

*BHAGAVAD GITA' WITH SRI RA'MA'NUJA'S COMMENTARY.**

SRI RĀMĀNUJA CHARYA, born in the early part of the 11th century, developed the Indian System of Philosophy known as Visishtadvaita. It is a system, purporting to be the only fair, consistent and logical interpretation of the Upanishads, which had, ere the incarnation of Rāmānuja Charya, been known and taught by a succession of Acharyas, known as Bodhayana, Zanka, Dramida, Bharuchi, Guhadeva, &c., (*vide* Thibaut's "Vedanta Sūtras" Vol. I, p. 21). Sri Rāmānuja was born in Sri Perambadur, near Conjeeveram, Madras Presidency. Both by precept and by practice, he proved himself to be a philosopher of such wide purpose that had it not been for the mighty influence timely wrought on the Indian intellect, Upanishads had remained a shallow philosophy, and Hindu religion a narrow circle, with nowhere in its perimeter an opening for teeming millions of humanity outside who wished to find an entrance, and were anxious to be taken under its saving influence.

No aspect of Hinduism save that of Rāmānuja's, admits into its fold any and every one who is willing to subscribe to its cosmopolitan character.

The Upanishads contain three salient texts known as the *Advaitic*, *Ghataka*, and *Dvaitic*. The first set make a distinct declaration of the One Substance (substance being taken in the sense of Spinoza's *Substantia*); the last set, that of a clear difference between a Divine Principle and a subordinate Principle. The Ghataka texts effect a reconciliation between the apparently antagonistic texts, and show a harmony between them; and such a homogeneity, on the whole, of the totality of the Vedanta teaching, that a master-hand like Sri Rāmānuja Charya was able to handle them in such a manner as to astonish every inquirer who went deep into the subject. The three eternal co-existences, indissolubly intertwined and manifesting together as in the relation of a substance and its ever dependent attribute, was according to him the song of Vedanta. It was to him like a hill, one man cognizing but its one slope, another its counter-slope, but it was really both in one, to one who looked at both from the top. In vol. I, page 42 of the "Secret Doctrine," Madame Blavatsky, in somewhat involved language, asserts the same three fundamental principles as acting in everlasting unison with each other. Rāmānuja's interpretation is, however, carefully guarded by the enlightened Pandits of Southern India, till but recently, when Dr. Thibaut of the Benares College has, by his vast erudition and rare insight, discovered the real beauties of the Visishtadvaitic philosophy so that he speaks of it in an hundred places in no ambiguous language. It is a curious circumstance that when a European Scholar happens to come into contact with a certain phase of Indian Philosophy, he so runs away with it as to make him blind to other phases. Such is Prof. M. Müller. He and others think that Monism

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is the one proper interpretation of all the Srutis put together, but why an opinion of this kind is hazarded before a question is looked at from all sides, passes comprehension.

To enable the world, then, to satisfy its curiosity exactly as to what could be this Visishtadvaitic spirit and what exactly the light in which the famous Bhagavad Gîtâ would appear, the translators undertook a translation of Sri Râmânuja Chariar's commentary on this book of God-Love.

To give an insight into what the Visishtadvaita philosophy makes Sri Bhagavad Gîtâ appear to be, a short delineation of its teaching is here attempted for the edification of its readers.—

- (a) The Gîtâ teaches Param Brahma or Nârâyana (the esoteric signification of this word would cover a hundred pages of matter). How is this Param Brahma to be attained? By intense devotion—which means the highest concentration of the mental faculty on the subject, viz., the Universal Spirit, i.e., a subjective determination or focussing the whole might of one's consciousness, when all perceptive or objective expressions of a sensorial nature become shut out. How is this intense devotion to be attained? Gîtâ teaches that it is to be attained by means of one's own (1) *Karma*, (2) *Jnyâna* and (3) *Vairagya*, that is to say (briefly explained): (1) By right action, (2) Right knowledge and (3) Freedom from appetites. These three lead to devotion, and devotion leads to the realization of the Supreme Spirit in one's self.
- (b) Bhagavad Gîtâ is divisible into three sections each consisting of six chapters. The first six chapters deal with the clear exposition of what are known as (1) *Karma Yoga* and (2) *Jnyana Yoga*, in order to develop "soul-sight" (all psychic phenomena, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, levitation, &c., are fractions of the powers which are implied in the expression "soul-sight"). The middle six chapters and chapters VII. to XII. deal with the philosophy of *Bhakti Yoga*, or union with spirit effected by means of intense devotion, into which the antecedent preparatory stages of (1) *Jnyana* and (2) *Karma* (Right knowledge and Right Action) culminate. The last six chapters discuss the eternal principles of matter and spirit (the double triangles, or the cross) controlled by the universal spirit (i.e., the double triangle, or the six-pointed star, enclosed in a circle, or the cross surmounted by a small circle), and finish up by supplementing further information as to the nature of (1) *Karma*, (2) *Gnana* and (3) *Bhakti*.
- (c) Taking chapter by chapter, the first chapter introduces the subject of the work as at the instance of penitent (or postu-

lent) Arjuna, who was blinded and puzzled, not knowing between right and wrong.

In the IInd Chapter, the Sânkhyic knowledge or discriminative knowledge, showing that there is such a principle as (1) the eternal soul, (2) that all action should be performed with no respect to its ultimate fruit and (3) the steadying of the mind are taught.

In the IIIrd Chapter, the nature of Karma or action is discussed and it is taught therein that all action should be essentially desireless and should be for the service of the world ; it is either to be attributed to the Gunas (or the three Differentials of matter, viz., Satva, Rajas and Tamas) or it is to be dedicated to the fountain source of all, the Universal spirit and Lord.

In the IVth Chapter is contained the disquisition on the nature of Karma (action), (2) how an action is to be construed as knowledge, (3) the divisions of Karma, and (4) the importance of knowledge.

In the Vth Chapter it is shown that Karma (action) is the easiest done, and the soonest performed, and that it has several aspects. The chapter closes with teaching the kind of knowledge with particular reference to Brahma.

In the VIth Chapter is taught how to perform Yoga (*i.e.*, the training of the will-power to attain a certain super-sensuous experience in the domain of spirit; that Yogis (or auto-hypnotists), are of four classes aiming at the preliminaries of Yoga, the accomplishment of Yoga and the ultimate stage of Yoga.

In the VIIth Chapter, the nature of Divinity, its occultation by materiality, the nature of self-surrender, the classes of devotees, the superiority of that devotee who is illuminated, are treated of.

The VIIIth Chapter expounds what is necessary to be known, and what is necessary to be retained by those who severally aspire after (1) temporal power, riches, &c.; (2) soul-cognition; and (3) finding of Bhagavan, or the Sublime spirit.

In the IXth Chapter is taught the mystery of Avatars, or descent of spirit into (matter) human shape, and the peculiar nature of Mahatmas—closing up with a glimpse of Bhakti.

In the Xth Chapter are shown at length the glorious attributes of Divinity, and the dependence of all things on the spirit, with a view to rouse and stimulate devout faith.

The XIth Chapter speaks of the "Divyachakshu" or the "Divya Drishti," in other words, the celestial sight, which would enable Arjuna to realize the Divine in Cosmic Manifestation, or to penetrate the spiritual mystery veiled under the external objective display ordinarily perceived by the Material senses; and of Bhakti,—devout Meditation—it being the singular means for knowing and attaining the spirit-centre.

The XIIth Chapter is especially devoted to Bhakti, showing its pre-eminence over all other paths to Salvation, showing it as the means; recommending other means to one who is unable to use Bhakti (viz., *Karma and Jnyāna* described in the first section of six chapters) as means which would lead as far as the door of the Outer Court of the Spiritual Temple; then are described the qualifications required for such candidates; the chapter winding up with a statement of the Love which the Spirit has for its devotees.

This completes the middle section, viz., that beginning with the seventh and ending with the twelfth chapter.

As stated before, the last section comprising six chapters, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII, supplies additional information to the subjects treated of in the previous two sections.

Taking now the last section, the chief topics discussed in the several chapters are in order.

XIIIth, (1) the nature of the body, (or the tabernacle of the soul); (2) the reason why soul should be attained; (3) the examination of soul-essence; (4) the causes which lead to bondage or union with matter; (5) and the method of regarding soul as contradistinguished from matter.

XIVth. This is a chapter on *Gunās* or the characteristics of matter-stuff. It treats on (1) how the *Gunās* are the prime causes of bondage; (2) the active impulse generating therefrom; (3) how to overcome it; the chapter finishing with the teaching that (4) the Supreme Spirit is the grantor of all that man aspires after, which is classifiable under the three main heads of a "material happiness," "soul-cognition" and "Divine Communion."

XVth treats of the Divine essence, the Transcendental Supreme Spiritual *Substantia*, described as "Purushottama," or the Highest person; who is, firstly, different from the compound known as the "non-intelligent" matter-stuff and, secondly, different from the pure "intelligent" soul-stuff; the difference consisting in that the Divine essence is possessed of the functions of *all-pervasive sustenance*, and the being the *master-owner* of all. This chapter is the crux of the Visishtadvaita Philosophy, and distinctly affirms, in quite unambiguous style, the three eternal verities, or the "three fundamental principles" of the "Secret Doctrine."

The XVIth Chapter is a treatise on Good and Evil Natures, called the Devic (angelic) and the Asuric (or Satanic) natures. By an exposition of this kind, the object sought to be secured is submission to Law, so that knowledge attained of eternal truths and righteous conduct may both have stability.

The XVIIth is an explanation that all that is Asuric is repugnant to Law, and that what harmonizes with Law is, by its distinguishing characteristic, of a three-fold kind.

The XVIIIth Chapter is the summing up of the main purport of the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā, showing that the mind is to be so

educated and trained as to perceive all action as emerging from a Divine-Source, (2) that *satva* is the one quality which is fit to be cultivated and acquired, and (3) that the culmination or fruit of all acts and deeds performed are but several modes of Divine Worship, and to be found in the union with Divine Essence. This constitutes the science of Bhakti or Spiritual Love. Union, intense and for all time to come, as taught in the Gîtâ.

It would be out of place to go into details of the Visishtadvaitic ring which many a verse in the body of Bhagavad Gîtâ truly has, as all that, clearly appears in its own legitimate place in the Commentaries now translated and which will be shortly available to the public.

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[EDITOR'S NOTE.—It will be highly profitable to every student of the sublime Bhagavad Gîtâ to make himself familiar with the different interpretations given it by the three principal schools of Indian Philosophic exegesis known as the Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita. In the exposition of their views the Advaitis have hitherto been by far the most busy; the others seeming to be inclined to keep their teachings to themselves. For this reason, the translation of Râmânuja's Commentary on the glorious book is both a timely and a valuable work of love. The revision to which the MS. will be exposed at the hands of our learned friend and colleague, Yogi Parthasarathy Iyengar, F. T. S., will enhance its usefulness to the interested student.]

THE PLANETARY CHAIN.

(Concluded from page 395.)

JUST as the seven globes of the Earth-Chain represent seven stages through which the earth passes in its evolution, so there are seven greater stages in evolution which constitute the seven Rounds of the Chain. For it is taught in the "Secret Doctrine" that the tide of evolution passes seven times round the series of globes, so that the passage for the first time through the seven stages constitutes the first Round, the passage for the second time the Second Round, and so on. We cannot conceive of the seven Rounds as being exactly similar, partly because, were they so, there would be a waste of energy in going seven times over the same ground, and partly because we always find that there is an analogy between the various cycles, the less being a reflection, so to speak, of the greater. Therefore the progress through the seven Rounds may be thought of as a spiral, each Round being on a different plane from the preceding one, and being connected with a different stage of development. And as a correspondence has been traced between the cosmic planes and the globes, so there is a similar correspondence between the cosmic planes and the Rounds. Here again it will be only with the four lower planes that the correspondence can