

Sri Krishna's Recipe for Lokasangraha.

Lessons for Social Reformers.

BY M. S. SRINIVASA SARMA, M. A.

Mankind was never in greater need than now of a general theory of life and conduct, of training the individuals to fulfil the conditions of personal and social existence. At a time when social planning of many kinds is being actively discussed, and many "Guides through chaos" are offering their much needed services, it becomes obligatory on our part to understand and realize the efficacy of the scheme propounded for the well-being of humanity by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *Jagadguru*. A little examination of the various suggestions for social reconstruction and the appeals of our social instructors for a change of mind, heart or spirit will point out to us that they are all an appeal to substitute public good for private advantage as the dominating motive of our actions. What the world is craving for to-day is an ethical revival even more than an economic revival. If we are to put first things first, we must admit that economic stability and political security are only means to spiritual freedom. We are called upon not only to live, but to live well. We should have not only physical strength and intellectual power but also moral sense and spiritual energy. If there is chaos in the world outside to-day, it is because that chaos reigns in the world within. When we neglect the soul side of things, it is no wonder that the darkness of mind breeds animalism and corruption and effaces the divine signature in us.

The supreme ideal of Hindu Ethics is *Lokasangraha*, the well-being and solidarity of the world. Śrī Kṛṣṇa persuades Arjuna in the *Gītā* to fight, not for love

of glory or lust of kingdom, but for the sake of the welfare of all beings (सर्वभूतहित). This can only be brought about by the law of righteousness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *Mārga-Darśaka* urges man to "stand up" (उत्तिष्ठ परतप), not for self-aggrandisement, not to do violence, but to use moral force, to do the duty. And it is to teach this secret of social well-being that He comes to the world and mingles in action. "Though there is nothing in the three worlds, O Pārtha, that should be done by Me, nor anything unattained that might be attained; yet I mingle in action; for, if I mingled not ever in action unwearied, men all around would follow My path."

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।
नानवासमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥
यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

Āchārya Śankara says that "the Lord, always possessed as He is of infinite Knowledge, supremacy of power, strength, might and vigour, controls the *Māya*, the *Mūla-Prakṛti*, the First Cause composed of three energies (*Guṇas*); and He appears to the world as though He is born and embodied, to help the world at large." Śrī Kṛṣṇa lets us into the secret of *Avatāras* when he says that "though I am unborn, imperishable and inexhaustible in My essence, and even though I am the Lord of all beings, still I am born when there is decay of righteousness and exaltation of unrighteousness, for the protection of the good and for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness." These manifestations are generally limited, self-

expressions of God; but in the case of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *Bhāgavata* makes an exception, and describes him as the full manifestation of the Divinity—

‘कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।’

Man is the object of God's constant care. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares that he who takes refuge in Him and falls at His feet finds the doorway of His abode open. It is open to all, the weak and the lowly, the illiterate and the ignorant, and such a man, He assures us, becomes pious; therefore He proclaims, “This is My word of promise, that he who loveth Me shall not perish.”

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

Here let us mark the word ‘Dharma-mātmā’ and understand its implications; for therein is the secret of individual as well as social welfare. ‘धर्मे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्’—everything in the universe is rooted in *Dharma*. *Dharma* is the dynamic urge to social action. It is the underlying principle in the social evolution of humanity. Society is the result of co-operative adventure; and *Dharma* is the organic principle which sustains life, and enables the individual to rise to his full stature and fulfil the law of his being. It is the bond that keeps society together and aims at the welfare of all creatures. It is the regulative guide to conduct, and leads ultimately to the achievement of the eternal and spiritual end of man.

Morality, therefore, is our social attitude towards the human environment; and character is the power of social agency, the organized capacity for efficient social functioning. In fact, personal morality is the means of social solidarity. Personality implies a capacity for fellowship. It is through interest in our fellow-men that the progress of our race can be insured. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that even seers whose sins have

been destroyed are intent upon the welfare of all beings and obtain peace thereby—

लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

The highest personality is realized only through the complete consecration of one's powers to society, to righteousness, and to God. Service of humanity is, in essence, the service of God. The law of successful personality like the law of life even among plants is not capacity for receiving, but capacity for giving. The successful personality is the one that loses life and all anxiety about life and its rewards for the sake of the highest service; and the social order awaits the reconstruction of its ideals by personalities of mental insight, moral power and social imagination. The highest social order can come only by directed effort, constructive thinking, and self-forgetting service. The meaning of life is interest in others; it means contribution.

Moral life is essentially dynamic. *Dharma* does not consist in solitary and sporadic acts of goodness; it is continuous and incessant striving after the highest ideal. Eternal vigilance and ceaseless activity characterize the essence of *Dharma*. The *Lāvāṅya Upaniṣad* enjoins that a man should spend his life-span of a hundred years entirely in the ceaseless performance of moral action. Ethical perfection, therefore, is the basis of social perfection. But, then, this is a strenuous process of effortful striving and self-exertion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa inculcates the power of self-help and asks us to raise ourselves by our own effort ‘उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम्’. Bhiṣma points out in the *Mahābhārata* that Heaven's help comes only to those who have exerted and put forth real and painful effort, and that where there is not this effortful striving, God's help and successful fruition are completely absent.

कृतः पुरुषकारस्तु दैवमेवानुवर्तते ।
न दैवमकृते किञ्चित्कस्यचिद्भ्रातुमर्हति ॥

Moral life is not only dynamic, but also relative to and dependent on the conditions of society. Though duty, that is *dharma*, is the free and creative expression of a well-developed moral self, yet it is relative to the position and standing which the individual holds in society. The first and foremost duty of every individual, according to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is loyal adherence to, and whole-hearted performance of his *Swadharmā*. It is the set of duties which are in perfect harmony with the essence of one's being. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us: "Listen now how perfection is won by him who is intent on his own duty. Man reaches perfection by each being intent on his own duty."

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥

The health and solidarity of the whole depends on each of the parts retaining its own position, and appropriately fulfilling its own function. Social organization is an orchestral unity in which the good citizens must be marshalled and their deeds co-ordinated under the common plan. They must be trained to play their parts in harmony. Without orchestration the effective pursuit of the social good is impossible. We misconceive the nature of the public good when we think of it as resulting from the accumulated actions of benevolently-minded or public-spirited individuals, each working for it on his own lines. How much of our present confusion is due not only to the deeds and policies of the selfish and unscientific, but also to the lack of co-ordination in the deeds and policies of the unselfish and scientific? In a co-operative enterprise all the members are equally important and equally valuable; and, in the interests of the strength and integrity of the

whole, each should keep on to his station in life determined by birth, education and environment, and function there properly. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, therefore, warns us: "Better one's own duty, though destitute of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger."

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

Everyone is great in his own place and everyone should do his work and let others do their work; confusion of duties should be avoided. There is no use in simply laying down a common plan for social well-being; we must also assign to every man the part he has to play in working it out, assuring ourselves at the same time that every individual to whom his part has been assigned is capable of playing it, and of playing it in such a way as to support, and not confuse, the contributions of his fellow-workers.

The concept of 'My station and its duties', the culminating point in the ethical teaching of Hegel and Bradley, is but a faint and belated echo of the clarion-call of *Swadharmā*. Performance of one's own duty has the merit not only of perfecting the individual and contributing to social solidarity; it is also the best form of worship of God. Here we find the glorious consummation of the living synthesis of moral endeavour and religious devotion.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

Thus we cannot escape work, because nature drives us to it. That being so, let all work be done as it should be done. If it is done without attachment, it leads to God. The importance of the unselfish spirit lies in the privileged achievement of

internal unity and detachment. Only powers that are exercised disinterestedly or unselfishly can be exercised to the full. Śrī Kṛṣṇa warns us that the welfare of society depends on the individual doing his duty for its own sake. Non-attachment to the fruits of action is the central citadel of His teaching. In the first place, genuine moral worth does not depend on the fulfilment of the contemplated action. The result is always the resultant of a number of extraneous circumstances over which man has no control. Secondly, non-attachment makes us free and unconcerned, and effectively drives out grief and fear. *Niṣkāma Karma* is the crown and completion of the ethical and religious life. There is no room in it for selfish advantage and personal equation. To discipline ourselves in *chittaśuddhi* and qualify ourselves for the attainment of wisdom, our duties should be performed in a disinterested spirit. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, therefore, asks us to do our duty without attachment, because that is the way by which man verily reaches the Supreme.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

Śrī Śankara defines *Lokasamgraha* as the preventing of the masses from resorting to a wrong path—(लोकस्य उन्मार्गप्रवृत्तिनिवारणं लोकसंग्रहः). How can this be effectively carried out? Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers that the influence of the personal example of great men well-versed in the Śāstras, and the declarations of Ṛṣis constitute the authoritative guide and inspiration to choose the right and avoid the wrong—

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

“Whatsoever a great man does, that other men also do; the standard he sets up, by that the people go.” The criterion which settles for us what our specific duties are is to be found

in moral experiences of the Śiṣṭas. The Germans have a very suggestive term to express the moral habits and experiments of the great and good men of the community—viz. *Sittlichkeit*. This is the *Śiṣṭāchāra* which comprises the social rules and manners of the true leaders of society. In every community we have a set of persons who are the best exponents of the culture and ideals of that group. They are not only the custodians of achieved culture but the ready sponsors to the forward march of that community in every direction; and it is to them that its individual members look for light, life and guidance. They are called the *Āptas*, whose statements bear the stamp of *Pramāṇa*. They are the inspired teachers of humanity who through years of self-restraint and self-culture have so purified their intellectual and moral nature as to recognize in their fulness and glory the invisible spiritual realities around. They see into the life of things and are the great fountain-heads of spiritual wisdom. They are the true reformers, since by spiritual intuition they see things *sub specie aeternitatis*.

स्वकर्मण्यभियुक्तो यो रागद्वेषविवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः पूजितः सद्भिराप्तो ज्ञेयः स तादृशः ॥

“He who is devoted to his own duties, devoid of attachment and aversion, free from hatred, revered by the good—such a person is to be known as an *āpta*; and to him belongs the glorious privilege of effecting necessary and salutary reforms for the well-being of society.” It needs the alchemy of the personal lives of these great leaders to transmute the lead of old ideas into the gold of compelling motives, to get the dream out of the dead pages of the long past into the realm of everyday living. We must at every stage be prepared for transvaluation of values, but should not on that account lose hold of abiding values

and eternal verities. It is the habitudes of thought and action of the best representatives of the community which organize into the *Sittlichkeit*, and serve as the criterion of everyday conduct.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is keenly alive to the essentially mobile and progressive nature of society. He says that change is the primal law of life, but emphasizes at the same time that the path of progress must be evolutionary, and not revolutionary. Psychologists tell us that the integrity and the sanity of the individual are entirely dependent on the vitality and continuity of his memory. Even the smallest injury to memory results immediately in incipient insanity. In the same way, to break sharply with the past is to court social amnesia, which means the death of society and the extinction of its culture. The sanity and unity of society consists in the continuity of its living traditions. But it should not be imagined that it is proposed to put up a reactionary plea against any progress. That would be neither desirable nor possible. But let us note that *natura non facit saltum*. A society, as John Morley says, can only pursue its normal course by means of a certain progression of changes; and these have a definite origin and ordered antecedents, and are in a direct relation with the past. Śrī Kṛṣṇa embodies the ideals of a progressive society and a mobile social order incorporating the results of past culture in his conception of *Yoga-Kṣema*, which He personally guarantees. *Yoga* is progress and connotes steady growth and progressive realization of the goal; and *Kṣema* is order and signifies the conservation of what has been achieved. Śrī Śankara defines *Yoga* as the acquisition of what is not on hand (अप्राप्तस्य

प्रापणम्) and *Kṣema* as the preservation of it (तद्रक्षणम्)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's clue for social well-being is to realize that I and my brother are one. Man should understand and sympathize with and love the rest of mankind, and identify himself with the life of humanity. Divinity is inherent in every man; and the more we love mankind, the nearer we are to God. Personal right living is not merely seeking and seeing God, but a divinely ordained vocation governed by the motive of elevating the whole of humanity to the level of God. The path of *Dharma* is the path that leads to the realization of the wonderful truth revealed in the Vedantic *Mahāvākya*: "Tat-tvam-asi". That the success of our heavenward endeavour is sure and certain is indicated in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement that "The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, and causes all beings to revolve, by His illusive power, as though mounted on a potter's wheel."

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

He assures us that, though we are ever performing all actions, we will obtain the eternal indestructible abode by His grace, if we take refuge in Him.

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।

मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥

The *Magna Charta* for humanity is contained in His final declaration:—

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

"Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bhārata; by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling-place."

