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MY REFLECTIONS ON KRISHNA & THE GALAXY OF THE GREAT (The galaxy in which Krishna, the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Marx and Gandhi scintillate)

I

INTRODUCTION

I reflected over Krishna and our Constitution for well over six decades of my life. I concretized my ideas over the 7 days in December 2005 that I devoted hearing the exposition of the *Srimad Bhagavad Mahapurana* at 'Veenapani Bhawan', my house at Laheriasarai, where I had founded the 'Veenapani Bhagavad-Gita Swadhyaya Kendra'¹ for the study of the *Bhagavad-Gita* from all observation-posts, adopting diverse approaches: historical, comparative, sociological, analytical, philosophical and functional. Immediately thereafter I went for meditation to the holy Naimisaranya, where, as our tradition goes, the great Vyasa had written in ancient times the great *Mahapurana*.

I have intuitively perceived that the *Bhagavad-Gita* stands illustrated in the events of Krishna's life. The *Mahapurana* illustrates through stories and metaphors what the *Bhagavad-Gita* teaches us through aphoristic principles in *shlokas*. I feel that the best way to comprehend the *Bhagavad-Gita* is to read it in the light of what Krishna did.

I remember how Prof. Sachinath Mishra commenced his first lecture on civics when I had joined my undergraduate class in 1954 at C. M. College. He referred to our Constitution as *Shashtra* quoting the *Bhagavad-Gita* (XVI.23) to tell us the great importance of obedience to our Constitution. Prof. Krishna Kant Mishra, who taught us the history of modern India, helped us in understanding what was common amongst Krishna, Jesus and Muhammad, and what made each emerge in history as the supreme role-model for those who struggled for justice, and



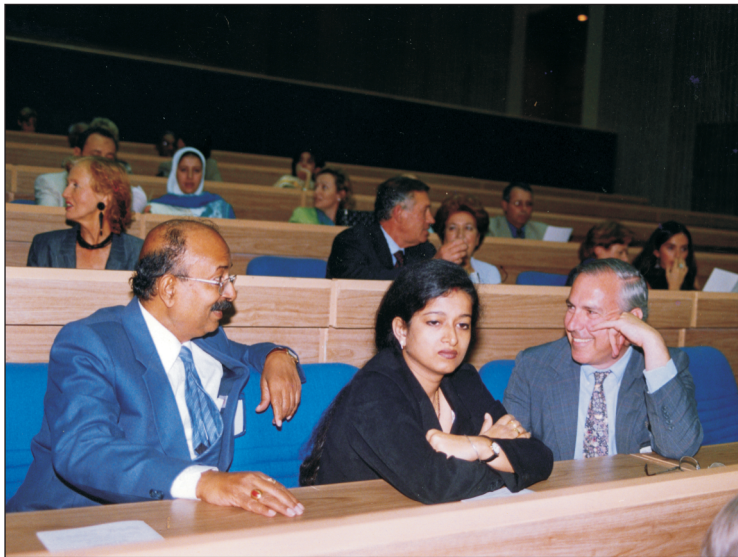
Veenapani Jha reading the *shlokas* of the *Bhagavad-Gita* on the rows of edicts at the Geetai Mandir at Wardha, near Nagpur



We two (Veenapani Jha & Shiva Kant Jha)



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worked for the welfare of all. In Krishna's *dharmayudha* (the righteous war) and *lokmangal* (welfare of all), Muhammad's *s'jehad* (the holy struggle only to promote noble cause for the weal of all), and Jesus' struggle against the brute imperialist exploiters of his time, the thinkers and the revolutionaries have discovered, at different points of time, a clarion-call to struggle against an unjust order. They manifested themselves at the three distinct and distant co-ordinates of time and space, but each one blew the conch of revolution for the good of humanity. Besides, I have always felt that the core egalitarian ideas of the great *Bhagavad-Gita* were at the most conscious point of the collective consciousness of the Constituent Assembly that had framed our Constitution.

II

REFLECTIONS ON KRISHNA

(i) The Prelude: I am indebted to that bird

It was a summer afternoon when resting on my bed on the first floor of our 'Veenapani Bhawan', I saw a little bird fluttering its tiny scarlet plumes on a blade of a ceiling fan. It had come into the room, it stayed for a while, and then flew away through a widow, kept ajar, unto the azure sky. The few moments I gazed at it became a long time, and a rich experience. My mind went back to a *ashloka* from the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Ch. II. 28), which tells us how we become manifest, again to become unmanifest. I was surprised how my wife caught my mental wavelength. I heard her singing, wholly withdrawn to herself, certain lines of *akirtan* which we had heard from Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the great founder of the Munger School of Yoga. She sang that *kirtan* again at the 'Srimad Bhagavad Purana Gyana yagya'. You can listen it on my website². Some of its stanzas (rendered in English) can be read in the Chapter 4; 'Portrait of my Mother'. We considered this as the quintessential presentation in simple words of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This *kirtan* expresses our profound philosophical vision which has shaped our ethics and philosophy: in short, what we can call the Hindu view of life. It expresses our oneness with the whole creation: thus it stresses our love and obligations towards not only all humans but also towards all creations. All the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and its worldview find most succinct expression in those lines.

(ii) The historicity and reality of Krishna

Much time has been wasted to prove whether Krishna or Jesus had historicity, or were mere myths. A lot of literature is available on the point to carry on the debate till the end of time, but this sort of quest seems to me futile. A story goes that someone had asked Meera; "Is Krishna real?" And she replied, "Yes, I believe. For me He is more real than anything else." She was right. Important point is the probability of His coming, and the credibility and creditworthiness of all that He said or did. Millions and millions never doubt His reality in their lives He has real presence for them. It is great that nobody before the Allahabad High Court, hearing the famous Ayodhya Dispute Case, questioned the reality of Sri Rama (by implications, of Krishna) Justice S.U. Khan, in his Judgment of Oct. 30, 2010 noted the sagacity of the litigants observing:

“At this juncture, it may also be noted that Sri Zafaryab Jilani, learned counsel for Waqf Board and other Muslim parties ... categorically stated that his parties did not dispute that Lord Ram was born at Ayodhya (previously this was also an area of dispute between the parties).”

Besides, nothing turns on the issue of ‘historicity’ (whether of Krishna or Jesus). With deep insight, Acharya Rajneesh (also known as ‘Osho’) said:

“How does it matter if there had been no Krishna?... The probability of the existence of Krishna is a matter of internal coherence. This probability exists, or it exists not.”³

We have danced with *Krishna* with ecstatic joy. We have drawn help and inspiration from Him when we feel depressed and our ways lost. We have received succour when all hopes are gone. Our burdens vanish when we think of Him. He helps us face the blizzards of existence. He helps us how to live, and also how to die. My grandmother would have been terribly shocked if I would have questioned the ‘reality’ of Krishna, who had for her an immanent living presence. When I was born, songs praising Him were sung by the ladies assembled to celebrate my birth. It is customary in our society to sing such songs of joy when a child is born. I wish when I die I should go praying, in the words of Tagore, ‘*maran re, tunhu mam Shyam-saman*’ (O Death, Thou art like Krishna) seeking ‘*mrityu-amrityu korey daan*’ (grant me immortality through death) In my childhood, I heard His stories from my parents; and thereafter I have read them in the *Bhagavad Mahapurana*, and the *Mahabharata* over the years enjoying them at different levels of my awareness of life. When someone raises the issue of Krishna’s ‘reality’, the words of Zeno (who lived sometime in the fourth century B.C.) come to mind:

‘Zeno began by asserting the existence of the real world. “What do you mean by real?” asked the Sceptic. “I mean solid and material. I mean that this table is solid matter.” “And God,” asked the Sceptic, “and the soul?” “Perfectly solid,” said Zeno, “more solid if anything, than the table.” “And virtue or justice or the Rule of Three: also solid matter?” “Of course,” said Zeno, “quite solid”’⁴.

It matters little if the historicity of Krishna is doubted. It is enough for me that Krishna is the richest and greatest cultural construct of mankind. They say He was the poetic creation of the great epic poet Vyasa. If that be so, then Vyasa was Krishna Himself as without acquiring ‘Krishna consciousness’ the *Mahabharata* (and its illustrious segment the *Bhagavad-Gita*), could not have been composed. Krishna *katha* (Krishna’s stories) are true. But their truth is both poetical and philosophical. The poetic truth has the greatest fidelity but it cannot be referential. “Richards denied to poetry any truth of reference and argued that ‘truth’, as applied to a work of art, could mean only the ‘internal necessity’ or ‘rightness’ of the work of art: that is, whereas scientific truth has to do with correspondence to the nature of reality, artistic “truth” is a matter of inner coherence.”⁵ When all is said, our oriental culture, the Hindu or the Muslim, is profoundly endowed with the gift of creative imagination

For centuries and centuries our seers and poets have conceived in their most exalted cultural consciousness the personality of Krishna. India's creativity at its most conscious point finds expression in Him. It seems to me that through the events of His life, our finest and deepest thoughts of abiding significance have found most efficacious expression. I intend focusing on some of the ideas which are contextually called for by the subject-matter of the Book III of this Memoir.

(iii) The Central ideas of the *Bhagavad-Gita* stated in brief

Astrophysicist Sir James Jeans aptly said: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine": I would say: the universe is an expression of thought, and its grammar is *kriya* (action). I intend to summarize what I have considered the core ideas of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. These ideas have shaped our worldview that reveals itself in our ethics, and our attitudes towards life and the universe. They have shaped our assumptions about 'property' and all other things which matter in our life.

The central idea of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was expressed in an oft-quoted *shloka* (Ch. II. 47) where Krishna counsels Arjuna to act without expectations of the fruits of actions. He tells Arjuna that he could never exist without action. Krishna told Arjuna precisely what modern science has shown. Whether it is an atom or a galaxy, the process of being and becoming is just an 'action' (*kriya*) and nothing else. I would try to state some of the fundamental principles of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, thus:

- (i) One should acquire right competence to understand and evaluate (through *viveka*, wisdom) the needs of the changing moments of one's life to acquire the right vision of one's duty (*kartavya-karma*) [see the *Bhagavad-Gita* Chapt. II. 47] to be done from moments to moments in one's life;
- (ii) One must not allow oneself to go under the spell of the negative feelings of attachment, lust, anger, and greed;
- (iii) One's perception of duty is determined by one's traits (*gunas*) which are the product of one's own actions, whether in this life, or the earlier life cycles;
- (iv) One is competent to evolve in the trajectories of the *gunas* evolving first towards the *sattwaguna*, and then towards transcendence of *gunas* in *moksha* (total liberation from life cycle) [see the *Bhagavad-Gita* Chapt. XIV];
- (v) In the trajectory of life, one tends to take to the path that accords with one's traits (*guna*), but it is possible to evolve treading any of the three paths (the paths of action, of knowledge, and devotion) of which the path of action is the easiest for the humans, though all the paths can go in synchrony, enriching each other, leading to the common goal in life;
- (vi) One should discharge duties for the weal of all (*sarvamanga*); and
- (vii) One must realize that what matters most is the attitude (the state of mind) with which acts are done.

One should work with the point of view which is *subh* (good) for all. The 'Utilitarians' prescribed a flawed objective for polity and political economy. Its chief proponent, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), called it "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Nehru noted, with great perspicacity, what we consider its basic flaw. "This view-point was not quite the same as the earlier democratic doctrine of equal rights of everybody. The greatest happiness of the greatest

number might conceivably require the sacrifice or unhappiness of smaller number”.⁶ Our Constitution strikes a different note. It comes close to what Krishna said in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

**(iv) Krishna's *Bhagavad-Gita* provides a remedy
against the 'moral deficit' of our times**

Our Problem: the 'Wallace Syndrome'

In our world what makes us worried most is its alarming 'moral deficit' almost every sphere. The industrial achievements and technological wonders cannot mask the rot, and hide what may become the founts for impending disasters. It is unwise for us to live in the romantic delirium of scientific achievements. The 19th century was greatly remarkable for industrial, imperial and technological changes, yet whilst assessing the worth of human achievements over that century one of its ablest scientific minds, Alfred Russel Wallace, expressed in his *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures* his deep concern at the “exponential growth of technology matched by the stagnant morality” which implied “only more potential for instability and less capacity for reasonable prognostication.” This is the well-known 'Wallace Paradox'. He presented, in his *Bad Times* (1885), the picture of what had gone wrong in the economic management of the West in the 19th century. What was the most worrisome problem for mankind at the end of the 19th century, continued to vex humanity in the next century too. Wallace observed in 1898 in his *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures* to quote:

“.... It must therefore be held to constitute the beginning of a new era in human progress. But this is only one side of the shield. Along with these marvelous Successes—perhaps in consequence of them—there have been equally striking Failures, some intellectual, but for the most part moral and social. No impartial appreciation of the century can omit a reference to them. and it is not improbable that, to the historian of the future, they will be considered to be its most striking characteristic.”

Stephen Jay Gould, examining the trends of the 20th century, drew up an enlightening account of our achievements and failures focusing on our tragic traits and our incapacity to respond to the challenges with optimism. He too considered the problem of 'the moral deficit' of our days alarmingly shocking. Sigmund Freud examined the ways of the humans, both as individuals and as the wielders of political power, and was led to comment:⁷

“Two things in this war have aroused our sense of disillusionment: the low morality shown externally by states which in their internal relations pose as the guardians of moral standards, and the brutality shown by individuals whom, as participants in the highest human civilization, one would not have thought capable of such behaviour.”

When we scan the course of things in our own days, there are reasons to believe that we have learnt nothing from the past. In the context of the present-

day economic management in our 'globalized' world, Joseph Stiglitz has perceptively highlighted its 'moral deficit'. He says in his *Free Fall* (2010):

“...too little has been written about the underlying “moral deficit” that has been exposed – a deficit that may be larger and even harder to correct. The unrelenting pursuit of profits and the elevation of the pursuit self interest may not have created the prosperity that was hoped, but they did help create the moral deficit.”

The *Bhagavad-Gita*'s Prescription

But we must not forget that the law of *karma* and its inevitable consequences operate in all the spheres (including, of course, our politics and economics). It was this great wisdom which Krishna imparted to Arjuna by telling him to know the very grammar of *karma* (the *Bhagavad-Gita* IV 17). The neo-liberals, supply-siders, the votaries of the present-day economic globalization, and the compradors of all the hues, must note that we do not garner miracles, we reap only consequences of our acts. The *Bhagavad-Gita* sets forth the inexorable law when it says :

Atmaiva hyatmano bandhur

*Atmaiva ripuratmanah.*⁸

The logic of *karma* is inexorable. If things go wrong, we ourselves are to be blamed. Man is free to choose his salvation or damnation. The *Bhagavad-Gita* teaches us the supreme art of living.

Dharma, as Medhatithi says, means *kartavya* which is generally translated as 'duties'. We know Deguit's view that 'duty' is the basic force at work in the social matrix involving the factors of solidarity and interdependence. 'Duty' is an individual's perception of what is right in a given situation, and what is required to be done for the weal of self and for the welfare of all others. Tilak quotes *ashloka* that goes to say: “those, who give up the duties, which *Dharma* demands to be discharged, but devotes time simply reciting 'Hari', 'Hari', are really enemies of Hari, as the Lord had taken birth only to protect *Dharma*.”

(v) Our Guide to Duties, and the standards for evaluating actions

Krishna explains to us the grammar of life, and provides us certain firm norms for judging the propriety of actions whatever be their spheres. He casts a great burden of responsibility on the humans, and makes them wholly accountable for their own actions or inactions. The edict to govern human actions and the criteria to assess their propriety can be gathered from the following four short extracts from Tilak's *Gita Rahasya* (Chapter XV):⁹

- (i) “The chief object of the *Gita* is not to show what would be the proper arrangement for the maintenance of society. The summary of the *Gita* is that, whatever the arrangement of society may be, one should enthusiastically perform all the duties which have come to one's share, according to one's status in life.....”
- (ii) “...one has necessarily to consider, in the first instance, the Reason (*buddhi*) of the doer, that is to say, the motive with which he did the act, and whether or not he had realized the consequences of the act, when one is determining the righteousness or the unrighteousness of the doer.”

- (iii) "Whether Bhishma will die or Drona will die as a result of the carrying on the war, is a minor consideration; the principal question is with what frame of Reason you are going to enter the fight;[Y]ou will incur no sin if Bhishma and Drone are killed while you are performing your duty with the pure and untarnished Reason."
- (iv) "Therefore, in order to find out whether or not Reason is pure and equable, one must in the first instance consider the external Actions of the man; otherwise, a man will by his mouth say that his Reason is pure and equable, and by his hands do whatever he likes."

The great Hindi Poet 'Dinkar' makes Bhishma tell the remorseful Yudhisthira, when the latter called on him in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, that the most important thing in one's actions is the motive and attitude of the person acting :

सत्य ही भगवान ने उस दिन कहा. मुख्य है कर्ता-हृदय की भावना
मुख्य है वह भाव, जीवन-युद्ध में भिन्न हम कितना रहे निज कर्म से

(God Himself said this: what matters most is one's attitudes to what one does. The most important point is how much detached one is from what one is doing.)

The Imperatives of the Grammar of Life

In course of my years gone, I discussed the ideas that I got in the *Bhagavad-Gita* with my parents, teachers, savants and many others. These ideas pertain to : (a) the acquisition of the art of getting over Fear, (b) the resolution to shun Greed, (c) the acquisition of the well cultivated capacity to understand and evaluate all the demands on our duty, (d) the acquisition of right 'character' without which the grammar of life cannot work. A few comments on these are set forth thus:

(a) The factor of Fear must go from life

In human history, 'Fear' has worked as the most paralyzing and asphyxiating of all factors. It robs one's competence to analyze and evaluate the challenges; it robs one of one's capacity to visualize things in right perspective, and to take actions with courage and imagination, unfaltering even when storms rage, and lightning strikes. Fear undermines what we call 'human specifics', and makes the victims mere fragile beach balls tossed hither and thither with heads held low.

We had suffered bouts of 'fear' in our remote past, both when nature inflicted on us acute sufferings, and when the greedy hordes of robbers and imperialists defiled our land and succeeded in subjugating our fiery people for centuries to servitude. 'Fear' is taking toll on us even now when thousands and thousands of our people die of starvation, when inequality and injustice make us fear return to servitude, when we fear to lose our culture and the way of life which has maintained us over centuries. Edmund Burke had rightly said: "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear." It is well said that when Fear governs, prudence goes on a holiday, and imagination gets shackled. Nehru portrays what had happened, and can happen again: it is an excellent portrait of Fear at work before World War I;

"So fear reigned in Europe and fear is a terrible thing. Each country went on preparing for war and arming itself to the uttermost....The

big private firms which made armaments—that...—naturally reaped a rich harvest and waxed fat.”¹⁰

(b) GREED must be conquered by individuals and the nations:

Krishna explained in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (in Chapter XVI *shlokas* 12-15) the traits dominant in the persons of ‘demonic’ nature. Nowhere in the world literature I could get better comprehension of the human traits (of all the three broad types of the humans) than in the *Gita*: these traits are called *Sattwik*, *Rajasik* and *Tamsik*. The description of the attitudes and assumptions of the ‘demonic’ people, as stated in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, is most graphic description of the exploiters and looters, fraudsters and crooks, self-servers, time-servers, go-getters and the economic gladiators busy in pursuing their limitless greed. Such persons claim to have supreme power to realize their ever increasing desires: They claim even to be ‘god’ (*Ishwar*). :

“For I am the Lord,
I enjoy, I am successful,
Perfect, powerful, and happy.”¹¹

Greed works as a most Important vector in imperialism. The demonic persons deify mighty capitalists. The Medicis of Italy were the great bankers in Italy during the Renaissance. Botticelli celebrated them in his *Adoration of the Magi* as the wise men in the service of Jesus. “The painting was commissioned by the head of the Bankers’ Guild as a tribute to that family. It should perhaps have been called *The Adoration of the Medici*. Having once being damned, bankers were close to divinity.”¹² This ‘Rogue Finance’ succeeded in establishing good relation on the principle of ‘give and take’ amongst the power wielders and the financiers to promote their common GREED.

(c) One must develop the capacity to understand and evaluate all the demands on one’s duties in the changing contexts of life.

The evaluative and judging agency is *buddhi* (pure Reason) that manifests itself through one’s *viveka*. One decides one’s *kartavya-karma* in life’s changing contexts in accordance with one’s *viveka*. But this process requires high level of character with developed intellectual and spiritual capacities. The situation in the *Bhagavad-Gita* illustrates this point. Arjuna never ceased to be a free agent. And Krishna never tried to become authoritative. As a good teacher He helped Arjuna remove his mental cobwebs; and as a good teacher he explained to him the grammar of the cosmos, and his own position and role in life in the larger context of the society. He counsels Arjuna to acquire the highest skill, even to develop the competence to act by both hands (the *Bhagavad-Gita* XI.33). Arjuna ascended the chariot to wage the Mahabharata War when his *viveka* made him think that alone was his duty. This is how we live our life. We must develop competence to decide what is what. Democracy requires this quality most. When the citizenry cease to be the free explorers of ideas, and free decision-makers in every demanding moment, not always sets in.

(vi) Krishna's attitudes towards 'Property'

The Oriental philosophy, whether Hindu, Muslim, or the pristine Christianity, never considered 'property' the fruit of an individual's acquisitiveness. Social purpose was always most dominant. 'Property' could not be a matter of an individual's greed. Certain stories in the *Srimad Bhagavad Purana* are the metaphors expressing Krishna's philosophical ideas we get so clearly stated in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

- (a) The *Srimad Bhagavad Purana* tells us the story of Dhenukasur who had asserted his monopoly over all the fruits and trees in the area of land where he controlled all the resources with his brute might. He prevented humans, birds and beasts from an access to the natural resources of that area. Krishna fought with him, and destroyed him in order to make the social resources available for all. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for the Trusteeship concept underscoring what the *Gita* had said: "acquisitive pursuit for property without considering others' demand is thieving only" Perhaps, when Gandhi was asking the acquirers of property to treat property a matter of public trust, he was stressing what Krishna had said. 'Property is for the weal of all'.
- (b) It is narrated in the *Bhagavad Mahapurana* (Canto V. Chapter 56) that Satrajit acquired *Shyamantak*, a precious stone which could beget a good quantity of gold every day. Krishna advised him that such a property should go the State for the benefit of all. He refused, and ridiculed Krishna. But he could not keep that precious stone safe. His brother, while roaming in a forest, lost not only that but lost his life also. He was killed by a tiger. When he did not return, a canard was spread against Krishna that he had got that person killed to snatch away that precious stone. Krishna saw to it that the precious stone was traced out, and brought back to the King's court. Satrajit was called to face it. He realized his folly. After examining Krishna's ideas about 'Property', Dr. Kiran Tandon observes: Krishna was all for social justice and egalitarian ideas.¹³
- (c) Krishna had resorted to a revolt against tyranny and exploitative order, as Jesus had done against the Herodian establishment and the callous money-changers (the ancestors of the present-day bankers, the arch-priests of the neo-liberalism) of Jerusalem. Krishna fought to put an end to exploitative *impeium* of Indra and Kamsa.
- (d) Krishna held in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that 'property' acquired merely for acquisitiveness and greed is clearly a sinister "THEFT" (Chapter III.12). It reminds us of the French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who had said: "Property is theft." But Proudhon's, and Marx's, ideas about 'property' are markedly different from Krishna's. Marx taught class conflicts, Krishna stressed on social harmony. Marx believed that the votaries of his ideology would destroy those who were the thieves of 'property'. Krishna stressed on the weal of all by teaching people the right way of acquiring 'property', and the right purpose for holding it. He stressed on the change of attitudes: one's propensity towards acquisitiveness must be got rid of by realizing the right course of action. It is amazing to see how close Gandhi goes to Krishna in formulating his ideas of 'trusteeship' to which I would come soon.

- (e) We get in the *Bhagavad Mahapurana* and the *Mahabharata* recurrent assertions that national wealth should be preserved for people's weal. Bhishma, in that epic, advised the King:

"The King should strive to augment the wealth of people to be used in the moments of emergent needs. He should treat such wealth as the wealth of the nation." ¹⁴

It is for our people and for government to consider the propriety of allowing the crooks to amass their ill-gotten gains in tax havens and the Swiss banks. I would revisit this point later in this Memoir. But in this context I must point out that Chanakya had instructed in his *Arthashastra* that those who amass their wealth in foreign lands deserved to be killed even without notice.¹⁵ Chanakya had prescribed severe punishment for tax evaders.¹⁶

(vii) Krishna's ideas of the Welfare State

The idea of the Welfare State had been best expressed in the concept of *lokasamgraha* explained in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Ch. III.20)

*Lokasamgrahameva pi
Sampasyan kartumarhasi*

[You should do work with a view to the maintaining the world.]

Krishna illustrated the principle with reference to the deeds of the great Janaka. Good deeds for the weal of all deserve to be done with total involvement [the *Bhagavad-Gita* III.25]. The cardinal principles of 'social justice' and 'equality' are stressed again and again in the *Gita*. No jurist or court anywhere in the world has stated the operative norm of the Right to Equality better than what Krishna did in the *Bhagavad-Gita* by requiring the authorities to be *samdarshi* (*saumdarshin*: seeing all without prejudice). Article 14 of our Constitution wants all the organs of the State, including our courts, to be *samdarshi* (the seers of the same *atman* in all) though the decisions would only be context-specific depending on the nature of the deeds done and the provisions of the law involved. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (and our Constitution) the driving force is *lokmangal*, welfare of all. It rejects Hegelian and Marxist dichotomies reflected in their theories of dialectics, to which I would refer in Chapter 24 of this Memoir.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* and our Constitution contemplate no class conflict or class struggle. They do not recognize dialectics which is central to the thought of Hegel and Marx. Our Constitution commits our polity to social justice under a system in which all live and work without discrimination. We have rejected Marx's dictum: "The [written] history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle". Our society over centuries has believed in co-existence and harmony. A Muslim poet, Maulana Zaffar Ali Khan Punjab says:¹⁷

If the teachings of Krishna are shared by all,
The fissiparous hawks would exist no more.

In my considered view, Krishna is of great contemporary relevance for us. I agree with Acharya Rajneesh that¹⁸

"Krishna has a great relevance for future. In future there would be a growing realization of his value. When creeds would fade, dialectical

religions would pass into the oblivion of history, Krishna would emerge even more resplendent.”

III

KRISHNA AND BUDDHA

I had no interest in the eschatology of Buddhism, but what interested me most was the Buddha's teaching that it is possible to evolve to the higher level of consciousness by following the Noble Eightfold Path (Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindedness, and Right Contemplation). His prescription is same as of Krishna's. What the Buddha did was what he felt to be his *kartavya-karma*. His traits (*guna*) led him to adopt the life-style that he adopted. Krishna might have told Gautama to tread in His own light; and the Buddha would have advised Arjuna precisely what Krishna had done in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This perception of what was common between the Buddha and Krishna led the poet Jayadeva to treat the Buddha as one of the incarnations of Keshava (Vishnu, or Krishna Himself): केशव धृतबुद्धशरीर जय जगदीश हरे (Praise be to Keshava who assumed the form of the Buddha). Whatever the Buddha wished people to do to get out of life's sufferings couldn't be different from their treading the Noble Eightfold Path: acts which amount to worship; or as Sankaracharya put it: यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं तवाराधनम् ('whatever I do is just worship'). The Buddha boldly asserted that all the sufferings emanated from desires which are driven by GREED. This profound statement deserves to be considered by all of us in the world we live these days.

IV

KRISHNA AND JESUS

Jesus challenged the powerful Herodian establishment. He had a wide following amongst the simple folk. Prof. Galbraith, in his *A History of Economics the Past as the Present* (1987), has described Jesus with full fidelity when he says (at p. 21):

“Those who in later times entered a protest against the established economic order would be called rabble-rousers, and it would be part of their defense that His assault on the Jerusalem establishment—in denigrative terms, the moneychangers and usurpers of the Temple – Jesus was their ultimate role model. To a far greater extent than many conservative Christians have liked to think, he legitimized revolt against evil or oppressive economic power. That priests in Central America who join the people in opposing rapacious or corrupt authority today believe themselves to be acting according to His example is a cause even now of much reputable distress.”

Prof. Galbraith recorded his indebtedness for this insight to Krister Stendahl, the former dean of the Harvard Divinity School, who in his *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (1984) mentioned the “increasing evidence that the role of Pilate was considerably greater in the execution of Jesus than the tradition and

even gospels lead us to think. The crucifixion — a Roman execution — speaks its clear language, indicating that Jesus must have appeared sufficiently messianic, not only in a purely spiritual sense, to constitute a threat to political order according to Roman standards”. And H.G. Wells aptly says: “It was not merely a moral and social revolution that Jesus proclaimed; it is clear from a score of indications that his teaching had a political bent of plainest sort”.¹⁹

The role that Jesus played and the ideals he set before people, are accurately stated with remarkable precision by Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Glimpses of World History* (at p. 85):

“Jesus talked a strange language of revolt against existing conditions and social order. In particular, he was against the rich and the hypocrites who made of religion a matter of certain observances and ceremonial. Instead of promising wealth and glory, he asked people to give up even what they had for a vague and mythical Kingdom of Heaven. He talked in stories and parables, but it was clear that he was a born rebel who could not tolerate existing conditions and was out to change them. Jesus was looked upon as a political, and by the Jews as a social, rebel....”

As the *Bhashyakars* (the commentators) read Krishna’s *Bhagavad-Gita* in the light of their own sectarian ideas. Jesus was also read later, from Paul onwards, by the scholars and the church, in the light of their own philosophy and of those whose interests they intended to promote and protect. They established powerful churches; they acquired political patronage and power, and also acquired fabulous wealth which bred corruptions and arbitrariness usual in a Plutocratic society. The great teachings of Jesus were transformed. [The way it could happen is amazing. Similar strategy is being adopted by the neoliberals in their attempts to subject our constitutions to a new gloss through what they call ‘the economic interpretation of constitution, the phenomenon now broadly described ‘neo-constitutionalism’]. This institutionalization of Jesus was utilized in ways not always worthy. Samuel Butler in *Erewhon Revisited* (1901) and *The Way of All Flesh* (1903) brought out what it all meant. Prof. Cazamian, in the contexts of such books, said: “To all practical purposes, churches are banks in which the pious, speculating on eternal rewards, in exchange for cash receive drafts on the hereafter.”²⁰ I have been led to believe that the Roman Catholic Church utilized the Roman tradition of power and wealth rather than the teachings of Jesus. The great historian Fisher has rightly said; “While Christ and His disciples were preaching the gospel of renunciation, the Italians, animated by a spirit as far removed as possible from that of the Galilean, were pushing into new markets, developing new enterprises, exploring new lands, and clamouring for new conquests.”²¹

I studied the *Holy Bible* while at my college, and I delivered a series of lectures on the ‘Book of Job’. My study of literature has led me to believe that Jesus bore spiritual affinities both with Krishna and the Buddha. There are grounds to believe that Jesus was well acquainted with them. The probability of such contacts has been admitted by many historians.

My reflections on Jesus have convinced me that he was a revolutionary against exploitative and corrupt regime, as was Krishna Himself. Obviously such

a person was too dangerous to be tolerated by the dominant acquisitive barons of the Mammon-worshipping clan. In the *New Testament*, St. Mathew says: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." One may think that Jesus, if he comes again, would be subjected to the same fate because the circumstances, which treated him that way, have recurred in ways much worse, and more dangerous. At the core points, the real Jesus was close to Krishna. The transformation of the activist Jesus into pensive, meditative *sannyasi*, which in later times the churches and the meta-physical speculators brought about in Him, is one of the ironies of human history. Wells has summed up the revolutionary ideas of Jesus in these suggestive words²²:

"The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought..... For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing off the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within." "And all men were brothers" His teachings condemned all the gradations of economic system, all private wealth, and personal advantages." "It was not merely a moral and a social revolution that Jesus proclaimed; it is clear from a score of indications that his teaching had a political bent of the plainest sort." "In the white blaze of kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence, no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him?"

The ironies of history: Christ and Christianity

Jesus Christ seems to have suffered more under the ironies of the Western history than He might have suffered on the Cross. It is amazing how His ideas were transmuted to support, first, the capitalism of the Church, then the imperialism of the nation states, and now this corporate *imperium* in this phase of Economic Globalization. I would revisit this point in Chapter 24.

(V)

KRISHNA AND MUHAMMAD

I belong to an orthodox Brahmin family, but I was fortunate to get occasions to spend time with some noble Muslims from whom I could get an overview of Islam. I felt indebted to Shri Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', whom I met at Muzaffarpur, for an insight into Islam. While working as a member of the Indian Revenue Service, I studied a number of standard books on Islam and Islamic Jurisprudence, and was for some time the question-setter and examiner of Muslim law for the LL.M. examination of Calcutta University. During the years I practiced law I came in contact with the India Islamic Centre at New Delhi. I requested Professor Dr. Razia Khan, who had been a professor at Patna, to write an article on 'the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Qur'an*'. I am grateful to her for her ideas which have

made me see Krishna in Muhammad in a perspective. I tend to agree with the view that it was a flash of the *Sudarshanchakra* (the ultimate weapon that Krishna could use) that the world had seen in the sword of Muhammad; and it would see it again in the sword of Kalki whose arrival is eagerly awaited by the exploited and suffering souls of the world.

Krishna and Muhammad shared the oriental view that the forces of good never fail. Explaining why Krishna could not succeed in dissuading the Kauravas from inviting the devastating war, Krishna told Uttanka in 'Anugita Parva' of the *Mahabharata*: (translation from Sanskrit by me):

"I am at present a human being. Hence I cannot exercise my supreme power over the Kauravas. I made all efforts, which were humanly possible, to dissuade them from the disastrous course of war, but they remained indifferent to my counseling."

"I explained to them the fearful consequences of the war, but they, under the grip of sinister forces, refused to listen to me, perhaps awaiting the verdict of Kaal ('Time', the supreme force of Destruction).."

I always felt that Krishna acted at two planes. It is never difficult to see when He speaks as God Himself, and when he speaks and acts just as a great man, a great teacher, or a great statesman. Muhammad heard messages from God, and Arjuna heard the words of God from Krishna who was God himself. But they resembled with each other as they acted and thought as great men.

"No civilized people in the world are so ignorant of Islamic history and contemptuous of the Mohammedan religion as the Hindus."²³ Even the Indian Muslims have, as Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' says²⁴, 'very superficial knowledge of Islam, and its historic role.' The Hindus saw Islam the way the Turkish invaders, who plundered this country, presented that to them. The Hindus were reduced to servitude for long. Thus they had reasons not to appreciate Islam. When the Hindus saw the cruelties, which Sultan Mahmud, Muhammad of Ghur, Timur and Changez Khan inflicted on the Hindus, it was understandable that the greatness of Islam went unnoticed. History of the world shows how the imperialists distorted even the noblest ideas, and turned them as grist for their mill. Whatever be the reasons, the Indians, (the Hindus and the Muslims alike) failed to see the charm of the revolutionary and egalitarian teachings of Islam of which Muhammad was the prophet. 'Islam' means "surrender to the will of Allah (Arabic: God). The recorded history of mankind has not seen a force as remarkable as Islam. I have always believed that his vision of Islam is still of relevance for the good of humanity. On core points I see him one with Krishna and Buddha who went before him, and Marx and Gandhi who came after him.

I would touch only certain points on which I could get opportunities to reflect over. I would do that with as much precision as this Memoir permits.

(i) Muhammad's God and the ideas of Sankaracharya.

For long it was believed that the great Sankaracharya's absolute monism (*advaita*) had been shaped substantially by the Islamic ideas. This view is simplistic. It is true that both Islam and Sankaracharya believed in one God, but they differed on fundamentals. God (*Brahma*), in *advaita* Vedanta, did

not act as the creator, operator, protector or destroyer, as did Muhammad's God. God in the Vedanta was a sort of catalytic agent in whose presence *prakriti* and *purush* created all the creations in which Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were supreme. Muhammad was God's Prophet and a great man. In Islam, Allaha is the sole God who is this world's creator, sustainer, and restorer. There are good reasons to think that Sankaracharya, and many other saints of the medieval India, were familiar with the fundamentals of Islam.

(ii) Muhammad and compassion

In the spiritual quest in every civilization, the quality of compassion has always been emphasized. Krishna is Himself *Karunanidhan* and *dayasagar*. In the Bible, God is compassionate, and in Islam God is *Rahman* (the Merciful). Buddhism considers *dukkha* (sufferings) one of the Four *Arya Satya* (Noble Truths), to be transcended by efforts and commitments. 'Islam' has underscored compassion for all. It is unwise to find fault with Islam for the unwise acts of certain persons done to promote objectives extraneous to the Islamic way of life.

(iii) Muhammad was against imperialism and capitalism

Karen Armstrong has discussed in *A History of God* (Mandarin, 1997) how Muhammad worked aggressively against imperialism and capitalism. With reference to *Qur'an* (92: 18; 9:103; 63:9; 102:1), she writes:

"In practical terms, Islam meant that Muslims had a duty to create a just, equitable society where the poor and vulnerable are treated decently. The early moral message of the *Qur'an* is simple: it is wrong to stockpile wealth and build a private fortune, and good to share the wealth of society fairly by giving a regular proportion of one's wealth to the poor."

Islam held: "God's uniqueness was the basis of the morality of the *Qur'an*. To give allegiance to material goods or to put trust in lesser beings was *shirk* (idolatry), the greatest sin of Islam".²⁵ And this "perception of God's uniqueness was the basis of the morality of the *Qur'an*. To give allegiance to material goods or to put trust in lesser beings was *shirk* (idolatry), the greatest sin of Islam."²⁶ The wealthy Meccan traders "felt that they had become the masters of their own fate and some even seem to have believed that their wealth would give them a certain immortality."²⁷ Krishna called such persons 'demonic'. Krishna stated the traits of such persons in detail in Ch. XVI.12 of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In *shloka* 12 such 'demonic' persons are:

'Bound by a hundred ties of hope,
Given over to lust and wrath,
They strive to gain by unjust means
Wealth for sensual enjoyment.'²⁸

(iv) Muhammad's catholicity

The Hindus and many western thinkers wrongly believe that Islam was deficient in catholicity and toleration. Karen Armstrong aptly says: "Muhammad never asked Jews or Christians to convert to his religion of Allah unless they particularly wished to so, because they had received authentic revelations of their own. The *Qur'an* did not see revelation as

cancelling out the messages and insights of previous prophets but instead it stressed the continuity of the religious experience of mankind.”²⁹

(v) Muhammad, and the neo-liberal paradigm

The neo-liberal paradigm of the present-day economic globalization is resorting to all conceivable methods to generate corporatism, consumerism, and crash materialism. In 1915, Einstein wrote to Lorentz in Holland “that men always need some idiotic fiction in the name of which they can face one another. Once it was religion, now it is the State”. I would rather say: “Once it was religion, then it was the State, now it is the Market, *Pax Mercatus*”. There is a systematic attempt to generate more desires and wants for goods and services through all fair and foul means. The Market believes that without consumerist culture, modern capitalism would get starved, and would collapse on account of its depleted profits. The zest of this sort leads one to believe that even the value of a person lies in his saleability. The genesis and effect of consumerism can be best understood by reflecting over the *shlokas* 62-63 of Chapter 2 of the *Bhagavad-Gita*: to quote —

‘When we are drawn over much to hedonistic allurements for things, we develop attachment with them. This ‘attachment’ breeds lust for them. Lust or craving, when obstructed, leads to anger. Anger leads one to delusion and ignorance, which in turn destroys memory without which one’s intelligence cannot survive. And when this happens, all is lost.’

Both Islam and Hinduism are against the hedonistic culture, and the consumerism that it promotes. It seems that this life-style is not appreciated by the neo-liberals because their strategy requires generation of more and more desires believing that Greed is good. This is one of the reasons why they are all against our oriental culture in general. It is hoped the Hindu culture would survive because it has strong inner strength to survive as it has powerfully interiorized its values; and the Islamic culture would also survive because it has powerfully interiorized its received values, and has also developed capacities to exteriorize them through their assertive actions.

It would be mankind’s misfortune if Muhammad’s message is not grasped, or is distorted for ulterior and ignoble reasons. The ‘arc of crisis’, apprehended to ensue on account of what the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 21 p. 897) calls a “clash of civilizations”, must be removed. I believe that for the survival of *Homo sapiens* we should allow civilizations to run their natural cycle so that clashes may not destroy our fragile, one world, already on the volcanic crater. More on this in Chapter 24 of this Memoir.

VI

KRISHNA AND MARX

In my view, Marx was *arishi*. Whilst Marx reflected on the grosser realities of human phenomenal world, Krishna went to the subtlest points which shape the realities of the cosmos and all its integral parts including the human societies. Marx had a narrow horizon, and a limited brief: Bertrand Russell is right in saying

that Marx “is too much wrapped up in the problems of his time. His purview is confined to this planet, and, within this planet, to Man.” Krishna had a cosmic vision of ever-lasting relevance. Yet both are great. In their own distinct idioms, they have taught us great lessons we cannot afford to forget.

Marx’s deductions from history are sound if they are considered within the perspective he had adopted and on the assumptions he had made. As I said above, he was not adopting a cosmic vision of the sort Krishna had adopted. He had taken up a limited province of human affairs at the grosser level of existence. He showed wrath against the exploitative socio-economic order as Krishna or Muhammad had done. To Marx, the alternative to private capitalism was, as history has shown, ‘State ownership of land and capital’. Gandhi felt that the problem could be solved through trusteeship. Krishna suggested attitudinal changes from greed to welfare of all. Marx had a right wrath: but in his prescriptions he seems to be the captive of his times

Marx’s materialism was right from his observation-post, and under the world-view he had assumed. His observations made him think that what mattered was ‘man’s relation to matter’. He was right to the point he had gone, but he had not gone very far. This constriction, on his perspective, was its strange tragic trait. He was not aware of the views that matter gets ultimately reduced to spirit, and then finally into Brahma. He was not aware of the view of modern physics to the effect that moments come when ‘matter’ ceases to be ‘matter’. Marx’s approach was scientific only in a restricted sense, and only to a limited extent. It will be folly to criticize him on the ground that he could not rise up to acquire the vision of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which shows, as Swami Ramsukhdassays in his *Geeta-Prabodhni*, that “देखने में वस्तु मुख्य दिखती है. क्रिया गौण है. पर वास्तव में क्रिया-ही-क्रिया है, वस्तु है ही नहीं. शरीर तो केवल कर्म सामग्री है.” (On observation, ‘matter’ appears of prime importance, and action not that important. But Cosmos is nothing but ‘action’. Human body is just an instrument of action.) Modern science shows us how the distinction between the observer and the observed ceases on right knowledge. Marx could not appreciate why *Kartavya-karma* is so important because he, like many other 19th century thinkers, felt in the inevitability of progress on account of the dialectic movement of forces. And this mistake led him to the error of ignoring, as Rusell says, “ethical considerations”, and moral vision in the cosmic context.

I have reflected on Marx’s ideas as to ‘property’. How close they come to Krishna’s which are so well expressed by the poet ‘Dinkar’ in his epic *Kurukshetra*:

जो कुछ न्यस्त प्रकृति में है
वह मनुज मात्र का धन है,
धर्मराज, उसके कण कण का
अधिकारी जन जन है.

[Whatever is the endowment of nature is the property of all.
O Dharmaraj, every being is entitled to all the resources in nature.]

Marx was great as he too had the same vision; and he wanted us not to procrastinate but to act. He said in *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach*: “Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways, but the real task is to *alter* it.”

With great perspicacity he said that the material factors of the production matrix determine the political system including law and judicial functions. We have good reasons to believe in what Marx said: "The State is an executive committee for managing the affairs of the governing class as a whole," Krishna would call this system 'demonic' where the traits of *rajas* and *tamas* dominate. The Chapter XVI of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (*shlokas* 1 to 20) tells us what happens when the 'demonic' forces dominate. Marx's ideas are, at the fundamentals, not materially different. I have reasons to conclude that in the capitalist system, as it emerged in the West from the 16th century, and also as it got established in other countries through imperialism, the powerful economic substructure determined the political and economic superstructure. I would try to prove my point in subsequent Chapters. In those Chapters, I would set forth my evaluative reflections on the system of governance and the institutions of polity at work in our times, and also on the world-view that has emerged triumphant in this phase of Economic Globalization.

The ideas of Marx are still a powerful force in human consciousness. Implementing them is treading on the razor's edge. Those, who have pretended to act in his light, have allowed themselves to be swept off for unwholesome reasons. The right Time for Marx's ideas is yet to come. Of course, some of its assumptions would undergo changes, and the strategy of its promotion would, through some creative destruction, be shaped anew. Perhaps this revolution in Marxist thought would take place someday only in the catalytic presence of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

This context takes my mind to my comments in the National Seminar on "Treaty Making Power of Government", organized on July 21, 2007 by National Working Group on Patent Laws (NWGPL) at the 'ASSOCHAM', New Delhi.³⁰ It was attended by many distinguished persons including the former Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral, the former Chief Justice of India Shri J. S. Verma, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, M.P. and Shri D. Raja, M.P. Referring to Shri Raja's Special Address, I said³¹:

"It is distressing that the art and craft of calculations are dear as much to the communists as to the capitalists under whatever version. The queer syndrome in our country is that whilst the common Indians are surely socialists, our formal socialists and communists have lost their ways and moorings, many even turning into crypto-capitalists. Every citizen of Bharat is a socialist in the sense Krishna and Gandhi have expounded socialism, teaching us the highest ideals as to property, production, equity, equality, justice, ethics, and the doctrine of the proper sharing of wealth for common weal. To offer an unsolicited advice: our leaders should read and understand the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Bhagavad Mahapurana*. Let the comrades try to create conditions: when (to say in the oft-quoted words of Faiz):

*Jab zulm-o-sitam ke kohe-garaa
rui ki tarah ud jaayenge."*

[the fog and mist of injustice, will go into wind tossing to wither like the shreds of cotton wool]

VII

KRISHNA AND GANDHI

I have mentioned that the *Mahabharata* shows that Krishna operated at two levels; as a man, and as God. As a man, he strove to do everything possible to prevent the war of destruction; and in this effort, as it happened with many great persons in the history, he failed. He worked as God indifferent to how the humans acted and invited inevitable consequences of acts. He merely ensured *Dharma* to remain triumphant. But Krishna was never fussy about notions like *himsa* or *ahimsa*. What mattered was one's perception of duty, and its bold discharge. If men find, on their right perception of duty, that it is proper to take resort to force, Krishna could have no objection to that. Mahatma Gandhi just acted in accordance with the ideas set by Krishna. In his perception of his duties in the context of the problems he faced, he was right in his doctrine of *ahimsa*. His view cannot be erected as a general creed valid in all contexts. Bertrand Russell has a point when he says:

“Certainly it has an important sphere; as against the British in India, Gandhi led to triumph. But it depends upon the existence of certain virtues in those against whom it is employed. ... But the Nazis had no scruples in analogous situations..”³².

Even Gandhi realized that time might come, circumstances might emerge, when assertions of right, even with force, can become people's *sdharma* (duty). This view follows from what he said in these extracts which I read when I visited Sabarmati Ashram shortly after my retirement from the government service in 1998:

“I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence.” (*Harijan*, 1-2. 1947) “If only the capitalists class will read the signs of the times revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which to-day pass muster as villages, can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort.... There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of the superficialities and consequent acquisition of real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up be times, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force, that a powerful Government can bring into play, can avert.” (*Young India* 5.12. 1928 p. 396)

This context takes my mind to Dr Amartya Sen's *Argumentative India* where he held that the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna was their way of 'debate' "between consequence-independent deontology and consequence-sensitive assessment" in which Arjuna accepts defeat as Krishna backed his ideas by the display of his supernatural powers. Sen posits a question: 'But was Arjuna really mistaken?' He feels that the consequences of the War could have been avoided if Arjuna's view would have been appreciated. I always felt that Dr. Sen read the *Bhagavad-Gita* to support his theory of consequentialism. The medieval commentators on the *Gita* had read their denominational and sectarian views in

the *Gita* to show that their views conformed to the philosophical doctrines expounded in that. It was a strategy to prove one's points, and to make them acceptable to people. Dr. Sen too seems to adopt similar approach. He has reservation about the *Gita* because he feels his theory of consequentialism is not compatible with the *Bhagavad-Gita*. I think Dr. Sen would have thought differently if he would have comprehended Tilak's *Gita Rahasya*. As my quotation from the 'Anugita' of the *Mahabharata*, quoted above, would show, every attempt had been made to avoid the Mahabharata war. When everything failed, He had no reasons to prevent the protagonists of the War to work out their destiny as free agents, with responsibility for sure and certain consequences of their acts. He had done everything possible to prevent the War. That was his role as a great man. When all efforts failed, He allowed *Dharma* to operate. He did not obstruct its operation: perhaps, even He couldn't have done so.

Krishna did take every step that could have been taken to avoid the Mahabharata War. If you read the discussion between Vidura and Krishna in Chapter 29; and also Krishna's pleadings in the Court of Kaurava against the devastating War in Chapter 95 of the Udyogaparva of the *Mahabharata*, you can appreciate the position that Krishna had taken in the *Gita*. It is unfortunate that Dr. Sen has tried to see this dichotomy (between deontology and consequentialism) of the western capitalist society in the all-inclusive philosophy of the *Gita*. One can perceive one's duty only after proper evaluation of the circumstances and possibilities. 'Duty' is not *karma* (action) but *kartavya-karma*. And when this approach to perceive one's duty is adopted, the dichotomy, to which Dr. Sen refers, ceases to exist. Both Krishna and the Buddha tell us that a right perception of duty requires 'Right Mindedness' and 'Right Contemplation' which require right knowledge and wisdom (*viveka*).

VIII

THE GRAMMAR OF REVOLUTION

The *Bhagavad-Gita* ends with certain propositions, which seem to me to constitute the very grammar of a revolution (Ch. XVIII. 78). It boils down to this: where, on the high altitude of graph, the lines of thought (represented by Krishna) and of action (represented by Arjuna) meet, we have a revolution; but where they meet at low altitudes we get mere revolutionary sparks. We see that in our country, both the lines are at low point these days. But the *Mahabharata* tells us never to forget the principles of Justice in human affairs. Such ideas, recurrent in our cultural oeuvre, were excellently summarized by Shri Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' in his epic *Kurukshetra*:

पापी कौन ? मनुज से उसका न्याय चुराने वाला ?
याकि न्याय खोजते विघ्न का सीस उड़ाने वाला ?

(Who is the sinner? Tell me the answer,
He who robs humans of their justice,
Or he who in the quest of justice,
Chops off the head of the sinister derelict?)³³

People's Right to Revolt

Moments come when it becomes duty to change the apparatus of power through a revolution. The *Srimad Bhagavad Mahapurana* tells us the story of the destruction of King Vena as he had ignored his people's welfare because of his inordinate greed. Krishna killed several demonic kings including Kamsa, Jarasandha and Bhomasura. Such stories are in the *Mahapurana* and also in the *Mahabharata*. In this epic the great Bhishma bewails why he did not revolt against Duryodhana which might have compelled him to desist from the Mahabharata War. It is a crime to see wrong being done, yet to keep silence. The poet 'Dinkar' describes Bhishma's agony in these words:

राज-द्रोह की ध्वजा उठाकर कहीं प्रचार होता
न्याय-पक्ष लेकर दुर्योधन को ललकारा होता.....
भारत भूमि पड़ती न स्यात्, संगर में आगे चल के

(If I would have raised even the seditious flag and given a clarion call, if I, in the cause of Justice, could have challenged Duryodhana then itself, perhaps, our land, Bharat, might not have faced this saddest day.)³⁴

Most of us suffer from similar agony. Whittier said:

For all sad of tongues or pen
The saddest are these: 'It might have been'.

But this struggle against a tyranny can be done in several ways: Krishna adopted one, Jesus another, and Gandhi still another: the category of inventiveness is never closed.

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