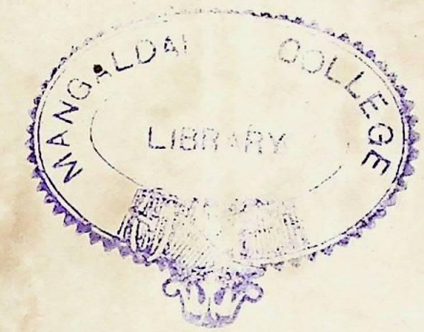
THE CONCEPT OF PERFECTION IN THE TEACHINGS OF KANT AND THE GĪTĀ

Balbir Singh Gauchhwal

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS
DELHI :: PATNA :: VARANASI

X2 Phi-T-21
Comt
Rare Book



MANGALDAI COLLEGE
LIBRARY
Acces ion No ... 21
Class No ... 142.3
Book No ... GAU

THE CONCEPT OF PERFECTION IN THE TEACHINGS OF KANT AND THE GĪTĀ

Balbir Singh Gauchhwal,
Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy,
Hindu College, University of Delhi.



MOTILAL BANARSIDASS
DELHI :: PATNA : VARANASI

© MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

BUNGALOW ROAD, JAWAHARNAGAR, DELHI-7
NEPALI KHAPRA, VARANASI (U.P.)
ASHOK RAJPATH, PATNA (BIHAR)

FIRST EDITION

1967

Price Rs. 18/-

PRINTED IN INDIA BY SHANTILAL JAIN, AT SHRI JAINENDRA PRESS, BUNGALOW ROAD, JAWAHARNAGAR, DELHI-7 AND PUBLISHED BY SUNDARLAL JAIN, MOTILAL BANARSIDASS, BUNGALOW ROAD, JAWAHARNAGAR, DELHI-7

TO

ŚRĪ KṚSNA

AND

IMMANUEL KANT

MANGALDAI COLLEGE
LIBRARY

CONTENTS

Chapters		Pages
I	The Historical Background: Concept of Perfection in Indian Thought.	1-22
II	The Historical Background: Concept of Perfection in Western Thought.	23-42
III	Kant's Conception of Perfection.	43-72
IV	The *Gītā*'s Concept of Perfection	73-92
V	Perfection According to Kant and the *Gītā*: A Comparative Approach.	93-104
VI	The *Gītā* Way to Perfection.	105-122
VII	The Kantian Way to Perfection.	123-137
VIII	The Kantian and the *Gītā* Way to Perfection: A Comparative Approach.	138-166
IX	Concluding Remarks.	167-179

Index

PREFACE

As a student of comparative thought, I have always felt convinced that never could a better evaluation be made of, and a more befitting tribute paid to, the speculative urge of most of the traditional philosophers, both of the East and the West, than to characterize it as primarily concerned with the enunciation of certain human ends involved in the cultivation of spiritual inwardness. That perhaps is the reason why we find them indefatigably grappling with, in a bid to put forward an agreeably appropriate answer to, the question as to the nature of the *summum bonum*, as also the means whereby it could be effectively pursued and ultimately attained. Although all such attempts could not enjoy universal agreement in respect of their conclusions inasmuch as they were conditioned by, and restricted to, these individual thinkers' metaphysical beliefs and convictions, yet an appreciable degree of unanimity of view-point is discernible in their ranks insofar as they hold that, if at all man has a goal to attain, it must be immanent in that aspect of his essential being the possession of which by him not only renders his existence *sui generis*, but also the realization of which constitutes his sole prerogative. It was this mode of reasoning that commended itself to, and found favour with, certain Western thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Butler, etc., as also the traditional Indian thinkers, with the solitary exception of the Cārvakas. Suprisingly indeed, it is this very line of reasoning that is found to pervade the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* in their common venture to build up a philosophy of *moral* religion. But what clamours for our immediate attention here is the fact that, whereas the Western thinkers had remained content with merely pointing out that the ultimate goal had to be conceived within the compass of man's essential selfhood, it was left to Kant and the *Gītā* to pursue the full implications of this germ of thought by declaring that not only the *end*, but also the *means* thereto must be sanctioned by, and grounded in, the law of our true self. Though set so far apart in time and space, the tendency that characterizes the tempers of both in this

context is remarkably identical, and the seeking for the vindication of this claim is the sole aim which this book has before it.

It has been my firm conviction that the main reason why the correct ethical perspective of Kant has often been missed, misunderstood, and even misinterpreted must be traced, firstly, to the widely prevalent tendency amongst most of the modern scholars to overlook those aspects and assumptions of Kantian ethics that owe their *raison d'être* to, and follow *pari passu* from, what Kant called 'morl religion'; and, secondly, to the contention—the continually recurring contention—that his ultimate aim was to limit his investigations to the sphere and significance of the *human* will alone. The most unfortunate result of such approaches has been that, in the former case, Kantian ethics has seldom been thoroughly examined, while in the latter case most of the Kantian scholars, on not finding it convenient to reduce these assumptions to the demand of their contention, have sought to interpret them in certain ways to which Kant was decidedly opposed. What is often forgotten is the fact that the problem that stared Kant in the face was not merely to account for the possibility of morality, but also to show how morality could have its own worth or goodness in itself so as to serve as the object of human endeavour. To him it appeared to yield to a solution on the assumption that, since reason in itself was inherently free from the possibility of wrong choice or conflict of motives in the absence of sensibility, it would necessarily act in the spirit and spontaneity of a maxim that would be universal in appeal, unconditional in application, *a priori* in origin, and binding on all human beings alike—what he called the Moral Law in contradistinction from the law of Nature. This assumption led him to the view that, since there is a natural opposition between reason and sensibility, neither by itself could account for morality or ought. Reason as the essence and ground of the Moral Law transcends it inasmuch as 'ought is here out of place, because the volition is already of itself necessarily in unison with the law'. Nor can it be accounted for in terms of sensibility, since in that case it would be conditional and contingent. This explains the reason why Kant insisted on searching morality 'in the knowledge of human nature alone', since it is here that both reason and sensibility confront each other, such that the one invariably invokes and

influences the other in every act of determination of the will. "Therefore imperatives are only formulae to express the relation of objective laws of all volition to the subjective imperfection of this or that rational being, e.g., the human will."

Kant thinks that by having placed morality not in the essential nature and activity of reason but in the relation in which it stands to sensibility he has made out a *prima facie* case for its justification. His basic assumption warranted the contention that, since no analysis of 'reason' could admit of a categorical imperative affirming that every rational being *ought* to act in accordance with the principle of autonomy, he has an *a priori* proposition which cannot by any manner of means be derived from the analysis of the subject-concept and is, therefore, synthetic. Kant's search for the transcendental schema was motivated not only by the desire to show how reason could be conceived as capable of acting in accordance with its own law of autonomy, but also by the desire to explain how it could be conceived as capable of activity whereby it could overcome the heteronomy of sensibility, and ultimately return to its pristine perfection. The Idea of Freedom seemed pre-eminently qualified for the accomplishment of this stupendous task. As purely *a priori*, it led to the assumption that morality could claim its fulfilment and justification only when reason under human limitations could be free to act in accordance with its own law of autonomy; as sensuous, it led to the assumption that morality could be regarded as unique in respect of its source, sphere and significance only when reason under human limitations could be conceived as free in neutralizing the influence of desires and inclinations in every act of determination of the will. Thus understood, reason under human limitations can be conceived as the ground of moral activity to the extent to which it has been free in the origination thereof. The main weakness of the views of most of the critics of Kant, which will be dealt with in this book in full detail, lies, negatively, in failing to realize that reason transceds morality to the extent to which sensibility influences or even defies human attempt in moral determination of the will; and, positively, in the tacit admission that 'reason' is synonymous with, exhaustible in, or reducible to the sphere and spirit of morality. It is alleged that since morality, on Kant's view, consists in unconditional

obedience to reason, involving as it does elimination of desires and inclinations, there is nothing positive to be aimed at by way of an end or value, that the rigid insistence on the will's being subjected to, and grounded in, the abstract law of reason hardly involves anything human to be desired, and that what is relentlessly insisted upon is not 'having' but 'doing', and that too in the most mechanical, impersonal way. The final word about the Kantian point of view comes to be embodied in the widely acclaimed, yet most unfortunate, dictum, 'duty for duty's sake'. Could anything be more distressing to the spirit of the Kantian perspective ?

That Kant did anticipate all such possible objections can hardly be doubted or denied in view of the evidence to be adduced in this book. His simple contention is that even in an act of duty there is present, albeit in a restricted measure, that law of reason, the Moral Law, which constitutes man's real essence or perfection. If it is argued that there is no end, value or goodness contained in an act of duty, the only conclusion is: 'the glorious ideas of morality would be indeed objects of applause and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action.' And where shall we search for the purpose and springs of action? Obviously, in that being of reason—or what Kant too often calls 'proper self'—which, although transcendent under human conditions, is immanent in every action to the extent to which the will in the act of determination reflects this as the 'categorical imperative'. In all such actions thus determined there is the promise and potency of something over and above that realized in them. *What* is thus realized of the proper self or the Moral Law is the good, and *how* by means of this it is realized is the moral. Thus, the upshot is now clear: that to the extent to which we succeed in subjecting our will to the Moral Law to that extent, and that alone, have we attained perfection or goodness. The *summum bonum* consists in realizing ourselves as the very essence and spirit of the Moral Law in its fullest consummation: 'A will whose maxims necessarily coincide with the laws of autonomy is a *holy* will, good absolutely.'

This is the sum and substance of the Kantian perspective which I have sought to elaborate in this book which in its spirit and content constitutes my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Punjab University a few years back. Though there is scarcely any ethical writing of Kant which I have not referred to, I have been cautiously selective. In order to safeguard against any misunderstanding or misinterpretation, I have quoted too freely. As T. K. Abbott's translation of Kant's ethical works is likely to remain an English-knowing student's avenue to Kant, I have relied on his rendering, to all intents and purposes.

In the successful completion of my research as embodied in this book, my chief obligation is to Mr. S. P. Kanal, now Reader in Philosophy, in the Post-graduate (evening) Institute, University of Delhi, without whose inspiring guidance, unfailing help, and continuous encouragement I could not have done much. My warmest thanks are also due to Mr. Thomas Nickerson, for having permitted me to make use of my paper, entitled "The Concept of Perfection in the Teachings of Kant and the *Gītā*' published in the July 1962 issue of the *Philosophy East and West*; to Professor G. R. Malkani, for my paper, entitled 'The Good in the Prābhākara School of Pūrvamīmānsā' published in his Journal, *The Philosophical Quarterly* in the January 1964 issue; and lastly, to Professor James D. Swamidasan, for my paper, entitled 'Some Assumptions of Kantian Ethics: A Critical Approach' published in his Journal, *The Indian Journal of Philosophy*, in the January 1964 issue. I have also taken certain extracts from my paper, entitled 'Moral Religion of Kant and *Karmayoga* of the *Gītā*', published in the *Kant-studien*, band 55, heft, 4, 1964, and for this I have to thank the Editor, Professor Gottfried Martin. And, finally, I have to thank Mr. Sunder Lal, the proprietor of M/s Moti Lal Banarsi Dass, and Mr. M. R. Suri, the Manager of the printing Press, for their promptness and efficiency in the publication of this thesis.

B. S. G.

Chapter I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND : CONCEPT OF PERFECTION IN INDIAN THOUGHT

That all of us at times are invaded by a recurring sense of incompleteness and discord in our innermost being is a self-certifying fact. We may not feel disturbed by it to a marked degree so long as all seems to go well with us, but to reflective people the imperfect conditions of life are by their very nature indicative of deeper interests, conceived in terms of a certain 'end' on the attainment of which all signs of imperfection cease to have their *raison d'être*. While in the West such a view does not seem to have been seriously entertained, in India certain schools like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṁkhya, Pūrva-mīmāṁsā and certain sects of Buddhism subscribe to it. But this negative concept has been repudiated by certain prominent systems in favour of a positive 'ideal' on the dawn of which the whole of our being is believed to get transformed into some illuminating experience. It is contended that in the very performance of conscientious actions there is contained the certitude of an ideal the accomplishment of which is invariably accompanied by 'something positive'. Such is the line of reasoning that has found favour with thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, Butler, etc. In India, the Jainas, later Naiyāyikas like Bhāsarvajña and others, certain Mīmāṁsakas like Bhattasarvajña, and the various schools of the Vedānta are the chief protagonists of this view.

In an enquiry of this nature, characteristic of Western thought upto the Middle Ages in particular, and of Indian thought in general, two questions at once clamour for attention: (1) What is this 'something positive' like ? And (2) What is it that is necessary to bring it into being ? So far as the answer to the first of these questions is concerned, there seems to be no considerable divergence of opinion among most of the Western thinkers on the one hand, and Indian thinkers on the other. The ultimate ideal has been conceived in terms of the soul's basic similarity to, equivalence with, or absorption in, the divine subs-

tance. But the signs of schism appear in their ranks with regard to the approach to the latter query. It is love or contemplation of God that dominates the religious convictions of the West, particularly upto the Middle Ages. In India, though emphasis has been laid on the different aspects of human nature—reason, will and emotion—yet the extent of emphasis has been determined by the philosophical outlook of each school. In Jainism and Buddhism, for instance, it is the practical aspect of human life that is more pronounced. In the Sāṅkhya system the need to cultivate an intellectual insight (*viveka-jñāna*) as a means to perfection seems to be stressed more than in any other Indian system. For the Mīmāṅsakas, distinterested volition as the spring of human activity is the most efficacious way of attaining real goal of life. In the systems of Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara it is the intellectual and volitional aspects, respectively, that are more prominently recognized. The most remarkable feature of the *Gītā* is, however, that it gives due weight to the importance of human nature as an organic whole. If the ultimate ideal to be attained is looked upon as the realization of one's self as such, the path of intellectual insight (*jñāna-yoga*) is recognized; if God is looked upon as the Supreme Person (*Puruṣottama*) and the effecting of a living communion with Him as the goal to be realized, the path of devotion and self-surrender to Him (*bhakti-yoga*) is advocated; while the path of disinterested willing or action (*karma-yoga*) can be adopted by one who believes in the effectiveness of disinterested action alone (*niṣkāma-karma*) as the means to the attainment of the goal conceived in either of the former or the latter way. Which of these paths we actually embrace in the pursuit of our goal will depend upon the natural bent of our being.[1] Yet it is not the particular path which we decide to follow in our spiritual pursuit that matters much in our life, but the spirit in which we discharge all our obligations and seek to bring the ideal within our approach.[2] We are reminded that it is the spirit in which we think, contemplate, and act that determines what we shall be or attain to.[3] Thus looked at, life acquires a higher purpose and a nobler meaning to be recognized and explored only by those who have sacrificed their whole nature for the discovery of the deeper aspects of life.

1. XVII.3. 2. IV.11. 3. VIII.6.

Therefore, what is thus most conspicuous by its presence in the ethics of the *Gītā*, as in all other ramifications of Indian philosophical thought, is the tendency towards a search for the ultimate end or *summum bonum* of life, together with an emphasis on the need for exploring all such means as can be most effective in the attainment of this end. As the colophon indicates, the *Gītā* aims primarily at providing the art whereby we can effect union with the ultimate ideal. Strangely enough, it is this very tendency that characterises the ethical system of Immanuel Kant, whose conception of perfection is to be compared with that of the *Gītā* in the following pages. The incentive for such an attempt is the unshakable conviction that the similarities between the teachings of both in regard to the ultimate purpose and meaning of human life are so markedly close as to warrant our regarding them as expressions of the same view about the real aim of life. How far this contention is reasonable to the spirit of their teachings remains to be judged from the following discussion.

But before embarking upon such a discussion, which doubtless is the primary aim of this book, it is well worthy of our attention to note that, although Kant and the *Gītā* did contrive to say something remarkable in regard to the two questions set forth above, yet it will be too much on our part to say that in their perspectives they can claim complete exemption from the debt of their respective predecessors. Hence an attempt at presenting a historical development of the concept of perfection seems desirable. Let me, therefore, devote myself to a brief exposition of this concept in the light of these two questions in the first two chapters. I shall begin with the Indian scene.

That the influence of the *Upaniṣads* on the metaphysical development of the *Gītā* thought has been tremendously profound can hardly be exaggerated. In all the colophons of its eighteen chapters the *Gītā* takes special pride in claiming for itself the title of an *Upaniṣad* (*bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu*), thereby pointing to the fact that the problem it seeks to discuss is almost the same as that of the *Upaniṣads*. This claim is partially true; it is true to the extent to which the nature of perfection as accepted by the *Gītā* is almost identical with that of the *Upaniṣads*. As we shall see later, it is in the evolution of a moral philosophy

of life in a different social setting that lies the unique contribution of the *Gītā* to the Indian thought. For the present I shall confine myself to a brief exposition of the nature of perfection as encountered in the *Upaniṣads*.

In this connection we must refer to two closely allied ideals accepted as the ultimate goal of all ethical activity: viz., the the absolutistic—attaining oneness with *Brahman*[1]; and the theistic—attaining qualitative sameness or equivalence with God.[2] Corresponding to these two ways in which the goal to be attained may be looked upon, two main springs of ethical activity are recognised, and either of these can be made the motive of exertion. These are : (1) purification of affections (*sattva-śuddhi*)[3]; or engaging oneself in activity in the spirit of fulfilling the will and command of God.[4] In respect to the former, the self is regarded as in itself the law of Goodness (*dharma*)[5], so that action as determined by, and grounded in, this law becomes the unfailing source of manifestation of the desire for self-realization, and when determined by the law of the sensuous, passive, emotional self becomes the cause of self-annihilation. Hence a vital distinction comes to be made between good and bad desires. Those who want to pursue the path of self-realization are asked to cultivate the good ones. Both kinds of desire must lead to their respective results because the universe is governed by certain immutable laws.[6] The final goal consists in absolute self-determination on the dawn of which all the hostile forces of the empirical outfit melt away. This is the ethical significance of '*yoga*' which seems to have shaped the *karma-yoga* of the *Gītā*. "No one who has not ceased to be immoral, who is passionately restless, who has not possessed his true self, whose mind is not tranquil, can realize his self".[7] Action does not cause bondage if both in its authority and content it has been rendered immune from the heteronomy of the lower self, and surely there is no better way to self-realization than this.[8]

In respect to the latter, God is looked upon as the rewarder

1. *Maṇḍ. Up.*, III.2.6., *Tait. Up.*, II.1, *Śvet. Up.*, I.7.9. *Praśna Up.*, IV. 9, *Māṇḍ. Up.*, 1-2.
2. *Muṇḍ. Up.* III.1.3.
3. *Muṇḍ. Up.* III.1.8.10.
4. *Śvet. Up.*, VI.4.
5. *Bṛh. Up.* II.5.11.
6. Cf. *Ibid.* IV.4.5.
7. *Kaṭh. Up.* 1.2.24.
8. *Īśa. Up.*, 2.

of the fruit of actions undertaken with a view to furthering the divine cosmic plan, but both the action and its fruit are dedicated to Him as a token of sacrifice (*yajña*) to Him. He is the ultimate abode and the master of the inner spirit (*antaryāmin*) as also the ultimate arbiter of human action (*karmādhyakṣa*). If all our actions are free from the taint of egoistic impulse, our helplessness to overcome certain forces lying beyond our control will be overcome by His uplifting grace and compassion. Behind cosmic manifestations (*māyā*) lies concealed the personal image of God Himself, and the attainment of a living communion with Him is what constitutes our true ideal.[1] Whatever be the image or idea formed of the goal sought—whether being Brahman or attaining equivalence with God—in either case the spiritual aspirant, on having accomplished his cherished ideal, becomes integrated into his natural image and freed from fear.[2] The experience of inner conflict characteristic of human nature is completely transcended in the state of perfection and a condition of spiritual poise and equanimity towards good and bad comes to supervene. The soul in its natural integrity regains what appeared lost to it, yet never to lose it again. It is in its own without any other besides.

As we shall see in the VIII chapter, it is exactly this *Upaniṣadic* view of the nature of perfection that reasserted itself in the *Gītā*—both in its absolutistic and theistic aspects. Some of the Indian systems that developed subsequently did not openly acknowledge this *Upaniṣadic* debt, but could not help being influenced thereby in one respect or the other, while the *Vedānta* schools avowedly based all their views on the *Upaniṣadic* doctrines. The extent and the degree of the *Upaniṣadic* impact on the later Indian thought has thus varied in each case. The *Prābhākara* school of *Pūrva-mīmānsā*, as we shall point out in this chapter, seems to have been dominated much more by the ethical side of the *Gītā* than by any other source or influence. Let us first begin by discussing the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* view.

The *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas* hold that the self (*jīvātmā*) is a unique substance which in its embodied existence possesses the attributes of cognition, feeling and volition; in this condition it is also possessed of such qualities as those of experiencing pleasure, pain,

1. *Muṇḍ. Up.* III.2.8. 2. *Śvet. Up.* II. 14. 3. *Tait. Up.*, II.9.

desire, etc. In itself the self is neither a series of cognitions, as maintained by the Bauddhas, since on their view it is impossible to explain such faculties as memory and imagination which presuppose the existence of self as the underlying, enduring substance; nor can it be conceived as a self-shining consciousness (*svaprākāśa caitanya*), as held by the *Advaita-Vedāntins*, since such a consciousness is prasitical in character, enduring only so long as the soul remains associated with its empirical outfit. In the state of perfection the attribute of consciousness disappears, and along with it the capacity of experiencing pleasure and pain drops away. It is in its empirical existence alone that the self acquires the capacity of experiencing pleasure and pain the reality of which is, however, not denied by the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas*. But the two are looked upon as inextricably linked up with each other, so that if one has to be escaped the other must also be given up. Hence all efforts must be directed to the bringing about of a state wherein the self attains complete freedom from all pleasure and pain. And such a state is achieved when the capacity for experiencing both—consciousness—is wholly got rid of. Naturally, the 'end' of human efforts comes to be conceived as isolation (*apavarga*). There is, thus, no gain in terms of 'something positive', since in that case, as Udyotakara points out, the liberated soul must require an ever-lasting body to enjoy this 'something positive', called *bliss*. Later *Naiyāyikas* like Bhāsarvajña and others, however, repudiate this negative concept of an 'end' and hold that the ultimate condition of perfection is characterized by bliss (*ānanda*). This view is vehemently opposed by Vātsyāyana as one for which there is neither valid evidence nor sufficient justification. If it is admitted that in liberation there comes about manifestation of bliss or happiness, there must be a cause for it which must be either eternal or noneternal. If the former, distinction between the soul freed and the soul bound comes to be obliterated and all efforts to liberate oneself become meaningless. If, on the other hand, the latter alternative is accepted, we shall have to locate it somewhere. It cannot obviously be found in the association of the self with intellect (*manas*) because by itself it cannot cause any result; nor can it be located in, or accounted for by having recourse to, certain other factors like merit (*puṇya*), because the result of non-eternal merit cannot be eternal. With the exhaustion of

meritorious effect there must remain nothing behind. Hence the contention that the soul in release enjoys bliss is without any rational foundation.

Although the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, by having sought to account for perfection simply in terms of the self's autonomy, did mark a radical departure from the *Upaniṣadic* pattern, yet the theistic aspect of the *Upaniṣads* surreptitiously gained entry into their mode of reasoning. God comes to be invested with absolute perfection and supreme executive authority of the moral law with, of course, the unique additional claim that, in contrast to the finite human selves, he is to be looked upon as a distinctly qualified Self.[1] As an embodiment of perfection, He is conceived, to use Aristole's expression, as pure Form and therefore as acting in necessary determination to the law of His perfect selfhood.[2] He is the only agency whereby actions receive their appropriate results (*karmaphaldātā*). In His capacity as the moral law giver He is the supreme judge of the moral quality of human actions (*karmādhyakṣa*). In his supreme perfection He is the eternal source, authority and custodian of the moral law (*niyogaa*).

Although in the inmost of his being man is as much the essence of the law of selfhood as God himself, yet the former is at the same time subject to the law of an entirely different realm—that of sensibility—and although acting in determination to the respective laws of these realms involves the desire for some kind of good (*iṣṭasādhantājñāna*), yet in the one case it means bondage to the blind mechanism of nature, in the other, regaining one's essential selfhood in its fullest autonomy.[3] The latter is the highest good (*niḥśreyas*) for the attainment of which cultivation of an attitude of active self-determination (*niyama*) and abstention from indulgence in egoistically oriented actions are recognised as constituents of the ethical discipline, the direct aim here, as in the *Upaniṣads*, being self-purification.[4] Every action that issues forth from the autonomous activity of the self (*svato' puruṣārthatvāt*) must in the end result in its self-cons-

1. *Vātsyāyana's Nyāya-bhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra*, IV.1.21.
2. *Udyotkara*, *Nyāya-vārtika*, IV. 1.21.
3. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, *Nyāya-manjari* (Benaras : Vizianagram Sk . Series, 1895), p. 511.
4. Gautama's *Nyāya-sūtra*, IV.2.46.

ciousness (*ātma-jñāna*). Since such a state is characterized by self-recollection, all that is not-self—volition, cognition, susceptibility to pleasure and pain—disappears once and for all. But the important point to note is that, although the self in its pristine perfection achieves the same status as that of God himself, it is not intelligible why volition and cognition should not continue in the former if they are ever present in the latter, especially if the system does not account for the final goal in terms of the identity of the self with God. And this seems to constitute the main difference between the theistically oriented point of view of certain *Upaniṣads* and the half-hearted atom-oriented philosophy of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas.

The Sāṅkhya-Yoga system, like any other Indian system of philosophy, sees in human life nothing but sorrow and suffering, pain and privation. No living being enjoys immunity from this law, since it is the law by which life on earth is governed. At every step, in every direction life reveals suffering. Naturally, the highest good comes to be conceived here, as in the early Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, as freedom from all pain and suffering without any possibility of the soul being entangled or entrapped by the false promises of life; for both it consists in the restoration of the self once and for all to its original condition. But the points of difference between the two in certain respects are irreconcilable. While defering a detailed treatment of the Sāṅkhya concept of perfection and bondage to the IV chapter wherein I intend to present it in relation to the view of the *Gītā*, I want to bring out here only the main points of difference between the two.

According to the Sāṅkhya, as also according to the Yoga, the individual self is not a substance *with* the separable attribute of consciousness, as conceived by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, but pure consciousness in its essence and truth. If there is anything by which we can conceive of the self or *puruṣa* it is pure consciousness and nothing but that. *Puruṣa* as ever-shining light (*sadāprakāśasvarūpa*) abides in its eternity without in any way being touched or moved by anything from without. The Advaita-Vedāntic view of the self as a blissful consciousness (*ānandasvarūpa*) is repudiated on the plea that the presence of bliss over and above consciousness would mean destruction of the autonomous nature of the *puruṣa* and introduction of

duality in its inner being.[1] All change and activity belongs to the realm of the material world (*prakṛti*). Since the *puruṣa* is simply a spectator (*sākṣin*), not a participant (*kartā*) in the ongoings of the phenomenal world, it is sheer ignorance (*aviveka*) to identify it with any thing or activity of the phenomenal world. Although we can and do grasp this truth intellectually, yet in the absence of spiritual enlightenment we act and think as if the *puruṣa* were the intellect, the mind, body and the senses having as its only aim the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. So long as the false sense of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*) persists, we are helplessly caught in the whirlwind of life which moves in a vicious circle wherein no point can be regarded as the beginning.

Perfection, then, consists for the Sāṁkhya-Yoga in the soul's attaining its self-conscious autonomy (*apavarga*). In the sublime state of isolation from *prakṛti* it stands liberated and freed from all afflictions and disturbances of the mind, distractions of the body, and desires and delusions of the ego. It was absolutely untainted before, but was not so *realized* because we were spiritually blinded by the allurements of *prakṛti*. It is this *prakṛti* which loses its hold on the *puruṣa* and gets liberated —the latter was never bound and therefore is not liberated. "No *puruṣa* is bound or liberated; nor does any die or take birth. It is *prakṛti* in its manifold that is bound, is liberated and suffers change."[2]

Thus, while in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the final goal is conceived as one on the attainment of which the attributeless soul persists in its own identity, here in the Sāṁkhya-Yoga the *puruṣa* is conceived as resting in its pure consciousness. In the event of release, the soul in both the systems is regarded as retaining its identity without knowledge of anything beyond itself. But the resemblance seems, however, to be superficial: in the one the soul in its final release *is* pure consciousness, while in the other it is *nothing* but itself.

Since the cause of bondage, according to the Sāṁkhya-Yoga, consists in the lack of the sense of discrimination (*aviveka*) between the self and the not-self, it is discriminating knowledge

1. *Sāṁkhyapravacana-sūtra*, V.66.
2. *Kārikā*, st. 62.

(*viveka*) alone that can cut asunder the knot of bondage born of ignorance.[1] This saving knowledge, when fully mastered, ripens into the immediate grasp of one's essential self hood: "I am not" (*nāsmi*), "Naught belongs to me" (*na mi*), "My self is not the ego" (nāham), etc. This formal discipline of the Sāṅkhya system is sought to be supplemented by the practical discipline of the Yoga. It aims at emphasizing the need of the cultivation of an attitude of detachment (*vairāgya*) much the same way as recognised in the *Gītā*, and of meditation (*yoga*). In its preliminary stages, detachment consists, according to the Yoga, in contemplating on the futility of the numerous objects of *prakṛti* and cultivating an attitude of utter indifference towards them so that, with the simultaneous progress in the practice of meditation on the ultimate truth, perfection is attained. Meditation (*yoga*) aims at arresting and negating all mental functions or modifications (*cittavṛttinirodha*). Unless emotional stirrings are fully subdued and intellectual activities effectively controlled, the self cannot restore itself to its sublime autonomy. The mind (*citta*) has to be purified and enlightened so that spiritual insight (*prajña*) into the truth may be possible. The Yoga system seeks to supply us with what are called the eight 'limbs' (*aṅga*) or rules which consist of the disciplines of restraint' (*yama*), 'observance' (*niyama*), 'posture' (*āsana*), 'breath-control' (*prāṇāyāma*), 'withdrawl of the senses' (*pratyāhāra*), 'steadying the mind' (*dhāraṇa*), 'contemplation' (*dhyāna*), and 'concentration' (*samādhi*). The rules of self-restraint and observance are essentially concerned with the moral aspect of conduct. The former is mainly negative and consists of non-injury (*ahiṁsā*) truth-speaking (*satya*), abstention from stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahamcarya*), and disowning of the sense of possession (*aparigraha*). The latter, which aims at the cultivation of positive virtues, includes purity (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*) fortitude (*tapas*), study of philosophic texts (*svādhyāya*) and devotion to God (*Iśvara-pranidhāna*). The remaining six disciplines are meant for the cultivation of mental concentration. In the meditative trance (*samādhi*) the disciple, by gradual degrees, gets rid of all the distractions of the mind-body complex. With his psycho-physical functions

1. *Sānkhyapravacana-sūtra*, II.7.

having been stilled, the *puruṣa* shines forth with all its effulgence and glory. Although he is liberated (*jīvanmukta*), yet he continues to be embodied so long as the force of his past actions (*prarabdha-karma*) is not completely exhausted. With its exhaustion, the *puruṣa* gives up the mortal coil and rests in its pure essence (*videhamukti*, *videhakaivalya*).

The negative concept of perfection as upheld by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya-Yoga again makes its presence felt in the Pūrva-mīmānsā school represented by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara. Both these thinkers share the earlier view of the schools discussed above that the highest goal for the self consists in its realizing itself as its own truth (*svātmasphuraṇarūpaḥ*). These thinkers, too, believe that there is no such thing as the experience of bliss in the state of perfection. Of special interest is Prabhākara's view of perfection which seems to have been considerably influenced by the *Gītā*. He believes that the *Vedas* claim their *raison d'ètre* to the fact that they seek to represent to the human consciousness the Moral law (*Apūrva*) in the form of unconditional duties. Their status and authority being *sui generis*, they alone are competent to reveal to man the knowledge of the supersensuous sphere which is otherwise unavailable to him. Since besides his essential self, he also possesses a sensuous self, this Moral Law as embodied in the *Vedic* injunctions presents itself to his moral consciousness in the form of an 'ought', or what Prabhākara calls '*niyoga*'. This is exactly the distinction drawn by Kant between the Moral Law and the Categorical Imperative. An action is, therefore, to be ranked as moral only if it is determined by, and grounded in, this law. Although Prabhākara speaks of the highest good of the self, yet he never subscribes to the common view that the self in action is motivated by the idea of the good (*iṣṭasādhantā-jñāna*) if, as in the Nyāya and the Bhāṭṭa view, it did not mean conscious self-determination (*kāryatā-jñāna*) alone. Here the view of the *Gītā* that the performance of duty requires no extraneous motive finds itself fully represented.

Prabhākara insists that it is not the mere recognition of an unconditional duty as indicated by the *Vedas* that constitutes a duty for us; what in fact is required for it to be rendered into a duty is the fact that it should be consciously 'willed' as such. Thus, a *Vedic* command becomes my duty only when, and when

alone, it is appropriated and imposed by my higher self as its own law and expressed in the determination of my will.[1] Since the motive of duty alone truly represents my essential selfhood, an action is moral to the extent to which it has been determined by this motive. Thus looked at, both the content and the authority must ultimately be referred to, and accounted for in terms of, this motive and this alone. It is actions of this kind that are to be characterized as truly unconditional. If, on the other hand, an action is determined by a sensuous desire it becomes conditional and contingent; since the true self does not find representation therein, it cannot be regarded as moral in the strict sense of the term. Thus, according to Prabhākara, human conduct may be determined by either of the two motives —that of desire or of duty—but morality proper has its existence only in the latter. Both doubtless involve some kind of purpose or goodness (*iṣṭa*); but the former lacks self-determination (*kāryatā-jñāna*). It is the law of duty that must be made the motive of all action to be characterized as strictly human, and for that matter moral, and it is this very law that is to be accomplished thereby.[2]

We can now well realize the extent to which Prabhākara makes the maxim of duty the mark and the measure of morality in the true sense of the term. Had he remained within the confines of this account of morality his critics would have been perfectly justified in having accused him and his followers for not admitting "any purpose in the performance of *nitya-karmas* (unconditional duties) beyond obeying the call of duty[3], for having given us "merely a negative concept"[4], as also for having declared that "like Kant, Prabhākara believes that an obligatory action is to be performed *not because* it will benefit the performer but because we ought to perform it."[5] That all

1. *Svaviśeṣaṇavattāpratisandhānajanyakāryatājñāna, Siddhāntāmuktāvatī* of Viśvanātha (Nirṇaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1916), pp. 472-73.

2. *Niyoga eva praroko niyoga eva cānuṣṭheya* : *Prakaraṇapancikā* of Śālikānātha (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Benaras, 1904), p. 5.

3. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), p. 335.

4. S. K. Maitra, *Ethics of the Hindus* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1956), p. 153.

5. D. M. Datta & S. C. Chatterjee, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1950), p. 345.

these objections against Prabhākara are ill-conceived can easily be gathered from what we have said before. Hence any attempt at a full rebuttal seems to be unnecessary. However, it may be pointed out here that he has pointed out in quite unequivocal terms that in every act of duty there is the idea of an object to be accomplished through the voluntary activity (*anuṣṭheya*). This object is the realization of the law of duty (*niyoga*) as in itself the law of our essential selfhood (*Apūrvam hi kriyāsādhyam*).[1] It is only under *human* conditions that the moral law—which is the essential law of our self—appears to be the law of duty. As soon as the human conditions are transcended, the sense of 'ought' yields to the spontaneity of the moral law. And this is what Prabhākara calls *Niyogasiddhi*—exactly what the *Gītā* understands by *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* and Kant, by 'Internal Morally Practical Perfection.' Deferring a detailed discussion of the views of Kant and the *Gītā* on this subject to later chapters, it can be pointed out here that the account of perfection offered by Prabhākara in non-theistic or non-absolutistic terms differentiates his position both from that of the *Gītā* and Kant and entitles him to a unique place in the Indian philosophical perspective.[2]

And, finally, we turn our attention to the exposition of the cpncept of perfection as encountered in the teachings of the various schools of the Vedānta. Broadly speaking, these schools may be divided into two distinct classes : absolutistic and theistic—the former conceiving of *Brahman*, the ultimate Truth, as an impersonal principle and the latter as a personal God. In each of these schools we find a positive concept of perfection: it is looked upon as not merely a state of freedom from suffering (*mukti*), but one characterized by eternal bliss (*mokṣa*). The chief amongst them are three, known as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita, associated, respectively, with the names of Śāṁkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. In the context of the present enquiry, I intend to limit my attempt to a succinct exposition of the view-points of these systems which claim a large following among peoples of India even to this day.

1. Śālikanātha, *Prakaṛaṇapaṅcikā*, p. 105.

2. *Vide* my paper, 'The Good in the Prābhākara School of Pūrvamīmānsā' in *Philosophical Quarterly*, January 1964.

According to the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṁkara, the human self is, in reality, of the same essence as *Brahman* or the Absolute, it is, so to speak, a spark of the cosmic Fire, a drop of the Ocean. When thus understood, the individual has in his being the very essence or truth which he is to realize. Perfection, then, signifies the return of the self to its own condition, the realization by it of what has always been its own essence but happens for the time being to have eluded its grasp under the all-enveloping influence of ignorance (*ajñāna*). All our suffering and sorrow arise because of the wrong perspective we come to acquire in our ignorance.[1] Perfection is not a state to be newly attained, but consists in disowning this false outlook. So long as we continue to identify ourselves with all that is not-self, we cannot truly recognize and regain what we are. Though self-luminous, infinite, and blissful in essence, its truth comes to be eclipsed by the false perspective which is entirely the consequence of its self-estrangement (*adhyāsa*). It is this state that conceals the truth of our being from our view and instead presents an empirical 'I' or ego which in the ultimate analysis is as much illusory as the 'snake' in place of the rope. As the illusion of the snake disappears on the perception of the rope—that which is the underlying reality of our experience—so also all this phenomenal world, much like the snake of the illusion, melts away into nothingness and that which was concealed and immanent in it reveals itself as our inner image. Ignorance (*ajñāna*) with its double function—namely, suppression of the underlying truth (*āvaraṇa*) and presentation of something else instead (*vikṣepa*)—becomes unknown to the realized soul. Thereupon, all sense of plurality disappears (*jñate dvaitam na vedyate*); consciousness of individuality comes to be superseded by the pure consciousness of the soul.

The realized soul, having thus dissociated itself with all empirical involvements and elements, discovers its autonomous being in itself (*svātmanyavasthānam*)[2]. Its essential nature as bliss (*paramānanda*), which lay obscured under the debris of the empirical buildup, becomes fully actualized. In our ordinary existence we perceive diversity and make distinctions, but when in perfection we attain the higher or transcendental point

1. Śaṁkara's *Bhaṣya*, II.3.46. 2. *Ibid.* IV.4.13.

of view (*pārmārthika dṛṣṭi*) there is for us the vision of one all-pervading Spirit (*sarvātmabhāva*). Possessed of equanimity, we seem to be an 'other' for others but we see no other than ourselves in all.[3] We transplant ourselves, so to speak, in a realm which is our own and in which we live never to die. This is the highest state wherein we are all—not conceivable how—of a piece with *Brahman* (*Brahmaiva hi muktyavasthā*).

Since bondage of the soul lies in its falsely identifying itself with the various adjuncts with which it happens to be associated as also the numerous objects of the world, its release can be brought about by removing this false sense of identification. Śaṁkara points out that man's position in this universe is *sui generis* in so far as he alone has the rare privilege of *consciously* exerting himself in that direction wherein lies his true good.[4] He is subject to the laws of two realms diametrically opposed to each other in their bearing on human life. In subjecting his will to the demands of one he loses himself in the inexorable sway of causal necessity and becomes spiritually incapicitated for feeling even the momentary thrill of that blissful essence which alone distinguishes him from every thing that forces entry into his consciousness, while in responding to the call of the other he gradually awakens himself for self-possession. Transformation of our outlook can be effected only by our spiritual conviction. In modern times this has been stated more dramatically by Kierkegaard: Truth is subjectivity. So for Śaṁkara: Truth consists in self appropriation. This involves no becoming for we do not achieve any state alien to the truth of our subjectivity; all that we have to do is to *realize* that we are in essence the very core of the universal, infinite Spirit. For those who have exerted even a moderate restraint on their blind, nature-sponsored impulses, such a realization becomes the process of gradual deepening into their inner integrity. When in the teeth of opposition from the promptings of the sensuous self we seek to determine the action by the law of our essential self we have to encounter a sense of deep maladjustment between what we feel called upon to choose from within and what we think we cannot help choosing from without. In the former case,

1. *Chāndogya Up.* VIII.12.3.
2. Commentry on *Bṛh. Up.*, I.6.10.

knowledge (*jñāna*) itself gets transformed into virtue, while in the latter spiritual bankruptcy and blindness (*ajñāna*) always feign both knowledge and virtue. What meanings we bestow upon knowledge and virtue will depend upon what we understand by our good (*iṣṭa*). But unless we have sunk into the life of the mere animal we cannot disown that inner law of ours (*svabhāva*) which strives in many a way to resist and overpower all that seeks to defy and subdue it. It may suffer defeat if the lower self had been allowed to forearm itself in anticipation of an inevitable conflict from its counter-part, but the defeat is not its extermination; and if it gathers momentum in due course of time it will bravely resist and persist 'as fire does when enveloped in smoke', giving rise to that inner determination, wherein lies the possibility of future victory. Since all this change in spiritual perspective cannot be brought about by mere intellectual conviction, that which defies this change is to be conquered by means of the power of self-determination, so that ultimately the change in perspective is not the result of apprehension but one of intuitive realization (*sākṣātkāra*). The moment the process of intuitive realization reaches the point of consummation the soul shines forth in its innate luminosity and splendour.

For this to happen the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṅkara, in common with most of the schools we have considered in the preceding pages, recommends a two-fold path: one which aims primarily at qualifying the spiritual aspirant for embarking upon the fruitful study of the Vedānta, and the other is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge leading to the realization of the ultimate truth. So far as the former aspect of the discipline is concerned, it is the *karmayoga* of the *Gītā* that comes to be accepted as the ideal one. Activity in determination to the law of our true being (*svadharma*)[1] is recognized as the prerequisite. The cultivation of the Kantian 'good will' and the purification of heart are the indispensable disciplines to spiritual self-enlightenment.[2] By developing the power of self-determination in action (*niyama*) and restraining from indulging in certain activities (*yama*) the vicious circle of this realm of good and evil (*saṁsāra*) can be brought to an end.[3] The immediate

1. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 148. 2. *Vedānta-sūtra*, III.4.26.
3. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 118.

aim is to do away with the sense of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*) and with a view to attaining this end helping others without any hope of recompense,[1] as taught by the *Gītā*, is necessary. While the truth comes about in the realization by the self as in itself *Brahman* which is beyond all conceptions of perfection and personality, still the discipline of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) is recognized as an equally effective means to perfection, but only when the Absolute, viewed as an embodiment of perfection, comes to be looked upon as the lord of all creation. Since such an outlook presupposes duality between the worshipper and the worshipped, Śaṅkara believes that gradually this ideal will lead to transformation into the vision of the highest truth.[2]

So far as the study of the Vedānta is concerned, the disciple must always strive to cultivate the following virtues, here called the four-fold aid (*sādhana-cātuṣṭeya*). These four virtues are: (1) ability to discriminate between what is eternal and what is transient (*nityānityavastuviveka*); (2) emptying the mind of the desire for the enjoyment of pleasure (*ihāmutrārtha-bhogavirāga*); (3) ability to control the mind and the senses, and to develop qualities like calmness, temperance, patience and the power of concentration (*samadamādisādhanasanpat*); and (4) an ardent desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*).[3] All these four aids are considered to be indispensable for effecting an integration in the fields of intellect, emotion and volition. Personality as a whole must be mobilized in the service of the cherished ideal of Truth. With the necessary ground for success in the wider sphere of spiritual development having been cautiously prepared, the aspirant is then advised to embark upon the study of the truths of the Vedānta with the assistance of a teacher (*guru*) who himself has realized the truth he imparts. This study comprises of the three-fold process: listening to the teacher's instructions with rapt attention (*śravaṇa*) reflecting on these instructions until doubts, if any, are completely and successfully dispelled and a firm conviction in the teachings of the revealed texts has been generated (*manans*); and, lastly, meditating upon the identity between the individual self and the *Brahman*—the basic truth of the Vedānta; repeated meditation on this truth (*nidhi-*

1. *Ibid.*, 37.
2. *Śaṅkara-bhāṣya*, III.2.21. 3. *Ibid.*, III.4.27.

dhyāsana) is regarded as most essential for combating the lingering effect of most of the undesirable impressions and habits (*viparīta-bhāvanā*). Such repeated meditations on the Vedāntic truths will not merely help ward off these old habits of thought but will also widen more and more the field of one's spiritual vision. With unflinching devotion to, and unswerable faith in, this path the spiritual aspirant ultimately realizes what is his truth and essence.

The aspirant who has realized this highest ideal of life retains his body until he leaves it once and for all. His egoistic personality having been completely wiped off by the emergence of the soul's inner light and life, he encounters his own Spirit pervading everywhere in the universe. The sense of moral obligation disappears with the extinction of the sensuous, emotional nature which prior to the dawn of perfection sought to oppose the manifestation of the law of the self by asserting its own law of seeking sensuous pleasures. Whatever he does he does out of the sense of spontaneity and selflessness. There being no ego left, all that he does is for the benefit of all creatures; there is the manifestation of perfect wisdom, perfect love and perfect will. When the realized self casts away the body at death, it becomes liberated in the final sens of the term (*videha-mukti*)—it finds itself in what it is already possessed of.

According to the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja, as according to the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṅkara, liberation connotes a positive state of bliss. This seems to be the only ground of agreement between the two. Śaṅkara, as we have already seen, holds that the human self is by its very nature of the essence of *Brahman* and that liberation consists in the former's realizing itself as such. Rāmānuja does not countenance this view. For him, the individual self (*jīva*) is different from, though not independent of, God. Like the realm of matter (*prakṛti*), it is co-eval with him, but not identical with him. Although it is different from him, yet it is similar to him in so far as it is characterized by the qualities of existence, consciousness and bliss in common with him. Naturally, perfection comes to be conceived as the soul's becoming like God (*Brahma-prakāra*). According to Rāmānuja, it is inconceivable that the individual self, which is different from and dependent on God, can ever attain oneness with him who is infinite and self-sufficient. The

highest goal, therefore, is looked upon as that on the attainment of which all the limiting barriers are transcended and the soul's innate qualities of intelligence and bliss are fully realized.

In this sublime state the soul's mortal frame comes to be discarded, since it can no longer subserve its new spiritual needs; in lieu thereof it acquires a perfect type of body by means of which it enjoys the highest in the living communion of God. Thus, liberation is not a disembodied state, as it signifies in other Indian systems of philosophy, but one of embodied existence of the soul. Though the freed souls attain fellowship with God, yet they are conceived as retaining their individual characters. The 'blessed region', as Plato termed it, is the heaven of absolute peace and perfection for Rāmānuja. God is the supreme master there, and is described as seated on his white throne, enjoying the company of his consort, *Lakṣmī*. All the freed souls are anxious to serve him and take particular delight in following his will and cherishing his ideals. All those righteous souls, which through hard toil and perseverance succeed in casting off their bondage to the phenomenal world, find their eternal bode in this region of the blessed, are cordially welcomed by those who have earlier reached there, are enrolled to their eternal brother-hood and granted fellowship with the supreme master. This heavenly abode with its beauty and exquisiteness transcends all description by the imperfect tool of human language.

The means to the attainment of such an enjoyable abode are, in Rāmānuja's view, mainly two: *prapatti* which is open both to the high and the low without regard to caste, and *bhakti* which is meant only for those who belong to the higher castes. The former consists in complete surrender to God (*Nārāyaṇa*) with full faith in his mercy and omnipotency. If observed and cultivated under the guidance of a qualified preceptor (*guru*), it can lead us to the realm of *Nārāyaṇa* much too quickly. It includes cultivation of those qualities which bring the aspirant closer and closer to God, abstention from those deeds that are unpleasing to him, faith in his power to protect his devotees, feeling of humility, absolute resignation to him, readiness to obey his will and command. The value of both knowledge and work is commended because they are regarded as conducive to the cultivation of devotion to God. The path of action (*karmayoga*), as recommended by the *Gītā* and that of know-

ledge can be of immense help in the cultivation of a devotional frame of mind.[1] The importance of the performance of religious rites and observance of certain ceremonies is also emphasized. They purify the mind and are helpful in effectively exhausting the effect of past actions which bind the soul in various ways. Meditation on God as the only ultimate and independent reality helps the soul realize an intuitive knowledge of his essence. We must worship and adore him, for no other object in the world can be regarded as the proper aim of meditation. Although, according to Rāmānuja, each self in bondage is a doer, yet its agency is limited by the omnipresence of God who is its inner master (*antaryāmin*). Nevertheless, God does not interfere with the freedom of the self.[2] Action in the spirit of disinterestedness must continue to be performed even after the knowledge of the self has arisen. Adherence to action at this stage is not, of course, for subjective purification as in the earlier stage, but for gaining more and more the favour of God. This is the path of calm resignation of one's will to the will and command of God.[3]

When the effect of past actions (*karma*) is completely exhausted and the grace of God (*prasāda*) fully invoked, the soul comes to be bathed in the divine light (*paripūrṇapara-brahamānūbhava*). Since it frees itself from all that is not-self, there remains no chance for its returning to the mortal world.[4] The real goal is reached when the freed soul discards the mortal frame. It then and there beholds the supreme master in its intuitive vision. Thus, for Rāmānuja there is no such stage as *jīvanmukti* which is recognized both by the Sāṅkhya and the Advaita-Vedāntins. Since perfection signifies the soul's regaining its pristine qualities of intelligence and bliss, on the realization thereof it merely attains similarity in essence, not in status. The ostensible reason why Rāmānuja conceives the freed souls as retaining their individual characters in the elevated state of release seems to be this, that it is only in that way that they can

1. Rāmānuja's *Bhaṣya* on the *Bhagavadgītā* (Introd.).
2. *Vedārthasaṁgraha* with *Tātparyadīpikā* (Benaras: Chowkamba Sanskrit Series, 1894), pp. 139-42.
3. *Cf. Gadya-traya*, III.
4. Rāmānuja's *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahma-sūtra*, IV.4.22.

enjoy blissful experience which they have earned after having put in hard labour and immense sacrifice. Perfection, then, is not a state of self-effacement, but one of self-disillusionment on its own side; it is for that matter not a state of the attainment of something other than its real nature, but one of its own self-discovery, self-revelation and self-possession.

The concept of perfection in the Dvaita system of Madhva is very close to that of the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja. Here the individual souls, though different from and subordinate to God, are conceived as possessing features like sentience and bliss in common with him. Madhva believes that there are infinite souls, each being distinct from others as revealed by the difference in their experiences. Since, according to him, the distinction between the individual soul and God is real, it is not correct to hold that in the state of perfection there remains no distinction between the two. The freed souls discard their physical bodies at the time of death and assume those made of pure matter (*sattva-śuddha*). In the kingdom of the supreme being (*Viṣṇu*) they realize their wishes without any pain and effort.

The bondage of the soul, according to the Dvaita-vāda of Madhva, lies in the soul's identifying itself with the various objects of the world. Under the overpowering influence of ignorance man forgets not only the real nature of God, but also that of himself. The study of scriptures like the Vedānta, he believes, can give us knowledge concerning both, but such knowledge can be ultimately transformed into immediate vision only through steadfast meditation and intense desire for liberation. At the same time, the disciple must have full faith in and constant love for God without whose grace (*prasāda*[1]), the final goal will not be attained. Contemplation on divine glories, performance of certain rites, observance of certain ceremonies, undertaking of pilgrimages lead to the purification of heart. Listening to the scriptural istructions (*śravaṇa*) under the guidance of a qualified teacher (*guru*), reflection on what one has learnt (*manana*), and constant meditation on the ultimate truth (*dhyāna*) make for liberation. In order to cultivate absolute detachment, *karmayoga* of the *Gītā* is recommended to be followed.

1. *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*. 1.1.17; I.3.41; II.3.33

The final goal consists in the attainment by the souls of blissful experiences, appropriate in each case to its intrinsic worth (*svasvayogyasvasvarūpānandābhivyakti*). For Mādhva, as for Rāmānuja, the state of perfection comes only after death; for the former, it consists in attaining the world of *Viṣṇu* and enjoying for ever the divine communion.

Chapter II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND : CONCEPT OF PERFECTION IN WESTERN THOUGHT

The spirit in which philosophy in India developed and endeared itself to the hearts of all has always been looked upon as the urge irresistibly expressing itself in the discovery of the real purpose and meaning of human life. Naturally, the pursuit of philosophy came to be regarded as in a special way connected with subserving human interests (*puruṣārtha*). With a growing conviction in its usefulness it was but natural that after some time it should acquire some kind of religious significance and sacredness about it. Independent speculations about its subtle problems being regarded as not very fruitful in the solution of the riddle of life, belief in some authority was a logical development. The Mīmāṁsā and the Vedānta schools, for instance, sought to connect most of their doctrines with the verdict of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*. Even the Baudha and the Jaina schools refer most of their views and conclusions to the teachings of Buddha and Jainas who are looked upon as the embodiments of perfection and omniscience. It was belief in one authority or another that dissuaded most of the thinkers from pursuing their independent speculations; rather they deemed it more fruitful to understand and interpret the teachings of the schools to which they owed their allegiance.

In sharp contrast to such an attitude, the pursuit of philosophy in the West has been mostly regarded as in an essential way related to the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. Such a tendency offered more scope and impetus to individual speculations. This is evident from the way in which the various problems of philosophy were sought to be tackled by thinkers of different shades of opinion before the time of Kant. I am of opinion that it was only Kant's predecessors who were very much interested in the pursuit of philosophy as a way of life, and strove to answer the two questions that were raised at the beginning of the last chapter. Naturally, the aim of the present chapter is to offer a brief exposition of the various interpreta-

tions of the concept of perfection as understood and interpreted by the various Western thinkers before Kant.

The earliest of the thinkers in the history of Greek thought to present his view on the topic under consideration is Pythagoras on whose religious convictions the influence of Orphycism was remarkably profound. The Pythagorean organization had as its primary objective the purification of the soul through contemplation of the divine truth. The purpose of human life on earth, the Pythagoreans believed, is to strive for higher and higher degrees of perfection, but by reasons of the soul's association with body we have to pass through an indefinite series of reincarnations. So long as the soul remains associated with the body with its numerous desires and passions, the wheel of transmigration cannot be rendered inoperative. Hence its purification consists in its rendering itself immune from all bodily contamination and earthly trammels, thereby enabling itself directly to be qualified for entry into the inscrutable region of the blest. It is through its complete purification that it can successfully avoid innumerable future incarnations. For the Pythagoreans immortality, however, is both a personal hope and a way of life. Human life, they declare, is but an avoidable episode in the incarnate wanderings of the soul. When through contemplation the soul becomes purified from the taint of bodily contamination and defilement, the cycle of birth and death comes to a dead stop. Aristoxenus seeks to offer us a peep into the religious convictions of the Pythagoreans in the following words: "Every distinction they lay down as to what should be done or not done aims at communion with the divine. This is their starting-point; their whole life is ordered with a view to following God and it is the governing principle of their philosophy."[1]

Impressed by the observation that three different kinds of people came to the Olympic games—those who came to trade, those who came to compete and those who came simply to watch—the Pythagoreans classified all mankind as lovers of wealth, lovers of pleasure and bodily satisfaction, and lovers of wisdom. It is only the lovers of wisdom who engage themselves

1. F.M. Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science in Pythagorean Tradition' *Classical Quartely*, 1922, p. 142.

in worthwhile pursuits of intellect which culminate in the same spiritual process of purification as rituals and taboos do. It is in this sense that philosophy, as Socrates is made to say in one of his characteristically Pythagorean moods, is the highest music of the soul. By contemplation on the absolute and ultimate truths of philosophy one can gradually find that moment of tranquility in which he dissciates himself from all bodily distractions and prepares himself for complete freedom of soul. The emphasis laid by the Pythagoreans on the need of cultivating a rational attitude to life and its pursuits came in for ready approval by the succeeding generation of later philosophers, notably Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

It was this attitude which found its unequivocal expression in the Socratic dictum: Knowledge is virtue. Every man seeks to strive for some kind of goodness, but what kind of goodness he seeks will depend upon what he understands by goodness. Even a liar choosing to lie once more may come to believe that telling a lie is not good. This is only a passing belief in his mind, a mere awareness but by no means a *knowledge*, since the moment he *knows* that telling lies is not good he would cease to be a liar. Socrates believed that since every man has in him reason which distinguishes good from evil, no man can be wholly bad or devoid of goodness. What degree of goodness he allows his will to manifest will depend upon the extent to which he *knows* of goodness. An act becomes good to the extent to which it is determined by the rational activity of the self. It was Socrates' unshakable conviction that all men could develop some degree of rational insight by the exercise of the inner power of self-determination. Knowledge for him is not a matter of intellectual conviction but a state of self-determination on the dawn of which virtue becomes just the antithesis of irrationality. It is such knowledge that makes man inwardly happy and outwardly consistent. We may all like to attain the cherished ideal of pure rationality, but unless we *know* what it means to be rational in all what we do, unless the inner faculty of rational determination has been awakened from its slumber we cannot *know* what it means to be virtuous and therefore human. "Men of Athens", says Socrates, "I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting

every one whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you, who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth, and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all."

Plato was equally confronted with the problem of explaining how reason, if it could effectively determine other faculties of mind in the service of its ideal, could succeed in freeing itself from all limitations under which it has to work. Plato believed that in a characteristically moral situation man's inner life appears under three different aspects. There is the tendency to originate action determined by the desire for the satisfaction of certain inclinations and appetites of the body, with the ultimate aim of deriving pleasure. Such temptations and impulses of the lower self are resisted and withstood, if the agent has not completely sunk into the life of the mere animal, by a higher power of rational self. Intermediary between these two is a third capacity, that of will. The will can either be determined by reason or by the impulses of the animal self which strives for determination of action by its own activity. A soul works harmoniously only when it is able to determine the will to action in such a way that the impulses do not overpower it but are subordinated to its rational activity. This is, in Palto's view, the picture of a just man. For reason, justice consists in exercising its inherent power of self-determination; for the will, in courage; for the appetites, in temperance. The picture of the human being is one in which reason is the commanding authority and justice is realized.

Plato holds that man can never transcend his finitude if he were to remain confined to a life which was constituent of bodily distractions, desires and passions. It is here that Plato's philosophical mood displays the Orphic touch and influence. The soul, he holds, owes its bondage to the body which it happens to choose at the hands of *Lachesis*, the daughter of necessity. What he, therefore, deplores most is the tendency on the part of man to hanker after sensuous pleasures, thereby losing sight of the ultimate destiny of the soul. "Because', Plato observes in the *Phaedo*, "each pleasure and pain seems to have a nail, and nails the soul to the body, and pins it on and makes it bodily, and so

it thinks the same things are true which the body says are true. For by having the same opinion as the body, and liking the same things, it is compelled, I believe, to adopt the same ways and the same nourishment, and to become such as never could come pure to the house of Hades but would always go forth infected by the body; so it would again fall quickly into another body and there be sown and grown, and therefore would have neither part nor lot in communion with the divine and pure and simple." So long as the soul remains associated with the body it can never free itself from what it is not in reality. It needs to be purified, and to achieve such an end the discipline of reason is pre-eminently suitable.

In the *Meno* Plato maintains that the ordinary man under the demoralizing influence of physical distractions is not truly awake but lost in walking about like a somnabulist in search of phantoms. So long as we are subject to ignorance of the truth of our being we cannot grasp it in its inner essence. In our ordinary vision we are like those ignorant men, who sitting in a cave, bound, with their backs to the light, fancy that the shadows on the wall before them are not shadows but real objects. "If we would have pure knowledge of anything, we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire and of which we say that we are lovers: not while we live but after death." Only those who have attained wisdom can be said to be truly awake and liberated. Death to them is the least terrible things on earth. "The fact is" says Plato in the *Phaedo*, "those who tackle philosophy aright are simply and solely practising dying, practising death, all the time, but no body sees it." So long as the soul is not freed from impurities of the body it cannot attain wisdom.

It is on the dawn of wisdom that the soul attains God-like existence; it is then pervaded by light born as a result of the intimate union with God. In our empirical existence such a light is eclipsed by our longings for earthly goods and pleasures. Evil, says Plato in the *Theaetetus*, haunts the mortal nature, and accounts for all our ignorance and suffering. "Therefore we ought to escape from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to escape is to become like God, as far as possible; and to become like Him is to become holy, just and wise. God is never in any

way unrighteous; and he of us who is the most righteous is most like Him."[1]

The question concerning the real aim of life raised by Socrates and Plato was destined to dominate the philosophical moods of the later Greek periods, and still later of the majority of Western thinkers. Aristotle inherited this very problem from his immediate predecessors and sought to tackle it in the light of his general metaphysical conclusions.

All objects, according to the Aristotelian metaphysics, are constituted by two heterogeneous elements—form and matter—in various proportions. Form takes shape in matter according to the principle of development inherent in it; matter is the medium in and through which this process of development strives to express itself. There is no form without matter, and contrariwise, no matter without form. This is true of all objects of nature. Since, according to Aristotle, matter is inert, and form active, the latter always strives for actualization. This process of actualization of form is very much retarded because of the perverseness of matter; the latter offers resistance, but the form must somehow overcome it if it is to actualize itself.

Perfection in the Aristotelian metaphysics is thus synonymous with complete realization of *form*—the climax or consummation of the process of development. It follows that those objects which, in the process of development, have reached nearest the climax are, of necessity, perfect. Aristotle thinks that this process of actualization has its ideal example in the instance of pure form of God. As pure form, God supplies the necessary impulse that renders the process of actualization of form possible. The Aristotelian God is absolute mind with no touch of the corporeal; his life is the life of pure thought that has no alien content. He is the Unmoved Mover of the universe, not as an active agent but as the goal towards which the entire realm of nature moves by an inner necessity in much the same way as the beautiful and the good induce us to realize them not by anything they themselves do, but by the appeal they make to us as objects worthy of being realized. Though the world depends on God, yet he is absolutely unaware of and unaffected by it. He is spirit without matter, mind without

1. *Republic*, X, 613.

sense, pure activity without action, complete and self-contained in all respects.

Now, man resembles an object of nature in two ways: (1) that man, like any other object of nature, combines in himself two different elements, form and matter; he has reason as well as a body; and (2) that like all other objects of the universe, he has a specific function to fulfil. As regards the first point, it has already been pointed out that form always strives to actualize itself, but matter, which is accompanied by and constitutive of it, always hinders this process. The highest good for man consists in the actualization of his form, viz., reason. But reason, to come to the second point, has a special function to perform. This special function in man, Aristotle points out, cannot be life, for life is certainly something which he shares with plants and animals; it is for that matter not peculiar to him alone. Nor can it be equated with, or reduced to, a life of pleasant feeling, for this, too, is shared by animals, if not by plants. The only characteristic that is peculiar to man alone is reason whose function Aristotle defines as the exercise of its power in accordance with 'excellence' or virtue. This is what he understands by the term *eudaemonia* which has been translated by the English term 'happiness'. For Aristotle, happiness, then, consists in the unobstructed realization of man's rational nature.

The activity of God, being pre-eminently blissful, is speculative, and human activity, which is most nearly related to it, will be most capable of happiness.[1] Man can enjoy such a life not in virtue of his humanity, but in virtue of his rational nature which is the divine element in him. "If then the reason is divine in comparison with the rest of man's nature, the life which accords with reason will be divine in comparison with human life in general. Nor is it right to follow the advice of people who say that the thoughts of men should not be too high for humanity or the thoughts of humanity too high for morality; for a man, as far as in him lies, should seek immortality and do all that lies in his power to live in accordance with the highest part of his nature."[2]

With the death of Aristotle in 322 B. C. the period of Greek philosophic achievement came to a close. In the period

1. *Ethics*, 1.6 (Weldon's translation). 2. *Ibid.*

that followed very little that can be called genuinely original, as compared with the speculations of the preceding era, may be said to have emerged. The course of philosophy began gradually to drift to different directions. This departure owed its origin to the breakdown of Greek political and social life. Old order having undergone change, a new outlook on philosophy and life began to take birth, and asserted itself in the form of a demand. Obviously, philosophy had no other alternative than to meet this demand of the day. It was a challenge flung in the form of a question which may be stated in its briefest possible form as : What shall the wiseman do in order to be happy ? The challenge had to be boldly faced. The Epicureans and the Stoics were the first to offer themselves in the field.

Epicurus' basic contention is that happiness alone is the highest good for man. In this connection two points may be clearly noted: firstly, that by it he meant not the pleasure of the moment, but happiness which lasts through the whole span of life, and, secondly, that it consists in the absence or lack of pain, and even of desire, rather than in its positive satisfaction. Thus understood, happiness pertains to the soul rather than to the body or the satisfaction of the sensuous, emotional self. The wise man will not despise pleasure when it comes to him, but he will not run after it and feel dejected or perturbed if next time he fails to get it. He will never permit multiplication of needs, since he knows that all pleasure born of the satisfaction of such needs is at bottom pain. "The end of our living" Epicurus is reported to have remarked, "is to be free from pain and fear. And when we have once reached this, all the tempest of the soul is laid. When we need pleasure is when we are grieved because of the absence of pleasure; but when we feel no pain, then we no longer stand in need of pleasure." Since every pleasure does not promote contentment and tranquility of the soul, we must exercise proper vigilance and care in the selection and pursuit of different pleasures; and if we find that a particular pain needs to be taken for ensuring happiness in the future we should not hesitate to do so.

If a man has acquired a contented frame of mind through restraint over his sensuous nature, he will always be happy in his inmost being, even though at times he may be involved in

some bodily torture. Though he may happen to be tortured on the rack, the wise man will still be happy. True happiness consists in an attitude of self-sufficiency rather than in dependence on the pleasures of the body and its desires. As such, the wise man will measure his perfection in terms of the degrees of freedom he has attained from all the distractions of the body. "When, therefore, we say that pleasure is a chief good, we are not speaking of the pleasures of the debauched man, or those which lie in sensual enjoyment, as some think who are ignorant and who do not entertain our opinion, or else interpret them perversely; but we mean the freedom of the body from pain and of the soul from confusion. For it is not continued drinkings and revels—that make life pleasant, but sober contemplation, which examine into the reasons for all choice and avoidance, and which put to flight the vain opinions from which the greater part of the confusion arises which troubles the soul." The source of all our misery and suffering, it follows, lies in our seeking for happiness in those objects which are really the causes of all these sufferings and pain. So long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we continue to believe that our existence depends upon the mercy of the objects we believe will make us happy, we can never know what it means to have the happiness of the soul. A beggar may believe that the alms thrown to him are meant to keep him alive today; but what he forgets is the fact that all this ultimately will conduce to the prolongation of his misery. "If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches, but take away from his desires." The ideal of human life, therefore, is to be found in an attitude of utter indifference to sensual enjoyment; inner happiness born of such an attitude is all that can really satisfy our urge which we feel in life.

The Stoic school, which flourished contemporarily with the Epicurean, also aimed at finding an agreeable solution for an ideal perfect life, but offered one which differed from that of the Epicureans in certain fundamental respects. These differences arose mainly due to their irreconcilable metaphysical beliefs, a few of them to be briefly noted here. Nevertheless, a certain amount of unanimity in their views is clearly discernible. For both perfect life meant one which was characterized by freedom from pain and suffering, befalling man in his earthly

existence. Here both agree on the need of cultivating a discipline of the soul that shall enable it to discover its true happiness in its inner being. Philosophy, for both, offered the necessary guidance and help in the pursuit and attainment of such an ideal. Again, both the schools display a fairly marked degree of agreement that the moral question could not be satisfactorily answered without a knowledge of the very nature of things. And it is because of their differences concerning the presentation of the different accounts of the nature of things that both the schools are at variance with each other as regards the meaning and true nature of the ethical ideal and the attitude of mind involved. The Epicureans based their conception of the ideal on the meachanical materialism of Democritus, according to which the universe is the outcome of the interaction of countless material atoms, without reason to guide them from behind. As such, perfection for them meant freedom from the natural desires and emotions, as also from the superstitious fears of the here and hereafter. The Stoics, on the other hand, regard the universe as a unitary whole, pervaded by and ruled over by the Universal Reason—God.

Since man is part and parcel of this rational universe, the moral ideal is sought to be defined in terms of those characteristics that are inherently present in him as a component part of this universe. It, therefore, devolves on him to act in harmony with the purpose of the Universal Reason in order to attain the highest possible measure of perfection. It is by virtue of his rational nature alone that he partakes in the divine scheme of reality. Hence in order to realize the highest purpose of his true being he should subject the rational part of his being to the will of God. Only the cultivation of the good will—the rational attitude of conformity to the law of the Universal Reason—can help us attain our perfection. In our day-to-day life reason should govern ourselves as Reason governs the whole universe. When we have thus moulded ourselves, a realization steadily grows on us that our life is not for the sake of our narrow, limited personality, but for the sake of the perfection of the whole. Since desires and impulses impede such a realization, the Stoics come to look upon them as a disease, a sign of human fall and degradation, an enemy of man on earth. We are, therefore, asked to extirpate them, so that the perfect health of the soul

might be fully ensured against any possible aggression from the direction of our sensuous, diseased nature. It is only in the absence of distractions, trials and tribulations, strifes and struggles of this side of our nature that we can be truly happy and discover our true essence. Wise and happy is the man who, versed in the secrets of the universe, recognizes himself and others as members of a universal society of rational beings. Even though he lives in Nature, yet inwardly be outgrows it and is completely resigned. He realizes that everything is decreed by Nature, the Universal Reason, Providence or the Good Will. His good lies in acquiescing in and reconciling himself to the Law that governs this world. Inner self-determination is his only ship in which he can sail to his destiny.

The ethical doctrines of Plato and the Stoics find their echo in the religious philosophy of Plotinus who is regarded as the prime mover of Neoplatonism. He holds that perfection consists in the purification of the soul and in its gradual assimilation with God. We humans have lost ourselves in ignorance imposed on us by the world around us, and, consequently, salvation lies in retracing our steps to the Transcendent Divine. The human souls in the shackles of bondage are like "children who, immediately torn from their parents, and for a long time nurtured at a great distance from them, become ignorant of themselves and their parents." The process of return to God must be by degrees. So long as we do not complete our journey on earth, we are subject to successive rebirths which are like one dream after another, or sleep in different beds.[1] Plotinus believes that the birth of a man is determined by his past actions.[2] Those, he says, who have properly excercized their faculties are born as human beings, while those who have spent all their lives in the pursuit of animal pleasures are born as lower animals.[3] As the phenomenal world has its existence through a falling away from God, so there persists in it a tendency to return to its pristine condition. This return forms the basis of the religious life. The highest ideal consists in complete merging of individuality in God. "All that tends to purify and elevete the mind will assist in this attainment, and there are three different roads by which the end may be reached. The love of beauty which exalts

1. *Enneads*, III.6.6. 2. *Ibid.*, IV.3.13, 15. 3. *Ibid.*, III.4.2.

the poet, that devotion to the one and that ascent of science which make the ambition of the philosopher, and that love and those prayers by which some devout and ardent soul tends in its moral purity towards perfection—these are the great high ways conducting to that height above the actual and the particular where we stand in the immediate presence of the infinite, who shines out as from the deeps of the soul."[1]

Perfection, for Plotinus, is synonymous with an ecstatic union with God. As soon as such a union is effected the soul loses all thought, desire and activity, and is once and for all divested of individuality, the last vestige of its earthly bondage. It then becomes qualified for enjoying the highest blessedness and is bathed in the light of eternity. "This therefore is the life of the gods and of divine and happy men—a liberation from all terrene affairs, a life unaccompanied with human pleasures, a flight of the alone to the alone." Negatively, perfection in the Plotinian thought means freedom from all limitations of earthly existence; positively, it stands for the soul's becoming one with God, a return of the soul to its source and eternal abode.

In 529 A. D. the Academy at Athens was closed by order of the Emperor Justinian. Neoplatonism had to make room for Christianity to which belonged the immediate future. The process by which the simple and appealing convictions of the early Church came to be gradually developed into a highly complex dogmatic system falls under the purview of the history of theology. Here it seems appropriate to say something about the views of St. Augustine whose writings mark the transition between the constructive period of Christian thought and the long period of the Middle Ages.

Augustine believes that the only knowledge worth pursuing is the knowledge of God and of the self. The highest good for man consists in effecting immediate union with the Supreme Divine. By love we are united with him. Hence love, he says, is the supreme virtue, the mother of all other virtues. In fact, it is love for God that constitutes love for self and for others. "Without love faith can do nothing, nor is love without hope, nor hope without love, nor either without faith." One

1. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics.*

who has a living faith in the greatness and goodness of God and has preened himself on the possession of a mystical vision of his divine form will always remain restless unless he has actually qualified himself for a 'flush of light to see *that which is*". "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." God reveals himself to those who reveal themselves before him, and those who are keen to do so resort to the sacrifice of all that is dear to them for his glory. He eludes our grasp when we seek to use our intellect. But the limitations are quite obvious—through intellectual knowledge we can "know what God is but not what he is."[1] Since man is possessed of evil and cannot be expected to shake himself free from this solely by his own efforts, he must invoke the mercy and kindness of God in order to save himself. Thus, only those few fortunate people whom God has mercifully selected for salvation need to be ranked among the happiest men of the world. Freedom is meaningless without the divine grace and mercy. "The human will does not achieve grace by an act of freedom, but rather achieves freedom by grace." Faith can invoke the divine grace which alone can make man love goodness as possessed by the soul before Adam fell.

Augustine believes that a certain measure of perfection can be attained by the performance of certain acts such as prayers, fasts, almsgiving, charity, etc. But the most effective and the safest of all the available means consists in love of God, followed by the cultivation of an intensive urge for renunciation of all earthly goods and gains. In such an attitude of utter indifference and humility God becomes the ruling passion of the soul. "He that knows the Truth, knows what that light is; and he that knows it, knows eternity."[1] As soon as the eternal light dawns on the soul there is illumination and joy all around. Such a unique experience resulting from the immediate and direct communion of the soul with the Divine Being is not a momentary experience, but continues all through eternity. The human soul ceases to be human and becomes what it is in its own image. It meets the Divine Spirit on a lofty level where words are woefully inadequate to describe its character. What can, however, be said with all conviction is that it is a positive

1. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, pp. 132, 133.

experience of 'something' called bliss which is the fullest consummation of the moments of ecstatic feeling experienced here and now in our fellowship with the Divine.

Thomas Aquinas, an influential thinker of the Middle Ages presents a view which seeks to reconcile the Aristotelian wisdom with Catholic orthodoxy. In his characteristically Aristotelian mood he declares that the supreme good for man, which he calls 'blessedness' (*beatitudo*), consists in the realization of his true self. God, he says, is the supreme master of this universe which embodies a purpose in it, and it is in this purpose that is revealed the goodness of his creation. Everything points in the direction of this purpose. Man can, therefore, realise the divine purpose and the goodness of God by realizing the truth of his being. For him, the highest good consists in attaining likeness to God. He differs from the rest of the animal world in so far as he has the consciousness of his self, and can for that reason realize his goal through conscious and voluntary activity. The highest kind of activity, according to Thomas Aquinas, is contemplation, and the supreme object of contemplation is God. By contemplative life he means "the life of study and possion for truth."[1] Though perfection is attainable through knowledge of God, yet not all knowledge can have the same effect. We have a kind of natural, immediate and unreflective knowledge of God, and yet we cannot reach near our cherished goal because it is imperfect activity. Reasoning may give us knowledge of the divine, yet it has its own limitations in as much as it is liable to errors and uncertainty in its fruition. The highest kind of knowledge is intutive; it is not attainable on earth but only in the hereafter where it endures for ever. It is this intuitive knowledge alone that is the real source of inner happiness and direct vision of God. Such is the supreme goal of human striving. They are most like God who know God as God knows himself. "When he shall appear, we shall be like to him, and we shall see him as he is."[2]

For Thomas Aquinas, as for Augustine, the ascetic life is the ideal life in the pursuit of perfection. Total abandonment of earthly interests is necessary in the seeking of eternal life. In order that eternal blessedness may be realized in its fullest

1. D. Chapman, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I, IX, p. 96.
2. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 12, a.5, c.

possible measure, a supernatural principle of grace has to be admitted; without God's constant grace and mercy attainment of perfection is not possible. Salvation cannot be won merely by one's own independent efforts; it has to be begged of the Supreme Divine in addition to these efforts. Thomas Aquinas recognizes three supernatural virtues that a righteous soul acquires from God: faith, hope and charity. Besides these, he also recognizes the value of ethical virtues, but he reminds us that in order that they are helpful in the attainment of the life of blessedness God's grace is indispensable. Of all such virtues, love for God is the highest, the purest and the most perfect. In the beginning love is directed towards God, but gradually expands and extends towards his creatures, and so ultimately includes even self-love. Contemplative activity which, as pointed out above, Thomas Aquinas regards as the best form of activity, is grounded in and inspired by the love directed to God.

The dominating religious spirit of the scholastic movement, particularly its emphasis on mysticism, could not successfully defend itself against heavy odds of the Renaissance which had been gathering momentum at least as early as the Crusades. An explicit recognition of and unswerving faith in, the supremacy and authority of reason gradually paved the way for the rejection of ecclesiastical authority and the acceptance of the scientific attitude and achievement of the seventeenth century. The spirit of free enquiry and unbiased reflection led to the desire for political, economic, religious and intellectual liberty. It was this desire that found its partial realization in the Renaissance and Reformation, and later on expressed itself in modern philosophy. Although the importance of reason in the scientific pursuits had been universally recognized and accepted, and the emergence of a secular ideal widely acclaimed, yet the need of the day was not merely to defend religious and moral values of the past, but also to reconcile the claims of philosophy (and this, of course, included religion) and science. It was with this end in view that Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, set about his task. The primary task he felt called upon to accomplish was to vindicate the reality of God and the soul as the fundamental and basic requirements of morality and religion, and that of the physical universe as the requirement of science. Spinoza, his immediate successor, was drawn into

the polemic by the inconclusive, or rather contradictory, results left over by his predecessor; but his interest was more rooted in religion as a way of life than in the mere vindication of its validity. The system of philosophy propounded by him sought to satisfy the scientific aspirations of his age. but at bottom it was an attempt to furnish a satisfactory solution to two important problems concerning religion : (1) What is it that constitutes human bondage ? And, (2) how is this bondage to be cast off ? Let us first begin with the former aspect of our enquiry.

For Spinoza, the sole cause of our bondage lies in our ignorance about the true end of our life. It is in our ignorance that we fasten our affections and attachments on those objects that are perishable and incapable of bringing about ever-lasting happiness. Such a misunderstanding comes about through the proclivity of human beings to regard nature as an arrangement of events somehow specially designed to be utilized for the satisfaction of human needs. Most of the people, says Spinoza, are spurred to activity by two kinds of craving: pleasure and honour or position. When these are not attained they are in a continual turmoil of emotions. Undoubtedly, all such objects are not at all worthy of pursuit for the simple reason that they lead men to activities that render their lives wretched and full of perpetual strife. Naturally, man should seek his good in some other direction if he really wants to throw off the yoke of bondage.

In the pursuit of this good Spinoza starts by defining the essence of life as *self-preservation*—the tendency of each individual to persist in his own being, which he termed *conatus*, or rather 'desire' (cupiditas) comprising the whole gamut of the forces of self-assertion. When this act of self-assertion wholly depends on ourselves, we are free, but when this act follows from our nature, of which we are but the partial cause, we are passive. To be passive does not, therefore, mean not to act at all, but to be determined in one's activity *ab extra*. This leads Spinoza to distinguish between two types of spring of humn activity: *passions* and *actions*. This distinction corresponds, as we shall see later on, to the one Kant makes between the *autonomy* of the essential self and the *heteronomy* of the empirical self. So far as the passions are concerned, they depend upon 'confused ideas',

and are accompanied by the quality of pleasure and pain resulting from various causes independent of, and unrelated to, the self-determining nature of the soul itself. On the contrary, actions depend on 'adequate ideas' because they are expressive of, and determined by, the autonomous character of the soul. "The desires which follow from our nature in such a way that they can be comprehended through it alone, are such as are referred to the mind in so far as it is conceived as consisting of adequate ideas. The other desires, however, are not referred to the mind except in so far as it conceives things inadequately, and their strength and growth must be defined, not as human power, but as that of the things that are outside us. Hence the former are properly called actions, the latter passions; for the former always indicate our power; the latter, on the contrary, our impotence and fragmentary knowledge."[1] For Spinoza, then, a free man is he whose actions follow from his adequate ideas or reason. To be virtuous is to act, to be rational ; contrariwise, to be vicious is to be passive or irrational or confused in ideas. The man who orders his life according to the dictates of reason will always strive to rise above the urges of sensuous desires, and seek to bring about his perfection by practising the virtues of temperance, sobriety, etc. He will help his fellowmen in all possible ways, and desire nothing for himself which he also does not desire for the rest of humanity. Since he knows that all things follow from absolute logical necessity, he will not himself be vanquished by various impulses and instincts. "The wise man", says the philosopher in his *Ethics*, "is scarcely at all perturbed in spirit, but being conscious of himself and of God, and of things, by a certain eternal necessity, never ceases to be but always possesses true acquiescence of his spirit."

Having shaken himself free from the limitations of the various forces of the sensuous self, the wise man becomes completely withdrawn into the life of reason. Such an attitude has its own pleasures and attractions. "First, it is of value in that it teaches us that we act according to God's decree, and are participants in the divine nature; and this the more, the more perfect the actions we perform, and the better we comprehend

1. *Ethics*, Pt. IV, Appendix II (Fullerton's trans.).

God. Hence this doctrine not only sets the soul completely at rest, but also teaches us in what our highest felicity or blessedness consists, to wit, only in the knowledge of God, which leads us to do only those things that love and piety recommend. Thus we see clearly how far from a true estimate of virtue are those who expect God to honor them with the highest rewards for their virtue and good actions, as though for the extremest slavery —as if virtue and the service of God were not felicity itself, and the completest freedom. Second, it is of value in that it teaches us how to behave with regard to those things which depend upon fortune and which are not within our power, that is, with regard to those things that do not follow from our nature. It teaches us, namely, to look forward to and endure either aspect of fortune with equanimity, just because all things follow from the eternal decree of God, by the same necessity with which it follows from the essence of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles. Third, this doctrine is of service to social life in that it teaches to hate no one, to despise to ridicule, to be angry at no one, to envy no one...Fourth, this doctrine is of no little advantage to state in that it shows how citizens ought to be governed and led; namely, not so as to act like slaves, but so as to do freely what is best."[1]

The primary aim of the wise man is to conceive everything adequately, including himself. "The more of this kind of knowledge any one possesses, the clearer is his consciousness of himself and of God, that is, the more perfect and blessed he is." But since, on Spinoza's view, nothing can be adequately conceived without God, man's supreme goal consists in the knowledge of God. From his absolutely adequate point of view he will gradually raise himself, by slow yet steady development of his reason, to that disinterested love of God (*amor intellectualis Dei*) which marks the consummation of his knowledge and virtue. Since intellect is immortal in its divine part, and since it is through the cultivation of intellect alone that love can be acquired, man's love of God has been called intellectual. The intellectual love of the wise man towards God is the same as the love of God towards Himself. Owing to the 'transformation of natures' it becomes God's eternal love of us as in Him. Having

1. *Ibid.*, Pt. II, 49.

been raised to the divine status the wise man sheds away all fear of death, and is possessed of the supreme joy or blessedness. This is the goal, the true freedom or salvation on the attainment of which all is but God and nothing besides. "If indeed the path that I have shown to lead to this appears very difficult, still it may be found. And surely it must be difficult since it is so rarely found. For if salvation were easily attained, and could be found without great labour, how could it be neglected by nearly every one ? But all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare."[1]

Joseph Butler, a contemporary of Spinoza, holds that "our resignation to the will of God may be said to be perfect when our will is lost and resolved up into His."[2] So long as we are unable to effect such a resignation to its fullest perfection we are incomplete and frustrated in our inmost soul. "It is plain", he says, "that there is a capacity in the nature of man which neither riches nor sensual gratifications, nor anything in this world can perfectly fill up or satisfy; there is a deeper and more essential want than any of these things can be the supply of. Yet surely there is a possibility of somwhat which may fill up all our capacities of happiness; somewhat in which our souls may find rest; somewhat which may be to us that satisfactory good we are enquiring after. But it cannot be anything which is valuable only as it tends to some further end. Those, therefore, who have got this world so much into their heads as not to be able to consider happiness as consisting in anything but property and possessions, which are only valuable as the means to somewhat else, cannot have the least glimpse of the subject before us, which is the end, not the means."[3] Although the road to perfection, according to Butler, lies in cultivating love for God, yet the true lover of God will be one who is *also* benevolent. Self-love in the widest sense of the term includes love for all other creatures of God. "That which we more strictly call piety, or the love of God, and which is an essential part of a right temper, some may perhaps imagine in no way connected with benevolence: yet surely they must be connected; if there be indeed in being an object infinitely good. Human nature is so constituted that every good affection implies the love

1. *Ibid.*, pt. V, 41. 2. *Sermons*, 14.5. 3. *Ibid.*, 14.9.

of itself; i. e. becomes the object of a new affection in the same person. Thus, to be righteous implies in it the love of righteousness; to be benevolent the love of benevolence; to be good the love of goodness; whether this righteousness, benevolence, or goodness be viewed as in our own mind or in another's; and the love of God, as being perfectly good, is the love of perfect goodness contemplated in a being or person. Thus morality and religion, virtue and piety, will at last necessarily coincide, run up into one and the same point and love will be in all senses the end of the commandment."

Before passing on to the next chapter it may, however, be noted here that the Western thinkers, whose views on perfection we have outlined in this chapter, are mostly agreed that the final goal consists in transcending the human limitations and effecting some kind of a rapport with God. In this contention they do not, therefore, appear to be far removed from the Indian thinkers whose views on the subject under discussion have been stated in the preceding chapter. Some of the well-known thinkers, as we have seen, do, like the Indian thinkers, subscribe to the view that the state of perfection is characterized by the attainment of 'something positive.' Perhaps the number of those who hold the negative view of perfection—viz., that perfection consists merely in giving up the human limitations and realizing the self as just itself and nothing more besides—is much bigger in India than in the West where the final goal has always been taken to mean some kind of God-like existence. How far Kant and the *Gītā* were influenced in the formulation of their views on perfection by their respective sides will be very easy now to ascertain. A few general observations will appear towards the beginning of the final chapter in this connection.

Chapter III

KANT'S CONCEPTION OF PERFECTION

From what has been said in the last two chapters it seems clearly to emerge that the problem which has traditionally claimed a substantial amount of attention of majority of thinkers is one which concerns the search for the *summum bonum* of man. In the first chapter we have seen how in India one school of philosophy after another took up this problem and sought to tackle it in its own characteristic way of thinking. In the history of Western thought we find thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Butler, etc., grappling with the same problem in a bid to find an agreeable solution thereof. Whatever were their findings and conclusions in this regard, a considerable amount of unanimity amongst their ranks is discernible in so far as they expressly held that the highest good for man consists in the realization of that essential part of his being which renders his existence *sui generis*. Small wonder that they sought to discover it in reason alone. It also came to be recognized as a corollary of this view that, since reason by itself was capable of determining conduct, a virtuous man was he who was never swayed by impulses contrary to his rational nature.

If, then, there is in man a distinctly peculiar power or faculty whereby he can determine his conduct, the question that at once clamours for a just solution is: What is the best conceivable purpose in the realization of which this peculiar power is to be utilized ? It is indeed the same old query with which certain moralists in the past found themselves irresistibly confronted, and, strange to say, the same with which Kant and the *Gītā* are concerned. Both begin with an explicit affirmation of their faith in the intrinsic goodness of the rational will, and by unswervingly upholding their faith therein, seek to account for the 'best conceivable purpose' in terms of perfection thereof. Thus, what strikes one most in the teachings of both is their insistence on the fact that, if there is such an element in human nature as rational will or self, its function consists, not in the

satisfaction of the animal nature of man, but in its own fulfilment, discovery and disillusionment. In the present chapter I shall confine myself to laying bare the Kantian notion of perfection.

Man, according to Kant, differs from the rest of the animal world in so far as he possesses reason. It is by virtue of the presence of reason in him that his actions possess a definite purpose and authority behind them, and take on a shape essentially different from that of the behavioural pattern of the animals. Although he shares with the animal world the life of sensibility, yet his greatness in the cosmic evolution demands that all his actions should invariably be determined by, and gounded in, the law of his rational self. When the rational self in the face of opposition from the sensuous nature is able to determine the action, it is called the *good* will. The fact that nature has favoured him with such a unique power or faculty goes to show that he has a unique purpose to realize and a unique part to play. As we shall see presently, it is the realization of the good will in its transcendent perfection that constitutes the unique purpose, and it is actions as determined thereby that constitute the unique means to the unique end. It was perhaps for this reason that Kant looked upon the good will as something which surpassed everything that could in any way be regarded by man as good. "Nothing", says our philosopher, "can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good, without qualification, except a good will."[1]

If we closely scrutinize the problem of conduct, three main stages or levels can be distinguished: namely, those of instinct, desire and reason. So far as the level of instinct is concerned, we find that it is the behaviour of the animals that is predominantly instinctive. Certain older thinkers, like Plato and Aristotle, regarded man as distinguishable from the rest of the animal world in this that, whereas an animal has its purposes set for it by nature, it is man alone who is specifically gifted with the capacity of conceiving a purpose for himself and moulding his behaviour accordingly. An ant, for instance, naturally searches for particles of food, and although in all its activities

1. *Critique of Practical Reason and other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, T. K. Abbott, trans. (6th ed., London : Green & Co., 1954) p. 9.

a definite purpose is exhibited, yet it is not *consciously* determined by it; the behaviour of the ant is conspicuously characterized by the absence of deliberate weighing of all the possible consequences implied in its purposes. As contrasted with the instinctive behaviour characteristic of the animal world, human behaviour is marked by the presence in it of some reflective purpose as its motivating force. We may conceive of many purposes at a particular time, and determine for ourselves which of the various purposes thus conceived we shall seek to realize in our activities. What this distinction serves to point out is the fact that, whereas in the conduct of an animal there is purpose but not self-determination, it is in human conduct alone that there are both purpose and self-determination. Whereas striving *for* a purpose is the primary feature of the animal conduct, striving *with* a purpose is the real mark and the measure of human conduct. And surely the difference is fundamental from the ethical point of view.

At the higher level of human conduct, action may be determined by the various forms of desire as well as by reason—in the former case there being many heterogeneous motives determining human action, in the latter case there being only one homogeneous motive as the determining factor of activity. No body can reasonably dispute the fact that human nature is capable of making either of the two kinds of motive the spring of activity. In certain ethical doctrines, such as in Hedonism, it is actions as determined by the desire for various kinds of pleasure that have been regarded as providing the ideal of a moral life. Jeremy Bentham was seeking to bring out this fact in quite unambiguous terms when he said :

> "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we are to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand, the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, and all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their

empire, but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while."[1]

The same contention finds itself fully expressed in the following view of John Stuart Mill :

"And now to decide whether this is really so; whether mankind do desire nothing for itself but that which is a pleasure to them, or of which the absence is a pain; we have evidently arrived at a question of fact and experience, dependent, like all other similar questions, upon evidence. It can only be determined by practised self-consciousness and self-observation, assisted by observation of others. I believe that these sources of evidence, impartially consulted, will declare that desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable, or rather two parts of the same phenomena; in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact: that to think of an object as desirable (except for the sake of its consequences), and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing ; and that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a psychological and metaphysical impossibility."[2]

In his well-known work *Methods of Ethics* Henry Sidgwick subscribes to the same line of reasoning when he says :

"The ultimate standard of moral volition is the productivity of desirable consciousness and the ultimate good or end in itself must be goodness or excellence of conscious life, and the goodness of conscious life must ultimately consist in happiness or pleasantness, and all other things called good are only means to the end of making conscious life more desirable—which is, in fact, to say that they are means to happiness."

And David Hume is most unwilling to recognize that there can be any 'obligation to virtue, except that of the agent's happiness'. What is still more alarming in his contention is that "reason is no motive to action", except in so far as it "directs the impulse received from appetite or inclination." The role of reason has thus been sought to be reduced to that

1. *Principles of Morals*, chapter I. 2. *Utilitarianism*, chapter IV.

of a hand-maid of passions—under no circumstances whatever can reason "pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."

All this seems to sound very plausible and may, for that reason, appeal to moralists who subscribe to such a line of reasoning, but in Kant's view it does not represent the real nature of of a genuine morality. We all know that morality exists only in relation to human nature which combines in itself both reason and sensibility, and to limit man's ultimate destiny to the pursuit of pleasure is no more than betraying colossal ignorance about the truth of his essential nature and existence, is no more than holding that though morality pertains to that by virtue of which he is man yet his total being is just that of the animal. So far as Kant's reaction to the hedonistic approach to human nature and morality is concerned, it seems worthwhile to consider it at some length here. As it appears to me, Kant did not deem it appropriate to devote much space in his writings to the exposition of the weaknesses of Hedonism as an ethical standard, presuming, perhaps, that his doctrine of what he calls the 'categorical imperative' is by its very implications an antithesis of this so-called moral ideal, and that, therefore, the arguments or evidences adduced in favour of his own point of view would by themselves shake the foundation, if any, of the hedonistic morality. For him, the real aim of human life transcends the limitations of the sensuous, emotional, passive self, and therefore morality cannot be reasonably identified with, or confined to, the animal aspect of our nature. A few impornat observations of Kant, involving reference to the untenability of the hedonistic claim, may be succinctly stated here :

(1) By resorting to the teleological argument concerning the function and purpose of reason in human life, Kant seeks to show (a) that an organic being is a whole adapted to a specific purpose, namely, life; (b) that in such a being every organ has also an end which is a constituent element in the realization of the total purpose; and (c) that every such organ is sufficient enough to achieve its specific purpose. Man, Kant points out, is such an organic being who possesses an organ in the form of

1. *Treatise of Human Nature*, book ii section iii.

what is called reason, which has a specific purpose to realize and a specific function to perform in human life. What is then that purpose which it has got to realize ?For Kant, it cannot be the attainment of a life of pleasureable experiences, since in that case reason is found to be ill-adapted to such a task. If it be argued that the natural function of reason in human life is the mere satisfaction of desires and passions, it appears more plausible to hold that nature would have been much wiser by having entrusted the task of securing the maximum amount of pleasure to instinct rather than to reason, that the choice of both ends and means would have been more effectively exercized by a simpler organ. And our actual experience of life tells us that the more we set ourselves to the task of securing pleasure for ourselves the less happy we seen to be. Mere satisfaction of blind impulses and inclinations cannot ensure that contentment of the soul which is the primary consideration with a man who seeks to obey the dictates of his reason and live in his essence as such. This is the reason why, as we shall see later, Kant looks upon desires and passions as the most formidable foes of a man who has made up his mind to make the law of reason the law of his life. If, then, reason and sensibility are poles asunder, it devolves upon us to discover the former's true function so that by discharging it properly it may adapt itself to its natural condition and constitution. This true function, according to Kant, consists in its determining all actions by its own law. While it thus imparts to the actions something which makes them human, in its determination of them it realizes itself and gradually discovers itself as the very essence and condition of the moral law. It is only then, and then alone, that we call it good in itself, good absolutely and unconditionally. On the contrary, pleasure that we ordinarily and unreflectively call good is, however, only conditionally good; its goodness is conditional and contingent on the continuance of the desire for pleasure. What Kant firmly holds is the fact that if reason is what distinguishes man from the animal world, it is the perfection of reason alone that is the befitting goal of man. A rational man can never satisfy his rationality by means of pleasure which he can enjoy only by ceasing to be human. So long as he is man, the goal of life will have to be

conceived as consisting in the perfection of something which invariably inheres in his humanity.

(2) The distinction Kant makes between the realm of reason and that of sensibility is relevant in the present context. When an action is determined by the law of the former it is unique in the sense that no other being than man is capable of it; but in so far as actions determined by the latter are concerned, they are not truly representative of his essential nature and cannot, for this simple reason, be called 'self-determined'. Kant agrees with older thinkers like Plato and Aristotle by holding that the human action is characterized by the presence in it of both purpose and self-determination. What is true of the instinctive level of conduct is equally true of the level of desire. Since in actions determined by the sensuous, impulsive self reason's law remains altogether dumbfounded, no moral worth can attach to them—they cannot be called 'self-determined.' The approach to morality here is essentially existential; we must first be our *self* in order to do anything, and if we have not been our self in what we have done, all that we can say is that such actions cannot be called moral, whatever else they are. There is in them some kind of purpose which is not representative of our true nature. In fact, in every act of 'self-determination' there is a purpose different from that of those actions which have been motivated by the lower, sensuous self. Under the impulse of a momentary pleasant experience, we may decide to cast our lot with a hedonistic philosophy of life, but what at that time we forget to ask is : Is such a choice representative of the demand of what Kant calls our 'proper self' ? This objection can be briefly stated in the following two ways, and in each way is born a distinct point in Kant's moral reasoning: (a) Since man's superiority over other creatures of this world is due solely to his reason, morality proper owes its existence only in relation to his rational self. But because he is partly rational and partly sensuous, the objective law of reason appears to him to be a law of duty, or what Kant prefers to call, the categorical imperative. It is this law of the 'ought' that signifies a conflict between the righteous or absolutely good self on the one hand, and the empirical nature on the other. If we do not bind our will to this law and instead perform all our actions simply because they are prompted by certain desires or

impulses, forgetting that we are humanly capable of determining our actions by a higher motive and of rising above this animal plane of life, such a tendency, in the words of Kant, is little short of an inhuman attempt 'to chicane with our conscience' or 'to corrupt the laws of duty at their source.' Morality, reason and goodness, for Kant, are just interchangeable terms.

> "That", he says, "is practically *good*, however, which determines the will by means of the conceptions of reason, and consequently not from subjective causes, but objectively, that is on principles which are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the *pleasant*, as that which influences the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, valid only for the sense of this or that one, and not as principle of reason, which holds for every one."[1]

And (b) the hedonistic ethics involves, according to the stock phrase, a '*hysteron proteron*'—it puts the cart before the horse in as much as it recognizes the sole authority of our sensuous self and teaches that reason can only be a servant of the passions; that it 'can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.' Kant decidedly has the support of the common sense when he points out that it is our reason alone which by virtue of its own greatness and unique worth is entitled to the supreme authority of determining, to state in Bentham's words already quoted, "what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do." There now emerges a new philosophy of life which is radically different from that of hedonism. The fallacy that the hedonistic psychology makes is that it reverses the actual order when it teaches the supremacy of the sensuous nature over the rational self. If the rational self is to be restored to its proper authority, it must be readily acknowledged as the sole motive to each and every activity rightly to be called moral or human. Here, then, emerges the second important point of Kant's ethics—the autonomy of the rational will. What needs to be clearly noted in this context is the fact that both the concepts—that of the categorical imperative and that of the autonomy of the rational self—are inextricably bound up with each other: only that will, and surely that alone, which acts in determination to the law of the rational self can truly be autonomous; and *vice versa* : that will which is autonomous can only act in determination to the law of the rational self. A truly rational self will strive through the will to overcome the opposition of the sensuous, impulsive self always lying in wait, so to speak, to subvert the proposed course of action and exert its full influence towards this direction. Such a conflict, Kant thinks, is inevitable at the human plane. It is in this inevitable human predicament that 'autonomy of the rational will' comes to acquire the pivotal position—realization of it as such in all its fullness becomes the supreme end, and the doing of duty the means to the realization thereof. I will, to begin with, take up the concept of autonomy as met with in the teachings of Kant.

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott), p. 30.

Autonomy of the will, according to Kant, is "that property of it by which it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)."[1] The will is truly itself when it is able to determine the action by its own rational, commanding authority. For it is in determining the action by itself that it can *ultimately* determine itself—that is, absolutely and unconditionally. If, on the other hand, it passively yields itself to the influence of an impulse foreign to its essential nature, it obviously forfeits its claim to autonomy and becomes thereby a mere tool at the hands of that impulse. It is this inherent capability of the rational will to defend and preserve its autonomous character amidst the phenomenal world governed by the mechanical necessity that imparts man a unique worth and a unique place therein. Naturally, Kant claimed ample justification for his being deadly set against the hedonistic line of reasoning, as also against certain moral and religious dogmas and doctrines, because they ignored this important characteristic of human nature. He was, therefore, never prepared to accept any doctrine, moral or religious, which did not teach respect for the autonomy of the rational will. Since man is by nature capable of acting in subjection to the rational laws of freedom, he should not let himself by eaten up by the desire for pleasure. The fact that man has in him the rational will is by itself sufficient to remind us that he is entitled to respect, freedom and the highest good. In a passage Kant says :

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

"Now I say: man and generally any rational being *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be aways regarded at the same time as an end. All objects of inclinations have only a conditional worth; for if the inclinations and the wants founded on them did not exist, then their object would be without value. But the inclinations themselves being sources of want are so far from having an absolute worth for which they should be desired; that, on the contrary, it must be the universal wish of every rational being to be wholly free from them. Thus the worth of any object which is *to be acquired* by our action is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature's, have nevertheless, if they are rational beings, only a relative value as means, and are therefore called *things*; rational beings, on the contrary, are called *persons*, because their very nature points them as ends in themselves, that is as something which must not be used merely as means, and so far therefore restricts freedom of action (and is an object of respect). These, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence has a worth *for us* as an effect of our action, but *objective ends*, that is things whose existence is an end in itself : an end moreover for which no other can be substituted, which they should subserve *merely* as means, for otherwise nothing whatever would possess *absolute worth*; but if all worth were conditioned and therefore contingent, then there would be no supreme practical principle of reason whatever."[1]

What therefore, Kant seeks to impress upon us all is the fact—often forgotton—that the moral law must orginate in the rational will; it alone is the ground of the categorical imperative and must, therefore, inspire our faith in, and obedience, to it. If I am really free, I must be the source and the author of the law to which I subject myself. Determination of my will by any other source is bondage because that by virtue of which I am dintinct from the animal world remains quite ineffective in action. A will which is moved by some pathological considera-

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 46.

tion can only know what Kant calls, not too happily perhaps, 'psychological' or 'comparative' freedom, but certainly not the freedom which belongs to its own nature in virtue of which it becomes the supreme authority of determining the action. Such a will would, then, act not under the law of freedom but under natural necessity. That which is our distinct human possession remains a mere claim without making it a conditon of action. A man still remains a spiritual automation even if he were determined, not by inclination or desire, but by a will which acts under the pressure of any extraneous agency.

Thus, true freedom consists in the will's acting, or refraining to act where the occasion so demands, independently of empirical grounds. As such, if morality is to be predicated of man, and man alone, he must then be conceived as capable of acting in determination to the pure practical reason or the rational will alone, apart from, or even in defiance to, the persistent demand of the law of the sensuous self. Being so conscious, a truly autonomous or moral will would never run the risk of letting its supreme authority be usurped by the contending inclinations or desires.

"A will", says the philosopher, "is purely *animal* (*arbitrium brutum*), when it is determined by sensuous impulses or instincts only, that is, when it is determined in a *pathological* manner. A will, which can be determined independently of sensuous impulses, consequently by motives presented by reason alone, is called a free will (*arbitrium liberum*); and everything which is connected with this free will, either as principle or consequence, is termed *practical*. The existence of practical freedom can be proved from experience alone. For the human will is not determined by that alone which immediately affects the senses; on the contrary, we have the power, by calling up the notion of what is useful or hurtful in a more distant relation, of overcoming the immediate impressions on our sensuous faculty of desire. But these considerations of what is desirable in relation to our whole state, that is, is in the end good and useful, are based entirely upon reason. This faculty, accordingly, announces laws, which are imperative or objective *laws of freedom*, and which tell us what *ought to take place*, thus distinguishing themselves from the *laws of nature*, which relate to that which

does take place. The laws of freedom or of free will are hence termed practical laws."[1]

In order to explain what laws are characteristic of the good will, or in what sense is the good will a law unto itself, Kant, in the above statement, seeks to distinguish between the laws of nature and the laws of freedom. Since in his view such a distinction is vital to grasping the concept of perfection, it seems necessary to bring out the idea underlying it. By the laws of nature he means what we today call 'scientific laws' which are usually defined as general statements descriptive of the uniform mode or behaviour of various natural phenomena. By the laws of freedom, on the other hand, he understands moral rules as statements prescribing mode of conduct for all rational beings under all conditions whatsoever. In our day-to-day life we speak of many events of nature as taking place in accordance with certain laws. What we mean by saying so is not that these events have any awareness of the way in which their behaviour comes to conform to the law, but rather their behaviour is so expressly uniform and certain that, in like conditions, it would invariably express itself in like manner. It is in this sense that we say that the phenomena of nature 'behave in accordance with', 'conform to' or 'obey' laws of nature, although such a way of our speaking is metaphorical or anthropomorphic : we try to explain impersonal events by means and in terms of personal thought or language. However, when we come to the domain of human relations, we find that the term 'law' is an extension from its social and legal usages to the scientific sphere. In the social and legal domains we do speak of 'obedience' by us of the laws of society. When we behave in accordance with the laws enacted by the society we belong to, we are aware, vaguely or clearly, of their commanding authority as well as of the unpleasant consequences attending upon the transgression of their supremacy. Although almost alll of us—with the exception of a few here and there—obey such laws, yet there are not many of us who obey them out of respect for them; surely, a large number of people obey because of the punitive measures attached to them. The moment they have the disposition to violate

1. J.M.D. Meiklejohn, trans., *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855) p. 486.

them, they are reminded of the punishment that may be inflicted on their being detected or caught red-handed. What, however, is important to note in this connection is the fact that in the social and legal spheres it is an external authority that has to be obeyed. There are only a few persons who act in accordance with the spirit of the social and legal enactments, even if they had no fear of punishment attending upon the violation of their authority. The term 'moral law' is a special extension of this basic meaning of the law, and has this element in common with it that a man may behave in accordance with it, and yet may not be aware of its real significance and spirit. He may be dutiful, but not virtuous. At this stage the authority behind his actions appears to him to be external. He may not catch at the existential spirit of the virtue. What Kant wants us to understand by this distinction between the moral law and other forms of law is that, whereas obedience to the latter involves one's acting in accordance with them, obedience to the former involves explicit recognition of the fact that the authority behind all his actions is his own rational will—he has to *be* his own, in his *own* in order to appropriate the spirit of the law. A truly good action will not merely be in accordance with, but will also have its source in, the rational will. A person, on Kant's view, who recognizes and realizes this supreme source in all his actions is really moral, much the same way as a citizen who realizes the sacredness of all the social and political laws and obeys them all in the spirit of ease and spontaneity—out of respect for their supreme, commanding authority.

Since, according to Kant, the human will is not wholly rational, confronted as it is with the empirical or sensuous self, man cannot be regarded as always acting in the spirit of the laws of freedom. There is always the possibility of his rational will being overpowered by the law of the natural self. He combines in himself two different kinds of nature—the rational will which has its own law of action, and the sensuous, emotional self which represents the realm of nature and is, for this reason, subject to its own law. Because of its ever-continuing struggle to overcome the opposition of the sensuous self, the rational will cannot fully realize the infinite potentiality of its true nature and cannot, therefore, act from a purely rational motive. On the one hand, there is the objective law of reason which in its

transcendent perfection is the law of absolute goodness, the Moral Law; on the other, there is the *human* will which has its obvious limitations while acting on what essentially and ultimately is its own law. It is, therefore, at the human level that the Moral Law or the law of an absolutely good self produces in the human will a peculiar sense of obligation or ought which by its nature is radically different from that contingent upon desire or inclination. Says Kant :

> "The word *ought* is capable of a double meaning, viz., I *ought* to do something (as a means) *if* I wish for something else (as an end), or I *ought immediately to do* something else and realize it (as an end). The first *ought* could be called the necessity of means, and the second the necessity of ends. The first kind of necessity indicates no real obligation, but merely gives the prescription for the solution of a problem, indicating the means I must use if I wish to accomplish a certain end. Whoever prescribes to another what actions he must perform or omit if he wishes to further his own happiness, might perhaps be able to bring all doctrines of morality under this requirement. But then these prescriptions are no longer obligations, but merely directions for behaviour suitable to achieving an end. And since the use of means has no other necessity than that which applies to the end, any actions thus prescribed will be conditional on accidental ends, and cannot be called obligations so long as they are not subordinated to an end necessary in itself."[1]

The sense of moral obligation is, then, a phenomenon resulting from the relation in which the absolutely rational will stands confronted with sensibility, and it is in this state that we call it the *human* will. Goodness or autonomy consists in its acting on its own laws. The more it acts in determination to its own laws the more it tends to be conscious of its inner potentiality so that it may be completely liberated from the hold sensibility has on it. Kant's contention is that man has his individuality because of this hold, and cannot, therefore, experience the joy of a life of pure rationality so long as this hold continues to obscure it from his ordinary vision and grasp. It is reason alone which by means of its power of self-determination can bring about a gradual loosening of this hold and a consequent expansion in its inner life. A process of transformation, though imperceptible, sets in the moment we proceed to make our life the rule or discipline of reason. It is only in our empirical consciousness that the moral law appears to be something alien to our nature, but when we gradually begin to transplant ourselves, so to speak, into the life and light of reason, we find ourselves possessed of our autonomous, essential selfhood. "Virtue", as Kant remarks, "considered in its complete perfection is therefore regarded not as if man possessed virtue, but as if virtue possessed the man."[1] We come to regain what under the overpowering influence of sensibility seemed lost to us. The law of autonomy is realized as soon as reason comes to its own; it is realized as its own essence and as its own perfection—withdrawn and re-collected in its rational essence.

1. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin Academy), ii, 298.

This, according to Kant, is the ultimate goal which we should always strive to achieve, but which, under human conditions, we can never attain in its fullness. Only those who are conscious of a felt-need to transcend the limitations of the lower self will have the foresight and courage to impose upon them the discipline of self-determination or the moral law. For a man, whose experience of life has remained confined to the sensuous pleasures, the happiness born of a life of pure rationality must remain as unknown as colour to the blind-born—something which he hears people speak about but he himself knows not what they mean when they so speak. But, for Kant, such a life is the only ideal which man, in keeping with what he essentially is, can aspire after. It all requires a conversion, a complete orientation of one's outlook on the meaning and purpose of life. As Kant himself has beautifully put it: "A man who, when he recognizes a thing as his duty, needs no other spring than this conception of duty itself; this is not to be effected by gradual *reform* as long as the principle of his maxims remains impure, but requires a *revolution* in the mind (a transition to the maxim of holiness of mind)."[2] This revolution in mind must ultimately find its consummation in

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 317.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 355

a super-human life of the spirit. Hence the spiritual aspirant must do all he can "to carry the cultivation of his *will* up to the purest virtuous disposition, that, namely, in which the law is also the spring of his dutiful actions, and to obey it from duty, for this is internal morally practical perfection."[1]

This state of 'internal morally practical perfection' is, according to Kant, the achievement of a will which has now completely determined itself as in essence the very spirit of the moral law. At this sublime stage the life of sensibility is completely got rid of, and the rational will regains its autonomy and authority to the fullest measure of perfection. The sense of moral obligation or 'ought' ceases to have its *raison d'etre*, since that in which it was grounded—the sensuous, emotional self—has been conquered through the performance of selfless actions. Now the will is absolutely good in the sense that in the absence of the lower self it realizes its innate character as a law unto itself—morality which owed its existence in the dual nature of sensibility and reason is completely transcended. It is in this sense that, according to Kant, the will begins to "shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself."[2] Since such a state of perfection marks the realization of the inherent goodness which the rational will is in its real essence, there is in it to be found a spontaneous urge to act out of sheer love for goodness; or to state the same point in other words, the will in its supreme perfection is itself the spirit of the moral law. "Therefore no imperatives hold for the Divine will, or in general for a *holy* will; ought is here out of place, because the volition is already of itself necessarily in unison with the law."[3] At another place the same view is stressed by Kant: "A will whose maxims necessarily coincide with the law of autonomy is a *holy* will, good absolutely."[4]

What comes out clearly from the above account of perfection is the fact that for Kant the rational self in its final condition becomes the *holy* or *divine*. Indeed, he does not stop here; he holds that perfection of the self consists in its attaining a God-like state. However, this is something to which most of the students of the Western philosophical perspective cannot

1. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
2. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 10.
3. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 31
4. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 58.

easily reconcile themselves. Traditionally, Kantian ethics has stood for a fine specimen of a secular moral point of view. But before coming over to this side, let me make a few observations concerning Kant's view of God. Such an attempt is necessary to have a clear grasp of his conception of perfection as also to refute those charges which have been levelled against him. These observations may briefly be summarized as follows:

(1) The moral law, as an ideal to be atained by a human will, presupposes in Kant's view a being as the perfect embodiment thereof. In other words, the fact that the will in its finitude and human conditions feels obliged to act in response to the law of the rational self irresistibly leads us to believe that there must be a Divine Will in which the moral law is completely realized. The conception of God is, then, a demand of a human will acting in obedience to the moral law. It is this which Kant has in mind when he says: "When I now try to test his conception by reference to the object of practical reason, I find that the moral principle admits as possible only the conception of an Author of the world possessed *of the highest perfection*."[1]

(2) Kant's God is more a personal than an impersonal being. "He must be *omniscient*, in order to know my conduct up to the inmost root of my mental state in all possible cases and into all future time; *omnipotent*, in order to allot to it its fitting consequences; similarly He must be *omnipresent*, *eternal*, etc."

(3) The human will is in its essence identical with the Divine Will. As we have seen before, the moral law is the very essence of a will which has attained perfection. But, as we have seen above, God, in Kant's view, is the perfect embodiment of the moral law. The very fact that a will in its perfection becomes holy suggests that is is in essence idential with the holy will of God.

(4) If we start from the stand-point of the human will, the moral law (or the law of pure practical reason) would appear to it to be the law of duty, or what Kant prefers to call, the categorical imperative; but if, on the other hand, we start from the side of God—the perfect embodiment of the moral law—the categorical imperative may be called the divine command. It practically makes no difference whether we call it the cate-

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, p 238.

gorical imperative or the divine command, since both the human will and the Divine Will are ultimately identical—pure rationality is just the essence of both. God, says Kant, "must be or be conceived as a person in respect of whom all duties are to be regarded as his commands."[1]

The tacit admission implied in the above view that the human will is ultimately identical with the Divine Will saves our philosopher from a very grave charge that might have otherwise been levelled against him, namely, that of introducing heteronomy in his system. Had he remained satisfied with, and confined to, the declaration that what we call our duty is the command of God, without at the same time having connected it with the autonomy of the will, he would have been thrown into a very awkward, or even self-condemning position. However, Kant seems to have been very careful on this point and has displayed conspicuous ingenuity in boldly averting such a position. He says :

> "But if practical reason has reached this elevation, and has attained to the conception of a sole Primal Being, as the supreme good, it must not, therefore, imagine that it has transcended the empirical conditions of its application, and risen to the immediate cognition of new objects; it must not presume to start from the conception which it has gained, and to deduce from it the moral laws themselves. For it was these very laws, the *internal* practical necessity of which led us to the hypothesis of an independent cause, or of a wise ruler of the universe, who should give them effect. Hence we are not entitled to regard them as accidental or derived from the mere will of the ruler, especially as we have no conception of such a will, except as formed in accordance with these laws. So far, then, as practical-reason has the right to conduct us, we shall not look upon actions as binding on us, because they are the commands of God, but we shall regard them as divine commands, because we are internally bound by them."[2]

What Kant in the above statement seeks to point out is the fact that, though the law of duty may in a sense be called the divine command, yet the important thing to bear in mind

1. Kant, *Ibid.* p. 322.
2. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Meiklejohn's trans.), pp. 495-96.

is that the disposition to carry it out must originate in the will itself. If the human will were not in essence identical with the Divine Will—the perfect embodiment of the moral law—it could not have come to look upon actions as binding on itself. For Kant, in the very consciousness of moral obligation there is the consciousness of something as an ideal to be accomplished. If we perform our actions simply because they are the divine commands, the end becomes the fulfilment of the will and command of God; but if, on the other hand, we regard it as consisting in the fulfilment and realization of our essential selfhood we look upon our actions as the expression of the law of duty or autonomy. But both these ends, according to Kant, lead to the same point of destination, namely, the elevation of the will to the divine status. The final end is, then, conceived as the will's attaining equivalence with the Divine Will. Says Kant :

> "In this manner the moral laws lead through the conception of the *summum bonum* as the object and final end of pure practical reason to religion, that is, to the *recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions, that is to say, arbitrary ordinances of a foreign will and contingent in themselves*, but as essential *laws* of every free will in itself which, nevertheless, must be regarded as commands of the Supreme Being, because it is only from a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will, and consequently only through harmony with this will, that we can hope to attain *summum bonum* which the moral law makes it our duty to take as the object of our endeavours. Here again, then, all remains disinterested and founded merely on duty; neither fear nor hope being made the fundamental springs, which if taken as principles would destroy the whole moral worth of actions. The moral law commands us to make the highest possible good in a world the ultimate object of all my conduct. But I cannot hope to effect this otherwise than by the harmony of my will with that of a holy and good Author of the world, and although the conception of the *summum bonum* as a whole, in which the greatest happiness is conceived as combined in the most exact proportion with the highest degree of moral perfection (possible in creatures), includes *my own happiness*, yet it is not this that

is the determining principle of the will which is enjoined to promote the *summum bonum*, but the moral law, which on the contrary, limits by strict conditions my unbounded desire of happiness."[1]

What, then, Kant understands by perfection is the fact that it is a supreme state in which the will attains similarity of status, or what he calls, the 'harmony' with the Divine Will. By having realized rationality as its innate character, it fully reveals its affinity with God. Since the Divine Will in the Kantian thought stands for the ideal perfection of the moral law or absolute goodness, the individual will, by having completely actualized this law as its very truth and essence, becomes all of piece with "the holy and good Author of the world." The moral law is the characteristic form in the realization of which the perfect will appropriates the Divine essence and existence. Like the Divine Will, the individual will in its perfection becomes at once goodness and the good.

Like most of the thinkers we have considered in the last two chapters, Kant holds that the state of perfection is characterized by the presence of a unique experience of 'enjoyment' which has its source and sphere in the will itself. It is mystically pervaded by, and bathed in, eternal happiness which flows from within its nature, much the same way as God is in his perfection. This is what the self, too, possessed ever before but in its human involvements and limitations could not be allowed to manifest by the obstructing influence of the 'sensible attachments', except for a dim flash in those cases wherein the will was spontaneously determined by the moral law.

"From this", says Kant, "we can understand how

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), pp. 226-27. *Cf.* Butler who seems to have at the back of his mind the view that God alone is the embodiment of goodness, and thereby seeks to infer that it is because of this that God has an absolute claim to our obedience of Him (Sermons, XIII). Such a slip is inevitable for those who, once having accepted the premise that God is perfectly good, seek to conclude that we ought, therefore, to obey Him. A slip of this kind is observable in the view of Bishop Martimer : "The first foundation is the doctrine of God, the creator. God made us and all the world. Because of that He has an absolute claim on our obedience" (*Christian Ethics*, p. 7). Prof. Emil Burner says : "There is no such thing as an intrinsic good", "in itself everything is neutral", "the good is simply that which God wills that we should do" (*The Divine Imperative*, pp. 114, 117, 196).

the consciousness of this faculty of a pure practical reason produces by action (virtue) a consciousness of mastery over one's inclinations, and therefore of independence on them, and consequently also on the discontent that always accompanies them, and thus a negative satisfaction with one's state, i. e. *contentment*, which is primarily contentment with one's person. Freedom itself becomes in this way (namely indirectly) capable of an enjoyment which cannot be called happiness, because it does not depend on the positive concurrence of a feeling, nor is it, strictly speaking, *bliss*, since it does not include complete independence on inclinations and wants, but it resembles bliss in so far as the determination of one's will at least can hold iteself free from their influence; and thus, at least in its origin, this enjoyment is analogous to the self-sufficiency which we can ascribe only to the Supreme Beings."[1]

If, then, what has been said so far about the conception of perfection is any clue to Kant's mind, we can easily see that the concern which is uppermost in his consciousness is to account for this conception in conformity with his basic stand on the autonomy of the will. In his view, the concept of the autonomy of the will can be the only true basis of any sound moral or religious faith. And, it appears no exaggeration to say that in the history of the Western ethical perspective Kant's attempt to preserve the autonomy of the will while seeking to account for perfection in theistic terms is, indeed, quite remarkable. Quite in keeping with his stand on the autonomy of the will, the ultimate goal is conceived as a state of 'harmony' of the individual will with the Divine Will, not as one of absorption or dissolution of the former into the latter. He regards bliss—the 'something positive'—as characteristic of God, but deliberately precludes the possibility of the will's sharing it in all its fulness, simply to emphasize the point that the will in its highest state is not lost in the divine substance. Yet another consideration that might have heavily weighed with him in this context seems to be that so long as the rational will, even if it has been freed from all sensuous accompaniments, remains associated with the body, it cannot completely realize its inherent bliss.

1. Kant. *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.) pp. 114-15.

As we have seen before, in certain Indian systems of philosophy, such a sublime state has been characterized as *jīvanmukti*. Kant's strongest contention is that, in whatever way the ultimate state is called or characterized, morality must always germinate in the good willing and in nothing but in itself. So long as one does not *will* what one seeks to attain. one cannot be called a true participant in the process of attainment. This simple fact applies to morality as much as to any other branch of human activity. When Kant emphasizes the fact that rational nature exists as an end in itself he seeks to point out that there is nothing to be realized beyond this rationality as an end, but such a realization must be the act of the will itself. Man, therefore, is worthy of respect because he is possessed of the rational will by means of which he can determine all his activity to be characterized as strictly rational or moral. Whatever tends to outrage this unique nature and supreme worth of man is morally bad. It is this strong reaction against any attempt to use man as a means that finds its echo in Kant's moral consciousness when he proceeds to condemn, in quite unequivocal terms, the various attempts made by most of the earlier thinkers to account for the ultimate facts of a truly good life, "at one time the practical special constitution of human nature, at one time perfection, at another happiness, here moral sense, there fear of God, a little of this and a little of that, in marvellous mixture, without its occurring them to ask whether the principles of morality are to be sought in the knowledge of human nature which we have from experience."[1]

All such attempts made by moralists from time to time to explain principles of morality Kant finds miserably inadequte for serving the interests of a strictly moral life. He takes special pains to examine certain well-known theories which claim to be based on sound moral principles, but ultimately finds them lacking in serious moral thinking on the ground that they are based on what he calls *heteronomy*. These are either empirical, based on the principle of happiness, or rational, based on the principle of perfection—perfection as an effect to be aimed at, or the independently existing perfection of God. Empirical principles, Kant points out, cannot serve as a foundation for moral laws, since they are based on the

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

particular constitution of human nature, or the accidental attributies which it is possessed of. Of all the empirical principles that which derives morality from the desire for happiness is most assailable, and that on three counts: first, it runs counter to well-attested facts—prosperity is not always proportional to good conduct; second, it contributes nothing to morality, since it is quite a different matter to make a man prosperous and to make him good; and, finally, the springs it provides for morality tend to sap the very foundation of morality itself. The appeal to moral sense as an explanation of morality Kant also rejects on three main grounds: first, it is superficial, since only those who cannot reason will believe that feeling will help them in their moral behaviour; second, feelings, which differ infinitely in degree, cannot furnish a uniform and universal criterion for what is good and evil; and, finally, one cannot justifiably impose one's own feelings as a standard for others. But, in Kant's view, the moral doctrine at least pays virtue the honour of assigning to her immediately the esteem we have for her; it does not tell her to her face that we are attached to her not by her beauty but by profit.[1]

Empirical principles having been shown to be incapable of serving as the foundation for morality, not merely because they can never hold universally, but also because the springs they provide place the motive to virtue and vice in the same category, namely, self-interest, Kant now proceeds to consider rational principles, chief among which are the ontological conception of perfection and the conception of a Divine absolutely perfect will.

> "The former", he says, "is no doubt empty and indefinite, and consequently useless for finding in the boundless field of possible reality the greatest amount suitable for us; moreover, in attempting to distinguish specifically the reality of which we are now speaking from every other, it inevitably tends to turn in a circle, and cannot avoid tacitly presupposing the morality which it is to explain; it is nevertheless preferable to the theological view, first, because we have no intuition of the Divine perfection, and can only deduce it from our own conceptions, the most important of which

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

is that of morality and our explanation would thus be involved in a gross circle; and, in the next place, if we avoid this, the only notion of the Divine Will remaining to us is a conception made up of the attributes of desire of glory and dominion, combined with the awful conceptions of might and vengeance, and any system of morals erected on this foundation would be directly opposed to morality. For the rest I think I may be excused a detailed refutation; for the primary foundation of morality laid by them is nothing but heteronomy of the will'."

"In every case where an object of the will has to be supposed in order that the rule may be prescribed which is to determine the will, there the rule is simply heteronomy; the imperative is conditional, namely, *if* or *because* one wishes for this object, one should act so and so; hence it can never command morality, that is categorically. Whether the object determines the will by means of inclination, as in the principle of private happiness or by means of reason directed to objects of our possible volition generally, as in the principle of perfection, in either case the will never determines itself *immediately* by the conception of the action, but only by the influence which the foreseen effect of the action has on the will; *I ought to do something, on this account, because I wish for something else*.....In that case the will does not give itself the law, but it is given by a foreign impulse by means of a particular natural constitution of the subject adapted to receive it. An absolutely good will, then, the principle of which must be a categorical imperative, will be indeterminate as regards all objects, and will contain merely the *form of volition* generally, and that as autonomy without needing to assume any spring of interest as a foundation."[1]

Kant's conception of perfection and its implications having been explained in detail, it now remains for me to examine a few important objections urged against it by certain critics of the Kantian ethics. In this connection I shall first consider certain objections levelled by Professor Teale. He points out :

"Not even God, that is, supreme perfection, is allowed

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

to contribute anything to morality for this conception, we are told, is merely empirical, and cannot operate as a motive to action only by reason of the happiness expected from obedience to it. Thus does the poverty of Kant's conception of perfection and hence of God, stand revealed. He seems to have had no inkling of a concept of perfection which could be, as it was for Spinoza, at once the source and the goal of human endeavour, at once the mark and the measure of individuality, activity, freedom, and value. Perfection, for Kant, meant nothing more than moral goodness."[1]

Obviously, Professor Teale seems to base his criticism on Kant's criticism of the ontological conception of perfection and of the conception of a Divine absolutely perfect will. Further, in order to understand Professor Teale's objection in its true perspective it appears desirable to state here the passage he selects from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* to substantiate and justify his view. The passage reads as follows :

"The word perfection may be taken either in a theoretical sense, and then it means nothing but the completeness of each thing in its own kind, or in a practical sense, and then it means the fitness or sufficiency of a thing for all sorts of purposes. This perfection, as a quality of man, and consequently internal, is nothing but talent, and what strengthens or completes this skill. Supreme perfection conceived as *substance*, that is, God, and consequently external (considered practically), is the sufficiency of this being for all ends. Ends then must be given, relatively to which only can the notion of *perfection* (whether internal in oursleves or external in God) be the determining principle of the will. But an end—being an *object* which must precede the determination of the will by a practical rule, and contain the ground of the possibility of this determination, and therefore contain also the matter of the will, taken as its determining principle—such an end is always empirical, and, therefore, may serve for the Epicurean principle of the happiness theory, but not for the pure rational principle of morality and duty. Thus, talents and the improvement of them, because they

1. A. E. Teale, *Kantian Ethics* (London : Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 203

contribute to the advantage of life; or the will of God, if agreement with it be taken as the object of the will, without any antecedent independent practical principle, can be motives only by reason of the *happiness* expected therefrom."[1]

In the light of this passage, from which Professor Teale seeks to derive the substance of his objection, let me consider his contention that Kant does not allow even God, that is, supreme perfection, to contribute anything to morality for two obvious reasons : (1) that such a conception is merely empirical; and (2) that being empirical, it can function as a motive to action by reason of the happiness expected from obedience to him. Hence in Professor Teale's opinion the bankruptcy of Kant's notion of perfection and of God stands fully exposed. What I can do now, is to present the Kantian position in regard to these two points, but hope to be excused for some amount of repetition, inevitably involved in such attempts, of what has been said in the preceding pages of the present chapter.

If what has gone before is any indication, it must have been abundantly clear that under no circumstances whatsoever is Kant prepared to acknowledge any action, and for that matter any end and any means, as strictly moral which is not effected by, and involved in, the autonomous activity of the good will. The moment it loses its hold on its law and falls a victim to some alien force or consideration it forfeits its autonomy for the time being, and for this reason, its moral character and claim. It is for this very reason that every object of the world which the will may desire has conditioned worth, and then such a will is merely heteronomous, a slave. It follows that the law of duty is the only end, the only purpose which it ought to realize, since it is in this way alone that it can be said to regain and retain its autonomous authority. Thus looked at, every human will, in so far it is rational, has an end to realize, but not in anything over and above its essential nature. That is why Kant speaks "of the reason for conceiving an End which is also a duty", and says that "there is in fact no other determination of the elective will except that to an end." That explains the reason why he insists that duty is *a priori* in character and unconditioned in fulfilment; this also brings out

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 138; A.E. Teale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 202-203.

why he shows his eagerness to contrast duty with everything that might be set down to inclination and desire. If there is an end which determines the will by some "practical rule" it must necessarily be empirical, conditioned and contingent in nature, and the conception of God is no exception to this view if the will is determined by the expectation of some reward from God. The conception we form of such a God is conditioned by our desires and inclinations, and cannot, therefore, meet the demand of our rational self as the basis of a genuinely moral life. If a man fondly believes that his good consists in the propriation of what he supposes to be a kind and benevolent God, and performs all his actions with that end in view, he simply uses himself as a means to an and the roots of which are to be found in his selfish, sensuous self. Neither has his God nor his will any moral significance—the one is wholly frightening and the other simply selfish. Such a vision of our God is the product of our anthropomorphic outlook : "...in whatever way", says Kant, "the Deity should be made known to you—even.....if He should reveal Himself to you : it is you..... who must judge whether you are permitted to believe in Him, and to worship Him."[1]

For Kant, then, the way to divine communion consists in the way of the rational will. And this is what he means by "immanent moral theology" which "teaches us to fulfil our destiny here in the world, by placing ourselves in harmony with the general system of ends, and warn us against the fanaticism, nay, the crime of depriving reason of its legislative authority in the moral conduct of life, for the purpose of directly connecting this authority with the idea of the supreme being. For this would be, not an immanent but a transcendent use of moral theology, and like the transcendent use of mere speculation, would inevitably pervert and frustrate the ultimate ends of reason."[2] Thus, morality does not fall outside the orbit of the rational or good will, but, on the contrary, is immanent in its own law and determination. Cultivation and development of faculties and talents is, according to Kant, desirable for a better moral

1. *Cf.* Kant, *Religion within the limits of pure reason* (2nd edition.; 1794), Fourth Chapter, Part One, Section 1, the first foot-note : "Much as my works may startle you, I must not be condemned for saying : every man creates his God".

2. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Meiklejohn's trans.), p. 496.

culture, but not at all for purposes of pleasing God or seeking satisfaction of the desires and passions. It can, I now think, easily be seen why Kant is not prepared to allow any empirical object, not even God in this sense, to contribute anything to morality. His belief in the intrinsic worth or autonomy of the rational will is so unswerving that he is never willing to attribute any moral worth to any action or end the attainment of which does not involve the self-determining authority of the rational will. Even the God-like existence, the *summum bonum*, is not worth any regard unless the will has been thoroughly disciplined through obedience to its own law.

So far Professor Teale's contention that for Kant perfection meant nothing more than moral goodness is concerned, he seeks to substantiate and justify his view by seizing upon a passage in Kantian ethics which we have already cited: namely, "...to carry the cultivation of his will up to the purest virtuous disposition, in which the law is also the spring of dutiful actions, for this is internal morally practical perfection." In this connection it may be pointed out that there are two aspects of perfection as conceived by Kant: the negative and the positive ones. On the negative side, perfection consists in the will's realizing its rational nature in the fullest measure, with the inevitable consequence that the life of sensibility is fully transcended. In the absence of any distraction from this aspect of nature the will is *absolutely* determined by its rational law. It is such a will that has been called by Kant the "purest virtuous disposition." As we have already pointed out, Kant goes further than this negative approach. For him, perfection in this aspect consists in the will's attaining equivalence, or to use his own term, "harmony" with the Divine Will, thereby enabling itself to have the "enjoyment" born of such a state. Indeed, such references are so pointed in the ethical teachings of Kant that it appears incredible that his critics might have so easily missed them. Since the individual will is held to be identical with the Divine Will in respect of pure rationality, the ultimate goal is conceived in the former's attaining the status of the latter.

An other objection to be considered in the context of our present enquiry is that urged by Professor Maitra. Having said that in the *Gītā* such expressions as 'dear to Me', 'enters into my being', 'reaches *Brahma-nirvāṇa*', occur which are

not to be met with in the moral teaching of Kant, Professor Maitra finds fault with the Kantian point of view in the following words: "This positive characteristic is missing in Kant, and this constitutes the main defect of his ethics This defect is the same as the barrenness of the moral law, which is universally regarded as the chief weakness of the Kantian ethics."[1]

Frankly speaking, such an interpretation of Kant's doctrine of the moral law as also of perfection is so common that to defy it would, I think, be nothing short of obstinacy on my part rather than deception, misrepresentation or misunderstanding on the part of the critics whose number is legion. The explanation Kant offers of the moral law is so obvious and so convincing that one wonders in what sense Professor Maitra should label it as characteristically "barren". The moral law, as has been pointed out before, is just the law of our rational self on which every human being—if he had control over his desires and inclinations—would act. Every act determined by this law is just the realization therein of this rational self, and it is in this sense that Kant speaks of an 'end', But the way in which we should seek this end is immanent in this concept of the end—the way called the categorical imperative. The will, in willing this imperative, wills its own law, that is, its greater and greater perfection. It is *what* is willed thereby that constitutes the content of the action willed. As Kant aptly puts it: "every volition must have an object, and therefore a matter."[2] Thus looked at, the moral law of Kant is not something mysterious or barren, but a positive law of *action* which we can call truly *ours*. That all of us do as a matter of fact act on this law when reason is at its best shows that it is a certain kind of philosohpy of life patronized and practised only by those for whom a life of pure rationality attended by happiness born of it is the only goal worth aspiring after. And this, as we shall see later, is also the message of the *Gītā* with which Professor Maitra contrasts the view-point of Kant, which, strange to say, he characterizes as barren. If the *Gītā* points to an ultimate state—*Brahma-nirvāṇa* or reaching the divine perfection—capable of being attained by the active exercise of the law of essential selfhood, in no way

1. S. K. Maitra, "The *Gītā's* Conception of Freedom as compared with that of Kant" in W. R. Inge, *et al.*, eds., *Radhakrishnan : Comparative Studies in Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 358.
2. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.) p. 123.

different is the ultimate goal conceived by Kant—the God-like existence of the rational self, qulifying itself for 'enjoyment' or something like 'bliss' characteristic of the Supreme Being himself. It is this transcendent goal that forced Kant "to destroy reason in order to make room for faith." It is such a faith that equally pervades the temper of the *Gītā*.

So our aim, according to Kant, must be to attain what we may call moral goodness, understood in terms of the good will working under human limitations. But had he remained confined to, or satisfied with, his conception of perfection to this extent, we should have ungrudgingly allowed his critics a free hand in accusting him of conceiving perfection as "nothing more than moral goodness", of speaking of virtue as nothing more than the "triumph over inclination and desire", of leaving the relation between will and perfection "apart and opposed,"[1] of portraying freedom as "nothing else than the realization of the moral law which, however, is absolutely devoid of content,"[2] of regarding virtue as something destructive of human happiness[3]; and his critics would have thankfully earned our applause in preaching that "the greatest of all the efforts to state the fundamental principles of Ethics in independence of what lies beyond Ethics is that of Kant."[4] But all these are objections, misunderstandings and misrepresentations which in the light of what has been said in this chapter are to be brushed aside by the serious students of the Kantian thought.

1. A.E. Teale, *Op. cit.*, p. 220. 2. S.K. Maitra, *Op. cit.*, p. 358
3. H. Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and evil* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) p. 130.
4. William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London : Macmillan and Co., 1949), pp. 172-73. See also W. Lillie *An Introduction to Ethics* (London: Methuen and Co., 1948), p. 173. James Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles* (London : William Blackwood and Sons, MDCCCXCVIII), p. 169.

Chapter IV

THE GĪTĀ'S CONCEPT OF PERFECTION

From what has been said in the preceding chapter it seems to follow that Kant is concerned not so much with the problem of what constitutes bondage of the self in its human conditions as with the propounding of the doctrine of perfection of the human self strictly in terms of its autonomy. He begins his enquiry with the common assumption that the self in its embodied existence is imperfect in the sense that its own essential nature remains partially, if not wholly, eclipsed and unrealised, though it is inherently perfect and free. What it in its inmost being is transcends what we know it is under human conditions. It is with the perfection of this transcendent aspect that Kant and the *Gītā* are concerned. But Kant, instead of probing into the causes of its bondage or imperfection, deems it more profitable to consider two other questions in connection with the accomplishment of his avowed aim: (1) What is it that can most effectively help us overcome this imperfection ? And (2) what is it that results after the *summum bonum* has been completely attained ? While the latter question has been discussed in the foregoing chapter, it is with the former that we are concerned here.

As contrasted with this Kantian approach, a greater emphasis is laid in the teaching of the *Gītā* on the question as to what constitutes bondage of the soul than on the nature of its perfection. While the latter aspect of the query is touched upon in certain brief references here and there, the former is sought to be discussed with a fairly marked emphasis and clarity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the divine teacher of the *Gītā*, seeks to impress upon Arjuna the necessity of grasping the real cause of his bondage which at first inclined him to abandon the idea of engaging himself in the battle for the cause of righteousness—a battle which he was called upon to fight in order to discharge the obligations of his avocation (*svadharma*). Although he was aware that he was on the path of righteousness, yet he was prepared to be killed by his opponents who, even if his kith and kin, were openly up-

holding and espousing an apparently immoral cause. And, as we read further, so long as he remained caught up in the firm grip of delusion born of his ego and its false, narrow attachments and claims, he could not see any justification in engaging himself in the warfare of righteousness (*Dharma*). He knew it well that the waging of the war was the only course of action he could choose to vindicate the law of righteousness, but so strong and sudden was the hold of delusion on him that he could not properly discriminate between what was good and what was evil. "My very being is attacked with faint-heartedness; with my mind bewildered about my duty, I ask Thee, Lord. Tell me for certain which is better. I am Thy pupil, teach me, who am seeking refuge in Thee."[1] Arjuna in such a mood represents the human soul with inner conflict between its rational law and the sensuous self. The very fact that there occurs a conflict implies that the self struggles to act on its own law, but is obstructed by the impulsive, emotional nature. And, as we learn, it is in this conflict and struggle that arises the whole moral philosophy of the *Gītā*. Towards the close of the message of this scripture Arjuna's rational self betrays the unmistakable signs of having recognized and regained its hold on its transcendent law, the law of his true being, and confidently declares: "Destroyed is my delusion, and recognition has been gained by me through Thy grace. O Lord, I stand firm with my doubts completely dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word."[2] The major portion of the intervening space in the *Gītā* is devoted to explaining the causes which bind the self and drag it from birth to death and death to birth until it attains the highest of which it is capable (*param-padam*).

This leads us to believe that the problem that seems to clamour for emphasis and priority in the matter of discussion, according to the view-point of the *Gītā*, is one that is concerned with the nature and causes of bondage of the soul in its embodied form. As such, an attempt will be made to offer an elaborate treatment of the problem in the following pages. In the present context the problem breaks up into two important questions which we shall attempt to answer : (1) In what does bondage,

1. II 7.
2. XVIII., 73. XI. 51.

according to the *Gītā*, consist ? And (b) what, after the causes of the bondage have been successfully cut adrift ?

Before proceeding farther afield, it seems desirable to point out that the *Gītā* does not seek to adduce or offer arguments in support of its metaphysical position which has a great bearing on its concept of perfection as also on the concept of the bondage of the soul. It does not, therefore, provide a philosophical justification for any of its points of view and gives the highest place to faith (*śradhā*). Consequently, it starts with certain concepts or unanalysable ultimates—the Absolute or *Brahman*, the self, God or *Īśvara*, and the universe, as also the fact of human bondage. The avowed aim of the divine teacher Kṛṣṇa is primarily to meet the spiritual aspirations of the common man rather than to present a thorough-going philosophical system in the modern sense of the term.

What, then, is peculiar about the teaching of the *Gītā* is the fact that it seeks to raise its metaphysical edifice on the common foundation of the Vedantā school of the *Upaniṣads* on the one hand, and the Sāṅkhya philosophy of Kapila on the other. The former, as we know, stands for the ultimacy of *Brahman* as the basis of all that exists here and now—the soul in its embodied existence being of the essence of *Brahman*, and all else in the ultimate analysis being false or rather illusory (*mithya*) in the same sense in which the apparent existence of a snake is no longer experienced when we have obtained knowledge of the underlying substratum, namely, the rope—the truth as compared to the illusory presence of the snake. The latter school represents an open revolt against the extreme form of monism of the former. The *Gītā* in its charmingly peculiar way presents the metaphysical and ethical sides of its teaching by combining the salient features of both these schools. What otherwise appear to be ultimately fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the two coalesce to form the whole structure of the teaching of the *Gītā*. It preserves the spirit of both, but gives them a new setting.

According to the Sāṅkhya system, reference to which has already been made in connection with our discussion of the notion of perfection, *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are the two ultimately exclusive ultimates which account for the whole universe in its material and spiritual aspects, respectively. On the material side, *Prakṛti*

is the caused cause of the infinite variety and form of all objects of our day-to-day experience. It is eternal and ubiquitous, representing a mysterious and tremendous power, ever engaged in the process of evolution. The existence of *Prakṛti*, according to the Sāṅkhya, is proved by the fact that all objects of the world possess certain common characteristics owing to which every one of them is inherently capable of producing in the individual pleasure, pain and indifference. They must, therefore, possess these three common characteristics in one underlying source. The evolution of the manifested universe out of this unmanifest stuff or *Prakṛti* takes place as a result of the disturbance or commotion in the equilibrium of its three constituents, called *guṇas*—literally meaning threads or strands which together make the string of *Prakṛti*. These constituents are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the sources, respectively, of light, activity and inertia. Every object of nature—from such subtle entities as intellect and mind down to the ordinary objects of perception—is possessed of these *guṇas*, though in varying proportions.

On the spiritual side, the Sāṅkhya posits the existence of *Puruṣa* or self which by its nature is just the antithesis of *Prakṛti*; it is uncaused and eternal like the *Prakṛti*. While all activity change and movement are attributed to *Prakṛti*, *Puruṣa* is supposed to be inactive, devoid of all *guṇas*, subject and seer of all objects possessing these three *guṇas*, yet being in essence of the nature of pure consciousness for all that. Though it is passive in the sense that no activity or movement initiates from its conscious efforts, yet it is not a mere superfluous adjunct to *Prakṛti*. The Sāṅkhya believes that the mere presence of *Puruṣa* is the sufficient ground for *Prakṛti* to evolve and deliver the infinite variety of objects that are potentially existent in its boundless womb. The otherwise mechanical, blind and dark world of matter becomes illumined, so to say, by the mere presence in its midst of the *Puruṣa*. Unintelligent, yet active, *Prakṛti*, to be properly guided into producing the world of infinite variety of objects with a definite design and purpose, requires, according to the Sāṅkhya logic, the help of the intelligent principle, *Puruṣa*, which by its mere presence shows *Prakṛti* the way ahead, much the same way as the blind and the lame co-operate with each other to serve their respective ends.

As light shines forth and dispells all darkness, without its

suffering in its own existence and essence, so is *Puruṣa* the cause of illumining the blind *Prakṛti* but in no way affected thereby—above all activity, change or movement. The effulgent light of *Puruṣa* is reflected in the intellect (*budhi*) which is nearest to it, and through it illumines the mind (*manas*) and the body. This reflection of light from the *Puruṣa* in the intellect is sufficient to render the latter conscious and intelligent, thereby conferring on it the unique power and privilege of decision and judgment, insight and foresight. Although the Sāṅkhya posits only one *Prakṛti*, yet the *Puruṣas* (selves) are accepted as countless, for the simple reason that different individuals have their own births and deaths, sensory and motor endowments, activities and functions, likes and dislikes.

Bondage, according to the Sāṅkhya, consists in the soul's identifying itself with the mind (*manas*) and the intellect (*buddhi*), the body and the senses, in utter ignorance of its real nature. The *Puruṣa* in its true being and essence is a mere witness (*sākṣin*) of the ongoings of this world and transcends all pleasure and pain, thought and feelings, changes and activity. All these processes originate in, and belong to, the phenomenal world or *Prakṛti*. It is the empirical ego (*ahaṁkāra*) which arrogates to itself the agency of all activity and deludes the self into thinking that all these activities are caused by its own power. The self, then, gets entangled into the various wordly attachments and pursuits, thereby eclipsing its essential nature as pure consciousness (*vijñāna-svarūpa*), and forfeiting its claim to freedom and immortality. Thus bound and rendered unconscious of its inner consciousness, it becomes some body possessed of a certain kind of temperament, character and function, at the same time attributing to itself all experiences and qualities that are really those of the empirical consciousness. So long as it labours under such a false sense of identification, its liberation from the earthly trammels is not possible, since it can never manage to escape from the binding force of ignorance born of the sense of non-discrimination (*aviveka*) between what it is in the inmost of its being and what in its present existence it takes itself to be. Sufferings and sorrows, births and deaths implicate the self only upto the time it maintains its friendship with its enemy, *Prakṛti*, and its various forces. What, then, is required for its freedom and perfection is the direct realization by it that it is in its truth

and essence pure consciousness as such, and nothing but that, unattached, unbound and immortal. Such an awakening must originate in the self; mere intellectual understanding of what lies beyond our empirical vision is of little avail. It must cultivate a penetrating insight (*viveka*) into its own life and awaken to its true image. Only then can it seize upon its reality and immortality.

This is a succinct account of the fundamental tenets of the Sāṅkhya system which, in the eyes of the *Gītā*, represents only an incomplete truth. Although the *Gītā* does not explicitly enter into a polemic against all these fundamentals of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, yet there are certain references which point to this side of the intention of its teaching; in fact, some of them are clearly brought out in meeting this intention. It subjects the dualism of the Sāṅkhya thought to its own point of view in order to mould it into a good absolutistic metaphysics the background of which is supplied by the *Upaniṣadic Vedānta*.

Now, the *Gītā*'s contention, as opposed to the Sāṅkhya's, is that there is the Supreme Being, *Brahman*, who is the prime source of all that *appears* to exist, an All-pervading Spirit who is the *prius* of all matter, animate and inanimate. It is the Absolute (*para brahma*) who holds all objects in being, and is the ultimate cause, source and ground of their existence. He is referred to as possessing two aspects—the higher or transcendent (*para-prakṛti*), and the lower or immanent (*apara-prakṛti*).[1] The higher nature, according to the *Gītā*, consists of the Essence, the ultimate, underlying Spirit that pervades and sustains every object and event of this world. The lower aspect, on the other hand, refers to the realm of *Prakṛti* which conceals what it ought to reveal. The former is the *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*, the Absolute which is just the essence of the human self, while the latter is the *Prakṛti* of the Sāṅkhya in all its diverse manifestation. The Absolute, when looked upon in relation to human aspirations and ideals, as also the cause of this *Prakṛti*, is God (*Īśvara*) referred to as the Father, and *Prakṛti* as the Mother which gives birth to various species in various forms.[2] Lord Kṛṣṇa says : "Under My guidance *Prakṛti* gives birth to al things, movable and immovable, because of this the wheel of creation keeps on going."[3] The

1. VII. 4-5 2. XIV. 4. 3. IX. 10.

Sāṅkhya thinkers seek to prove the existence of the *Puruṣa* by by resorting to the 'design argument' which is explained as pointing not to the designer but to one that benefits from the design which is taken for granted as uncaused. For the *Gītā*, on the other hand, the corrective lies in taking *Brahman* to be the designer: "Whatever is glorious beautiful and mighty, know thou that all this has issued forth from a fragment of my splendour."[1]

Although the human self is in its essence the same as the Universal Spirit yet it regards itself as different from it because of its deeply rooted sense of identification with the various adjuncts, such as the mind, the senses, and the body as well as with the numerous objects and experiences of the phenomenal world. Strange to say, the Sāṅkhya seeks to establish the multiplicity of the selves by pointing to the visible differences in the activities, functions, sensory and motor endowments, births and deaths of different living beings. However, a little reflection suffices to show that all such arguments militate against the basic contention of the Sāṅkhya that the *Puruṣa* is above or beyond all change, activity and movement which pertain to the domain of the world of phenomena. It is perhaps this wrong perspective that the *Gītā* seeks to correct when it says that the soul is never born, nor does it die, but gets embodied as this individual or that. What appears misleading in the case of the Sāṅkhya logic is that it ignores the vital distinction between the *Puruṣa* as the eternal core and substance, and the *Puruṣa* in its human existence. Certainly in respect of its essence as pure consciousness one *Puruṣa* cannot be conceived as different from another *Puruṣa*—the differences are only relative to the conditions of bondage, and are not for that reason absolute. In the state of perfection all the *Puruṣas* must be essentially identical. It is to this direction that the *Gītā* points when it says that although the Universal Self is undivided yet it seems divided as different living beings.[2] It is the sense of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*) born of the ignorance of truth that deludes different people into believing that they are their own selves different from, and independent of, every other human being. It is this false sense of self-sufficiency and self-existence that is the matrix of all our spiritual ills.

1. X. 41. 2. XIII. 16.

Blinded by the impulses and cravings of the ego, the individual loses his grip over his essential nature with the inevitable result that the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti—sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—overpower his whole spiritual being. This is basically the Sāṅkhya view of the cause of human bondage which the *Gītā* whole-heartedly supports: "The three *guṇas—sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—bind in the body the Imperishable Dweller[1]". These three qualitative modes of *Prakṛti* are inextricably interlinked in every object of our experience. Our rise or fall in the scale of spiritual perfection depends upon how far we have ascended above or descended into the realms of these three binding modes of Nature. Ethically, *sāttvika* state is impure. *Sattva*, according to the *Gītā*, binds the individual to his body through the desire for happiness and knowledge of this material world, *rajas* through attachent to action and its fruit, and *tamas* through negligence, indolence and sleep.[2] Although no being in its embodied existence can be said to be free from either or all of these, yet it is quite possible that in one individual one *guṇa* may be more predominant than in others. This accounts for differences in individual temperaments, likes and dilikes. One who displays knowledge about spiritual matters and remains happy with whatever little he has to his lot has more of *sattva* in him; one who is greedy, restless and passionate is predominantly *rājasika*, and one whose being is controlled by dullness, heedlessness and lethargy is abundantly *tāmasika*.[3] The whole realm of *Prakṛti*, along with its infinite variety of objects, readily entraps those for whom the satisfaction of desires of the empirical ego is the aim of life. Once we have cast our lot with the play of *Prakṛti*, we are irresistibly tempted to enjoy its various products, forgetting that it is the source of our bondage alone. No human being while he is what he is, can claim complete impunity from the rule or reign of the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*; they make his whole empirical nature and give him his likes and dislikes, traits and temperament, desires and inclinations. But although this is the only way in which human nature in general is moulded and gradually unfolded by his endeavours, yet the *Gītā* teaches that man at the same time transcends all such limitations in so far as he has the law of his essential being. Those

1. XIII. 16, 2. XIV. 5-7. 3. XIV. 11-13.

who unawaringly accept these limitations as the boundary beyond which there is nothing to be attained, succumb to their bondage, while those who have the faith that these are to be crossed by means of what they claim they have in the inmost of their being take a long turn to perfection. Thus, every human being has in him two paths which are diametrically opposed in respect of direction: those who are predisposed towards developing the *sāttvika* nature oriented towards self-introspection, self-control and self-perfection, and those who are subdued under the debris of arrogance, pride, anger, self-glory and self-indulgence. This is the well-known distinction the *Gītā* makes between men of divine nature (*devā-pravṛtti*) and those of demoniac inclination (*āsura-pravṛtti*), respectively. It all depends upon our own outlook and inner determination which of these we cultivate and develop. The message of the *Gītā* enjoins upon us to form impressions of the former and give up the latter, if any. The path to perfection is beset with horrible difficulties and is as painful to tread upon as it is on the edge of the razor. Thus disheartened, many may come to look upon the life of sensibility as their be-all and end-all, but then in what does their human trait consist ? Their behaviour will be as determined as that of an external event—both will follow the iron law of nature. It is man who is the only loser, his vision of the inner spirit being obstructed by the prevailing darkness. Under the cover of ignorance he attributes the agency of all works to himself, being wholly oblivious of the fact that it is the modes of *Prakṛti* alone that are the real causes of all activity, change or movement. The self in its transcendent aspect and essence is a silent spectator of how the nature-man acts and reacts in relation to the realm of *Prakṛti*. If a man could so *realize* and determine himself by this realization the problem of bondage is solved once and for all. But so long as we are what we are, it seems not only difficult but pretty impossible. The *Gītā* asks us not to be determined and disheartened by thinking that it is impossible, for it is in thus being determined that consists the negation of our freedom. We must take a bold decision, says the *Gītā*, and conquer the modes of *Prakṛti*, root and branch. Failure in this means failure in duty towards our own self. "While all kinds of work are done by the modes of Nature, he whose soul is bewildered by the blinding sense of

egoism thinks that he is the real agent."[1] So strong and unshakable is the hold of egoism on him that his higher self seems, as it were, to have abandoned him as a mere agent and evolute of *Prakṛti*. His vision does not extend beyond the narrow bounds set up by the interests of the ego. He fondly believes that the world of *Prakṛti* has been specially designed for the sake of human enjoyment, forgetting in his imperfect vision that in its ultimate analysis it is but a shadow of a higher Essence which he cannot discern so long as he allows the sense of egoism and of attachment to have an unchecked sway over his inner consciousness. The realm of the three *guṇas* is sufficient to absorb all aspects of his empirical nature since both are constituted of the same *Prakṛti*; but the true self eludes his grasp and remains unknown to him. Actions determined by the various desires and inclinations do not reflect this self. The result is that sorrow and suffering take pity on the poor man and never leave him alone. One is here reminded of the following memorable lines in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* which aptly bring out the point involved in our present discussion :

'Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream;
The *Genius* and the *mortal instruments*
Are then in council; and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom; suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.'

No other terms appear more appropriate for bringing out the point of the *Gītā* than those used by the celebrated poet in the above lines. The 'Genius', the Supreme Self, has so arranged things that the 'mortal instruments' (or, in the terminology of the *Gītā*, the *guṇas*), which are but the vehicles through which the divine essence is expressed, attract and bind those who mistake them for the true source of satisfaction of their little, blind egos and their petty, narrow claims. He who has broadened his spiritual vision and managed thereby to rise above the realm of the 'mortal instruments' will find the gates to an immortal existence open before him. An experience of 'insurrection' is inevitable for those who do not discern the truth and

1. III. 27.

do not withdraw themselves from all that they know to be mortal in the ultimate analysis. Thus lost, all their functions, mental and intellectual, and pursuits irresistibly tend to become the means and the mould of a life of Nature. On the perceptual level, their vision extends only to those objects which they know will satisfy their animal cravings; their reflection extends only to the working of the realm of the *guṇas*, and their consciousness extends only to those experiences and expectations which promise satisfaction to their nature-sponsored impulses. It is only the triple *guṇas—sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*,—that in their interplay determine their dispositions and characters, and these in turn determine their activities. Though qualitatively distinguishable, all the three are sources of bondage: *sattva* binds with the bond of happiness and desire for knowledge of what exists, *rajas* with the bond of attachment to action and its fruit, and *tamas* with sloth and negligence. When thus bound, we fail to realize that we are bound; we are rendered spiritually incapable of discriminating between what binds us and what can save us. Bereft of a true spiritual insight, we generate the conviction—and this is what Spinoza too sought to point out—that this world with all its variety, design and purpose exists for our enjoyment. The truth to be realized lies beyond what appears to us to exist, and so long as we remain confined to these appearances, reality with which we are one continues to remain hidden from our ordinary, empirical vision. 'Veiled by My creative power (*yoga-māyā*)", says the divine author of the *Gītā*, "I am not revealed to all. This bewildered world knows Me not, the unborn, the unchanging."[1] Unless we pierce through the thin layers of our ignorance and determine ourselves by the inner determination of our spirit, we cannot help dancing to the tune of the three modes of the *Prakṛti*. But the result is wholly unpleasant. "The soul in Nature enjoys the modes, and attachment to them is the cause of our births in good and evil wombs."[2]

From what has been said above, it seems to follow that the *Gītā*'s conception of the nature and cause of human bondage is in essentials very much the same as that of the Sāṅkhya. As we have already pointed out, the cause of bondage, according

1. VII 25.. 2. XIII. 21.

to the latter, consists in ignorance understood in the sense of non-discrimination (*aviveka*) between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. The *Gītā* whole-heartedly subscribes to this very mode of reasoning when it declares: "Deluded by the modes of *Prakṛti* men become attached to the activities or manifestations of these modes";[1] "all creatures in this universe are bewildered by the delusion of the dualities which spring from likes and dislikes"[2]; "therefore, with the sword of self-determination cut this doubt born of ignorance, and which has crept into thy heart."[3]

Whether we look upon human bondage as the result of non-discrimination (*aviveka*), as does the Sāṅkhya, or as the result of ignorance (*ajñāna* or *avidyā*), attachment (*sammoha*), as does the *Gītā*, the idea behind all these phraseologies or expressions is quite the same. Both hold that bondage consists in the conviction generated, strengthened and sustained by our inability to rescue the soul from the overpowering influence of the three modes of *Prakṛti*. In the absence of the power of self-determination we lose our hold on what Kant calls 'autonomy of the self' and the *Gītā* the '*svabhāva* or '*svadharma*.' This ignorance or *aviveka* can neither permit us to advance in the direction wherein lies the state of perfection, nor happiness nor the highest state.[4]

Once we have clearly grasped the *Gītā*'s point of view in regard to the nature and cause of human bondage, the answer to the question 'In what does perfection of the self consist ?' is not far to seek. If bondage exists because of, and thrives on, our inability to extricate ourselves from the binding force of *Prakṛti*, perfection consists in our ability to transcend the realm of these forces, and accordingly in moulding ourselves in another direction, We must try to get back to our essential selfhood, freedom and pristine integrity. We may very much wish to be delivered from the bondage of mundane hopes and desires, but so long as we lack the power of self-determination, so long as the transaction between the ego and the world, from which it seeks to derive all its vitality and existence, continues unchecked and unchallenged, there is no getting away from bondage or slavery. We are involved in an irresistible vicious circle : "When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire, and from desire comes wrath."[1]

1. III. 29 2. VII. 27. 3. IV. 42. 4. XVI. 23.

The goal is nothing short of self-realization, but we have to search the soul in the inmost of our being. "Subtle, they say, are the senses; subtler than the senses is the mind; subtler than the mind is the understanding; but subtler even than understanding is He."[2] The realm of *Prakṛti* serves as a veil, an obstacle that hides the truth which is to be uncovered by us and by none else. The self lies hidden under the thick strata of physical and mental functions, and finds it extremely difficult to originate its own activity to emerge out of all such limitations. This is the reason why, as the divine author of the *Gītā* points out, "this divinely created *māyā*, constituted of the three modes of *Prakṛti*, is difficult to cross over."[2] The goal is to be accomplished by completely transcending the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—but the progress will be in a systematic way. We must strive to advance from *tamas* to *rajas* and from *rajas* to *sattva*. As the *Gītā* points out in its later chapters, all *sāttvika* activity is characterised by selflessness, *rājasic* by selfishness, and *tāmasic* activity by ignorance and delusion. We have to get at the *sāttvika* stage whereupon spiritually-conditioned knowledge and happiness reign supreme, ignorance, delusion and selfishness having been throughly got rid of. When every part of our physical and mental life throbs with the *Sāttvika* activity and ceases to obstruct the inner light of the self, instead of promoting the narrow or selfish interests of the natural man, we may well be sure that a good ground has been prepared for bringing into being a greater role of the *sāttvika* quality in our life. But perfection is a stage even beyond that. Even the quality of *sattva* must be gradually shed away, and this for the following reasons: firstly, like other qualities, it is a mode of *Prakṛti* which has the same binding effect as the modes of *rajās* and *tamas*; secondly, all *sāttvika* pleasures are limited and relative; they may not be entirely free from a tinge of ignorance and attachment; and lastly, since the ideal to be attained lies beyond these triple modes, it is of little avail to remain confined to the *sāttvika* state. It is of course true that *sattva* represents a mode qualitatively superior to the other two, but the

1. II. 62. 2. VII. 14.

bond of knowledge and happiness cannot allow free flow of inner bliss of the spirit. These three modes, says the *Gītā*, keep the Imperishable Dweller bound to the body; they must be wholly got rid of so that the spirit may shine forth in all its splendour and glory.

The *Gītā*'s contention that *sattva* is ultimately a mode of bondage seems to be very confusing and inapt in view of its statement in the tenth discourse wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that He is the *sattva* of all *sattvas*. However, this seems to have been clarified by Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍamaṇī*. Besides the three usual modes, he recognizes the fourth one also, *viśuddha sattva* which stands for serenity, bliss and self-realization. This is not a mode of *Prakṛti* but an essential feature of the perfect self. It is probably in this sense that Lord Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be a *sattva* as distinguished from the *sattva* of *Prakṛti*.

But it may be asked: if freedom consists in the soul's transcending the realm of *Prakṛti*, does it not amount to cessation of all activity? All natural action, according to the *Gītā*, is due to the interplay of the three modes of Nature, and not due to the soul in the body. Action is made possible by the three *guṇas* of Nature, yet the *Gītā*, while insisting on the need of transcending the realm of *Prakṛti*, demands action. Such a demand is apparantly paradoxical, but the reason is clear! So long as the soul remains associated with the body activity cannot be abjured. But it is not in acting that lies our bondage; it is rather in acting with an attitude of hope and fear towards the objects of this world that constitutes our bondage. Hence it is not activity but such an attitude behind activity that is enjoined to be given up by the *Gītā*. Though activity is the law of Nature, yet we are capable of a higher law, as different from the law of Nature as our soul from the objects of Nature. As such, all activity that we undertake must be subjected to, and grounded in, the law of our spirit. Bondage comes to us when, instead of furthering this law, we further the interests of the natural self. Here, then, comes in the importance of the *Gītā*'s insistence on the abandonment of the fruits of all our action. All that is of *Prakṛti* cannot serve the real interests of the soul. As uch, our concern or desire for objects of *Prakṛti* is the mark of our bondage. Though all objects of this universe are to be ultimately referred to God, yet he cannot

be identified with all that is here and now. All beings, says the *Gītā*, exist in the cosmic Soul, and although he brings forth and supports them, yet he is not exhausted in (or by) them. "By Me alone", says the *Gītā*'s Supreme Being, "this universe is pervaded through My unmanifest form. All beings abide in Me, but I do not abide in them; behold My divine mystery. My spirit which is the source of all beings sustains but does not abide in them."[1] No finite, imperfect object of the universe can imprison that which is infinite and perfect. The embodied soul, in so far as it is one with the Transcendent Divine, can share this life of infinitude and perfection only when it has discarded all limitations of *Prakṛti*.

Negatively conceived, the *Gītā*'s notion of perfection is almost the same as that of the Sāṅkhya: in both the cases perfection comes to be looked upon as the soul's achieving a state of complete isolation from the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*, whereupon all sorrow and suffering disappear once and for all. In certain of its verses the concept of perfection has been referred to by the *Gītā* in keeping with its negative character: the highest (*param*), supreme peace (*parām śāntim*), the state from where there is no return (*apunarāvṛttim*), perfection (*siddhim*), perfection brought about by work (*naiṣkarmyasiddhi*), and the eternal, undecayable freedom or status (*śāśvatampadamavyam*). But the *Gītā* does not stop short at the negative concept of an end; it puts forward a positive ideal when it echoes the *Upaniṣadic* view of the ultimacy of *Brahman* as the very essence of human souls.[2] Hence perfection consists in the return of the soul to its whole, reality or truth, *Brahman*. Since the *Gītā* looks upon the Absolute (*Brahman*) as both personal and impersonal, accordingly perfection has been accounted for in terms of both these aspects. *Brahman*, when conceived in relation to his creative energy (*yoga-māyā*) or the various manifestations (*vibhūtis*), is the personal God (*Iśvara*), and the goal to be realized is explained as in some way attaining qualitative sameness of existence with Him;[3] the highest goal has also been described as dwelling in God. In its impersonal aspect, the state of perfection has been conceived as 'being *Brahman*.'[4]

1. VII. 12, IX. 4-5, X. 42. 2. X 20, XV. 7. 3. XIV. 2. *mama sādharmyam āgatah*; *mama bhavanāgatāh*, IV. 10, XIII. 18; *manmanā bhava*, IX,34; *nivasisyasi mayyeva*, XII.8., VI. 31.
4. *Brahma-bhūyam*, *brahma-nirvāṇa*, II. 72, V.25.

Both these conceptions of perfection are advocated by the *Gītā* in conformity with the distinction it makes between the immanent and the transcendent aspects of the Godhead. When conceived in relation to his creative power (*yoga-māyā*), the supreme being comes to be looked upon as the Lord, Father, Mother, Creator, Ruler and Sustainer of this world. Living in the world which hides Him, we seek to discover Him in all that comes before our imperfect vision; at this stage of our spiritual growth the tendency of attributing anthropomorphic qualities is tolerated by the divine teacher of the *Gītā*. The common man's notion of God will be formed in terms of what he regards as the most perfect and the dearest thing that he can possibly conceive of. In chapters X and XI God is described in terms of numerous attributes (*vibhūtis*) which we ordinary mortals can easily understand and appreciate in our search for the highest. Those, for instance, who look upon God as the creator and the sustainer of this world regard him as their father, others as the dispenser of justice. For those who look upon him as the embodiment of goodness he is the very essence of the good; those who feel inseparated from him, afflicted and over-ridden in the inmost of their being by the seemingly irresoluble conflicts will look upon him as the only abode of refuge for the whole universe, while for those whose hearts are filled with wonder and awe at the infinite variety, beauty, design and wisdom as revealed in the various aspects of the working of nature he is the adorable Master (*guru*). In relation to human nature God is the supreme Person (*puruṣottama*) : "Thou holdest all— and, therefore, thou art all."[1] He is all, because all cannot exist apart from, and independent of, him. "The difference", says Dr. Radhakrishnan, "between the Supreme as spirit and the Supreme as person is one of standpoint and not of essence, between God as He is and God as He seems to be. When we consider the abstract and impersonal aspect of the Supreme we call it the Absolute; when we consider the Supreme as self-aware and self-blissful being, we get God. The real is beyond all conceptions of personality and imperesonality. We call it the Absolute to show our sense of the inadequacy of all terms and definitions.

1. XI. 40.

We call it God to show that it is the basis of all that exists and the goal of all. Personality is a symbol and if we ignore its symbolic character it is likely to shut us from the truth. Even those who regard personality as the ultimate category of the universe recognize that God is vast and mysterious, mighty and ultimate."[1] The *Gītā* does not lose sight of the religious aspirations of the common man, and, therefore, accords due regard and recognition to all sorts of temperaments and moods, provided they are tempted by a sincere search for the divine. For the embodied beings he is the cosmic ideal to be attained in their own ways and by their own means.[2]

In the light of what has been said above, let me now consider an important issue which arises from our present point of view: Does the *Gītā* believe in the soul's retaining its individuality after the attainment of its goal ? Dr. Radhakrishnan and Śrī Aurobindo read in certain verses of the *Gītā* a definite suggestion for the continuance of conscious individuality even in the state of perfection. "Release", says Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is not obliteration of individuality for all eternity, but a state of blissful freedom of the soul with a distinct existence in the presence of God.....The author of the *Gītā* seems to believe in a continuance of conscious individuality even in freedom..... Freedom is not pure identity, but only a qualitative sameness, an elevation of the soul to God-like existence, where petty desires have no power to move. To be immortal is to live in the eternal light. We do not cease to be ourselves, but deepen our selfhood, efface all stains of sin, cut asunder the knot of doubt, master ourselves, and are ever engaged in doing good to all creatures."[3] In very much the same way Śrī Aurobindo holds that nowehere in the *Gītā* is there any indication that dissolution of the individual spiritual being into the unmanifest, indefinable or absolute *Brahman* is the true meaning or condition of immortality.[4] Both these thinkers seek to substantiate their contentions by means of such verses of the *Gītā* as identify

1. *The Hindu View of life* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1957), pp. 107-108.
2. IV. 11.
3. *Indian Philosophy* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1948), Vol.I, p. 577.
4. *Essays on the Gītā* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1923), series, 2, p. 20.

perfection with the soul's dwelling in God, attaining the divine status, or securing equivalence with the divine will (*sādharmya*).

In order fully to evaluate and appreciate the above contention we shall here make the distinction between what may be called *relative* and the *absolute* points of view as contained and encountered in the teaching of the *Gītā*. When looked at from the relative point of view, the contention stated above seems to be fully justified, since perfection here is understood in terms of the *relation* between the embodied soul and a personal God. In its imperfect condition the soul looks upon God as an abode of refuge, and that seems to be the reason why perfection is identified in the *Gītā* with the soul's dwelling in God; he is regarded as the supreme ideal, and that is why the divine author of the *Gītā* speaks of the ideal as the attainment of the divine status. He may be equally conceived as the supreme Moral Law, and that explains why perfection is conceived as a state elevated to the Divine Law (*sādharmya*). In all such expressions as 'dwelling in God', 'attaining the divine status', 'coming in the presence of God'. etc., it is decidedly the relative point of view that is clearly discernible. Coming as they do directly from the mouth of Arjuna, the use of first person involving the relation between the perfect God on the one hand, and the embodied, unrealized soul on the other, does not mean that the *Gītā* believes in the continuance of conscious individuality, and in nothing more than all this. The absolutistic point of view is equally emphasized : "This unmanifest, named the imperishable, is declared to be the highest goal. For those who reach it there is no return. That is My highest abode." The fact that the *Gītā* recognizes and supports both the points of view is clearly brought out by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in reply to a question by Arjuna. "Of the devotees", enquires Arjuna, "who worship Thee, incessantly attached, and those who worship the imperishable, unmanifest, which are the better *yogins* ?" And the clear answer given is : "Those I regard as the best *yogins* who, rivetting their minds on Me, ever attached, worship Me with the highest faith. But those who worship the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest, the omnipresent, the unthinkable, the rockseated, the immovable, the unchanging,

1. VIII. 21

keeping the whole host of senses under control, looking on all with an impartial eye, engrossed in the welfare of all beings... those come indeed to Me."[1] But immediately after this we are told : "Greater is the travail of those whose mind is fixed on the unmanifest, for it is hard for embodied beings to gain the unmanifest directly—the highest *Brahmasthiti* goal."[2] This highset goal is referred to in the *Gītā* as *Brahmasthiti*, *Brahmanirvāṇa*, *Brahmabhūyam*, *Brahmabhūta*, etc. All these expressions significantly point to the impersonal aspect of perfection. Since the soul in essence is the same as *Brahman*, the logical conclusion which the *Gītā* arrives at is that in the state of perfection the soul must return to its truth as *Brahman*. Thus looked at, the *Gītā* seeks to emphasize as much the theistic or personal aspect of perfection as the absolutistic or impersonal one.

In both the aspects of perfection the realm of *Prakṛti* is completely transcended. Although there are references in the *Gītā* which indicate that the goal—particularly of the theistic type—is to be reached after death,[3] yet the emphasis is that it is realizable within this life.[4] The *Gītā* presents a very fascinating account of the marks of a man who has attained perfection (*guṇātita* or *sthitaprajña*).[5] At this stage the realized soul renders itself completely immune from all susceptibility to pleasure and pain. The binding activities of all adjuncts of *Prakṛti*, with which the soul was associated in its imperfection, having been fully subdued, a sense of inner indifference to all attractions of the world characterizes the attitude of the perfect man. He is never moved from his supreme state of calmness and equanimity even though, while he lives, all his activities take place in the realm of the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*. The sense of egoism, the mightiest of all the binding agents of *Prakṛti*, having been deprived of its existence by the dawn of the unique light of the self, he becomes conscious that the agency of all the activities undertaken by him lies not in his self but in the *guṇas* of the *Prakṛti*. Thus is he saved from the evil of delusion which vitiates the vision of an ordinary human being. "One who knows that it is *Prakṛti* which is the cause of all actions and thus knows that he performs them not, he knows indeed."[6] He will not rejoice if he has succeeded

1. XII. 1-4 2. XII. 5. 3. VIII. 5-10.
4. V. 19-26. 5. II. 54, XIV. 21-27. 6. XIII, 29.

in achieving what others will judge to be good, nor shall he lament if his activity fails to achieve what others will call something pleasant. The intermediary that brought the realm of *Prakṛti* and the soul together—both bound, so to say, by a pledge of joint partnership—having been sacked for its treachery, the former becomes absolutely incapicitated for beguiling and entangling the latter. This partnership having been invalidated by the regained self-consciousness of the soul, the realized soul is deeply anchored in the infinite or fathomless ocean of the Soul. "He, who thus knows *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* with its *guṇas*, is not born again, no matter he lives and moves in every way."[1] He will live and act in the world so long as he does not cast off his body. But the stress and strain of the cosmic forces find him unperturbed, their attacks repulsed and their binding effects destroyed for ever. In the inmost of his being he enjoys complete ease and bliss born of the real nature of a realized soul.

1. XIII, 23.

Chapter V

PERFECTION ACCORDING TO KANT AND THE *GITĀ*: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

In the last two chapters I have endeavoured to present the concept of perfection as contained in the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* in a manner, I think, most faithfully representing the spirit that characterizes the outlook of both. I must now proceed with the more pleasant task of accounting for this concept in terms of a comparative approach and evaluation with a view to discerning in what respects and to what extent the teachings of both subscribe to a common outlook so far as our present enquiry is concerned. What, however, needs to be pointed out at the very outset is the fact that although the teachings of both are set so far apart in space and time, yet in respect of temper and tendency they are more or less identical, and seeking for the justification of this contention is the primary objective of this thesis. But at the same time I have no intention whatever to minimize or belittle the importance of what are ultimately fundamental or irreconcilable differences between the two. What these differences are between the teachings of both will gradually emerge into limelight in the course of our present attempt; we may hope to meet some of them towards the concluding portion of this thesis.

While explaining the *Gītā*'s point of view in regard to the nature of perfection it was pointed out that there are two main ways in which it is conceived therein, the character of each hinging on the attitude taken towards God; if God is conceived as the transcendent Divine (*para Brahman*) in his unmanifest and unthinkable form, the highest goal is regarded as the soul's realizing itself as *Brahman*; if, on the other hand, God is viewed in relation to his infinite manifestations (*vibhūtis*) as the cosmic ideal, the embodiment of all goodness and the good, perfection is taken to signify a living communion with his divine status (*sādharmya*). As we have seen before, both these phases of perfection are clearly recognized in the *Gītā*, though for spiritual aspirants of different temperaments and dispositions.

Now, if what has been said in the last two chapters is any indication towards any possible points of similarity between the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* in regard to the subject-matter of our present enquiry, it will have to be conceded that both diaplay remarkable unanimity of views in respect to the theistic interpretation of the notion of perfection. We may perhaps appreciate such an identity in their viewpoints in its true perspective if we try to get a clue to the way in which both seek to arrive at the same conclusion.

It has already been stated that there is for the *Gītā* the one supreme Being who is the real ground of all the mutable existence of the whole universe. On the one hand, we have a perfect, infinite Soul, and on the other, the world of matter (*Prakṛti*), and in between these two is the status man occupies. Although the nature of the human souls and the phenomenal world is to be ultimately referred back to the supreme Being, yet both need to be accounted for. What strikes us most is the fact that both Kant and the *Gītā* offer very identical views to account for both these realms—that of matter and spirit. A little amount of recapitulation seems indispensable in the case of the *Gītā*, while the position of Kant needs to be fully stated in the context of our present discussion.

From what has been said before it can be easily gathered that the *Gītā*'s metaphysical approach consists, roughly speaking, in the distinction it makes between the mutable (*kṣara*) and the immutable (*akṣara*) Nature. All change and activity belong to the realm of *Prakṛti*. The ego with all its desires and inclinations constitutes the empirical apparatus of the natural man. If a man confines himself to the satisfaction of his desires and inclinations, all his activities and pursuits are simply the outcome of these natural forces in their interplay, action and reaction. The realm of the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti* binds him with their imperceptible chains. His consciousness remains condfined to, and concentrated on, the lower aspect of Nature. But over and above this he has another, more fundamental Nature (*savbhāva*) which remains obscured from his vision under the cover of his natural self. This higher self eludes his grasp so long as his consciousness continues to be absorbed in the promptings of the various mental states—the ego, mind and the intellect. Made up of the stuff of *Prakṛti*, they do not know what

it means to work for the interests of the higher self. The conviction that the infinite variety of objects in the world exists solely for the sake of enjoyment makes us oblivious of the true essence of our being, so much so that so long as we continue to be dominated by this conviction we literally forget ourselves. Bondage, then, is the only result and suffering its inevitable accompaniment.

But the *Gītā* points a way out : its emphasis is on the need of raising ourselves above this plane of *Prakṛti* and of transplanting ourselves in the higher realm of the spirit. We must recognize ourselves as sharing the life and law of the immutable world of our being. Hence we are enjoined to reorient the whole philosophy of life: instead of being governed by the law of the *Prakṛti* we must yoke our will to the life of our *Puruṣa*. Once we have gathered momentum and resolved to be so governed, our self from behind comes forward and begins to give a new direction to life, a distinct purpose, meaning and authority. It is in this way that the process of evolution sets in and fulfils itself by gradual stages.

Suprisingly enough, Kant has his grip over this very aspect of the situation when in a like manner he proceeds to draw the distinction between the realm of sense and that of self. Both the realms have their respective laws: the realm of sense being governed by the blind mechanism of nature, while the realm of self by the law of freedom or autonomy.

> "For this reason", says Kant, "a rational being must regard himself *qua* intelligence (not from the side of his lower faculties) as belonging not to the world of sense, but to that of understanding; hence he has two points of view from which he can regard himself, and recognize laws of the exercise of his faculties, and consequently of all his actions: *first*, so far as he belongs to the world of sense, he finds himself subject to the laws of nature (heteronomy) ; *secondly*, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, have their foundation not in experience but in reason alone."[1]

Hence, on Kant's view, a rational being has two standpoints from which to consider himself. In so far as he regards

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p.72

himself as belonging to the world of sense, these laws are the causal laws of nature, and in so far as he conceives himself as belonging to the world of self, these laws are principles of reason by means of which it can determine action. It is because of our unavoidable association with both these realms that the principles on which we as wholly rational beings would act *appear* to us to be imperatives on which we ought to act. In other words, since our power of determination of action falls short of the demand of the objective, unconditional law of the rational self, we have the sense of 'ought' or imperative characterized by the sense of obligation. True morality pertains to the will determined by this objective law of the rational self. Only then can we claim autonomy and freedom of our will. The moral law demands unconditional obedience because it represents the law of our true being. The only alternative is to account for it in terms of something conditional and contingent on human desires and inclinations, but can we then in any conceivable way attribute freedom and autonomy to ourselves? That in Kant's view is the only reason why a rational agent will subordinate his desires and inclinations to the authority of his reason.[1]

A will is, therefore, free, and so moral, only when it is yoked to the law of the 'proper self' as a member of the intelligible world. When thus determined, it must free itself completely from the 'heteronomy of the sensible attachments.'

> "The claims to freedom of will made even by common reason are founded on the consciousness and the admitted supposition that reason is independent of merely subjectively determined causes which together constitute what belongs to sensation only, and which consequently come under the general designation of sensibility. Man considering himself in this way as an intelligence places himself thereby in a different order of things and in a relation to determine grounds of a wholly different kind when on the one hand he thinks of himself as an intelligence endowed with a will, and consequently with causality, and when on the other he perceives himself as a phenomenon in the world of sense (as he really is also), and affirms that his causality is subject to external determination according to laws of nature. Now

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 81.

> he soon becomes aware that both can hold good, nay, must hold good at the same time. For there is not the smallest contradiction in saying that a *thing in appearance* (belonging to the world of sense) is subject to certain laws, on which the very same *as a thing* or being *in itself* is independent; and that he must conceive and think of himself in this twofold way, rests as to the first on the consciousness of himself as an object affected through the senses, and as to the second on the consciousness of himself as an intelligence, *i.e.*, as independent of sensible impressions in the employment of his reason (in other words as belonging to the world of understanding).
>
> "Hence it comes to pass that man claims the possession of a will which takes no account of anything that comes under the head of desires and inclinations, and on the contrary conceives actions as possible to him, nay, even as necessary, which can only be done by disregarding all desires and sensible inclinations. The causality of such actions lies in him as an intelligence and in the laws of effects and actions (which depend) on the principle of an intelligible world, of which indeed he knows nothing more than that in it pure reason alone independent of sensibility gives the law; moreover since it is only in that world, as an intelligence, that he is his proper self (being as man only the appearance of himself) those laws apply to him directly and categorically, so that the incitements of inclinations and appetities (in other words the whole nature of the world of sense) cannot impaire the laws of his volition as an intelligence. Nay, he does not even hold himself responsible for the former or ascribe them to his proper self, *i.e.*, his will; he only ascribes to his will any indulgence which he might yield them if he allowed them to influence his maxims to the prejudice of the rational laws of the will."[1]

According to Kant, we know nothing more of the intelligible world than this that in it reason, independent of sensibility, is the source of the law. This law of the intelligible world applies to man categorically because only in that world is he his proper self. To conceive ourselves as grounded in the intelligible world

1. *Ibid.* pp. 77-78.

is only a negative way of expressing our essence, namely, that the sensible world cannot supply the rational will with what it can accept as its own law of activity. The conception of self as belonging to the intelligible world becomes positive only in one respect, namely, when we conceive ourselves as possessing an active faculty, called the will, which can determine all activity by its own autonomous, independent law. Freedom from the heteronomy of nature is possible only when we change the whole of our outlook on the true meaning and significance of human life. Instead of accepting the heteronomous law of sensible inclinations as the law of our activity, we must effectively determine our will by the autonomous law of reason by virtue of which we claim to be human. So long as we do not do so, freedom in its truth must remain unknown to us.

"Freedom", says Kant, "and the consciousness of it as a faculty of following the moral law with unyielding resolution is *independence of inclinations*, at least as motive determining (though not as *affecting*) our desire, and so far as I am conscious of this freedom in following my moral maxims, it is the only source of an unaltered contentment which is necessarily connected with it and rests on no special feeling. This may be called intellectual contentment. The sensible contentment (imporperly so-called) which rests on the satisfaction of the inclinations, however delicate they may be imagined to be, can never be adequate to the conception of it. For the inclinations change, they grow with the indulgence shown them, and always leave behind a still greater void than we had thought to fill. Hence they are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and although he cannot lay them aside, they wrest from him the wish to be rid if them."[1]

If, then, bondage, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, consists in our inability to discern the law of our true being (*svabhāva* or autonomy) from the law of the sensible attachments, perfection consists in so determining our actions that only our rational law fulfils itself therein, so that ultimately our self discovers itself as absolutely self-determined. So long as we act in determination to the law of the sensible inclinations, we

1. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

display ourselves as only a *thing* in the phenomenal world, not as a *person* possessing an infinite worth. Performance of actions in the true spirit of the moral law is an art that is enjoined to be practised as much in living as while dying, so that both life and death can be conquered.[1] This is the art of *Yoga*, a true skill (*kauśalam*) which, when perfected, makes one the master of action.[1] It is because of a wrong perspective, of a defective way of looking at life and the world that we are often governed by various emotions and passions, such as hope and fear, wrath and grief, and as a result acquire the misleading notion that we can never escape from or conquer them, our subjection to them implied in our very birth in this world. Seized with this conviction, we act as if we are some evolute of the blind forces of *Prakṛti*. The law of our inner self having been denied its only right, our sensuous self and the phenonmenal world are left to negotiate for a *rapproachment*, desire and inclinations claiming to constitute the complete essence of our being. We may well believe that we act as autonomous and free agents, but our so called freedom, is, as Kant points out, like that of a turnspit which moves of itself once it is wounded. Freedom, to have meaning, content and authority, must be recognized as originating from within the depth of our spiritual being. Far above the law and limitations of the realm of sense is the realm of the spirit the possession of which, even in a small measure, gives human life a unique meaning and orientation in this world governed throughout by the iron law. Once we transplant ourselves, so it speak, into the inner secrets of this realm, and make the law of the realm of sense subordinate to the law of the spirit, we soon begin to generate the conviction that the real good lies in us alone. Delivered from the bondage of the realm of sense, we begin to act in the way in which lie our inner interests and aspirations. When we talk of the perfection of the self we do not thereby mean development from a less perfect to a more perfect condition, since in the realm of the spirit we are already perfect; immortality and eternal life are not to be taken as future possibilities or events in time. If these were

1. *Cf.* Plato in the *Pheado* "The fact is, those who tackle philosophy aright are simply practising dying, practising death, all the time, but no body sees it. If this is true, then it would surely be unreasonable that they should earnestly do this and nothing else in all their lives, yet when death comes they should object to what they had been so long earnestly doing".

events and temporal achievements, they would necessarily be governed by the laws of time and causality, and would, for this reason, be the very antithesis of freedom and immortality. Perfection of the self, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, means just the inner realization and recognition of the self as that essence which is beyond time and its limitations, and stands for all goodness, a law unto itself.

Though for Kant and the *Gītā*, the human self is inherently perfect and is the very essence of goodness, yet there is no denying the fact that we all at times are disposed to act wrongly. The *Gītā* points out that although the hold of *Prakṛti* at times is very tight on us, yet the very recognition thereof is in itself a very significant pointer so far as our spiritual development is concerned. It is because of the presence in us of our inner spiritual urge that we are aware of a conflict between what our law (*svabhāva*) demands of us and what the law of the sensuous self urges us to act. We cannot ignore the 'still small voice' within without ceasing to be human beings. Had we been bereft of this inner prompting, we could have hardly spoken of having been perturbed, lured or bewitched by the attraction of desires and inclinations. In the very consciousness of our having been seduced is contained the consciousness of our having missed something we valued more. Although this higher law by virtue of which arises this consciousness is limited and resisted by the extraneous forces, yet they cannot corrupt it. At a particular occasion the sensuous nature may come to have an upper hand and the inner law may be eclipsed 'as is fire by smoke' or 'a mirror by dirt' or even as 'the embryo by the amnion', but even then we retain what we are in our truth; we are still conscious of our having fallen away. No responsibility attaches to man for mere possession of a sensuous, emotional nature. It is only when he acts in determination thereto, and consequently contrary to his real interests, that he is *responsible* for his fall. The opportunity to have acted otherwise was available to him, and he could, if he so determined his will, have acted in subjection to the demand of his higher law. Hence evil disposition, according to the *Gītā*, works by appealing to our lower self which in its turn overpowers the self-determining authority of the higher nature. We cannot fail to listen to the voice from within the inmost of our being

so long as we are within the reasonable bounds of human nature. We can afford to ignore it only when we have given up our claim to humanity for good. Wrong-doing is thus the inevitable consequence of our loose hold on the higher nature. "The senses, the mind and the reason are said to be its seat; by means of these it obscures knowledge and stupefies man."[1]

Kant subscribes to this line of reasoning when he says:

> "Hence the distinction whether the man is good or bad must lie, not in the distinction of the springs that he adopts into his maxim, but in the *subordination*, i.e. *which of the two he makes the condition of the other* (that is, not in the matter of the maxim, but in its form). Consequently a man (even the best) is bad only by this, that he reverses the moral order of the springs in adopting them into his maxims; he adopts, indeed, the moral law along with that of self-love; but perceiving that they cannot subsist together on equal terms, but that one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the spring of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas, on the contrary, the latter ought to be adopted into the general maxims of the elective will as the sole spring, being the *supreme condition* of the satisfaction of the former."[2]

Now, let us discuss a question which pertains to the domain of Kantian ethics. As we have seen, so far the contention has been that an action could be regarded as morally good if it was determined by the objective law of reason. But it may be pointed out that an agent's action may be subjectively right but objectively wrong. Let us admit that it is sometimes so. Now the question naturally arises: By what means are we to judge actions to be good or bad in such situations? Kant's answer to this question is: 'Act only on that maxim which thou canst at the same time will to become a universal law.'

Professor Teale holds that Kant's answer succeeds only in placing the objective standard of morality outside the will, and therefore external to responsible action.[3] He discusses this point with reference to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* wherein a sorrowful tale is narrated of an innocent girl, Sonia, who takes to prostitution not because she is fond of debauchery

1. III. 40. 2. *Kant' Op. cit.* p. 343. 3. *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

or of earning a big daily wage without much intellectual ado, but because of no other alternative to her for maintaining her consumptive mother, her younger sister and her younger brother. Yet inspite of her unpleasant profession, she has a pure heart and a living faith in God. Professor Teale shows with the help of this story "that there are occasions when we can will an action, and that from a sense of duty, which we could not will that any one else should do. This was what Kant would never admit, but, as we shall see, he was wrong in this". According to Professor Teale, Sonia's action was subjectively right but objectively wrong. I as one do not agree with this view. Now, it seems necessary to distinguish between two senses of duty. When, for example, in a particular situation I am trying to discover what my duty is, I am thinking of what may be called objective duty. Duty in this sense is what I should recognize as best, if all the circumstances relating to my action were known to me in advance. But I have complete knowledge neither of the facts of the situation nor of other external factors connected therewith. It is, then, quite conceivable that I may make a mistake as to what my duty in the objective sense is.

Now, what I believe to be my objective duty may, after Kant, be called subjective duty; and my subjective duty is my actual duty here and now. What I believe to be objectively best is my operative ideal whose claim I recognize as binding on me. The difference between these two senses of duty is brought out in the following statement: it is my duty to *will* what I believe to be my duty. No act which does not aim at attaining what is recognised as objectively best or doing what is recognized as the objective duty is a dutiful act; but an act may satisfy this conditions, and yet it may be not a dutiful act. In the light of this distinction let us ask : On what side—subjective or objective—is Sonia's action wrong ? The answer is that it is not on the objective side but on the subjective side that the action lacks moral goodness. What, however, is important to note in this connection is the fact that in order that an action of ours may be right from both sides it is not sufficient merely to *recognize* the objective duty as my subjective ideal, but also that it must be *willed* as such. We must on our side impose the objective law on ourselves and will it as a universal law. It is only then that the will can be said to be subjected to the

law of duty, and that duty is objective in reference, universal in appeal and binding on all. We shall have to hold that Sonia merely *recognized* the objective duty as binding on her, but could not have the spirit of the duty imposed on her will. Did she *will* that all others in her situation should maintain their ailing mothers, younger brothers and sisters in the same way as she did ? Had she sincerely put this question to herself she should have realized that though she recognized her objective duty yet she had not imposed it on her rational will. The objective duty which she did not impose on her will is not something foreign to her nature but the law of her reason itself. It then means that the moral standard lies implicit in our nature and progressively manifests itself the more this higher nature is given a chance for its revelation in the determination of the will. Every man is thus a law of goodness unto himself in his essential truth, but at the same time he combines in his nature something which obstructs the manifestation thereof. How far an agent has attained the heights of goodness or has progressed in the scale of moral perfection will have to be judged by consideration of the extent to which his will is determined to action by the law of goodness. No man is then intrinsically bad. Every human being is the embodiment of goodness, and differences relate to the power with which one can determine oneself thereby. "There dwells a soul of goodness in things evil", but the soul has to be awakened to bring goodness into actual manifestation. The liar, choosing to lie once more, is choosing good, since temporary relief from anxiety or fear of telling the truth is all the good that he knows. But to that extent alone he is good and knows goodness as much alone. But surely the limits of goodness are not to the extent to which the liar knows.

What we are led to infer from the above discussion is the view that rationality in human affairs admits of degrees, but what extent of rationality an agent allows to his action will depend on his conception of rational action as such. In the very admission of the fact that the liar's action is good to some extent, and his conception of goodness marked to a certain limit, however negligible a limit it is, is implied discernment of some ideal of goodness in terms of which the degree of his progress or perfection in the sphere of moral goodness can be

determined. Since, as has been pointed out, such an ideal is implicitly contained in human conscience, consciousness of ourselves as agents necessarily implies consciousness of the distinction between good and evil. It is the ideal of goodness that guides our choice, but what degree of goodness we choose will depend upon what degree of perfection in goodness we have attained. Our seeking of moral perfection implies that we are perfect already to some extent. We seek God, said Pascal, only because we have already found him.

Action is, then, a means to the realization of some sort of goodness that the agent chooses. The drunkard chooses to drink and the liar to tell a lie in order to realize what they know will be good for them. Although the actions through which they seek to realize what they think is good are not identical, yet both seek to realize what is good for them. So choice is a precondition of goodness, and action a necessary means to the realization of the latter. The more the agent chooses, the more he acts to realize what he thinks is his good. The ideal of goodness, implicitly contained in the human soul, finds through action an occasion for its realization. The effort never wholly fails, since goodness in some measure is present in the act of choice itself. Every choice being a choice for goodness, every action becomes an occasion for the ideal of goodness to come nearer and nearer us. What we have realized in action promises more than what we have realized. The ideal of goodness is my operative ideal whose claim I recognize as binding on me. Thus arises a sense of incompleteness which continues to goal me on for making more and more choice of goodness through action and attain more and more satisfaction in the inmost of my being. This process of striving must stop only with the attainment of the ideal of goodness in its fullness. This is the rational or logical conclusion.

But if the ideal of goodness is implicit in every human soul, and if the sole aim of all our action consists in the realization thereof, will it not be something characteristically human to make the ideal itself the determining ground of all our action? It is here that arises the need for a practical discipline whereby the ideal can be realized. Kant and the *Gītā* again meet here, and as we shall see, their approach to this aspect of the moral life is almost identical.

Chapter VI

THE *GĪTĀ* WAY TO PERFECTION

So far we have been concerned with the first phase of our enquiry, namely, In what, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, does perfection consist? Now, in the following pages an attempt will be made to answer the question inextricably linked with the concept of perfection : What, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, is the way to perfection? In the present chapter I intend to offer a brief exposition of the *Gītā* approach to this question deferring the Kantian point of view to the next chapter.

What we must begin by taking note of is a problem concerning not only the *Gītā* but also all the Hindu scriptures and schools. The problem is : If the self in its inmost truth is perfect and free and is above all activity and change, how is perfection possible? How do the Hindus seek to make room for the various ethical disciplines in relation to "a self which in itself does not become better through good work nor worse through bad work."[1] The answer, implicit in the teachings of the Hindu thinkers, is that although the *ātman* in itself is above all activity and self-realized, yet when associated with the body it becomes oblivious of its nature as such, and this obliviousness (*ajñāna*) constitutes its bondage. But what is important to point out in this connection is the fact that under *human* conditions it becomes conscious of its innate character, however vaguely, through the limitations of the not-self (*Prakṛti*). Here, then, arises the necessity of a practical discipline involving conscious determination by the self of all activity presented to it by the realm of the not-self. Thus, the *human* self itself becomes the ground and subject of a peculiar kind of activity which is pre-eminently fitted to usher in perfection. Kant called this capability of the self to determine action simply the 'moral law' and the *Gītā*, like the *Upaniṣads*, calls it the *Dharma*. It is in this sense that on the plane of action *Dharma* is regarded as the direct means to take the soul to its realization as such. Man,

1. *Bṛh. Up.*, IV. iv. 22.

according to the *Gītā*, has as a psycho-physical being certain forces in him which, though belonging to the realm of the not-self, can be harnessed in the service of the ideal aimed at. These forces are: reason, will and emotion. If reason as logical intellect is used in the pursuit of knowledge it can give us knowledge of the realm of *Prakṛti*, but that which is the ultimate ground behind it remains still hidden from our vision; will, undetermined by the law of our being, can result only in selfish action which in its import is as dangerous as any evolute of *Prakṛti*, while emotion in its free play will bind us through attachment and love towards the objects of *Prakṛti*. It is by virtue of the innate power of conscious determination that "man desires to attain the *immortal* by means of the *mortal*. Thus is he endowed, while all other creatures are conscious of only hunger and thirst."[1] It is the realization of himself as immortal that constitutes the highest good for him. The good, then, in order to be realized must be *consciously willed* as such. And this in the Hindu tradition constitutes the basic principle of ethics of action. The final aim consists in the giving up of the sense of egoism, and for this all the three paths—of *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma*—are recognized as equally useful. Which of these we decide to embrace will depend upon the innate bent of our temper. However, it is not the particular path which we decide to tread that matters much in the pursuit of our mission, but the spirit and seriousness with which we discharge our obligations to bring the goal nearer and nearer within our approach. The fact that one of these aspects becomes more prominent in our endeavours to reach the cherished ideal indicates this much that we are by our very nature disposed to make it the vehicle of realization of our essence.

Thus, over and above the path of action which both Kant and the *Gītā* recognize, the latter recommends the disciplines of *jñāna* and *bhakti* too. A succinct description of each may be presented now.

(i) The path of spiritual knowledge (*Jñānayoga*)

Reason (*buddhi*), when determined by the inner urge of the spirit, seeks to grasp and uncover that ultimate source and sphere which is not revealed to it in its independent efforts.

1. *Aitreyāraṇayaka*, II. iii. 2.

We continue to be haunted by a sense of insufficiency and doubt so long as our inquisitive spirit does not get anchored in the truth the search for which is our only aim. Obsessed by such a frame of mind, the empirical world fails to interest us since it presents to our observation a picture which is decidedly incomplete and partial. It is, as the traditional view has it, in a state of ceaseless flux; its contents grow, develop and decay, it contains dualities—pleasure and pain, heat and cold, life and death, and so on. Without offering any explanation, the *Gītā* silently passes on to the contention that such a phenomenal world presupposes the existence of a realm beyond the reach of the senses, the mind and the intellect. "The senses, they say, are great, greater than the senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the intellect, but greater than the intellect is He."[1] The intellect, it is contended, seeks to understand and analyse the phenomena of existence extenally and cannot, therefore, lead us to the existential grasp of the ultimate Existence. Hence the *Gītā* makes the vital distinction between what it calls the sphere of *jñāna* and *vijñāna*, the latter concerned with the process of intellectual apprehension of the details of existence, and the former with the essential knowledge of the underlying truth behind all existence. The scripture teaches that an aspirant after *jñāna* cannot profitably leave aside the knowledge of *vijñana*, since it is difficult to acquire *jñāna* without having previously attained an insight into the nature of the various kinds of phenomena of this vast universe.[2] Every object of *Prakṛti* reflects the presence therein of the one, eternal Supreme, but he is hidden from our empirical point of view so long as the delusive creations of *Prakṛti* continue to generate in us the consciousness of individuality. In our perfection we are one with the Supreme, but the binding *guṇas* of *Prakṛti* erect the thick wall which eclipses the outflow of the inner bliss and light of the inner self. Instead of realizing the identity, we are deluded into thinking that the realm of *Prakṛti* is its own cause, and that the only knowledge worth acquiring is that which pertains to its diverse manifestations. In this connection it is important to bring out the vital distinction the *Gītā* makes between three

1. III. 42.

2. XIII. 2.

kinds of attitude involved in the acquisition of knwoledge;[1] (i) *Sāttavika* knowledge whereby the one Imperishable Being is seen in all existences, undivided in the apparently divided universe; (ii) *rājasika* knowledge in the acquisition of which one sees mutiplicity or diversity without any underlying unity; and (iii) *tāmasika* knowledge which induces one to adhere to one single effect as if it were the whole cause, without concern for the cause and grasping the real. Unless we have the *sāttavika* kind of knowledge we must remain on the plane of appearances, and hence within the confines of bondage.

The *Gītā* points out that the realm of *Prakṛti*, despite all its resisting forces, can be effectively conquered.[2] In order to accomplish this stupendous task we must develop the power of intuition and effect complete reorientation of our attitude towards life and the world; it should be nothing short of an inner awakening and inner conversion. Arjuna remained lost to the law of his innermost self so long as his consciousness was overpowered by the law of *Prakṛti* and its delusive forces; the moment he discarded such an alien law he found himself converted to the rule of the inner law. The description of the real image of the underlying truth (*viśvarūpa*) is an attempt on the part of the *Gītā* to portray the uniqueness of intuitional experience as felt by the self in its perfect condition. Every self is capable of such an experience which the mystics have always eulogized. The *Gītā* speaks of two types of human beings: those of divine temperament (*daiva*), and those of the demoniac outlook (*asura*). Those possessed of the former always strive to purify themselves through the acquisition of the *sāttavika* kind of knowledge, while those possessed of the latter seek to confine themselves to the pleasures of *Prakṛti* and satisfaction of the numerous desires born as a result of such an attitude. Giving themselves up to the insatiable desires, full of hypocricy, excessive pride and arrogance, holding wrong views through delusion, they act with impure resolves; the world for them is its own cause, existing for their enjoyments alone.[3]

What is thus necessary in the eyes of the *Gītā* for the spiritual vision to dawn on us is the need to cleanse the soul of the defilement of the body; passions and desires must be conquered

1. XVIII. 20-22. 2. VII. 14. 3. *Cf.* Chapter XVI.

so that the soul may gradually steady itself and discover what actually is true knowldege underlying the apparent multiplicity. Thus, "it is the man of faith who gains knowledge—the man who is intent on it and has mastery over his senses; having gained true knowledge he comes ere long to the supreme state of traquility."[1] The power of developing a strong sense of discrimination in the acquistion of the right kind of knowledge comes to be stressed.[2] The way in which this power operates depends on the nature of the direction it has been set to. In the case of people with divine endowments it will be directed to the acquisition of the underlying principle of this universe, ultimately to discover their identity with it while in the case of people with demoniac temperament it will remain confined to the satisfaction of their selfish interests and animal urges alone. People of demoniac dispositions cannot cut asunder the string of life and death, and have to undergo in their successive births all the suffering to which human life on earth is susceptible. Only the wise know that earlier such a life is conquered the better.

The unknown principle which cannot be experienced through the senses and the intellect the *Gītā* calls *Brahman*. The sense-ego knows the world through sense-experience; the super-ego tries to know the objective world by building up a structure with the help of certain concepts filtered down from sense-experience. But all this after all is only a representation, and one desirous of reaching the deepest aspect of life must transcend all kind of representative knowledge. In the beginning all his efforts will naturally be directed to reaching the Eternal by an abstractive knowledge ; he will proceed by excluding from the conception of the Eternal all that offers itself as limitable by the senses. Gradually, in this ascending process the initial opposition between the conceptions of the self and the not-self will begin to disappear. When once this stage has been successfully effected, the passionate search for truth will lead us away from everything that is transient, short-lived and mutable. We discover a deep spiritual relation with an indescribable agency. This mysterious agency, which lies beyond the realms of sense-ego and super-ego, is experienced as existing as the supreme

1. IV. 39. 2. II. 44.

ground of all that we in our empirical vision call the *Prakṛti*. To the wise or *jñānin* the supreme ground is just the underlying unity of the whole. This is the supreme knowledge on having which there remains nothing more to be known, called the highest mystery (*rahasyam uttaman*).

Possessed of this kind of knowledge, the wise man's whole being attains a rythm which expresses itself in the spontaneity of conduct, illumination of the inner being and universality of vision. He works and lives in the world in tune with the essential unity and unique oneness of all this All. Individuality yields to the recognition and realization that the self within is *Brahman* in all this All. All the inner forces and activities of the wise seer collect together and flow in one direction concretely manifesting the illuminating light of the inner essence. "Where the mind flickereth not, like a lamp in a sheltered place, where on seeing the Self by means of the self one is content unto oneself, where one experiences the absolute bliss known only to the pure self but ever beyond the reach of the senses, where no other gain is considered greater and where one is not perturbed even by the serverest pain—that supreme state free from all affliction is the state of the illumined self.[1] Such a state can be attained through *yoga* besides the paths of action, devotion and knowledge. But the *Gītā* points out that the limitations of *yoga* are many and may, therefore, not be practisable by a large number of spiritual aspirants. Madhusūdan Saraswatī quotes a verse from Vaśiṣtha to support this view : "To suppress mind with its egoism, etc., *yoga* and *jñāna* are two useful aids. *Yoga* consists in the suppression of mental activity, and *jñāna* is true comprehension. For some *yoga* is not possible, while for others *jñāna* is not possible."[2]

What we are reminded of to bear in mind is the fact that *jñānayoga* is the path of strenuous self-endeavour. Hardly one, says the *Gītā*, in a thousand strives to attain the vision of the perfect self, and hardly one succeeds from amongst those who thus strive. Four types of people are mentioned in the scripture, and every type strives for knowledge of truth in its own way. These are : the afflicted, the seeker for knowledge the seeker after material comforts with a view to going beyond it, and

1. VI. 19-26

2. Commentary on the *Gītā*, VI. 29

the enlightened. Of these the last, the *jñānin*, is declared to be the best, for, unlike others, he has no other aim to further than directly to discover that which in truth is the only Truth. He is just in possession of the knowledge, direct and intuitive, that he is in essence and truth the very being of the Supreme. "At the end of many births", says the *Gītā*, "the enlightened finds refuge in Me; rare indeed is such a soul to whom Vāsudeva (God) is all this All."[1] For him the whole world is a vast transparency through which shines forth the Supreme Self in all its splendour. That which appeared to be an irresoluble mystery and inspired awe and wonder is now recognized as in essence no other than one's own. The duality of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* is no longer experienced; the diverse manifestations of the former are in fact the numerous forms in which the Supreme expresses himself so that those who seek to attain his being may resort to these concrete forms and discover him therein. To the *jñānin* there is but one Supreme, and nothing more than He. To those who are deluded by *yoga-māyā* there is not one but a multiplicity.

Unfortunately, the *Gītā* does not seek to go deeper into certain philosophical problems. The questions of 'why ?' and 'how ?' connected with the creation of *Prakṛti* and human bondage are not sought to be discussed and replied. And to this extent the critics may well charge the author of the scripture with a certain measure of dogmatic outlook. What it impresses upon us is the fact that all this around us, which we call the universe, obstructs and conceals that which is most intimately related to our essential being. Human bondage can be effectively cast off if insight into the nature of the underlying truth is cultivated. And this is what the *Gītā* calls the path of spiritual insight (*jñāna-yoga*).

(ii) The path of devotion (*Bhakti-yoga*)

Devotion or *bhakti* is that attitude of the spirit which seeks to establish an eternal relation of love, faith and confidence in a personal God. Such an attitude is characterised by the keenly-felt desire to establish a living communion with the supreme Master. *Bhakti-yoga* has been described as the supreme mystery, the science of all sciences, purifying and directly qualifying

1. VII. 19.

us for *mokṣa* or release. The *Gītā* reminds us that the worship of the unmanifest (*avyaktopāsanā*) is difficult to be undertaken by ordinary, uninitiated people. As such, worship of the personal God is recommended by it as the easiest way open to all, the weak and the low, the illiterate and the ignorant. Love, when it is constant (*nirantara*) and disinterested (*nirhetuka*), becomes the safest means to self-purification, and when directed to God, is as effective in bringing about the self's redemption as the other paths. The primary objective of all the disciplines is to help us surrender the sense of egoism, so that the inner springs of the self may be completely shaken free from all the binding forces of *Prakṛti*, and the path of devotion seeks as effectively as other disciplines to accomplish the same purpose. Love and attachment, if grounded in our personal likes and dislikes, become the most potent causes of our bondage, but if determined by the spiritual urge for perfection, they acquire something of excellence unique about them. It all depends upon our outlook, faith and training as to which direction our attitude takes and what it attains. So long as there is no inner conversion, purity of heart and total surrender of the sense of egoism, devotion cannot ripen into the direct and immediate vision of God. The same God can be worshipped with a selfish end in view, and by constant pursuit and hard-work the end may be attained, but the real goal of life remains unattained. "Limited is the fruit that falls to those short-sighted ones; those who worship the gods go to the gods; those who worship Me come to Me,"[1] so says the divine being of the *Gītā*.

According to Nārada, *bhakti* consists in intensive love directed towards God; it is blissful in character and on its fruition the devotee attains perfection and immortality, being thoroughly satisfied.[2] For Śāndilya, it is the passionate longing for God's vision for its own sake. Vedavyāsa defines it as deepest attachment expressed in the worship and contemplation of God. For Śaṁkara, devotion to God is the greatest of the contributory factors leading to the attainment of *mokṣa*; it results in the search for and conquest of the self (*svarūpānusandhāna*). The *Bhāgavata* holds that devotee in the highest

1. VII. 23. 2. *Bhakti-Sūtra*. 2-4.

esteem who dedicates himself to the service of God alone and desires nothing else—neither the position of *Brahmā* (creator of the universe), nor the seat of Indra (the lord of heaven), neither sovereignty over the whole earth, nor the results of *yoga*.[1] It is for this reason that *bhakti* has been described as an end in itself (*phalarūpatvāt*).[2]

The *Gītā* teaches that reason, will and devotion are the ways in which the soul can express itself in order to attain an integral divine life. Arjuna typifies the struggling soul and Kṛṣṇa the personal God. "Hearken to My supreme word. With a view to doing good to thee, I will declare it to thee, now that thou art taking delight in My words."[3] The devotee, Arjuna, requests his supreme Master to reveal all his divine manifestations (*vibhūtis*), so that he may be known thereby. This gives the supreme Being an occasion to reveal a few of his divine forms to his devotee. With all his grace bestowed on his devotee, the Lord endows him with divine eyes so that he may see all these forms. With awe and wonder the devotee sees his God as the creator and destroyer of the universe, father and mother, friend and philosopher, goal and abode, the giver and the withholder, source of life and death, and what not ? How can infinite manifestations of the infinite Being be humanly described ? Arjuna's heart was struck with awe and wonder. "Wear Thou again Thy form benign, and be again as Thou wast", so exclaimed the terror-stricken devotee. Having seen the grandeur of the divine forms, he was filled with ecstatic joy. His devotion had ripened into a direct and immediate vision of his Supreme Master. "By single-minded devotion, O Arjuna, I may in this form be known, seen and truly entered into,."[4] so said the Lord.

The path of *bhakti*, like the other paths, is beset with certain difficulties. The devotee experiences at times the recurring urge of strong passions and impulses which, if not properly controlled, may easily jeopardize all his plans to attain the cherished ideal. As such, certain subsidiary disciplines have been recommended to be carefully observed by all those who are engaged in the pursuit of *bhakti*. The devotee is enjoined to refrain from wordly attachments and not to think in terms

1. XI. xiv. 14. 2. *Bhakti-sūtra*, 26. 3. X. 1. 4. XI. 54.

of gains or losses, never to worry about praise and blame, and surrender everything, even his soul, to God. He must generate the conviction that whatever he has, much or little, is not his but of God, and is, therefore, to be used for serving him and his creation. God is not capable of being pleased by precious offerings and *yajñas* if they are bereft of faith and devotion towards him. He is easy to be approached with a pure heart and loving devotion and nothing more than these. "Any offering of leaf, flower, fruit or water made to me in full devotion of heart I lovingly accept,"[1] this is what the divine Being of the *Gītā* declares. Thus looked at, God is the enjoyer of all our sacrifices (*bhoktāram*), the witness and judge of all our action, as also the recepient of the fruit of all our activity dedicated to him. By thus sacrificing the fruits of all our activity to our Supreme Master our soul tends more and more to be purified from the taint of egoistic impulses and feels drawn closer and closer towards him. Under the enveloping influence of intense love and devotion the recurring currents of emotions and impulses tend to be gradually subdued and, consequently, inner peace begins to make its presence felt. "Thus shalt thou be freed from the good and evil results which are the bonds of action. With thy mind firmly set on the path of renunciation, thou shalt become free and attain to My being."[2] Resting serene, the devotee is aware all the time that in all that he does he is not the doer, nor in any way the cause of anything done, but that it is the divine will that does everything. Such a devotee is a *jñānin* too, and so the best of all.[3] "He who knows worships Me."[4] "To him", says the Lord, "I am exceedingly dear, and he is dear to Me."[5]

Though the path of devotion requires primarily the surrender of the soul to the will and command of God, yet the directing of the urges and impulses of the natural self towards him is also enjoined. This will be a valuable aid in abandoning all sense of pride, egoism, hypocricy, agency, etc. Self-purification presupposes self-control. We cannot cultivate the latter simply by starving the senses and mortifying ourselves; the urge must come from within. 'When a man starves his senses, the objects of those senses disappear from him, but not the yearning

1. IX. 26. 2. IX. 28. 3. VII. 71.
4. XV. 19. 5. VII. 22.

for them; the yearning too departs when he beholds the Supreme." Besides a man of *sāttavika* temperament, even a man of *rājasika* nature may be on the path of righteousness, but it is the attitude involved in each case that makes all the difference; the latter clings to righteousness with attachment to the fruit thereof.[1] God, we are told, favours none, disfavours none, but those who have taken the bold step of sacrificing their all in his service gain the fruit of their sacrifice. The voice of God declares: "Fix thy mind on Me, into Me alone let thy understanding enter; thou shalt surely live unto Me hereafter."[2] The same assurance is held out in another verse: "Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, prostrate thyself before Me, thou shalt come unto Me. I pledge thee there is no greater gain than this, a state where one is not perturbed even by the greatest pain."[3] "Abandoning all moral points of view (*dharmas*), come to Me for shelter; grieve not, I will liberate thee."[4]

Love in its purity is the whole spirit in the process of flow towards God. Once we open the interior of our soul, nullify the effect of extraneous forces with strong determination and faith, recognize God as our All with the inner eye, we find ourselves gradually lifted above the demands of this mortal world and transplanted, so to say, in a world sustained by love and adoration for our Master. We live by love alone, and ever lost in love seek to effect our communion with him. We cannot describe what it is like, much the same way as "the taste of the dumb person."[5] In intense love we have a soul-absorbing atmosphere of ecstatic feeling, and all our actions become the means and mould of the will and command of God. Whenever and whereever we see anything, we see him alone in all his divine majesty and glory, as the law and light of our life and the sustaining force of our breath. "He who sees Me, everything in Me never disappears from My sight, nor I from him,"[6] that is what the divine voice of the *Gītā* firmly declares. Of all the spiritual aspirants he alone is considered best who adores God with reverence, with his self ever attached to him.[7] Devotion becomes the source of inner peace (*śāntirūpa*) and everlasting bliss (*paramānandarūpa*). With love as the only sustain-

1. XVIII. 34. 2. XII. 8.
3. Chapter, VI. 4. XVIII. 66 5. *Nārada Sūtras*, 51-52.
6. VI. 30. 7. VI. 47.

ing ground of his breath, the devotee "sees nothing but love, hears only about love, speaks only of love, and thinks of love alone."[1] It is at this stage that he becomes qualified for God's mercy and grace, and succeeds in his mission with the fruition of love.

In the initial stages of his devotional frame of mind, the aspirant begins with an explicit recognition of a personal God as the embodiment of all perfection and power, bliss and beauty, greatness and goodness, might and mercy, truth and trust. So long as personality persists God is looked upon as something which we are not, but aspire after to be. This in fact is the relative point of view, since on the fructification of love there is just one spirit in which there is neither the devotee nor the object of devotion but both fused as one. Love begins in duality but aims at unity. That is why Śaṁkara speaks of gradual evolution of an absolutistic unity after the devotion has borne its fruit (*krama-mukti*). Although in the beginning the self is in search of 'another', yet the aim of love is to lose in the 'other' as one's own being. The *Bhāgavat* teaches that "the truth is non-duality but duality is recognized for making room for devotion."

(iii) The path of action (*Karma-yoga*)

In order to understand the true import of this discipline we shall have to recall what was said in the beginning of this chapter. There it was pointed out that all the Hindu scriptures and schools unanimously hold that the good in order to be realized must be *consciously* willed as such. Hence we what must cautiously guard against is the assumption, the continually recurring assumption, that 'disinterested activity (*niṣkāmakaṛma*) alone determines the frontiers of Hindu ethical perspective. It seems always to have been recognized and accepted that the discipline of disinterested activity is too negative by its nature to prompt voluntary activity. This is the reason why it is accorded a primary place in the scheme of those disciplines where the goal is sought to be attained primarily through spiritual insight (*jñāna*) or devotion to God (*bhakti*), as for instance, in the theistic aspects of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā* and the various schools of the Vedānta.

1. *Nārada-Sūtras*, 5.

The *Gītā*, as we have seen, recognizes the cognitive (*jñāna*) affective (*bhakti*) and the volitional (*karma*) aspects as the constituents of the one discipline. But that which distinguishes action in its characteristically ethical sense from action as a means to *jñāna* or *bhakti* is the element of conscious determination. The characteristically ethical virtue, therefore, comes to be accepted as the flower and fruit of consciously willed activity. This accounts for the attempt made by the *Gītā*, as also by a number of other Hindu schools, to supplement, if not to replace, the negative virtue of disinterestedness by a positive, concrete ethical discipline of active self-determination—what has been popularly called *dharma*, the ethical implications of which have hardly been adequately followed and properly assessed. Action determined by such a law of the self's being acquires a unique kind of content, authority and purpose which are lacking in action as recognized in the disciplines of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. It is such an action that is enjoined to be performed by the *karma-yoga* of the *Gītā*.

Arjuna, the representative man of the *Gītā*, forgets this law of his inmost being (*svadharma*) and falls a victim to the dictates of his sensuous, passive, emotional nature. "My very being is stricken with the weakness of pity. With my mind bewildered about the true law of my being, I ask Thee. Tell me for certain, which is better. I am Thy pupil; teach me, who am seeking refuge in Thee."[1] The voice of the perfect law as embodied in the being of Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells him "Having regard for thy inner law (*svadharma*) thou shouledst not falter, for there exists no greater good for a warrior than a battle enjoined by *dharma* itself."[2] "And if thou doest not this battle enjoined by this law, then thou wilt defeat the very purpose of this law and incur sin and lose glory."[3] Of course, Arjuna comes to the battle-field with a view to fulfilling the requirements of his *dharma*, but all of a sudden a strong wave of attachment comes from the direction of the lower self and succeeds for a time in dissuading him from discharging the obligations of his law. But in the end he exclaims: "Destroyed is my delusion and recognition has been gained by me through Thy grace, O Lord. I

1. II. 7. 2. II. 31.
3. II. 33.

stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I shall act now in accordance with Thy instructions."[1]

In order to grasp the special import of *Karma-yoga*, it seems appropriate to refer to two ideals of life that dominated certain sects at the time the *Gītā* came into being—the negative ideal of renunciation (*nivṛtti*), and the positive ideal of active participation (*pravṛtti*) in the ongoing of the world as a stepping-stone to perfection. The ideal of *nivṛtti* believed in the renunciation of action and complete withdrawal from all worldly obligations. It came to be believed that every deed was a positive hindrance in the way of salvation in as much as it confirmed the sense of egoism and individuality of the doer. All action was sure to produce its appropriate result from which it was impossible to get away. It is this attitude which is clearly reflected in the following verse from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* : "Those who practise penance and faith in the forest, the tranquil knowers who live as mendicants, depart freed from sin through the door of the sun to where dwells the immortal, imperishable Spirit."[2] Thus, it became a usual practice with the seekers of truth to retire to the forests with the result that all social obligations were lost sight of. There was the widely shared conviction that knowledge alone could be fearlessly relied upon as the surest means to liberation.[3] The ideal of *pravṛtti*, on the other hand, doubtlessly enjoined upon the aspirants the need to lead their lives in the midst of society and discharge all their obligations relating thereto, but even such a mode of living could not wholly free itself from selfishness. They were somehow seized with the conviction that perfection was to be pursued and attained by one's own independent efforts which involved a number of observances which were exclusively the concern of the aspirant alone. Thus, their concern for their own advantage was primary, while the task of discharging social obligations came to be looked upon as secondary. Consequently, such an outlook could hardly be characterized as free from selfishness.

The *Gītā*'s distinct contribution lies in synthesizing these two ideals in a manner which acquires special importance about it. Both have in them germs of a highly significant ideal—that of *Karmayoga*—which emphasizes both the spirit of renun-

1. XVIII. 73. 2. I. ii.11. 3. *Śāntiparva*, 240, 7.

ciation and the ideal of active participation in the discharging of social obligations. Renunciation apart from an active life is empty, while activity divorced from the spirit of renunciation is spiritually blind.' Or, to state the same point in other words, renunciation is only a form the matter or content of which must be derived from activity as grounded in the law of one's essential self. It is here, then, that the ethics of the *Gītā* gets oriented towards a new direction: it is in the concrete, social sphere that the self should search the Self, and no activity, rightly called moral, should fall short or outside of the demands of this sphere. And *pari passu* with this sphere-orientation followed the corresponding change in outlook concerning the content of ethical discipline (*dharma*). This exactly was the nature of the task for the accomplishment of which was born the *Gītā*, yet with the express aim of confining itself to the bounds of the *Upaniṣadic* ethics, thereby claiming for itself the title of an *Upaniṣad* as indicated in its colophons (*Bhagavadgītāsu-upaniṣatsu*).

Arjuna, as we read in the opening verses of the *Gītā*, comes to the battle-field with the desire to discharge all obligations implied in the ideal of *pravṛtti*. He belonged to the *kṣatriya* clan whose duty was to potect righteousness and chastise wickedness, always and everywhere. This constituted his *svadharma*. Much to the surprise of his well-wishers, he forgets it, and all of a sudden develops an ardent desire for withdrawing from the battle-field. He speaks like one who has renounced his all, having completely determined himself by the law of his inmost self (*sanyāsin*). Such a mood of his is not in fact the outcome of gradual spiritual development but of the sense of attachment and affection for his kith and kin.[1] The unusual trend, exhibited in his changed decision and outlook, smacks of selfishness, ignorance and inactivity. He has his own law to follow; but not recognizing its sanction and sanctity, he refuses to obey it and seeks to find happiness in adopting the law of a lower order. Though under the overpowering influence of infatuation (*moha*) he wishes to renounce everything wordly, yet all this is the urge of escapism, a mechanism characterizing the lowness of spirit (*hṛdaya-daurbalyam*) in which he has unconsciously fallen. Such a desire of his is no more than *rāga*

1. I. 31, II. 6.

(infatuation); it is certainly not *vairāga*[1] or attitude of non-attachment towards *Prakṛti*.

What Arjuna in his despondency could not, however, realize is the fact that it is not action, but the fruit thereof, that is to be renounced. It is action that is to be *consciously* willed, not the fruit. Action, when determined by the law of the higher self, becomes the key to a truly spiritual way of life. Hence the basic requirements of *Karma-yoga* are : firstly, to let the inner law determine the action, so that the autonomy of the spirit may be ensured. Says the divine teacher of the *Gītā*: "Better is one's own law, though uninviting, than the law of another even though we carry it out much better than our own. Better is death in the fulfilment of one's own law, for to follow the law of another (i.e. the law of the lower nature) is perilous."[2] Secondly, *Karma-yoga* requires work to be done without the desire for fruit.[3] This, in fact, is a corollary following from the first requirement. The whole world is at work, and one who shuns work alloted to him in accordance with the conditions of his life is a sinner. All activity that is going on around us has a sanction and purpose behind it. If we work to further this cosmic plan by means of our inner spiritual strength we come closer and closer to the conditions of our true life. If, on the contrary , we work simply in response to our selfish, narrow impulses and desires, we are not only a slave to our sensuous self but also guilty of derelection of our duty towards others. But the moment we detach ourselves from the bondage of the lower nature and determine the action by our own law, we discover our true aim. "Action is far inferior to self-disciplined activity; seek refuge in the attitude of detachment. Wreched indeed are those who work for fruit."[4]

Karma-yoga of the *Gītā* may be taken either in the theistic or in the non-theistic sense. As we have noted above, it is one of the essential requirements of this discipline that action must be grounded in, expressive of, and determined by the law of the essential self the realization of which as such is the ultimate aim. The immediate aim here is self-purification, as will be pointed out later on. The discipline is also given a theistic touch when we are enjoined to exile the limited, outward looking ego and enthrone

1. II. 3. 2. III. 35. 3. II. 47. 4. II. 49.

God in its place as the acceptor and enjoyer of our action. "Be as one whose aim is My service, even performing action for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection."[1] *Karma-yoga* is thus a way of life whereby we can bring about a change in our inner consciousness and thereby save ourselves from the afflictions of this mortal world. "Those who have united their will with the Divine, renouncing the fruit of their actions, and freed from the the bonds of birth, reach the sorrowless state."[2]

The *Gītā* presents the philosophy of *Karma-yoga* in terms of three main principles: determination of all activity by one's own law (*svabhāva*), renunciation of all desire for the fruit of actions performed, and cultivation of an attitude of equanimity. Where a belief in God exists, he is recognized as the enjoyer (*bhoktā*) of the fruit of action as a sacrifice from us. Equanimity is possible when we have shed all thought of our ego and have ceased to dance to the varying tunes of our natural self—the mind, intellect and the senses. It is this state that is recommended to Arjuna : "Being steadfast in *yoga* perform actions, abandoning attachment, remaining unruffled both in success and failure."[3] When such a realization has dawned, when there remains no agent of the not-self called 'I' to be served and worshipped by action, all work done becomes truly a sacrifice (*yajña*). Sacrifice, says the *Gītā*, is the law of life and mystery of creation. "By sacrifice alone shall ye grow and fructify' is what we ought to learn as the law of this creation. God ordained that we would not only multiply and prosper through work but also fulfil our cherished desires.[4] He, who does not further the law of sacrifice and does everything at the bidding of his selfish self, is guilty and, therefore, accumulates sin; such people live invain.[5] The wise men work to further the interests of the social order (*lokasaṁgraha*) and help the cosmic wheel going. Only then can they hope to rise to the higher realm of their true being. "Libration," says Śaṁkara, "is accompanied by wisdom, but wisdom does not spring without the purification of heart. Therefore, for the purification of heart one should perform all the acts of speech, mind and body, prescribed in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, dedicating them to the Supreme Lord." The

1. XII. 10. 2. II. 51.
3. II. 48. 4. III. 10. 5. III. 16.

Gītā teaches that if undertaken in the spirit of renunciation, all work culminates in wisdom.[1]

Thus looked at, *Karma-yoga* is a way of life whereby the rule of *karma*, the natural order of deed and consequence, can be completely nullified and the law of the spirit regained in its fullness. "The man who delights in the self alone, who is anchored in the self, who is satisfied with the self alone, has no work left to be done."[2] Emptied of the sense of egoism and attachment, freed from the impulses and passions of the natural order of *Prakṛti*, the wise man acts as the very self of the Supreme. All forces of the not-self find him calm and unperturbed. His whole being is pervaded by bliss characteristic of the divine, Supreme Being (*Brahman*). He lives as the very law and life of the one, eternal Spirit.

To conclude: the *Gītā's* main theme is that of perfection which can be attained by us if we open our inmost being to divine love, divine knowledge and divine will. Though the goal is essentially one, yet the roads that lead to it are many. The Divine ever shines in us, but it is upto us to recognize and discover him by offering our heart, will and reason to him. Even a little of what we may do to lift ourselves above the heteronomy of *Prakṛti* will save us from the recurring cycle of birth and death. The highest of which we are capable is already in us, we have simply to *realize* it as such through self-dtermination. From the ultimate point of view the self has neither anything to realize nor anything to determine—it is above all change, desire and activity. Yet under *human* conditions it has to be conceived as endowed with the power of determining itself through the determination of activity. The discipline by which it has to realize itself must be grounded in its own power. Only then can it be regarded as fully autonomous. This organic unity of the ends and means is taught not only by the *Gītā* but also by Kant, as we shall see in the following pages.

1. IV. 33. 2. III. 17.

Chapter VII

THE KANTIAN WAY TO PERFECTION

In the preceding chapter we have seen that, according to the *Gītā*, we human beings are inherently capable of the law of the spirit which, if made the determining ground of our reason, will and emotion, can ultimately result in the fullest measure of its consummation. Kant agrees with the *Gītā* in holding that man in his essential being is capable of such a law (which he calls the moral law or the law of holiness), but he teaches that it applies to him only in relation to his will. Whereas for the *Gītā*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* can also help us attain the ultimate goal, Kant remains strictly within the bounds of pratical reason as the basis of morality. The path of love has no fascination for him, presumably because all love is of the nature of inclination and, therefore, not free from the tinge of selfishness—that is why he speaks of it as a pathological motive. It is only by subjecting the will to the moral law, or the categorical imperative under *human* conditions, that the rational self can regain the truth of its existence. It is in the very spirit of the categorical imperative that there is the thought of something not only to be overcome or transcended but also of something to be positively achieved.

> "For reason", says Kant, "recognizes the establishment of a good will as its highest practical destination, and in attaining this purpose is capable only of a satisfaction of its own proper kind, namely that from the attainment of an end, which end is determined by reason only, notwithstanding that this may involve many a disappointment to the ends of inclination."[1]

In the above massage Kant makes the vital distinction between two kinds of ends: one as determined by reason alone and discoverable in it alone; and the other as conditioned by desires and inclinations. Will for his is the executive faculty which can be determined by either of the two—in itself it is ethically neutral. If, however, reason is to discover the worth

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 12.

it is inherently capable of, it must determine the will by means of its own law and thereby realize its essential truth. If, on the contrary, the will is determined by the sensuous forces foreign to the law of true being, the rational self is reduced to impotency and finds itself unable to discharge the unique function which in its human embodiment is exclusively its right and authority to discharge. Hence what makes the will *good* is not what it accomplishes but by what motive or end it has been determined to act. Goodness, it follows, attaches to a rational will alone, or to a will subject to the law of duty or categorical imperative.

> "That an action", Kant observes, "done from duty derives its moral worth, *not from the purpose which is to be attained by it*, but from the maxim by which it is to be determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the *principle of volition* by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire. It is clear from what precedes that the purpose we may have in view in our actions, or their effects regarded as ends and springs of the will, cannot give to actions any unconditional or moral worth. In what, then, can their worth lie, if it is not to consist in the will and in reference to its expected effect? It cannot lie anywhere but in the *principle of the will* without regard to the ends which can be attained by the action."[1]

For Kant, then whatever value there is in a purposeful action it may not be moral value. A truly moral action would embody a unique kind of purpose the source and sphere of which is to be found in the principle of the rational self alone. An action, which has been grounded in and determined by some heteronomous motive, will doubtless have a purpose behind it but it cannot explain what part the rational self has played in its execution. Obviously in all such actions the law of our 'proper self' is not at all recognized and embodied, and cannot for this simple reason rank as *moral* in the true sense of the term.

Morality, Kant holds, is exhibited only in those actions in which the law of the proper self becomes the only motive, enforcing itself as such in the teeth of opposition from the contending inclinations. This is the only law of human action, the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

categorical imperative which "concerns not the matter of the action, or its intended result; and what is essentially good in it consists in the mental disposition, let the consequences be what it may. This imperative may be called that of morality."[1]

What, therefore, we must cautiously guard against is the tendency to confuse the voice of duty with that of self-interest. Once we have clearly grasped what it is that essentially belongs to us we shall not before long understand what it is that inspires us to do our duty. Under the impulse of the moment we may violate the law of duty, but when we have gradually recovered from the influence thereof we recognize this law more clearly in the form of remorse. Once this law has taken deep roots in the moral fabric of our nature we cannot, without inviting a wave of revolt in our inner conscience, do what we please nor disown it at will. The fact that in a particular situation we succumbed to the influence of an irrational impluse indicates only this much that the law of the self had no firmly-cultivated grasp over our will, that we lacked, of course partially, what may be called 'self-determination.'

Therefore, Kant recognizes three kinds of action which accord with duty: (1) those done from immediate inclination; (2) those done not from immediate inclination but from consideration of some remote end of self-interest; and (3) those done not from immediate inclinations or self-interest but from the motive of duty alone. It is only in actions of the last category that inheres the moral worth. The moment reason has successfully determined the will and expressed itself in action, it has realized itself, albeit partially, through action—it has realized itself only in its own way. It has accomplished what lay in its power; it still remains intrinsically or unconditionally good. What, then, matters most in the performance of actions is not *what* the will has attained or lost, but *how* it acted before it attained or lost anything If it has faithfully acted in subjection to the law of inner freedom and autonomy, and even failed to produce what we call agreeable consequences, it must have the comfort as well as the credit of having acted in the way in which it ought to have. Its real success consists in its rational choice and determination, and its freedom in its autonomous willing.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

And what meaning the external forces give to its action in terms of agreeable or disagreeable consequences is absolutely irrelevant to its intrinsic worth or goodness, Kant continues:

> "A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, nor by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay, even of the sum-total of all inclinations. Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, even with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself."[1]

Kant points out that the very thought of subjecting our will to the command of duty would be absured were not the promise and potency of some cherished ideal contained in the very act of obedience thereof, since without such a promise "the glorious ideas of morality would be indeed objects of applause and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action." The highest purpose which we have to realize is, as we have already noted, perfection, which according to Kant, consists in the self's attaining 'harmony' with the Divine Will. It is here that the law of duty finds itself consummated in the ideal of holiness. The life of sensibility is completely transcended, so that the rational self acts just in the very spirit of the objective law—this is the state of supra-morality. And yet, the 'moral religion' requires that it must be brought about by its own autonomous efforts. What it realizes must be what it is in its natural integrity, it must be the result of its own striving.

> "When it is said of the perfection that belongs to man generally (properly speaking, to humanity), that it is in itself a duty to make this our end, it must be placed in that which may be the effect of one's deed, not in that which is merely an endowment for which we have to thank nature;

1. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

> for otherwise it would not be duty. Consequently, it can be nothing else than the cultivation of one's power (or natural capacity) and also one's will (moral disposition) to satisfy the requirement of duty in general. The supreme element in the former (the power) is the Understanding, it being the faculty of concepts, and, therefore, also of those concepts which refer to duty. First it is his duty to labour to raise himself out of the rudeness of his nature, out of his animal nature more and more to humanity, by which alone he is capable of setting before him ends, to supply the defects of his ignorance by instruction and to correct his errors; he is not merely *counselled* to do this by reason as technically practical, with a view to his purposes of other kinds (as art), but reason, as morally practical, absolutely *commands* him to do it, and makes this end his duty, in order that he may be worthy of the humanity that dwells in him."[1]

If cultivation of the 'moral disposition' is what the law of duty demands of us, surely complete mastery over the sensuous nature is the first pre-requisite. The ideal of holiness implies, according to Kant, purity of heart and complete detachment from the allurements of 'sensible attachments.' This is the ideal which can be attained only by those who boldly sacrifice the comforts of the 'animal nature'. The ideal is in us and resounds with its undiminished force where-ever and whenever we are found to fall victim to the lower self; each step that we take to be bound by it liberates us from the sackles of the blind mechanism of nature. That perhaps is the reason why Kant expresses much concern for our inability to reach the ideal while our will remains a faithful servant of "the natural law of desires and inclinations, in other words, to the heteronomy of nature." All our actions motivated by the law of sensibility can only inform us of our participation in the realm of nature, but that by virtue of which we partake in the realm of spirit remains beyond our grasp. By raising ourselves above the heteronomy of sensible attachments we can grow into our spiritual consciousess and free ourselves from its bonds. Such is the distinct note of optimism clearly revealed in the teaching of Kant.

It is this wave of optimism, says the philosppher, that

1. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

inspires an agent to pursue the path of duty despite all distractions from the heteronomy of nature. The law of duty is the law of his own self and he must not falter in his determination to fulfil its spirit in all his action. Herein lies the road to perfection. A realization begins steadily to dawn upon the aspirant that human life is not a mere sport of blind impulses and unquenchable desires but that it has an eternal flame which must be brought to shine in all its innate glory. So long as he owes his allegiance to and faith in the law of the sensuous self he cannot plunge into the immutable universal law of his selfhood. "I am willing," Kant remarks, "to admit out of love of humanity that even most of our actions are correct, but if we look closer at them we everywhere come upon the dear self which is always prominent, and it is this they have in view, and not the strict command of duty which would often require self-denial."[1] So strong is the bondage caused by the persistent sense of egoism or 'dear self' that we often seek to justify our actions by calling them truly benevolent whereas they are through and through selfish and the outcome of the heteronomous self. It is this sort of bondage that is to be conquered by means of the application of the categorical imperative to the human will, since in no uncertain terms does this imperative assure us that by willingly serving it as the law of our action we gradually bring about the process of self-perfection to its consummation, that in practising this discipline all strivings and sacrifices are not wasted but duly conserved.

> "The Infinite Being, to whom the condition of time is nothing, sees in this to us endless succession a whole of accordance with the moral law; and the holiness which His command inexorably requires, in order to be true to His justice in the share which He assigns to each in the *summum bonum*, is to be found in a single intellectual intution of the whole existence of rational beings. All that can be expected of the creature in respect of the hope of this participation would be the consciousness of his tried character, by which, from the progress he has hitherto made from the worse to the morally better, and the immutability of purpose which has thus become known to him, he may hope for a further

1. *Ibid.* p. 24.

> unbroken continuance of the same, however long his existence may last, even beyond this life, and thus he may hope, not indeed here, nor in any imaginable point of his future existence, but only in the endlessness of his duration (which God alone can survey) to be prefectly adequate to His will (without indulgence or excuse, which do not harmonize with justice)".[1]

This is the well-known argument Kant puts forward to account for the immortality of the soul. The ideal of perfection implies complete freedom from the life of sensibility, and so long as we remain what we are we cannot attain it. "The perfect accordance of the will with the moral law is holiness, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence." If, then, it is the presence in us of our sensuous nature that does not permit us to achieve the desired goal, what should be our attitude towards it ? There are three possible alternatives open to us : Are we to indulge the natural man, or to seek to suppress him, or to make him helpful in the pursuit of self-perfection ? Kant outright rejects the first alternative, since, as we have already seen, it regards man merely as a product of the forces of the natural world and ignores his spiritual nature. Just diamertically opposed to this alternative is the view of Asceticism which enjoins suppression of desires in the misdirected belief that reason, in the absence of any obstruction, will easily carry out its law and attain the ideal which is inherently in its own nature. Kant is deadly set against this view also. He vehemently deprecates the Carthusian spirit of self-mortification on the ground that a life of virtue cannot be cultivated by antagonizing, and inciting to revolt, the various desires and passions ; they must be conquered through the use of reason itself in gradual stages of moral evolution. The task of self-conquest cannot be hoped to be completed even within the short span of one life or two. However, it is the task that has to be undertaken and brought to completion.

> "Virtue, therefore, in so far as it is based on internal freedom, contains a positive command for man, namely, that he should bring all his powers and inclinations under

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20.

his rules (that of reason); and this is a positive precept of command over himself which is additional to the prohibition, namely, that he should not allow himself to be governed by his feelings and inclinations (the duty of *apathy*); since unless reason takes the reins of government into its own hands, the feelings and inclinations play the master over him."[1]

The treatment of Kant's doctrine of duty as sketched in the present chapter would appear inconclusive without reference to certain objections urged by certain critics against it. It would, however, hardly be an exageration to say that Kant contrived to present a view-point which is distinctly impressive in the whole ethical thought of the West. This is the reason why every writer on moral philosophy has felt called upon to examine his doctrine in some detail. What surprises a candid student of the Kantian ethics is the fact that no other thinker of the West has been so much misunderstood and misinterpreted as Kant himself. And this for the simple reason that his doctrine of the categorical imperative cannot be read through the eyes of any other moralist of the West. One could, under the circumstances, be hardly accused of betraying ignorance of the fact that in the West there is hardly any other thinker than Kant who has been so superficially exmined and perfunctorily criticized. The net outcome of such a careless perusal of his view-point has been accumulation of prejudice against him in the minds of a good number of students of Kantian ethics. This will be fully borne out by a look at the various objections levelled against it by writers and thinkers after Kant. Keeping in view the limitation of space, I do not intend a full rebuttal thereof, nor do I propose to include many of such objections. Only a few directly relevant to the present context will be taken up and considered, almost those which relate to the sharp contrast Kant is interpreted as drawing between duty and desire.

It is this contrast which evoked Schiller to coin two epigrams stated below:

"Willingly I serve my friends all, but alas I do it with affection
Hence Iam plagued with doubt, virtue I have not yet attained.

To this Schiller represents Kant as offering the following reply :

1. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

"This is your only recourse,
you must stubbornly seek to abhor them,
Then you can do with disgust,
that which the law may enjoin you."

Professor Mackenzie charges Kant as under :

"Kant's point of view might be illustrated by the famous declaration of Sir T. Browne in his *Religio Medici* : "I give no alms to satisfy the hunger of my brother, but to fulfil and accomplish the will and command of my God." Contrast this attitude with that of the philanthropist who is actuated simply by love of those whom he seeks to benefit, and it is at once evident, even to the plainest common sense, that the latter is immeasurably the higher of the two. Indeed, it would scarcely be a paradox to say that, in such cases, the more purely a man is guided by love, and the less conscious he is of performing a duty, the better his action is."[1]

Professor James Seth found the main weakness of Kant on the same point. He says :

"The view rests upon an absolute psychological dualism of reason and sensibility, of the rational and the irrational. Because reason differentiates man from the animal, and his life must therefore be a rational life, it is inferred that all the animal sensibility must be eliminated. The result is an intellectualising of the moral life—the identification of goodness with wisdom, of virtue with knowledge, of duty with rational consistency, of practical activity with philosophic contemplation. But this passionless life of reason is not the life of man as we know him. We cannot summarily dismiss the entire life of sensibility as irrational. Without sensibility there is no activity; the moral life, as such, implies feeling."[2]

Dr. Rashdall subscribes to this very line of reasoning when he says :

"It would be a violent perversion of psychological fact to represent that every man who works hard and resists temptations to self-indulgence from love for his wife and

1. *A Manual of Ethics* (London : University Tutorial Press, 1929), p. 158.
2. *A Study of Ethical Principles* (London :William Blackwood & Sons, 1897), pp. 164-65.

children, or from a zeal for his profession, is inspired by pure respect for the abstract Moral Law."[1]

Professor Teale[2] quotes a certain Dr. Collenbusch as having remarked : "Dr. Kant's morality is quite pure of all love, and this makes me ask, What is the difference between the morality of the devil and the morality of Dr. Kant ?" Schopenhauer characterized Kant's morality as the "apothesis of lovelessness, the exact opposite, as it is, of the Christian doctrine of Morals."[3]

In view of what has been already stated about Kant's moral position, it does not appear difficult to rebut all such charges. The matter is simple: if man is rational, which even the critics will have to concede, and if it is by virtue of rationality alone that we claim our superiority to all other creatures, is there any logic to convince us that all our actions, to be called *human* in the real sense of the term, must not be grounded in, and determined by it ? And if in our practical life this law of reason is found to be harsh and stringent, it only shows how deeply attached we are to the law of our inclinations. Kant never held that an action done out of love has no value or worth, as his critics have made out a case against him; what he did say is that it is the law of reason alone that is the only law characteristically human, and in this Kant does have the support of even the common sense. Moreover, for Kant God is the embodiment of pure rationality, and since man, too, in the inmost of his being is the very spirit of pure rationality, it is in this sense that he shares the divine essence. As such, in his *human* condition the law of duty would appear to him to be a law of holiness or the command of God. That is why while speaking of duty Kant refers to its divine sphere, source and significance and often uses the term 'holiness' as interchangeable with the term 'rationality.' True love of God consists in acting in determination to this law of rationality. When viewed from the standpoint of our rational nature, it is called the law of our true being; when considered from the side of God as its perfect embodiment, it is called the divine command. What Kant calls 'practical love of God' consists in making this command

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 122. 2. *Op. cit.*, p. 138.
3. *Grundlage der Moral* (Eng. Trans. Sect. 6), p. 50.

the law of *our willing* the action, and what he calls the 'pathological love of God' consists in our being influenced by certain extraneous considerations, such as those of seeking favour or fortune from God as the reward for the mere act of 'wishing', or as the price for sacrificing freedom and embracing slavery. Certainly, the latter kind of love is incongruent with the nature of man as an end in himself—the author of the moral law.

The facts stated above constitute the essentials of Kant's moral point of view, and it appears incredible that his critics could have conveniently missed them. What Kant enjoins upon us is not that we should despise our friends because of the presence in us of the inclination to serve them out of love, as Schiller thinks; not that we should not be philanthropists if we cannot cultivate an attitude of love towards those whom we cannot benefit, as Mackenzie seems to make out the case, but that we can serve our friends or be philanthropists in a more *humanly* way if we act in determination to our inner, rational law, capable of being universally willed irrespective of individual preferences and inclinations, like love. After all all, inclinations are ultimately the outcome of the heternomoy of nature. If they are claimed to be not, there is no dispute since they must be the forms of inner self-determination to be appropriately called 'disinterested respect' or love for the moral law— a love emanating from the heart of the 'proper self'.

"To be beneficent when we can", Kant continues, "is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honour, which, if it is happily directed to that which is in fact of public utility and accordant with duty, and consequently honourable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem. For the maxim lacks the moral import, namely, that such actions be done *from duty*, not from inclination. Put the case that the mind of that philanthropist was clouded by sorrow of his own, extinguishing all sympathy with the

lot of others, and that while he still has the power to benefit others in distress, he is not touched by their trouble because he is absorbed with his own; and now suppose that he tears himself out of this dead insensibility, and performs the action without any inclination to it, but simply from duty, then first has his action its genuine moral worth. Further still; if nature has put little sympathy in the heart of this or that man; if he, supposed to be an upright man, is by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others, perhaps because in respect of his own he is provided with the special gift of patience and fortitude, and supposes and even requires, that others should have the same—and such a man would certainly not be the meanest product of nature—but if nature had not specially framed him for a philanthropist, would he still not find in himself a source whence to give himself a far higher worth than that of a good-natured temperament could be? Unquestionaly. It is just in this that the moral worth of the character is brought out which is incomparably the highest of all, namely, that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty."[1]

If, as Kant maintained and as most of his critics will allow, the law of duty is the command of man's true self and/or that of God—a law that does not appeal for and depend on selfishness but commands perfection—it must be clearly distinguished from everything that might be set down to inclination and desire. It must not only be recognized as the law of our true being, but firmly imposed on our will in order that it might rank as the noblest and strongest motive to action rightly called *human* or *good* or even *rational*. But so long as our will remains overburdened and befogged by appeals to empircal satisfactions we cannot take delight in the furtherance of the genuinely moral motive. Naturally, the only recourse is to get rid of these binding forces of the passive, emotional, sensuous nature in order to attain to 'a destination not restricted to conditions and limits of this life, but reaching into the infinite.' For Kant, the path of duty is the only effective weapon available to man to cut asunder the roots of the life, of bondage. The will must be shaken free from the 'ignoble and corrupting motives' so that it may faithfully reflect the true light of the self. All this, of

1. *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), pp. 14-15.

course, requires patience and perseverence, but hope must sustain the aspirant in his spiritual quest.

> "The heart is freed and lightened of a burden that always secretly presses on it, when instances of pure moral resolutions reveal to the man an inner faculty of which otherwise he has no right knowledge, *the inward freedom* to release himself from the boisterous importunity of inclinations, to such a degree that none of them, not even the dearest, shall have any influence on a resolution, for which we are now to employ our reason."[1]

And, finally, we come to the consideration of a question raised by Dr. Broad.[2] He asks: In what, according to Kant, does the source of the sense of moral obligation consist? It obviously cannot lie in sensibility, since it is 'blind and slavish.' We may, then, hold that its source and sphere must be the self itself. But, how? The self, as we know, *is* essentially what Kant calls 'the law of holiness', and cannot, for this reason, be by itself the source of moral obligation. A perfectly rational self would necessarily act out of sheer love for goodness. In what else, then, does the feeling of moral obligation consist? Or, what amounts to the same, how does the 'moral law' of the absolutely rational self come to appear to be the law of duty or categorical imperative? According to Dr. Broad, "Kant's theory, roughly, is that the non-rational aspect of a human mind is the way in which such a mind inevitably appears to itself." And he objects to such a view on the ground that "Either what appear to me as my passive emotions and irrational impulses are *purely* delusive appearances or they correspond to something in my real self. If it be a pure delusion that I have irrational impulses it must be a pure delusion that I ever act on them, and therefore a pure delusion that I ever act wrongly. If, on other hand, these appearances do correspond to something in my real self, then it is indeed possible that I should really act wrongly at times. But my self will *really* be mixed; and there is no explanation why a self which is in fact of mixed nature should always be able to act as if its nature were purely rational."

1. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

2. *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, 4th impression, 1948). pp. 135-37.

What, then, seems important to point out in this connection is the fact that for Kant the particular inclinations, desires and passions are neither delusive appearances nor do they correspond to something in the real self, as understood by Dr. Broad. As we know, the phenomenal world, according to Kant, is governed by the iron law of causation. Desires and inclinations—in short, all that is not-self—are thus governed by the laws of the phenomenal world wherein there is no freedom in the sense in which we speak of this term in relation to human will. Thus, for Kant it is only in the intelligible world that man is his proper self. If an action is to be called free and moral, it must originate from this proper self; if, on the contrary, the action originates from his desire or inclination there is neither freedom nor morality. Thus looked at, the phenomenal world constitutes his *appearance*, the empirical 'I'. while the noumenal world is his reality, the transcendent 'I'. In the former he is acted upon, whereas in the latter he acts as himself. These are two points of view from which an agent can regard himself as free or determined according as he freely chooses to act or is made to act by forces alien to him. And this seems to be the reason why Kant held—and I think without leaving any room for doubt or confusion—that "what belongs to mere appearance is necessarily subordinated by reason to the character of the thing as it is in itself." What he meant thereby is not that desires and passions are delusive appearances, but rather that, as against the reality and freedom of the self, the agent under their influence will *appear* as something not his real self, not as a freely choosing and acting being. We must, therefore, rise above the realm of appearance, so that we may recollect ourselves into the realm of our timeless, immortal being, and recover our freedom and autonomy.

It has already been pointed out that, according to Kant as also according to the *Gītā*, desires and inclinations are phenomena characteristic of the *human* life. As soon as they are transcended, the soul attains its pristine glory and freedom. It is from this ultimate point of view that they can be called appearances—they are accidental. But so long as we are what we are we cannot treat them as purely delusive appearances; we have got to reckon with their force. If we have convinced ourselves that it is our absolute freedom that is the final goal,

there is at the same time the conviction that the inclinations and desires are from that ultimate point of view *appearances*, not from the present point of view, since we are not now what we conceive ourselves to be. Professor Stace points out how "all philosophy labours under the difficulty of having to express non-sensuous thought in language which has been evolved for the purpose of expressing sensuous ideas."[1] And the difficulty of Kant as well as of almost every system of Indian philosophy is the same in the present context. If the self is essentially perfect and free, how can it be looked upon as bound by desires and inclinations ? The only assumption made here is that although the self is perfect by nature yet the irresistible currents of inclinations often neutralize its power of determination, with the result that it becomes incapable of determining the activity by means of its power or freedom.

1. *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London : Macmillan, 1920), pp. 99.

Chapter VIII

THE KANTIAN AND THE *GĪTĀ* WAY TO PERFECTION: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

The observations of the last four chapters seem to force upon us, almost irresistibly, the conviction that what brings Kant and the *Gītā* to a common point of view is their insistence on the fact that, if there is in human nature such a unique element as rational self, its aim and function in human life must also be unique. As we have seen, for both its aim is its own perfection, and its function is to bring it about by its own means and in its own way. What needs to be pointed out here is the fact that, whereas most of the traditional Western philosophers had remained content with merely emphasizing that the goal of human life had to be conceived within the compass of man's essential selfhood, it was left for Kant and his Indian counterpart, the *Gītā*, to pursue the full implications of this vital germ of thought by unequivocally declaring that not only the *end* but also the means thereto must be sanctioned by, grounded in, and subjected to this essential selfhood.

Let me begin by pointing out that for Kant and the *Gītā* the human self is inherently perfect, and is for this reason the law of absolute Goodness unto itself—that from the ultimate point of view perfection, goodness and rationality are synonymous terms. If it were wholly rational in our *human* existence it would always and everywhere act out of sheer love for Goodness. But as we know, the conditions of human life as they are involve at the same time predisposition of opposition by the sensuous, emotional nature to the manifestation of this law in our actions. Every act in which we succumb to the powerful influence of our lower self, with the inevitable consequence of failing to respond to the call of the law of our real being, makes for our bondage. Thus the authority of our real self under human conditions is limited; its autonomy is always at stake, mostly in danger of being outraged by irresistible currents of emotions and passions, desires and inclinations. Butler was pointing out this very fact when he said, "Had it strength as it

has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."[1] But man's position in this world is *sui generis* in so far as he combines in his nature two heterogeneous elements: rational self (*ātman*) and sensibility (*kāmātman*). In respect of the former, he partakes in the divine nature, while in respect of the latter he is merely a servant of the 'natural law of desires and inclinations'. His uniqueness, therefore requires him to follow his essential selfhood. "Everything in nature", says Kant, "works according to laws. Rational beings alone have the faculty of acting according to the conception of laws, that is, according to principles, i.e., have *will*."[2] The question that vitally concerns our practical life and clamous for a just solution, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, is: If the human self is by its nature perfect and belongs, for this reason, to an order the law of which is different from, and independent of, that of the not-self, *how* can it throw off the yoke of bondage to which it finds itself subjected on earth ?

It has already been pointed out that for the *Gītā*, intellect, emotion and will, though products of *Prakṛti* or nature, can well be harnessed in the scheme of self-perfection. As Plato put it in the *Phaedrus* myth, the charioteer, the soul, must steer its unruly steeds—intellect, appetites and will—in the proper direction for the attainment of truth, beauty and goodness. Kant joins issue with the *Gītā* only to the extent to which he visualizes the possibility of the meaning and mystery of human life being completely solved in the effective determination of the will by the soul's law of goodness—the Moral Law, or what under human conditions would appear as the Categorial Imperative, the "unconditional command which leaves the will no liberty to choose the opposite."[3] Such a will Kant calls the *good* will in distinction from the 'holy will' or the 'divine will'. Obviously, it is the former expression that is referred to by him when he begins with the seemingly paradoxical statement in his *Critique of Practical Reason*: "Nothing can possibly be conceived in this world or even out of it that can be conceived as absolutely good except a good will."

What, however, seems necessary at this stage is the need

1. *Sermons*, 2. 14.
2. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), pp. 29, 56.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

to understand the philosophy of action which, in the words of the *Gītā*, is extremely subtle[1]; even wise men are often perplexed as to what is really action and what is not an action. Such an enquiry is indispensable to understanding and appreciating the concept of perfection which is the central theme of the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā*, and it is in this enquiry that a new outlook emerges on the meaning and mystery of human life, an outlook that constitutes the specific message of both.

To the question as to how work is related to, and productive of, the goal, the *Gītā* emphatically declares: "Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom, nor through renunciation does he attain perfection."[2] So long as we lead embodied lives it is impossible to shun work; activity is characteristic of living beings. Thus, any attempt to abjure activity is a revolt against the provision of Nature, and is doomed to prove abortive. Wisdom, then, lies in willingly acquiescing in, and submitting to, the rule of Nature.[3] Equally deluded is he who, for fear of being bound by the fruit of actions, seeks to abstain from work, since even in such a state he cannot avoid experiencing the turmoil of various desires and emotions. If, therefore, renunciation of work is impossible abstention from work is sheer hypocricy.[4] Work must be done, because it is the demand of Nature. Inertia or quietism cannot ensure liberation from earthly trammels.

If, according to the *Gītā*, neither is abandonment of work possible nor abstention from work desirable, it devolves upon us to seek our perfection through work. It is not in the renunciation *of* work, but in the renunciation *in* work that perfection of our true being is to be attained. What is to be abstained from is the tendency to indulge in the gratification of desires and inclinations, and what is to be renounced is the tendency of hankering after the fruit of the actions performed, but what is necessary is the performance of actions in determination to the law of our real self. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself says: "Therefore without attachment, perform always the actions that have to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing actions without attachment."[5] For Kant, too, performance

1. Iv. 16-17. 2. III. 4. 3. III. 5; XVIII. 11, 59.
4. III. 6. 5. III. 19.

of action in determination to the moral law leads us 'to sharing in the *summum bonum*'.

"Suppose now", he says, "that in this matter nature had conformed to our wish, and had given us that capacity of discernment or that enlightenment which we would gladly possess, or which some *imagine* they actually possess, what would in all probability be the consequence ? Unless our whole nature were at the same time changed, our inclinations, which always have the first word, would first of all demand their own satisfaction, and joined with rational reflection, the greatest possible and most lasting satisfaction, under the name of happiness; the moral law would afterwards speak, in order to keep them within their proper bounds, and even to subject them all to a higher end, which has no regard to inclination. But instead of the conflict that the moral disposition has now to carry on with the inclinations, in which, though after some defeats, moral strength of mind may be gradually acquired, *God* and *eternity* with their *awful majesty* would stand unceasingly *before our eyes* (for what we can prove perfectly is to us as certain as that of which we are assured by the sight of our eyes). Transgression of the law would, no doubt, be avoided; what is command would be done; but the mental *disposition*, from which actions ought to proceed, cannot be infused by any command, and in this case the spur of action is ever active and *external*, so that reason has no need to exert itself in order to gather strength to resist the inclinations by a lively representation of the dignity of the law: hence most of the actions that conformed to the law would be done from fear, a few only from hope, and none at all from duty, and the moral worth of actions, on which alone in the eyes of supreme wisdom the worth of the person and even that of the world depends, would cease to exist. As long as the nature of man remains what it is, his conduct would thus be changed into mere mechanism, in which, as in a puppet-show, everything would *gesticulate* well, but there would be *no life* in the figures. Now, when it is quite otherwise with us, when with all the effort of our reason we have only a very obscure and doubtful view into the future, when the Governor of the world allows us only to conjecture His existence and His majesty, not to behold

them or prove them clearly; and, on the other hand, the moral law within us, without promising or threatening anything with certainty, demands of us disinterested respect; and only when this respect has become active and dominant does it allow us by means of it a prospect into the world of the supersensible, and then only with weak glances; all this being so, there is room for true moral disposition, immediately devoted to the law, and a rational creature can become worthy of sharing in the *summum bonum* that corresponds to the worth of his person and not merely to his actions."[1]

It will, then, have to be conceded that morality proper comes into its own when, and only when, it is the direct expression, not necessarily actual fruition of, the act of the good will itself. Thus, an action is truly *human*, and for that matter *moral*, when it is the result of the self-legislating authority of the rational self alone. Thus looked at, morality is a practical discipline of *self*-determination, *self*-fulfilment and *self*-realization.

"We stand", Kant continues, "under a *discipline* of reason, and in all our maxims must not forget our subjection to it, nor withdraw anything therefrom, or by an egoistic presumption diminish aught of the authority of the law (although our own reason gives it) so as to set the determining principle of our will, even though the law be conformed to, anywhere else but in the law itself, and respect for this law".[2]

Nowhere else could Kant's view find itself more faithfully represented than in the *Gītā's Karmayoga* which defined as that practical discipline of morality whereby the human will, by gradually liberating itself from the sensuous self, can lead to the fullest consummation of the truth of our being.'[3] The *Gītā* says: "Far inferior indeed is mere action to the action of the disciplined will; therefore, O Arjuna, seek refuge in the discipline of the spiritual will; wretched are those who hanker after the fruit of their actions."[4] The path of the disciplined will (*Buddhi-yoga*) is the only available ray of hope for those who want to seek complete solution of the riddle of life through the help of action. Says the *Gītā*: "Here in this world one who

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's tr.), pp.245-46.
2. Ibid., p. 175.
3. VI. 18.
4. II. 49.

has anchored his will into the law of his self, transcends the fruit both of good and evil deeds. Strive, therefore, for the perfection of this law, since it is in its perfection alone that lies the key to freedom from action."[1] Arjuna in his spiritual blindness could not realize that what could cut asunder the knot of his doubt and resolve all his conflicts was not something to be begged or borrowed but intuited as his own truth. That is why he is instructed to recognize his own *svadharma*, and act in subjection to his own nature (*svabhāva*). The need to shake the wings of his soul free from the demoralizing influence of desires is impressed on him. He is inspired to regain his hold on the autonomy of his soul (*samattvam*) which for the time being has eluded his spiritual grasp. It is this need that is emphasized: "Better is one's own law, though uninviting, than the law of another carried out perfectly."[2] Every man has in him a unique impulse which strives for its fulfilment; all that Arjuna was called upon to do was to make it the mark and the measure of all his activity. This is what the *Gītā* understands by *sahajam karma*, and Kant by *moral* action.

By thus having affirmed the supremacy of the self as the sole law of action, the ethical idealism of Kant and the *Gītā* drifts, albeit implicitly, to a new direction. If I know that in acting in determination to the law of my self I expeience freedom, my moral consciousness from within provides me with the clue as to both the End thought to realize, as also the Means I ought to employ for the realization thereof. The discussion of the way in which the consciousness of the lawl eads us to the conception of the End having been outlined in the preceding pages, it only remains for me to point out here that every action determined from within is not merely an occasion for the expression of my self, but also a positive act of *self*-realization, of gradual approximation to a destination reaching into the infinite, as Kant said. Thus, the process of *self*-realization is immanent in the very act of *self*-determination—the latter serves as the means to the attainment of the former. The hedonists might as well contend that when the will of the agent is determined by the self's law of seeking pleasurable experiences, every act performed becomes a means to, or an occasion for, self-

1. II. 50.
2. II. 7.

realization. Two serious objections might be urged here. Firstly, is every such action *invariably* an occasion for what the hedonists might call 'self-realization'? All that can be adduced as evidence here militates against the hedonistic contention. Secondly, what do they actually understand by the expression 'self-realization'? According to Kant and the *Gītā*, as we have already seen, it stands for the essence of the self as at once the Good and the Goodness, and every act as determined by it serves as an occasion for greater and greater degrees of its perfection, so that ultimately it finds itself as perfect. Had the self been inherently bereft of such a capacity, we would have been mere condemned strangers to what the hedonists call altruistic conduct, and would have hardly objectively appreciated goodness even in those actions which we know run counter to our best interests but conduce to the happiness of others. If the hedonists have any point in speaking of 'self-realization' they must hold that the invariable tendency of seeking pleasurable experiences is the inalienable law of the 'self', and that every action determined by this law is the means to the ultimate perfection thereof, so that in the event of its fullest consummation the 'self' discovers itself as 'absolute pleasure' much the same way as, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, the self finds itself as absolute Goodness or the Moral Law. This position, we are sure, cannot be acceptable to the hedonistes on the ground that the self itself is not pleasure, but *desires* pleasure. But it may be asked: if the self itself is not pleasure, how are we to account for the hedonistic contention that all human beings do as a matter of fact desire pleasure? Kant and the *Gītā* would retort by saying that no man can, truly speaking, *desire* anything which he is not in reality, and that he desires something because it is in him potentially, but in desiring seeks to transcend through *action* the stage of tension by realizing it as his own in actually—that he desires to do good so that he may ultimately find the desire as actually consummated in Goodness.[1] The human self is a curious compound of the finite and the infinite, and the former has to be transcended through the discipline of the latter.

1. Cf. Bradley: "However, we say with confidence that, in desire, what is desired must in all cases be the self"—*Ethical Studies*, p. 67.

If, then, the only good which we are capable of desiring consists in the realization of the self as at once Goodness and the Good, it would be little short of hypocricy if we sought to perform our actions for the sake of their result. Of course, by performing such actions we can claim that we have displayed activity, but we cannot claim that in all such actions we have displayed freedom which is the very essence of our self. It is this alien law that is referred to in the *Gītā* as *paradharma*, and by Kant as *heteronomy* of the will. Hence for a genuinely good will the command of the *Gītā* is: "To action alone thou hast a right, but never to its result; let not the result of the action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction."[1] In a very similar vein Kant, too, holds that "the pre-eminent good which we can call moral consists in nothing else than the conception of law in itself, which certainly is possible in a rational being, in so far as this conception and not the expected effect, determines the will."[2]

From what has been said above it must not be gathered that Kant and the *Gītā* in their rigid insistence on the necessity of performing selfless action, enjoin the dismissal from one's mind of all motive in the doing of duty. What must clearly be noted here is the fact that disinterested activity in the literal sense of the expression is a psychological myth; and, to insist upon it in the name of morality is, in Śaṁkara's words, little short of reducing life to the form of meaningless drudgery.[3] Will and motive cannot be torn apart. But an action to be really moral must be such that the content and the authority of its motive are derived from no source other than what Kant calls 'the objective law of reason'. For the *Gītā*, as we have seen, the source and sphere of the action must be traced to the act of conscious self-determination. According to Kant,

> "Now it is clear enough that those determining principles of the will which make maxims properly moral and give them a moral worth, namely, the direct conception of the law and the objective necessity of obeying it as our duty, must be regarded as the proper springs of actions, since

1. I. 47. 2. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

3. *Commentary on the Gītā*, III. 1.

otherwise *legality* of actions might be produced, but not *morality* of character."[1]

Thus, what is actually revealed in the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* is not that the agent should empty his will of all motive, but that the *multiple* purposes of the deeds that fall to his lot in life should be replaced by a *single* purpose, namely, allowing the rational self a full scope for regaining its grip on its own law. "In this path", says the *Gitā*, "the resolute understanding is single, but the plans of the unenlightened intelligence are many-branched and multifarious."[2] With a view to determining the way in which this single purpose is to be realized, Kant and the *Gītā* turn to something immediate and concrete, namely, the doing of duties that inevitably devolve upon us all as belonging to a social order. Thus, there emerge two ends, one immediate and concrete, the other remote and transcendent, but they are conceived in such a way that the one becomes transmuted to be the birth of another. Evidently, Kant has the root of the matter in him when he proceeds to ask himself: "What are the Ends which are also duties ?", And the reply, most appropriate to the nature of the question, is: They are our own perfection and the happiness of others.[3] What Kant seeks to emphasize here is the fact that, although every person has his own perfection to pursue, yet he must at the same time see to it that all his efforts are not confined to, and shaped by, the conception of his own perfection but also extend to the well-being of others. "I am bound then", Kant holds, "to sacrifice to others a part of my welfare without hope of recompense, because it is my duty, and it is impossible to assign definite limits how far that may go. Much depends on what would be the true want of each according to his own feelings, and it must be left to each to determine this for himself... Moral well-being of others also belongs to the happiness of others, which it is our duty to promote, but only a negative duty."[4]

Strange to say, this double standard of morality—perfection of ourselves and the happiness of others—in Kant's point of view sounds quite implausible. As we know, throughout

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 249. 2. II. 41.
3. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 296. 4. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

all his writings he takes immense pains to deny the relevancy of pleasant consequences to the rightness of actions, and yet here he appears to contradict himself by declaring happiness to be one of the 'ends' to be promoted. The reason why he makes perfection the end to be pursued is intelligible, since it is, according to him, the very end which reason is innately capable of. But why he should lay down another 'end' which is born of inclinations and desires is incomprehensible. A few objections relevant in this context may be stated here. (a) If hapiness, on Kant's view, is an 'end' for me to promote for others, why can it not be my 'end' to be promoted ? (b) We have pointed out before that even in an action done for the sake of duty there is some motive. For Kant, as also for the *Gītā*, the motive in such actions is the attainment of perfection. But what is the motive in promoting others' happiness ? Why should I promote the happiness of others without a hope of recompense ? I cannot do anything even for me if I know that I shall not gain anything thereby. Simply stating that it is a duty to promote the happiness of others cannot make one to act in this direction unless there is the prospect of gaining anything thereby. And Kant does not tell us 'why' we should seek to promote the happiness of others. (c) Even if it be admitted that it is my 'duty' to do so, it can never be my duty to subject my will to the furtherance of an inclination. Since, *ex hypothesi*, promoting others' happiness has no motive which, on Kant's view, we have to realize thereby, such an action can only be blind which is certainly absured.

What, then, emerges from the above discussion is the fact that so long as Kant does not state the kind of motive necessary to actuate the agent to promote the happiness of others, he cannot reasonably maintain his view. Since, on his view, there can be only one motive —that of duty—to all action rightly called moral, and since every motive of duty has an end—that of perfection—before it, it must be shown, if his statement is to have any meaning, that by promoting the happiness of others the path of perfection becomes easier to follow. Though Kant has nowhere stated this, yet this seems to be the only intelligible reason why he laid down the 'end' of promoting the happiness of others *pari passu* with that of seeking one's perfection.

Fortunately enough, the *Gītā* is quite clear on this point. In quite a convincing and persuasive tone the *Gītā* seeks to bring home to us the social character of our duties calculatedly directed to bring about our spiritual goal. Every individual, we are told, is born with a particular station in his society. Of necessity, certain duties devolve upon us the performance of which is inextricably linked up with the attainment of perfection.[1] Naturally, perfection becomes the prerogative of one who has disciplined and enlightened his will by conscientiously discharging the duties that relate to his station, whoever he is and whatever is his station. It is not *what* we do, but *how* we do what we do that really matters. God cares more for the adverb rather than for the verb, more for the *how* than for the *what*. A soldier, for instance, has, in conformity with the nature of the work he is obliged to do, a determinate code of conduct set for him (*svadharma*). It is quite conceivable that at times the discharging of his duties may entail much hardship and unpleasantness, as in the case of Arjuna on the battle-field. But, is he justified in abstaining from discharging his duties on such grounds? Decidedly not, since the *Gītā* requires us to continue our work, in both perfect and imperfect conditions of life. Abandonment of work is not contemplated in the *Gītā* at any stage; absence of conscientious devotion to work, whatever it is that has fallen to one's lot, is looked upon in the *Gītā* as reprehensible.[2] The soldier who has willfully ignored the law of his being (*svadharma*) has forfeited the claim of his will to its autonomy; he has subjected it to the law and authority of some impulse foreign to the law of its own being, thereby allowing it, in Kant's well-known words, to be used as a means to some end which originates from the "heteronomy of nature" (*paradharma*). The *Gītā* cites three kinds of renunciation that an active man may resort to. He may renounce an obligatory act through delusion, but this is positively dangerous, for it will obstruct the manifestation of his spirit. Or, he may renounce a duty because it appears painful or entails in its performance physical suffering, but renunciation of this kind can never bring true happiness to the inner spirit. Only that individual is entitled to everlasting

1. XVIII. 45. 2. XVIII. 47.

peace of mind who performs his duty solely because it ought to be done, irrespective of any expectation of its fruit, pleasant or painful. Possessed of the autonomy of his soul, he never abhors a duty because of the disagreeable consequences the performance thereof may be attended with.[1] Such renunciation is true sacrifice, and such an agent is a truly renounced man (*sanyāsin*). In thus working in response to the voice of his true self, he finds his real happiness. Work is undertaken by him for the service of others, but without any hope of recompense. Service of humanity through performance of duty, according to the *Gītā* is the real service to God, and, from the ultimate point of view, a service to one's own cause.[2] Hence the scripture hardly permits the contention that "there is no logical place for social morality in a system of thought, the dominating conception of which is that of the identity of the self and Brahman."[3]

As gospels of action (*karmayoga*), Kant and the *Gītā* are convinced that a time is bound to come when the conscientious efforts of the aspirant land him in a supreme state wherein the constraint of duty comes to be superseded by the inner sense of spontaneity; the soul, having shaken itself free from the sensuous attachments, is possessed of its autonomy (*samattva*). It is thus no accident to find Kant seized with the unshakable conviction that man is a moral agent if, and only if, in all his actions his will is undeviatingly determined by the objective law of reason which is ever present in its perfection in every human being; but what he very much doubts is whether such a law is actively present in the minds of those whose actions appear to conform to the requirement of duty. He holds that, although many things are done in conformity with what duty prescribes, it is nevertheless always doubtful whether they are done strictly from duty, so as to have moral worth. In thus arguing, he was seeking to refute that widely prevalent assumption which may lead many to fondly believe that by doing their actions merely in conformity with the prescription of duty they are making pursuit of goodness a distinct mark of their lives, or, as De Burgh has put it, "There are those whose nature turn

1. XVIII. 7-10. 2. XVIII. 46.
3. John Mckenzie, *Hindu Ethics* (London: Oxford Uneivrsity Press, 1922), p. 95.

in free desire towards the good as the sun-flower turns towards the sun."[1] Goodness, for both Kant and the *Gītā*, is the will's own rational law, but for its proper nourishment, flowering or fruition it requires conscious self-determination. The state of absolute self-determination attained through such a practical discipline is what the *Gītā* calls '*naiṣ-karmyasiddhi*'—exactly what Kant, as we have already pointed out, understands by 'internal morally practical perfection.' But for both, it is something more—it signifies a state of living communion of the soul and God. The *Gītā* holds that *Karma-yoga* ultimately results in the flowering of spiritual knowledge.[2] But, what the specific character of this knowledge is will have to be determined by the consideration of the spirit in which the spiritual aspirant engaged himself in activity prior to the attainment of his goal. Now, according to the *Gītā*, there are two main springs of spiritual activity, and either of these can be made the motive for exertion. They are: (1) purification of the soul (*ātma-śuddhi*)[3] and (2) carrying out God's will by doing all duties as his commands (*Iśvarātha*).[4] Though the sphere in both the cases is the same, yet it is in the manifestation of the spirit with which the duties of each sphere are undertaken that the difference lies. What in the one case is looked upon as the duty to promote the welfare of others is looked upon in the other as service to God. In the former case the spiritual aspirant dedicates himself to the promotion of happiness of others (*sarva-bhūtahita*); his aim is to contribute his might to the bringing about of world solidarity (*lokasaṁgraha*) on earth. An attempt is, therefore, made to transcend the limits of the narrow, private self. Such selfless service of others is based upon the true self to rid itself of the false sense of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*). However much we may dedicate ourselves to the service and welfare of others, we can never claim much success in our spiritual mission if this sense of I-ness is not completely transcended. So long as it continues to hold its away over our mind, it will irresistibly militate against all our endeavour to actualize the real nature of our self, thus obstructing the liberation of the

1. *From Morality to Religion* (London: MacDonald & Evans, 1938), p. 39.
2. IV. 33.
3. V. 11.
4. III. 30; IX. 27; XI. 55, XII. 10.

springs of that inner spirit the realization of which in all its pristine integrity constitutes the *supremum bonum* of our life. But yielding to such protractions and difficulties is against the true spirit of spiritual activism (*karmayoga*). The *Gītā* encourages us to muster strength and put forth our best efforts, since "in this path no efforts are ever lost, nor is there any obstacle in the way of its coming to fruition; even a little that we may do in the spirit of *karma-yoga* will save us from great danger.[1] Conscientious discharging of all social obligations ultimately qualifies the aspirant for enlightenment (*jñāna*), which the *Gītā* conceives as being *Brahman* (*Brahma-bhūyam* or *Brahma-bhūta*).[2]

In the other case, the aspirant after perfection undertakes all social obligations with the consciousness of furthering the divine plan. All that is done by him is done for carrying out, so he thinks, God's will and command. He looks upon himself as a mere instrument, owing his existence simply for the fulfilment of the Divine will (*nimittamātram*). Here, as in the previous case, there is the attempt to do away completely with the sense of egoism so that all thought of arrogating to oneself the agency of all that is done may be annihilated, root and branch. The aspirant is constantly animated by the thought of God's grace and of the security guaranteed by him—"that no aspirant devoted to the divine purpose will ever perish". By his own indefatigable efforts and the invoked grace of the Master of his inscrutable destiny he directly qualifies himself for God-realization. While in self-realization the self discovers itself as the very essence of *Brahman*, in God-realization it attains equivalence with the Divine will (*sādharmya*). Whether perfection be conceived in terms of the former aspect or the latter, the self enjoys the unique bliss which is the characteristic of the Supreme Being himself.[3]

If what has already been said about Kant's notion of the moral law is any clue to his mind, we have little hesitation in stating that, very much like the *Gītā*, he, too, recognizes the two motives either of which can serve as the spring of the spiritual life. They are: (1) carrying out the moral law as the

1. II. 40.5. II. 7 2; V. 24; VI. 27; XIV. 26; XVIII. 54.
3. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

law of one's rational self; and (2) carrying out the moral law as the command of the Divine will. It is the former that he has in mind when he says:

> "The stage of morality on which man (and, as far as we can see, every rational creature) stands is respect for the moral law. The disposition that he ought to have in obeying this is to obey it from duty, not from spontaneous inclination, or from an endeavour taken up from liking and unbidden; and this proper moral condition in which he can always be is *virtue*."[1]

As regards the other aspect of the moral spring, it has already been pointed out that Kant believes that the moral law, as an ideal to be realized as in essence the very truth of the rational self itself, presupposes or implies a Being as the perfect, concrete embodiment thereof. The fact that the human self feels obliged to act in response to the rational law—as if it were imposed *ab extra*—leads us to believe that there must be the Divine Will in which it must be fully realized. Kant says : "When I now try to test this conception by reference to the object of practical reason, I find that the moral principle admits as possible only the conception of an Author of the world possessed *of the highest perfection*."[2] It has been pointed out before that for Kant both the human self and God are ultimately identical in respect of the characteristic of rationality. Thus viewed, both are possessed of perfection, although the former has to realize itself as such. If, therefore, the self under the human limitations looks upon duty as the divine command, and carries it out in that spirit, it makes no difference in practice. For the self still remains autonomous, since we are not asked to do our duty *because* it is commanded by God, but because it is *also* the law of our own essential belong: 'So far, then, as practical reason has the right to conduct us, we shall not look upon actions as binding on us, because they are the commands of God, but we shall regard them as divine commands, because we are internally bound by them."[2] And this, as we have seen, is how the *Gītā* makes room for the path of devotion (*bhakti*).

1. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
2. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Meiklejohn's trans.), p. 496.

It has also been pointed out before that, according to the *Gītā*, the attainment of the ultimate ideal is invariably accompanied by the unique experience of bliss which is the fruit and flower of the sincere efforts made by the self. Whether the attitude to action is characterized by the desire for self-realization or God-realization, the self attains what it is capable of by its very nature. But here Kant stumbled, and we regret his stumbling not because to a certain extent he breaks off from the *Gītā*, but because the concept of autonomy which is so vital to the fabric of his moral point of view loses all its meaning and significance. And this happens when he teaches that, although in the state of perfection the unique experience of happiness is the reward the self is entitled to, yet the difference in the *source* thereof is to be accounted for in terms of the spirit or attitude with which the final state has been brought about. A man, so he seems to have believed, who has made 'disinterested respect' the motive of self-realization and achieves through it the goal, will discover in his self itself the infinite and everlasting source of the unique experience of 'something like bliss' which 'is analogous to the self-sufficiency which we can ascribe only to the Supreme Being'. This is achieved when all desires and inclinations have been completely conquered and the self finds itself possessed of that 'inward freedom' on the dawn of which 'none of them, not even the clearest, shall have any influence on a resolution, for which we are now to employ our reason."[1]

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 259. It is strange that most of Kant's critics have misunderstood the sense in which he spoke of 'happiness'. Teale took him for a hedonist when he held that Kant "could find nothing that would explain that peace and contentment which supervenes on successful volition, nothing save happiness which he previously despised on the ground that it is essentially empirical", Op. cit., p. 224. Rashdall says: "We might ask in what, according to Kant, happiness is to consist. Happiness, as we know it, arises entirely from the satisfaction of desires, and happiness is admitted to be a rational end of action", *Op. cit.*, pp. 120, 130. After telling us that there is inconsistency between Kant's arguments for the existence of God and for the immoratality of the soul, Broad proceeds thus: "In the latter it is assumed that we shall not be morally perfect until we have completely got rid of the passive, sensuous and emotional side of our nature. In the argument about God it is assumed that the happiness, which is an essential feature in the supreme good, is not the mere consciousness of virtue but is something further added as a reward of virtue. But could we feel any such happiness if we had no sensations or emotions left ?", *Op. cit.*, p. 142. All these critics do not realize that happiness for Kant is just the unique experience of inner self fully actualized in the state of perfection.

This is the cherished goal characterized by the flowering of virtue in its fullest measure which "when considered in its complete perfection is, therefore, regarded not as if man possessed virtue, but as if virtue possessed the man."[2] But the question that is to be faced now is: Would a man, who has qualified himself for a perfect virtuous life through the performance of actions in the spirit of the fulfilment of the will and command of God, still find the *source* of happiness—happiness as the reward of virtue—in the actual dawn of 'inward freedom' of the self? Quite oblivious of the valiant efforts he has all along been making to defend the concept of autonomy as the fundamental basis of his moral doctrine, he now teaches, possibly to make room for devotion in the way in which the *Gītā* does, that happiness here must come to the righteous soul as a *reward* from God in lieu of all sacrifice that it has made. Kant continues:

> "The *worth* of a character *perfectly* accordant with the moral law is infinite, since the only restriction on all possible happiness in the judgment of a wise and all-powerful distributor of it is the absence of conformity of rational beings to their duty. But the moral law of itself does not *promise* any happiness."[3]

What, then, Kant in the critical moments of reflection failed to consider is the fact that, if virtue and happiness are not connected with each other either logically or by way of natural causal relation, inventing a God here would be directly opposed to the basic tenet of his moral faith. In fact, Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the self, carried to its logical implications, admits of no extraneous agency, and yet can meet all the aspirations of a genuinely moral life. We shall have the occasion to say something more in the concluding remarks. In the meantime we may note the fundamental principles which constitute the fabric of the 'moral religion' of Kant and the *karmayoga* of the *Gītā*.

(1) The belief that the means necessary for the bringing about of the end must be rooted in and derived from the self itself leads to the belief in the intrinsic worth of one's own self as the only law of action. This is clearly stated by the *Gītā* when it teaches: "Better is one's own law, though imperfectly carried out, than the law of another order carried out perfectly. Better is death in the fulfilment of one's law, for to follow the law of another order is fraught with danger."[1] After having maintained that morality pertains to autonomous willing, Kant records the basic principle in the following words:

> "From what has just been said, it is easy to see how it happens that although the conception of duty implies subjection to the law, we yet ascribe a certain *dignity* and sublimity to the person who fulfils all his duties. There is not, indeed, any sublimity in him, so far as he is *subject* to the moral law; but in as much as in regard to that very law he is likewise a *legislator*, and on that account alone subject to it, he has sublimity. We have also shown above that neither fear nor inclination, but simply respect for the law is the spring which can give actions a moral worth."[2]

It would be interesting to refer here to the common reaction of Kant and the *Gītā* to those religious dogmas which, instead of emphasizing the innate capability of the human self in the pursuit of the truth, preach only the doctrine of heteronomy, by holding out hopes of heaven, enjoyment and power. In order to appreciate the *Gītā*'s point of view in the present context, it is important to take special note of its attitude towards action. (1) It outright condemns inertia, as pointed out before, (2) It rates action motivated by the sensuous self much higher than inaction. That is why reclacitrant Arjuna is sought to be prevailed upon to fight at least for the attainment of heaven, if not for the fulfilment of the law of his being.[3] And (3) it regards as of the highest spiritual value actions performed in determination to the law of the true self: "One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one's essential being."[4] It is from this point of view that the *Gītā*'s God regards the attainment of heaven as no substitute and compensation for one's infinite worth and inscrutable destiny. "The undiscerning who rejoice in the utterances of the *Veda*, are full of desires, fasten their hopes on heaven, utter those flowery words which result in rebirth as the unavoidable fruit of their selfish actions. The understanding of those who are given to enjoyment and power, and are carried away by such utterances is not well-established in the self."[5] Kant shares this contention

1. III. 35.
2. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 58.
3. II. 37.
4. XVIII. 47.
5. II. 42-46.

of the *Gītā*, and even goes to the extent of characterizing such heteronomous Hindu faith as 'pusillanimous'. As we have already seen, he undertakes a thorough probe into all those theories which, although founded on heteronomy, claim to be called moral. All such theories are utterly useless from the strictly moral point of view, since they do not recognize the good will as the fundamental motive to human action.

(2) For both, belief in the goodness of the self, and consequently, in the determination thereby of all action is the characteristic feature of the moral life which owes its *raison d'eter* to, and proceeds from, the inherent opposition of sensibility to the law of the self, of the non-ego to the ego as Fichte said, of the matter to the form as Aristotle pointed out, of the *ajñāna* to the *ātman* as Śaṁkara taught, or of the *Prakṛti* to the *Purusa* as the Śāṁkhya maintained. Man is bound because, besides the immortal self, he also combines in himself the life of sensibility which, when encountered, makes us conscious of our finitude. It is sensibility which conditions the unconditioned and is the matrix of all discord and discontentment in the inmost of our being.[1] Once we have convincingly made the pursuit of pleasure the passion of our life, it is inevitable that we should suffer the nature of an insurrection. It was because of the inner termoil that the afflicted Arjuna sought to know: "By what is a man compelled to commit sin, as if by force, even against his will ?" And the reply he got is: "This is craving, this is wrath, born of the mode of passion, all-devouring, most sinful, to be recognized as our formidable foe on earth. Enveloped is wisdom by this insatiable fire of desire which is the enemy of those who seek the Truth."[2] Manu, the author of moral texts, repeats the same contention when he says: "Desire is never satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects thereof; rather it grows more and more as does the fire to which fuel is continuously added.[3] With almost the same degree of emphasis does Kant assert;

> "For the inclinations change, they grow with the indulgence shown them, and always leave behind a still

1. *Cf.* Bradley: "I *am* finite; I am both infinite *and* finite, and that is why my moral life is a perpetual progress", *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
2. III. 37, 39, 41, 43.
3. *na jātu kāmāḥ kāmānām upabhogena sāmyati*
   haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūya evabhivardhata.

> greater void than we had thought to fill. Hence they are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and although he can not lay them aside, they wrest from him the desire to be rid of them...Inclination is blind and slavish whether it be of a good sort or not, and when morality is in question, reason must not play the part merely of guardian to inclination, but, disregarding it altogether, must attend simply to its own interest as pure practical reason."[1]

Such being the attitude of Kant and the *Gītā* to sensibility, one need not be taken aback to be told that both advocate the suppression of desires.[2] Before explaining their point of view in this context, it seems worthwhile to point out that, had they so taught, they would have surely invited self-contradiction to their concept of autonomy, since the rational self under such an assignment must be heteronomous. Moreover, a soul desirous of promoting its autonomy, cannot then find itself adequately equipped to accomplish this stupendous task, since all mental poise will be irretrievably upset in the wake of perpetual conflict. For the *Gītā*, therefore, resorting to violent austerities is the only alternative people of demoniac resolves can readily and blindly lay their hands on to perish. "The men who perform torturous actions, contrary to the injunctions of the scriptures, with arrogance and egoism, impelled by the force of their desires and passions, men of immature minds tormenting the group of elements in their bodies, and Me also dwelling in their bodies, know these to be demoniac in their resolves."[3] In another verse the same view is repeated: "Beings follow the bent of their nature, what will repression accomplish ?"[4] What the *Gītā's karmayoga* enjoins upon us is the need to conquer the empirical forces of the lower nature by means of the law of active self-determination (*svadharma*). It would be equally wrong to think that Kant ever preached suppression of desires. In no uncertain terms does he deride and depricate what he calls "monastic asceticism" which foolishly advocates self-torture and crucification of the flesh. He is fully convinced that no amount of suppression can ever ensure that cheerfulness of heart which is indispensable to the cultivation of a 'virtuous disposi-

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.),p. 214.
2. S. K. Maitra, *Op. cit.*, p. 357.
3. XVII. 5-6
4. III. 33.

tion', and what he calls 'ethical gymnastic' consists in the continuous, sincere endeavours to promote full autonomy of the rational will, so that desires and inclinations may be subordinated to the self-legislating authority of such a will. Kant asks :

> "Of what sort is the emotional characteristic, the *temperament* as it were, of *virtue* : is it cheerful and *spirited*, or anxiously depressed and dejected ? An answer is hardly necessary. The latter slavish spirit can never exist without a secret *hatred* of the law, and cheerfulness of the heart in the *performance* of one's duty (not complacency in the *recognition* of it) is a mark of the genuineness of the virtuous disposition, even in *devoutness*, which does not consist in the self-tormenting of the penitent sinner..., but in the firm purpose to do better in the future which, animated by good progress, must produce a cheerful spirit, without which one is never certain that he has *taken a liking* for good, that is to say, adopted it into his maxims."[1]

For the cultivation of an autonomous will the *Gītā* recommends the discipline of detachment (*vairāgya*) and constant practice (*abhyāsa*),[2] besides that of active self-determination (*svadharma*). We are also asked to withdraw ourselves from the soul-absorbing fascinations of *Prakṛti* into the inner life of the spirit. This is the *yoga* or discipline of autonomy (*samattvam*).[3] "When one has conquerred one's lower self and has attained to the calm of self-mastery, his supreme self abides ever concentrate; he experiences peace of mind in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour."[4] We are also instructed to follow the path of self-restraint as shown by the Scriptures (*Śāstras*). He who forsakes the law of *Śāstra* and does every thing at the bidding of his selfish nature gains neither perfection nor happiness.[5] And let us turn to Kant.

> "The impulses of nature", he says, "contain *hindrances* to the fulfilment of duty in the mind of man and resisting forces, some of them powerful; and he must judge himself able to combat these and conquer them by means of reason, not in the future, but in the present."[6]

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), pp. 330-31.
2. VI. 35-36.
3. VI. 33.
4. II. 56, XIV.24-25
5. XVI. 23.
6. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 290.

> "It cannot indeed be denied that in order to bring an uncultivated or degraded mind into the track of moral goodness some preparatory guidance is necessary, to attract it by a view of its own advantage, or to alarm it by fear of loss, but as soon as this mechanical work, these leading strings, have produced some effect, then we must bring before the mind the pure moral motive which, not only because it is the only one that can be the foundation of a character..., but also because it teaches a man to feel his own dignity, gives the mind a power unexpected even by himself, to tear himself from all sensible attachments so far as they would fain have the rule, and to find a rich compensation for the sacrifice he offers, in the independence of his rational nature and the greatness of his soul to which he sees that he is destined."[1]

(3) According to Kant and the *Gītā*, a spiritual aspirant who has adopted the discipline of active self-determination will have an unswering faith in God as the objective ideal of his moral aspiration as well as in the immortality of his soul as the necessary condition for the realization of the goal. It is this which Kant has in mind when he says :

> ".....and admitting that the pure moral law inexorably binds every man as a command, the righteous man may say: 'I *will* that there be a God, that my existence in this world be also an existence outside the chain of physical causes, and in a pure world of the understanding; I firmly abide by this, and will not let this faith be taken from me."[2]

For the *Gītā*, too, belief in the immortality of the soul and existence of God characterizes the attitude of a *karmayogin*. "Amongst all the *yogins*, he who worships Me with faith, his inmost self all rapt in Me, is deemed by Me as the best *yogin*",[3] this is the view of the *Gītā's* God himself. At the end of the sixth chapter Śrī Kṛṣṇa holds out the assurance to Arjuna to the effect that an aspirant who persists in his attempts ultimately attains the highest goal. He realizes himself as the Supreme Self. However, if reality, according to the *Gītā* as also according to the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṁkara, is discoverable to man in the discovery of the self alone, it is quite possible that this

1. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
2. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 241.
3. VI. 47

line of reasoning might have been seriously received by the Saṁkhyas, the Naiyāyikas, the Pūrva-mīmāṁsakas and even the Jainas in so far as they held that all human selves are in their own right and essence ultimately real and that the highest good consists in realizing themselves as such by dropping out all those aduncts that eclipse their light. Buddha, however, went only a step further than this metaphysical mysticism by unequivocally declaring that all that could be said was first to reform oneself in order to qualify for that of which man is capable; only then could one talk about more.

The point to which it is necessary to draw attention in this connection is that Kant and the *Gītā* are unswervingly convinced that it is only actions determined by the law of our essential selfhood that can enable us to experience the bliss of that spiritual and universal life which will be born when the sense of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*) or 'dear self' dies. It was perhaps this conviction that irresistibly found its expression in these words of Kant: "The moral culture of man must begin, not with improvement in morals, but with a transformation of the mind."[1] A spiritual awakening begins to dawn upon us the moment we recognize that the real aim of our life consists in subserving the purpose, not of our sensuous, narrow self, but of a transcendent spirit in the discovery of which we discover a universal, all-embracing Spirit which manifests and fulfils itself in the cosmic purpose. It is because of this ever-growing consciousness that work attracts our will, not for its fruit, but because it will afford our spiritual law an opportunity for perfection. It is this law that progressively reveals itself the more our will is informed and disciplined through its own dutiful actions. It is in this way that a gradual yet a steady process of transformation of the whole of our nature sets in; life and existence take on another mode, action acquires a different meaning, and the whole outlook manifests a unique purpose. Our will no longer remains the slave of our bound, egoistic personality, but becomes the will of the Universal Will; our consciousness no longer remains confined to, or satisfied with, the gratification of this desire or that, but becomes the consciousness of spiritual happiness or self-contentment; and our whole being is no longer that of a finite personality, but one whose roots extend to an infinite life. As Kant puts it, "The worth of a character *per-*

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 356.

fectly accordant with the moral law is infinite." It is such an infinite life as in essence the moral law itself that Kant and the *Gītā* recommend us to attain. For those who aspire after such a life discharging all their obligations as their duties or as commands of God is accepted as the moral discipline, but in neither case are they to arrogate to themselves the agency thereof. The best way according to Kant, and one of the best ways according to the *Gītā*, to seek the divine life consists in so determining the will to action that it effectively expresses the law of the spirit, which is characteristic of God and equally of ourselves. What must be understood as the test of a strictly moral life is that the will must under no circumstances whatsoever be subjected to any other element than that which is peculiar to, and grounded in, our nature as human beings. And in so far as God is the perfection of such a nature, we can do all our duties as his commands. This is the best way of expressing our love for him, the way of true devotion to or adoration of our Master. And Kant could perhaps find no better words to express this conviction of his than these : "To love God means, in this sense, to like to do His commandments."[1] These words were given an unusually devotional tone as he proceeded in his writings. He says :

> "For nothing glorifies God more than that which is the most estimable thing in the world, respect for His command, the observance of the holy duty that His law imposes on us, when there is added thereto His glorious plan of crowning such a beautiful order of things with corresponding happiness. If the latter (to speak humanly) makes Him worthy of love, by the *former* He is an object of adoration."[2]

If, then, God is to be loved, we must love him by sacrificing all that is dear to our little self, and by doing all that which brings us near him. The supreme end before us is to lay bare the reality of our inmost existence and live in it as the law and life of our being, unknown and unexplored in our ordinary egotism and empirical vision. For those who succeed in discovering the secrets of such a blissful life there remains nothing to be done, no law is imposed on them, and their will becomes in itself a divine will. The chasm between the indi-

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 176. 2. Kant, *Op. cit.*, pp. 228-29.

vidual will and the divine will as felt before is bridged, and a deep, spiritual unity established between the two. Egotism and the attending sense of individuality are the creations of our false, empirical vision. On the dawn of the light of the spirit there is neither the one nor the other, but the spirit and its blissful experience. It is to this infinite life of pure spirit that the discipline of conscious self-determination—whether we call it *Karmayoga* or the Categorical Imperative or in its perfection, the Moral Law—leads us.

"Two things", says Kant, "fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within.* I have not to search for them and conjecture them as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence. The former begins from the place I occupy in the external world of sense, and enlarges my connection therein to an unbounded extent with worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and moreover into limitless times of their periodic motion, its beginning and continuance. The second begins from my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world which has true infinity, but which is traceable only by the understanding, and with which I discern that I am not in a merely contingent but in a universal and necessary connection, as I am also thereby with all those visible worlds. The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates, as it were, my importance as an *animal creature*, which after it has been for a short time provided with vital power, one knows not how, must again give back the matter of which it was formed to the planet it inhabits (a mere speck in the universe). The second, on the contrary, infinitely elevates my worth as an *intelligence* by my personality. in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent on animality and even on the whole sensible world—at least so far as may be inferred from the destination assigned to my existence by this law, a destination not restricted to conditions and limits of this life, but reaching into the infinite."[1]

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

When once we have discovered such a life the whole of our personality becomes the means and the mould of the law of the Universal Spirit. This is the highest secret (*uttamam rahasyam*) of the action which becomes the promise and potency of perfection of our essential law (*svabhāva*). The moment we have decided to make the attainment of this perfection the motive of all our action, our will finds itself irresistibly caught in a divine whirl-wind emanating from within us and sustained by our desire for divine attachment. There is no mystery about it, since we seek to discover ourselves in and through the exercise of our law in action. And

"when morality has been completely expounded (which merely imposes duties instead of providing rules for selfish desires), then, first, after the moral desire to promote the *summum bonum* (to bring the kingdom of God to us) has been awakened, a desire founded on a law and which could not previously arise in any selfish mind, and when for the behoof of this desire the step to religion has been taken, then this ethical doctrine may also be called a doctrine of happiness because the *hope* of happiness first begins with religion only."[1]

From what has been said in the preceding pages we seem to be driven, almost irresistibly, to the conclusion that the teachings of both Kant and the *Gītā* in regard to the nature of perfection, as also of the means necessary to attain it, are essentially identical. Both base their message of duty on a philosophy of life that emphasizes the ultimate unity between human conduct on the one hand, and the supreme ideal on the other.

But at the same time we must not lose sight of certain points of difference which can be easily discerned in their teachings. In the first place, we find a considerable difference between their concept of God. For the *Gītā;* God (*Īśvara*) is a representation by the human mind of pure *Brahman* which has no objectivity to encounter; it is the latter which alone corresponds to the essential selfhood. God, thus, is only representationally real. That is why the goal of attaining a living communion with him, according to the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā* and the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṁkara, falls short of the

1. Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 227.

ultimate requirement of religion. Śaṁkara, therefore, speaks of gradual advance towards the ultimate goal even after the attainment of the living communion with God (*krama-mukti*). For Kant, on the other hand, God is a personal being and the attaining of the 'harmony' with him is the final aim of perfection. In the second place, the *Gītā's* God (*Īśvara*) is not so much an object of philosophical speculation as the perfect embodiment of love and grace, freedom and bliss, such as the heart and the soul seek. Kant's God, on the other hand, is more a philosophical necessity than the inner need of the heart and the soul. In the third place, as has been pointed out before, for Kant only the discipline of the *good willing* can bring about the cherished goal, whereas for the *Gītā* all the three aspects—will, emotion and cognition—can be harnessed for the purpose. For Kant, love is at bottom an inclination and, therefore, not free from the tinge of selfishness. And lastly, whereas religion, according to the *Gītā*, is to be understood as providing the basis of ethics, with Kant it is just the other way round. For him, the ethics of duty alone can provide the basis of a sound religion. Apart from such a religion, all other religious forms are heteronomous. In fact, Christians criticize him on the ground that he subordinates religion to ethics. Fot him, the moral law binds man and God alike. Both are the ultimate grounds or conditions of goodness and the good—the ethical concern is supreme for them in so far as they are rational beings.

But it is because of his dual nature that man comes to experience the moral law in a way in which God does not. Kant believes that God's will is *holy* in the sense that it is pure reason, and so the very essence of the moral law or absolute Goodness. Man is divine or holy to the extent to which he acts not only in accordance with, but in the very spirit of, this law. We are called upon to solve the riddle of life, not through theoretical reasoning and metaphysical discussion, but through our supremely human capability. But where shall we search for the way ? Surely in the inner springs of the self itself, in its own law. Thus viewed, all our duties are our actions determined by this law. Hence the view of the *Gītā*: "Devoted each to his duty man attains perfection."[1] And, once we have taken

1. XVIII. 45.

the bold step of imposing the law of duty on our volition, every step that we thus take tends to bring us closer to God. Divine grace without determining our will to action through its own law is not possible according to the *Gītā*; nay, even hoping for it when we have not satisfied its conditions is a sin. A verse from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* says that "those who give up their duties and sit down uttering the name Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, are really the enemies of God and sinners. Even the Lord took birth in the world for the sake of righteousness". No less vocal in condemning such people is Lord Kṛṣṇa himself, who records his strongest disapproval of their behaviour when he calls them hypocrites (*mithyācāra*)[1]. It is with the fervent hope that every good man will endeavour to discover the deepest aspect of his being, first through his conscious efforts and then through the incomprehensible grace of God, that the *Gītā* concludes its teaching. And with the wisdom of the *Gītā* Kant, too, concludes thus :

> "Now we may divide all religions into two classes—*favour-seeking* religion (mere worship) and *moral* religion, that is, the religion *of a good life*. By the former a man either flatters himself that God can make him eternally happy (by remission of his demerits), without his having any need *to become a better man*, or if this does not seem possible to him, that *God can make him a better man*, without his having to do anything in the matter himself except to *ask* for it; which, as before an all-seeing being asking is no more than *wishing*, would in fact be doing nothing; for if the mere wish were sufficient, every man would be good. But in the moral religion...it is a fundamental principle that every one must do as much as lies in his power to become a better man, and that is only when he has not buried his innate talent, when he has used the original capacity for good so as to become a better man, that he can hope that what is not in his power will be supplied by a higher co-operation. But it is not absolutely necessary that man should know in what this co-operation consists; perhaps it is even inevitable that if the way in which it happens had been revealed at a certain time, different men at another time should form different

1. III. 6.

conceptions of it, and that with all honesty. But then the principle holds good: "it is not essential, and therefore not necessary for everyone to know what God does or has done for his salvation", but it is essential to know *what he himself has to do in order* to be worthy of this assistance."[1]

1. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 360.

Chapter IX

CONCLUDIG REMARES

The concept of perfection, as met with in the teachings of the Indian systems of philosophy, in those of certain Western thinkers, as also in those of Kant and the *Gītā*, having been dealt with in the light of the two questions—in what way has the nature of perfection been conceived ? and, what disciplines have been recognized and recommended for achieving it ?—it now remains for me, first, briefly to trace the relatioin in which the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* stand towards those of the various thinkers we have considered before; and, second, to make a few observations regarding the common approach of Kant and the *Gītā* towards certain problems having a close affinity with, and bearing on, their views about perfection.

Let me, to begin with, consider Kant in relation to Plato and Aristotle. It has already been pointed out that for both these thinkers man's peculiarity consists in the fact that he displays a characteristic type of behaviour by virtue of which he is to be easily distinguishable from every other creature, and that it is in the realization of this unique capacity that he can discover his *summum bonum*: this capacity is reason by means of which he is capable of *conceiving* a purpose and of *acting* accordingly. That explains the reason why for both these thinkers virtue consists in a life guided and organized in terms of rational activity. Plato was the first Greek thinker to emphasize that reason alone has absolute worth and is man's highest good in its perfection. Little wonder that the rational part of the soul is declared to be the essential part, and its realization to be the highest ideal. Not unnaturally, therefore, do appetites and inclinations come to be looked upon as something not merely to be subordinated to the interests of the rational self, but to be gradually got rid of through the cultivation of a purely rational life. Will must be subjected to the rule of reason, so that a life of virtue could be ensured. This is the highest virtue of justice or what Kant in his language calls 'autonomy'. "Justice", says Plato, "is the having and doing what is one's own". Inner

happiness attends such a life. Such a man will not be swayed by sensibility which, in Plato's words, is the prison-house of the soul, a fetter, deliverance from which is the ultimate goal of the immortal soul. So we ought to fly away from earth as quickly as we can, and to fly away is to become like God. Plato's influence on Kant seems to have been indeed very great.

For Aristotle, all human activity has some end in view. This end may be the means to a higher end, this to a still higher, and so on, till we reach a supreme end for the sake of which every other good is to be pursued. In what does the highest good consist? Aristotle points out that the goodness of a thing consists in the realization of its specific nature, of that which sets it off from every other creature. So far as man is concerned, it is reason alone that is peculiar to his nature. Hence it is in the unobstructed realization of his rational nature that man can attain the highest good. No activity, for this simple reason, can be called moral, and so truly virtuous, if it is not grounded in rational choice and determination. Man partakes in the divine essence in so far as his life in its essence and reality is one of pure reason. It is to such a life that attaches highest happiness man is inherently capable of.

The influence of Stoicism seems to have been equally remarkable. Kant's concept of the autonomy of the will seems to have been largely moulded by the Stoic influence. According to the Stoics, every man must do as much as he can to make his soul the ruling power of his conduct just as the Universal Soul rules the world. We must not allow our will to be coerced by those forces which do not help the soul stand steadfast in its integrity and determination. A good man of the Stoic conception will not be moved by any other consideration than that of duty. Kant's contention that emotions and desires are to be conquerred by subjecting oneself to the law of reason is characteristically Stoic in origin. The view that in man the divine principle of reason can be realized by making it the rule of all activity is shared as much by the Stoics as by Kant. All men are cast in one mould in so far as they are rational. Man, therefore, should seek his happiness in the law and life of reason alone.

And, lastly, the influence of Spinoza on Kantian thought seems to have been fairly marked. For Spinoza, everything

happens in the universe by utter necessity, so that there is no room for man to think that all that exists in this universe is specifically designed for his pleasure and comfort. He is a slave if his actions are determined by such forces as are beyond himself, and are not grounded in, and determined by, his essential selfhood. As we have already seen, in his view only those actions are to be regarded as really free that follow from the autonomous activity of reason. The well-known distinction he makes between the two kinds of spring of activity—passions and actions—finds itself readily accepted in the distinction Kant draws between the autonomy and the heteronomy of the will. The fact that human bondage is due to man's submitting to forces alien to his rational nature is a view that is shared both by Kant and Spinoza. Freedom, according to both, lies in 'self-determination' alone. Although Spinoza's God is the absolute principle, impersonal in character as distinguished from Kant's which is certainly personal, yet the former's conception of the intellectual love of God based on an attitude of absolute disinterestedness is reminiscent of the latter's notion of the practical love of God based entirely on the principle of rational determination of the will.

And now to the Indian systems of philosophy. Here we find a great deal of controversy as to whether the ultimate goal consists merely in transcending the realm of good and evil (*saṁsāra*), or in the attainment of 'something positive'. As we have observed before, the older Naiyāyikas like Vātsyāyana and his followers, the Vaiśeṣikas and the Sāṁkhya-yoga thinkers, certain Mīmāṁsakas like Pārathasārthi Miśra and the early Bauddhas subscribe to the former view, while the Jainas, certain Naiyāyikas like Bhāsarvajña and others, certain Mīmāṁsakas like Bhattasarvajña, and all the schools of the Vedānta hold the latter view. While the Jainas teach that perfection consists in the soul's realizing its inherent potentialities—infinite peace, infinite faith, infinite power and infinite knowledge—the Mīmāṁsakas of the view of Bhattasarvajña hold that the final goal consists in the actualization of the experience of bliss which is the very essence of a perfect soul. All the schools of the Vedānta hold in common with each other that bliss is the very life and light of the soul, but they differ amongst themselves as to the other datails of perfection. While the Advaita-Vedānta

of Śaṁkara regards the goal as the soul's realizing itself as *Brahman* itself, all other schools hold that it consists in effecting a living and loving communion with God, conceived as personal.

In the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* both the phases of perfection are clearly discernible. For the former, perfection, negatively conceived, means complete freedom from the passive, emotional self; positively conceived, it marks complete realization of the rational self whereupon one has an experience of something like bliss which we can ascribe only to the Supreme Being. On the negative side, the *Gītā* points to freedom obtained through action (*naiṣkarmya-siddhi*) whereupon all sense of moral obligation and egoism disappears; on the positive side, it speaks of the soul's enjoying eternal bliss in the state of perfection. Both Kant and the *Gītā* are in complete agreement with each other in so far as perfection is conceived as the soul's attaining its status as the very like of God himself.

What brings the two together so close to each other is their conviction in the ultimate triumph of the conscientious efforts of the good will—the will disciplined and directed by its own rational law. Man has a special mission to fulfil in so far as he is in his essence spiritual or rational; naturally, the highest good consists in *knowing* himself as such. This is exactly what Socrates meant by the term 'knowledge'—knowledge as consisting in the rational determination of the will. It is this act of rational determination as expressed in conduct that is virtue. Virtue in itself becomes the promise and potency of something we value more than pleasure born of the heteronomy of the lower self. For Kant and the *Gītā* virtue may require indefinite[1] time for fruition. Hence for them immortality of soul is the necessary implication of the moral life. One must not stop short of the goal on the attainment of which that which struggled hard from within is possessed in its pristine glory, bliss and eternity.

In the Indian systems of philosophy the belief that all actions, good and bad, invariably produce their appropriate

1. T. K. Abbott's wrong translation of certain terms and expressions has caused some confusion in the minds of most of the Kantian scholars. He uses the expression *Infinite* time while actually it should be *Indefinite* time. Similarly, the use of the expression *Unattainable* goal is not fair to Kant; it should be 'not easily attainable' goal. Dr. Broad has criticized Kant because of these confusions in the translation of such expressions.

consequences is expressed as a law, called the law of *Karma*. One falls in the grip of this law when one performs actions with an eye to their fruit. The reason why the *Gītā* asks us to perform all our actions in conscious self-determination is thus clear: they tend to liberate us from the blind mechanism of nature. And that is also the reason why Kant teaches that only those actions, and those alone, that are subjected to the law of the rational self can be called moral, human or good. He emphatically asserts time and again that a good will would not allow itself to be swayed by 'sensible attachments' or heteronomy of nature. Bondage must be the inevitable consequence if our will is determined by forces alien to the authority of the rational self. Reason, according to Kant, is the divine element in us, and by making it the only ground of determination of the will we make for the 'destination not confined to the conditions and limits of this life but reaching into the infinite.'

Some Indian systems of philosophy, like the Jaina, the Bauddha, the Śāṁkhya and the Mīmāṁsā, believe that the law of *Karma* is autonomous and requires no external agency to guide and administer it. On the contrary, certain other systems, like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, hold that it is directly under the guidance of God. It is argued that the stock of merits and demerits of actions performed cannot by itself lead to their befitting results; it is God, as all-powerful and omniscient, who alone is competent to disperse justice as demanded by the nautre of actions performed. In the *Gītā* the term '*svabhāva*' is used as equivalent to the law of *Karma*, and is declared to work as an impersonal moral law. "God", says the *Gīta*, "does not create actions or their instruments for men. Nor does he bring about the union of actions with their fruits. It is only *svabhāva* that prevails. The Lord does not take upon himself any one's virtue or vice; it is ignorance that veils knowledge and deludes all creatures."[1] In another verse the same view is repeated by the *Gītā's* God: "I am the same to all beings; none is hateful or dear to Me."[2]

Kant, on the other hand, seems to think that the law of action cannot work by itself, but requires some all-powerful,

1. V. 14-15. 2. IX. 29.

omniscient Being to administer it. That is why he deems it necessary to postulate God. His existence is regarded as necessary for the ostensible reason that it is he alone who so arranges things that virtue is rewarded with an appropriate degree of happiness. A man can be virtuous but it is not in his power to make himself happy thereby. God is the sole agency to apportion appropriate reward in the form of happiness to the righteous soul in accordance with the quality or nature of its past actions. That is the reason for Kant's not visualizing any necessary relation between the two, either logically or by way of natural causation. Hence God alone, in his view, can bring the two in a mutual relation.

> "There is", he remarks, "not the least ground, therefore, in the moral law for a necessary connexion between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to the world as part of it, and therefore dependent on it, and which for that reason cannot by his will be a cause of this nature, nor by his own power make it thoroughly harmonious, as far as his happiness is concerned, with his practical principles. Nevertheless, in the practical problem of pure reason, i.e., the necessary pursuit of the *summum bonum*, such a connexion is postulated as necessary."[1]

Now, it remains only to say something about Kant's suggestion that it might be reasonable to postulate the existence of a powerful, kind, omniscient God who so arranges things that virtue invariably accompanies the deserved amount of happiness. What, however, baffles us most here is the fact as to how God—however powerful and however obliging —can bring about the union of the two in a being, if there is between them no logical or natural connection. Both are, on Kant's view, logically and naturally incongruent with, and exclusive of, each other, and yet it is persistently maintained that both *somehow* be brought together. One is at a loss to understand how they can be brought together if they are inherently antagonistic to each other. It is quite plain that no such postulate can render the Kantian *faux pas* free from the implications of theoretical incoherence and logical inconsistency.

Let us consider the grounds on which Kant sought to

1. Kant, *Critque of Practical Reason* (Abbott's trans.), p. 221.

make such a postulate. A postulate, according to Dr. Broad,[1] is a proposition having the following characteristics: (1) it is neither intuitively nor demonstratively impossible; (2) it can neither be proved nor disproved either by empirical inference or by logical reasoning; and (3) to act as if it were true will achieve better results than to reject it as false or unwarrantable. These better results may be achieved in the form either of (a) augmentation of knowledge and gain in theoretical consistency; or, (b) addition to happiness, efficiency, skill, etc. The former aspect of the postulate may be called theoretical, and the latter one practical. We have already seen that Kant cannot justify his postulate as a means of augmenting our knowledge or causing more consistency or coherence in our ways of thinking. If happiness and virtue are neither logically nor naturally connected with each other, it is difficult to imagine by what miraculous device God can bring the two together in a harmonious or uniting relation. Either there is in their very nature a provision for a *rapprochement*, or both are inherently devoid of such a relation. In the first case, they will unite together out of their inner necessity and will, *ex hypothesi*, require no external agency to violate their innate characters; in the second case, not even God, however powerful, can ever effect them into a harmonious unity. If, then, the postulate is to be justified at all, it should be justified as a practical postulate. But even here Kant seems to fare no better. On the one hand, he teaches that in perfection the soul realizes the experience of something like bliss; on the other, he holds that it is God alone who brings about an appropriate degree of happiness as a reward to the virtuous soul. The two positions are obviously self contradictory. The latter position militates against his doctrine of the autonomy of the rational will which he is not otherwise prepared to sacrifice at any cost. Since happiness, according to him, is not the motive of a genuinely moral will, God is expected to do that which it does not desire to be done for it. The Kantian God, it seems, is no better than a *Deus ex machina*—an agent introduced *ab extra* to see that no virtuous soul goes unrewarded. But a truly autonomous self would care more for its unconditional worth and freedom than for external solicitations and

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 254.

favours. If even a righteous soul cannot attain happiness, as Kant appears to believe, it is incomprehensible as to how God can ever bring it about. "On this showing, morality would not even be a venture of faith, since its outcome would be so uncertain that life everlasting would not be long enough to afford more than a hope that the author of our existence may be pleased to crown with success an endeavour which is never quite adequate in itself. If that were all a virtuous man could hope for, that were all a righteous soul could expect, he might very well believe in the defeating hand of the devil, but he could hardly be expected to believe in the infinite goodness of a being whose existence is connected, not with virtue triumphant, not with moral success and achievement, but with moral frustration and everlasting delay of virtue's reard".[1]

In the context of this phase of our discussion it appears appropriate to point out that what, according to Kant and the *Gītā*, lies within the power of human soul is always to act in a manner that enables it to overcome the opposition of the not-self, so as to return to itself. And this tacitly presupposes a Supreme Being in so far as he is conceived as the Ideal of human aspiration which constitutes the very spring of moral activity, and also in so far as he is the creator and controller of all that is on the side of the notself. The goal of moral activity is finally reached when, by transcending the latter, the soul finds itself as, or equivalent with, the Supreme Being. That is the reason why Kant found it reasonable to believe in a world under the governance of a wise Author and Ruler, since without such an eternal, moral order 'the golrious ideas of morality would be indeed objects of applause and admiration, but not springs of purpose and admiration." Both the inner and outer sides of this eternal order must harmonize with each other, so that the transcendent goal may be realized—the former being the concern of the human soul to further, the latter the act of grace of God. In other words, what is contributed by the human soul must not be lost in the outer aspect of Reality.

> "Thus", Kant points out, "the moral character of men can never have its complete effect in their outward life according to the order of nature, but it may realize

1. A. E. Teale, *Op. cit.*, p. 219.

> itself fully in the world of spirits, according to spiritual laws. The unrevealed goodness of many an effort which is thwarted in its results by defective power, or again, the malice hidden beneath many an apparently good act, are for the most part lost, if judged by the effects in the material world, but, according to the idea suggested, they would have to be regarded as fruitful of consequences in the spiritual world, for in a world under spiritual laws, the connection of the private with the universal will, would be such that each free action would produce an effect and call forth a reaction in exact accordance with its moral character."[1].

If this is Kant's view of the mark and the measure of the moral universe, it is indeed difficult to imagine what led him to hold that none but God himself could reward the virtuous soul with an appropriate degree of happiness. One would, however, feel tempted to suggest that his view, when studied in the light of his conception of the moral universe, mightbe taken as implying that God's justice as an ordered moral universe is necessary for virtue to be accompanied by happiness as deserved by it. This doubtless is quite a plausible view, but, suprisingly enough, Kant does not allow any foothold, since, as we have seen, God is also supposed to be the 'distributor' of happiness in his kingdom. Indeed, Kant's anxiety to maintain the supremacy of God as the governor of the universe, as the ground of all goodness and the good, led him astray by inducing him to concentrate a major part of his attention on this aspect to the neglect of that other aspect which only emerges in its true perspective when we have convinced ourselves that our belief in the goodness of God is itself due to our sense of helplessness, and where-ever there is no such sense of helplessness we ascribe autonomy to our will. If virtue lies within our power to cultivate, the prospect of the attainment of happiness is certainly the spring thereof. The belief in God, we must concede, is necessary at a point where we think certain conditions, which lie beyond our control, may be secured, so that at the proper time virtue out of its inner necessity ripens into happiness. Thus looked at, the two are not to be taken as events causally related to each other, but rather as two successive phases in the

1. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin Academy), ii, pp.335-36

life of the perfect soul, the former symbolizing the outward flow of its infinite potential essence devoted to the conquest of all that restricts its inner freedom and consciousness, and the latter itself representing as the actualized being of virtue, the essence of goodness and the good. It is here that duty finds its fruition in

> "the moral disposition in all its perfection, in which, viewed as an Ideal of holiness, it is not attainable by any creature, but yet is the pattern which we should strive to approach, and in an uninterrpted but infinite progress become like to. In fact, if a rational creature could ever reach this point, that he thoroughly *likes* to do all moral laws, this would mean that there does not exist in him even the possibility of a desire that would tempt him to deviate from them; for to overcome such a desire costs the subject some sacrifice, and therefore requires self-compulsion, that is, inward constraint to something that one does not quite like to do; and no creature can over reach this stage of moral disposition. For, being a creature, and therefore always dependent with respect to what he requires for complete satisfaction, he can never be free from desires and inclinations, and as these rest on physical causes, they can never of themselves coincide with the moral law, the sources of which are quite different; and therefore they make it necessary to found the moral disposition of one's maxims on moral obligation, not on ready inclination, but on respect which *demands* obedience to the law, even though one may not like it; not on love, which apprehends no inward reluctance of the will towards the moral law. Nevertheless, this latter, namely, love to the law (which would then cease to be a *command*, and then morality, which would have passed subjectively into holiness, would cease to be virtue), must be the constant though unattainable goal of his endeavour, for in the case of what we highly esteem, but yet (on account of the consciousness of our weakness) dread, the increased facility of satisfying it changes the most reverential awe into inclination, and respect into love: at least this would be the perfection of a disposition devoted to the law, if it were possible for a creature to attain it."[1]

1. Kant, *Op. cit.*, pp. 176-77.

Thus, in the very obedience of the moral law there is contained the certitude that the spiritual action must give us the vision of our inner essence; duty must lead us to the inner beauty on losing its character in the spontaneity of goodness. It is here that we transcend the realm of deed and consequence, and withdraw ourselves into infinite consciousness. All our narrow, selfish interests having been abandoned for good, we find ourselves in tune with the all-pervading reality. It is this inner freedom that is the true requirement of our inner being, and nothing but that. And it is this very freedom that must be the means to its fullest realization. "Thus shalt thou", says the *Gītā*, "be freed from the good and evil results which are the bonds of action."[1] It is hope in the attainment of such freedom that sustains the aspirant in this strenuous task. Kant had this in mind when he says:

> "But naturally one who is conscious that he has persevered through a long portion of his life up to the end in the progress to the better, and this from genuine moral motives, may well have the comforting hope, though not the certainty, that even in an existence prolonged beyond this life he will continue steadfast in these principles; and although he is never justified here in his own eyes, nor can ever hope to be so in the increased perfection of his nature, to which he looks forward, together with an increase of duties, nevertheless in this progress which, though it is directed to a goal infinitely remote, yet is in God's sight regarded as equivalent to possession, he may have a prospect of a *blessed* future."[2]

But all this hope must rest on, and arise from, our will to accomplish what we humans ought to, as *also* on the firm faith that what is necessary for the fulfilment thereof will be readily available to us not because we simply desire it but because we deserve it on ethical merit. Belief in God's grace means, for Kant and the *Gītā*, no more than seeking the co-operation of outer forces with *good* willing. Hence their belief in religion as the conservation of human values proceeds *pari passu* with their belief in the omnipotency and goodness of God. While hope for the attainment of the ultimate goal of life would be

1. IX. 28; III. 19 2. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

the outcome both of *good* willing and the grace of God, yet religion, according to both, is to be called *moral* in so far as it pertains to the former. It is this very fact which the *Gītā* seeks to emphasize when it says: "There is nothing on earth equal in purity to spiritual knowledge. He who becomes perfect through *yoga* finds this of himself in himself in due course of time."[1] It is all a question of binding oneself to the inner discipline and growing in the ever-deepening process of inward freedom. Very few people awaken themselves to this inner need, even though, as Kant says,

> "the command 'we ought to become better men' resounds with its undiminished force in our soul; consequently, we must be able to do so, even though what we ourselves can do should be insufficient in itself, and though we should thereby only make ourselves susceptible of an inscrutable higher assistance. It must, however, be presupposed that a germ of good has remained in its complete purity, which could not be destroyed or corrupted—a germ that certainly cannot be self-love."[2]

The essentials of the concept of perfection in all its possible implications as encountered in the teachings of Kant and the *Gītā* having been discussed in the preceding pages of this thesis, what in the end I seek succinctly to point out is the fact—a fact which has most profoundly impressed me as a student of comparative thought—that the similarities between the two are so numerous and so close that no serious student can ignore them as mere accidental. Indeed, they are so impressive that they easily invite speculation as to whether the German Philosopher could possibly have been acquainted with the main spirit of the *Gītā* teaching. The debt, if genuine, would have been too great to receive acknowledgement from Kant on almost every step in the propounding of what he calls 'moral religion.' What has, however, always inspired me so warmly in the presentation of the problems of the present topic is the iresistible conviction that two powerful currents of thought—one originating from the East and the other from the West, yet separated from each other by a long period of time—combine together to offer in almost identical terms the solution of the meaning

1. IV. 38.

2. Kant, *Op. cit.*, p. 353.

and mystery of human life consistently within the frame-work of its capability. I shall conclude by quoting Mr. J. W. Hauer, a German scholar of Sanskrit. He says: "The *Gītā* gives us not only profound insights that are valid for all times and for all religious life, but it contains as well the classical presentation of one of the most significant phases of Indo-Germanic religious history...It shows us the way as regards the essential nature of basal characteristics of Indo-Germanic religion. Here spirit is at work that belongs to our spirit."[1]

1. *Hibbert Journal*, April 1940, p. 341.

INDEX

Aquinas, 1, 36-37, 43.
Action, 4, 38.
  disinterested, 2.
  dutiful, 58.
  moral, 143.
Activity, contemplative, 37
Adam, 35.
Adhyāsa, 14.
Ahaṁkāra, 9, 17, 77, 79.
Ahiṁsā, 10.
Aitreyāraṇyaka, 106.
Ajñāna, 14, 16, 84.
Aparigraha, 10.
Apavarga, 6, 9.
Apūrva, 11.
Aristotle, 1, 7, 25, 28, 43, 49, 167, 168.
Aristoxenus, 24.
Asurapravṛtti, 81.
Ātmajñāna, 8.
Augustine, 1, 34-35, 36, 43.
Aurobindo, Sri, 89.
Autonomy, 7, 50, 56, 98, 167.
  law of, 57.
Avidyā, 84.
Aviveka, 8, 9, 10, 77, 84.

Bhāsarvajña, 169.
Bhattasarvajña, 1, 169.
Bentham, Jeremy, 45.
Bliss, 6, 63, 72.
Bondage, 8, 10, 15, 21, 38, 75, 83, 86, 99.
Bradley, F.H., 144.
Brahmā, 113.
Brahman, 4, 13, 14, 15, 17, 75, 77, 79, 87, 91, 109, 163, 170, 173.
Broad, C.D., 153, 170.
Buddha, 160.
Buddhi, 77.
Burner, Emil, 62.
Butler, 1, 43, 62, 138-39.

Caesar, Julius, 82.
Chapmann, 36.
Charity, 39.
Chatterjee, S.C., 12.
Citta, 10.
Cittavṛttinirodha, 10.
Command, 176, 178.
Contentment, 63.
Consciousness, pure, 9.
  human, 11.

Datta, D.M., 12.
De Burgh, 149-50.
Democritus, 32.
Descartes, 37.
Devapravṛtti, 81.
Dharma, 4, 74, 105, 117.
Dhāraṇā, 10.
Dhyāna, 10, 21.
Disposition, virtuous, 58, 70.
Dostoesky, 101.
Duty, 12, 128.
  subjective and objective, 100.
Dvaita, 13.

End, 1, 6, 38.
  objective, 52.
Epicurus, 30.
Equanimity, 5, 15, 40.
Eudaemonia, 29.

Faith, 39.
  form of, 28.
Freedom, 53, 63, 96, 169.
  psychological, 53.
  laws of, 53, 54.

Gautama, 7.
God, 2, 5, 8, 13, 20, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42, 66, 67, 68, 70, 77, 86, 102, 112, 113, 114, 141, 149, 161, 162, 163, 164.
  intellectual love of, 169.
  disinterested love of, 40.
Good, 16, 50.
  highest, 29.
Goodness, ideal of, 104.
Guṇas, 76, 80, 83, 86, 91, 92.

Hauer, J.W., 179.
Hedonism, 50.
Heteronomy, 59, 60, 67, 95.
Hiriyanna, 12.
Hume, 46.

Ideal, 1, 5.
Ideas, adequate, 39.
Imperative, Categorical, 11, 47, 59, 162.
Inge, W.R., 71.
Iṣṭa, 12, 16.
Iṣṭasādhantājñāna, 7.
Iśvara, 78, 87.

Jīva, 18.
Jīvātmā, 5.
Jīvanmukta, 11.
Jīvanmukti, 20, 64.
Jñānayoga, 2, 106-111.
Justice, 167.

Karma, law of, 171.
  prarabdha, 11.
  nitya, 12.
Karmayoga, 2, 4, 16, 19, 21, 116-122, 142, 149, 150, 151, 154, 157, 162.
Kārikā, 9, 11.
Karyatājñāna, 12.
Kierkegaard, 15.
Knowledge, 9, 10, 25.

Law, moral, 11, 55, 56, 162, 164.
  divine, 91.
Lillie, William, 72.
Madhva, 13, 21-22.
Maitra, S.K., 12, 157.
Manas, 6.
Manu, 156.
Martimer, Bishop, 62.
Matter, 28-29.
Māyā, 5.
Meiklejohn, J.M.D., 54, 152.
Meno, 27.
Mckenzie, John, 72, 149.
Meditation, 10.
Mill, J.S., 46.
Mokṣa. 13, 112.
Mukti, 13,
—*krama*, 116, 164.

Naiṣkarmyasiddhi, 13, 87.
Nārada, 112.
Nārada-sūtras, 115.
Nārāyaṇa, 119.
Nature, laws of, 53, 86.
Nirvāṇa, *brahma*, 71.
Niḥśreyas, 7.
Niyama, 7, 10, 18.
Niyogasiddhi, 13.

Obligation, moral, 56.
Orphycism, 24.

Pascal, 104.
Paradharma, 145, 149.
Perfection, divine, 65.
  Upaniṣadic, 4-5.
  Nyāya-Vaisesika, 5-8.
  Prabhakara, 11-13.
  Saṁkhya-Yoga, 8-10.
  Śamkara, 13-16.
Phaedo, 26, 27, 99.

Plato, 99, 139, 167-68.
Prabhākara, 11-12.
Prajñā, 10.
Prakṛti, 9, 10, 18, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 84, 91, 92, 94, 105, 106, 108, 110, 156.
Prakaraṇpancikā, 13.
Prāṇāyāma, 10.
Prapatti, 19.
Principles, rational, 65
  empirical, 65.
Puṇya, 6.
Purāṇa, *Viśṇu*, 165.
Purification, 24.
Puruṣa, 8, 9, 18, 75, 76, 77, 79, 84, 92, 156.
Puruṣārtha, 23.
Pythagoreans, 24.

Radhakrishnan, S., 89.
Rajas, 80, 83.
Rāmānuja, 2, 13, 20-22.
Rashdall, H., 72, 153.
Realization, intuitive, 16.
Reason, 32, 50.
  universal, 32, 33.
  practical, 52.
Religion, moral, 165.
  favour-seeking, 165.
  law of, 15.
  perfection of, 100.
  rational, 50.
  proper, 97.
  preservation, 38.
  assertion, 38.
Sobriety, 39.
Socrates, 25, 170.
Spinoza, 1, 37-39, 168-69.
Spirit, divine, 35.
Stoics, 30, 32, 168.
Stoicism, 168.
Summum bonum, 128, 163, 167.
Svabhāva, 16, 98, 100, 143, 163, 171.
Svadharma, 16, 73, 117, 119, 143, 148, 157, 158.
Svādhyāya, 10.

Tamas, 80, 83.
Teale, A.E., 66-67, 72, 83, 101, 102, 153, 174.
Temperance, 39.
Temple, William, 72.
Thaeletus, 27.

Udyotkara, 7.
Upaniṣads, 3, 4, 8, 23, 105, 163.
  Bṛh, 4.
  Kaṭh., 4.
  Manḍ., 4.
  Munḍ., 4, 5.
  Iśa, 4.
Śvet., 4, 5.
Tait., 4, 5.

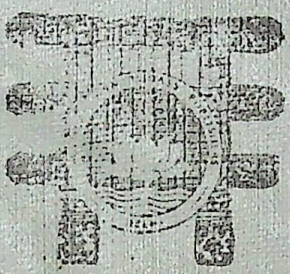
Sacrifice, 5.
Sādharmya, 85, 90, 93, 151.
Sākṣin, 9.
Śālikanātha, 13.
Samādhi, 10.
Śāndilya, 112.
Śaṁkara, 2, 13, 15, 16, 18, 86, 112, 145, 159, 163, 170.
Sāṁkhyapravacan-sūtra, 9.
Saṁsāra, 16.
Santoṣa, 10.
Śāstras, 158.
Sattva, 80, 83.
Sattva-śuddhi, 4.
Self, human, 14.
  Supreme, 82, 159.
Vairāgya, 10, 158.
Vatsāyana, 169.
Vedānta, 1, 5, 13, 16, 17.
Vedavyāsa, 112.
Vibhūtis, 87, 88, 93, 113.
Viveka, 7, 8.
Vivekacuḍāmaṇi, 16, 86.
Vivekajñāna, 2.

Volition, form of, 66.
principle of, 124.

Will, good, 16, 44.
autonomy of, 51, 63.
autonomous, 158.
animal, 53.
free, 53.
divine, 59, 60, 61, 62, 70, 126, 151.

World, intelligible, 97.
Yama, 16.

Yoga, 4, 10, 99, 177.
karma, 116-122.
jñāna, 106-111.
bhakti, 111-116.
buddhi, 142.
Yoga-māyā, 83, 87, 88.



G21
HAJNGALDAI COLLEGE CENTRAL LIBRARY