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SRI KRISHNA: THE SAVIOUR OF HUMANITY

By Prof. T. L. VASWANI

GANESH & CO. MADRAS

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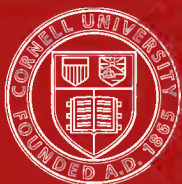
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SRI KRISHNA :
THE ŚAVIOUR OF HUMANITY

By the same Author

THE GOSPEL OF FREEDOM

THE SECRET OF ASIA

MY MOTHERLAND

INDIA IN CHAINS

SRI KRISHNA: THE SAVIOUR OF HUMANITY

BY
PROF. T. L. VASWANI

RE. 1

GANESH & CO., MADRAS

1921

**THE CAMSRIDGE
PRESS, MADRAS.**

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

• In the present circumstances of excitement and transition in India, it is vitally necessary that the Indian people keep a secure hold on the national dharma—the spiritual life. It is because the essays contained in this book carry the force of aspiration towards a spiritual ideal, and will appeal through the universal devotion to the Divine Flute-player, to large numbers of Indians, that the publishers have brought them together in book form, with thanks to the revered author, and the hope that the method of their presentation will not do injustice to his lofty idealism and beautiful expression.

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THE COMING OF KRISHNA

THE coming of Krishna, five thousand years ago, was the birth of a mighty revolution. One kingdom after another has been built in India and has crumbled to its fall. But Krishna's Kingdom has endured, has spread its influence through these fifty centuries. The French Revolution was political; the English revolution was economic; but 'liberty' wallowed in blood in France, and industrialism in England ended in capitalist exploitation; but Krishna started a spiritual revolution which made India a model nation in the morning of history. Krishna played upon his wondrous Flute; and since then, a new vision has come to Aryavarta of God the Beautiful, of God the Eternal. For Krishna had in him that which is born of God—the *ananda*, the freedom, the loveliness, the love whose living original is the Eternal.

Time was—not many years back—when the name of Krishna meant little to many of our 'educated' men; and not a few of those who

spoke in the name of Jesus were jealous of the honour of Krishna, not knowing in their ignorance or bigotry that in both Krishna and Jesus worked the One Spirit. What is the situation to-day? Groups of earnest men and women in Europe and America have begun to glimpse the beauty of the Krishna-Life; it is no longer fashionable to reduce that life of singular grace and singular beauty to a legend of the past. Many of those who mocked him in the earlier days have learnt to love and honour the name. Many who believed that His Teaching was transcendental moonshine have found in His words the Wisdom of Life. Many who thought He preached impracticable abstractions have learnt to discover in Krishna's gospel a message of vital value to the practical modern man.

For this Krishna who played upon the Flute and sang the 'Song Celestial' on the battle-field taught that the life of the spirit was not ascetic but profoundly human, to be lived not *away* from the world but in the *field of action*. Krishna was ever human as a boy: and he taught, alike by precept and example, that action was at once the necessity and *fulfilment* of human life. To live is to act; and none may hope to grow into the virtues of the interior life

without fulfilling the obligations of the outer life as members of a society, a nation. In the beginning was Act—said Goethe; and the life of action is what Krishna taught each one must live. But He was careful to add that our action must express not the lower self of ambition and power but the deepest self which is love. As it is our work *hides*, it does not *express*, the higher self; hence the conflict between the ideal and the actual in the life of the world.

This conflict was, perhaps, never more bitter than to-day. For when were the nations smitten with strife so much as at this hour? The earth and the sky and the very waters under the earth have been armed in our days as never before in the world's sad history; fire and sword have swept over the earth. It is the music of the Krishna-flute which the warring world needs at this hour; it is the message of Love that Krishna gave to India which is the nations' piteous need to-day.

They speak of the coming again of the Lord, of the appearance of an Avatar in these days. That the need is piteous they know who realise the world's sad condition; that the Avatar need not be on this material plane will be understood

by those who believe that every pure heart, every aspiring soul, may touch the Divine on the spirit-plane. For if God be the deepest Self of man, then are man and God inseverable, and every heart that is purged of bitterness and strife and separation may become a cradle for the Child Divine. In the purified heart, in the discipline which comes of suffering endured for the sake of truth, in the daily work offered in the service of Love, we still may hear the music of the Lord, even as Arjuna did on the Kuru-field in the long ago,—we still may hear the Child singing of the simple thing the cowherds heard in ancient Aryavarta. And that music still may prove to be the healing of an aching world. And listening to the simple things, the little door of our earth ears may yet open up in that wonderland where breathes the benediction of the Beauty that is God.

•

KRISHNA'S CALL

Over and over again have I loved to dwell upon the beautiful eastern story which tells of Love as the Parent-Spirit of all. Eternal Love, we read in the story, sounded notes of Harmony in the long long ago, and the sun glowed and the moon shone and the stars smiled and systems were formed, and the world with its varied wonders came into being. And 5,000 years ago Aryavarta saw a new theophany of Eternal Love; five thousand years ago Sri Krishna played upon the flute. Along the ancient pathways of the East he walked with love-filled eyes. He played upon the flute, and the little girls attending to domestic duties in their homes moved out to listen to His Lay. He played upon the flute, and men came over thorns and stones to listen to the mighty magic-song of Love. He played upon the flute and shepherds left their work to touch His blessed feet and enter into some apprehension of his Call of Love. He played upon the flute and—

the ancient records say—the trees trembled and flowers fell and rivers whirled and even the little birds listened to the strains of Love.

What did the Song declare?

In some quiet hours of life—hours of calm meditation on the Mystery of Ages—I have asked myself this question over and over again. The question has returned to me from time to time, and here I mean to say just a little of what Sri Krishna's Song has meant for me. The idea of the Song is recorded in the *Bhagawad Gita*—a Book so precious, so full of spiritual appeal, that I have prayed from time to time the prayer that I may have the strength and grace from God to tell my countrymen of what He taught in Aryavarta and carry from place to place the Message till I die.

I shall here speak of the subject in a very simple manner. I shall not deal with it in a philosophical manner, but in a way that may be intelligible to the young men of India to-day.

Now the first note of Sri Krishna's Flute may be expressed in the words: *God is the essential truth of Man.*

Has it ever occurred to you to ask yourself What you are, Why you are here, What is

your destiny? Can it be that you have been lost so much in the tumult and transitory arrangements of time that you have never asked yourself these questions? Hæckel wrote years ago the words:—"Our human nature which exalted itself into an image of God, in its anthropical illusion, sinks to the level of a placental mammal, which has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus. Humanity is but a transitory phase of the evolution of an eternal substance, the true proportion of which we soon perceive when we set it in the background of infinite space and eternal time." In a similar strain wrote Dr. Schiller in his book 'Humanism':—"The human race is an enormous agglomeration of bubbles which are ever bursting and ceasing to be. No one made it, or knows anything worth knowing about it. Love it dearly, oh, ye bubbles!" So Bakounine maintains as "a fundamental and decisive truth" that "the social humanity is nothing else than the supreme development, the highest manifestation of animality."

This naturalistic view of man—a view responsible for the purely economic interpretation

of history—is the one which has a strange fascination for some thoughtful young men in India. But I declare emphatically to all such young men that every attempt to explain the life of man by the vibrations of matter and ether is a failure, because it ignores the *essential element* in man—viz, *soul-life*. Spencer lived to rectify the mistake of his earlier interpretation of ‘the detailed phenomena of life and mind and society in terms of matter, motion and ether.’ Read the chapter on ‘The Dynamic Element in Life,’ added to the new edition of his ‘Principles of Biology’ in 1898; and note the following words from his pen:—“We are obliged to confess that life in its essence cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms. The processes which go on in living things are incomprehensible as results of any physical actions known to us.”

The one truth I wish every young man to take into his mind is this: man does not belong to the category of natural things: man is an out-breathing of the Eternal Spirit. Think not you are creatures of clay: you are greater than your bodies, greater than your present self-knowledge. There are potentialities in you—infinite capacities—which will take ages to unfold.

Each one of you is an heir of eternal life: hence it is you cannot rest for long in the finite. The soul's spontaneous gravitation is towards God. "Thou God! madest us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." In a beautiful poem 'The Hound of Heaven,' the author describes one trying to escape the Supreme and to find rest in finite things. The Supreme follows him 'with unhurrying chase, unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic constancy.' Rest is denied him though he seeks it by turns in beautiful places, the stars, the dawn, the evening, the eyes of little children; and even as he stands within the shadow of death the Voice of the Supreme speaks to him:—

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest

I am He whom thou seekest!

Thou dravest Love from thee, who dravest Me."

Yes, God is the *life* of nature: God is the *truth* of man. To trample upon this truth were to commit national slaughter. For the *soul* of India is religion, and India shall live as long as her children are loyal to the Divine Idea of Life.

Each one of us is an expression, a manifestation, an out-breathing, a forth-putting, an

embodiment of an Eternal purpose, an Eternal idea. It will not do simply to *know* you are a *soul*; you needs must *realise* it. I have no doubt I am addressing words to some who feel that the burden of life is too great for them. Are you disappointed? Do you feel, on certain occasions, disgusted with the world? Is it that having reposed faith in a friend, a relative, a comrade, you have been betrayed? Is it that you have been persecuted? Is it that the world has seemed to you enwrapped in darkness? Then listen to the word of the Lord, Remember there is in you an infinite abyss of the soul-life. Remember you are a child of God; remember your home is in the Eternal Heart, and you are here to express the God-life; take courage; face the problem of life in the strength of faith; and know as you go along the pathway of life, that your destiny is to utter in every experience an Eternal Idea. The present must be brought under the control of the Infinite. And when we come in contact with the poor and weak, let us remember that they too are members of the mystical Body of the Lord. Here then is the first note of Sri Krishna's Flute. *God is the essential Truth of man.*

And then there is the second note. How shall

I express it? *The life of the spirit can be lived in the world.* Here is the second great teaching of Sri Krishna. Spiritual life is open to the man of the world. I have heard people say from time to time: 'How can we live the life of the Spirit? We have not the opportunities; we have no time. We have to attend to our office, our workshop, our daily concerns, and we find no time for prayer; we have no time for worship; we have no time for meditation.' Now remember the truth that spirituality is determined not by outer *circumstances* but inner *attitude* towards life. Over and over again does Sri Krishna declare the truth that you must be in the world and yet be devoted to the Lord. To retire into God is *not* to leave the world. The old dualism separating the world and the Spirit must give place to *immanent idealism* calling on man to overcome the world by acknowledging the Divine Idea immanent in the sacred world-order. Face life: think not of fleeing from it. Master matter: do not ignore it. Vivify the world with the Spirit-Word: do not despise it. The spiritual is not a *Beautiful Beyond* but a *Living Present*. And so the Teacher prayed:—"I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of

the world but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." The life of the spirit demands the *unitary discipline of deeds*. *Personality* is constituted only as various centres of human energy co-operate with the Divine Will. Eucken discerned rightly when he wrote:—

Where spiritual emotion does not somehow turn into activity it runs a great risk of becoming an inert brooding over things, a purely subjective feeling, an empty mood." "Perform Action in union with the Divine" says the Gita. In England they speak of Sunday as the Lord's day. I was having a conversation one day, in England, with a gentleman. I found him exceedingly good and kind. One day in the course of a little talk, he asked me what I thought of the religious life of England. He pressed the question more than once and I said:—"Do you want my polite opinion or do you give me the privilege to speak without reserve?" And he was good and he said to me: "Speak freely." And I said to him:—"I find that many get up in the morning and attend to all things except their prayers." And he said to me half-perplexed, "My friend, is it not enough that we have set apart Sunday to worship God?" I was silent: I

shall not be silent with you, friends. See that no one may say concerning *you* that Sunday only is your day of worship. Great is your spiritual heritage, and great too on that account is your responsibility. See that you think of every day as the day of the Lord. See that you strive to make every act a sacrament; subordinate the temporal to the Eternal, the seen to the Unseen. Be in the world but serve the Spirit; attend to your business, gather silver and gold if you will; but remember that your silver and gold must be pressed into the service of the Lord. Study, think, carry on your scientific and philosophic researches, but remember that your scholarship must be pressed into the service of the Spirit. And so in every transaction of life it is open to you to realise the presence of God. It rests with you to make life a *communion with God*, rather than a *struggle for existence*. Have you forgotten the beautiful story found in one of our sacred books? It is the story of Yagnavalkaya; this great soul, we read in the story, is about to enter the stage of higher life, and so he calls his wife—Maitreyi—to himself and says to her, 'I want to take the vow of poverty. Take thou my property.' Says his wife to him

‘Can property secure me immortal life?’ and the husband says to her, “Money, wealth, treasure, property will not make you immortal.” ‘What, then, is the secret of immortal life?’ is the question proposed by the wife. And then Yagnavalkya gives a beautiful discourse, the main idea of which may be set forth in the words:—“Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Lord is dear the wife. Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Lord is the husband dear. Not for the sake of the son is the son dear, but for the sake of the Lord is dear the son. Not for the sake of the world is the world dear, but for the sake of the Eternal is dear all that is.”

There is expressed in beautiful words the *sacramental view of life*.

And this reminds me of the third great truth of which you read in the Sacred Song. I may express it in the words:—*Accept the sacrament of suffering*. Tradition speaks of Sri Krishna as the ‘smiling one’; but does this imply that Sri Krishna’s heart was smitten with no secret sorrow? When he set the chariot of the Pandavas facing the foe, was there no sorrow in his heart—sorrow too deep for words or

tears? As I have gone through the *Bhagavad Gita*, page after page, the thought has come to me that his heart was smitten with sorrow. He saw how few were those who understood his message. He saw how many were they who wished to walk the way of wickedness. He saw how greatly Aryavarta was suffering from sin. He discerned the piteous need of the age. Who could see into the infinite abyss of his heart, love-sick for Aryavarta, as he sat under the Asvatha tree and a huntsman pierced him with a spear? Yes, Krishna was smitten with sorrow. And there is the note of sorrow in the Sacred Song. There is no self-realization without sorrow. Not without reason is it said in one of the sacred books that the whole universe is really due to God's *tapasya*; yes, the universe is the *self-giving of God*, and suffering has its place in the education of the Race. It is said sometimes the *Bhagavad Gita* is a book so philosophical, so abstract, that it cannot appeal to the young. My experience is different. The *Bhagavad Gita* is more than a theory of the universe, it is philosophical yet practical: it sets forth a sublime *weltanschauung*; but it is also concrete, and practical in its appeal. *It is at once a philosophy and gospel of Life.* And no gospel of

life can be set forth without some reference to the sufferings and sorrows of man. Sri Krishna's teaching has a direct appeal to each one of us. Suffering purifies the soul; suffering strengthens the soul; suffering builds up the higher life of man; suffering develops your *sense of unity with others*. Kidd—an eminent sociologist—observed:—"The fact of our time which overshadows all others is the arrival of democracy." But if democracy is to be an evolutionary force, it must be tempered and controlled by men who are ready to suffer as servants of humanity. In these days when so many talk of the 'cult of the ego,' the nation needs men trained in the school of Sacrifice. The Time-Spirit demands a development of what Kidd calls, '*a stupendous system of other worldliness*.' Forward movements have been initiated and inspired by spontaneous self-offering, not the utilitarian lore of loss and gain. One of the Hindu artists has drawn a beautiful picture on which my thoughts have dwelt from time to time. It is the picture of a *gopi*, of one who loved Sri Krishna as few have loved him. The Hindu artist represents this girl as standing on the threshold of her house waiting for the Lord. Some boys pass by her and smile at her

in scorn, she minds it not; some throw stones at her, she minds it not; voices come from different quarters of the neighbourhood, she minds it not. Her heart is centred on Him whom she has learnt to love. With eyes of shining expectation, with heart smitten with longing, with soul-aspiration, speechless in intense anxiety, she waits for the coming of Sri Krishna. If we had such aspiration for a vision of the Lord, we are at the beginning of a new movement. We stand on the threshold of a new age. Krishna wants you for the service of India; He wants you to make Her free. For piteous and urgent is the need of the world to-day. The dominating civilizations of the world are commercial, external; modern civilization threatens more and more to become *soulless*, to crush under the wheels of the Mammon-God the Verities of Life. The world needs India, the nations need the healing message of Sri Krishna; therefore must India become free.

THE FLUTE-PLAYER

It was at a small *swadeshi* fair in a quiet little village I saw him first. They had come together—men, women, and children—from a number of neighbouring hamlets; they had put on new clothes of different colours that day; it was the birthday of Krishna. One there was in the crowd who easily attracted attention; he played upon his flute; and, as I heard him, I opened the window of my heart to let in more and more of the melody of his song.

I wished to know all I could of this man with music in him. He was there, I learnt, not to win a street-singer's meagre reward; he was there, for he loved the crowd. He lived, I learnt, in a little house on the road-side. I called on him a day after the fair. There was in him the soul of a child and the mind of a sage; his one devotion was to his flute which he played upon most wonderfully in his house and the street, in the market and the field, on the hill-top and by the side of the stream. I

called on him in the evening; he greeted me with glad remembrance. I was there, I said, to make his *darshan* and to hear him sing and speak to me.

In the course of the conversation, I asked him what was the secret of the greatness of which men and nations were in such weary quest.

"Greatness," said the Flute-player, "is the mask put on by the petty-minded. If you, my brother! would love, renounce greatness."

"But politicians," I urged, "tell us, over and over again, that India must become great among the nations."

"*A politician*," he said, "is not always, is not often, a *patriot*. Struggle for greatness is one of the darkest things of modern democracy; its motive is exploitation; its end is War. Let India strive not to be great but to be a servant of Humanity."

"The Way of Service?" I asked.

The Flute-player had travelled much; he had met many minds; he had meditated much on nature, its beauty and grandeur,—on life, its pain and strife,—on the history of the nations made by the broken dreams of God's Rebels—the Dreams of Truth and Beauty and Freedom disturbed, again and again, by power and pride.

The Flute-player paused for a few moments, then said :—

“As to the Way of Service, the one thing to do is to *unveil illusions*. Each age has its illusions; and what is called progress is often a climb from illusion to illusion. The *other-world illusion* played a great part in human life once. The *civilization illusion* plays a great part to-day. You would all be *civilized* after the fashions of the West! Your politics are an echo of European politics; you forget that no imposition of political machinery manufactured abroad can infuse new life into a nation.”

Proceeding further, the Flute-player said :—

“To unveil illusions is to see the Beautiful, is to be in touch with the spirit of your history, the Idea of your nation. Money, fame, titles, power,—*utilities*,—are sought by men who have not the vision that grows out of Knowledge. Do you see the Beautiful in the struggles and conflicts of your national life? If not, you have not learnt to love India, you have not learnt to tread the Path of Service.”

I asked how to him had come the Knowledge, how he had become a Singer, a Flute-player, a Worshipper of the Beautiful. Then he told me

a story, there is no space to tell; then I learnt how he had, for years together, moved in high circles, how sorrow entered into his heart and Sorrow turned into Song.

Note after note of sorrow was sounded by that flute; at its heart was the yearning of one who loved the crowd and sang to peasants and labourers and poor village-folk the Song which ravished their hearts. Out of his sorrow he had built his art; in the dark waters of sorrow had he seen the Beauty that is God.

And before I took leave of him, he played upon his flute sounding through it notes of the strangest Beauty. And when I asked him what they meant, he looked into my face with eager eyes and said :—"Follow where the flute is leading; for 'tis the beauty of suffering that makes life rich and strong and free in this bitter world of slaves."

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KRISHNA—THE SINGER

There is nothing new that I can tell you; you know the things I have to say; you know them all; only you have forgotten them; you have seen the Wonder of the Wonderland which is your true Homeland; you have seen the Face; you have heard the magic-notes of the Singer and his flute; there is the Eternal Krishna in every heart. But you have forgotten this: and so you feel depressed, poor, weak; and you say to one another:—What can *we* do? We have not the power, we have not the resources to help, to serve the Ideal. You forget that you are inheritors of a rich glory, that in you are locked up untold treasures, that in you is a fount of inspiration. Princes are ye all, not beggars as you imagine yourselves to be when you go a begging at alien doors; the Eternal Self is in every heart; and what I shall now say to you is meant only to revive in you some memory of what you know but have for the moment forgotten.

Krishna's Flute! What did it say? Krishna's *murli*! What did it declare? What secret of his Heart did Krishna sing out in those wonderful notes which ravished the hearts of the Gopis and the simple-folk as he wandered, Flute on his lips, from hamlet to hamlet, in the long ago? There was joy in the notes; joy entered the hearts of those who heard him and the Flute. And joy dwells in the home of the free. We seek with selfish hands to build houses of power; they become prison-houses; they enchain the soul; we purchase power, position, the yellow dust called gold, at a heavy price; we buy the world and pay for it freedom; to become big is to be in bondage; and Krishna's Flute, with joy in the heart of it, is a call to men and women to break *the three bonds* of evil desires, selfish actions and weak will, and to enter into the life of freedom.

The life of the *mukta*,—the free man,—what are its marks? What are the marks of life in general? To live is *to respond* and *to receive*; when the plant dies it does not respond to light and air and water. When the horse dies, it does not respond to the master's call; when a man dies, he does not respond to his friends and family. To live is to respond; it is also to

receive; none of you but is what he is on account of the influences on him of others; your body is an inheritance from your ancestors; your mind is, largely, a social inheritance; education and other social influences make you largely what you are. You live in the measure in which you respond and receive.

In a beautiful text in the Gita, Krishna calls attention to two things we must do if we are to respond to Reality and live the life of the free man. The two things are, *tapasya* and *yagna*. Strange teaching this—you will tell me—to ask you to do *tapasya*! Yes, even on the Janmashtami-day, when it is thought every one has the licence to do as he likes, I would ask you to do *tapasya*. In ease and enjoyment have you long expired; you have lived the life of *bhoga*; I summon you to the path of *tapasya*. I know I speak to family men; and I ask you all to practice *tapasya*. Read the story of the nations; it is the resolves of men of *tapasya* that have made history, and revolutionised the lives of many. You run after the rich, the so-called big men; not often have such men helped the country. The wealthy among you, I know, will be angry with me for these words; but I must speak the truth

as I know it; I cannot speak to please the wealthy or flatter the vanity of the worldly wise. The Flute of Sri Krishna appealed to the hearts of the poor, simple shepherds and shepherdesses of Gokul and Brindaban; and at the festival of the free meet, not the proud of power but the simple in heart with their shining lights of reverence and love. *Tapasya* will help India; *tapasya* generates the power of good, the power of service. There is the man of riches and learning; he speaks to you with strength or art and scholarship; you are not moved; but a sadhu comes; he speaks but a few artless words; you feel the uplift, the inspiration of his speech. Why? The sadhu is a man of *tapasya*, and there goes out into what he says and does the power of *tapasya*.

To *tapasya* add *yagna*. The Eternal is the Yagneswara, the Lord of Sacrifice. Offer your sacrifice and be blessed. *Yagna* is not the rite external; I attach little value to rites and ceremonies; you know I am a heretic; *Yagna* is what you offer to the Lord. But what can *we* offer? you ask. Ah! you dream of doing big things, yet the Lord accepts a flower, a leaf, any little thing offered Him with devotion! I ask you not to run after greatness, but to try to

be *a little* useful to your community, your society, your country; a little thought of help, a little sympathy, a little act of kindness, a little deed of love—such the *yagna* asked of you by the Yagneswara.

Responding to the Life of the Universe with *tapasya* and *yagna*, you will receive from the All-Giver the power to achieve; your life will then be fruitful. There is in the ancient record the story of a woman—a fruitseller; Krishna is then a little child; the woman feels the mystic influence of Krishna's dark beauty; he wants some fruits; she insists on giving him *all the fruits* in her little basket; Krishna has grains of rice in his hands; he scatters them to her in return for her fruits, and every grain of rice, the story says, becomes a jewel in her hands. Such is the Law; what you give to the Lord returns to you, a thousandfold; every grain becomes a jewel.

I have little more to say on this subject. I ask you all to practise *tapasya* and *yagna*; I ask you all to learn to scatter not hoard your lives. In the strength of *tapasya* and *yagna*, rearise, sons of the sages of the East! and vindicate India's Message. Awake to utter again the Aryan Wisdom; the

nations need it; civilization needs it. Not in pride but in humility of heart, in repentance and with new resolves, think of the mighty achievements of Aryavarta and your own feeble lives. You say you have a proud past; is the past proud of you? You say you have high traditions; do not the traditions lay on you high obligations to be fulfilled to-day? You say your fathers were great: do not your doings grieve them in the Brahmaloaka? Let us confess before God and man that we have sinned against the Spirit. He has waited, He is waiting, in the rain and storm outside; let us do *tapasya* and *yagna*; then will He enter, again, the temple of India's heart and re-kindle the kindly light.

THE MESSAGE OF THE FLUTE

‘Yours in Krishna and Christ’—such were the closing words of a beautiful letter I received, some time ago, from an English lady to whom I mailed a copy of my address on ‘Krishna’s Flute.’ Not so would write many Englishmen and Englishwomen to-day. The old missionary conception of Krishna is dominant in Christian circles; and I remember how much I offended an India-returned missionary of a Protestant church, because, in the course of an article on the ‘Christ of Ages’ which I contributed to a Christmas issue of the ‘Christian Commonwealth’ a few days before I left London for Karachi, I expressed my belief—it has been the conviction of the world’s religious seers—that in Jesus and Krishna and Buddha and the other great Prophets of Humanity there has been the immanence and activity of the One Spirit of God, that the Wisdom of the World-Teachers is one though its Voices are many. But this was too much for my missionary friend, who was angry because I mentioned Krishna in the same breath with Christ! He

criticised my view and attacked the character of Krishna ; I replied in my pamphlet on 'Christ and Krishna.'*

That missionary only represented a class of persons who believe—several of them with the best of motives—that to sling stones at Krishna is to exalt Jesus ! In a sermon at the City Temple, the distinguished preacher, Dr. F. Newton, said to his London congregation :— ' When I was a lad I saw a picture in which the artist—if we could call him an artist—tried to represent the future of China and India without the Gospel, a great moving multitude falling over an abyss into hell, through no fault of their own ! ' ' A great moving multitude falling over an abyss into hell ! ' What an ignorance of actual India in this horrid picture ! And ignorance and theological prejudice account for the distorted view of Sri Krishna in Christian lands. Unfortunately, that view influenced several of the educated class in India ; and I have heard some agree with a well-known man who said that the stories related of Krishna's life did more than anything else ' to destroy the morals and corrupt the imagination

*Printed in extenso at the end of this book.

of Hindu youth !' It was not the stories of Krishna's life, it was the corrupt hearts of those who, putting on the mask of orthodoxy, were anxious to do evil things in the name of Krishna, that did harm to the Hindu faith. Fortunately, the corrupt lives of these priests and their 'mystery cults' have been exposed; and with a better knowledge of India and her past, educated Indians are beginning to come into their own rich Heritage of Aryavarta; and no small part of that heritage is the wonderful story of Krishna and the mighty inspiration of His Life,—His philosophy, His achievements, His Song.

Years ago I saw, in the historic town of Serampore, a little Krishna drama staged by simple peasants of the place; what devotion, what joy, what love of the beautiful and the good, were expressed in their simple dramatic art! A little theatre exhibiting plays of Krishna and Rama and Buddha and other heroes of Indian history will be a truly democratic institution and will, I believe, do real service to the people; it will rouse that vigorous idealism which will rid Religion of its dogmatic encumbrances and release Indian life from its bondage to customs and creeds.

Simple peasants rejoiced the most in His company, as He did in theirs, in the long ago; and they who carry in their hearts something of the love and innocence of those peasant boys and girls—they will appreciate his Life and its rich Message to the modern age. Aryavarta's piteous call for wise counsel and right conduct in the hour of her peril, 5,000 years ago, made Him quit His beloved Brindaban for Mathura; Krishna the Singer, Krishna the Flute-Player, passed from His little hamlet to the council chamber, there to give advice to India's princes; the Master-Musician, the lover of the peasant and the poor, became the statesman; and an ancient story has it that the simple peasants of Brindaban came, one day, to Mathura to meet him. They were brought into the durbar hall, and Krishna, dressed as a prince, advanced to greet them. But they would not look at *this* Krishna! What had these simple folk—the boys and girls, men and women of Brindaban—to do with Krishna arrayed in pomp and power?

They stood by him, not looking at Him, casting their eloquent eyes on the ground; they would converse with Krishna the Cowherd, not Krishna the courtier. And He understood it

all; and leaving the durbar, He put off the prince's dress, He put on the simple cowherd's clothes, and with naked feet and with the Flute in His blessed hands, Krishna played and sang with the simple folk in the garden of the king.

Was it a winged instrument, this Flute of Krishna? It had joy in every movement of it; it ravished the hearts of the men and women who heard Him play upon it. What did it say? What Message did the mighty Singer send through the simple grace and freedom of its notes? Who can say? The ancient record says how the remembrance of that Song lived in Radha's heart, and in the hearts of other gopis and the shepherds who heard it in the long ago. The ancient record, also, says how in his manhood, too, He sang the Song, but this time on the Kurukshetra amid the strange destinies of the year that saw the five Pandavas face a mighty foe on the battlefield. A fragment only of that Song is enshrined in the scripture named the 'Bhagwad Gita'; what wisdom, what insight, what inspiration even in that fragment! Let Krishna's critics read it and pay Him the homage of converted hearts!

The 'Gita', the little fragment of the Song of

Krishna's Flute, is enough to show that He belongs not to one particular race but to all; the 'Gita' rises above race bias; it sings of the Spirit Universal; and we are not worthy of Him if we seek to imprison Him in our little creeds and claim Him as exclusively our own. Sri Krishna belongs to all nations; the Message of this Flute-player is a Message of life and floats down the stream of ages from the Heart of Life Universal to the seekers after Life. In some brief blessed moments, He gave that Message to Arjuna, the questioning, doubting, vacillating, weak-willed Arjuna. And was not the Message he gave this:—"Stand up, Parantapa! and do thy Duty?" And does not Arjuna represent the Hindu soul, honest, aspiring, idealistic, metaphysical, eager for a solution of the problems of the Ultimate Absolute, but weak-willed, halting, shrinking from pain, reluctant to see the Beauty of God through the veil of suffering? To the Arujana-soul of India comes Sri Krishna's Message:—"Stand up, Parantapa! do thy Duty!"

The Message is Young India's piteous need; it is a message for the world. For at this hour vice and vanity, luxury and pride have sapped the inner strength of civilization; at this hour

mechanism sits oppressively on the heart of life; at this hour humanity lies wounded in the house of her own children who have renounced the worship of the Eternal Values and built altars to the gods of 'nationality,' 'empire,' 'race.' At this hour, in the silent spaces of the world's confusing sounds, comes Krishna's Message:—"Stand up, Parantapa, do thy Duty"! At this hour, through the dark spaces of the night, comes the call of the Flute:—"Stand up, Parantapa, do thy Duty." For the people are in bondage, and men are needed everywhere—men of courage, truth and love—to stand up and rebuild the nations on the reality of the Life Spiritual.

"Stand up, Parantapa, do thy duty!" For pain is passing, but thy Dharma is Eternal; and what more foolish than to barter away the freedom of thy soul for a little ease from the strife of life?

"Stand up, Parantapa, do thy Duty;" for the world's wounded heart needs help and healing.

Stand up, Parantapa! Stand up as a servant of Humanity! Thy Master stands by thee, singing His sweetest song on the Flute. He sings and summons thee out to the storm of things. Wilt thou be a comrade of God?

KRISHNA THE LEADER

A fascinating study this; the personality of Sri Krishna. There is the child Krishna stealing butter and playing with the gopies. There is Krishna the Cowherd, tending the ~~cattle~~ with loving care. There is Krishna the Statesman, interpreting the will of the people in those dark days which went before India's Great War. There is Krishna the King showing how every King who would be worthy of the name should rule—a servant of the nation. There is Krishna the Teacher of Wisdom, Krishna the Philosopher. Every one of these aspects of the Great Life offers much to think upon; but I will only here speak of Krishna the Leader. You speak of 'leaders'; and many people, I am afraid, judge of men by appearances. A man talks to you in fine words; you cheer him; you call him a 'leader'! You forget that a 'leader' will not always speak pleasant things; a 'leader' is not a *demagogue*; a leader in Sanscrit is called *marga darshaka*, the path-pointer; he

must point the Right Path; you may cheer him or censure him; he must do his *dharma*; he must speak the truth; he must tell you of the things which you may not like but which he knows are for your good; not always is he popular; not always do the people understand him. The Path of Service is not the path of popularity; the Leader of men is a Servant of the Ideal.

And every leader worthy of the name has a message for his people; to that message ~~he is~~ loyal; he is not an opportunist, not a popularity-hunter, not an echo of current prejudices. "Awake! and Stand up! O son of Kunti"! In these words does Krishna the Leader declare his message to us, sons of modern Ind. "Awake"! What is wrong with India? I have heard many say:—"Oh! a difficult task this, of India becoming great again, Wait; wait; you must not be impatient." How long, I ask, are you going to wait? How long? An eminent sociologist has pointed out that a generation is enough for a nation to be transformed. Thirty years only! A nation can be great in thirty years! Forty or fifty years ago Japan was a backward country; Japan to-day is a world-power. America itself, a century ago, was

not even a civilized country—such the opinion of an English writer. America to-day is one of the leaders of civilization. Think, too, of what England was about a hundred years ago, and survey its situation to-day. Then think of India. India fell over three centuries ago. India is still struggling to recover her birth-right. What is wrong with India? You have not yet awakened! Sometimes you open your eyes but only to close them again! Therefore ~~does~~ Krishna the Leader say; Awake! Awake! and see! •See the sad condition of your homes! See the state of your women! See the appalling poverty of the masses! See how much you are doing, by patronising Manchester and Lancashire at the expense of the village weaver and the Indian swadeshi, to make India poorer day by day! Awake and see that India, once the world's leader, is the poorest country to-day! Awake! and see the divisions and subdivisions which make the country weak, when a strong Hindu-Muslim unity can make India invincible.

“Awake and stand up, O son of Kunti.” “Stand up,” says Krishna, ‘stand up’—for what? To do violence? No. Never a greater delusion than this which some young men have, that violence

is effective. The *sircar* has followed violent methods, has imprisoned men for their faith in freedom, has appealed to physical force, to repression, to rigorous policy, to lawless 'laws'; has the *sircar* succeeded? No. The National Movement was never stronger than it is to-day. The end of physical force is *impotence*. Stand up, then, not to do violence but to use your *moral force*. Stand up to worship Bharata, to worship Humanity. And one of the noblest forms of worship is *service*. Serve India and Humanity by standing up for Truth and Right, by bearing witness to your faith in freedom. A young man tells me:—'Many are not ready for this: I am alone: What can I do?' I refuse to believe you are alone. Did you read that story in the Buddhist books? Buddha is out on his mission to the people; Mara, the evil spirit, becomes afraid; if the teaching of Buddha spreads, Mara's kingdom will crumble; Mara moves out to meet Buddha on the way and overawes him with numbers; lakhs of warriors stand by Mara's side; Buddha is alone; Mara points with pride to his millions and says to the Buddha:—'These millions bear witness to me; where are *your* witnesses?' And Buddha the Wise lifts his finger up, then

brings it down . and says:—"The Heavens above, and the Mother Earth below—they bear witness to me!" Yes; the Heavens above and the Mother Earth below—they bear witness to every servant of Truth and Right; they co-operate with him in his struggles to make man free. Say not, then, you are alone! The great forces of the universe are waiting to co-operate with you. Only awake! only stand up, O son of Kunti! Your hands are His Hands; your ~~soul~~ a fragment of the great World-Soul; your strength His strength. And there can be no failure or defeat for him who stands up under the Leadership of Sri Krishna.

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THE LAW OF LIBERTY

There is no subject, my friends, upon which Hindu thought has dwelt with more emphasis than the subject of Liberty. Over and over again, as you may read in the records of the past, did the Hindu heart cry for freedom, for deliverance from what the *Gita* calls the 'tangle of Maya.' *Mukti* is the master-word, the one great idea of Hindu philosophy and Hindu devotion. So it has been declared in the Books that the most important condition of spiritual life is *mumukshatwa*—'desire for freedom.' The Hindu practised penance, went on pilgrimage, joined *sadhsung*, read the scriptures, did *puja* in order to have freedom. He yearned not for a world of pleasures—a paradise of golden walls and rubied pavements—but to be a *mukta*. India's great men were not multi-millionaires, but the devout and pure who, wedded to Lady Poverty, longed for Freedom. Think of the *Rishis* who sang the wondrous songs recorded in the Vedas and the Upanishads;

think of Buddha who left his royal father's house and all to go upon the quest—to know the secret of *Nirvana*; think of India's long line of seekers after God: they yearned for *mukti*.

What is the secret of spiritual freedom? What is the law of liberty? The question has been considered by him—the Teacher of the Gita. Let us listen to the Word.

‘Escape from the tangle of *mâyâ*.’

I am afraid the sense of *maya* is declining. ~~This~~ is partly due to the fact that the old materialistic conception of heaven and hell has vanished. We no longer think of heaven as the palace of pleasure. An English boy said that Heaven was the place where he could have his pudding in plenty; his notion of heaven as a paradise of pleasure we have outgrown. Nor do we think of hell as the region of serpents and lions, tigers and other monstrous beings.

So far so good. But we have gone to the other extreme. We think that hell does not exist at all. On the other side of death, we shall know that hell is not a fiction but a dreadful fact of the moral order. In the Great Day when the secrets will be revealed and the true scale of values will be seen in the light that the

Infinite alone is the explanation and satisfaction of the finite, we shall realise that ‘hell’ is a dreadful reality. Every lower desire, every evil choice, builds up, I believe, a world of hell. We speak of ourselves as *practical* men because we gather silver and gold. We forget that to ignore the Unseen to publish our folly. For the Unseen is the Sovereign Reality of life.

How shall we escape the tangle of *Māya*? This brings me to the next point: ‘~~develop soul~~ *consciousness*.’ Do not identify yourselves with externals and bodies: the *clothes-view* of man’s nature must be outgrown. Each one of you is more than the body—more even than an aggregate of conscious states. Each one of you is a centre of God’s life—an outbreathing of the Eternal. You are not conscious automata but centres of *Ishvara*’s will. Learn to *affirm your soul-consciousness*. Say not “I am an automaton—a puppet dangling on the wires of Fate.” Man is of God, and in God alone may he find his rest. This is ‘*māya*’—to attach to things an intrinsic and *inherent* value. To get rid of this ‘*māya*,’ to resist externality, to dominate circumstances, is to express the self in you.

And so a third point denotes:—we must establish *equilibrium of the soul*. In each man at present you may see the working not of one self but of two or more selves. Hence, too, the inconsistencies of great men. Milton who struck the sublime strains of ‘Paradise Lost’ became a savage controversialist. Napoleon was a genius: was he not also sensual and cruel? Man as he is to-day is *dual* or *multiple*. The two or more personalities which operate in each ~~one~~ of us must be merged into one. The *empirical* self of custom, convention, heredity, must be merged into the *fundamental* self; life must express the *deepest self* in man, *viz.*, God.

There is but one sin in the world: it is the sin of separateness; egoism, impurity, malice, anger, conflict, prejudice, narrowness spring from self-adoration. If we could but remember that we are not ours: we belong to the Universe. The soul that strives to realise unity in all, rises to what Sri Krishna calls ‘indifference’—indifference to what others say and may say. Is such a man persecuted by others? He does not get nervous or angry: he breathes the words of benediction—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Castes and

creeds, sectarian strifes and denominational divisions disappear for him; he rises to the pure passion of Service; he compassionates his very critics, knowing that love is more than righteous indignation.

A novelist imagines the coming again of a great teacher in another body to serve the people. He finds there are many who confess his name and call themselves his disciples, but have perverted the truths he taught. He rewords the truth he taught in the days of ~~long~~ ago; he is criticised, opposed, persecuted by the men who call themselves the disciples of the Teacher that was: they know not the man they persecute is the same Teacher come again: they hold a meeting attended by influential men; they pass a resolution condemning him as a traitor to their religion: they decide to burn him. The decision is communicated to him: he is silent; he is tied hand and foot: he is silent. He is asked to enter the fire prepared for him: he says he is ready to die, but wishes to have a few minutes to meet the leader of the community. His wish is granted: the Teacher advances, embraces the leader and *kisses him in compassionate love*. There you have the picture of him who is indifferent to what the

people say. He loves all; he hates none; he is compassionate; he does not condemn.

Sri Krishna says this attitude of 'indifference' cannot be developed without meditation. To break the bonds of *maya* you needs must strive for daily fellowship with the self, you must cultivate the hidden life; meditation is the recuperative force of life. In soul-silence is the health, the harmony, the freedom of the soul. To be free is to fulfil our functions as sons of God. And the law of liberty is the law of *God-service*.

So true is it that freedom moves within the circle of necessity which is *divine determination*. The *mukta*—the liberated one—is he who is *moved by the God-self*.

And to serve the God-in-man is to grow in the life which is to prepare us for *Mukti*. Freedom is realized through fellowship.

There is a story of a girl eager for the coming of the King on that wonderful night when he is to pass through the town. She is anxious to have a look at Him and greet Him and behold the glory of His face. He will come at night; so night after night she keeps the watch, and has her lamp burning. 'I shall fall at His feet' she says 'and shall see His face.' She is standing, waiting for the King at the door. Just

then comes an old woman with a child. 'I have no shelter, I am poor, won't you take me in?' 'Not to night, not to-night; for the King is coming' she replies; 'I have reserved every thing for Him; come tomorrow.' 'But every one says so; I have gone to many, no one thinks of me; I suffer; I starve.' Then the thought comes to the girl that to serve the King she must serve a brother, a sister in the King's realm. 'Enter the room' she says 'here is the food; here is the light for you.' And it is announced that the King is coming that very night. The girl goes in quest of the King; she goes to one place after another but finds Him not, till at last tired, spent in strength she returns to her room where she has taken in the poor starving woman. And lo and behold! she finds the King is there waiting for her in her humble dwelling house. He has come to her, for she served a poor starving sister.

On this thought then let me close this chapter. A vision of the King comes to him who becomes a servant of man. And liberty is service of the *God-in-man*.• We are free in the measure in which we enter God-Service. We are not yet free; we yet live within the veil; but we too may be free. There are degrees of

freedom ; let but the *aspiration* grow to go beyond the tangle of maya ; and our bonds too will one day be broken ; and we too shall enter the Nirvana of Attainment.

THE VOICE IN THE WOODS

He has to go to a far-off school everyday. And every evening as he returns home, he says to his mother:—"Mother! I come through the woods; and I feel afraid." The mother says to him:—"My boy! there dwells in the woods a Beautiful Boy, Krishna: call on him in love as you cross the woods, and he will help you every day." And the next evening he calls on him in love, and Krishna blesses him and leads him with his wondrous music through the woods. And every day the student comes and plays with Krishna, and the forest becomes for him no longer a dark dreadful place but a House of Joy. One day his teacher says he is to give a feast the next evening; and every student thinks of giving a good present for the feast. He, the student of whom I speak, on returning from the *asram* says to his mother:—"Mother! to-morrow the *Guru* gives a feast: what present shall I give him?" The mother says:—"We are very poor. But tell the Boy

in the forest. He will give you a precious present for the teacher." The next morning the student on his way to the school meets Krishna in the woods, and asks for a present for the teacher. Krishna gives him a cup of milk. The boy reaches the school. He finds other students have brought precious presents : he has only a cup of milk. He gives it to the teacher. The feast is given. The teacher pours the milk in a vessel. The cup is full. Again the milk is poured in the vessel ; again the cup is full ! The teacher empties the cup again and again, but finds it full every time. All available vessels in the teacher's house are filled with milk ; the cup is full still. The cup seems inexhaustible. What Krishna gives is inexhaustible ! " Who gave you the wonderful cup ? " asks the teacher. " A beautiful Boy in the woods," is the student's answer. " Show him to me," the teacher says. " Come with me, Sir," says the student. The two start off for the woods when the feast is over. The student shouts :—" Krishna ! Krishna !" Krishna does not come. The student shouts, again and again, then cries piteously with tears in his eyes :—" Krishna ! come ; my teacher is here ; and if you will not come, he will take me for a braggart and liar."

Then, too, Krishna does not come, but his Voice is heard saying :—" My friend ! I cannot come, for in the heart of him who comes with you, I see not *love*."

Is He coming again, known in different ages by different names,—Krishna, Buddha, Christ ? Is He coming again in the world's great agony ? Piteous and urgent, it seems to me, is the need of the nations. He came to Brindaban and asked the people to give up drink and sing God's name at the beautiful Yamuna bank. They listened to him for a time and prospered. Then they broke their pledge ; they indulged in drink ; they denied their God ; they slew Krishna's son ; and sorrow-smitten, he went into the woods and left the world. He came again to Palestine. And for sometime they hearkened to His message ; they saw His miracles of mercy ; they acclaimed Him their King, the Messiah. Then unfaith entered their hearts ; one by one they left him ; they crucified the Lord. Is the world any the better prepared to receive Him to-day ?

Many in East and West strain their eyes for His coming again ; and thinking of the great *dukha*, the world sorrow to-day, my heart has cried, again and again :—" When wilt thou

come, O Healer of the Nations ?' Then have I recalled the story of the Voice in the woods :—
"I cannot come. For in the hearts of men I see not *love*." The world's vibrations during and after the war have been the vibrations of strife and hate. The victor-nations are flushed with the wine of power. The defeated nations nourish illwill and anger in their hearts. The East loathes the West. The West has contempt for the East. National rivalries are rampant in Europe. Western imperialisms sit heavy on the Orient's life. India that has worshipped God above the battle-line, India, too, is receiving hate-vibrations to-day, and a number of young men are saying in their hearts :—"Violence or non-violence, India must be released from bondage to Britain. The sword must settle the controversy. We care not if there be a God." I sat on the steps of a little lake in a little town at twilight ; I sat silently, and saw boys playing and shy women worshipping the waters with little lights in earthen vessels. I heard the boys cry "Victory to India, the Mother" ; I heard the women say :—"Victory to India, the Mother." It was a moving sight. Then I said to myself :—"Victory ! Yes ; but hate will not win it. For the power that wins is Love." That Love

Krishna sang when he came to us five thousand years ago. That Love was symbolised by the Cup he gave,—the Cup of inexhaustible milk. That Love must come and dwell in our hearts if we are to know Him on His coming again to this anguished world. Build the nation; but oh! build it with love,—with reverence for Humanity,—in your hearts. For what you build on hate and pride must perish. Such is the Law.

WHAT WAS THE VISION ?

Why did Krishna draw so many in Gokul,—so many cowherds and milk-maids? Why did they give up their work to listen to His lay as He passed by? There was in His music the power of a vision of life. What was the vision? ~

Some vision, has nourished civilization in every great period. Civilization, according to an English thinker, is a series of 'illusions.' 'Visions' would be, I think, the proper word; and visions are not illusions. The vision which nourished ancient Greece was *beauty*. Greek architecture, Greek art, Greek philosophy, Greek religions grew out of a vision of beauty. The Beautiful is the dominant thought and inspiration of Plato's "Dialogues." Music, temples, theatres, fashions in dress, modes of living, Athenian eloquence, were influenced by love of the beautiful. Outer beauty, beauty of form and figure, have been sung and experienced in many ways in India; but it has not

been the *dominant* note of India's thought and life. There is something higher than art. And India's great men, her *sadhus* and sages, have been careless of their dress and surroundings. The vision of Rome was 'power.' As I saw the Colliseum in Rome, years ago, I recalled her dream of dominion and conquest. Rome developed 'imperialism.' India went upon conquests of culture, not those of the sword. In modern times the prominent forces are those of *industry* and *science*. The age is commercial; the age is scientific; science helps commerce. There is, I confess, something uncanny about modern industrialism; but the vision of science, the vision of Nature's unity, of the laws which make the Universe one, is a grand vision. Unfortunately, the nations dominated by greed and love of gold have exploited science for the gross purpose of advancing their commercial interests in the East; and the wars which have largely grown out of the commercial motives of modern nations have made use of science as a destructive agent.

The vision of Him who played upon the flute has been India's vision through the ages. He sang of the Ideal Imperishable, the Infinite Living Ideal; and as they listened to his Song,

—the gopis in Gokul and Arjuna on the Kuru field,—the littlenesses of the earth vanished and the great Vision of Life floated before them. Krishna called the people to a love of the Infinite Ideal. That love I have missed, again and again, in many of our activities to-day. I have missed it in many homes where veiled women have wept before me. I have missed it in many schools, and students have told me of their great sorrow at the cruel treatment of their teachers. I have missed it at many meetings where several speakers brought with them an atmosphere of ambition and abuse. I have missed it in temples where many of the priests are happy with the narrowing lust of gold, forgetful of God. And is there love in abundance even in our National Movement? Or is there more of pride and power and national egoism? The India of to-day is a world of questions; the India of the past is, I believe, a world of answers to many of these questions: India's people have wandered much, have suffered much. And they will wander and suffer much in endless doubt and unrest until they learn like those who made India great in the long ago to build the Nation with the power of the Ideal. For there is one Great

Force, the God-force; and to co-operate with it is to be uncheckable, unconquerable.

And the way to worship the ideal? It is named *Yagna* in the Gita and other Hindu books. The man who has love in his heart for the Infinite Ideal—the true *idealist*—is the man of *sacrifice*. Krishna's vision of love was this vision of sacrifice. The vision has been the secret of the best and noblest in Indian literature and Indian life. *Rejoice through Renunciation*, is the note sounded, again and again, by the Upanishads. The great heroes and heroines in Aryan literature,—Rama and Buddha and Sita and Sakuntala—had to suffer, to renounce, in order to attain. The very War on the Kuru-field was a sacrifice India offered to the Gods in order that a new India, a greater India be builded. Therefore it was named the *Dharma-Yuddha*. "Nourished by Sacrifice," we read in the Gita, "the Gods in the *Deva-loka* give what men desire." We say we want *swaraj*. We shall win *swaraj*, but not without the blessings of God; and we shall win it in the day we co-operate with the world-Will. Invisible Helpers, the great Gods, I believe, stand behind us in the struggle of these days. Victory is India's, but

on one condition, that we 'nourish the Gods' with daily sacrifice. *The eternal is ever present in sacrifice*, says Sri Krishna. And again and again the teaching is given in the Gita that action must be performed without any least desire for 'fruit.' So much of our activity is 'fruitless' because we seek 'fruit'—of honour or gain or success. Perform *karma* but not as *mâyâ*; perform *karma* as *yagna*—such is the vital message of the Gita. The great lives are those of men and women whose work was *yagna*,—a sacrifice to the Lord.

May I, to end this chapter, make a special appeal to young men? Many of you move out in villages to spread the national gospel. Three years ago when I returned to Sind after my wanderings abroad, I appealed to my countrymen to take the message of freedom and modern knowledge to the village-folk; I urged that villages must be awakened, organised and united in the service of the national movement. Many youngmen are now moving out to the villages. And I wish to ask in all humility :—What are you after, in your village-work? What is the *motive* of it? Do you worship the Ideal? Do you strive to make your work a *yugna*, a sacrifice? Then let me

ask you, friends, to use your energy not for *ambition* but for the glory of the Only One. Then let me beg of you to abuse none when you speak,—not even the *Sirkar*, and work with the love which casts out both fear and pride from the heart. Passion and pride never help a nation; and Freedom is a goddess that will not come with shouts of hate and strife.

THE SIPAHI SPIRIT

I do not agree with those who regard the Gita as a text-book of the war-cult. There are nationalists who see nothing wrong in violence. There are young men who urge that India cannot achieve her freedom without violence. They point to the nations of Europe. But the freedom of western nations infected with passion and pride has not yet solved the world's problem, which is the problem of reconciliation, and Europe has wandered from violence to violence. Democracy will not come to its own until the nations abandon the creed of violence and consent to become a family of free peoples. The empirecult must go no less than the 'nation-cult.' Both have caused wars and violence. My vision of India is not merely that of a 'dominion' in the Empire; it is that of an independent nation having an alliance with England in a family of free nations. The 'Empire' idea must go. We want not empires, not aggressive nationalisms but alliances of inde-

pendent nations for the service humanity. By *swaraj* I mean independence. But independence must not be achieved by violence. Not until the creed of violence is given up may the nations be really *free*. I sympathise with the feeling expressed in the motto of Berlin on the last anniversary of the War ;—*Nie wieder krieg* " : (*Never more War*). The "fruits of victory" as Mr. Norman Angel has shown in his latest book, are death, devastation, taxation, economic extension.

They misread the Gita who think it glorifies war. But it does commend the sipahi spirit ; India would not be in the present state if her people felt, not a few here and there, but thousands and thousands in each Province :—"We are *sipahis* of India." India fell in the day the 'sipahi spirit' declined. India's passivity is the main cause of India's political bondage. This *passivity* was misnamed 'religion' at one time ; true religion is *activism*. Religion is action,—such the great truth sung by Sri Krishna in the Gita. Life is a battlefield, and every one must have the Kshatriya-spirit, the *sipahi* spirit if he would serve India to-day.

"On the *dharma kshetra*, the holy field of

battle, what did they do, Sanjaya?"—we read in the Gita; and the words are significant. What have *we* done on the *dharma kshetra*, the field of Life? What have we done? Had our food and clothes, and slept? Sought ease and comfort? There is a hidden Self in each that will not be satisfied with the things often sought. That Self is in a region unsuspected, undiscovered; but sometimes, sometimes it makes its presence felt, the hidden Self appears,—and it manifests itself in many ways. Sometimes you stand on a mountain height; you see Nature clothed with wondrous beauty; the thrill of a new experience passes through you; the hidden Self has made its power felt. You serve a sick friend, and in the silence of your sorrow at an hour when the world's voices are asleep, the hidden Self appears and you glimpse a little of the meaning of life. You listen to an idealist; you see a sadhu; you hear a patriotic speech or song, and you feel you are become a new man; you resolve to be a servant of the Ideal. In many ways does the hidden Self appear. You close the doors; but again and again the Self opens one or the other of them and looks at you, and you feel you are greater than you thought you were. The hidden Self is your deepest

Self. It is the God-Self. And to live is to do the battles of the God-Self.

Poets and preachers and patriots and teachers have this one task,—in many ways to indicate how to fight the battles of the God-Self;—to fight and not to faint. It is the warrior-spirit, the *Kshatriya-spirit* we need to fight the battle. It is the spirit which is the very anti-thesis of violence; it is the spirit of *discipline*. He who would be a *sipahi* of India today must discipline himself. Mere emotion will not help us in the struggle for freedom; and passion will simply split the National Movement. 'We are *sipahis* of *swaraj*,'—I have heard many say. And what an inward pain have I not felt to see so many of them abuse and hate, and confound patriotism with *passion*! How many of these '*sipahis*' have the strength of self-control and the longing not to become 'big' or 'known' but to be spent in the one service of the God-in-man? We must *discipline* ourselves, if we would be *sipahis* in the army of Sri Krishna.

Speaking to students and young men some of whom are to help the struggle we are in, I would invite attention to the *threefold discipline* they must have for the service of India. They need the triple training of the body, mind,

and emotions. Every one who would be a *sipahi* of *swaraj* must train his body ; the body must become pure and strong. We are responsible for the forces which flow through us ; and if *satvic* forces are to go out of us to help others, our bodies must be pure and strong. The best discipline for the body is *simple life*. Then there is *mind-training*. Truth is what the mind seeks ; and truth comes to the *truth-seeker*. Every *swaraj-sipahi* must practice the *sadhan* of truth. It is a difficult *sadhan*, but he must practise it. He must not indulge in exaggeration, idle rumours, gossip, harsh thinking. There is opportunism in public life ; there is the desire to please others ; there is the reluctance to think for ourselves ; there is the notion that to confess our faults is unpatriotic ; all this must be given up if, indeed, we are in quest of truth that will make the nation free.

Then there is needed training of the *emotions*. Fight against evils, but without hate in your hearts. Passion and pride will not help India. There must be deep humility in the heart of him who would join the Brotherhood of *swaraj-builders*. When Russia waged war with Japan, it seemed for some time as though things were going very hard for the Jap.

There was anxiety in Japan. And a Japanese girl prayed in humility :—"Protector of the Nation! accept me in my country's service." Then she took her mother's leave and went forth to the battle scene to serve the sick and wounded,—and, to die. Her name is not in the books; but her sacrifice remains an inspiration. It was the sacrifice of an humble soul. The *sipahi* of the Mother must be humble, his one anxiety to do his duty, his one longing to be accepted in the service of the people.

HIS PASSION-PLAY

In the quiet, broken, little temple of my heart a chanting voice sings of the *leela* of the Lord! Krishna-*leela*: Three stages of it may be easily noted. There is the *Adi-leela*,—Krishna's sport in the days of his boyhood and youth. There is the *madhya-leela*,—which he shows in the years of his manhood when he is in the car on that fatal Kuru-field to guide Arjuna and the Aryan race. There is the *anta-leela* revealed in the last years of his manifestation. It was a life of most wonderful, most child-like joy, the life of Krishna. Out of that joy, *anand*, sprang the music and philosophy and statesmanship of Sri Krishna. It is difficult for modern critics to understand such a life; and they have singled out an incident from the *adi-leela* to find fault with him and Hindu India. That incident is the *vastra-haran*. Krishna, we are told, snatched away the garments of the *gopis*. The milkmaids had put off their clothes: they had left them by the

river-bank; they were bathing: Krishna snatched them away; Krishna concealed them! Carping critics, specially those anxious to 'convert' Hindus to Christianity, mention this incident to discredit Sri Krishna and the Hindu religion! Now, I ask, why must every thing in the books be taken to be literally true? The apocryphal element has entered, I believe, into the scriptures of all religions. In earlier days, Conferences were held in India to discuss doctrines of philosophy and theology and to revise rules of social polity. There is need of a conference of Hindu theologians to-day to discuss questions arising out of a textual criticism of the scriptures, to eliminate passages which are evidently interpolations, to separate the historical from the legendary in the lives of Indian teachers and heroes, and to secure what I may call an 'expurgated' edition of the scriptures. There were strange things, some of them by no means moral, written about Jesus in the early days of the Christian church; some of them may still be read in some 'Gospels.' But the Catholic Church rejected them, sifted the sayings and actions attributed to Jesus, and brought them together in an *approved* volume known as the Bible. In addition to the Bible accepted by the

Christian Church, there are the extra-canonical 'Gospels' which mention things giving a distorted picture of the Master.

Concerning Sri Krishna, the critics forget that the incident of *vastra-haran* ("snatching away the clothes") is related of Him when He is only a few years of age. It is absurd to attribute—as the critics do—immoral desires to the boy Krishna. Personally I interpret that incident as *poetry* rather than *history*; and poetry, too, has its *truth*. And I wish to indicate what I regard as the *poetic* truth in the *vastra-haran* incident which has appealed to me and in my purest moments moved me to tears.

The *gopis* were milk-maids; they had a passion for Krishna. Passion has its place in life. Out of *passion* grows *power*, but *not* until passion is transmuted. Transmutation, we are told, does take place in the physical world,—under the influence of radio-emanation; the old atoms are broken up by radio-activity! Sir Ernest Rutherford showed, sometime ago, that under the impact of alpha-particles shot out by radium C, there was evidence of the disruption of atoms! Passion *breaks up* old centres and builds up new centres in us under the "radio-activity" of the Ideal. This 'activity' is

symbolised by *vastra-haran*; it is self-emptying, it is renunciation of our *vastras*,—the ‘clothes’ we are in which is essential to life’s enrichment.

Some perception of this great spiritual truth is in a beautiful picture of an English artist. It is named “The Way of Attainment.” It represents a man as being naked and kneeling before Christ. And at the feet of Christ he surrenders his broken sword and bag;—the sword stands for ambition, the bag for material gain. Each aspiring soul having passion for the Ideal is a *gopi*, and must come to Krishna as one naked. At His feet must be surrendered everything. The *vastras* we are in, the clothes under whose burden our life is stifled must be renounced, if the Self in us is to shine in Glory.

The *vastras*;—Yes; and they must go one by one. There is the *sthula* appetite, the *indriya* looking for *pleasure (Bhoga)* every day; there is the *manas* riding pride every day; there is the *ichha-shakti* eager to build up its house of ambition every day; there is the craving for *rasa* seeking satisfaction in *undisciplined* emotion. All these must be surrendered at the feet of the Lord if our passion is to be transmuted into *power*.

And surrendering these, we shall find, as the *gopis* found, that the Lord gives them back to us. Everything returns to us, but beautifully *transmuted* under the Lord's influence. Our *indriyas*, senses, become organs of His influence, so that in our seeing and hearing and touch we contact the one Reality. Our *manas* emptied of pride becomes an avenue of His Truth. Our *ichha-shakti* becomes the will-to-serve the God. Our *emotions* rejoice in *bhakti*, the love of Love. Old centres break; new centres are built. But not without *much suffering*. Only let the soul be steadfast; only let her have faith; only let her be *humble* yet *fearless*; and from the heart of suffering will come to her the Master's Voice:—"Take Courage: Thou art Divine." In a medieval story we read of a saint; from his body dropped blood; and in every spot where a blood-drop fell, there sprang up beautiful flowers. I know of no deeper law than this,—the law of sacrifice! Knowledge to him who stands empty before the Lord. Power to him who lies wounded at His Feet. And blessed, indeed, the *gopi*-soul whom He chooses for the *leela* of *vastra-haran*,—the Play of His Sacred Passion.

CHRIST AND KRISHNA

A REJOINER.

Some time ago, my attention was called to a letter on "Christ and Krishna" by Rev. William Hinkley of the London Missionary Society, in "The Christian Commonwealth." This letter was a reply to an article of mine entitled "The Christ of Ages." I replied to the criticism as follows:—

(1) My critic complains of the comparison (*suggested not detailed* in my article) between Jesus and Krishna; and naturally so. His theology is committed to the orthodox creed. I, believing in the Brotherhood of World-Teachers, regard Jesus and Krishna and Buddha as *avatars* of the one Spirit. The point of parallelism between them only indicates that the One Word of God—the 'Logos'—has worked in all. The doctrine of the Word, let me add, is by no means alien to the Hindu scriptures; Sri Krishna in a passage of great beauty in the *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of the

Sabda Brahman which means the 'Word of God.' Jesus' beatitudes, Buddha's parables, and Krishna's *Gita* are all aglow with the Truth of the God in man, of the Man in God. Indéed, it is to me not a little suggestive that resemblances extend even to matters bearing upon the *underlying conception* of Christ, Buddha and Krishna. Apologetic writers often think that Jesus is unique in speaking of Himself as the 'Son of Man' and as "Before Abraham was I am." Yet in the *Lalita Vistara* we meet with the conception of Buddha's divinity and pre-existence; we even find that Buddha is called '*Purusha*' (man) and on occasions even '*mahapurusha*.' And is not the idea of divine incarnation prominent in Hindu scriptures? Declarations as bold as any attributed to the Christian Jesus are attributed to the Word in Krishna:—

"They verily who come to Me with devotion they are in Me and I in them."

"He who knoweth Me unborn, beginningless, he is liberated from sin."

"I pervade the word with a fragment of Myself."

(2) My critic wants to know "definitely when Krishna came."

I had the occasion to consider the question at a meeting of the Pioneer Preachers, London; and I pointed out that different dates were assigned by different writers. A good number of modern century before Christ; according to the Hindu tradition Krishna lived five thousand years ago. Zoroaster lived—according to a good number of western critic—about 2000 B. C., and priests of his faith declare that he lived about 2500 B. C. Of one thing there is no doubt that Sri Krishna lived centuries before the tradition-aldate of the Lord Jesus' birth.

(3) My critic wonders "at what great moral turning point" Sri Krishna appeared.

None who has even a nodding acquaintance with the Hindu Books could wonder thus. That Krishna appeared at a great moral turning point is what every student of the *Mahabharâtâ* knows well enough. Hindu theologians are unanimous on this point. Sri Krishna came at a great crisis in the history of the Indo-Aryan Race; the clash of sect with sect, the conflict of class with class, the struggle of the Aryan with the non-Aryan, the rivalries in the realm of religion and philosophy, the corruption in morals, the weakening of the sense of spiritual brotherhood, the oppression of the People threatened to

wreck the Hindu type of Life and the mission of the Hindu race : there was a line of cleavage between civilization and Religion ; and the crisis of the age reached its climax in the 'Great War' between KURUS and PANDAVAS : India was in piteous need of a new Teacher to nourish her higher life to stem the tide of secularism, to open up a vision of a new synthesis of thought and life and press the very struggles and sufferings and sighs and travails of the time-spirit in the service of a New Civilization and a New Gospel. Sri Krishna came to resist the forces of evil, to effect a new synthesis of the social and spiritual. He came to introduce a great moral and religious era—*an era of Synthesis and Spirituality*—in the history of the Indo-Aryan Race ; and I have often felt he longed to see India become an incarnation of his Idea so that India might enter upon a world-ministry glorifying God and serving man. Is it an illusion to think, to feel, to discern that the great Day of India's Destiny is drawing nigh ? The age of Krishna has invariably recalled to me the age of Jesus. The orthodox Hindu has always held that Krishna came to open a new age (*yuga*) and the Hindu like the Christian looks forward to the coming of the Lord again, but at the close not of this

world but of this *age*—*Kaliyuga* as it is called, —and in *another* Body to effect a New Synthesis, to initiate a new world-civilization, to introduce a new moral Force, to unfold the issues of a new Dispensation of the Spirit. How many of the ministers of the Christian Church who cast stones at the Blessed one work to verify the vision of the Coming Age?

(4) My critic continues:—“*What is far more serious from the point of view of sheer honesty and truthfulness is the inference* that because Krishna is said to have come to resist the force of evil his character is comparable with that of Jesus Christ.”

The insinuation in the words which I have italicised arrests my attention ; but I pass it by with a silent prayer for my critic ; this is not the first time I have been censured thus by a Christian missionary for serving the Lord ; but I have long lost the right of self-defence. Let me but say that though my article contains the two statements, viz., (1) that Krishna like Jesus came to resist the force of evil, (2) that Krishna and Jesus were both lofty leaders in the religious evolution of the race—the statements are there not as constituting an *inference* but as two *distinct propositions*, each having its own

ratio sufficiens. The one is not dependent upon the other. I never said that Krishna may be compared with Jesus 'because' Krishna came to resist the forces of evil!

(5) My critic coolly affirms that Krishna's story in the Mahabharata is a story of his 'mythological doings.' Alas! the Revd. missionary knows precious little of the book concerning which he speaks in such tones of plump assurance. It is true that mythological elements enter in that sacred story as they do in that of Jesus (cf. "Study of Holy Scriptures" by Dr. Briggs who says:—"there can be little doubt that there is a strong mythological element at the basis of biblical history as well as of other ancient histories). But to resolve, on this account, the personality of Krishna into a poetic fiction were a task as heroic as that of Robertson and Drew to reduce Jesus to a myth!

(6) My critic asks the reader of the 'Christian Commonwealth' to study the 'Vishmi Purana' to form an estimate of Krishna. The critic means, I suppose *Vishnu*! And Hindu theologians do not regard the "Vishnu Purana" as all *history*: it is a record of *traditions* some historic, some allegorical, some metaphorical, some mythical. To the Western reader anxious

to study the Gospel of Sri Krishna, I can commend no better book than the beautiful translation of the 'Bhagavat Gita' by that great and gifted English lady,—Annie Bessant.

(7) My critic tells us that a Hindu writer has said that Krishna symbolises "all that is amorous, sensuous and meltingly voluptuous."

Who the Hindu writer is, my missionary friend does not say.

Let me assure the reader that no Hindu theologian would make such a statement. There are some who though Hindu in blood are agnostics or atheists or militant Christians in creed: one of such could speak in this strain but no Hindu by faith. Krishna is to the Hindu heart what Jesus is to the Christian. Hindu saints and teachers and poets and patriarchs, and philosophers and devotees have, age after age, been passionately drawn to Sri Krishna; and I have yet to know that 'criticism' can brush aside as baseless fabric of fiction the Witness of the Hindu thought and life, age after age, to the beauty and grace of Sri Krishna. I who believe in the Union Church of East and West rejoice to see Krishna in Jesus and Jesus in Krishna and both in the Word concerning which the great mystic wrote: "In the beginning was the Word

and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

(8) My critic quotes Bishop Caldwell who says:—“the stories related of Krishna’s life do more than anything else to destroy the minds and corrupt the imagination of Hindu youth.”

The Christian missionary in India often quotes Bishop Caldwell; but the Bishop knew precious little of Hindu theology; The *ex cathedra* statement in regard to the morals of the Hindu youth is unworthy of a minister of Christ. Let those who will, please themselves, by giving the dog a bad name and hanging it. I—an Eastern lover of the West—know enough by personal contact to bear witness to the inward beauty of the Hindu youth—his simplicity, modesty, gentleness, purity, devotion, and deep spirituality. Contact with unchristian specimens of the Western type of life has spoiled some, I know: and I, in my part of India, am battling still against the secularism (imported, let me add, from the West) which if let to rule unchecked will; I am sure, commit national slaughter of the Hindu race-consciousness; but not even in the darkest hour of my fight have I failed to perceive that the Hindu heart is sound still. Brotherly England! God

hath blessed thee: wilt thou not study with an *understanding heart* the Faith, the Thought, the Life of India—India the mother of Religions—India who long despised by the world, will yet be hailed as ‘blessed.’

(9) I needs must add that there are in the traditional accounts of Sri Krishna, certain incidents which, there is reason to regard, as interpolations and inventions. Some of them are poetic myths—described in such a way as inevitably to create the impression that they were originally meant to be interpreted as an allegorical interpretation of some verities of the Unseen. But some—and their number is exceedingly small—are in painful conflict with the claims of enlightened reason and the declaration of the moral and mystical self of man. These incidents will be found in the “Puranas,” but not in the “Bhagavad Gita.” They crept in, I have reason to believe, in the protracted Night of ignorance and superstition—India’s Dark Ages—when a good number of Manuscripts (there were no printed books) were lost and India’s vision of the Just and only Fair was temporarily obscured. Unfortunately, it is these incidents which the average missionary in India seizes with the quick perception of a

keen controversialist. Nor does he fare well in the controversy; for the Hindu finds it easy to retort that there are objectionable things in Christian traditions as well.

The Bishop of Tasmania pointed out not long ago that the Old Testament was not a book which *as a whole* could be used for instruction in morals of the Christian child. Indeed, the critical reason of to-day will detect objectionable passages in several Scriptures. The "Tri Pitakas of the Buddhist, the Avesta of the Zoroastrian, the Bibles of the Jew and the Christian no less than the Hindu "Puras" have incidents, legendary, extravagant, inconsistent with reason, incompatible with the claims of the Ideal as we discern it to-day. I have, for instance, never been able to appreciate the institutions of the Mosaic economy, viz., sacrifice, polygamy, slavery, divorce. Nor can I appreciate the sentiments involved in such declaration as these :—

"The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart."

"Then saith the Lord, 'Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.'"

“ When he shall be judged let him be condemned and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few ; and let another take his office. Let his children be faithless and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg ; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.”

Let the Christian missionary who, because there are in the ‘ Puranas ’ (books which are not historical biographies of Krishna) some objectionable passages (which, as I have pointed out already, are interpolations of the Dark Ages) cast stones at the Blessed one, read the story of the legion of devils cast out of an insane man by Christ who let them enter a herd of swine : let him read the traditional tales concerning Jesus told in books which the Christian Church calls ‘ apocryphal ’ but which were believed in the Middle Ages. There is the story of a bride made dumb by sorcerers but cured because she closely hugged Jesus, very often kissed him and continually moved him and pressed him to her body. (A story parallel to this in an ‘ apocryphal ’ account of Krishna is often dwelt upon by the average missionary in India to prove that Krishna was *immoral*). The missionary always forgets that the Krishna of the story

like the Jesus of this incident in an extra-canonical 'Gospel' is represented as being an *infant*. Think of an *infant* being *immoral* ! There is the story of a young man bewitched and turned into a mule but miraculously cured by Jesus being put on his back ! There is the story of Jesus causing a boy to die because the boy broke down the fish-pools made by Jesus, on the Sabbath. There is the story of Jesus being sent to a school master but refusing to tell the letters. And 'this master' so reads the chronicle "when he lifted up his hand to whip him, had his hand presently withered and he died. Then said Joseph to St. Mary 'Henceforth we will not allow him to go out of the house ; for every one who displeases him is killed." I could multiply illustrations.

(10) My critic asks what I mean by Krishna's *Inward Vision*. I regret limits of space forbid my giving an interpretation of the subject. But I would refer the reader, in this connection, to Annie Bessant's splendid translation of the "Bhagavad Gita"—a book which is a beautiful exposition of Krishna's Inward Vision—the Vision of the One Self in whom is rooted every one—the Vision of the One Who is the *In-Soul* of all.

One word in conclusion. It is sad that the personality of Sri Krishna should be still attacked by some of those who confess the name of the Christ. If only they knew that the One Word of God has come to men in different Prophets ! The Word was in Jesus : the Word was in Krishna too. And the love of Jesus that ends in the hate of Krishna is not the love that will still the world's sectarian strife. The world's need is the Love that reconciles all races, all scriptures, all religions, all prophets, all peoples—of East and West—in the One Self whose vision is beauty, wisdom, truth. In the name of that Love I feel constrained to say that they who condemn Sri Krishna commit a crime in the name of the Christ of God.

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