Chapter III

THE CONCEPT OF MAN IN THE Gīṭā

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa while narrating the story of King Harischandra speaks of the four ages called the Kali age, the Dvāpara age, the Tretā age and the Krta age. Here Indra is said to have described in brief these four ages to Rohita, the son of Hariśchandra.* Indra here compares these four ages with four different states of a man. The Kali age is likened with the sleeping state of a man, the Dvāpara with the waking state, the Tretā with the rising state and the Krta with the moving state.

Thus Indra says to Rohita - "A man who sleeps is like the Kali age; a man who awakes is like the Dvāpara age; a man who rises is like the Tretā age; a man who travels is like the Krta age." 1 Hence he advises Rohita to travel.

The meaning of this passage may be that a man with full vigour and activity is certainly better than a man who

* Rohita had to flee away from home when he came to know from his father that it was time to offer him (Rohita) in a sacrifice to Varuṇa. He roamed about in the forest for about three years.

1. Manning, Ancient and Mediaeval India, p. 96, vol I
sits idle, or remains inactive and this passage further appears to suggest that Rohita is approaching better days thus by leading an active and dynamic life.

There are endless cycles of ages. They come in a cyclic order one after another. The present age is said to be the dark age or Kali yuga of Mankind. This will come to an end in a universal flood. It will destroy all living creatures on earth and thus there will be an end of this age. Then the earth will again emerge afresh from the waters to begin with a new age called the golden age or Satya yuga or Kṛta yuga. This age will successively be followed by three other ages called the Tretā, the Dwāpara and the Vāli, each of them being worse than the preceding ones. The last one will again be cut-short by another similar flood. Thus this process of creation and destruction will go on endlessly in a cyclic order.

What the Indian believes is that the Satya or Kṛta age was the first and the best age for mankind. Men were perfectly happy, peaceful in that age. They knew no illness nor they had any sort of want. They could lead a life of ease and comfort. They had not to make any labour. Nature by her own accord produced abundantly everything that a man

2. D.D. Kosambi, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline, p. 26
required. Men in that age were best known for their simplicity, innocence, piousness. They were peace-loving and virtuous and each of them lived for thousands of years.

Then there had been change in human nature. Men turned to be greedy. They tried to acquire for themselves private property and to hoard things which they considered necessary. These and similar other sinful activities led them successively to three different ages known as Tretā, Dvāpara and the Kali. Now life span of man becomes shorter. Man's life especially in what we now call the Kali yuga is full of sorrows and sufferings. Many menaces like war, diseases, old age, poverty etc. have been the cause of unrest and anxiety for human race today. Thus it is noticed that there is a pessimistic outlook of man in Indian thought. But it is true only initially but not true finally.

The description of man in the Satya age as simple, innocent, peaceful, virtuous etc. is not at all correct. No man of the above description could ever be found in the world nor was there any such age called the golden age or the like. Such facts are not supported by history nor can archaeological investigation give us any clue about it. Commenting on such myths like this Prof. D.D. Kosambi remarks - "In spite of the widespread myth, there was no original golden age of mankind outside the imagination of later poets and priests." 3 Thus

3. Ibid., p. 27
the concept of man as a being of 'pristine perfection' is only a myth. There were no such men in the world.

Many characters portrayed in the Mahābhārata, of which the Gītā forms a part, are cruel, inhuman, unsympathetic to their fellow human beings, devoid of love and compassion. Let us first examine the character of Duruyodhana, the eldest son of the blind king Dhritarāṣṭra. He was without doubt an ambitious, selfish, self-centered, cruel, jealous, greedy and power-loving prince. After the death of Pāṇḍu, the king of Hastināpura, his elder brother Dhritarāṣṭra became the king of Hastināpur. But he being blind, his eldest son became the real ruler of the kingdom. But Pāṇḍavas, the sons of Pāṇḍu were the real heirs to the throne. When they grew up, they demanded their share of the kingdom. But Duruyodhana and his brothers were not at all willing to give them their due share. On the contrary, they made plans after plan, as to how they could bring about ruin of the Pāṇḍavas.

Duruyodhana once invited Yudhiṣṭhira to a gambling competition and Yudhiṣṭhira being addicted to it, had readily accepted it. But Duruyodhana took deceptive means in order that he could defeat Yudhiṣṭhira in the said competition. Duruyodhana's uncle Bhīṣma playing the role of a swindler helped him in winning the game. The result of the game was that Yudhiṣṭhira had to lose wealth, their share of kingdom,
his brothers, even himself and their common wife Draupâdi. However they had to leave the kingdom for thirteen years and according to the terms and conditions of the competition the Pâṇḍavas had to live in the forest for first twelve years and lead lives in concealment of their identity for the last year of their exile. After the expiry of the period, they came back home and demanded their share again. Of course, this time they were prepared to remain content even if they would be granted only five villages for their five brothers. This time too, Duryodhana refused to give them anything and as a result the great battle at Kurukshetra took place between the two clans of Kauravas and the Pâṇḍavas.

It was all for self-love, ambition, jealousy against his cousins that Duryodhana threw himself up in the bloody battle, which brought their own ruin. Krishna himself being the incarnation of God, stood by the side of Yudhiṣṭhira, solely with a view to upholding righteousness and justice and uprooting all evils from human society. Moreover, most of Duryodhana's brothers bore the stamp of the same character as that of Duryodhana. In the Mahâbhârata, the Kauravas have been shown as the 'lovers of power'.

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Like the Sāmkhya philosophy, Gita's admission of mutual preponderance of the three guṇas, which are characteristically different from one another and the fact of their pervasiveness in all bodies have led the author of the Gita to recognise three types of men according as they are dominated by either of the three guṇas. A man with the preponderance of Sattva guṇa is characterized by knowledge. In him streams forth the light of knowledge through different sense-gates. A man with the preponderance of rajas is found to be active and greedy. He undertakes different sorts of actions and he is found restless. And when tamas predominates a man, he becomes dull, inactive and negligent of duties.

The tamaś arising as it does from ignorance leads man to error and delusion. A man when dominated by tamaś is of fiendish nature and a man with such nature usually indulges in cruel activities. A man when dominated by rajas is of demoniac nature. Such man has the qualities of ambition, greed, and the like.

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5. B.G., XVIII.40
6. B.G., XIV.11
7. B.G., XIV.12
8. B.G., XIV.13
9. B.G., XIV.8
11. Ibid., p. 243
Men with both fiendish and demoniac nature are devoid of judgment. They hope in vain, labour in vain, their knowledge too is in vain. According to the nature or disposition, a man has his peculiar faith. Thus we notice three types of men according to three different kinds of faith known as sāttvic (good), rājasic (passionate), and tāmasic (dull). A man with sāttvic faith worships gods, a man with rājasic faith worships the semi-gods and the demons and a man with tāmasic faith worships the spirits and the ghosts. The Gītā indirectly recognises that there are wicked men deluded evil doers, sinners, the worst sinner of all sinners.

With a view to offering elaborate explanation of the three natures of Daivī (god-like), Rākṣasīm (fiendish), and Āsurīm (demoniac), as given in the verses 12 and 13 of the chapter nine, the author of the Gītā further opens up

12. B.G., IX.12
13. B.G., XVII.3
14. B.G., XVII.2
15. B.G., XVII.4
16. B.G., IX.30; VII.15
17. B.G., vii.15
18. B.G., iv.36; iii.16
discussion of these topics in the 16th chapter.

Probably bringing men of both fiendish nature and of
demoniac nature under one category called 'demoniac' the
author of the Gitā here classifies man into two broad classes,
viz., the 'divine' and the 'demoniac'.

"Two stamps there are marked on all living men,
Divine and Undivine; I spake to thee
By what marks thou shouldst know the Heavenly man,
Hear from me now of the unheavenly!" 19

Thus we come to know from the Gitā that there are
two types of beings in the world. A man born with demoniac
nature is characterised by ostentation (Dambhah), arrogance
(darpah), excessive pride (abhimānah), anger (krodhah),
harshness (Pārusyam), and ignorance (ajñānam). 20

He is reborn again and again; He fails to reach God.
The man of demoniac nature 'tends towards continued bondage
in existence'. 21 The demoniac is not aware of the course of
action he is to undertake or the way of renunciation. In

19. B.G., XVI.6

Sir Edwin Arnold's translation is quoted here from his
book 'The Song Celestial'.

20. B.G., XVI.4

21. B.G., XVI.5
him neither purity nor good conduct nor truth is found. He holds the view that the world has no moral basis, it is without a God, again the world is not brought about in regular sequence. These men of devilish nature stick to such views. They are of weak understanding, indulge in cruel activities. They pose themselves as enemies of the world causing its destruction.

Such men nourish insatiable desire. They are hypocrites, proud, arrogant and they in their delusion hold wrong views and 'act with impure resolves'. These men have gratification of desires as their highest aim of life. They are obsessed by innumerable wants and cares. Bound by hundreds of ties of hopes and aspirations, these erotic and angry fellows solely with a view to gratifying their desires strive to amass wealth by unfair means. Another verse says - "Resorting to egotism, violence, arrogance, lust and wrath,

22. B.G., XVI.7
23. B.G., XVI.8
24. B.G., XVI.9
25. B.G., XVI.10
26. B.G., XVI.11
27. B.G., XVI.12
they hate Me in their own bodies and those of others, these envious men."\(^{28}\)

Thus the Gītā appears to recognise three kinds of Primary vices, viz., desire or lust, wrath and greed. It says that these three are the gateways that lead to the Hell and thereby destroy the soul.\(^{29}\) Elsewhere, of course, it says that desire and wrath are the twain causes of all vices.\(^{30}\) Thus here in the Gītā also, we see the darker aspect of man. That there are evil-doers or wicked men may be known from two other verses of the Gītā which say that God creates Himself for the protection of the righteous and also for the destruction of the wicked (duśkṛtām).\(^{31}\) Elsewhere we find another division of man into four classes or castes. This division of man into four castes is also based on the preponderance of this or that quality which a man has in his disposition. Thus the Gītā recognises four classes of men in the society.

It is God who brings forth the four-fold order in the society according to the divisions of quality and work. The

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28. B.G., XVI.18
Franklin Edgerton's translation is given from his book 'The Bhagavad-gītā', p. 82

29. B.G., XVI.21

30. B.G., iii.37

31. B.G., IV.7, 8
Lord declares - "The four-fold caste system was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and work. Though I am its creator, know Me to be immutable and non-doer."  

These four castes are the Brähmins (the Pundits or teachers), the Kshatriyas (the warriors or leaders), the Vaiśyas (the traders and farmers) and the Śūdras (the servers or labourers). Though originally, quality and work were the criteria for deciding caste of a man; but subsequently birth and heredity became the deciding factors of it. Because it is difficult to know as to what quality does a man possess.  

In this context T.M.P. Mahadevan says - "Originally the castes were professional and subsequently became hereditary."  

According to this division a Brähmin has the predominance of Sattva guṇa, a Kshatriya has the predominance of rajas and a Vaiśya has the predominance of tamas. But in case of a Śūdra none of these qualities is found predominant.  

The duties of the four castes have been divided according to the pre-ponderance of the qualities found in their nature. The natural duties of a Brähmin are serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance, uprightness, wisdom, knowledge

32. B.G., IV.13  
33. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 571  
34. T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism, p. 69  
35. Ibid., p. 71  
36. B.G., XVIII.41
and faith in God. The natural duties of a Kshatriya on the other hand are valour, vigour, fortitude, skillfulness, spirit in fight and open handedness and leadership. The Vaiṣyas have three kinds of duties. These are agriculture, tending cattle and trade. A Śūdra is a worker or manual labourer. His natural duty is to minister to the need of the members of other three castes. The Gītā lays emphasis on performing duties of one's own caste and also the duties pertaining to one's stage of life. It says that one's natural duty is superior, even if it be carried out imperfectly, to the duties of another though carried out perfectly.

From the present day point of view, the division of men into various castes may be said to be a curse for human society, because it has a disintegrating force behind it. Probably the caste system was brought into effect at the beginning solely with a view to building a society on the basis of mutual good-will and co-operation and also with a view to getting rid of the dangers that might accrue from a competitive view of society. T.M.P. Mahadevan opines - "It

37. B.G., XVIII.42
38. B.G., XVIII.43
39. B.G., XVIII.44
40. B.G., XVIII.47
is the principle of integration and co-ordination that weighed with the builders of Caste."41 He further says, "The system was evolved to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition; but in later ages it became a divisive force."42 In contradistinction from the two types of men (i.e., men of fiendish and demoniac nature), the Gītā speaks of another class of men who are by nature divine (daivī) or god-like. They are great-souled and of divine nature. They know God to be the imperishable source of all beings and hence they worship Him with an undistracted mind.43 These steadfast and strenuous men unendingly glorifying God and bowing down to Him with devotion always worship Him.44 A man of divine nature is capable of attaining liberation. While a man of demoniac nature is not so capable. It is said that the divine endowments make for liberation while the demoniac make for bondage. A man of divine nature has as many as 26 good qualities. These are - "Fearlessness, purity of mind, wise apportionment of knowledge and concentration, charity, self-control, study of the scriptures, austerity and uprightness, non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to fault-

41. T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism, p. 70
42. Ibid., p. 69
43. B.G., IX.13
44. B.G., IX.14
finding, compassion to living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty, and steadiness (absence of fickleness), vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, freedom from malice and excessive pride.  

In discussing the nature of man, we cannot avoid discussing the problem of free-will. It has roused the attention of a large number of eminent philosophers of the world. In thoroughly examining Gitā's view on this problem, we become rather puzzled. The Gitā appears to suggest that man has no freedom. Many passages of the Gitā give us the impression that men are pre-destined. They cannot have freedom. They are the puppets at the hands of God. In this context Radhakrishnan observes, "The will of man seems to be determined by past nature, heredity, training and environment." It is nature that determines our will. Hence our effort seems to be vain. One verse of the Gitā says - "If indulging in self-conceit thou thinkest 'I will not fight' vain is this, thy resolve. Nature will compel thee." In the very next verse of the Gitā again the teacher cautions Arjuna by saying that

45. B.G., XVI.1-3
(S. Radhakrishnan's translation is quoted.)

46. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 573

47. B.G., XVIII.59
(Radhakrishnan's translation).
by being fettered by his own deeds born of his nature, he will be compelled to do, even against his will, the very act which he proposed (willed) not to do out of ignorance. What we come to know from this verse is that our actions are determined by our nature and accordingly we are bound by our deeds.

The following verse also signifies almost the same thing as the verse just mentioned above. The verse runs thus -

\[
\text{na tad asti prithivyām vā}
\]
\[
\text{divi deveśu vā punaḥ}
\]
\[
\text{sattvām prakṛtijair muktām}
\]
\[
\text{yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir gunaḥ.}
\]

Neither in earth nor even among the gods in heaven is there any creature which is free from the three modes born of nature.

We could not desist our temptation from quoting another verse of the Gītā in support of the above view.

\[
\text{Īśvarāḥ sarva bhūtānāṁ}
\]
\[
\text{ḥṛddeśe 'ṛjuna tiṣṭhāti}
\]
\[
\text{bhrāmayan sarva bhūtānāṁ}
\]
\[
\text{yantrā rūdhāni māyā.}
\]

48. B.G., XVIII.60
49. B.G., XVIII.40
50. B.G., XVIII.61
"God residing as He does in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, whirls all beings as if they were mounted on a machine."

This stanza unequivocally says that men are not free. They are puppets at the hands of God.

From another verse it becomes evident that we only happen to be the nominal causes of our actions. We are not the real doers of our actions. In verse 33 of the chapter VI, Śrikrishṇa asks Arjuna to fight the battle and to enjoy a prosperous kingdom. But at the same time He says - "I have already killed these in advance. (Therefore) O Savyasācin (Arjuna)! do you (come forward to) become the nominal cause." 51 We are simply the occasions here. God does everything for us.

Again if from self-conceit we do not listen to the advice of the Lord, we will surely be perished. 52 In other words we cannot resist the will of the Almighty. Lord Śrikrishṇa further says that 'Daiva' or providence or God is one of the five factors responsible for accomplishment of each action. 53 Explaining the meaning of the term 'Daiva' Radhakrishnan says, "Daiva represents the non-human factor

51. B.G. Tilak's translation is quoted.
52. B.G., XVII.58
53. B.G., XVIII.14
that interferes and disposes human effort. It is the wise all-seeing will that is at work in the world." By 'Daiva' we mean an unforeseen element which causes an unforeseen result. We have no control over it. We also call it by different names such as fate, luck or destiny. It may also be said to be "a force accumulated by the acts of one's past lives."

"Purvajanmakṛtaṁ karma
tad daivam
iti kathyate."

- Hitopadesa

The result accumulated by the acts of one's past lives is called 'Daivam'. Daiva acts unnoticed. We meet with unforeseen results. Thus as a result of our past deeds, we become partially determined. The Gītā further tells us that a man of perverse mind only thinks himself to be the sole agent of an action. He does not see truly. The implication of this verse is that the agent is not the sole cause of an action. There are other factors responsible for accomplishment of an action. Śaṅkara further explains that the pure self should not be considered the agent. For him the ego should be taken to be the doer; even then it is only one of the main

55. B.G., XVIII.16
determinants of human actions which are all products of nature. In other words it means that all actions are the products of prakṛti. Hence what we understand from all this is that man is not wholly free. His actions are determined by some other factors as explained above.

Thus many passages give us the impression that man is not free. Radhakrishnan remarks, "The Gītā holds that quality and capacity are the bases of functional divisions. Accepting the theory of rebirth, it holds that a man's inborn nature is determined by his past lives."\(^5\)\(^6\) But some other verses of the Gītā give a completely different picture. These verses lead us to the view that we may act according to our sweet will. But at the same time it warns us that we shall have to bear the brunt of such deeds. In other words such actions have dreadful consequences. In one verse the Lord says to Arjuna that by fixing his thought on Him (God), he can by His grace cross over all difficulties, but at the same time He warns him that if due to self-sense he does not care to listen to him, he would surely be perished.\(^5\)\(^7\) It means that Arjuna is at liberty either to listen to or not to listen to His advice. If he listens to His advice, he has no problem, but if he does not listen to his advice, he will meet with

\(^{56}\) S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 368

\(^{57}\) B.G., XVIII.58
death. This verse means that Arjuna by applying his own free thinking can determine the course of his actions. Thus man appears to be free. He can choose either 'salvation' or 'perdition'.

It must be remembered that though we are free, we cannot resist the Will of the Almighty. According to another verse the wicked and deluded evil doers do not resort to God. It means that these persons act according to their sweet will. But such persons meet with dreadful consequences. God by His illusion or māyā takes away their intelligence and as a result such persons remain in a demoniac condition.

Again it is said, "He who violates the scriptural law and acts as his desire prompts him, he does not attain either perfection or happiness or the highest goal." The fact that a man acts according as his desire prompts him certainly indicates freedom of the man. Again in describing the fate of men of devilish nature, the author of the Gītā says that God casts down again and again those persons who are cruel, hateful, worst of mankind and evil into the wombs of demons, never again to rise above that condition.

58. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 373
59. B.G., VII.15
60. B.G., VII.15
61. B.G., XVI.23
62. B.G., XVI.19
63. B.G., XVI.20
Further the Gītā says that these men do not attain to God.\footnote{64} These verses seem to imply that man is not free; because he cannot change his lot by his own effort and will. But these verses actually do not imply pre-destination. Rather it means that men of demoniac nature act according to their own judgement and as a result they are cast down again and again into the wombs of demons. Adding a note on these verses (verse 19 and 20 of the Chapter XVI) Radhakrishnan says that we are advised only to shake off this demoniac nature. "It does not mean pre-destination." It is held that we can always turn good ward and achieve perfection.\footnote{65} The course for achieving perfection is open to us. Hence, we are at liberty to choose the course of our action. "Even the greatest sinner if he turns to God, can achieve freedom."\footnote{66}

All these verses point out that a man can act according to his own free-will; though in so doing he may meet with disastrous consequences. Śrīkrṣṇa the Lord desires well-being of all creatures and accordingly he tells us what is good and what is bad for us. We are at liberty either to listen to or not to listen to him. After giving so many

instructions to Arjuna, Śrīkrṣṇa finally asks Arjuna to act according as he desires.

\[
\text{iti te jñānam ākhyātāṁ}
guhyād guhyatāraṁ mayā
vimbṛṣyai' tad asesōṇa
yathe'ccasi tathā kuru.
\]

"Thus thou hast been taught the knowledge divine which is the secret of all secrets by Me. Having reflected on it fully do as thou wishest." 67

Arjuna is taught the knowledge divine, but the Lord does not impose His command on Him. Lord Śrīkrṣṇa asks Arjuna to decide for himself the course of action he now desires to take. He constrains no one in choosing one's action. "Man is to be wooed and not coerced into cooperation. He is to be drawn, not driven, persuaded, not compelled." 68

Hence we come to the conclusion that man, according to the Gītā, is not pre-determined. He is free.

We have already pointed out that though morality is not the primary aim of Indian philosophy, it does not altogether

67. B.G., XVIII.63
68. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 375
reject it. It is used as an instrument or aid for attaining the highest ideal of life. According to the Gītā also morality is taken to be a secondary means for attaining liberation. Hence, we cannot say that according to the Gītā man is pre-destined. If we believe in man's determinism, then it cuts at the very root of morality. In that case morality becomes irrelevant. As the Gītā does not reject morality, we cannot say that the Gītā advocates determinism. Man according to the Gītā is free. He is not pre-destined.

In order to have a clear apprehension of the problem of free-will versus determinism, we may carefully note the following observations made by Radhakrishnan. "Man is a two-fold, contradictory being, free and enslaved. He is god-like, and has in him the signs of his fall, that is, descent into nature. As a fallen being, man is determined by the forces of prakṛti. He appears to be actuated solely by elemental forces, sensual impulses, fear and anxiety. But man desires to get the better of his fallen nature." 69

The Gītā seems to support a theory of the plurality of selves. 70 Śaṅkara in his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā

70. Vide B.G., 2.12 and other verses.
explains that the slokas which speak of the plurality of selves speak so only conventionally. He says, "Nor are there what are called 'ultimate particulars' (antyaviśeshas) as the basis of individual distinctions in the Self, since no evidence can be adduced to prove their existence in relation to the several bodies. Hence Brahman is homogeneous and one." 71 Thus the reference of plurality of selves here is not to the eternity of Brahman but to the pre-existence and post-existence of the empirical egos. The Gītā is true to the Upaniṣads when it analyses the problem of reality in two ways - subjective and objective. The subjective principle is the Ātman while the objective principle is Brahman. Ātman exists behind all the fleeting changes of our psychical body, while Brahman exists behind the fleeting changes of the world. The Gītā distinguishes between the apparent man and the Real Man. As Śrīkrṣṇa says, "He (the Real Man, i.e., his spirit) is never born, nor does he perish at any time, nor having (once) come to be will he again cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." 72 This Real Man is nothing but the Ātman or Brahman. The Gītā emphasises at once on the immortality of the soul and


72. B.G., II.20
the inevitability of rebirth. It says, "Just as a man discards old and worn-out dress and puts on a new one, similarly man (his soul) gives up his old and worn-out body and assumes a new body." Radhakrishnan comments on this as follows, "The eternal does not move from place to place but the embodied soul moves from one abode to another. It takes birth each time and gathers to itself a mind, life and body formed out of the materials of nature according to its past evolution and its need for the future. The psychic being is the viññāna which supports the triple manifestation of body (anna), life (prāṇa) and mind (manas). When the gross physical body falls away, the vital and mental sheaths still remain as the vehicle of the soul. Rebirth is a law of nature."  

In the Gītā the personality of man has been divided into two aspects: the changing personality - Kṣara Puruṣa, and the unchanging personality - Akṣara Puruṣa. The changing personality consists of the five sheaths, viz., the annamaya Kośa - the alimentary sheath, prāṇamaya Kośa - the vital sheath, manomaya Kośa - the mental sheath, viññānamaya Kośa, the intelligent sheath and ānandamaya Kośa - the blissful sheath. All these Kośas constitute the empirical

73. B.G., II.22
74. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 108
75. B.G., XV.16
personality of man. These sheaths are, as it were, the five layered mask of the real man - the Ātman, which makes him appear what he is really not. The Gītā aims at discarding this mask by spiritual disciplines and realizing the real personality. According to the Gītā, finite selves are the eternal parts of God. The body is limited by time and space, produced and destroyed. But the Ātman that is embodied in it is neither born nor destroyed nor limited by time and space. It is beyond the five sheaths. A man transcends his 'mask-personality' by spiritual practices and attains his real personality by gradual integration of spiritual qualities. Such a state is called in the Gītā as Yogārūḍha state or Sthitaprajña state. The spiritual qualities which have been cultivated by intense spiritual discipline become natural and steady in a man of realization. But after he leaves his body, he becomes absolutely free from five-fold covering and attains Kaivalya.

According to the Gītā, one should always perform one's appointed duties without attachment or aversion and any desire for enjoying their fruits. Being absorbed in worldly

76. B.G., ii.17-28
77. B.G., ii.54-72
78. B.G., VI.4
79. B.G., ii.47
pursuits, a person is afflicted by the events of the world. But having attained the true knowledge of the self, a person's attachment to worldly objects is destroyed. Freedom from desire leads him to the attainment of equanimity of mind. Hence he is not overjoyed on attaining something good nor dejected when something evil comes. He casts off his likes or dislikes. Gain or loss make no difference to him. He is indifferent to honour and dishonour. He thus remains no more a creature of circumstances. Such a person is therefore known as dvandvātīta. The attainment of unity or identity is not possible by merely reconciling the dualities or pairs of opposites but by transcending them, because however balanced one may be, one remains an individual. Duality has meaning only in the imperfect world and it always refers to a unity beyond itself. Hence the real and final stage is the transcendental equanimity, which is the state of self-realization. It is attained only when the soul is lifted up and established firmly in absolute spirit.

80. B.G., ii.56; vi.7
81. B.G., XIV.24
82. B.G., ii.38
83. B.G., XII.18
84. B.G., IV.22; V.3.