Chapter IV
Two Ways of Life: Proximity and Distance

In the previous two chapters I examined two philosophies of life with regard to human limitations and potentialities. The differences of time and cultural backgrounds notwithstanding, these two approaches to life have much in common in their perception of the human condition. The basic common assumption is that human beings are part of a certain system of life working eternally in the careful supervision of its creator, the Self, present within the system itself to keep it going smoothly and purposefully (in a direction known best only to the Self itself). The system has certain inbuilt testing situations and also concessions. If circumstances tend to have a limiting influence on human freedom to act, the Self offers to liberate the struggling mortal from all trouble that may lie on the way.

It is assumed, in Emerson and in the Gita, that mankind is in need of help that the Self may provide. Commenting on the assumptions of Emerson’s philosophy of “Self-Reliance” Lou Ann Lange remarks that they “suggest that he thought that men were in need of help. They indicate, too, that he believed the help was available and that men were in a position to assist in their own rescue”1. In the Gita towards the end Arjuna tells Krishna that by his “divine favour” the confusion of his mind is removed and he has gained understanding. He will, in future, act according to his advice. (C.W. 134 XVIII, 73). Allegorically, Arjuna seems to be speaking thus for mankind.

In the system of the Self in Emerson and in the Gita mankind is supposed to face certain limitations. Some of these are inevitably in the system. One may depend on the Self, of course, in the face of all sorts of circumstances in life and achieve success and happiness. In this chapter I set out to first compare the limitations faced by human
beings in their life as visualized in Emerson and in the *Gita*. Then I shall compare the concept of the Self in both. Alongside this, I shall try to assess, on the basis of the similarities of perception, the influence, if any, that the reading of the *Gita* might have had on Emerson.

In the present study the first limitation of man (on which Emerson and the *Gita* have a common stand) is that he must lead a virtuous life which means he should be honest, just, dutiful and helpful to fellow-beings. This relates to the social utility of man. This limitation is inevitable in the system of the Self. Emerson says in “Fate” that this “limitation is impassable by any insight of man.” In the ultimate analysis, human insight and the freedom of will are subject to it (*W*, VI, 21). The universe is being governed justly. No wrong-doing will go unpunished. In “Compensation” Emerson points out that justice is always done. All crimes are punished and all virtues are rewarded. There is redressal for all wrongs; silently and certainly it works at all times (*W*, II, 102). In “Fate” we are told that Fate requires man to be just and “always strikes” sooner or later if man fails to do justice (*W*, VI, 21).

In the *Gita* in chapter IV Krishna declares that he personally intervenes and awards punishments to the wicked whenever “virtue” suffers a decline and vice and injustice predominate in human society. He makes himself felt in all ages to preserve the just, destroy the wicked and establish “virtue” (*C.W.* 52, IV, 8). In chapter XVI mankind is seen as existing in two broad categories with good and evil destiny. Those with the evil destiny do not know how to “proceed in virtue” and “refrain from vice.” They are not pure, truthful and moral (*C.W.* 116, XVI, 7). Krishna says that he casts evil persons into the wombs of evil-minded people on earth for their subsequent births, and they go to the worst hell at last (*C.W.* 117, XVI, 19, 20). The evil doers remain
This theory of rewards and punishments is known as Compensation in Emerson and Karma in the Gita. Commenting on the influence of the philosophy of Karma on Emerson, Arthur Christy points out (in his book The Orient in American Transcendentalism) that the doctrine of Karma “finds its reflection in Emerson in his doctrine of Compensation.” As Emerson advanced in age he found the Greek interpretation of fate as too easy-going. He found that the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads approved of his own theory. He “found in fact that Karma and Compensation were practically two coins of the same mintage.” And when he came upon the Mohammedan Kismet he thought it was Karma because it was Oriental. Through his theory of Compensation Emerson had come far away “from the theism of his time.” He “never wrote of escaping from one's sin through the grace and atonement of Christ.” The decrees of Allah and Calvin's God are, he noted, autocratic, whereas among the Hindus what one receives is the fruit of one's own actions, a harvest arising from the actions pertaining to a previous life. Emerson has been criticised more for this law of Compensation than for any other element in his Transcendental system. The well-to-do people are not always innocent of any crime, and those suffering are not always the sinful.

The next common limitation on human freedom to act, in Emerson and in the Gita, is that in their pursuit of pleasures related to senses humans should not try “to gratify the senses.” Rather, they should suit their pleasure of the senses to their moral needs (W, II, 103). The test of man lies in the “solution” of this “problem.” Man has to learn to separate what is sensually sweet, strong and bright from what is morally sweet, deep and fair in life. This limitation is ordained in nature and is closely related to the one we have just studied. In us we have a tendency
to seek inordinate pleasure. The soul (the Self) permits moderate eating but the body likes to feast. It requires man and woman to be one flesh and soul, but the body seeks physical pleasure alone and joins "the flesh only" (W, II, 103, 04). Emerson regards man's devotion to the gratification of his senses as a rebellion against the creator and a separation such that one does not see God complete in every object. One sees only the sensual attraction of an object but one doesn't see the hurt it contains. (W, II, 105, 06). In "Compensation" Emerson tells us that men wish to be wealthy, powerful and famous and thus want to become great but they cannot have the sweet leaving out the bitter. Their sensual pursuits cannot make them happy. (W, II, 104).

Throughout the Gita the human desire to gratify the senses has been seriously deplored. At the end of chapter II one, who gives up "all lusts of the flesh" and walks with controlled desires, is praised (C.W. 43, II, 71). In chapter III the man who takes delight in "the gratification of his passions" is regarded as "sinful" and living in vain (C.W. 46, III, 16). Later in this chapter it is pointed out that lust born of physical cravings induces man to commit crimes (C.W. 49, III, 36, 37). In chapter XVI the "gratification of sensual appetites" is strongly disapproved of. Lust and greed are regarded as passages to hell. It is pointed out that people who are given to the "gratification of their inordinate desires," who regard it as most important and who seek to accumulate wealth through unjust means will sink into the Narak (hell) of impurity at last (C.W. 116-17, XVI, 8, 10 to 16). It is interesting to note that the word gratification has been used three times (with a negative connotation) in this chapter while referring to sensual pleasures. It may be noted here that in Emerson and in the Gita man's turning to the gratification of his senses takes him away from the Self which is within him hiding behind the life of senses. Without access to
this Self there can be no happiness for him.

Next, in Emerson and in the *Gita*, praying, craving and working for material gains is rejected altogether. To Emerson prayer aimed at a "private end" is a mean and thievish act. Prayer asking for a particular thing which is not for the benefit of all is "vicious" (W, II, 77). It seems that Emerson, perhaps, advocates working without a desire for a personal reward. He remarks that a man united with God "will not beg." All action will seem prayer to him. All people working will seem to him to be praying (W,II,77). Emerson regards reliance on property, which is implied in one's working and praying for personal gain, as want of self-reliance. People assess each other on the basis of property each owns and not on the basis of character (W,II, 87). But this is not the right approach. This dependence on material possessions cannot bring any happiness to them. This limitation on human freedom to act to gain happiness and success cannot be by-passed in Emerson and in the *Gita*.

This limitation on man seeking happiness and success is stressed throughout the *Gita*. The ideal man, the truly happy man, is stated to be one to whom iron, stone and gold are the same (C.W. 110, XIV, 24). As for property, it does not even have a definite home (C.W. 100, XII, 19). As regards his work, he gives up "the desire for a reward of his actions; he is always contented and independent." He may be busy in work but to him it would seem he is not doing anything (C.W. 53, IV, 20). This is because he is not working for a reward. He works selflessly. He is not selfish (C.W. 132, XVIII, 53). Here, while comparing Emerson's philosophy with that of the *Gita*, one cannot afford to be too exacting. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a deep echo of the philosophy of the *Gita* in Emerson. Emerson and the *Gita* both want man to work without the desire for a personal reward. To many people
in India this seems to be the only lesson put forward in the *Gita: Karam 
kiye jao, Phal ki iccha mat rakho.*

The next limitation ordained in nature, common in Emerson and the *Gita,* is that human beings are born with a moral or material bias. In “Fate” Emerson writes: “People are born with moral or with material 
bias; uterine brothers with this diverging destination” (W, VI, 12). Emerson refers to the Hindu explanation of this phenomenon which 
says that this is because of the deeds committed in a state of prior 
existence. But this is, he says, only a poetic way to explain fate. This 
poetic attempt, however, is made in the *Gita.* It is declared in chapter 
XVI that “two kinds of destiny prevail” in the world. There are people 
born with a divine destiny, who have a strongly moral bias and there 
are others born “under the influence of evil destiny,” who have a material 
bias and who pursue material gains and sensual pleasures. (C.W. 115-
16, XVI, 6). It is very clearly stated that the births with the good or evil 
destiny are the result of deeds committed in the previous lives. (It may 
be that Emerson had the *Gita* in his mind when he wrote of the Hindu 
poetic way to explain fate).

If we compare Emerson's position with that in the *Gita,* we find 
that he does not seem to believe in previous lives but he does believe 
that the birth of a person decides the moral or the material bias that he 
or she is going to have in life. Emerson’s own explanation of this 
phenomenon is equally poetic (to use his own word) as it is in the *Gita.* 
He tells us that in what one is at present one is a party and one knows it (W, VI, 13). But this position does not go well with his own insistence 
that men are born with a diverging destination. How can a person be a 
party to his bias at birth? The idea of moral or material bias of human 
beings is put forward in “The Transcendentalist,” too, wherein mankind 
is seen as always divided into two categories as thinkers: Materialists
and Idealists (W, I, 329). Emerson, however, is less harsh on the materialists while in the Gita they are literally bound for hell.

The next limitation on freedom of action in life, in Emerson and in the Gita, originates from human senses again. The senses obstruct the vision of the reality in nature and provide man a life of appearances alone. In chapter II and III in this thesis we have already discussed this point in some detail. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson points out that senses stand between man and the Self. The light which from within or behind shines through us on the things in this world enlightens us to acknowledge “that we are nothing, but the light is all.” He adds that a man hides within him all wisdom and all good. The senses separate in man the human from the divine. The “eating, drinking, planting, counting man” does not truly represent himself (W, II, 271). The senses bind man to the life of time and space and close the door on the eternity (the Self). The “influence of the senses” on “most men” is such that it overpowers “the mind” and makes the obstacles of time and space appear real and insuperable. It would be madness to allow oneself to be hindered by “these limits” (W, II, 272). The scale of the soul is one, and the senses and understanding have quite another scale (W, II, 273). This limitation, though ordained, gives way if there is constant struggle to overpower it.

In the essay “The Transcendentalist” we find that the idealist knows the secret of the senses. He affirms facts untouched by “the illusions of sense.” These are the facts which can be discerned only through “a retirement from the senses” (W, I, 330). The materialist, on the contrary, leads a life only at the level of the senses. He makes fun of the idealist and calls him a star-gazer or a dreamer. But Emerson says it is easy to make him aware that he, too, is a phantom living among phantoms (W, I, 331).
The secret of the senses is given in the *Gita* in chapter V. It is pointed out that the man having knowledge of the reality of “things” on account of his alertness knows that “in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, talking, quitting, taking, opening and closing his eyes he doeth nothing.” Only his “faculties” are “employed in their several objects” (C.W. 58, V, 8, 9). The reality lies underneath the life of senses. Interestingly, here we find in the *Gita* a close proximity to Emerson’s description of the life of senses discussed in the preceding second last paragraph. We have noted that (in Emerson) eating, drinking, planting, counting man does not in fact represent himself. The senses in the *Gita* subject man to a transitory experience (of time and space in Emerson). They acquaint him with heat and cold, pleasure and pain but this experience is “transient and inconstant” (C.W. 36, II, 14). It hides the Self behind it. The senses produce affection or dislike. The wise man knows both these to be his “opponents” (C.W. 48, III, 34). The individual is attracted or bewildered because of different sensibilities which oppose each other (C.W. 72, VII, 27).

Senses in Emerson and in the *Gita* create an illusion of reality and prevent man from knowing the ultimate reality. In the essay “Illusions” Emerson points out that among mankind he finds “victims of illusion” in all stages of life. The life of illusion begins with childhood, and continues through youth, adulthood and old age. The young and the old alike, all are moved by one illusion or another (W, VI, 313). Nature affords illusions according to persons. Nature affords a fine bait to deceive an intellectual and has something to amuse and dupe a sot, too. Illusion deceives even the performer of the miracle and the elect are no exception to it (W, VI, 319, 20) Illusion engulfs all. Emerson himself was no exception. He confesses in “Circles” that he
has infirm faith, and his will is not strenuous. He is God in nature and he is a weed beside the wall (W, II, 307). In “Experience” he complains that life is a continuation of moods. As we pass through these moods, they are like lenses of various colours painting the world in their own way (W, III, 50). The climax of the life of illusions is reached when Emerson says that the individual is always mistaken. He gets quite the contrary of what he expects (W, III, 70).

Behind the life of illusion there is the reality with no disunity in it. Emerson praises the Hindus for their perception of this essential unity of the universe. He also admires them for regarding variety as illusion. He praises them also for their belief that blessedness of man lies “in being freed from fascination” of illusion (W, VI, 324). He appreciates that they believe that the notions of ‘I am’ and ‘This is mine’ are caused by Maya (W, VI, 324). It seems (to me that) the life of illusion is a kind of test for human beings since the law of Compensation also operates simultaneously with it (W, VI, 322) (even if the individuals labour under illusion). This inference is strengthened by the fact that the illusion is created by the Self. In his essay “Illusions” Emerson makes this point very clear. He tells us that “fascinations” have a very long chapter. “Great is paint; nay God is the painter” (W, VI, 313). He describes the illusive power of the Self thus: “At the top or at the bottom of all illusions, I set the cheat which still leads us to work and live for appearances” (W, VI, 323). This cheat in Emerson is the supernatural power of Krishna in the Gita.

In the Gita we find that the life of illusion is created by the Self. The Self remains hidden behind the illusion created by it. Krishna points out that he is not visible to all, because he is “concealed by the supernatural power” that is in him (C.W., 72, VII, 25). This power is yogmaya, the illusion. The idea of illusion as fascination occurs in
chapter VII. It is pointed out that all human beings become subject to the contrary sensations of love and hatred (affection and dislike) right from birth and consequently are “fascinated or perplexed.” They obtain full knowledge of the reality of the universe only on “being freed from the fascination” which arises from these “contending passions” (C.W. 72, VII, 27, 28). It is interesting to note here that the phrase “being freed from the fascination” here in the Gita is available as “being freed from fascination” in Emerson (W, VI, 324) with the single omission of the article ‘the.’ This similarity of description of a situation in life in Emerson and in the Gita is not the only indication at this point that, perhaps, the phrase comes from the Gita. Emerson’s praise for the Hindus in this particular context also points to it.

The idea in Emerson that the human mind keeps moving from one thought to another is implied in the theory of the illusion created by the three qualities of nature operating on man in the Gita but it is also separately presented in chapter VI. Arjuna describes mind as strong, stubborn, turbulent and unsteady by nature and unrestrainable like wind. Krishna adds that it is difficult to confine it (C.W. 66, VI, 34, 35). The three qualities of nature, the Sattwa (truth and goodness), Rajas (passion and materialism), and Tamas (dulness and melancholy) keep human mind occupied in turns at all times. At a given time one quality or the other exclusively exercises its influence and determines human behaviour. The “influence of these qualities” bewilders the whole world (C.W. 70, VII, 13). This illusion is hard to overpower since it belongs to the Self: “This my divine and supernatural power ... is hard to be overcome” (C.W. 70, VII, 14). In heaven or on earth, among the gods and the human beings, there is none, except the Self, who is unaffected by the influence of these three qualities (which create illusion) (C.W. 130, XVIII, 40).
At a particular time one may be busy doing good to others, or doing good to himself by seeking material gain and physical pleasure or one may just be ignorant, lethargic and inactive. In chapter III in this thesis we have discussed the influence of the three qualities in some detail. Discussing the idea of illusion in the *Gita*, it has also to be noted that even if the human beings are working under an illusion (created by the three qualities of nature) they are subject to the law of Karma. It seems to be a test for them since the Self is behind the illusion. (When one overpowers the three qualities of nature one becomes acquainted with the Self and is also, in course of time, liberated from the cycle of birth and death on earth.)

In “Experience” we have a parallel situation to compare to the one we have just discussed. Emerson points out that though “it is our constitutional necessity” that we see “things under private aspects, or saturated with our humors,” God is “yet” the “native of these bleak rocks” (W, III, 81). God is the mystery behind private behaviour. The bleak rocks of our behaviour here refers to the separation inflicted by illusion in nature between the human and the divine. In the *Gita* these bleak rocks are the influence of the three qualities of nature operating on man at all times with the Self concealed underneath. The concept of the human quality of subjectiveness which is one of the seven lords of life in “Experience” (discussed in this thesis in chapter II) comes very close to the idea of the influence of the three qualities of nature on man in the *Gita*.

On comparing the idea of illusion in Emerson with that in the *Gita* we come upon the following similarities of perception. First, the Self is the creator of illusion. Second, illusion is very powerful and engulfs and bewilders all mankind. Third, the law of Compensation or Karma remains in force despite mankind being under nature’s illusion.
And fourth, the Self is concealed behind illusion. As for the dissimilarities, in Emerson we find no mechanical categorization of illusion (into three parts). In “Experience,” no doubt, Emerson has tried to describe the power of nature under the seven lords of life, which categorization is similar to the mechanical categorization of illusion in the Gita. And there is also no promise of liberation from the cycle of birth and death for those who overpower illusion. We may add here that one striking similarity regarding the supposed purpose of illusion in Emerson and in the Gita is, perhaps, that it tests and disciplines mankind. About illusion in Emerson Carpenter points out in his book Emerson and Asia: “Experience of the illusions of reality disciplines man to the understanding of the true meaning of life”6.

About the influence of the Hindu philosophy of illusion on Emerson’s concept of illusion Carpenter says that its one indication is “the frequency with which he mentions Maia, the Hindu goddess of illusion in this connection” in his writings7. Carpenter adds: “As in his later essays, so in his later journals, the Hindu doctrine of Illusions is often considered”8. According to Christy, “one of the first principles in Hindu thought to attract Emerson was that of Maya. Much in his own philosophy approximated the Hindu concept”9. Christy adds: “He called his own thoughts the doctrine of illusion, but he recognized their resemblance to Maya, and he admitted that the Hindus had treated the subject with the greatest catholicity.”10 The Hindu doctrine of Maya “found a large place” in his “thought”11.

In the Gita, as we have noted already, the illusion created by the three qualities of nature is the yogmaya, ‘the supernatural power’ of Krishna. The exact verse referring to it may be examined here:

\[
\text{daivi hy esa gunamayi} \\
\text{mama maya duratyaya}
\]
mam eva ye prapadyante
mayam etam taranti te (VII, 14)

This divine maya of Mine, consisting of the modes [three qualities of nature] is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me alone cross beyond it.

In the ‘Notes’ to the chapter VIII of the Gita Charles Wilkins explaining the Hindu concept of creation refers to a metaphysical work which represents God as Maha-Pooroosh, the great man or prime progenitor, and Prakreetee, nature or first principle, as a female. God in conjunction with Prakreetee creates the world with his “Maya or supernatural power” (C.W. 142). The Self created the world (of illusion) with his Maya. The illusion itself is Maya, we have already noted. The point to be noted here is that the word Maya occurs in Charles Wilkin's translation of the Gita, the book so much liked and read by Emerson.

The concept of illusion is the basis of the philosophy of Emerson and that of the Gita. About Emerson it is also said that the “concept is so close, so native to all his thinking that it seems to him to be a fixed rule and theory of life.”12 In the Gita overpowering of illusion is essential for a union with the Self: “When the soul hath surpassed these three qualities” it is liberated from birth and death, old age and pain, and becomes immortal through its union with the Self (C.W. 109, XIV, 20). It seems Emerson was influenced by the concept of illusion in the Gita. Our comparisons of the similarities in thinking on this point indicate this. It may, however, be remembered here that Emerson became familiar with the idea of illusion through his study of Vishnu Purana and the Upanishads, too, which works might have helped him in understanding the concept fully.

In our times, too, the Hindus in general continue to believe that life in the world is unreal and is a mere illusion. It is God’s sport, his
'Leela'. The illusion of this 'Leela' is, however, so immense that they are confused between God and the gods, and they believe there are as many as thirty three crore gods and each god has his own heaven exclusively designed for his worshippers. There are goddesses, too, dwelling in conjugal relationship with these gods. The Gita, however, describes these gods to be subject to illusion as the human beings are. The Hindus it seems have ignored for the most part this assertion in the Gita and continue the worship of gods of their choice. It may be noted that the Gita makes no mention of any goddesses. The Gita stresses the worship of one God, who is supreme.

The next limitation on man's freedom to decide his fate (common in Emerson and in the Gita) arises from his constitution in nature. Each individual on earth has a unique constitution (mental and physical make-up) given to him by nature. Emerson sees its origin in the divine plan of the Self and in the Gita, it seems, it is partly the divine will and partly the result of the deeds of the individual in the previous lives.

The constitution of an individual decides the role he is supposed to play in this world. In "Self-Reliance" Emerson speaks of the "divine idea" represented by each of us (W, II, 46, 47). In everybody's life, he tells us, there comes a time when he realizes that to be envious is to be ignorant and to imitate is to commit suicide and that he himself carries for better or worse "his portion" (W, II, 46). One must trust oneself, one's constitution, one's portion, to be successful and happy in life. Emerson says: "Trust thyself." For himself he says that the only right is what is after his constitution and the only wrong what is against it (W, II, 50).

The constitution is designed to suit the particular environment in which the individual is placed. He is given his plot of ground to till (W, II, 46). This point is elaborated. He is impressed much by one
face, character or fact but not by another. His memory is carved in relation to his future (W, II, 46). The course of action in these circumstances is explicit. He must accept the place “the divine providence” has decided for him through the society of his contemporaries and events that he will face in life (W, II, 47). The divinely ordained role for each is “the transcendent destiny” and must be accepted (W, II, 47).

In “Spiritual Laws” Emerson points out that everyone is given his vocation. It lies in his talent (W, II, 140). There is a side in his life where there is an open space for him to go. His “faculties” guide him quietly to that direction to do his best there (W, II, 140). It is also suggested in this essay that the Self incarnates itself in each individual with a unique job to perform. The talent and the call of vocation in the individual is determined by “his organization, or the mode” adopted by the general soul (in all cases) for incarnation in him (W, II, 141). The course of action chosen according to the constitution will decide the right and the good for the individual, and “the state or circumstance” (which also limits his freedom but is) suitable to his constitution will be heaven for him (W, II, 140). In the essay “Illusions” it is pointed out that the people who attain distinction in this world have the knack of using a “certain fate in their constitution” (W, VI, 317).

Temperament and subjectiveness are two limitations of a constitution. In “Experience” Emerson calls temperament (with negative qualities) the veto or limitation power in the constitution (W, III, 54). Bad temperament may disturb altogether man’s connection with the Self (W, III, 52). As for subjectiveness, one sees as one is (W, III, 79). Subjectiveness, as noted earlier, is the “constitutional necessity” of human beings and under its influence things are seen privately and the result is that every good or evil thing is the individual’s own
“shadow” and his vision becomes distorted (W, III, 76). Temperament and subjectiveness are the factors which alienate man from the Self.

The concept of the individual human constitution is formally introduced in the Gita in chapter IV. The entire human population is divided into four broad categories or types (Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra). Krishna says that in his creation of entire mankind he brought forth four types of people whose “principles” and “duties” distinguished them from one another (C.W. 52, IV, 13). The four kinds of people are mentioned along with their duties in chapter XVIII. (In chapter III in this thesis we have discussed these duties.) It is added that the duties of these four kinds of people are according to “the qualities which are in their constitutions” (C.W. 130, XVIII, 41). In chapter VIII the peculiarity of the individual human make-up is referred to as “Adhee-atma”, which is “Swabhab or particular constitution, disposition, quality or nature” (C.W. 73, VIII, 3). It is born with man.

It has been strongly recommended in the Gita that, in one's own interest, one ought to faithfully perform the duty decided by one's constitution. One would attain “perfection” if one accepts uncomplainingly one's “particular lot and duty” (C.W. 130, XVIII, 45). In chapter II Krishna draws Arjuna's attention “towards the duties” of his “particular tribe” (the Kshatriya). He tells him that if he did not “perform the duty” of his “calling” he would make himself guilty of “a crime” (C.W. 38, II, 33).

It is not explained in the Gita why a particular individual constitution belongs to one of the four types. However, once the individual is born into one of the four types he becomes subject to the influence of the three qualities of nature. According to his subjectiveness (his susceptibility to the influence of these qualities) his temperament is determined. He may become self-controlled and noble, or passionate
and hyper-active, or lethargic and melancholic, etc. Even the faith of the individual is to be “produced from the constitution” under the influence of the three qualities of nature (C.W. 119, XVII, 3). The sum-total of the individual's constitution is carried forward by the individual soul in course of its subsequent births. According to the deeds of the individual his constitution either improves and becomes subject to favourable destiny or deteriorates and remains confined to the evil end.

The force of character is thus cumulative in the Gita. Krishna tells Arjuna that even if he refuses to fight in the battle principles of his nature will make him fight. The duties of his natural calling will confine him to action and he “will involuntarily do that from necessity,” which he wants to avoid due to ignorance (C.W. 132, XVIII, 60). So constitution has a cumulative power in the Gita.

From our discussion of the human constitution in Emerson and in the Gita we find the following conceptual similarities. First, each individual in nature obtains a particular constitution at his birth. Second, it is in the interest of the individual to choose his calling according to the inclination present in his constitution. Third, the individual's temperament may carry certain defects or qualities in life, which become part of his constitution. Fourth, the individual's susceptibility to different influences in society has a bearing on his present and future. Fifth, the character of a person has a cumulative force and it affects the constitution. Emerson says: “the force of character is cumulative. All the forgone days of virtue work their health into this” (W, II, 59). Fifth, the Self is the author of the constitution one obtains at birth.

One important point about constitution, in Emerson and in the Gita, requires a separate consideration. It is that one ought to follow one's own constitution and should not imitate others in one's work. Emerson says in “Self-Reliance” that we should insist on ourselves
and never imitate. We can present our gifts at all times with the force accumulated in us in all our life but "an adopted talent of another" will lead us nowhere (W, II, 83). In the Gita in chapter XVIII Krishna points out: "The duties of a man's own particular calling" even if "not free from faults", are far better for pursuit than the duties of another, howsoever well-pursued they might be (C.W. 131, XVIII, 47). The following words from "Self-Reliance" seem to be complementary to the above admonition: "Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much" (W, II, 83).

As for the dissimilarities of perception, they are very obvious. Emerson would not talk of transmigration nor would he divide mankind into four types. He views the law of Karma with respect to only the present life time. To him virtue or vice breathe in us every moment (W, II, 58).

Next limitation faced by mankind, common in Emerson and in the Gita, is that human life is generally full of sorrows and difficulties. In "Experience" Emerson remarks that every house seems to us to be a place of happiness until we come to know about it. We find "tragedy" around us. We come across sorrowful women and cruel husbands. The people ask for news as if all the time they have no good news (W, III, 47). Further, in "Fate" he tells us that nature is not a sentimentalist. The elements, diseases, fortune, gravity, lightning have no respect for persons. The earthquakes kill men indiscriminately. Then there are alterations of climate. He concludes this point with the idea that Providence uses "a wild, rough road" to achieve its aims (W, VI, 7, 8). In the Gita the world is described as "the finite mansion of pain and sorrow" (C.W. 75, VIII, 15). In chapter IX again Krishna calls this world "a finite and joyless place" (C.W. 82, IX, 33) Here while comparing the two positions on life, it becomes clear that the Gita
paints a darker picture of life. This too much emphasis on the seamy side of life can, however, be explained in the light of the declared aim of the \textit{Gita}, which is to prepare people for a liberation from the cycle of birth and death on earth. Nevertheless, it is a pessimistic response to the limiting circumstance in life. This pessimism of the \textit{Gita} is visible in the day to day life of Indian people even today. The injunction of the \textit{Gita} that one should work without the desire for a reward may be partly responsible for it. When we look for nothing in return for our efforts except the bliss imagined to be available in the inscrutable Self our zest for fruitful work may dwindle away and we may consequently lose interest in life. There is, however, it seems, in this philosophy a possibility of infinite zest for life, too, provided people are enlightened enough to understand it in the right spirit. This possibility is hinted at in the point which follows. Our limitations can become our strengths.

Next limitation for human beings in nature (in Emerson and in the \textit{Gita}) is that the soul of the Self is eternally bound to the human life through the human bodies and is destined for an eternal interaction with matter. In Emerson we find that “matter and mind are in perpetual tilt and balance” (W, VI, 43). Man has to use his thought (originating in the Self) to tackle the forces in nature (W, VI, 19). Man learns to deal with nature through experience (W, VI, 19-20). In the \textit{Gita} the life is made up of a combination of Prakreetee (nature) and Pooroosh (the Self), both of which are beginningless. The progress of man in nature is actually the progress of the Self. The “various component parts of matter and their qualities are co-existent with Prakreetee” (C.W. 104, XIII, 19). With the interaction between the Self (in man) and nature, the experience of pain and pleasure comes into being. The Pooroosh is that principle which is operational in the sensation of pain and pleasure. The point is further clarified: “The Pooroosh resideth in the Prakreetee
and partaketh of those qualities which proceed from the Prakreetee” (C.W. 104, XIII, 20, 21). It is pointed out to make the idea more obvious that everything in nature, animate or inanimate is produced from a union of “matter” (Prakreetee) and “spirit” (the Self) (C.W. 105, XIII, 26). It is the Self in us that lives on in us. The following lines from “Fate” are complementary to our discussion on this point:

On one side elemental order, sandstone and granite, rockledges, peat-bog, forest, sea and shore; and on the other part thought, the spirit which composes and decomposes nature, here they are, side by side, god and devil, mind and matter, king and conspirator, belt and spasm, riding peacefully together in the eye and brain of everyman” (W, VI, 22, 23).

From here onwards we shall take into consideration those human limitations for which (it seems) human beings themselves are directly responsible. In a way we discuss now human weaknesses as identified in Emerson and in the Gita and which indicate common perception. First in this series comes the mental unrest of man. In Emerson this surfaces in the human habit of travelling for amusement and change of mood. Such travelling he believes is a fool's paradise. One is in ruins within and moves from ruins to ruins (W, II, 81). In the Gita this limitation is anticipated. The man dear to Krishna is one having an undistracted mind. He neither rejoices nor finds fault and he is “pleased with whatever cometh to pass.” He has a steady mind (C.W. 100, XII, 16, 17, 19).

Second, cowardice and indifference to the needs of the present are seen as two major limitations of man. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson complains that man is cowardly and apologetic. He has no courage to say that he thinks that he exists (W, II, 67). He ignores his present and
lives in the past or future (W, II, 67). In the *Gita* the very context in which Krishna happens to advise Arjuna stresses the undesirability of cowardly indifference to need of the hour. The comparison here is more symbolic than literal. Krishna tells Arjuna that his flight from the battlefield will make him detestable, even among those by whom he was to be respected. It will be seen as occasioned by fear (C.W. 38, II, 35). In chapter II Krishna emphasising the present tells Arjuna that for a human being only his present is important (C.W. 37, II, 28).

Next, lack of faith in the Self is regarded as a weakness and a source of trouble. If one has no faith in the Self one cannot be happy or successful. In “Compensation” Emerson regrets that we lack faith in the power of the soul. We do not believe it to be properly eternal and omnipresent (W, II, 125). He emphasises that our faithful love for the Self can rid us of “a vast load of care.” He exclaims: “O my brothers, God exists.” Nature has at its centre a soul (W, II, 139). He concludes this point with the suggestion that everything around us teaches us faith (W, II, 139). In the *Gita* the man lacking faith in the Self is regarded as lacking reason (C.W. 48, III, 32). In chapter IV it is declared that the man with a doubtful mind, having a wavering faith in the Self, can neither enjoy this world nor that which is above. He will have no “happiness” (C.W. 56, IV, 40).

Attachment to society and its ways of thinking and behaving is seen as another human weakness causing trouble. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson asks us not to live according to the wishes of people since they are deceived and they deceive. We need even to keep off our family members, father, mother, wife, brother, and friends. By paying attention to the prejudices of others we give them a chance to annoy us. We have to remember that no man can come near us “but through” our “act” (W, II, 72). Emerson names this weakness of paying attention to society
as conformity.

In the *Gita* in chapter XII Krishna defines wisdom as “exemption from attachments and affection for children, wife and home” (C.W. 102, XIII, 8, 9). As regards one’s attitude to society, one ought to guard against its influence. In chapter XII the man dear to Krishna is he who is “the same in friendship and in hatred, in honour and dishonour.” To him “praise and blame are as one” (C.W. 100, XII, 18, 19). Society in Emerson and in the *Gita* is seen as exercising a weakening influence on the development of the individual.

Too much reverence and regard for great men or books is seen as yet another drawback of man. In “Circles” Emerson remarks that he knows and sees very well the limitations of people known as great and worthy of regard (W, II, 307). He adds that we lose interest in others when we become aware of their “limitations” (W, II, 308). In “Self-Reliance” he calls upon us to rebel against the intrusion of men, books and institutions (W, II, 71). In the *Gita* the people of the time are advised to stop paying excessive attention to the gods and the Vedas. The gods are reported as having heavens which can't liberate mankind from the cycle of birth and death and rather, they perpetuate it. The gods themselves are, unlike Krishna, subject to the influence of the three qualities of nature just as the human beings are (C.W. 130, XVIII, 40). The Vedas, too, can't provide liberation. They deal with the objects of the senses. In chapter III in this thesis we have discussed these points in some detail. In chapter X Krishna shows Arjuna his expanded form and declares that the Vedas or sacrifices to gods could not make that sight of him possible to Arjuna or anyone else (C.W. 96, XI, 47, 48). In Emerson and in the *Gita* the individual is advised to make a first hand approach to the Self. Here, it may be noted that the gods in the *Gita* seem to be doing what the great men do in Emerson, i.e. they make the
individual traditional and imitative. They limit the scope of individual initiative. The Self in man would be available to him when the roadblocks of traditionalism and imitation are removed. It may, however, be remembered that the company of spiritual people is recommended in Emerson and in the *Gita* both. This point is explained in the discussion of the liberating Self in this chapter.

The established religion is still another limitation for human beings in their search for happiness and success in life. Emerson notes two defects of historical Christianity. The first is the exaggerated position of authority given to Christ and the second is the treatment of revelation as given in olden times and finished as if God, the Self, were not alive now (W, I, 130). Emerson believes that the established religion gives the individual too little importance. His “philosophy was a reaction against Unitarianism, which had too low an opinion of human nature”\(^\text{13}\). He “taught” a “universal religion above names and dates and places, and beyond creed, race and colour.”\(^\text{14}\) In the times of the *Gita* the established religion of the time was represented by the gods and the Vedas. The *Gita* castigates it in a way which is little short of a direct attack. The Vedas and the gods, as we have noted, are disparaged beyond repair. At the end Krishna advises Arjuna to give up all forms of the established religion and turn to him: “Forsake every other religion and fly to me alone” (C.W. 133, XVIII, 66)

Next, in Emerson and in the *Gita*, we find a close proximity in thought regarding evil as a limitation of mankind. Emerson believes that evil has no essence. It is man-made and does not actually exist as a force. In the traditional Christianity, however, it is a recognizable force represented by Satan who has got a (supposedly) perceptible personality for ever to be seen as working through the misdeeds of the evil-doers. Satan is the eternal opponent of God leading mankind away
from him in revenge for the special status given by him to his Son in heaven. In “Experience” Emerson calls evil “shade, absence of light, and no essence” (W, III, 79). In “Fate” he even calls it good in the making (W, VI, 35). (In chapter II in this thesis we have discussed this point in detail.) Evil is a shortcoming resulting from the interaction between matter and spirit. It is absence of knowledge and wisdom. In the Gita, too, it is so. Evil has no essential existence. It is only part of the illusion created by the three qualities of nature. As soon as one steers clear of the influence of these qualities, one is free from evil. One is united with the Self. This point is explained in the discussion relating to the liberating Self in this chapter. The unreality of evil as a force is stressed in the Gita. It is made clear that evil has scope for becoming good. If anyone who has always been an evil doer turns to Krishna, “he is as respectable as the just man.” He soon becomes virtuous and obtains eternal happiness (C.W. 82, IX, 30, 31). In Christianity man is sinful from the beginning. Adam, the first man, disobeyed God and became subject to sin and death. His descendants, without exception, carry a body which is the product of the original sin. Jesus, the son of God incarnated himself as a man and atoned for the sins of man by sacrificing his life. Man, however, continues to be sinful and can hope to be saved by Jesus on the day of judgement when the whole world will come to an end.

At the end of our discussion of the limitations faced by human beings in this world we may discuss the idea of transmigration of souls. In the Gita it is treated as inevitable and real. It occurs in almost every individual case because the individual has not tried sincerely to avoid it. We have discussed this point in detail in chapter III in this thesis. In Emerson the idea is left vague and open to conjecture. In “History” he remarks that “transmigration is no fable. I would it were” (W, II, 32).
According to Christy this doctrine “cannot be regarded as a matter of belief in Emerson.” He “played with it both seriously and humorously.” Emerson, however, believes that the soul of the Self moves onward incarnating itself in the succeeding generations of mankind and is eternally bound to the humans. However, in his published work it is not indicated “that he ever considered” how “the soul is incarnated into new forms.” Emerson believes like the Gita that the Self is present in everything that exists. To Emerson the evolution is “a symbol of upward march of the soul.” In the Gita this is implied (The Self is eternal). The soul moves forward through the transmigrational process.

In Emerson and in the Gita the Self is all knowing and knows what it ought to do next or what has happened in the past. In the Gita in chapter IV Krishna tells Arjuna that in former times he had given the philosophy of the Gita to Veevashwat who had handed it to Manoo and Manoo gave it Eekshwakoo and thus passing from one to another then came a time when it was lost. And now it was Arjuna’s turn to receive it. When Arjuna questions him that Eekshwakoo was born long before he (Krishna) was born and how it became possible for him to preach his doctrine even before him, Krishna answers that both of them (he and Arjuna) have passed through many births. He clarifies to Arjuna: “Mine are known unto me; but thou knowest not thine” (C.W. 51, IV, 1-5). In the essay “Swedenborg” Emerson suggests a similar perception:

The soul having been often born, or, as the Hindus say travelling the path of existence through thousands of birth having beheld the things which are here, those which are in heaven and those which are beneath, there is nothing of which she has not gained the knowledge: no wonder that she is able to recollect, in regard to any one thing, what
Incidentally Krishna knows what he formerly knew and taught to Veevashwat. It looks probable that, perhaps, Emerson had Krishna in his mind when he wrote the above words.

We shall now discuss the idea of Self in Emerson and in the *Gita* and explore the conceptual nearness and distance. Self in both cases seems to offer panacea for all human ills. It seems it seeks to liberate human beings from all their troubles that come in their way. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson calls it “the aboriginal Self” holding out the promise of a universal reliance on it (W, II, 63). In the *Gita* this reliance on the Self is called “divine dependance”. It is pointed out that a man who has “this confidence in the Supreme” does not go astray (C.W., 43, II, 72). The phrase “divine dependance” in the *Gita* comes very close to the phrase “self-reliance” in Emerson. It seems very probable, considering the similarities of perception, that Emerson, perhaps, took a hint for his phrase self-reliance from this phrase in the *Gita*. The possibility of Emerson having read Charles Wilkins’ *Gita* before writing “Self-Reliance” is discussed in chapter V of this thesis.

The Self is within the individual and is thus accessible to all. The individual has to learn to let it act through him and solve his problems. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson points out that talking of self-reliance is an inadequate way of saying it. We should rather talk about the Self, “that which relies because it works and is” (W, II, 69, 70). We are not to rely on the Self, rather we have to make ourselves worthy of reliance by the Self. The Self should rely on us. Self-reliance in this way becomes Self-obedience or obedience to the Self. In the *Gita* the idea is made very explicit. The Self, Eeshwar, is in the heart of every living being and moves all things with his supernatural power. And we should take shelter only with him always (C.W. 133, XVIII, 61, 62).
This means obedience to the Self at all times.

One important aspect of the philosophy of Self in Emerson and in the *Gita* is that (in respect of both) preaching and teaching is the basic aim. About Emerson it is pointed out: “The teacher is always about to be the preacher; the lecture or the essay is never far from being the sermon.”\(^{18}\) About the *Gita* it is said: “It is a book conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics.”\(^{19}\) Consequently, in Emerson and in the *Gita* we find a devotional attitude to the Self, committed to justifying the ways of the Self to man.

Before I proceed further, a brief analysis of style and language in Emerson and in the *Gita* will be in order. Emerson writes in a simple, conversational style which addresses the reader or the audience directly. In the *Gita*, too, the style is conversational though the conversation with all its philosophical complexity takes place mainly between two characters in the epic of *Mahabharata*. The presentation of ideas has a dramatic element in it. The technique followed is that of each question being followed by an answer. There is a continuous repetition of many ideas throughout. The hearer or the reader is always in the mind of the author.

In Emerson, too, ideas are repeated off and on. Emerson has, however, the knack of saying the same or similar things with the help of many different words and sentences. There is a continued zest in the writing throughout which is imperceptibly transferred to the reader, too. The *Gita*, too, carries an atmosphere of zeal which catches the reader instantly. Charles Wilkins (whose translation was Emerson’s favourite) deserves praise for his easy to understand rendering of the *Gita*. The repetition of ideas in Emerson and in *Gita* can be understood better in the light of the commitment in both to preaching and teaching the philosophy of the Self.

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As already noted in chapter II of this thesis, Emerson’s sentences in his paragraphs and his paragraphs in his essays, on the whole, do not seem to be written according to any logical order. His themes in his essays do not appear to have been handled through a well-ordered structure. Perhaps, because of this quality of his writings, some critics believe he has no philosophy of life to present to his reader. George Santayana remarks: “At bottom he had no doctrine at all. The deeper he went and more he tried to grapple with fundamental conceptions, the vaguer and more elusive they became in his hands.”20 To say that Emerson had no philosophy at all seems to be very unfair. This thesis rather seeks to take a comprehensive view of it.

In the Gita, too, as also noted in the preceding chapter (of this thesis), it seems, chapters have not been written systematically. The thought does not seem to follow in an orderly way through different verses. Each chapter seems to be lacking in unity and coherence and one does not get the impression of a systematic philosophy. There are critics who condemn this style severely. Prem Nath Bazaz observes: “But the Gita doctrine is neither integration of different philosophies, nor synthesisation of diverse faiths. It only creates a bizzare amalgam.”21 Bazaz believes that the author of the Gita jumps from “one topic to another” and is unable “to make a point or evolve a formula” and, as a result, “lands himself into innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies.”22 This, however, seems too much of criticism, though Bazaz may be right to a certain extent. The scope of this thesis does not, however, permit me to go any further into this aspect of the style in the Gita. In Emerson and in the Gita, it seems, the unsystematic approach (as it appears to the critics) may have sprung from the very subject they deal with, i.e. the mysteries of the universe. And it looks almost impossible for anyone to give (perfectly) logical explanations
for them. The style in both cases then (it seems) has got to be discursive.

Emerson’s prose, as also noted in chapter II of this thesis, has a poetic quality. It seems poetic in appearance and effect. It is beautiful, elegant prose, and the images it creates seem highly appealing and imaginative. In the Gita, too, (here)in Wilkins’ translation, we come upon beautiful phrases making the prose look poetic in quality. I have chosen two passages, one each from Emerson and the Gita, for comparison of the poetic quality of prose in them and also for a discussion of other stylistic features notable in them. We not only find similarities in style, we also find similarity of thought. The first passage comes from Emerson’s “Self-Reliance,” while the second passage is from chapter II in the Gita:

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; and it is easy in solitude to live after our own [as a misguided Sannyasi does in the Gita]; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude (W, II, 53-54). (This also seems to be the main lesson in the Gita.)

A man is said to be confirmed in wisdom, when he forsaketh every desire [may be even to please others] which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy, and contented in himself. His mind is undisturbed in adversity [even when people might find fault with him], he is happy
and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and anger [experienced while dealing with others]. Such a wise man is called *Moonee*. The wisdom of that man is established, who in all things is without affection; and having received good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one, nor is cast down by the other. His wisdom is confirmed, when like the tortoise, he can draw in all his members [this may refer to the independence of solitude in Emerson], and refrain them from their wonted purposes. The hungry man loseth every other object but the gratification of his appetite, and when he is become acquainted with the Supreme, he loseth even that. The tumultuous senses hurry away, by force, the heart even of the wise man who striveth to restrain them. The inspired man, trusting in me, may quell them and be happy. The man, who hath his passions in subjection, is possesed of true wisdom (C.W.41-42) (Besides carrying the central idea of the *Gita*, this passage seems to remind us of Emerson’s philosophy of Self-reliance.)

In respect of their language and style, these two passages seem to be the work of the same author. The word-order and the syntax in both seems to illustrate the poetic quality of the prose in them. We can now examine the two passages rather closely. Both make use of a particular kind of superlatives. Emerson uses the words like all, equally, whole, always, perfect. In the passage from the *Gita* we find- every, all, all, every, Supreme, true. All of these words are very frequently used in Emerson. Next, we find value-based superlative phrases used in both passages (which additionally seem to carry poetic emphasis in them). In Emerson we find the phrases like all that concerns me, the whole
distinction, greatness and meanness, the world’s opinion, great man, the crowd, perfect sweetness, independence of solitude. To match these expressions, in the Gita we come upon the phrases like- confirmed in wisdom, happy and contented in himself, undisturbed in adversity, happy and contented in prosperity, a stranger to anxiety, fear and anger, without affection, every other object, acquainted with the Supreme, possessed of true wisdom.

Next, in both we find expressions denoting dogma and authority. In Emerson the notable examples are- I must do, This rule, may serve for the whole distinction, It is the harder, you will always find, It is easy. In the Gita to match these expressions we find: A man is said to be, Such a man, The wisdom of that man, His wisdom is, he can draw, The hungry man loses every other object but, may quell them and be happy, is possessed of true wisdom. Further, in both we find some words used with their possible antonyms. In Emerson I is contrasted with people, actual with intellectual (in this particular context), greatness with meanness, arduous, the harder with the better and easy, the world’s with our own, and finally, the crowd is contrasted with solitude. In the Gita we find the contrast between adversity and prosperity, and (between) good and evil. In addition, Rejoiceth is contrasted with cast down.

Further, we find (rather interestingly) Emerson uses the word ‘you’ in this passage for his reader, while Krishna in the Gita, who is speaking to Arjuna, instead of ‘you’ uses the word ‘he’ to make his point clear. The object of the speakers in these two passages is to persuade and coax the reader or the hearer to strive to become ‘the great man’ (in Emerson) and the ‘wise man’ (in the Gita). This comparison of style and language brings the prose written in Emerson very close to that in the Gita. I have no observation to make and no
conclusion to draw at this particular point in our discussion except that the prose style in Emerson and in Wilkins’ translation of the Gita is very similar. I leave the rest to inference. We can now move to the discussion of the concept of Self in Emerson and in the Gita.

To understand and compare the concept of the Self in Emerson and in the Gita it may be useful to find answers to the following three questions: What is the Self? When would the Self liberate (help) the man in trouble? (and) How would it liberate?

First, what constitutes the Self? The incomprehensibility of the Self is an admitted fact in Emerson and in the Gita both. In “The Oversoul” Emerson exclaims that the philosophy of six thousand years in the past has not been able to explore the power and the vastness of the soul. Its experiments have left ultimately the enigma unresolved (W, II, 267, 68). In the Gita the Self proves equally elusive. It is pointed out that the soul is regarded by some as a wonder while some speak or hear about it with very great surprise. However, none knows it though it may have been described to him (C.W, 37, 38, II, 29).

The Self is its own creator and has created everything. Emerson calls it the ultimate fact, the ever-blessed One and points out that self-existence is the quality of this Supreme Cause (W, II, 70). In the Gita the Self is described as that which has no beginning and is Supreme (C.W. 103, XIII, 12). In chapter X the Self as the creator is described as the beginning, the middle and the end of all things (C.W. 85, X, 20).

The Self is all-knowing and knows what ought to be done and gets it done or, as noted earlier, rather does it. In “Uses of Great Men” Emerson tells us that when we understand the central identity of the individuals we come to know that substance which makes them ordains and does things (W, IV, 33). To get its work done the Self has made the individuals as different from one another with distinct jobs for each.
Each soul, which is sent into nature, it seems, has been given some virtues and powers which are not interchangeable. It seems the Self writes ‘not transferable’ and fit for this journey only "on these garments of the soul" (W, IV, 28). (The garments refers to human bodies here.) And the result is that one is what one is and so one remains (W, IV, 28). In the Gita as we already know the Self has created four broad categories of individuals whose qualities are non-transferable and it is ordained for them that everyone who is happy with his own particular lot will attain perfection (C.W. 130, XVIII, 45). We have discussed this point briefly, earlier, with regard to human constitution. The idea of the human bodies as garments of the soul as discussed by us in Emerson occurs in the Gita in chapter II thus: "As a man throweth away old garments, and putteth on new, even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames entereth into others which are new" (C.W. 37, II, 22). It may be noted here that beyond the semantic similarity of perceptions in Emerson and in the Gita, we also find lexical similarity in expression at certain points. The use of the word “garments” for human bodies is one example. Earlier we have noted that the word constitution has been used a number of times in both to denote mental make up. In our discussion of illusion we noted that a phrase used in Charles Wilkins’ translation of the Gita occurs in Emerson’s essay “Illusions”.

The idea that the Self is behind all human beings, getting things done through them (according to its inscrutable will), is further available in the following two references to the Self in Emerson and in the Gita. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson writes that it is evident that the soul in mankind is not an organ, but gives life to and uses all organs. It is not a function of human mind like memory, calculation, or comparison, rather it makes use of “these as hands and feet” (W, II, 270). In the Gita we read about the Self: “It is all hands and feet; it is all faces,
heads and eyes.” It is all ears. It sits in the middle of the world and possesses the whole (C.W. 103, XIII, 13 to 17). In the above references the use of the phrase “hands and feet” with respect to the working of the Self in Emerson and in the Gita is significant. It corroborates my observation made in the preceding paragraph.

The Self is referred to by different names in Emerson and in the Gita. To Emerson it is the Over Soul, the Universal Soul, God, the law, being, the Universal Being, the Deity and soul, etc. In the Gita it is the soul, the Supreme, the Deity, Brahm, God, Eeshwar, the supreme soul, the Supreme Being, the Parmatma or supreme soul, the supreme spirit, the universal spirit, etc. The similarity in the use of names for the Self is noteworthy here. The Universal Being in Emerson and Supreme Being in the Gita come very close to each other. Deity is yet another word commonly used. Soul, too, is used in both. The name the Universal Soul looks very close to the universal spirit and the supreme soul. Emerson's term Over- Soul seems to be an English version and an adaptation of the “Parmatma or supreme soul” (C.W. 113) of the Gita. This looks probable going by the similarities of perception that we have noted in this thesis. Bliss Perry, however, explains it the other way: “As far as we know Emerson coined the word Over-Soul, but he had the pleasure of discovering that the Hindu philosophy had a precisely equivalent term (parmatman) for the same conception”

The Self in Emerson and in the Gita is the reservoir of all socially desirable qualities. Virtue in Emerson approximates all of them. The Self is all virtue. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson says that virtue is “Height”. Those who have virtue in them will rule the world. A man or a group of men responsive to the principles of virtue will by nature’s law have their sway on the whole world. All people and all countries, if not virtuous, will come under their control (W, II, 70). In “Spiritual
Laws” Emerson stresses that the Self is virtue. He points out that it is sublimely proper to describe God as saying, I AM (W, II, 160). (The suggestion here seems to be that God says-I am virtue and hence I prevail) Interestingly, whether Emerson had Krishna of the Gita in his mind or not, we find in the Gita in chapters-VII, IX, X and XI many expressions beginning with the word- ‘I am’. As for the power of virtue to rule the world, the Gita is written specially to stress this point. Krishna is born to preserve and establish virtue (C.W. 52, IV, 7, 8) and has virtue in him (C.W. 107 XIV, 02). The use of the word virtue with respect to the quality of the Self and the quality desired by the Self is common in Emerson and in the Gita.

The concept of the Self as the upholder of virtue becomes elusive in Emerson and in the Gita when in both we find a deliberate attempt being made to include in the Self the good and evil on equal footing. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson says that the Self is moving forward, in a state of becoming, and, therefore, always brings down the past, reduces all riches to poverty, turns all reputation to shame, confuses the saint with the rogue, and pushes Jesus and Judas equally aside (W, II, 69). It seems the Self is represented as amoral and neutral here. This idea is taken forward in Emerson's philosophy. In “Fate” towards the end he praises the Self as the Beautiful Necessity which mixes all together so as to ensure that plaintiff and defendant, friend and enemy, animal and planet, food and eater are one in kind (W, VI, 49). Three times Emerson makes an appeal to his reader to make altars for the Beautiful Necessity. According to David M Robinson, in “Self-Reliance” wherein Emerson says “if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the devil” “the idea of self is elevated above any notion of right and wrong”24.

In the Gita, too, we find the Self in a seemingly amoral and neutral position. In chapter IX Krishna says that he is the same to all mankind.
None is worthy of his love or hatred (C.W. 81, IX, 29). In chapter II it is pointed out that those endued with true wisdom do not pay attention to good and evil in this world (C.W. 40, II, 50). In chapter V it is pointed out that the Self does not create the powers or the deeds of humanity. Nor does it receive the “vices” or the “virtues” of anyone (C.W. 59, V, 14, 15). It is nature which connects rewards and punishments with the deeds of mankind. In chapter X the Self is seen as the common source of pleasure and pain, birth and death, fear and courage, and renown and infamy (C.W. 83, X, 4, 5). Krishna declares that these all “distinctly” come from him and these are the various qualities of natural beings. Further, the wise man of the Gita is required to be neutral, free from enmity and same in friendship and in hatred (C.W. 99, 100, XII, 15, 18), the same to the friend and the foe (C.W. 110, XIV, 25). In chapter X Krishna is shown as containing the good and the evil. He says he is gaming among frauds. He is glory of all glorious things. He is the essence of all qualities (C.W. 87, X, 36). And further, he is the rod among rulers and policy among those who seek victory (C.W. 87, X, 38).

In Emerson and in the Gita all that we find in life, the good and the bad, is seen as related to the Self. (If the Self is to be represented as the omnipresent author of everything, this becomes a compulsion, a necessity.) It is said that once Carlyle took Emerson on a badly upsetting trip through the London slums and then exclaimed: ‘Well, do you believe in a devil now?’ Emerson remained as cheerful as ever. To Carlyle his undisturbed cheerfulness about the world was a strange and amusing sight but his wife Jane felt annoyed at it. Eliot Norton who was in their company was also very upset and he remarked “that if Emerson went to hell by mistake he would probably deny its existence or pronounce it the abode of good and realm of order”.
However, Emerson had, perhaps, discovered the (liberating) Self within him and within it the entire limiting circumstance that mankind finds so difficult to cope with. In “Fate” Emerson says that earlier we believed positive power to be all but now we have learnt that negative power or circumstance is half (W, II, 15). In the Gita the negative power of the circumstance is thus present in the Self: “Self is the friend of the self [in man]; and in the like manner, self is its own enemy.” The Self (perhaps) is the enemy within the brute, and outside it is the enemy he creates. It is further pointed out: “Self is friend of him” who has subdued himself with his own help but like an enemy the Self takes pleasure “in the enmity of him” who has no soul (i.e. who does not respond to the positive power of the Self within him faces hostile circumstances in life) (C.W. 62, VI, 05, 06). The use of the word ‘self’ as referring to God’s presence in man as man’s spiritual self is noteworthy in the above lines quoted from Charles Wilkins’ translation of the Gita which Emerson read frequently and sent to his friends to read. We can conclude this point. In Emerson and in the Gita man has within him the positive and the negative power of the Self. He can turn to the good or the evil in himself. On the whole the Self is one.

The next question to answer is: When would the Self liberate the troubled man? It relates to the circumstances leading to an access to the Self. In Emerson and in the Gita the difficulty of access to the Self has been fully recognized. In “The American Scholar” Emerson points out that the soul of the Self in almost the entire humanity is yet obstructed and unborn (W, I, 90). In the Gita in chapter II it is admitted that the wise man who has access to the Self is difficult to find (C.W. 71, VII, 19).

The Self (in Emerson and in the Gita) has provided mankind with freedom of action. Man is free to choose between what he thinks
to be the right and the wrong. In “Fate” Emerson says that freedom is necessary. A man is free to the extent he thinks himself to be free (W, VI, 23). In the Gita at the end of the long advice to Arjuna Krishna calls upon him to think over it well in his mind, and then act as it seems best to him (C.W. 133, XVIII, 63). Even the evil man is free to turn to good. Krishna says that if any one who has always done evil turns to him he becomes respectable like the other righteous people (C.W. 82, IX, 30).

The provision of freedom of action notwithstanding, the Self in Emerson and in the Gita lays the virtuous action as the first condition for man for access to it. The second requirement is that of doing the assigned duty by carrying out honestly the dictates of the constitution. Great stress is laid on the duty as assigned to everyone. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson says that we should do our work to reinforce ourselves (W, II, 54). Social responsibilities towards father, mother cousin, neighbour, town, cat and dog are included in duty. When one does one's duty sincerely one allows the Self to act through oneself. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson tells us about this “secret of nature.” He advises that we should work and live, work and live and all unawares the onward-moving soul will build and forge for itself a new situation and the question and the answer will become one (W, II, 284-85). When this stage is reached one no longer questions or doubts one's doing since it comes from the Self. Emerson stresses that all philosophy and nature reveals to man that the Self “dwells with him” and the sources of nature lie in his own mind, when the sentiment of duty is in him (W, II, 294). The emphasis on the performance of one’s duty cannot he underestimated in Emerson. It links man to the Self.

The Gita is all about duty and its diligent performance. Its basic aim is to turn Arjuna back to his duty. In addition, it philosophises on
the duty of man towards the Self. The duty in the Gita like the duty in Emerson includes social responsibilities. The learned men work hard and perform all the duties of life, and set an example for others to follow (C.W. 47, III, 26). In chapter II Krishna calls upon Arjuna to perform the duty of his calling (C.W. 38, II, 33). It is the duty assigned to him through his constitution. When one does the duty assigned and controls oneself the Self becomes one's eternal guide. Krishna says that he does not forsake such a person and he in turn does not forsake him and he “dwelleth” in him (Krishna) “in all respects even whilst he liveth” (C.W. 65, VI, 30, 31). The use of the word “dwelleth” is noteworthy here in connection with the access to the Self. In the preceding paragraph already we have noted that in Emerson the Self “dwells” with him who does his duty sincerely. In addition to the semantic similarity of perception here between these two words we take note also of the lexical similarity. I come back to the point. The stress on the duty is so great in the Gita that even the Self is bound to the moral duties. Krishna says that he lives in the exercise of the moral duties. If he did not attend to these duties everybody would follow his example and would fail in his duty (C.W. 47, III, 22 to 24).

The next important condition for access to the Self is the practice of detachment in life while performing the duties. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson says he would practise detachment in his relations with his parents and relatives. He would conduct these relations in “a new and unprecedented way” (W, II, 73). He calls it “isolation” and “elevation” but it would not be “mechanical”. The world may sometimes conspire against us, he says, with trifling matters. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity all at once may present difficulties to us. But in this situation one must keep one's state of mind unaffected and must save oneself from getting confused (W, II, 72). Life attached to one’s father,
mother, wife, brother or friend is one lived “after appearances,” therefore, one ought to practise detachment in life and lead a life of truth in the Self (W, II, 72).

In close proximity to this stand in Emerson, we find in the Gita throughout great emphasis being laid on detachment from this world as a pre-condition for access to the Self. In chapter XIII wisdom is described as detachment from the objects of the senses (appearances in Emerson). It also includes the realisation that birth, death, destruction, sickness, pain and shortcomings are inevitable. It also requires man to be detached from “children, wife and home” and even-minded at the happening of every event whether favourable or unfavourable (C.W. 102, XIII, 8, 9). In chapter XII detachment from the world is regarded as desired by the Self. One ought to regard pain and pleasure as the same and be tolerant of wrongs. In friendship or in hatred, in honour or dishonour, in cold or heat, one ought to be the same. One ought to treat praise and blame with indifference (C.W. 99-100, XII, 13 to 19).

Detachment from the world also seems to include, in Emerson and in the Gita, the giving up of the pursuit of material gains. We have already noted that pursuing material gains is a limitation that ought to be overpowered. To put it briefly, reliance on property is the want of self reliance in Emerson (W, II, 87) and in the Gita the ideal man (worthy of access to the Self) regards gold, iron and stones as not different (C.W. 63, VI, 8). Our comparison between the two positions here seems to highlight that Emerson comes very close to the Gita in his insistence on detachment from the worldly relations and possessions.

In the preceding paragraphs we noted that home, children, wife, friends and suffering are noted in both as worthy to be dealt with in a detached manner. It seems very probable on the basis of the comparison being carried out in this thesis that the words “isolation,” “elevation” and “a
new and unprecedented way” (which is not “mechanical”) seem to have been prompted in Emerson by his reading of the Gita for his use in his philosophy of the Self. This is, it seems, using of an old philosophy in a new way in modern times.

Next, for access to the Self, even the desire for and expectation of the fruit of one's action is to be given up. Emerson points out in “Experience” that hankering after an overt or practical effect seems an apostasy to him (W, III, 84). About himself he says that he is grateful for small gains. He adds that he compared notes with a friend who expects too much in life and feels disheartened when he does not get the best results. On comparison he says he found that he himself begins “at the other extreme, expecting nothing” and feeling grateful for moderate gains (W, III, 61-62). He suggests that if one takes the good one finds without asking any questions, one will have plentiful in life (W, III, 62). (This seems to be an adapted application of the wisdom of the Gita in the modern times). About the fruit that he wishes to have in life he says that he finds a private fruit sufficient. This fruit is the realization that he should not look for immediate results from his contemplation, advice and reception of truths. He adds that he finds it deplorable to ask for consequences of his efforts on a town and county, “an overt effect” at an early date. He concludes his point with the idea that all he knows is reception, he is and he has (W, III, 85). It seems very probable here that, perhaps, Emerson had the philosophy of the Gita in his mind when he expressed the above-mentioned views. He welcomes whatever comes as a result of his efforts. It is interesting to note here that the results which he talks about relate to his efforts as a lecturer to audiences and as a thinker for himself. He refers to personal experience to stress his point.

In this position Emerson comes very close to the Gita which
says that man's trouble is rooted in his desire for the fruit of his actions. The *Gita* emphasises that one should do one's duty without the desire for a reward. Human sorrow originates in the desire for fruit: “the miserable and unhappy are so on account of the event of things.” This happens to Emerson’s friend with whom he compared notes. The wise men are those who have given up all thought of the fruit which is produced from their actions (C.W. 40, II, 49, 51). This is a condition necessary for access to the Self. The wise man is he who has given up “good and evil fortune”. He is unexpecting about the event of things and is happy with “whatever cometh to pass” (C.W. 99-100, XII, 16, 17, 19). The discussion in the preceding paragraph seems to amply display that Emerson’s position is not different from this.

Next, in one's preparation for access to the Self, it seems, one needs to prefer a particular company of people. In “Self-Reliance” Emerson refers to a class of people with whom he has spiritual affinity and whom he likes wholeheartedly. He is ready to go to prison for them if required (W, II, 52). This company is noble and true in the same truth with him. About the other kind he says that they should cleave to their companions while he will seek his own company (W, II, 73). In the *Gita* Arjuna is advised to seek a particular kind of people, “learned men,” to seek wisdom from them with humility, questions and attention (C.W. 55, IV, 34). In chapter X a particular company of people is admired. These people are full of spiritual wisdom and they are with their very hearts and minds devoted to the Self. They make merry among themselves taking pleasure in talking of the Self and in teaching one another the doctrine of the Self (C.W. 84, X, 9).

Here it is to be noted that neither Emerson nor the *Gita* would like us to stop here. The human company has its limitations. As noted before, in the *Gita* we find that a wise man is hard to be found. And in
Emerson the position is made very clear in “Uses of Great Men.” He remarks that at last we shall stop looking for completeness in men and we shall be happy with their social and delegated quality (W, IV, 34). So what is one left to do? One ought to depend on the Self for infallible guidance which will make one’s temporary, prospective and opaque self bright with its light (W, IV, 34, 35).

To be acceptable to the Self, in Emerson and in the Gita, it is also required that one returns the benefits that one receives in nature. Emerson says that he who gives to others the most benefits is great and that man is mean who receives favours and makes no returns (W, II, 113). In the Gita, however, the benefits received in nature are to be returned to the gods (and deserving men) with acts of sacrificial rituals. A man not making these returns is a thief and the men of his sort are selfish and sinful (C.W. 45, 46, III, 12, 13).

For access to the Self the man of learning and the man of business, both, are suitable. In “Experience” Emerson says that an intellectual type of life will not take the place of a muscular type of life (W, III, 58). For himself, however, he would prefer the intellectual type. He points out that people condemn knowing, and recommend doing. But he is very content with knowing, if only he could know. He further says that knowing a little is worth the expense of the world (W, III, 84). The above mentioned opinion of Emerson, examined without reference to the Gita, would mean simply that Emerson prefers the profession of a lecturer to any other occupation. But Emerson noted the following lines from the Gita (translated by Charles Wilkins) in his journals: “Children only and not the learned speak of the speculative and practical doctrines as two. They are but one, for both obtain the self-same end” (C.W. 57, V, 2, 4, 5)²⁷. Not long after making this entry Emerson noted in his journals his views about the Gita:
It was the first of books, it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered over and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us.

There was, and even today there is, to some a famous dispute about whether one ought to choose for oneself a contemplative way of life like that of mystics and ascetics or whether one should live with full involvement in all aspects of social and family life. The first way is generally known as the way of knowledge and the second the way of action. The Gita deals with this controversy. In chapter V specially both types of people are said to be suitable for access to the Self: “the desertion and the practice of works are equally means of extreme happiness” (C.W. 57, V, 2). In Emerson we find, it seems, an adaptation of this resolution in the Gita, whereby in modern times he finds that men of learning and men of business stand on equal footing in the system of the Self. Both can have access to the Self.

Last in our discussion of what is required for access to the Self comes the most important point in Emerson and in the Gita, namely while doing one’s duty one should give up the self sense, the pride that one is the doer of things. When one does something it is only his senses which make him do it. One should come out of the illusion created by the senses. One has to make a complete surrender of one’s ego, one’s human self to the Self. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson tells us that in eating, drinking, planting, counting, etc. man does not represent himself because in these activities his human will is operative. Actually for access to the Self, he should not interfere with his thought and should act fully and see how things stand in God (W, II, 280). The phrase “things stand in God” is significant here. In the Gita the enlightened
and devoted man sees “the supreme soul in all things, and all things in the supreme soul” (C.W. 55, VI, 29). He sees how things stand in the soul. The use of the preposition ‘in’ is notable in the Gita and in Emerson in relation to the Self. One needs to get into the Self and live from there as the Self is invisibly present in everything. This would become possible when one breaks the barriers of the senses which make our worldly self. Like the Gita Emerson tells us that the thought coming from the Self (within) should prevail. We should keep our worldly self aside. The “blindness of intellect begins when it would be something of itself” (W, II, 271). He repeats the idea: “The weakness of will begins when the individual would be something of himself” (W, II, 271). Newton Dillaway expains this point thus: “Emerson was trying to push us out of our lower selves into our Self, the intimate consciousness of the divine presence in ourselves”31. According to Gustaaf Van Cromphout the purpose of Emerson's concept of history was “progressively to enable man to escape from history, to escape from that compromise with time and nature into the freedom which is in the spirit”32. It seems Emerson believes that we should give up the self sense which we have acquired through past experiences. We are what history or tradition has made us. We need to be liberated from the tradition in us, which forms our mundane self.

In the Gita it is repeatedly stressed that one ought to give up the self sense and make a complete surrender to the Self. The seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, etc. are the activities of the senses which form the mundane self of man. These belong to nature and are regulated by its three qualities. A withdrawal from nature into the Self is required. In chapter XIV Krishna points out that one who sees no other agent than the three qualities of nature (discussed in detail in chapter III in this thesis) and discovers that the Self is above them finds the Self at
last. The *Gita* stresses obedience to the Self. Even if one commits violence on a large scale one would not be guilty if one commits it at the behest of the Self, giving up one's self sense (C.W. 126, XVIII, 17). Sri Aurobindo sums up the argument in the *Gita* thus: “Know then your self; know your true self to be God . . . live in the self, live in your supreme spiritual nature . . . deliver all you are and do into his hands for the supreme and the universal spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world.”33 The lower self is to be mastered by the higher, the natural self by the spiritual. This “is the way of man's perfection and liberation.”34 This summing up of the argument in the *Gita* incidentally seems to sum up Emerson’s philosophy, too, quite accurately.

To sum up our discussion of when the Self would liberate, we can say that in Emerson and in the *Gita* for liberation by the Self one needs to be virtuous, dutiful, detached from the world, stable and contented, accompanied by good people, generous, dedicated, humble and unselfishly receptive to the dictates of the Self.

The last question to answer in our discussion of the Self is: How would the Self liberate man from his troubles? The answer to this question relates to the effect of the access to the Self. In Emerson and in the *Gita*, the individual, it seems, will have the following three advantages on his access to the Self.

First, he would know what to do in life. He will have a direction in life and knowledge to proceed with. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson tells us that when the heart gives itself unto the Supreme Mind it relates itself to all its works. Man comes to have “particular knowledges and powers” (W, II, 276). He comes to know “the particular thing and everything and every man.” The “Maker of all things and all persons” stands behind him and casts “his dread omniscience” through him “over
things” (W, II, 280). In the Gita this idea is conveyed through many verses. In chapter X Krishna says that everything worthy of distinction and pre-eminence is the produce of the portion of his glory (C.W. 88, X, 41).

The second advantage is of a social nature. The individuals having access to the Self will be able to form a civilized society of the highest order. Since the Self is the reservoir of virtue, they will be virtuous. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson tells us that Justice, Love, Freedom and Power are attributes of the Self. These they will understand and acquire (W, II, 271, 72). In the Gita, as we already know, the Self is the protector and preserver of justice and virtue. One liberated by the Self will become just and virtuous. And from what passes in his own heart, whether it is pain or pleasure he would see the same in others (C.W. 66, VI, 32). Those liberated in this way will form a just and virtuous society.

The third advantage will be that the individual will be happy and at peace with himself and the world. Peace comes to him from knowing that he is safe in his shelter with the Self. This, however, pre-supposes a complete union with the Self, called Yog in the Gita. One who has it sees the Self everywhere and in everything. There is no fear of anything going wrong. It is a life in the Self. In “Self-Reliance” the human soul linked to the Self sees in everything identity and eternal causation. It perceives Truth and Right to be self-existent and it becomes calm with the knowledge “that all things go well” (W, II, 69). Nothing can ever go wrong. This realization brings peace and stability in life. In “Fate” we find that the Self, the Beautiful Necessity makes man courageous with the thought that he cannot avoid a danger that is appointed nor can he “incur one that is not” (W, VI, 49). Nothing in this world is then to be feared. Ultimately, whatever comes will be the will of the Self and a man’s happiness lies in compliance with it.
This protective and safe shelter provided by the Self to the individual is also mentioned in the Gita. The Self is referred to as “divine necessity” in chapter VIII (C.W. 75, VIII, 19). In chapter IX the Self is described as “the journey of the good; the comforter,” “the resting place,” “the asylum and the friend” (C.W. 80, IX, 18). The Self makes man its agent and gets its will carried out. (There are obviously certain dangers appointed for him.) In chapter XIII the Self is described as “the ruler of all things” (C.W. 103, XIII, 16). (In “Fate” we have seen that the “Law rules throughout existence.” - W, VI, 49.) In chapter XI Krishna tells Arjuna that all his enemies have already been killed by him and he has only to become the immediate agent: “They are already, as it were destroyed by me. Be thou alone the immediate agent” (C.W. 93, XI, 33). He adds that none of the warriors arrayed against him will remain alive (C.W. 93, XI, 32). This situation compares well with the idea of “the self existence of Truth and Right” and “all things go well” in “Self- Reliance” (discussed in the preceding paragraph). And this compares well also with the idea of the Deity in “Fate” deriving universal benefit by a man’s pain (W, VI, 47). It still compares well with the idea in “Fate” that one cannot avoid an appointed danger. Commenting on the law of Karma of the Hindu scriptures Promod Kumar Saxena remarks: “The Indian solution to the problem is to make the divine will one’s own” and a man taking “his stand on his Immortal and Infinite self” finds that “the law of cause and effect has merged in the Absolute” and it is not “a forceful compulsion.” It gives immense peace and sense of security to believe that one is acting as an agent of the Self.

It has been stressed in Emerson and in the Gita that a complete disconnection from pain is possible through one’s union with the Self. One knows no pain when one is united with the Self. In “Spiritual
Laws” Emerson points out that the soul (of the Self) in man knows no “deformity or pain.” It is regrettable that man has not learnt to describe his condition as lightly as it is possible. Through a union with the Self one can realize that it is only “the finite” in him that suffers while “the infinite” in him lies smiling within (W, II, 132). The suffering relates only to the physical level of our existence. This idea is taken up in “Fate” again as double consciousness. The technique of double consciousness requires that a man should allow the finite side of him to suffer and should take shelter with the Deity, the Self in him. (I have analysed this idea in detail in chapter II in this thesis.) The Self derives universal benefit from his “pain” (W, VI, 47). So complete safety against pain is available with the (liberating) Self.

In the Gita a similar way to liberation from pain is suggested. On one’s union with the Self the individual receives “boundless pleasure” which having attained he regards no other gain as equal to it and in that state of mind “he is not moved by the severest pain.” This is a state of the “disunion from the conjunction of pain” called Yog, “spiritual union or devotion” (C.W. 64, 65, VI, 20 to 23). The suffering exists at the level of the lower self alone. In Emerson and in the Gita the existence of pain is pre-supposed for man in his life and the Self is believed to be capable of providing liberation from it. The use of the word pain is noteworthy. It seems that, perhaps, Emerson’s double-consciousness is an adaptation of the Yoga of the Gita in modern times.

Incidentally, in Emerson and in the Gita, though without any pre-conceived design, we find a philosophical pattern of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. The common thesis is that the Self is within man and man must take an advantage of it and solve all of his problems easily. The anti-thesis is that access to the Self is seriously obstructed by the Self itself. There is illusion as a barrier. A man united with the
Self is yet a distant possibility. Man himself, too, has many infirmities in him. The synthesis is that there is still hope. It is possible for every man to have access to the Self. The Self is ready to help everyone always.

From our study and analysis of the similarities of perception in Emerson and in the *Gita*, we may conclude that it seems Emerson was powerfully influenced by the philosophy of the *Gita*. The *Gita* is “the most important Hindu scripture that profoundly impressed Emerson.”36 To him it was “a transnational book and he held it in high esteem.”37 When asked by L.F. Dimmick if he wanted to bring out an American edition of the *Gita* (translated by Charles Wilkins, London, 1785) “he replied that he did not want to give it to people indiscriminately who were not prepared to receive it.” He felt that if he did that “he would surely make the high worth of the book cheap by enabling it to reach vulgar hands.”38 By not presenting it to the so called vulgar, Emerson, perhaps, had deferred to the wishes of Krishna, who towards the end of the *Gita*, advises Arjuna that this philosophy is “never to be revealed” to anyone who is not devoted, who is not his (Krishna’s) servant, who does not want to learn or who hates him (C.W. 133, XVIII, 67). This injunction may also, perhaps, have been the cause of Emerson not disclosing having read the *Gita* for a long time. He had to first prepare his readers or audiences to receive this wisdom. His first work *Nature* made the beginning and introduced his audiences and readers to this wisdom. The culmination came with the “Self-Reliance.” It was only when he was convinced that people had received the philosophy of the *Gita* warmly that he made known to them that there was a book which he wanted them to read. And he then lent this book to many of his friends.

To conclude the discussion of the liberating Self, it will be useful
to briefly analyse the distance between the Self in Emerson and the Christian God and the proximity between the Self in Emerson and the Self in the *Gita*. Emerson’s first published work *Nature* declares that none can set bounds to the possibilities of man. Man “is himself the creator in the finite” and “has access to the entire mind of the Creator,” the Self (W, 1, 64). This very remark takes Emerson’s Self away from the Christian God and brings it closer to the Self in the *Gita*. The *Gita* declares man to be the creator in the finite. We have already seen this in this chapter and also in the preceding chapter. Still to recapitulate, in the *Gita* in chapter XVIII it is pointed out that when a man is devoted to the Self giving up all the negative qualities like cruelty, pride, lust, anger, greed, selfishness, etc. he is prepared for becoming Brahm, the Self. And “being as Brahm” he attains peace of mind and also “supreme assistance” from the Self, to be at last absorbed in its nature (C.W. 132, XVIII, 50 to 55). This is access to the entire mind of the creator. Krishna makes the promise of this access more obvious to Arjuna in his assurance to him of his liberation from all troubles with his help. Arjuna by Krishna’s divine assistance will “surmount every difficulty” which surrounds him (C.W. 132, XVIII, 57, 58).

The Christian God though offers help in all difficulties does not allow man to become exactly like him, however hard he may try. He is “separate from sinners and exalted far above them.”39 Though Christianity treats man as an image of God “it starts with man as a sinful creature and he can get redemption from his sins only if God bestows favour on him.”40 Man is a finite being and cannot even dream of becoming God or God-like “and since God is infinite he can never be fully seen in the finite, nor ever identified with it.”41 In Christianity duality or plurality is an essential feature in the “relationship within the Godhead (in the Trinity), and between God and man, in grace and
worship.”42 God is omnipotent, omniscient and entirely holy, while no “man has any of these attributes.” Man is imperfect, commits errors and falls sick. He may be made holy by God in the next life. He may be “united with him, but not completely identified with him.”43 In the Gita and in Emerson thin partitions divide the bounds between man and the Self. If we go to the bottom of the reality, we realize this. In “The Over-Soul” Emerson tells us that there is no “bar or wall in the soul” where man as the effect stops and God, the Self, as the cause starts. The walls are removed. Man lies on one side open to the “attributes of God” (W, II, 271-72). This is direct access to the Self.

In the preceding discussion the proximity between the Self in Emerson and the Self in the Gita and the distance between the Self in Emerson and the Christian God have become very obvious. In Emerson, it seems, two cultures came into direct contact and Emerson, being an unorthodox and free-minded intellectual, was superbly enthused by his discovery in the Gita that man can discover his God within himself and can become God walking in flesh and blood (human form) which was regarded by the Christians as the product and home of sin and far removed from God. On being liberated from the traditional concept of God, Emerson’s enthusiasm knows no bounds. Though this outburst of joy is visible in all his published writings, it is very outstanding in his essays - “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address,” “Self-Reliance” and “The Over-Soul.” In “The Over-Soul” he remarks that the simplest person who worships God with integrity becomes God (W, II, 292). He adds that when we break “our God of tradition” and cease from “our God of rhetoric” then God will fire our heart with his presence (W, II, 292).

In “Compensation” he points out that the exclusionist in religion in trying to shut out others harms himself by shutting the door of heaven
on himself (W, II, 110). It goes to the credit of Emerson that he had an open mind and was tolerant in his search for truth. There are many passages in the *Gita* which emphasise the performance of rituals and seem to bury the real philosophy underneath them. But this did not distract Emerson from getting at the truth in the *Gita*.

All literature, in whatever form and in whichever language, has got inevitable links to the varied experiences of mankind. Emerson thought very deeply on life and gave artistic expression to his philosophy through his essays and verses. Thousands of years ago, someone, who wrote the *Gita*, too, meditated deeply on life and gave artistic expression to his thought through verses. This thesis has discussed how the thought in Emerson resembles the thought in the *Gita* and how the influence of the latter on the former can be inferred. This inference has also a deeper aspect. The United States as a country was very young at the time of Emerson’s birth. It was weak and poor and was struggling to be rich and strong. Emerson provided inspiration and courage to the people of his country “through his writings in prose and verse.” He told his countrymen how they might look at life around them in a new way. It was, of course, the philosophy of the liberating Self that he gave them. It points to the infinite inner strength present in man for his use in dealing with his circumstances. The world was different when Emerson left it “and part of that difference he brought about.” That is not a small achievement. He “breathed new life into his own generation.” He provided stimulation and excitement to people and this process still continues. “On its highest moral and spiritual levels, American life was, in essence, changed because Emerson lived.” There seems to be a progress from difficulties towards success in the American life, in this way, in part as a result of Emerson’s efforts. And the *Gita*, certainly, seems to have played a part in Emerson’s
extraordinary achievement as a writer and in his contribution to his country. Incidentally, this also demonstrates how literature influences life.
NOTES


2. Christy 98, 103.

3. Christy 104, 05.


5. Christy 98.


7. Carpenter *Emerson and Asia* 132.

8. Carpenter *Emerson and Asia* 133.

9. Christy 86.

10. Christy 86.


15. Christy 105.
16. Christy 112.
17. Christy 112.
25. Paul F. Boller, Jr. 139.
26. Boller, Jr. 139.

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30. Pandit 95.

31. Dillaway 59.


37. Patri 62.


41. Parrinder 44.

42. Parrinder 44.

43. Parrinder 45.

44. James Playsted Wood, *Trust Thyself: A Life of Ralph Waldo
Emerson for the Young Reader (New York : Pantheon, 1964) 3.

45. Wood 4.

46. Wood 4.

47. Wood 4-5.