

Swabhava and Swadharma¹

IT IS then by a liberating development of the soul out of this lower nature of the triple gunas into the supreme divine nature beyond the three gunas that we can best arrive at spiritual perfection and freedom. And this again can best be brought about by an anterior development of the predominance of the highest sattwic quality to a point at which sattwa also is overpassed, mounts beyond its own limitations and breaks up into a supreme freedom, absolute light, serene power of the conscious spirit in which there is no determination by conflicting gunas. A highest sattwic faith and aim new-shaping what we are according to the highest mental conception of our inner possibilities that we can form in the free intelligence, is changed by this transition into a vision of our own real being, a spiritual self-knowledge. A loftiest ideality or standard of dharma, a pursuit of the right law of our natural existence, is transformed into a free assured self-existent perfection in which all dependence on standards is transcended and the spontaneous law of the immortal self and spirit displaces the lower rule of the instruments and members. The sattwic mind and will change into that spiritual knowledge and dynamic power of identical existence in which the whole nature puts off its disguise and becomes a free self-expression of the godhead within it. The sattwic doer becomes the Jiva in contact with his source, united with the Purushottama; he is no longer the personal doer of the act, but a spiritual channel of the works of the transcendent and universal Spirit. His natural being transformed and illumined remains to be the instrument of a universal and impersonal action, the bow of the divine Archer. What was sattwic action becomes the free activity of the perfected nature in which there is no longer any personal

¹ Gita, XVIII. 40-48.

limitation, any tethering to this or that quality, any bondage of sin and virtue, self and others or any but a supreme spiritual self-determination. That is the culmination of works uplifted to the sole Divine Worker by a God-seeking and spiritual knowledge.

But there is still an incidental question of great importance in the old Indian system of culture and, even apart from that antique view, of considerable general importance, on which we have had some passing pronouncements already by the Gita and which now falls into its proper place. All action on the normal level is determined by the gunas; the action which is to be done, *kartavyam karma*, takes the triple form of giving, askesis and sacrifice, and any or all of these three may assume the character of any of the gunas. Therefore we have to proceed by the raising of these things to the highest sattwic height of which they are capable and go yet farther beyond to a largeness in which all works become a free self-giving, an energy of the divine Tapas, a perpetual sacrament of the spiritual existence. But this is a general law and all these considerations have been the enunciation of quite general principles and refer indiscriminately to all actions and to all men alike. All can eventually arrive by spiritual evolution to this strong discipline, this large perfection, this highest spiritual state. But while the general rule of mind and action is the same for all men, we see too that there is a constant law of variation and each individual acts not only according to the common laws of the human spirit, mind, will, life, but according to his own nature; each man fulfils different functions or follows a different bent according to the rule of his own circumstances, capacities, turn, character, powers. What place is to be assigned to this variation, this individual rule of nature in the spiritual discipline?

The Gita has laid some stress on this point and even assigned to it a great preliminary importance. At the very start it has spoken of the nature, rule and function of the Kshatriya as Arjuna's own law of action, *svadharma*;² it has proceeded to lay it down with a striking emphasis that one's own nature, rule,

² II. 31. *svadharmam api cāvekṣya*.

function should be observed and followed, — even if defective, it is better than the well-performed rule of another's nature. Death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement. To follow the law of another's nature is dangerous to the soul,³ contradictory, as we may say, to the natural way of his evolution, a thing mechanically imposed and therefore imported, artificial and sterilising to one's growth towards the true stature of the spirit. What comes out of the being is the right and healthful thing, the authentic movement, not what is imposed on it from outside or laid on it by life's compulsions or the mind's error. This swadharma is of four general kinds formulated outwardly in the action of the four orders of the old Indian social culture, *cāturvarṇya*. That system corresponds, says the Gita, to a divine law, it "was created by me according to the divisions of the gunas and works," — created from the beginning by the Master of existence. In other words, there are four distinct orders of the active nature, or four fundamental types of the soul in nature, *svabhāva*, and the work and proper function of each human being corresponds to his type of nature. This is now finally explained in preciser detail. The works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, says the Gita, are divided according to the qualities (*gunas*) born of their own inner nature, spiritual temperament, essential character (*svabhāva*). Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of spiritual truth are the work of the Brahmin, born of his swabhava. Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving, lordship (*īśvara-bhāva*, the temperament of the ruler and leader) are the natural work of the Kshatriya. Agriculture, cattle-keeping, trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the Vaishya. All work of the character of service falls within the natural function of the Shudra. A man, it goes on to say, who devotes himself to his own natural work in life acquires spiritual perfection, not indeed by the mere act itself, but if he does it with right knowledge and the right motive, if he

³ III. 35.

can make it a worship of the Spirit of this creation and dedicate it sincerely to the Master of the universe from whom is all impulse to action. All labour, all action and function, whatever it be, can be consecrated by this dedication of works, can convert the life into a self-offering to the Godhead within and without us and is itself converted into a means of spiritual perfection. But a work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, even though it may look better from the outside when judged by an external and mechanical standard or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth precisely because it has an external motive and a mechanical impulsion. One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective. One does not incur sin or stain when one acts in the true spirit of the work and in agreement with the law of one's own nature. All action in the three gunas is imperfect, all human work is subject to fault, defect or limitation; but that should not make us abandon our own proper work and natural function. Action should be rightly regulated action, *niyatam karma*, but intrinsically one's own, evolved from within, in harmony with the truth of one's being, regulated by the Swabhava, *svabhāva-niyatam karma*.

What precisely is the intention of the Gita? Let us take it first in its more outward meaning and consider the tinge given to the principle it enounces by the ideas of the race and the time — the hue of the cultural environment, the ancient significance. These verses and the earlier pronouncements of the Gita on the same subject have been seized upon in current controversies on the caste question and interpreted by some as a sanction of the present system, used by others as a denial of the hereditary basis of caste. In point of fact the verses in the Gita have no bearing on the existing caste system, because that is a very different thing from the ancient social ideal of *caturvarṇa*, the four clear-cut orders of the Aryan community, and in no way corresponds with the description of the Gita. Agriculture, cattle-keeping and trade of every kind are said here to be the work of the Vaishya; but in the later system the majority of those concerned in trade and in cattle-keeping, artisans, small craftsmen and others are

actually classed as Shudras, — where they are not put altogether outside the pale, — and, with some exceptions, the merchant class is alone and that too not everywhere ranked as Vaishya. Agriculture, government and service are the professions of all classes from the Brahmin down to the Shudra. And if the economical divisions of function have been confounded beyond any possibility of rectification, the law of the guna or quality is still less a part of the later system. There all is rigid custom, *ācāra*, with no reference to the need of the individual nature. If again we take the religious side of the contention advanced by the advocates of the caste system, we can certainly fasten no such absurd idea on the words of the Gita as that it is a law of a man's nature that he shall follow without regard to his personal bent and capacities the profession of his parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a milkman be a milkman, the son of a doctor a doctor, the descendants of shoemakers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time, still less that by doing so, by this unintelligent and mechanical repetition of the law of another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities a man automatically farther his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom. The Gita's words refer to the ancient system of *caturvarṇa*, as it existed or was supposed to exist in its ideal purity, — there is some controversy whether it was ever anything more than an ideal or general norm more or less loosely followed in practice, — and it should be considered in that connection alone. Here too there is considerable difficulty as to the exact outward significance.

The ancient system of the four orders had a triple aspect; it took a social and economic, a cultural and a spiritual appearance. On the economic side it recognised four functions of the social man in the community, the religious and intellectual, the political, the economic and the servile functions. There are thus four kinds of work, the work of religious ministrations, letters, learning and knowledge, the work of government, politics, administration and war, the work of production, wealth-making and exchange, the work of hired labour and service. An endeavour was made to found and stabilise the whole arrangement

of society on the partition of these four functions among four clearly marked classes. This system was not peculiar to India, but was with certain differences the dominating feature of a stage of social evolution in other ancient or mediaeval societies. The four functions are still inherent in the life of all normal communities, but the clear divisions no longer exist anywhere. The old system everywhere broke down and gave place to a more fluid order or, as in India, to a confused and complex social rigidity and economic immobility degenerating towards a chaos of castes. Along with this economic division there existed the association of a cultural idea which gave to each class its religious custom, its law of honour, ethical rule, suitable education and training, type of character, family ideal and discipline. The facts of life did not always correspond to the idea, — there is always a certain gulf found between the mental ideal and the vital and physical practice, — but there was a constant and strenuous endeavour to keep up as much as possible a real correspondence. The importance of this attempt and of the cultural ideal and atmosphere it created in the past training of the social man, can hardly be put too high; but at the present day it has little more than a historical, a past and evolutionary significance. Finally, wherever this system existed, it was given more or less a religious sanction (more in the East, very little in Europe) and in India a profounder spiritual use and significance. This spiritual significance is the real kernel of the teaching of the Gita.

The Gita found this system in existence and its ideal in possession of the Indian mind and it recognised and accepted both the ideal and system and its religious sanction. “The fourfold order was created by me,” says Krishna, “according to the divisions of quality and active function.” On the mere strength of this phrase it cannot altogether be concluded that the Gita regarded this system as an eternal and universal social order. Other ancient authorities did not so regard it; rather they distinctly state that it did not exist in the beginning and will collapse in a later age of the cycle. Still we may understand from the phrase that the fourfold function of social man was considered as normally inherent in the psychological and economic needs

of every community and therefore a dispensation of the Spirit that expresses itself in the human corporate and individual existence. The Gita's line is in fact an intellectual rendering of the well-known symbol in the Vedic Purusha-Sukta. But what then should be the natural basis and form of practice of these functions? The practical basis in ancient times came to be the hereditary principle. A man's social function and position were no doubt determined originally, as they are still in freer, less closely ordered communities by environment, occasion, birth and capacity; but as there set in a more fixed stratification, his rank came practically to be regulated by birth mainly or alone and in the later system of caste birth came to be the sole rule of status. The son of a Brahmin is always a Brahmin in status, though he may have nothing of the typical Brahmin qualities or character, no intellectual training or spiritual experience or religious worth or knowledge, no connection whatever with the right function of his class, no Brahminhood in his work and no Brahminhood in his nature.

This was an inevitable evolution, because the external signs are the only ones which are easily and conveniently determinable and birth was the most handy and manageable in an increasingly mechanised, complex and conventional social order. For a time the possible disparity between the hereditary fiction and the individual's real inborn character and capacity was made up or minimised by education and training; but eventually this effort ceased to be sustained and the hereditary convention held absolute rule. The ancient lawgivers, while recognising the hereditary practice, insisted that quality, character and capacity were the one sound and real basis and that without them the hereditary social status became an unspiritual falsehood because it had lost its true significance. The Gita too, as always, founds its thought on the inner significance. It speaks indeed in one verse of the work born with a man, *sahajam karma*; but this does not in itself imply a hereditary basis. According to the Indian theory of rebirth, which the Gita recognises, a man's inborn nature and course of life are essentially determined by his own past lives, are the self-development already effected by his past

actions and mental and spiritual evolution and cannot depend solely on the material factor of his ancestry, parentage, physical birth, which can only be of subordinate moment, one effective sign perhaps, but not the dominant principle. The word *sahaja* means that which is born with us, whatever is natural, inborn, innate; its equivalent in all other passages is *svabhāvaja*. The work or function of a man is determined by his qualities, *karma* is determined by *guṇa*; it is the work born of his Swabhava, *svabhāvajaṁ karma*, and regulated by his Swabhava, *svabhāvaniyataṁ karma*. This emphasis on an inner quality and spirit which finds expression in work, function and action is the whole sense of the Gita's idea of Karma.

And from this emphasis on the inner truth and not on the outer form arises the spiritual significance and power which the Gita assigns to the following of the Swadharma. That is the really important bearing of the passage. Too much has been made of its connection with the outer social order, as if the object of the Gita were to support that for its own sake or to justify it by a religio-philosophical theory. In fact it lays very little stress on the external rule and a very great stress on the internal law which the Varna system attempted to put into regulated outward practice. And it is on the individual and spiritual value of this law and not on its communal and economic or other social and cultural importance that the eye of the thought is fixed in this passage. The Gita accepted the Vedic theory of sacrifice, but gave it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction which alters all its values. Here too and in the same way it accepts the theory of the four orders of men, but gives to it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction. And immediately the idea behind the theory changes its values and becomes an enduring and living truth not bound up with the transience of a particular social form and order. What the Gita is concerned with is not the validity of the Aryan social order now abolished or in a state of deliquescence, — if that were all, its principle of the Swabhava and Swadharma would have no permanent truth or value, — but the relation of

a man's outward life to his inward being, the evolution of his action from his soul and inner law of nature.

And we see in fact that the Gita itself indicates very clearly its intention when it describes the work of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya not in terms of external function, not defined as learning, priest-work and letters or government, war and politics, but entirely in terms of internal character. The language reads a little curiously to our ear. Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance and practice of spiritual truth would not ordinarily be described as a man's function, work or life occupation. Yet this is precisely what the Gita means and says, — that these things, their development, their expression in conduct, their power to cast into form the law of the sattwic nature are the real work of the Brahmin: learning, religious ministrations and the other outer functions are only its most suitable field, a favourable means of this inner development, its appropriate self-expression, its way of fixing itself into firmness of type and externalised solidity of character. War, government, politics, leadership and rule are a similar field and means for the Kshatriya; but his real work is the development, the expression in conduct, the power to cast into form and dynamic rhythm of movement the law of the active battling royal or warrior spirit. The work of the Vaishya and Shudra is expressed in terms of external function, and this opposite turn may have some significance. For the temperament moved to production and wealth-getting or limited in the circle of labour and service, the mercantile and the servile mind, are usually turned outward, more occupied with the external values of their work than its power for character, and this disposition is not so favourable to a sattwic or spiritual action of the nature. That too is the reason why a commercial and industrial age or a society preoccupied with the idea of work and labour creates around it an atmosphere more favourable to the material than the spiritual life, more adapted to vital efficiency than to the subtler perfection of the high-reaching mind and spirit. Nevertheless, this kind of nature too and its functions have their inner significance, their spiritual value and can be made a means and power for

perfection. As has been said elsewhere, not alone the Brahmin with his ideal of spirituality, ethical purity and knowledge and the Kshatriya with his ideal of nobility, chivalry and high character, but the wealth-seeking Vaishya, the toil-imprisoned Shudra, woman with her narrow, circumscribed and subject life, the very outcaste born from a womb of sin, *pāpāyonayah*, can by this road rise at once towards the highest inner greatness and spiritual freedom, towards perfection, towards the liberation and fulfilment of the divine element in the human being.

Three propositions suggest themselves even at the first view and may be taken as implicit in all that the Gita says in this passage. First, all action must be determined from within because each man has in him something his own, some characteristic principle and inborn power of his nature. That is the efficient power of his spirit, that creates the dynamic form of his soul in nature and to express and perfect it by action, to make it effective in capacity and conduct and life is his work, his true Karma: that points him to the right way of his inner and outer living and is the right starting-point for his farther development. Next, there are broadly four types of nature each with its characteristic function and ideal rule of work and character and the type indicates the man's proper field and should trace for him his just circle of function in his outer social existence. Finally, whatever work a man does, if done according to the law of his being, the truth of his nature, can be turned Godwards and made an effective means of spiritual liberation and perfection. The first and last of these propositions are suggestions of an evident truth and justice. The ordinary way of man's individual and social living seems indeed to be a contradiction of these principles; for certainly we bear a terrible weight of external necessity, rule and law and our need for self-expression, for the development of our true person, our real soul, our inmost characteristic law of nature in life is at every turn interfered with, thwarted, forced from its course, given a very poor chance and scope by environmental influences. Life, State, society, family, all surrounding powers seem to be in a league to lay their yoke on our spirit, compel us into their moulds, impose on us their mechanical interest and rough

immediate convenience. We become parts of a machine; we are not, are hardly allowed to be men in the true sense, *manuṣya*, *puruṣa*, souls, minds, free children of the spirit empowered to develop the highest characteristic perfection of our being and make it our means of service to the race. It would seem that we are not what we make ourselves, but what we are made. Yet the more we advance in knowledge, the more the truth of the Gita's rule is bound to appear. The child's education ought to be an outbrining of all that is best, most powerful, most intimate and living in his nature; the mould into which the man's action and development ought to run is that of his innate quality and power. He must acquire new things, but he will acquire them best, most vitally on the basis of his own developed type and inborn force. And so too the functions of a man ought to be determined by his natural turn, gift and capacities. The individual who develops freely in this manner will be a living soul and mind and will have a much greater power for the service of the race. And we are able now to see more clearly that this rule is true not only of the individual but of the community and the nation, the group soul, the collective man. The second proposition of the four types and their functions is more open to dispute. It may be said that it is too simple and positive, that it takes no sufficient account of the complexity of life and the plasticity of human nature, and, whatever the theory or its intrinsic merits, the outward social application must lead precisely to that tyranny of a mechanical rule which is the flat contradiction of all law of Swadharna. But it has a profounder meaning under the surface which gives it a less disputable value. And even if we reject it, the third proposition will yet stand in its general significance. Whatever a man's work and function in life, he can, if it is determined from within or if he is allowed to make it a self-expression of his nature, turn it into a means of growth and of a greater inner perfection. And whatever it be, if he performs his natural function in the right spirit, if he enlightens it by the ideal mind, if he turns its action to the uses of the Godhead within, serves with it the Spirit manifested in the universe or makes it a conscious instrumentation for the purposes of the Divine in humanity,

he can transmute it into a means towards the highest spiritual perfection and freedom.

But the Gita's teaching here has a still profounder significance if we take it not as a detached quotation self-contained in meaning, as is too often done, but as we should do, in connection with all that it has been saying throughout the work and especially in the last twelve chapters. The Gita's philosophy of life and works is that all proceeds from the Divine Existence, the transcendent and universal Spirit. All is a veiled manifestation of the Godhead, Vasudeva, *yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām yena sarvam idam tatam*, and to unveil the Immortal within and in the world, to dwell in unity with the Soul of the universe, to rise in consciousness, knowledge, will, love, spiritual delight to oneness with the supreme Godhead, to live in the highest spiritual nature with the individual and natural being delivered from shortcoming and ignorance and made a conscious instrument for the works of the divine Shakti is the perfection of which humanity is capable and the condition of immortality and freedom. But how is this possible when in fact we are enveloped in natural ignorance, the soul shut up in the prison of ego, overcome, beset, hammered and moulded by the environment, mastered by the mechanism of Nature, cut off from our hold on the reality of our own secret spiritual force? The answer is that all this natural action, however now enveloped in a veiled and contrary working, still contains the principle of its own evolving freedom and perfection. A Godhead is seated in the heart of every man and is the Lord of this mysterious action of Nature. And though this Spirit of the universe, this One who is all, seems to be turning us on the wheel of the world as if mounted on a machine by the force of Maya, shaping us in our ignorance as the potter shapes a pot, as the weaver a fabric, by some skilful mechanical principle, yet is this spirit our own greatest self and it is according to the real idea, the truth of ourselves, that which is growing in us and finding always new and more adequate forms in birth after birth, in our animal and human and divine life, in that which we were, that which we are, that which we shall be, — it is in accordance with this inner soul-truth that, as our opened eyes

will discover, we are progressively shaped by this spirit within us in its all-wise omnipotence. This machinery of ego, this tangled complexity of the three gunas, mind, body, life, emotion, desire, struggle, thought, aspiration, endeavour, this locked interaction of pain and pleasure, sin and virtue, striving and success and failure, soul and environment, myself and others, is only the outward imperfect form taken by a higher spiritual Force in me which pursues through its vicissitudes the progressive self-expression of the divine reality and greatness I am secretly in spirit and shall overtly become in nature. This action contains in itself the principle of its own success, the principle of the Swabhava and Swadharma.

The Jiva is in self-expression a portion of the Purushottama. He represents in Nature the power of the supreme Spirit, he is in his personality that Power; he brings out in an individual existence the potentialities of the Soul of the universe. This Jiva itself is spirit and not the natural ego; the spirit and not the form of ego is our reality and inner soul principle. The true force of what we are and can be is there in that higher spiritual Power and this mechanical Maya of the three gunas is not the inmost and fundamental truth of its movements; it is only a present executive energy, an apparatus of lower convenience, a scheme of outward exercise and practice. The spiritual Nature which has become this multiple personality in the universe, *parā prakṛtir jīva-bhūtā*, is the basic stuff of our existence: all the rest is lower derivation and outer formation from a highest hidden activity of the spirit. And in Nature each of us has a principle and will of our own becoming; each soul is a force of self-consciousness that formulates an idea of the Divine in it and guides by that its action and evolution, its progressive self-finding, its constant varying self-expression, its apparently uncertain but secretly inevitable growth to fullness. That is our Swabhava, our own real nature; that is our truth of being which is finding now only a constant partial expression in our various becoming in the world. The law of action determined by this Swabhava is our right law of self-shaping, function, working, our Swadharma.

This principle obtains throughout cosmos; there is every-

where the one Power at work, one common universal Nature, but in each grade, form, energy, genus, species, individual creature she follows out a major Idea and minor ideas and principles of constant and complex variation that found both the permanent dharma of each and its temporary dharmas. These fix for it the law of its being in becoming, the curve of its birth and persistence and change, the force of its self-preservation and self-increasing, the lines of its stable and evolving self-expression and self-finding, the rules of its relations to all the rest of the expression of the Self in the universe. To follow the law of its being, Swadharma, to develop the idea in its being, Swabhava, is its ground of safety, its right walk and procedure. That does not in the end chain down the soul to any present formulation, but rather by this way of development it enriches itself most surely with new experiences assimilated to its own law and principle and can most powerfully grow and break at its hour beyond present moulds to a higher self-expression. To be unable to maintain its own law and principle, to fail to adapt itself to its environment in such a way as to adapt the environment to itself and make it useful to its own nature is to lose its self, forfeit its right of self, deviate from its way of self, is perdition, *vinaṣṭi*, is falsehood, death, anguish of decay and dissolution and necessity of painful self-recovery often after eclipse and disappearance, is the vain circuit of the wrong road retarding our real progress. This law obtains in one form or another in all Nature; it underlies all that action of law of universality and law of variation revealed to us by science. The same law obtains in the life of the human being, his many lives in many human bodies. Here it has an outward play and an inward spiritual truth, and the outward play can only put on its full and real meaning when we have found the inward spiritual truth and enlightened all our action with the values of the spirit. This great and desirable transformation can be effected with rapidity and power in proportion to our progress in self-knowledge.

And first we have to see that the Swabhava means one thing in the highest spiritual nature and takes quite another form and significance in the lower nature of the three gunas. There too it

acts, but is not in full possession of itself, is seeking as it were for its own true law in a half light or a darkness and goes on its way through many lower forms, many false forms, endless imperfections, perversions, self-losings, self-findings, seekings after norm and rule before it arrives at self-discovery and perfection. Our nature here is a mixed weft of knowledge and ignorance, of truth and falsehood, of success and failure, of right and wrong, of finding and losing, of sin and virtue. It is always the Swabhava that is looking for self-expression and self-finding through all these things, *svabhāvas tu pravartate*, a truth which should teach us universal charity and equality of vision, since we are all subject to the same perplexity and struggle. These motions belong, not to the soul, but to the nature. The Purushottama is not limited by this ignorance; he governs it from above and guides the soul through its changes. The pure immutable self is not touched by these movements; it witnesses and supports by its intangible eternity this mutable Nature in her vicissitudes. The real soul of the individual, the central being in us, is greater than these things, but accepts them in its outward evolution in Nature. And when we have got at this real soul, at the changeless universal self sustaining us and at the Purushottama, the Lord within us who presides over and guides the whole action of Nature, we have found all the spiritual meaning of the law of our life. For we become aware of the Master of existence expressing himself for ever in his infinite quality, *anantaguna*, in all beings. We become aware of a fourfold presence of the Divinity, a Soul of self-knowledge and world-knowledge, a Soul of strength and power that seeks for and finds and uses its powers, a Soul of mutuality and creation and relation and interchange between creature and creature, a Soul of works that labours in the universe and serves all in each and turns the labour of each to the service of all others. We become aware too of the individual Power of the Divine in us, that which directly uses these fourfold powers, assigns our strain of self-expression, determines our divine work and office and raises us through it all to his universality in manifoldness till we can find by it our spiritual oneness with him and with all that he is in the cosmos.

The external idea of the four orders of men in life is concerned only with the more outward working of this truth of the divine action; it is limited to one side of its operation in the functioning of the three gunas. It is true that in this birth men fall very largely into one of four types, the man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive vital man, the man of rude labour and service. These are not fundamental divisions, but stages of self-development in our manhood. The human being starts with a sufficient load of ignorance and inertia; his first state is one of rude toil enforced on his animal indolence by the needs of the body, by the impulsion of life, by necessity of Nature and, beyond a certain point of need, by some form of direct or indirect compulsion which society lays upon him, and those who are still governed by this *tamas* are the *Shudras*, the serfs of society who give it their toil and can contribute nothing or very little else in comparison with more developed men to its manifold play of life. By kinetic action man develops the *rajasic* guna in him and we get a second type of man who is driven by a constant instinct for useful creation, production, having, acquisition, holding and enjoying, the middle economic and vital man, the *Vaishya*. At a higher elevation of the *rajasic* or kinetic quality of our one common nature we get the active man with a more dominant will, with bolder ambitions, with the instinct to act, battle, and enforce his will, at the strongest to lead, command, rule, carry masses of men in his orbit, the fighter, leader, ruler, prince, king, *Kshatriya*. And where the *sattwic* mind predominates, we get the *Brahmin*, the man with a turn for knowledge, who brings thought, reflection, the seeking for truth and an intelligent or at the highest a spiritual rule into life and illumines by it his conception and mode of existence.

There is always in human nature something of all these four personalities developed or undeveloped, wide or narrow, suppressed or rising to the surface, but in most men one or the other tends to predominate and seems to take up sometimes the whole space of action in the nature. And in any society we should have all four types, — even, for an example, if we create a purely productive and commercial society such as modern

times have attempted, or for that matter a Shudra society of labour, of the proletariat such as attracts the most modern mind and is now being attempted in one part of Europe and advocated in others. There would still be the thinkers moved to find the law and truth and guiding rule of the whole matter, the captains and leaders of industry who would make all this productive activity an excuse for the satisfaction of their need of adventure and battle and leadership and dominance, the many typical purely productive and wealth-getting men, the average workers satisfied with a modicum of labour and the reward of their labour. But these are quite outward things, and if that were all, this economy of human type would have no spiritual significance. Or it would mean at most, as has been sometimes held in India, that we have to go through these stages of development in our births; for we must perforce proceed progressively through the tamasic, the rajaso-tamasic, the rajasic or rajaso-sattwic to the sattwic nature, ascend and fix ourselves in an inner Brahminhood, *brāhmaṇya*, and then seek salvation from that basis. But in that case there would be no logical room for the Gita's assertion that even the Shudra or Chandala can by turning his life Godwards climb straight to spiritual liberty and perfection.

The fundamental truth is not this outward thing, but a force of our inner being in movement, the truth of the fourfold active power of the spiritual nature. Each Jiva possesses in his spiritual nature these four sides, is a soul of knowledge, a soul of strength and of power, a soul of mutuality and interchange, a soul of works and service, but one side or other predominates in the action and expressive spirit and tinges the dealings of the soul with its embodied nature; it leads and gives its stamp to the other powers and uses them for the principal strain of action, tendency, experience. The Swabhava then follows, not crudely and rigidly as put in the social demarcation, but subtly and flexibly the law of this strain and develops in developing it the other three powers. Thus the pursuit of the impulse of works and service rightly done develops knowledge, increases power, trains closeness or balance of mutuality and skill and order of relation.

Each front of the fourfold godhead moves through the enlargement of its own dominant principle of nature and enrichment by the other three towards a total perfection. This development undergoes the law of the three gunas. There is possible a tamasic and rajasic way of following even the dharma of the soul of knowledge, a brute tamasic and a high sattwic way of following the dharma of power, a forceful rajasic or a beautiful and noble sattwic way of following the dharma of works and service. To arrive at the sattwic way of the inner individual Swadharma and of the works to which it moves us on the ways of life is a preliminary condition of perfection. And it may be noted that the inner Swadharma is not bound to any outward social or other form of action, occupation or function. The soul of works or that element in us that is satisfied to serve, can, for example, make the life of the pursuit of knowledge, the life of struggle and power or the life of mutuality, production and interchange a means of satisfying its divine impulse to labour and to service.

And in the end to arrive at the divinest figure and most dynamic soul-power of this fourfold activity is a wide doorway to a swiftest and largest reality of the most high spiritual perfection. This we can do if we turn the action of the Swadharma into a worship of the inner Godhead, the universal Spirit, the transcendent Purushottama and, eventually, surrender the whole action into his hands, *mayi sannyasya karmāṇi*. Then as we get beyond the limitation of the three gunas, so also do we get beyond the division of the fourfold law and beyond the limitation of all distinctive dharmas, *sarvadharmān parityajya*. The Spirit takes up the individual into the universal Swabhava, perfects and unifies the fourfold soul of nature in us and does its self-determined works according to the divine will and the accomplished power of the godhead in the creature.

The Gita's injunction is to worship the Divine by our own work, *sua-karmaṇā*; our offering must be the works determined by our own law of being and nature. For from the Divine all movement of creation and impulse to act originates and by him all this universe is extended and for the holding together of the worlds he presides over and shapes all action through the

Swabhava. To worship him with our inner and outer activities, to make our whole life a sacrifice of works to the Highest is to prepare ourselves to become one with him in all our will and substance and nature. Our work should be according to the truth within us, it should not be an accommodation with outward and artificial standards: it must be a living and sincere expression of the soul and its inborn powers. For to follow out the living inmost truth of this soul in our present nature will help us eventually to arrive at the immortal truth of the same soul in the now superconscious supreme nature. There we can live in oneness with God and our true self and all beings and, perfected, become a faultless instrument of divine action in the freedom of the immortal Dharma.