

Danijel Turina

Bhagavad-gītā

translation and commentary



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Foreword by the Publisher

This book, although in its first edition, already has a history. Using the Croatian edition, published in 2002, the author rewrote the entire work in English. The existing glossary from the Croatian edition was expanded, and some additions were made, such as the inclusion of the Sanskrit original in a separate translation at the end of the book, a glossary of names, Kuru family tree, and, in respect to readers' demand, a brief guide to the pronunciation of Sanskrit. Because of all that, and because of the differences between English and Croatian versions, the overall volume of the book increased from 562 pages (the Croatian edition) to almost seven hundred pages. The English edition also provided an opportunity to correct a certain number of small errors in grammar, references and transliteration of Sanskrit terms.

Adjusting of the text to English made us re-examine our method of writing the Sanskrit terms, as well as lexical consistency, which turned out to be quite a challenge, mostly because the differences between Sanskrit and English are greater than those between Sanskrit and Croatian. We tried to make the entire work as formally correct as possible, and, although the author in his introduction concedes that this book is not meant primarily for scholars, and that the only thing of importance for him was to convey the spiritual message, you might be surprised to find out that final result is more formally correct than any other translation we

had the opportunity to review, and that his translation unites spiritual meaning with poetic harmony and literal accuracy. This seems to come as a result of close association between spirit and language in Indian culture, where one cannot survive if the other is not treated with due respect.

There are very few rules and standards regarding the use of Sanskrit terms in English, which is in part caused by the technical problems of transliteration, especially in the case of authors writing about spiritual subjects. In all cases, we tried to stay as close to the original as possible. We upheld this rule even in the case of words that are customary in English, such as “cakra,” which is usually written phonetically as “chakra,” where only a part of the meaning of the Sanskrit term is conveyed in English, the one regarding the energetic centers in the body. However, Sir Monier-Williams* cites in his dictionary almost forty different meanings of this term, including “circle,” “zodiac,” “whirlpool,” and “potter’s wheel.” We can find an example in Kṛṣṇa’s weapon, the “Sudarśana cakra,” which is on one hand “a circular weapon,” “a disc,” and on the other hand Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual weapon, His attribute, which is seldom recognized. In all such cases, we decided to stick to the original, and give the reader an opportunity to judge the subtleties of meaning himself.**

According to the same logic, we used “Kṛṣṇa” instead of “Krishna,” “Śiva” instead of “Shiva,” “nirvāṇa” instead of “nirvana,” and “avatāra” instead of “avatar.” Still, we did not go so far as to use the Sanskrit plural, deciding that it would probably only confuse readers, and so we used the English plurals with Sanskrit stems, as in “cakras” and “avatāras” (not “chakras” and “avatars”). Some of the more unusual plurals created along the way were the plurals of the words “pitṛ” (the ancestors, pronounced “pitri”), “pitṛs” (pronounced “pitris”) and the plural of the word “apsaras” (class of female deities, nymphs)—“apsarasas.”

We should also observe that the logic of Sanskrit often creates a web of meanings around words, and so “Rudras” will mean “howling, roaring, dreadful, horrible, powerful,” denoting a breed

* Sir Monier Monier-Williams: *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Revised edition (June 1989), ISBN 019864308X.

** On the other hand, some terms, such as “karma,” for instance, are the same in both Sanskrit and English, and the problem of transliteration was simple to solve.

of powerful demons, sons of Rudra, while “Rudra” as a name will belong to Śiva in His aspect of the Destroyer. According to a similar logic, Kṛṣṇa’s warriors are called the Nārāyaṇas, since they are led by Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa).

The names of various breeds of divine and demonic beings (devas, gandharvas, apsarāsas, piśācas, rakṣasas and the like) were written without capitalization (except where a family name was used—Ādityas, Bhojas, Andhakas...), as opposed to common practice, following the rationale that the Western counterparts of the devas are angels and good spirits, gandharvas and apsarāsas are elves and fairies, while piśācas and rakṣasas have their counterparts in demons, devils, fiends and evil spirits, of which none are capitalized in English. Still, we strayed from this rule in cases where a certain word denotes both a class of gods and a level of consciousness, which is at the same time personal and impersonal, as in the case of the Kumāras. For similar reasons we capitalized Ātman, as Self, while at the same time left brahman uncapitalized, in order to avoid confusion with Brahmā as a personal being.

In order to make readers think actively about the meaning of certain words, the author was deliberately inconsistent, writing “guṇa tamas” in most places, and then switching to “tamo-guṇa.” Similar case is with “yogī” and “yogin”—“yogī” being a nominative singular, and “yogin” being a stem word, both legitimate. Respecting the spirit of the English language, we mostly used “yogī,” in spite of the fact that, in the Croatian version, we decided for “yogin.” The author’s practice of playing with words is actually well within the guidelines of the Sanskrit original, where the same thing or a person are called different names, or written in a different way, in different contexts. This abundance of wordplay makes it utterly impossible to make a literal translation of the Sanskrit texts, and the second best thing is to attempt to make the original wordplay as understandable to the reader as possible. We tried to make the reader feel like an insider, to let him in on the subtleties of the text and help him understand the subtle flow, instead of chewing his food for him, giving him only a small slice of the meaning.

Insisting on using the Sanskrit terms wherever possible, we still had to draw a line somewhere, respecting the language and the context. This is why we wrote “Sanskrit,” and not “saṁskṛta,” avoiding the Sanskrit “paṇḍita” to use “pandits,” and opting for

“Himalaya” instead of “Himālaya,” although those three instances are the only exceptions from more than six hundred words and names where we decided to use the accustomed English terms.

Also, we wrote the names of different authors as they themselves wrote them, in Sanskrit transliteration (as “Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī”), anglicized (“Yogananda”) or even both (“A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda”). Terms like “ātmic,” “nirvāṇic” and “paranirvāṇic level,” which originate from Sanskrit (Ātman, nirvāṇa, paranirvāṇa), but which are used to denote the levels of reality and written non-transliterated in Theosophy, were “forced” back to the Sanskrit original. Conversely, in the case of “Hare Krishna,” we decided to leave it in the English form.

Writing the names of the vedic texts and compound Sanskrit terms, we usually avoided separating the words with spaces or hyphens (for instance in “Amṛtabindūpaṇiṣad”), although in some terms (like “citta-vṛtti-nirodha” or “kali-yuga”) we chose to put hyphens or spaces for the sake of clarity.

In some cases, however, we broke all the rules with reckless abandon.

My soul and all my bodies I devote to Kṛṣṇa, the Highest Puruṣa, the supreme sanctuary and goal of all beings. To Him, the Supreme, I surrender, with my entire being, for all eternity.

To Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, who gave Bhagavad-gītā the form of writing, I offer my deepest respect. To him, who gave the immortal spirit of the holy scriptures a body, I bow, again and again.

I bow before the feet of all previous commentators of this scripture. According to the needs of their times and their personal insight, they enriched the immense treasury of the original Bhagavad-gītā with the jewels of their thoughts, mined out from the immense possibilities of the Divine.

From the Infinity, nothing can be taken away, or added to. Abandoning any such thought, I take it as my task to praise the Immense Greatness of God, which expresses itself to the world through the words of Bhagavad-gītā.

To my disciples, and to all the others who made my work on this and other fields possible in a number of ways, I give the blessing of the Spirit of God. May their lives become altars of devotion to God, may their consciousness attain liberation from all forms of lowliness and attachments, and may they dwell in Him, forever.

May the Divine Reality, the foundation and essence of all existence, become perfectly visible in all manifested things. May all the beings attain the highest goal.

Om Śrī Vāsudevāya Mahā Parama Bhagavate Namaḥ.

Introduction

My relationship with *Bhagavad-gītā* dates back to the beginnings of my personal journey; and although an impartial observer might conclude that only a few years had passed, those years were so packed with events, that I indeed feel as if they took place in the ancient ages, in the beginnings of time.

My first experience with *Gītā* took place in the context of the Croatian translation of *Mahābhārata*. Although it was shortened due to the huge volume of the work, this translation made a great impression upon me; the message of *Gītā* was unstained, unharmed by the shortening, and although my consciousness was at that time too coarse to absorb the immense subtlety of Kṛṣṇa's thoughts and Arjuna's questions, the depth and power were too apparent not to impress me deeply. Since then, I have always had a wish to lay my hands upon a translation of *Gītā* that would be complete, and equally valuable and profound.

My wish was granted, at least in part, when I visited a bookstore to find the translation and commentary of the first six chapters, the work of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Of all the translations and commentaries that I had the opportunity to read so far, I hold his to be the best on many grounds. I often used to read and contemplate this work; meditate, read, and meditate again, in attempts to follow Kṛṣṇa's oceanic consciousness into the depths it touched, in which I was but partially successful. At those times,

nirvikalpa samādhi, the state of realization of the One Self, without the other, was, by the grace of God, within my reach. Still, I was losing Kṛṣṇa after the fourth chapter, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't follow. This, among other things, incited my further spiritual growth; if there was anything I disliked, it was the possibility of there being a state so profound and subtle that I could not reach it. As much as I desired to read the complete translation of the remaining twelve chapters of *Gītā*, the limits of my understanding were painfully apparent.

At one time, I had the opportunity to browse through the Serbian translation of *Gītā* “as it is,” translated by the founder of the society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, better known as Prabhupāda, in a second-hand bookstore. I wanted to buy it, and by some miracle I even had the money to do so (which was seldom the case in those days), but then I became aware of my limitations—for I was unable to follow *Gītā* beyond the fourth out of six chapters that I already had, what in the world could I be doing with the additional twelve chapters of the scripture beyond my comprehension? Reading such a text could, in my opinion, produce nothing but arrogance and vain buildup of undigested material, which would by no means lead toward enlightenment, but on the contrary, could be justly described as a method of harboring delusions. And so, I left the book on the shelf, and spoke to God: “Instead of reading this, I will practice yoga, and if I ever become capable of understanding this scripture in whole, and thus become worthy of it, You will give it to me anyway, as You give me everything I need. Thank you.”

In that mood I left the shop, pleased with my discovery.

A couple of years passed. One morning I woke up feeling that something special was about to take place, feeling a great blessing descending upon me. I was totally clueless regarding the exact nature of the event, but utterly certain that something extraordinary and miraculous was about to happen. In such mood, I went to the marketplace with my parents. While my father parked his car, a young member of the Hare Krishna community approached us, trying to sell us his books. My father brushed him off, irritated because the man was disturbing his parking efforts, but I approached him with interest. The young man had a copy of the translation of *Gītā*, and insisted that I take it. Not having enough money with me, I was actually trying to convince him not to sell

me the book at such a discounted price, but since he insisted, I accepted, and then felt that special blessing—it was truly a gift from God, this copy of *Gītā* with all eighteen translated chapters.

To be honest, up to the present date, I'm not quite convinced that I am able to comprehend *Gītā* in its greatest depth, but God's message was clear beyond doubt, not so much in the described events, but in the indescribable inner experiences that accompanied them. I had the ability to understand *Gītā*.

Frankly speaking, that copy of *Gītā*, translated by the Hare Krishna founder, had no good qualities other than the beautiful cover and binding, completeness, and the faith of the members of this movement in its value. In fact, unfortunately I can only see this book as pathetic, since the consciousness of its author seldom exceeds the astral, reaching for the mental, but making up for it with a huge abundance of desires, passions and frustrations that prevent him from even the accurate translation of the text; in his burning desire to present *Gītā* in the light in which he understands it, the author distorts the translation, turning it from the words of Divine Light into a means of advertisement for his cult. Reading it saddened me quite a bit. Fortunately, it seems to be an exception, rather than a rule. For example, Maharishi indeed does attempt to make the winds of *Gītā* blow into the sails of his Transcendental Meditation™ teaching; however, he never counterfeits the translation, limiting his interventions to the commentary, even in places where *Gītā* seems to state the exact opposite of what he would prefer. I deeply respect him for his honesty.

For what reason do I, then, take on a mission of writing a commentary on one of the deepest and holiest scriptures? I am almost completely ignorant of its original language—Sanskrit is foreign to me, and it is most likely to remain so.¹ Likewise, I was neither born, raised nor educated in an Indian tradition, I do not belong to any Indian lineage, and chances are that my commentary will be *a priori* discarded as “heretical,” at least by some.

¹ In my translation I made use of the existing ones, as well as the word-by-word translation from Prabhupāda's work. I originally wrote my translation and commentary in Croatian, and then translated it to English. Both those translations are original works—there is no loss in meaning; however, due to the specifics of the respective languages, both Croatian and English versions should be consulted in further translations, in order to avoid errors.

So be it.

For *Gītā* is not a technical manual for a tractor or a truck, for such things to matter in its translation. *Gītā* is a holy scripture, and a holy scripture by its definition speaks about the nature of God, whom I know to be my highest reality. Yogīs, people who have devoted their entire being to God, making it divine, whose consciousness dwells in God, are the ones capable of understanding and interpreting the holy scriptures, and not the Sanskrit scholars or paṇḍitas. Arrogant scholars can do nothing but nibble at the bones of the scriptures, while mystics feed on their flesh. I wouldn't say that I understand *Gītā* in its fullness; Kṛṣṇa himself, in *Mahābhārata*, when Arjuna, having forgotten most of it, asked him to repeat what he had told him during the battle, was unable to repeat the magnificence of his original work. The nature of Īśvara, the supreme Lord, was not something that even He was able to recall at someone's whim, and not even by his own will, but only in special moments, when it was truly necessary, and in accordance with dharma. The truth of that is known to yogīs: God is never in the service of human ego, not even when the ego is in the service of God. God is the river that has to flow through us, and we are not here to determine its flow, but to align ourselves with it. I therefore implore readers to understand my intent: my commentary is not meant to take the place of the original text, to add to it or correct it, nor to adjust it according to some more or less hidden desire of my own. My commentary is to be understood in the same way in which I understand my own life. I see myself as personified Divine qualities, a sequence of choices through which I have crystallized myself out from the infinite treasury of existence, from the foundation of all things—in all circumstances deciding what I want, and what I do not want to be. My commentary, therefore, speaks more about me than about anything else. The *Gītā* you are about to read is a window into my thoughts and consciousness, into my view of *Gītā*, my perception of God. I have no desire to write “the *Gītā* as it is”—*Gītā*, as it really is, is a brief Sanskrit text that can hardly fill a hundred pages. Those who favor authenticity will undoubtedly read such *Gītā*, hardly giving the translations any thought.

This is, consequently, not the “real” *Gītā*. This is my teaching, my insight, and *Gītā* in its depth provides me with the opportunity to try myself, playing “catch” with God: can I follow You,

Genius, can I comprehend and describe Your deeds and thoughts?
Will I be able to look into Your soul, into Your real abode, into
the real nature of Your being?

That is what we are about to see.

Mahābhārata

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is a stand-alone work, and is often treated as such. Nevertheless, one should realize that it was originally a part of the sixth canto of the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, the story of the great tribe of Bharatas, compiled by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, who dictated it into the quill of Gaṇeśa.

That is what the tradition tells us. The words of modern Indologists, however, seem to be closer to the truth—*Mahābhārata* doesn't appear to be the work of one author, but rather a collection of tales, narrated and added to by many storytellers; the basic fable was adorned with stories of many kinds, educational and other, of which many can stand as individual works. It seems that Vyāsa was the compiler of *Mahābhārata*, the person who wrapped all those bits and pieces of words of mouth into a single manuscript.

As for the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it is subject to the same ruling as the other holy scriptures: the criterion of its authenticity is not in the continuity of lineage, or in the authority of the author, but in the depth of consciousness that is reflected in it. The faithful Christian does not hold Jesus to be a son of God because the Bible, which was given to people by God, says so, but exactly the opposite: the depth and power of the biblical text itself makes him believe that Jesus must have been the son of God, because it would be impossible for anybody else to speak such words. This reasoning

makes groundless all forms of criticism that target the unreliable origin of both works. One may object that the gospels were written down long after the death of Jesus, and it is conceivable that the passing of time caused many alterations and distortions of facts, making the relationship between the authors and Jesus, as well as the reliability of their storytelling, uncertain. The same logic, applied to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, says that *Mahābhārata* is not a homogenous work; that the actual author is unknown, as well as the facts in the background of the work. Such an analysis questions the very existence of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sañjaya, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, let alone their profound discussion on some battlefield.

In answer to such criticism, much noise can be heard from the faithful camps of both traditions, attempting to respond to such, apparently scientific, rebuttals with rather fanatical statements about the authenticity of the traditional statements regarding the scriptures' origin.

I personally find the attempts of defense on such grounds to be even more ridiculous and absurd than the attempts of rebuttal on those same grounds, for it is reasonable to expect a rebuttal based on such reasoning. The infidel will always criticize a scripture's form, the wrappings of the package; he will attack the form of the scripture. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that the infidel will bring out sufficient historically-scientific data to question everything about Jesus, except the fact that his disciples believed in his existence, or similar data that questions everything about Kṛṣṇa except the fact that he is mentioned in *Mahābhārata*. Having brought out all those facts, he will feel very pleased with himself for providing the ignorant flock of believers with a metaphorical tombstone for their faith. It seems that the majority of such "analysts" are motivated more by the need to justify their system of disbelief, than by the need for finding out the truth (which they all, without exception, profess).

If an infidel, who attacks scriptures on those grounds, can be understood, the situation in which a believer defends the scripture on those very same grounds is utterly appalling, at least from my perspective. You see, it is a giveaway, a confession made by the believer, where he admits his faith to be based on the faith in tradition, with the least consideration given to the depth of the scripture itself. How much weight can an attack on the form carry, for a believer who reads the words of Jesus, diving into their

depths? Such attacks can only make him smile. He, who understood the depths of the teaching of Jesus, will know beyond any doubt that such depths could only be reached by the means of great insight into the nature of reality. If that is the nature of the contents, the nature of the form is utterly meaningless. The one who said “Before Abraham was, I Am,”² must be either God or His son; what difference does it make whether those words were spoken by Jesus or John? If they were spoken by John, then he is the one who is founded in the deepest reality, and not Jesus. Since John says that those words were spoken by Jesus, and it isn’t very likely that a person with such foundations in reality would have to ascribe his words to another, it logically follows that the words were spoken by Jesus. It settles the matter. From this line of reasoning, it automatically follows that Jesus was the one who perceived himself as the greatest reality, and that the other things that were said about him in the gospels are most likely all true.

Likewise, one may speculate whether words ascribed to Kṛṣṇa were indeed spoken by Kṛṣṇa, or Vyāsa, or a third party, perhaps. The fact remains that these words were spoken, and their depth is evident from the fact that these words alone gave birth to a firm conviction that Kṛṣṇa is God himself, and the only point of dispute between believers is whether Kṛṣṇa is God Himself, or His incarnation. Such conviction was based on the depths of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, not the other way around, in the same way in which the conviction that Jesus is the son of God is based on the depths of gospels. I am, therefore, personally opposed to vain discussions regarding the formal authenticity of *Bhagavad-gītā*, because the depth of the text itself gives me no reason to put it in question.

Now that we’ve settled this matter, let us return to *Mahābhārata*.

As well as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, too, is made of eighteen cantos, or books, if you prefer. I will now try to tell the basic tale of the epic, primarily through quotations.³

² John 8:58.

³ All the quotations from *Mahābhārata* (in the Croatian version of this book) were taken from the book *Mahābhārata*, edition ITRO August Cesarec, ISBN 86-393-0155-7, published in 1989. In the English version, those quotations have been translated to English. I would recommend one to read *Mahābhārata* in its entirety, in order to understand the wider context of *Gītā*. However, I think that even this abbreviation might be useful.

1. The Book of Beginnings (Ādiparvan)

The first book, The Book of Beginnings, presents us with the complex family relationships within the Kuru tribe, as well as the origins of the work and its complex narrative structure. Here it is, in simplified form:

Once upon a time, King Parīkṣit⁴ was hunting a deer in the forest. As the wounded animal escaped him, he hunted for it throughout the woods, without success. And so, tired and thirsty, he came upon a muni,⁵ and asked him whether he might have seen a deer passing by. Having been bound by a vow of silence, the hermit did not answer.⁶ Angered with his silence, the tired king took a dead snake and threw it around the hermit's neck, and left.

The wise man had a son by the name of Śṛṅgin, who was still young and violent in temper. Seeing his father's condition, he immediately cursed the king: "This miserable sinner, who hung a dead serpent around the shoulders of my old and weak parent, will be sent to the abode of Yama⁷ by Takṣaka, the king of serpents, in exactly seven days." The father was not pleased with this, for he thought the king to be a righteous man in all other respects, and that he had committed this deed out of ignorance and exhaustion; all the inhabitants of a country need to respect its

⁴ The story about King Parīkṣit and the brāhmaṇa's curse is the same one the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* begins with, and so I include it here, not so much because of its relevance to the plot, but in order to clarify the wider context. Parīkṣit is the son of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu, the only descendant of the Pāṇḍavas after the battle on Kurukṣetra, and therefore the heir to the kingdom. He was raised from the dead by Kṛṣṇa himself, after the unfortunate episode with Aśvatthāman's curse. The story of Parīkṣit, in a way, closes *Mahābhārata* into a full circle; it is both the beginning and the end.

⁵ A hermit vowed to silence.

⁶ Vows are taken very seriously in India, as a form of one's dedication to the truth. Keeping one's vows is one of the foundations of personal honor, and a measure of one's determination for adherence to the truth, as the highest principle of the world.

⁷ Yama is the Vedic deity of death, and also the personification of dharma, the universal law of righteousness, under which beings are born, and under which they find their death. That is the perspective from which Yama teaches Nāciketa in the *Kaṭhopanīṣad*.

king, the old man said, because he cares about their safety.⁸ Regardless, the brāhmaṇa's curse remained, and so the king, hearing about the event, felt great sadness, more for knowing that he had insulted a holy man under a vow, than for his imminent death. He gathered all his counselors to advise him. In spite of all the precautions that they gave and administered, the curse was realized, and in a week, the king died.

His son Janamejaya was then crowned and, hearing about his father's fate, became very angry at Takṣaka, the serpent king, whom he blamed for the entire event. He summoned the brāhmaṇas and ordered them to prepare a ceremony of serpent sacrifice, to force Takṣaka into his death. All the dignitaries gathered to witness the sacrifice, and after Janamejaya eventually spared Takṣaka's life, a great festivity was organized, on which Vyāsa ordered his disciple Vaiśampāyana to recite the great epic poem of the history of Bharatas, the *Mahābhārata*.⁹

In times of old, the Earth was blessed with all kinds of abundance, and people and animals lived on it in perfect harmony. Then, at the peak of its abundance, asuras¹⁰ started taking birth in the royal families. Thus was increased the number of violent men of power, who performed all kinds of vile deeds, until,

⁸ In Vedic India, the king, as a member of the kṣatriya caste, had a duty to protect all his subjects. It was common for the king, alone or with a company, to patrol the country and eradicate the villains who wandered in the woods. Since kṣatriyas, and especially the more powerful ones among them, which kings most certainly were, could master both ordinary and the mantric weapons, common criminals could in no way oppose them, regardless of their number. This is why righteous kings, and Parikṣit undoubtedly was such, were highly admired by their subjects, and the abundance in which they lived was not caused by the oppression of their people, but came from the voluntary gifts showered upon them by the grateful inhabitants of the land. The ancient Indian economy seems to have been based on a principle quite different from our own—in our economy, a man is initially unwilling to do something, and after he is bribed with money, he unwillingly agrees to do the work. In India, a man was initially willing to do things that are in his nature, and he was then rewarded by others, out of gratitude for his service.

⁹ This concludes the rather extensive introduction.

¹⁰ The asuras are the Vedic mythological enemies of the devas (gods, or, more correctly, demigods or angels). They are superhuman spiritual beings of significant powers, whose nature is, however, influenced mostly by fury and passions, which makes them fond of violent acts and defiance of dharma. The incarnation of asuras on earth is therefore a sign of bad news and incoming trouble of all kinds.

finally, the laments of the Earth¹¹ came to the ears of the Maker.¹² Brahmā then ordered all the devas to ease the burden of the Earth by taking birth there and waging a battle with the asuras. He gave the same order to the gandharvas¹³ and apsarasas¹⁴ as well.

The king of the devas, Indra, then took counsel of Nārāyaṇa regarding the nature of his earthly embodiment. When they agreed, Indra gave orders to the other deities, and they, one by one, took upon themselves the earthly forms, to the destruction of asuras, and to the service of all three worlds.¹⁵

At that time there lived a king of Cedis by the name of Vasu. It once happened that Vasu's wife Girikā came to the king after the completion of her monthly purification ceremonies.¹⁶ But the same day, Vasu was addressed by his ancestors,¹⁷ who asked him to kill a deer as a sacrifice to them. Respecting his ancestors, Vasu went

¹¹ The goddess Earth, Gaia.

¹² To Brahmā, the Prajāpati (forefather). The Vedic mythology holds Brahmā to be the deity responsible for the creation of our universe, but he is not the universal Creator. Brahmā is the son of Nārāyaṇa, born from the lotus that manifested from Nārāyaṇa's navel.

¹³ The variety of heavenly creatures noted primarily for their musical, and occasionally martial, skills.

¹⁴ Apsarasas are the heavenly fairies, a sort of a female counterpart to the gandharvas.

¹⁵ "The three worlds" is a term subject to various interpretations. It most often designates earth, air and heaven. The Vedic classification of the levels of existence wasn't exactly detailed; it was thought that, besides the earth, there are also heaven and hell, and that corporeal beings, according to their deeds in life, dwell after death in one of those two. If they are reborn on earth, it is most likely for a reason such as this commandment by Indra to the devas and other heavenly creatures, or because of some curse, which occasionally takes place when heavenly inhabitants happen to insult someone, who then places a curse upon them. Such misfortunes can happen even to Indra, as in that legendary episode, in which he was born as a pig.

¹⁶ During the menstrual period, women were considered to be unclean, and so they had to be ceremonially cleansed afterwards. After that, they approached their husbands in order to make love.

¹⁷ Pitṛs, or the forefathers, the spirits of the ancestors, were considered to be a sort of heavenly beings, whose position in the heavenly realms depended on the regular sacrifice by their descendants. This belief is a relic of primitive thought; in the latter stage of Indian thought, it is held that one's destiny depends solely on his deeds, and his deeds depend solely on the state of his consciousness, but since tradition is revered in India, and the Vedas are a part of tradition, reminiscences of early beliefs can be found even in the latter texts, since they are never

to a hunt, remembering his beloved Girikā on his way. Intoxicated by desire, and remembering his duties, he asked a hawk to carry his semen to his wife.¹⁸ During his flight, the other hawks thought that he had some meat, and tried to take it away from him, causing the king's semen to fall into the water. There it was swallowed by an apsaras who was cursed to take birth as a fish. Ten months or so passed, and a fisherman happened to catch a fish, and to his great wonder, two children came out of its belly, a boy and a girl. The fishermen reported it to the king, and Vasu then took the boy, who eventually became the virtuous king of the Matsya province.

Giving birth to those twins, the apsaras was freed from her curse, and her daughter, who kept a fishy scent, was given to the fishermen's king to be his daughter. The girl was given the name Satyavatī. She liked the company of fishermen and sailed a boat across the river Yamunā. A famous ṛṣi,¹⁹ Parāśara, was once passing by, and he was aroused by the sight of her. When he informed her of his intent, she was worried that the loss of her virginity would desecrate the home of her father, so the sage promised to return her virginity after making love to her, and also to grant her one wish. She wished her body to radiate the finest scent, and it came to pass immediately. The girl was greatly pleased, and embraced the sage. It thus happened that Satyavatī gave birth to the famous son of Parāśara, the wise Vyāsa. After his birth, he incinerated all his past sins with his insight, turned into a grown man, and went to the woods to practice austerities.²⁰

openly discarded, but, rather, carefully re-interpreted and avoided. This is the reason why we seldom find revolutionaries in India, but we find an abundance of "reformers," who discard the old beliefs in most ways, but still keep a formal continuity of tradition.

¹⁸ Beside the obvious mythological element, we can see the importance given to duty: it is a husband's duty to make love to his wife on a regular basis, in order to conceive children; since a woman's natural desire is to conceive, it was considered a part of the husband's protective role to ensure the wife's pregnancy and childbirth.

¹⁹ A sage.

²⁰ Austerity, or tapasya, is a common synonym for yoga, although it is sometimes used in an older meaning of self torture with purpose of appeasing some deity, probably because God would feel pity for the miserable fellow and fulfill all his desires, if that was to stop him from torturing himself—which was probably mistaken for a successful tactics.

There was a king named Pratīpa, who had a son by the name of Śantanu. Śantanu married a girl who happened to be the incarnation of Gaṅgā,²¹ but they were married under the condition that he doesn't oppose her, regardless of her actions. It happened that she drowned seven of their children in a river, and when she attempted the same with the eighth, Śantanu could no longer restrain himself, but scolded her and rescued the baby. They then parted, and the king named the child Gaṅgādatta,²² but the mother took the boy with her. One day Śantanu walked along the Gaṅgā, observing in wonder that very little water seemed to flow in the river. Walking upstream, he saw a young man barring the river flow with arrows, but failed to recognize his son, having seen him only as a newborn. Gaṅgā then showed herself to him in a vision, and spoke to him: "O king, this is the eighth son that I have given you. Take him to your home. This hero has learned the holy books with Vasiṣṭha;²³ he is skilled with all weapons, and is equal to Indra in battle. He has knowledge of all the weapons that are known to the famous and invincible Paraśurāma,²⁴ the son of Jamadagni; his aim is impeccable, and he knows all the duties of a king."

Śantanu did as Gaṅgā told him, and took his son, who was as radiant as the sunlight, with him, returning to his throne. Once the king went into the woods, and while walking along the riverbank felt a lovely scent coming from somewhere within the bush. He found its source in a lovely maid, with dark hair and the looks of a goddess, who was none other than the fisherman's daughter, and so Śantanu went straight to her father and asked for her hand in marriage. But the fisherman set a condition: he would give his daughter for the king's wife only if their son became the heir to the throne. Śantanu was unwilling to grant his request, for the

²¹ A deity of the holy river Gaṅgā. Hindu beliefs varied from personifications of natural phenomena, such as the rivers, mountains and like, to a belief that the physical aspects of existence have corresponding higher aspects, and that the physical river, for example, is but a physical body of some deity, in the same way in which the entire earth as a planet is an embodiment of some still higher deity. Such concepts of hierarchy were elaborated by Theosophy, in particular.

²² "He who is given by Gaṅgā."

²³ A known sage.

²⁴ "Axe-wielding Rāma," a brāhmaṇa who eradicated the kṣatriyas from the face of the earth twenty-one times, and is considered to be an avatāra of Viṣṇu.

kingdom was to belong to Devavrata,²⁵ but still, he was troubled by the thoughts about her beauty. One day Devarata approached his father to ask about his troubles, and he answered that he was troubled by the following concerns: Devavrata was his only son, and if something were to happen to him, what would become of the line of Bharatas? His son pondered this, and went to the old minister for counsel, where he heard about the fisherman, his daughter and his request. Devavrata immediately went to the fisherman king, who repeated his terms. Determined to please his father, Devavrata pledged a terrible vow: he would renounce his claim to the throne in favor of Satyavatī's child, and furthermore, take a vow of celibacy. He thus claimed a bride for his father, and won great fame among the gods, who called him Bhīṣma.²⁶ King Śantanu then blessed his son: "As long as you desire life, death will not claim you. It will approach you only after being given your permission."

Satyavatī gave the king two sons, and Śantanu died before his second son reached maturity. Unfortunately, both Śantanu's sons died early and without offspring, and the kingdom was thus left without an heir. Satyavatī offered a solution; Bhīṣma should marry his brother's wives and rule the state, thus providing the kingdom with an heir. He refused, reminding her of his vows. Embarrassed by his virtue, she told him that in her youth, she bore a son Dvāpāyana to the sage Parāśara, a son who was a renowned sage, and who doubtlessly, if asked, would provide his brother's widows with children.

And indeed Vyāsa agreed, but only if the women were to keep the vows prescribed by him for a whole year, for there is no woman in the world that could approach him without austere penance.²⁷ Satyavatī was opposed to that idea: how was the kingdom to go on without the ruler? The widows must immediately conceive. Vyāsa answered: "If I must, in such ill circumstances and timing, provide my brother with descendants, then let the

²⁵ Gaṅgādatta's other name.

²⁶ "Fierce," for fierce is the one who takes such vows and keeps them.

²⁷ It is most likely some sort of a yogic purification technique. Vyāsa is a sage of immensely pure consciousness and great power, and it is possible that his physical body was charged with great energy, which could indeed harm an ordinary woman who would engage in sexual intercourse with him. This is the reason why Vyāsa prescribed cleansing to the widows.

princesses suffer my ugliness. This will be the greatest of penances.²⁸ If they can live with my foul breath, austere and ugly face, clothes and body, they will conceive by me and give birth to beautiful children. Let the princess of Kosala wait for me dressed in clean garments and jewelry, and I will visit her in her bedroom.” Saying that, the ṛṣi vanished.

After difficult persuasion, Satyavatī convinced Ambikā to uphold her duty. Seeing Vyāsa’s revolting form, she shut her eyes in terror, not opening them during intercourse. For this reason, Vyāsa later proclaimed, the son Dhṛtarāṣṭra would be perfect, but blind, because of her fault. Since the king must not have a physical flaw, Vyāsa agreed to meet the other widow Ambālikā, who grew pale in horror, and the child would thus be of white complexion, and called Pāṇḍu.²⁹ Hearing about that, Satyavatī started begging Vyāsa to provide them with another manchild, to which he agreed, but Ambikā, remembering the sage’s terrible sight, sent her maid, whose behavior greatly pleased Vyāsa—the minute she saw him she started to serve him, and when he called, she came to him. She would give birth to the son Vidura, Vyāsa foresaw, who would be the champion among the wise and the virtuous, and it would be the god of justice,³⁰ whom a curse forced to take birth on earth.

Pāṇḍu was crowned a king because Dhṛtarāṣṭra, although older, could not accept the duty due to his blindness, and Vidura was born by a woman of ignoble birth. So the younger Pāṇḍu became the king.

Bhīṣma won Dhṛtarāṣṭra a bride by the name of Gāndhārī, who, seeing her husband was blind, wrapped her eyes with a fold, out of love and compassion for him.

Śūra, a noble Yādava, who was the father of Vasudeva,³¹ also had a daughter by the name of Kuntī, or Pṛthā, unequalled in beauty. Śūra’s nephew, Kuntibhoja, had no descendants, and so Śūra gave

²⁸ The test of ugliness had two effects: if the ugliness repelled the girls, their energetic system would not join with Vyāsa’s immensely powerful energy during intercourse, and they would remain unharmed. If, however, they saw through the ugliness, it would mean that they had surpassed the impurities of their souls and attachments to the lower things such as physical appearance, and they would be able to endure Vyāsa’s inner purity and the power that goes with it.

²⁹ “The pale-skinned”; the father of the five Pāṇḍavas.

³⁰ Yama, or Dharma.

³¹ Vasudeva is Kṛṣṇa’s father.

him his eldest daughter, as they agreed before. In her stepfather's home, Kuntī had the duty of taking care of the brāhmaṇas and other guests, and her care won her the love of a sage by the name of Durvāsas, who taught her a mantra by which she could call upon any god to give her a child. He did so with foreknowledge of her future troubles.

Being a curious girl, she could not resist the temptation, and she invited the god Sūrya.³² The very moment she spoke the mantra, the deity appeared and said: "Here I come, dark-eyed girl. Tell me, what can I do for you?" Kuntī said: "O destroyer of your enemies, a brāhmaṇa gave me this mantra as a gift, and I, o lord, called you merely to test its effectiveness. I bow before your mercy and beg your forgiveness of my insult. A woman should always be forgiven, regardless of the insult." Sūrya replied that he knew about the mantra, but that the mantra was not to be spent in vain, and she must conceive with him. "But do not be frightened, embrace me instead," said the sun god, and so it happened that Kuntī conceived and gave birth to a son. This was the origin of the famous hero by the name of Vasuṣeṇa, born with earrings and divine armor, bright as the sun, shining and beautiful as his father. Sūrya then gave Kuntī her virginity back, and returned to his heavenly realm.

The princess of Vṛṣṇis³³ looked upon her newborn son, not knowing what to do with him. Fearing her relatives, she decided to hide this evidence of her carelessness, and so she threw her strong son into the water. The well known Adhiratha, husband of Rādhā, a sūta³⁴ by caste, found the baby, and he and his wife raised him as their own, giving him the name Vasuṣeṇa. The boy was gifted with great strength, and when he grew, he developed skills with various weaponry.

The mighty Vasuṣeṇa used to worship the Sun standing eastward till the Sun shone behind him. During those devoted prayers, there was nothing in heaven or earth that the heroic and sharp-minded Vasuṣeṇa would fail to give the brāhmaṇas, if they asked him. It once happened that lord Indra, knowing that, took the

³² Sūrya is the sun god.

³³ Vṛṣṇis are one of the Yādava tribes, the one in which Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī were born.

³⁴ Sūtas are a caste of chariot drivers.

form of a brāhmaṇa, came to Vasuṣeṇa, and asked for his natural armor. Vasuṣeṇa cut the armor from himself and gave it to him. The ruler of heavens was pleased with him beyond measure, and gave him a spear that could kill any opponent, be he deva, asura, rākṣasa³⁵ or any other being, but which could kill only one opponent. And thus was Vasuṣeṇa given the name Karṇa, because he cut his natural armor from himself.

When the time came for Kuntī to choose her groom, Kuntibhoja arranged a svayaṃvara,³⁶ to which he invited the kings from around the neighborhood. Among the noble guests, her eye fell upon the mighty Pāṇḍu, who excelled among all others, and she took him for her husband. Bhīṣma won another bride for Pāṇḍu, Mādri, the daughter of the people of Madra, who was famous for her beauty. And thus was the wedding of Pāṇḍu celebrated.

At that time, Gāndhārī gave birth to one hundred sons, by a very strange line of events. When she, at one time, served the great Vyāsa with much care and respect, he blessed her with the ability to bear one hundred sons, of whom none would fall short of his father. When she conceived, Gāndhārī carried great weight in her womb for two years, unable to give birth. When she heard a rumor that Kuntī gave birth to a son bright as the sun, she went insane with impatience, and hit her own belly with full strength. She immediately gave birth to a hard ball of meat, looking like a large iron cannonball, which grew within her for two whole years. She intended to throw it away, but then Dvaipāyana appeared before her, his spiritual powers telling him of the events. “What have you done?” he asked, and she revealed the whole truth to him, about the news of Kuntī’s birth, about Vyāsa’s promise to her, of bearing one hundred sons, and about how she, alas, gave birth to this ball. Thus spoke Vyāsa: “O Gāndhārī, what I have said, will undoubtedly come to pass. I never uttered an untruth, not even in jest. Let the 101 jar filled with buffalo butter be brought here in great haste. When they are brought, sprinkle this ball with cold water.” As he said, so it was arranged. When the ball was sprinkled with cold water, it slowly dissolved into 101 piece, each

³⁵ Rākṣasas are a lower kind of demons: aggressive, bad tempered, bloodthirsty and violent.

³⁶ A festivity in which a bride chooses her groom, in the form of a tournament in which the candidates display their skills with arms.

the size of a thumb. Each of those pieces was placed in its separate jar of buffalo butter, all in a desolate location under guard. The holy man then told Gāndhārī that she was allowed to open them only after two full years. Thus arranging all and providing them with advice, the holy sage went into Himalaya to attend to the feats of austerity.

At the proper time, from the piece of meat placed into a jar, a child was born, the prince Duryodhana. The prince Yudhiṣṭhira had precedence, the firstborn of the princess Kuntī, and on the day of Duryodhana's birth she, too, gave birth to another son, named Bhīma, who was enormously strong, with powerful muscles.

When Duryodhana was born, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra called for Bhīṣma and Vidura, and all other Kurus, well meaning folks and brāhmaṇas and told them: "The prince Yudhiṣṭhira is the oldest, and he is the heir to the throne. By the favor of his birth, he won the kingdom to himself. But could this son of mine, who was born after him, also become a king? Could this also be? Tell me what righteousness dictates."

At the moment these words were uttered, jackals and all other predators howled ominously. Listening to those signs of incoming doom, the brāhmaṇas and the wise Vidura said thus: "Hear, o king, the strongest of men. Signs of doom appeared at your son's birth, and there is no doubt that he will become a bane of your nation. The future of us all depends on whether we discard him or not. If we keep him, we will bring misfortune upon us, and if you renounce him, o king, you will still have ninety-nine more sons left. It is said that one man should be renounced for the sake of a family, that a family should be renounced for the sake of a village, that a village should be renounced for the sake of the state, and that the whole earth should be renounced for the sake of one's soul."

Vidura and the brāhmaṇas thus explained the matter, but out of love for his son, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was unwilling to heed their counsel. During the following month, all the other Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons and one daughter were born, and a woman who served Dhṛtarāṣṭra, from the vaiśya caste, gave birth to his son called Yuyutsu, who had a profound mind, and this happened while Gāndhārī was still pregnant.

At one time Pāṇḍu was hunting deers in the woods, and he shot one engaged in mating with his female; and those were not a

deer and his female, but a son of a ṛṣi and his wife, preoccupied with play in the deer form. Ṛṣi cursed him, not for the murder of a brāhmaṇa, for the king could not know him as such, but for interrupting him in the act of lovemaking, and the curse was that he and the woman he mated with would immediately visit Yama in his kingdom. Ṛṣi then died, and Pāṇḍu remained in his grief.

After that unfortunate event, Pāṇḍu asked his wife Kuntī to conceive with his better or equal, since he could not give her a child. Kuntī then told him about the mantra which can be used to give her a child by any deity, and he advised her to conceive with Dharma, wanting a righteous and virtuous son. At the favorable time, she gave birth to the virtuous Yudhiṣṭhira. At the moment of the child's birth, a bodiless sound was heard: "This child will, beyond doubt, be a prince among those who bring justice, the first among those who live in virtue! The first son of Pāṇḍu will be called Yudhiṣṭhira. He will be a king of a great realm, famous in all three worlds, abundant in fame, glory and proper behavior."

Being blessed with a son full of virtues, Pāṇḍu wished that Kuntī would give birth to another, blessed with great strength. She obeyed her husband and called Vāyu,³⁷ who gave her son of a strong body, Bhīma, and at his birth they again heard a supernatural voice saying: "This child will be the strongest among all men of strength!"

Pandu then took the counsel of brāhmaṇas and asked Kuntī to take the special vows for one year. Kuntī did as he asked her and, after one year, Pāṇḍu told her: "O fair lady, with your austerities you have greatly pleased Indra, the king of heavens, so call him now and conceive another son." She did as she was told and invoked Indra, the heavenly ruler, with her mantra. He gave her a boy whom they called Arjuna. At the time of the prince's birth, a voice like a thunderstorm sounded from the clear skies and proclaimed: "O Kuntī, this child of yours will have the strength of Kārtavīrya and Śibi,³⁸ invincible will he be in battle, like Indra himself. He will make your name famous across the world, and master divine weapons of many kinds."

³⁷ A god of air and wind.

³⁸ Famous kings. Kārtavīrya was a king who surpassed all other kings with generosity and self-sacrifice, which earned him a thousand arms and a golden chariot. Śibi was also a king famous for his generosity and selflessness. There is a

When Pāṇḍu was given sons by Kuntī, at one time his other bride, Mādrī, came to him to tell him in confidence: “My grief is great, o king! Although I am equal with Kuntī, my husband will have offspring only by her. If Kuntī can help me to give you a son, she will do me great good, and also give you children.” And so it happened that Kuntī taught Mādrī the use of the mantra, and she called the two Aśvins, and conceived by them two sons, the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, at whose birth the bodiless voice announced: “These two will surpass other men in beauty, clarity of mind and virtue. They will glow with magnificent shine, beauty, abundance and handsomeness.”

Thus Pāṇḍu got five sons, all conceived by gods, and blessed with great strength, who lived to attain great glory and to widely spread the fame of the name of Kuru. Their virtue increased as they grew up, and the famous sages who lived on that snowy mountain looked upon them with admiration. The five sons of Pāṇḍu and the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the magnifier of the tribe, grew quickly like lotuses on a lake.

Then it happened that Pāṇḍu felt great desire for his young wife Mādrī, lost his senses and desired to mate with her, and thus died instantaneously. Mādrī, crushed with grief, left her sons in Kuntī’s care, and joined her husband in the burial flames.

As the children grew, the sons of Pāṇḍu bettered the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in everything, especially Bhīma, who also used to torment Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons, but more out of immaturity than malice. This conceived hatred in the heart of Duryodhana, and he planned to kill Pāṇḍavas ever since.

The king saw how the Kurus were growing up without education and proper upbringing, and how they were wasting their time, and so he chose Kṛpa to be their teacher.

At the spring of Gaṅgā, there lived a famous sage by the name of Bharadvāja. One day he saw a beautiful fairy named Ghṛtācī walking along the banks of the river, and at that time the wind blew and opened her skirt. The hermit was so excited at the sight, that he dropped his semen into a jar. The wise Droṇa happened to be born therefrom.

famous tale which tells how he saved a dove from a hawk, giving the hawk a piece of his own flesh as a reward. It turned out that the dove was Agni and the hawk was Indra, and that this deed earned Śibi great fame among the gods.

Bharadvāja had a friend, King Pṛṣata, whose son Drupada used to come to Bharadvāja's desolate home to play and learn with young Droṇa. Soon they became friends. After King Pṛṣata's death, his son Drupada sat at his throne. Around that time, the famous Bharadvāja died as well. Droṇa wanted a child himself, so he took Śaradvat's daughter Kṛpī³⁹ to be his wife. She gave him a son, whom they called Aśvatthāman.

Around that time, word came to Droṇa about the famous King Jāmadagnya, who planned to give away all his treasure to the brāhmaṇas, and he was immediately on his way to the Mahendra mountains. Coming before Rāma, he bowed to the earth before his feet and, seeing that the king was about to head for the woods, Droṇa said to him: "I am the descendant of Bharadvāja, but I came not from the womb. I am a brāhmaṇa of high birth and my name is Droṇa. I am here for your treasure."

The king saluted him and said: "All the treasures and gold that was mine I gave away to the brāhmaṇas. I still have only my body and precious weapons of all kinds. I am ready to give you either. Tell me, which of those two will you have?"

Droṇa answered: "O son of Bhṛgu, it is appropriate for you to give me all your weapons, and to teach me the secrets of their use in battle!" And so, the king passed the entire lore of weapons unto him, with all the rules and secrets, and Droṇa cherished his abundant gifts. With joy in his heart, he then went to visit his friend Drupada.

Unfortunately, the king's heart was poisoned by the arrogance of his wealth and position, and so he despised Droṇa and said: "How dare you, o brāhmaṇa, address me as your friend? How can a crowned king be friends with a wandering beggar? As children we were friends, but time destroys all, and so our friendship, too, has worn out. Can a rich man associate with the poor, an ignorant man with a man of knowledge, a coward with a hero? Friendship can exist only between peers."

Droṇa turned away and left Drupada's court, with flames of anger consuming his heart. He stopped for a moment to consider his course of actions, and then went to Hāstinapura, the throne of the Kurus. He desired revenge against the king of the Pañcālas for his rudeness. He found a new home with Kṛpa, the brother of

³⁹ The sister of Kṛpa, the military instructor of the Kurus.

his wife Kṛpī, who was the teacher of the Kurus. There he demonstrated such mastery of weapons that Bhīṣma came to greet him with interest. Droṇa then told him his tale. He was extremely poor. He hardly had the means to feed his son Aśvatthāman, who didn't have milk to drink for years. Thus troubled with poverty, he vowed never again to live such a life. He then explained how his childhood friend had treated him. "O Bhīṣma, Drupada inflicted a grave insult upon me, and in my anger I came to my cousin Kṛpa to find smart and obedient students to teach."

Bhīṣma listened to him and said: "Aim your bow, o brāhmaṇa, and make the Kuru princes the masters of the lore of weapons. Be certain that all the desires of your heart will be fulfilled." And so Droṇa, the first among the archers, gladly accepted the sons of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra as his students.

Arjuna had a great love for weapons and arts of war, and so he spent much time with his teacher. He surpassed all others in skill, strength of muscles and perseverance. Indeed, although the teacher's instructions were the same for all, Arjuna's skills raised him above all his companions. And so, Droṇa made Arjuna into a champion among archers. And Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons now hated them even more: Bhīma for his huge strength, and Arjuna for his virtue and success.⁴⁰

When the Kurus attained mastery in the skills of war, Droṇa thought that this might be the right time for him to ask for a reward for his efforts. He called all his graduates and told them: "Capture in battle Drupada, the king of Pañcālas, and bring him before me. This will be my greatest reward." The young warriors rushed in haste, following Karṇa and Duryodhana. Arjuna told his teacher: "We will attack only after the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra have shown their abilities. None of them will be able to capture the king of Pañcālas in the field of battle." Indeed, King Drupada raged in battle like a wheel of fire, besting Duryodhana and Vikarṇa, and even the mighty Karṇa and other brave princes, thus quenching their thirst for battle. The Pāṇḍavas heard the lamentations of the broken army, paid Droṇa their respects and climbed

⁴⁰ Here we can see a mentality of hatred and envy, which lies in the foundations of the great conflict on Kurukṣetra. The virtuous ones admire one's success and virtue, and are pleased with the well-being of others, while the sinners feel envy and hatred when others prosper. Such demonic mentality results in all sorts of sin.

into their chariots. Bhīma chased the elephants and chariots of Drupada's army with his mace, like a shepherd driving his flocks, and Arjuna started hacking Drupada's bow, carriage and horses with his arrows. Perfectly fearless, he boarded Drupada's chariot with a sabre and captured him, and the army of the Pañcālas ran away in terror. The princes then went after the Pañcālas in pursuit, but Arjuna told them: "This Drupada is a cousin of the Kurus, and is the best among the kings. So, o Bhīma, do not kill his soldiers. We are here only to give our teacher his reward."⁴¹

Capturing in the battlefield Drupada, together with all his friends and ministers, the princes brought them all to Droṇa. He reminded Drupada of his inappropriate manners, and returned him half his kingdom, keeping the other half—for friendship is possible only between the peers. Drupada thanked him, and went away in humiliation. There was no hope for him to avenge his defeat, by either force, or the strength of spirit, and his only hope was to have a son who would be the weapon of his revenge. In that mood, he asked the brāhmaṇas to help him make a sacrificial ceremony, from which he would get a son who would be able to defeat master Droṇa. Indeed, from the sacrificial flame there came a young man and a young woman, Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī.⁴²

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra chose Yudhiṣṭhira to rule the land, and the people were on Yudhiṣṭhira's side as well. Duryodhana, together with other corrupt advisers, then started to poison the mind of the blind king, advising him to send the Pāṇḍavas away and to put Duryodhana on the throne. Dhṛtarāṣṭra eventually yielded and agreed, and sent the Pāṇḍavas to a remote province of Vāraṇāvata. The vicious Duryodhana was greatly pleased, and arranged a palace to be built there from very inflammable materials, which he would put to flames at an appropriate moment—with Pāṇḍavas in it, of course. The Pāṇḍavas, however, felt the peril and avoided it in time, but then it became apparent that Duryodhana was a serious threat. And so, hoping to come up

⁴¹ We can see that Arjuna, although a great warrior, has no desire for senseless killing; also, amidst the battle he maintains the objectivity in judgment of others' value, and where someone else would want to humiliate a defeated opponent, he treats him with respect. This is where Arjuna's innate greatness shows.

⁴² They are also known as Yājñasena and Yājñaseni, "they who are born from the sacrificial flame." Draupadī is also known by the name of Kṛṣṇā, for her complexion was dark.

with a plan, they all dressed up as beggars, and wandered throughout the woods, together with their mother Kuntī. It happened that King Drupada held svayaṃvara for his daughter Draupadī at that very time, and the Pāṇḍavas won her for themselves. By a strange course of events, Draupadī was to be the wife to all five of them.⁴³ Since their identity was revealed, they were approached by Kṛṣṇa and his brother Balarāma,⁴⁴ who gave them their blessing and continued their journey. King Drupada called for the five men who were still dressed up as brāhmaṇas, in order to arrange the wedding, and when he found out that those men were in fact the Pāṇḍavas in disguise, there was no end to his joy.

The news of the Pāṇḍavas surviving the attempted assassination and joining with a respectable family reached Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Duryodhana, Karṇa and Dhṛtarāṣṭra assembled in council to determine the appropriate course of action, so that the Pāṇḍavas would not inherit the kingdom, and their line be destroyed. Duryodhana recommended trying to incite a dissent among the Pāṇḍavas; Karṇa advised immediate military attack, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra nodded in approval. Bhīṣma opposed them all: “I could never approve any form of discord with the Pāṇḍavas. As much as you, Duryodhana, demand a right to the throne, so do the Pāṇḍavas have the right to succeed their father. If the famous sons of Pāṇḍu are disowned of the kingdom, how could you, or any other descendant of the Bharatas, ever hope to inherit it? If you think your claim to the kingdom is valid, then it is my opinion that they are entitled to claim it as well, and their claim is older. So give them half of the land in peace.” Droṇa agreed with Bhīṣma, and advised the king to invite the Pāṇḍavas back to Hāstinapura. Vidura added: “The rumors of the Pāṇḍavas being invincible are quite true. Those who have Baladeva for an ally, Kṛṣṇa for an adviser, and Sātyaki⁴⁵ for an assistant, will best anybody in war. Remember that, o king, and keep in mind that their claim to the throne is older, and treat them as virtue demands. Know that where there is Kṛṣṇa, there are the Pāṇḍavas, and where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is victory!

⁴³ This situation was indeed unusual, but soon accepted.

⁴⁴ Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma appear in the story for the first time here, although they have been friends with the Pāṇḍavas for a long time, since childhood, especially Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, who were both famous as great warriors, admiring each other greatly.

⁴⁵ Kṛṣṇa’s chariot driver.

Duryodhana, Karṇa and Śakuni, the son of Subala, have embraced wrongness and lost their minds. They are behaving like children, so do not heed their advice!”

Dhṛtarāṣṭra took those words to heart and declared his will: he would send the Pāṇḍavas to Khāṇḍavaprastha and give them half of the kingdom to rule, albeit unclaimed wasteland. The heroes agreed, saluted the king, and set on their way to Khāṇḍavaprastha. With Kṛṣṇa leading them, the heroes arrived there and made the place immensely beautiful, and then, with Dvaipāyana’s help, they selected and measured a favorable area, sanctified it with correct rituals and started to build a capital city on that spot. They surrounded the place with a trench wide as the sea, and walls that scraped the sky, white as the fluffy clouds. It was decorated with palaces with many gates, all adorned with the two plates in likeness of the wings of Garuḍa.⁴⁶ It was closed by the gates tall as the Mandara mountains, with streets wide and well built, so that there was no fear of an accident. With its numerous buildings of great beauty, the city resembled Amarāvātī,⁴⁷ and was therefore called Indraprastha.⁴⁸ It resembled a great cloud, decorated with brilliant lightning. On a beautiful spot of good omen, the Pāṇḍavas erected a castle, filled with all kinds of treasures, resembling the palace of the heavenly treasurer Kubera.⁴⁹ The city was inhabited by many brāhmaṇas, knowers of the Vedas, as well as many other noble inhabitants. The joy of the Pāṇḍavas increased day by day, for they saw that they lived in a great kingdom of pious inhabitants.

The Pāṇḍavas made an agreement between themselves, that if one of them were to watch the other while he was with Draupadī, he would go to the forest, and live in celibacy for twelve years. It once happened that robbers drove away a brāhmaṇa’s cattle, and Yudhiṣṭhira was at that time with Draupadī in the weapons hall. Thinking about dharma, Arjuna went in to get his weapons, told Yudhiṣṭhira everything, came out with joy in his heart and went

⁴⁶ Garuḍa is the eagle mounted by Viṣṇu, his bearer, as the bull Nandi who is the mount of Śiva.

⁴⁷ The heavenly city of Indra.

⁴⁸ It means “Indra’s plain.” This city is thought to have been located in the area of today’s Delhi.

⁴⁹ Kubera is the ugly midget son of Viśravas, the guardian of the treasure on the northern mountain of Meru or Kailāsa. In Hindu mythology, his treasure and abundance are synonymous with infinite wealth.

after the robbers. Upon his return, he asked Yudhiṣṭhira's permission to fulfill the vow, having broken their agreement. Yudhiṣṭhira was saddened but agreed, and so Arjuna went away to spend twelve years in the forest, living the life of a pilgrim. He visited all the sacred places, finally reaching the shores of the western ocean, at the holy place called Prabhāsa. The news of that came to Kṛṣṇa, who came to visit his friend. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna hugged each other, asking about each other's heroic health, and sat down to talk.

A great festivity soon started on the Raivataka mountain, celebrated by the Vṛṣṇis, Bhojas and Andhakas,⁵⁰ and the two of them went there to observe. While they were wandering around, they happened to see the beautiful daughter of Vasudeva, Bhadrā,⁵¹ the sister of Kṛṣṇa, surrounded by her friends, adorned with jewels, and the moment Arjuna set his eyes on her, the god of love took hold of his heart. The mighty Kṛṣṇa saw how Arjuna beheld Bhadrā, emerged in his thoughts, and said unto him: "How can that be? How can the god of love subdue the heart of a forest dweller? Blessed be; her name is Bhadrā, and she is the dearest daughter of my father. If she is dear to your heart, then tell me, and I will speak with father." Arjuna responded: "How could one not be charmed by her beauty? Tell me, o Janārdana, is there a way for her to be mine?" Vāsudeva advised him to kidnap her, as was the custom among the kṣatriyas, and the wedding was soon arranged. Subhadrā gave Arjuna the beautiful son Abhimanyu, who soon excelled in knowledge of the Vedas, and who learned from his father the entire lore of weapons, both human and divine. As Indra beheld Arjuna, so did Arjuna behold Abhimanyu, his heart overwhelmed with joy. The days passed, and Arjuna once told Kṛṣṇa: "O Kṛṣṇa, it's summertime. Let us go to the shores of Yamunā, to have fun with our friends there." And so Pārtha and Govinda⁵² said farewell to Yudhiṣṭhira, and left in the company of their friends.

While they were sitting in some lovely place, they encountered Agni in form of a brāhmaṇa, strong as the śāla tree, leaving trails

⁵⁰ The various branches of the Yādava tribe.

⁵¹ Also known as Subhadrā. She was secretly in love with Arjuna and dreamt of being his wife.

⁵² Pārtha means "the son of Pṛthā," Arjuna, and Govinda means "he who rescues the cows," which is the name of Kṛṣṇa.

resembling molten gold. When they saw him, they stood up, and he addressed them: “You are the greatest heroes on earth, and I am a voracious brāhmaṇa, whose meals are plentiful. Give me abundance of food, and you will please me greatly.” For food he desired the Khāṇḍava forest, which was abundant with all kinds of evil creatures, but under the protection of Indra, so he was unable to devour it. The Khāṇḍava forest was always a refuge for those who opposed the devas, and now it again became home to numerous creatures. When Arjuna heard that Agni intended to devour the Khāṇḍava forest, which was guarded by Indra, he answered: “Exalted one, I have no bow that could endure the strength of my muscles and my rage in battle. The swiftness of my hands is in need of many arrows, and my chariot will hardly endure the weight of the many arrows that I need. Kṛṣṇa himself has no weapon worthy of his might, with which he could slay the nāgas and the piśācas.⁵³ O Pāvaka,⁵⁴ we are willing to do whatever courage and skill can achieve, and it is up to you to provide us with the proper instruments.”

Agni then called Varuṇa, the lord of waters, and told him: “Give me, as soon as possible, the bow and the pouches you got from the King Soma,⁵⁵ and also this chariot with the image of a monkey on the flag. Arjuna, with the Gāṇḍīva bow, and Kṛṣṇa, with the disc⁵⁶ are about to achieve a great victory.⁵⁷ So give them, for my sake!”

And so it happened that Arjuna received this jewel among the bows, which had enormous strength, and Varuṇa gave him also two inexhaustible pouches and a chariot equipped with heavenly weapons, decorated with a flag bearing an image of a great ape. The teamed horses were white as silver, or woolly clouds, and fast as the wind or thought. This chariot was made after profound consideration by Viśvakarman,⁵⁸ the builder of the universe. It looked like a cloud in the sunset. Agni gave Kṛṣṇa the

⁵³ Nāgas are a tribe of snakes, or cobras, and piśācas are a tribe of vile demons, worse even than the rākṣasas.

⁵⁴ “The Purifier,” an attribute of Agni.

⁵⁵ Soma is the god of the sacrificial drink, used in the Vedic rituals. He is also the ruler of all the liquids and plants.

⁵⁶ The Sudarśana cakṛa.

⁵⁷ Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are here equipped with weapons and chariots in which they will enter the battle on Kurukṣetra, and in which they are usually depicted.

⁵⁸ “He whose doing is all,” one of the attributes of the Creator, Brahmā.

disc, which had an opening in the centre and an axis within. It was a terrible weapon that soon became his favourite.

Pāvaka then told Kṛṣṇa: “This weapon will make you superior to both men and the devas in battle. O Mādhava, when you throw it at your enemies in battle, it will slay them, and none will be able to resist it; then it will return into your hands.”

Agni then burst into flames on Arjuna’s word, and started to devour the Khāṇḍava forest, encircling it with his seven flames, rising into his all-consuming form, as if it were the end of yuga.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the princes among the kṣatriyas stood at the opposite sides of the forest, riding on their chariots, and started a slaughter of all living beings that dwelt there. As the forest burned, thousands of living things ran in terror, making horrifying sounds. Lakes and ponds boiled, killing all the fish and turtles. Pierced by Arjuna’s arrows, the birds, screaming, fell into the burning trees. The mighty flames of the brilliant pyre reached the very sky, scaring the gods themselves.

Indra soon amassed clouds of all kinds, covering the skies, and released a heavy rain onto the burning woods. But the showering rain never reached the pyre, as it was consumed by the heat of the flames while it was still high above the ground. Indra then became angry at Agni, and gathered huge clouds in order to make a real flood. This clash of fire and water, which was terrible to behold, was covered by a storm of flames that mixed with smoke and lightning.

At that moment, the son of Pāṇḍu called upon assorted heavenly weapons, using them to dispel the rain of Indra. The sky above the jungle was covered with Arjuna’s arrows, and no living being could escape them. The ruler of gods then wished to confront his son in battle, and so he covered the fierce Arjuna with his weapons, filling the skies with the fruits of his rage. The raging winds disturbed all the oceans, driving huge groups of stormy clouds that poured down thunder and lightning, bringing havoc upon the earth. The well trained Arjuna then invoked the proper mantras, sending his excellent weapon called Vāyavya,⁶⁰ and it nullified the force of Indra’s thunders, dried out the flood, silenced the rain, and dispelled the lightning.

⁵⁹ Yuga is the age of the world.

⁶⁰ Vāyu’s, or “of the wind,” the weapon of the air element.

Numerous birds of Garuḍa's tribe descended proudly from the upper skies, intending to assault Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna with their thundering wings, beaks and claws. Countless snakes, whose faces spat fire, came from the heights, constantly producing poison. Arjuna shredded them all, with arrows that bore the power of his anger. A countless number of asuras, gandharvas, yakṣas, rākṣasas and nāgas gathered there, all of them thirsting for battle, roaring with terrible screams. In their raised hands they held weapons made of iron, as well as discs, stones and all other sorts of projectiles, and they all came to the battlefield to duel with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. Although he was showered with an impenetrable multitude of weapons of all kinds, Arjuna kept cutting their heads off with his sharp arrows. The mighty Kṛṣṇa, slayer of the villains, made a terrible slaughter in the armies of Daityas and Dānavas.

The two fearless and invincible heroes then saw that Indra, together with all the gods, was preparing for the battle, and so they stood calmly to meet them, with bows in their hands. The two lords of the battlefield furiously assaulted the approaching army, covering it with their thundering arrows. Only after their lines had been repeatedly broken by Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna did the heavenly gods leave the battlefield, seeking the refuge of Indra.

Having witnessed the fearlessness of the two heroes, Indra wanted to best his son in battle at all costs, but then a voice spoke from the sky, bodiless, deep and strong: "Vāsava,⁶¹ nobody can best Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in battle, for they are Nara and Nārāyaṇa, famous in heavens since ancient times! The destruction of Khāṇḍava was destined!" The ruler of gods saw the truth in those words and returned to the heavens, renouncing his anger and jealousy.⁶²

Kṛṣṇa noticed that an asura was saving his life by fleeing from the flaming abode of Takṣaka, and he lifted his disc to strike at him, but at that moment the asura shouted: "Come over here, o Arjuna, and save me!" Hearing his frightened voice, Arjuna answered: "Fear not!" and since the merciful son of Pṛthā told the

⁶¹ Vāsava is the leader of the eight vasus, Indra.

⁶² Here we have a nice example of self control: as much as he allowed anger and jealousy to guide his actions, Indra's discriminative intellect has complete control over them, and he can simply turn them off if he deems it necessary; he can reject them as obsolete. A person without self control does the opposite: instead of renouncing anger and jealousy, he will rather renounce sanity and reason, thus falling into sinful behavior.

asura not to fear, Kṛṣṇa withheld his blow, and Agni no longer wanted to devour him. And so it happened that the wise Agni incinerated the forest in fifteen days, defended from the rage of Indra by Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.⁶³

And so, with the help of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, the famous god grew in strength, forceful and bright, and devoured the Khāṇḍava forest for the benefit of the entire world. Purandara,⁶⁴ in the company of the maruts,⁶⁵ then descended from the skies and told Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa: “You have accomplished a feat that was beyond the powers of the heavenly gods themselves!”⁶⁶

⁶³ This event is relevant to the later storyline for several reasons. First among them is to show the origin of the weapons that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are to use in the later battles. The second is to portray them as great warriors—which is especially important in the case of Kṛṣṇa, since his aspect of a great warrior is greatly ignored, often to a quite ridiculous extent.

⁶⁴ Indra.

⁶⁵ The stormy companions of Indra.

⁶⁶ Thus ends the Ādiparvan, the first book of *Mahābhārata*, given here in great detail, since it contains a great deal of information necessary to understand the background of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

2. The Book of the Assembly Hall (Sabhāparvan)

Maya the Dānava then paid Arjuna his respects, folded his hands, and told him: “O son of Kuntī, you saved me from Kṛṣṇa’s rage, and from the fire that almost consumed me. Tell me, is there anything I can do for you? I am a famous artist, Viśvakarman among the Dānavas, o son of Pāṇḍu, and I really wish to do you some service.”

Since Arjuna declined to ask anything from him, yet the asura was persistent in his wish to do something out of gratitude, after a moment of thought Kṛṣṇa asked him to help the righteous King Yudhiṣṭhira: “Build a residential palace, that will remain unmatched by any building in the world of men. Build, o Maya, a building that will display the art of devas, asuras and men.”

This request pleased Maya greatly, and indeed, he soon built a palace beyond comparison. Adorned with priceless objects and jewels, beautifully built, it roused the envy of all the kings in the area.

And that was especially the case with the corrupt Duryodhana.

King Duryodhana saw the fabulous wealth of the Pāṇḍavas, and was struck by bitterness, and his heart leaned toward sin as he was on his way back to Hāstinapura, troubled by all the things he had seen. The son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra was so preoccupied with his thoughts that he said nothing to answer the son of Subala, who had addressed him several times. Seeing him so immersed in thought, Śakuni asked him: “O Duryodhana, why do you sigh so heavily?”

Duryodhana answered: “My uncle, I saw the entire land under the rule of Yudhiṣṭhira, subdued by Arjuna’s weapons. I also witnessed sacrificial ceremony⁶⁷ of the son of Kuntī, which resembled Indra’s sacrifice, and now I am troubled by jealousy, night and day. I am drying out like a shallow pond in the broiling heat of the summer. I will throw myself into fire, or drown myself in water. My life is finished!”

Śakuni then told him: “O Duryodhana, you should not be jealous of Yudhiṣṭhira. The sons of Pāṇḍu are enjoying the gifts of their good fortune. Only by good fortune did they escape all your tricks and treacheries. They have received, o king, their part of the kingdom, and all that they have achieved, they achieved by

⁶⁷ The rājasūya ceremony, the anointment of an emperor.

their own effort. They are great warriors, who shoot from large bows, and battle brings them great joy. But I do know a way to defeat Yudhiṣṭhira: the son of Kuntī likes to gamble. He lacks gambling skills, and were he invited to gamble, he would hardly be able to resist the challenge. I am a skillful gambler, unmatched in all three worlds. Therefore, o son of Kuru, invite him to gamble. In your name, I will win all of his great wealth. Only, o Duryodhana, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra must know about that. If your father commands me, I will win, in gamble, all of Yudhisthira's possessions. Have no doubt in me.”

Under the influence of the deceitful Śakuni and the evil Duryodhana, the wavering King Dhṛtarāṣṭra agreed, and ordered a palace to be built, with a hundred doors and a thousand pillars, in which a gambling festivity was to take place.⁶⁸

And so it happened that Śakuni and Yudhiṣṭhira started gambling. Śakuni kept cheating, while Yudhiṣṭhira kept losing. As the stakes grew, Yudhiṣṭhira was cheated in gamble not only of gold and jewels, but also from his palace, kingdom, and eventually even his brothers, himself and Draupadī. Intoxicated with arrogance, Duryodhana, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana and other sinners then abused and terrorized Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas, while Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others stood with their heads bowed down, doing nothing. In those moments of anxiety and terror, the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra committed such offenses, that it became quite apparent that the moment of doom would close on them all; Bhīma swore to have no peace until he killed Duḥśāsana and Duryodhana in battle, and so the war became almost inevitable. Various bad omens appeared.

The blind King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, terrified by the deeds of his sons, returned to Draupadī and the sons of Pāṇḍu their freedom and property, and so they left Hāstinapura. But his sinful sons persuaded him to change his decision, and he allowed them to call the Pāṇḍavas back in order to throw the dice again, so that they could deceive them into twelve years of exile in the forest. They were supposed to spend the thirteenth year among the people, incognito; if their true identity were revealed, they would have to

⁶⁸ Gamble was thought to be a sign of Divine judgment, as well as a battle. That made gamble a rather common means of distributing the goods, but cheating in gamble was considered extremely dishonorable.

return to another twelve years of exile. The suggestible king agreed, and the Pāṇḍavas were cheated and exiled.

Saṅjaya came before King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who was sitting in a desperate and gloomy mood, and asked him: “O lord of the land, you have won the entire earth with all its treasures. You have sent the Pāṇḍavas into exile. What is the reason for your sorrow?”

Dhṛtarāṣṭra answered: “Indeed, are we not supposed to grieve and despair, facing a battle with the mighty Pāṇḍavas on their great chariots of battle, together with all their allies?” Saṅjaya replied: “When gods set to ruin and dishonor a person, they first take his mind away from him. At the time of doom, reason, poisoned by sin, accepts evil as good, and holds on to it till the bitter end.”

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said unto Saṅjaya: “O Saṅjaya, the look of the sorrowed daughter of Drupada can incinerate the entire world. I do not know if there is any hope for even one of my sons to survive?”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Thus ends the Book of the Assembly Hall, probably the most terrible and disquieting book in the entire *Mahābhārata*, on a depressing and ominous tone.

3. The Book of the Forest (Vanaparvan)

As soon as he found out what happened to the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛṣṇa came to them immediately. The Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas also arrived, as well as the cousins of the king of Pañcālas, and Dhṛṣṭaketu, the king of Cedis, and also the mighty and famous Kaikeya brothers. Each of them resented and condemned the dishonorable deed of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The saddened Draupadī came out before Kṛṣṇa and started to tell him about the terrors and shame she had to endure, and he, deeply touched, tried to comfort her and calm her down, and so he told her: “Fair princess, all those who have mistreated you will lie in mortal anguish amidst the bloody mud on the battlefield of a lost battle. I solemnly swear that your undeserved sufferings will be properly avenged. Dry your eyes! Himalaya can burst, heavens can tumble, earth can be crushed into dust, and the bottomless sea can dry out, but my word will not be in vain.”⁷⁰

Kṛṣṇa told them that he could not prevent the evils committed in Hāstinapura, for he was at that very time fighting his enemies, and so he was late. Saying farewell, Kṛṣṇa left them, and all the other kings and brāhmaṇas with him, and so the Pāṇḍavas remained alone in the forest. Foreseeing a great battle in their future, Yudhiṣṭhira then instructed Arjuna to engage in great austerities in order to gain heavenly weapons from gods, weapons suitable for defeating Duryodhana’s army in the war to come.

And so, Arjuna went north, toward the peaks of Himalaya, to engage in deeds of austerity. On a beautiful place in the forest, Arjuna threw himself to the greatest of penances, with all his might. Dressed in rags made of grass and leather of a black saiga, with a cane in his hand, he ate leaves that fell to the ground. During the first month, he ate fruit every third night. During the second month he ate it every sixth, and during the third month he ate only every fourteenth day. When the fourth month began, the mighty son of Pāṇḍu kept himself alive on air alone. Hands raised, standing only on top of his toes without any other support, he continued his austerities, and his hair became as white as a lotus, or lightning,

⁷⁰ Comparison with Luke 21:33: *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

from frequent washing. All the heavenly sages then assembled, came before Śiva, the lord of the gods, bowed low before Him and said: “That mighty son of Kuntī has engaged himself in the highest temptations of austerity at the slopes of Himalaya. The land around him has started to smoke from the heat of his spiritual force. His intention is unknown to us, but he gives us pain. You can divert him from that.”

The husband of Umā⁷¹ calmly listened to the wise men, and then the lord of all creatures addressed them: “Have no concern over that; I know what Arjuna’s heart desires. He longs not for the heavens nor welfare, nor for a long life on earth. What he desires, I will give him today still.”

And so the famous owner of the Pināka bow assumed a form of Kirāta,⁷² as bright and huge as the Meru⁷³ mountain, setting down immediately on the slopes of Himalaya. Approaching the son of Kuntī, Śiva saw how one of the Dānavas, by the name of Mūka, intended to kill Arjuna by turning into a wild boar. At that moment, Arjuna took Gāṇḍīva and a few arrows that resembled poisonous snakes, and released the bow’s string, filling the air with its vibration, and said this to the boar: “I have done you no harm, and yet you are trying to kill me. For this reason you will today visit the abode of Yama.”

Seeing that Arjuna was about to kill the boar, Śiva yelled at him not to shoot, for it was his prey, but Arjuna paid no heed, and released his arrow. At the same moment Śiva’s arrow struck like a raging thunder, and so they both hit the huge body of Mūka at the same time. Mūka then reverted to his terrible form of rākṣasa, and released his soul.

Arjuna then looked at him who tried to prevent him from killing the boar, and saw a brilliant being, bright as gold, and dressed as a hunter. He was followed by a woman of similar clothing. Arjuna then smiled and asked: “O golden creature, who are you, and why do you wander through these deserted hills with this woman? Are you not scared in this wasteland? Why have you shot this boar, when I was the one who took aim at it first?”

⁷¹ Umā is Śiva’s wife Pārvatī.

⁷² Kirātas were a tribe of hunters that lived in the mountains.

⁷³ Meru is a sort of a Hindu Olympus, a mountain in the center of the world, upon which resides the sky.

The hunter smiled and responded: “This forest, rich in game, belongs to us who live here. You need not worry about me. But you, however, do not appear to be firm enough to be one of its residents. I see the traces of soft and comfortable life upon you. I should, rather, ask you what you are doing here. I saw the boar first, and my arrow struck it down, and so I have precedence.”

Word by word, there was an argument. Kirāta finally yelled: “Come, and guard yourself! I will release upon you arrows like thunder, and you can gather all your strength and repay me in kind!” Arjuna was angered by his words and covered the hunter with arrows, but the man simply smiled while the arrows fell all over him, leaving him completely unharmed. Arjuna was bewildered greatly. “Excellent, excellent!” he said, wondering in his mind who that might be. “He is either a deva or a yakṣa, maybe even Indra, and it could even be Rudra⁷⁴ himself!” he told himself. “The gods do have a custom of wandering through these noble mountains.” Wondering in amazement, Arjuna continued to fight until his arrows were depleted, and then started to strike Kirāta with his bow, but Kirāta took it away from him. Arjuna then struck the hunter with a sword that could split the hardest rock. But the sword shattered, only a shard remaining from the blade. And the hunter simply smiled. Arjuna was left with no options other than to assault him with his bare hands. The strong son of Pṛthā attacked Kirāta, panting in rage. Blows fell on both sides, and the entire place was ringing with the clash of their fists, but it did not last long. The God in the form of Kirāta and Arjuna were caught in a firm grip. The God was then angered, and struck Arjuna with all his might. Arjuna then fell unconscious. Soon, he came to his senses, rose from the ground covered with blood, and was consumed by bitter anguish. In his thoughts he then fell to the ground before the lord of the gods, the merciful Śiva, and made his likeness from clay, and decorated it with a wreath of flowers in deepest respect, when, at that very moment, he saw that wreath on Kirāta’s head, and his heart was relieved. He prostrated himself before the feet of Śiva, and God was pleased greatly. He saw how Arjuna’s body was exhausted by penance, and addressed him with a voice deep as a thunder: “Phālguna, you have pleased me greatly with your feat beyond comparison. No warrior

⁷⁴ The name of Śiva in his aspect of a destroyer.

can match your fearlessness and perseverance. Your strength and courage, o sinless one, are almost equal to mine.”

Then the mighty God, whose sign is the bull, embraced Arjuna and told him: “I already forgave you everything!⁷⁵ O son of Pāṇḍu, I will give you my greatest weapon called Pāśupata.⁷⁶ You alone will be able to wield it, deploy it and have it return to you!⁷⁷ Not even Indra knows it. This weapon should never be used without a valid reason, for it can destroy the entire universe if it is cast upon a weaker opponent. There is none who could withstand it in all three worlds. You can cast it upon the enemy with thought, eye, word or bow.”

Focused and attentive, Arjuna then approached Śiva and said: “Instruct me!” And the Lord told him all the secrets of handling it. After that, this weapon was in service of both Arjuna and Śiva. At that moment the entire land with its mountains, forests, seas, villages and cities trembled, and thousands of drums and trumpets were heard. Stormy winds and whirlpools blew through the air, and gods and Dānavas beheld this weapon standing at Arjuna’s side.

“Go now to the heavens!” the three-eyed⁷⁸ God told him, and Arjuna stood before him and watched him, unflinching, with the deepest respect. The lord of all the heavenly creatures returned to him the great bow Gāṇḍīva, the bane of all Dānavas and piśācas, and then he vanished before Arjuna’s eyes, which were wide in amazement.

The mighty destroyer of evil stood there, still in wonder, and told himself: “Indeed, I saw the great God of the gods!⁷⁹ Blessed

⁷⁵ Arjuna was troubled by knowledge that he fought with the Lord, thinking that he had committed an insult, but Śiva dispelled his worries.

⁷⁶ Pāśupatāstra, “the weapon of Pāśupata,” “the weapon of the Lord of the beasts.”

⁷⁷ Actually, this weapon was also at the command of Droṇa and his son Aśvatthāman, but only Arjuna had the strength of spirit necessary to control it in fullness; he alone could withdraw it, once it had been deployed.

⁷⁸ Śiva is traditionally portrayed with the open ājñā cakra, “the third eye.” The insight into the highest reality and renunciation of the world are the fundamental attributes of Śiva.

⁷⁹ Lord Śiva most certainly does not belong to a lower category of deities, to which belong the Vedic gods Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, Vāyu and the likes of them, but rather to the same category with Viṣṇu, as a name for the embodiment of the highest reality, a being that embodies such elated qualities of the Unmanifested One, that we can without reservation speak of Him as the Almighty Lord.

be my fortune for being allowed to touch, with my own hands, the three-eyed Śiva, owner of the Pināka, and to see Him in His benevolent form!”

And while the mighty son of Kuntī stood there thus thinking, the gods Varuṇa, Kubera and the famous Indra came there with all their numerous escorts. The beautiful Yama, the mighty destroyer of beings, also appeared, illuminating the heavens with his glow, followed by the pitṛs, the lords of birth.

Yama addressed him: “Behold us, the protectors of the earth, o Arjuna! We will allow you to see us with your spiritual eyes, for you deserve it. In your previous life, you were a ṛṣi of infinite spirit, known as the great Nara. Under the order of Brahmā, you were born into the world of men, and you will defeat in battle the virtuous grandfather of the Kurus, Bhīṣma, who is born from the Vasu. It is your duty to defeat the mighty kṣatriyas lead by Droṇa, son of Bharadvāja. O son of Kuntī, you will slay the earthly forms of gods, Dānavas and rākṣasas who are embodied on earth, and they will go where the fruits of their deeds will take them, and your name will last forever in the world. Together with Viṣṇu, you will release the burden of the earth. Accept from me this staff,⁸⁰ with which you shall achieve great deeds.”⁸¹

All the other gods followed Yama, and they all gave him their invincible weapons, mighty as the thunder. When the protectors of worlds left, Arjuna directed his thoughts toward the chariot of Indra, driven by Mātali, Indra’s driver, and they came, cutting across the sky and roaring like the great stormy clouds. All the skies went bright with their shine. Arjuna then climbed into the chariot, and, saying farewell to the mountain, he traveled across the sky to Indra’s heavenly city of Amarāvati. Having stayed there for some time, he finally returned to his brothers, who happily greeted him. The twelve years of their forest exile were spent in conversations with the ṛṣis and in numerous adventures, and the time came for them to wear disguises, and go to the land of King Virāṭa, where they were about to spend the thirteenth year of their exile.

⁸⁰ The staff of Yama is a sign of power over the life and death of beings.

⁸¹ Here Arjuna even formally becomes an instrument of implementation of dharma on earth, whom the gods empower to represent them in the world.

4. The Book of Virāṭa (Virāṭaparvan)

And so the heroes disguised themselves, and came into King Virāṭa's service. Yudhisthira dressed himself up as a brahmana by the name of Kañka, who will cast dice at the court. Bhīma disguised himself as a cook and butcher by the name of Ballava. Arjuna dressed himself up as an eunuch by the name of Bṛhannaḍa, who was to teach the women in Virāṭa's palace the skills of song and dance,⁸² while Nakula and Sahadeva were to be an equerry and a cattle driver. Draupadī herself would become the queen's maid. During their hiding, they hid their mighty weapons on a great tree that grew by a cemetery.

When they had spent almost a year under disguise, the misfortunate Duryodhana, unable to restrain himself from conceiving some evil act, under advice of Suśarman, the king of Trigartas, decided to gather his army and steal the cattle from King Virāṭa, utterly oblivious of the whereabouts of the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana then struck from the north with his entire military force, and surrounded many thousands of animals that belonged to King Virāṭa. The manager of the herds barely escaped and brought the news to the empty city, to the young prince Uttara, for all the others were engaged on another battlefield. The young and careless Uttara then started to boast, saying that he would singlehandedly stop the enemies, if he could only find a driver for his chariot. It happened that Arjuna, dressed up as Bṛhannaḍa, volunteered for this duty. Having caught up with Duryodhana's army, the prince's courage suddenly vanished at the sight of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and other great warriors, and so he fled. The roles turned, and now Bṛhannaḍa was encouraging Uttara, who escaped from his chariot in fear. Arjuna, who saw that this would not get them anywhere, caught him and somehow convinced him to return.

⁸² There is lots of irony in this division of roles: a gambling loser Yudhiṣṭhira plays a gambling expert, a bloodthirsty warrior Bhīma plays a butcher, and the heroic Arjuna an eunuch. Besides all that, we can see the multiple sides of Arjuna's personality: he is not just the best warrior and learned in the holy scriptures and yogic discipline, but he is also able to teach women the dance and song. This gentle side of the great warrior portrays the complexity and three-dimensional nature of his personality.

The Kurus, with Bhīṣma and Droṇa in front of them, observed this sight, and with fear in their hearts they suspected that the strange newcomer might be Dhanañjaya. Droṇa started noticing bad omens and advising retreat, but Karṇa opposed him.

At that time, Arjuna and Uttara reached the tree where the weapons were hidden. The prince retrieved and unwrapped the weapons and saw, brilliant as the sun, the Gāṇḍīva and four other bows, and asked Arjuna: “O Bṛhannaḍa, to which famous hero belongs this bow, with hundreds of golden enforcements and brilliant tips?” Bṛhannaḍa responded: “The bow you ask about is the worldwide famous Gāṇḍīva, which belongs to Arjuna, and can destroy the entire army of enemies.” “It is quite a miracle, o Bṛhannaḍa,” Uttara answered. “You say that these bows, swords and arrows are the property of the Pāṇḍavas, and they have not been heard of since they lost their kingdom in gamble, although they could destroy any enemy!”

Arjuna then told him: “I am Arjuna, o Uttara; I am the son of Pṛthā, and Kañka, the member of your father’s court, is Yudhiṣṭhira. The strong Ballava, skillful cook at your father’s court, is Bhīma. Nakula is the equerry, while Sahadeva cares for the herds of your cattle. You should also know that sairandhrī, the queen’s maid, is the queen Draupadī herself. And these are my ten names: Arjuna, Phālguna, Jiṣṇu, Kirīṭin, Śvetavāhana, Bībhatṣa, Vijaya, Kṛṣṇa, Savyasācin and Dhanañjaya.”

Having heard that, Uttara saluted him in an appropriate manner, and said: “My name is Bhūmiñjaya, and I am also called Uttara! I am so happy, o Pārtha, to be able to behold you with my own eyes. Be welcome among us, o Dhanañjaya! O hero of mighty arms and red eyes, your muscles resemble the trunk of an elephant! It would be appropriate if you forgave everything I said in ignorance!⁸³ Your wonderful and matchless feats dispel all the fears from my heart, and fill it with love! O mighty hero, I will climb into this magnificent chariot and drive it myself! Tell me, at which part of the army will you strike first? Give me the orders, and I will bring you there!”

“I like you, o tiger among men!” responded Arjuna. “You are no longer burdened by fear. I will crush all your enemies in battle.

⁸³ Arjuna’s fame is such, that the young Uttara must have felt before him as Arjuna did before Lord Śiva.

Quickly, tie the pouches to the chariot, and take from the weapons the sword with a shining blade, decorated with gold.”

Arjuna then took off the bracelets and put on the beautiful gloves woven with gold, and then tied back his black curly hair with a white cloth. Sitting on his chariot, the mighty hero performed a purification ritual and took control of his spirit facing east, and remembered all his weapons, and they all came to him and told the royal son of Pṛthā: “Here we are, o famous one! We are here to serve you, son of Indra!” And Arjuna bowed before them and said: “May you all reside in my spirit!”⁸⁴

Having retrieved all his weapons, Arjuna smiled with joy, and released Gāṇḍīva’s string. A terrible sound was heard, that shook the birds in the sky and the branches of trees. By that sound, which resembled roaring thunder, the Kurus knew that it was indeed Arjuna who released the string on the best of bows. The mighty hero then went ahead with Uttara driving his wagon, waving a flag above his chariot; a flag that showed a monkey with a lion’s tail, a divine illusion invented by Viśvakarman himself. The unstoppable destroyer of enemies blew powerfully into his great shell of thundering sound, which raises the hair on the enemies’ heads. The sound made swift horses fall to their knees, and the prince Uttara sat down in fear.

During that time Droṇa spoke to the Kurus: “I have a very bad feeling about this! Look at this jackal, running through our lines with an ominous howl! He ran away before anyone could hit him! It is all a sign of a great disaster.”

Duryodhana was opposed to his advice to retreat, saying that the thirteenth year had not yet passed and that the Pāṇḍavas would have to return to exile according to their agreement, and the boastful Karṇa agreed with him. Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman agreed with Droṇa, adding: “What kind of a kṣatriya would publicly take pride for acquiring the kingdom by cheating in gamble, as does the shameless son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra? Who could, if he had any sense in him, take pride in acquiring the treasure by deceit, as if he were a meat salesman? In which battle did you defeat Arjuna, Nakula or Sahadeva? And yet, you have robbed them of their treasures! We can see that people, and even insects and ants, can forgive within

⁸⁴ This is Arjuna in his greatest might and glory, like the sun that rises from beneath the clouds.

the limits of their powers, but the sons of Pāṇḍu could never forgive the humiliations to which you have exposed Draupadī. Send now, o Duryodhana, your wise uncle, who is so well acquainted with the duties of a kṣatriya!⁸⁵ Send now that gambler and cheat Śakuni to meet them in combat! But Gāṇḍīva does not cast dice, but shoots sharp arrows at opponents!”

Bhīṣma then organized the army, and the quarrel ended. Bhīṣma expressed a theory that the inaccuracy of the calendar produces an excess of two months every five years,⁸⁶ so that everything the sons of Pāṇḍu had promised had been fulfilled. Duryodhana, however, stated that he would not return the Pāṇḍavas their kingdom, and so the battle began. Duryodhana did not join the other warriors, but, being a lousy warrior and a coward, went to drive Virāṭa’s cattle away. Arjuna caught him and returned the cattle, and then faced the great warriors. Karṇa and Arjuna faced each other in a duel. Twelve of Karṇa’s arrows wounded Arjuna, Uttara and their horses, but Arjuna responded in kind⁸⁷ and showered Karṇa with a cloud of arrows that pierced him throughout his body, so that he had to retreat.

⁸⁵ Śakuni, who had cheated in gamble. We can see that the warriors who fight together with Duryodhana do it more out of duty, than out of love for him, since they openly scold him and consider him to be a villain.

⁸⁶ Gregorian calendar creates an excess of approximately six hours every year, which is corrected by the leap year. Lunar calendar, used in ancient India, is around eleven days shorter than solar year, which is corrected by adding an extra month approximately every two and a half years. This adjustments create additional five months in thirteen years of Pāṇḍavas’ exile. According to Bhīṣma’s theory, these extra months should be subtracted from the Pāṇḍavas’ exile.

⁸⁷ It seems that the warriors were extremely resilient to shots, and that they could be killed only if their heads were separated from the body. All the other wounds healed quickly, probably due to the effect of powerful mantras. For that reason, the main attack strategy on a great warrior was to first kill his horses and the driver, thus rendering his chariot motionless. The opponent would then strike at his weapons, cutting his bow with arrows, only then striking at the warrior himself. As much as it seems evident that there was much exaggeration in the tales of the kṣatriyas’ abilities, it seems to me that those exaggerations must have been based on the truth, and that a great fighter must have represented a military force that could crush everything but another of his kind. To put it figuratively, the great fighters such as Arjuna, Bhīṣma and Droṇa were equivalent to today’s entire armies equipped with a nuclear arsenal. Although the weapons they used seem primitive (bow and arrow, mace, sword etc.), the strikes of such weapons were strengthened with mantras to such an extent, that it is more appropriate to compare Gāṇḍīva to a six-barrel Gatling cannon with explosive munition, than

When the son of Rādhā retreated from the battlefield, the other warriors, with Duryodhana in front, struck at Arjuna one by one, followed by their troops. But, as the shore sustains the waves, so did Arjuna resist the fury of this countless army, whose lines showered him with arrows. The champion of warriors then attacked the enemy using his heavenly weapons. The sky and all sides of the world were covered with the countless arrows launched from Gāṇḍīva, as earth is covered with the sun's rays. None of the enemies could even look at Arjuna, who was shining with great light. Arjuna's countless arrows seemed to not have enough room under the skies. The opponents had only one opportunity to take a close look at him, for they were at the very next moment on their way to the other world together with their horses. As his arrows passed easily through the bodies of his opponents, so did his chariot travel through their lines. His arrows always found their target, like the eye that always dwells on the things a man loves to observe. A trail left behind him resembled a trail of a herd of wild elephants that storms through the jungle. All the great warriors of the Kurus then assaulted Arjuna with all their force, and Dhanañjaya, the son of Kuntī, struck the old master Bhīṣma with ten arrows in the chest, although he was fighting with the best of his abilities. The irresistible and mighty son of Gaṅgā was swayed by bitter pain and stood there for a long time, leaning on a shaft of his chariot.

Arjuna was then surrounded from all sides by warriors who held their heavenly weapons, pouring an inexhaustible abundance of arrows at him. He used his weapons to neutralize theirs, and then the owner of Gāṇḍīva called upon one of Indra's invincible weapons called "maddener." With his sharp arrows, he totally covered all four sides of the world. The vibration of Gāṇḍīva completely numbed the senses of the opponents,⁸⁸ and then Arjuna took his great shell and blew into it with great force, filling the skies with its roar. Its sound left the heroes of Kuru bewildered,

to an ordinary shooting bow. The focus of the fighter's thoughts played such a role, that the physical matter of the weapon had little significance. This was also why the arrows of a weaker fighter could not harm the stronger one.

⁸⁸ To remind you, Gāṇḍīva is a weapon that is built more of the astral than of the physical substance, which is why it is capable of sustaining the enormous strain that would instantly crush any material bow. Arjuna gets his arrows from the inexhaustible poach, given to him, together with the bow, by Agni.

and the bows, which they never parted with in battle, fell from their hands. Having the Kuru army thus stunned, Arjuna told the king of Matsyas' son: "Go among the Kurus while they are still stunned, and bring me the white garments worn by Droṇa and Kṛpa, and the lovely yellow one that belongs to Karṇa, and bring also the blue dress of the king and of Droṇa's son.⁸⁹ I would say that Bhīṣma is not stunned, for he knows how to oppose this weapon, and so be sure to avoid him!"

The famous son of Matsya then let go of the reins and jumped down from the chariot, and gathered the clothes of the warriors, returning to his post. He then spurred the horses and brought Arjuna away from the battlefield.

When Bhīṣma saw that Arjuna was leaving, he hit him with his arrows, but Arjuna slew his horses and the driver, rising from this multitude of chariots with the wonderful bow in his hands, like the sun that rises from beneath the clouds. The son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra⁹⁰ came to his senses and, seeing the son of Pṛthā standing alone in the battlefield like the lord of the gods, he asked Bhīṣma in his frustration: "How did this one save himself from you?"⁹¹

The son of Śantanu answered him with a smile: "Where were your senses and your bravery? Why did you cast aside your bow and your arrows? Arjuna is not bloodthirsty, nor is he inclined to sin. Not for all three worlds would he forget his elders. This is the only reason he has not killed us all in this battle. O champion among the heroic Kurus, return to your city and allow Arjuna to go in peace, taking over the herds. Do not be crazy, and stick to what is good for you!"

Duryodhana listened to the words of the old master, the words spoken for his good, and he grew angry, but having lost any desire for further battle, he sighed deeply and went silent.

The endeared Arjuna saw the Kurus headed toward the capital and followed them, nodding to salute the old Bhīṣma and the teacher Droṇa, paying his respects. He greeted Droṇa's son, and the teacher Kṛpa and other honorable persons among the Kurus in the same manner. Then the son of Pṛthā used a single arrow to

⁸⁹ Arjuna promised to bring the girls in court the dresses from the battle.

⁹⁰ Duryodhana.

⁹¹ Typically for sinners and villains, Duryodhana has to find someone else to blame for his own faults.

break Duryodhana's precious crown into shards, and the vibration of his bow filled all three worlds.

Arjuna and Uttara then returned to the capital, and, the time of their exile having ended, Pāṇḍavas revealed their real identity, and King Virāṭa gave his daughter to be the wife of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu.⁹²

⁹² The son of Abhimanyu and Uttarā will be the famous Parīkṣit.

5. The Book of Preparations (Udyogaparvan)

They all celebrated the wedding of Abhimanyu, and when they all rested, Kṛṣṇa told them: “All of you who are gathered here know how King Yudhiṣṭhira was cheated in gamble, how his kingdom was taken away from him, and how he accepted exile. The sons of Pāṇḍu, who could subdue the entire world with the force of their weapons, have been fulfilling this terrible oath for thirteen years, never backing away from their word. These famous heroes have spent a year in service to others. It is now up to you to decide what will be just and good for both Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana, and what would be proper and acceptable for both Kurus and Pāṇḍavas. The honorable King Yudhiṣṭhira would not desire even the kingdom of heaven if it were unjust, and if righteousness demanded, he would accept ruling over a single village. The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra can not overcome Arjuna’s power. We know not what Duryodhana has in mind, nor do we know the course of future events. It is therefore difficult to decide what to do. I say we should send an envoy, a man of noble birth, full of virtues, who will be able to convince Duryodhana to return Yudhiṣṭhira his half of the kingdom.”

And so the king of Pañcālas sent Kurus his own priest as a negotiator.

Since it was unlikely that Duryodhana would return the land to the Pāṇḍavas, preparations for war began, and so the sides in conflict started recruiting allies. It happened that Duryodhana and Arjuna came to ask Kṛṣṇa to be their ally, and found Kṛṣṇa fast asleep. Duryodhana entered his bedroom first, and Arjuna came in after him, and they both waited for Kṛṣṇa to awaken. Duryodhana sat on a chair near Kṛṣṇa’s head, and Arjuna remained standing near the bottom of the bed, folding his hands in respect. When Kṛṣṇa awakened, he saw Arjuna first, asked them about their journey, greeted them in a proper manner, and then asked them the reason for their visit. Duryodhana answered him smilingly: “O Kṛṣṇa, there is likely to be a war between us, and very soon, as well. If that is to happen, you must help me. Your friendship with me is equal to your friendship with Arjuna, and our kinship is equally close. The only difference is that I came first today, and our good forefathers always respected the right of seniority.”

Kṛṣṇa answered: “There is no doubt in my mind that you came first, o Duryodhana, but when I opened my eyes, I first saw Arjuna. Since you came first, and I saw Arjuna first, I will help you both. Your seniority is equal. When the petitions are heard, custom demands that the youngest petitioner is to be given the right of first choice, and therefore I will give Arjuna the opportunity to choose first. There are a million of my shepherds, each of them my equal in strength. They are called the Nārāyaṇas. Each of them can fight in the toughest battle. Those soldiers, matchless in battle, will side with one of you, and I alone, renouncing weapons, for I chose not to fight, will stand on the side of the other. You, son of Kuntī, can choose first, for the law gives you that right.”

Arjuna then chose Kṛṣṇa,⁹³ Nārāyaṇa in person, the bane of all villains, who said he would stay out of the battle.

Duryodhana won the countless armies of Nārāyaṇas, and was out of his mind with joy, winning this thousand of thousands of soldiers, although Kṛṣṇa was not on his side.⁹⁴

Duryodhana having departed, Kṛṣṇa smiled and asked Arjuna: “Dhanañjaya, why did you act so unreasonably?⁹⁵ You chose me instead of my army, well equipped and countless in number.” Arjuna answered: “I desire, o Kṛṣṇa, to attain glory equal to your own. You have the power to confront all the kings of earth with their numerous armies. I feel I am also up to such a feat. I want you to drive my chariot. It has been my desire for a long time!”

Vāsudeva said unto him: “I would say, o son of Kuntī, that you desire to compete with me. May your wish be granted! I will drive your chariot.”

⁹³ Commentators on the *Bhagavad-gītā* usually, for reasons unknown to me, mistakingly state that Duryodhana first chose the army, and that Arjuna was left with Kṛṣṇa, although the epic states otherwise.

⁹⁴ Here is a typical example of a shallow worldly consideration, according to which a million fighting warriors are more valuable than God, who doesn't fight. Duryodhana fails to understand that his friend is worth more to Arjuna than any number of soldiers of any kind, since he alone is able to crush the power of any army, and none could take the place of his friend. Arjuna sees Kṛṣṇa only as his friend, since he has not yet revealed his Divine identity before him, but in spite of that he treats him with instinctive respect, giving him the supreme place in his life.

⁹⁵ Arjuna indeed acted “unreasonably.” However, “reasonably” is not a synonym for “correctly.”

Numerous kings gathered their armies around Hāstinapura. There were eleven akṣauhiṇīs⁹⁶ of army. The entire region was covered with military force.

The court priest, whom Drupada sent as his envoy, observed all those legions on his journey. Arriving at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court, he saw all the aristocrats and army generals of the Kurus, as well as their friends and allies. He was welcomed with due respect. After the greetings, he spoke thusly: "O kings, it is well known that Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra are brothers and that, undoubtedly, the kingdom of their father belongs to both of them in equal measure. The brave sons of Pāṇḍu do not wish to engage in a war with the Kurus in order to retrieve their kingdom, for they do not wish to bring destruction upon the land. So return, o Kurus, what is to be returned, for it is time for returning and virtue demands this course of action. Do not allow this opportunity to be wasted!"

Bhīṣma agreed with brāhmaṇa's words, but he was arrogantly interrupted by Karṇa, who kept looking at Duryodhana while he spoke: "In Duryodhana's name, Śakuni defeated the Pāṇḍavas in gamble. The son of Pāṇḍu does not uphold the agreement, counting on the assistance of the Matsyas and the Pañcālas. You are a man of knowledge, and you should know that if you attempt to frighten Duryodhana, he will not give an inch of the land, and if it is according to justice and law, he will give the entire land, even to his enemy. If they want their inherited land returned to them, let them live in a forest for the agreed period of time, and after that, they can live under the reign of Duryodhana in health and peace. If they renounce the path of virtue, and decide to wage war and attack on these noble Kurus, they will remember the words I have spoken today."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Akṣauhiṇī, according to a classical theory, is an army of 21,870 elephants, 21,870 battle chariots, 65,610 riders and 109,350 footmen.

⁹⁷ Such speech, lying, arrogant and unfounded in reality is a cause of demise of those who utilize it, and is a quality of grave sinners, who wish to use speech to create an illusion different from the truth. Since they have their foundations in lies, the truth eventually strikes back at them, and they disappear from the world, sinking into the hell of their own arrogance. They remember righteousness only when their personal interests are threatened, but otherwise they constantly violate the rights of others, ridiculing the very idea of righteousness. That is the manner in which the sinful subjects of Duryodhana spoke, thinking their military force to be superior.

The old Bhīṣma did not agree: “Son of Rādhā,” he said, “you speak the words of madness! Remember how the son of Pṛthā singlehandedly defeated the six great warriors of the Kurus. If we fail to comply with the messenger’s requests, war will break out, and we will be destined to die along with Duryodhana.”

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra then started to soothe the tension, and sent Sañjaya as a messenger to the Pāṇḍavas, who implored the Pāṇḍavas to try to resolve the issue in a peaceful manner, for what kind of life would they live if they slew their cousins in battle? Yudhiṣṭhira agreed wholeheartedly, and said that he wanted nothing but peace; let Duryodhana return his capital Indraprastha and half of the kingdom, and there would be peace. He then surrendered his best interests into the hands of Kṛṣṇa, who decided to go to Hāstīnapura himself, in order to try to find a solution. Yudhiṣṭhira sent Duryodhana the following message: “The Pāṇḍavas will calmly withstand all the insults inflicted upon Draupadī, as well as all the other things, for we do not wish to see all the Kurus slaughtered. Our powers are sufficient to grant us revenge. Still, we want peace, and we will be satisfied if you give each of us a single province. Even that will suffice to finish our dispute. Suyodhana,⁹⁸ give the five brothers even a village each, and the brothers mix with brothers, elders with children, and let laughter and joy unite the Kurus and the Pañcālas.”

And so Sañjaya conveyed the message to Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s court, but after counsel, Duryodhana’s response was the following: “Either I will slay them and rule this land, or I will be slain, and they will enjoy undisputed reign! I can put my treasures and kingdom, and even my life at stake, but I cannot live in peace with the sons of Pāṇḍu. O illustrious master, I will not give the Pāṇḍavas the land sufficient to cover the top of a needle.”

In spite of the fierce words spoken by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma, Gāndhārī and others, the madman persisted in his decision, and then Kṛṣṇa personally went to Hāstīnapura, in his last attempt to achieve peace.

A godless thought was conceived in Duryodhana’s mind: he would capture Kṛṣṇa, tie him up and throw him into the basement, and the Vṛṣṇis and Pāṇḍavas would submit to him. The idea outraged everybody, and Bhīṣma left the room, not wanting

⁹⁸ One of the names of Duryodhana.

to hear any more poisonous words from the mouth of this corrupt and sinful scoundrel.

Kṛṣṇa thus came and stated the position of the Pāṇḍavas, and Duryodhana had the opportunity to hear many things not to his liking, spoken by various respectable sages, but still, he persisted in his madness: “They lost their share in gamble, and I refuse to give it back. I am completely innocent in all this. I will not give them an inch of the land! Not even enough to put on the top of a needle.” Duryodhana then left the palace, all puffed up, and started to think how to commit an outrage: he planned to capture Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa, the slayer of his enemies, then spoke before the gathered dignitaries: “You are deluding yourself, o Suyodhana, if you think that I came here alone. That is why you, in your mindless plan, intend to subdue me by force and put me into bondage. Yet still, I am not alone! Here they are at my side, the Pāṇḍavas, Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas. They are all here; Ādityas, Rudras and vasus,⁹⁹ with all the great sages among them!” And saying that, Kṛṣṇa burst into laughter.

And while he laughed, from his body that shone like fire, there appeared countless deities, bright as lightning and no bigger than a thumb. On his brow appeared Brahmā, on his chest Rudra, and on his arms appeared the guardians of the sides of the world. From his mouth came Agni, and with him the Ādityas, vasus, Aśvins, maruts, Indra and viśvadevas.¹⁰⁰ From his two hands came out Arjuna and Baladeva. Arjuna stood at his right, and Baladeva at his left; Arjuna with a bow, and Baladeva with a plough¹⁰¹ in his hands. In each of his arms, one could see a shell, a disc, a mace or a bow called Śārṅga, a plough, a spear and all other weapons, all raised for a strike. From his mouth, ears, eyes, from each part of his body, emanated sparks mixed with smoke, like the rays of the sun. Seeing this terrible form of Kṛṣṇa, all the kings closed their eyes with trembling hearts, and only Droṇa, Bhīṣma, mindful Vidura, blessed Sañjaya and the ṛṣis abundant with penance could stand straight in his countenance. The divine Janārdana had allowed them to observe this divine sight. The drums of heaven

⁹⁹ The groups of the devas.

¹⁰⁰ All the other devas.

¹⁰¹ Balarāma, or Baladeva, the brother of Kṛṣṇa, used a plough as a weapon, and is thus depicted in the traditional iconography.

roared, and the rain of flowers started pouring onto this magnificent form. At that moment, the entire earth trembled, the oceans moved, and the people of the land stood bewildered.¹⁰²

Kṛṣṇa then assumed his previous form, and, hand in hand with Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman, left the place, having been given permission by the sages present.

And so, the war became imminent. The Pāṇḍavas chose Dhṛṣṭadyumna for as a commander, under the advice of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, since he was born from the sacrificial flame to bring ruin to Droṇa, and he could also stand before Bhīṣma, whom Duryodhana placed for his commander. The armies finally met on the field of battle.

¹⁰² Kṛṣṇa here reveals himself as God Himself for the second time. The first time it happened when he used to eat the dirt as a child, and his mother Yaśodā opened his mouth, wanting to remove the dirt. In his mouth she then saw the sum of all worlds (source: *Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, canto 10).

6. The Book of Bhīṣma (Bhīṣmaparvan)

The Kurus, Pāṇḍavas and Somakas established the rules of warfare between them, agreeing on terms of battle: only those equal in skill and strength should meet in battle, and they were supposed to fight fairly.

The holy ṛṣi Vyāsa then gave Sañjaya heavenly vision in order for him to be able to observe and report the events on the battlefield from Hāstinapura, and thus keep King Dhṛtarāṣṭra informed. Vyāsa informed the king of many bad omens, foretelling the demise of all Kurus and a great slaughter, and having said that, he disappeared.

The commanders arranged their armies on the holy field of Kurukṣetra, ready for battle. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna climbed into the chariot and headed to the front of the Pāṇḍavas' army.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Here begins the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Bhagavad-gītā

Chapter One¹⁰⁴

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, gathered on the field of dharma,
on the field of the Kurus,
what did my sons and Pāṇḍavas do,
in their desire for battle?

As it can be seen from the abbreviation of *Mahābhārata*, the army of Kurus, commanded by Bhīṣma, and the army of the Pāṇḍavas, commanded by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, have met in Kurukṣetra, in order to resolve the inheritance conflict in an open battle. Like a gamble, a battle, too, was thought to be a form of divine judgment: since the law of righteousness rules over all things, giving strength to the righteous, and weakening the unrighteous, it was thought that the righteous side would always be victorious.

Sañjaya, who was blessed by the ṛṣi Vyāsa with an ability to see things at a great distance, and also in the past and future, sits beside the blind King Dhṛtarāṣṭra as an adviser, in the throne hall of Hāstinapura, and this is the first time that the old king asks him about the situation in the battlefield.

¹⁰⁴ The chapters of *Gītā* are given different names in different traditions. However, since I think those names to be quite arbitrary, I decided to simply use numbers.

2 Sañjaya said:

Seeing the army of Pāṇḍavas,
arranged in battle lines,
King Duryodhana approached his teacher
and spoke the following words:

Duryodhana is a liar, coward and a villain. His only skill consists of somehow creating the appearance that a lie is the truth, and that the truth is a lie, there where it matters, and where the decisions are made, thus managing to rule and control men far better than himself, if they are not extremely persistent in opposing him, even at a cost of their own welfare. Although wise and respectable, the master Droṇa is attached to the welfare in which he lives at Duryodhana's court, and, although brāhmaṇa by birth, he performs the duties of a warrior. In words, Droṇa, together with Bhīṣma, will be the first to condemn Duryodhana's behavior and wrongdoing, but when it comes to taking action in order to stop the villain, the two of them, instead of tying him up and giving him over to Yudhiṣṭhira, as they threatened to do, will most likely only keep staring at the floor in discomfort. The last meeting of the noble men in Hāstinapura ended with bitter and angry criticism of Duryodhana, and in anticipation of a grave disaster, which will happen at his fault, and the idea of killing Duryodhana or surrendering him to Yudhiṣṭhira still lives in the minds of the famous warriors. This is why Duryodhana uses flattery and fawning, his most powerful weapons; he will flatter the great warriors, starting with Droṇa, thus binding them to himself, and making them forget the terror of battle and its immediate cause.

3 Behold this mighty army of the sons of Pāṇḍu,
arranged into battle lines by your mindful disciple,
the son of Drupada.

Duryodhana aims at Droṇa's warrior mentality: by turning his attention to the army and its structure, he will divert his attention from the cause of the battle, which happens to be Duryodhana, with his unrighteousness and love for power. If a warrior sees only an army opposing him, he will think how to fight it and defeat it. If, however, he starts to think about the cause of the forthcoming bloodshed, which is Duryodhana, he might come

up with all kinds of ideas about using his warrior skills and powers in a more just and useful manner, rather than to fight the righteous sons of Pāṇḍu. Duryodhana, of course, cannot allow this to happen.

Mentioning Dhṛṣṭadyumna as the son of Drupada, he also reminds Droṇa of the old insults inflicted upon him by Drupada, his childhood friend, and the entire story of Droṇa's revenge and the humiliation of the king of Pañcālas, who, wanting to have a son who will be a weapon of his revenge to Droṇa, made a sacrificial ceremony, in which Dhṛṣṭadyumna was born from the fire, for the destruction of Droṇa. By reminding him of all this, Duryodhana puts Droṇa in a state of anxiety and desire for self-defense, and thus manages to turn his anger from himself completely.

4 **There are heroes, mighty archers,
equal in battle to Bhīma and Arjuna:
Yuyudhāna,¹⁰⁵ Virāṭa, and also Drupada,
mighty in his chariot of war.**

Although it can appear at first that to call these warriors equal to Bhīma and Arjuna is a compliment to their skill, it is actually an attempt to create a false impression, that Bhīma and Arjuna are much weaker than they, in fact, are. Duryodhana is, in fact, encouraging Droṇa by lying: after awakening in him the warrior's instinct, and also an ominous feeling regarding the son of Drupada, he is now leading him to a false impression that the army of Pāṇḍavas will be rather easy to defeat. For if Sātyaki, Virāṭa and Drupada, who were had been defeated in the past, and who pose no serious threat to Droṇa in the battlefield, are equal to Bhīma and Arjuna, then the battle is already won, and all it takes is to cheer up a bit, do the work and the problem is solved.

In truth, however, things stand quite differently. The entire army of the Kurus under Bhīṣma cannot match Arjuna alone, who showed his power by defending the herds of King Virāṭa, where he had no difficulty utterly defeating all the greatest warriors of the Kurus. Besides that, Arjuna has in his power the divine weapons so powerful, that he could use them to destroy the entire enemy's army in a single blow, if he wanted so. If Duryodhana

¹⁰⁵ Sātyaki.

happened to remind the teacher Droṇa of those facts, chances are that Droṇa's anger would again start to dwell on him, which, of course, could not be allowed to happen.

- 5 Also Dhr̥ṣṭaketu, Cekitāna
and the brave king of the Kāśī,
and also Purujit, Kuntibhoja
and Śaibya, a hero among men.
- 6 There is also the courageous Yudhāmanyu,
and the mighty Uttamaújas,
and the son of Subhadrā,¹⁰⁶
as well as the sons of Draupadī.
All of them mighty warriors,
great on their chariots of war.

Reciting those names could, of course, produce only an expectation of easy victory in the mind of Droṇa, the master of arms.

- 7 Hear, o champion among the twice-born,
for I will now tell you the names
of the commanders of my army.
I am telling you this
in order for you to know them better.
- 8 Among them you are first; then come Bhīṣma,
Karṇa and Kṛpa, victorious in many battles;
also Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa and the son of Somadatta.¹⁰⁷

The flatterer knows his work. Starting the list of great warriors with him in first place, he creates in Droṇa an impression of his personal responsibility for victory over the Pāṇḍavas, and reciting the names of great warriors, such as Bhīṣma and Karṇa, only helps to affirm this impression. The greatest warriors at the side of Duryodhana are Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and Aśvatthāman. They alone are capable of causing Arjuna and Bhīma serious headaches. All the others are there more or less only to fill the scenery.

¹⁰⁶ Abhimanyu.

¹⁰⁷ Bhūriśravas.

- 9 **There are many other heroes,
skillful with various weapons,
knowledgable in warfare,
willing to give their lives for me in battle.**

Having lead Droṇa to identify himself with the army, and to involve himself in thinking about the immediate danger of the battle, instead of the real danger of Duryodhana, he finishes his speech by naming himself as the one, to whom the army owes its loyalties. One could ironically note that he never mentions himself nor his brothers as authorities in warfare, since their talents lie in other spheres: gambling, lying, deceitful murders, manipulations and insults to respectable people. They can now only hope that those talents will not abandon them while others fight in a war they have caused and incited with their unrighteousness.

- 10 **Countless is our army under the command of Bhīṣma,
while the strength of the army of the Pāṇḍavas,
commanded by Bhīma, is limited.**

Guided by his worldly reasoning, Duryodhana thinks that safety lies in greater numbers. In his consideration, he fails to notice several things. One is that numbers mean very little in a combat of great warriors. Another is Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is sided with the Pāṇḍavas, and whom he, being godless, does not recognize in His true nature. If he could manage to do that, he would understand that there is no hope for his side whatsoever.

He can now name Bhīma as the commander of the Pāṇḍavas' army, since Droṇa does not fear Bhīma as much as he does Arjuna, and the influence of flattery has added to his courage.

- 11 **Line yourselves now in battle lines,
on various positions within our army,
protecting Bhīṣma above all.**

The flatterer does not miss the opportunity to touch Bhīṣma, pronouncing his importance and the leading role, addressing the entire group of great warriors that stand beside Droṇa, listening to Duryodhana's monologue.

**12 Increasing the joy of Duryodhana,
the brave Bhīṣma, grandfather of the Kurus,
roared then like a lion, and blew into his shell.**

Since those expectations have been set before him, Bhīṣma came to act like a general, in spite of his firm belief that there is no way to beat the Pāṇḍavas, and that Duryodhana is a vicious villain. Tied by his duties, Bhīṣma, although righteous, thus becomes a tool in the hands of a deranged and evil fool. This tells us that duty is not a thing to be considered an absolute, but instead, one should always keep judging things with his own mind, making his own decisions, unbound by tradition, customs and conventions. Those things are a path that leads to ruin, and they are to be avoided. If Bhīṣma and Droṇa had listened to their consciences, they would have killed the sinful Duryodhana a long time ago, thus preventing great slaughter of men.

Of course, if the world had not been filled with evil souls embodied in the men of kṣatriya caste, Earth would not be forced to pray to the Maker to free her from them, and Kṛṣṇa, devas, gandharvas and apsarasas would not be forced to take birth at their ruin, but that is a different story. A wider, global plan does not excuse personal failures and misjudgments. In this worldly clash of good and evil, everybody had an opportunity to stand at the side of either good or evil, and those who stood at the side of evil because of customs and duty, still sided with evil, which is a far greater sin on their part, than it would be to violate the customs and social conventions. Bhīṣma and Droṇa had forgotten that a man owes his gratitude to God first, then to the universal law of righteousness that rules the world, and only then to the king or some other form of earthly government. If a king is in conflict with God, or with the law of righteousness, none owes him obedience. One should, rather, oppose him with calm conscience. If Bhīṣma and Droṇa had acted according to their consciences, having Duryodhana beaten up and tied in a bag and brought to the righteous Yudhiṣṭhira, they would have shown their alignment with God and dharma, and if war was to take place, they would not have sided with the cursed, but with the blessed. Their sin thus remains, and can never be justified by duty. Man's highest duty is devotion to God and harmony with the divine law, dharma. All other things must be in alignment with that, and are subordinate to that.

- 13 Shells then suddenly sounded,
as well as small and big drums, timpani, horns,
and a terrible sound was heard.
- 14 Sitting on a battle chariot
behind the team of white horses,
Mādhava¹⁰⁸ and the son of Pāṇḍu¹⁰⁹ then blew
into their divine shells.
- 15 Hṛṣīkeśa¹¹⁰ blew into Pāñcajanya,
and Dhanañjaya into Devadatta.
The great Bhīma of a wolf's belly
blew into the great shell Pauṇḍra.
- 16 The son of Kuntī, King Yudhiṣṭhira,
blew into his shell Anantavijaya,
and Nakula and Sahadeva
into Sughoṣa and Mañipuṣpaka.
- 17 The great archer, the king of Kāśī,
and Śikhaṇḍin, the great fighter,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa,
and also the invincible Sātyaki,
- 18 Drupada, Draupadī's sons,
and the strong-handed son of Subhadṛā,
as well as many others, also blew into their shells,
o lord of the land.
- 19 The terrible sound,
echoing strongly throughout the sky and land,
shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

Boasting was thrown back into the face of Kuru army, for the illusion of their strength, woven carefully by Duryodhana, broke on the firm rocks of the military power of Pāṇḍavas, under the

¹⁰⁸ Kṛṣṇa.

¹⁰⁹ Arjuna.

¹¹⁰ Kṛṣṇa.

leadership of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna and Bhīma, and now the army of Kurus felt anguish in their hearts, and looked into the future with fear.

20 Seeing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra aligned for battle,
with weapons almost away,
the son of Pāṇḍu,¹¹¹ standing on his chariot
with a flag that bore the form of Hanuman,
raised his bow for battle.

21 Then, o king, he said unto Hṛṣīkeśa:
O Sinless one, drive my chariot between the armies,

22 so that I can see those,
who stand there desiring battle,
and whom I am to face in combat.

23 Let me see those, who have gathered here,
ready for battle, wishing well
to the vicious son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

Before the battle began, Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to direct his prayers toward Durgā, a goddess who, let us say, represents the energy of all the devas united in military efforts, and she, showing herself to him, wished him luck, and foretold his victory. After that event, it seems that Arjuna was in a pretty determined warrior's mood.

24 Sañjaya said:
O Bhārata, Hṛṣīkeśa obeyed Guḍākeśa,
and drove the beautiful chariot,
putting it to a halt amidst the armies.

25 In front of Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
and all those rulers of the land, he said:
Pārtha, behold these Kurus, who have gathered here!

Judging by the mild tone in which Kṛṣṇa addressed his friend, it become apparent that he has in mind something quite different from enforcing Arjuna's military determination with prayers to

¹¹¹ Arjuna.

Durgā. For it is one thing to fight ordinary enemies, for instance strangers who invade in order to rob and kill, and quite another to fight one's own family and teachers. Kṛṣṇa now wishes to introduce Arjuna to this aspect of the situation. With his kind and friendly voice, almost as if at a family gathering in the presence of Arjuna's mother Pṛthā, grandfather Bhīṣma and teacher Droṇa, Kṛṣṇa says: "Behold our family!" This must have certainly influenced Arjuna's mood.

- 26 The son of Pṛthā then saw standing there his fathers,
grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers,
sons, grandchildren, many friends,
- 27 fathers in law, and well-meaning people in both armies.
The son of Kuntī, seeing all those relatives present,
- 28 having been overwhelmed with compassion,
said in great anguish:
Seeing all my relatives, o Kṛṣṇa,
gathered here for battle,
- 29 paralyzes my limbs, and my mouth dries!
My body trembles, my skin shivers,
- 30 and Gāṇḍīva slips away from my hand.
I feel as if I am being consumed by fire!
My legs can no longer hold me,
and I would say that my mind is failing me.

Arjuna's mood has visibly changed, from that of a determined warrior who comes to inspect the condition of his enemies, to that of a caring relative, concerned for his brothers. From this position, Arjuna cannot even imagine permitting any violent act against those people—why, he has defended and served them all his life, and now he is supposed to kill them? Unimaginable. Arjuna is, therefore, in such a dilemma, that his mind and his body are failing him. In his dilemma, a fight appears to be a completely wrong solution, and he sees all the family quarrels, even heavy insults and mistreatment as irrelevant trivia, compared to the deed he is supposed to commit.

Certainly, it is a state of consciousness somewhat higher than the previous one, where he was ready and willing to kill people without any further consideration, regardless of their nature and the consequences of his acts, but it is still far from satisfactory. For if righteous ones were to yield in such a manner, villains such as Duryodhana would rule the world unopposed, and everybody would live in a resulting hell. If we do not wish that to happen, we should take care for injustice not to take over in the world, and in some situations, violence is necessary in order to ensure that. Certainly, in this situation, limited violence directed against Duryodhana would suffice to avoid the slaughter, but as we had the opportunity to see before, this problem has many layers.

**31 O Keśava, I sense a bad omen
and see no good in killing my cousins in battle.**

Arjuna argues from a position that killing his relatives is evil, and that the only good that could possibly come from it would be to return the kingdom to Yudhiṣṭhira. But, what kingdom would it be, if all its people, starting with his dearest ones, would have to die in order to obtain it? Arjuna is, therefore, justified in saying that he can see no good coming from this situation.

**32 I desire not victory, o Kṛṣṇa,
nor empire, nor pleasures.
What good is the empire to us, o Govinda,
pleasures, and life itself?**

**33 The very people for whose sake we desire kingdom,
joys and pleasures are here in the battlefield,
renouncing life and wealth:**

Arjuna, being a great saint, lives not for his own sake, but for the sake of others, to whom he has devoted his entire life, finding joy in fulfilling his duties in a way that increases happiness in the world. Even at the great battle over Virāṭa's herds, he remembered to take away the garments from the famous warriors in order to give them as gifts to the girls in the court, wanting to make them happy. Let us remember that he did not kill the great warriors when he had the opportunity, but only stopped them

from stealing, allowing them to leave freely afterwards. Arjuna is not cruel, he finds no joy in violence, and his military greatness is only a fragment of his greatness as a person, and is in service of the whole. His entire personality is, however, in the service of the good in the world, finding the greatest pleasure in the harmonious company of his friends. It is therefore apparent that Arjuna is not a mindless military machine that would perform an unseen massacre if called to, but a sweet and kind human being who is able to protect others with unseen strength, if necessary.

34 Teachers, fathers, sons,
as well as grandfathers,
uncles, grandchildren, fathers and brothers-in-law,
and other cousins;

35 them, o Madhusūdana, I do not wish to kill,
even if I am to be killed,
not even for the reign of all three worlds,
let alone this single one!

Since Arjuna is constantly exposing himself to danger in military campaigns for the sake of his cousins and friends, he most certainly doesn't see why he would now, for a change, expose them to danger for his own sake. If someone's life is to be sacrificed, he will sacrifice his own.

36 What pleasure can we obtain
by killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, o Janārdana?
Only sin can fall on our heads
if we slay those who attack us here.

37 It is, therefore, wrong to slay our brothers,
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
What happiness can we obtain
from killing our own kin, o Mādhava?

Arjuna is now thinking from the position of pleasure: What pleasure will he obtain if he slays his opponents, and what if he doesn't? When he kills ordinary assailants, he feels the pleasure of preserving the conditions for normal functioning of his family

and friends. In this way, he contributes to their mutual joy, and they all live in happiness and prosperity. If, however, he slays his cousins as assailants, then no good can come from that: instead of preserving the environment of happiness, he would destroy it, creating instead a hell which echoes with laments of women and cries of children. From the position of the attainment of happiness, this war can thus have no justification. This, at least, is a line of Arjuna's thinking.

**38 Although they, blinded with greed,
see no injustice in destruction of family,
nor sin in betrayal of their friends,**

**39 why would not we, who see clearly
the injustice in destruction of family,
divert ourselves from sin?**

Now Arjuna comes out with a possible objection: his cousins wage war against him because of Duryodhana's greed, injustice and treachery. Those reasons made them turn against him and his brothers, now wanting to kill them in a battlefield.

If they are determined to commit such a sin, Arjuna thinks, because of their blindness and illusion, at least I, who see and understand, do not have to commit such atrocities. A man is responsible for his own actions, not for the actions of others; he forms himself by deciding to take a certain course of action in situations created by others.

When observed from a yogic perspective, Arjuna now thinks with the heart cakra, unlike before, when he was using the three lower cakras, to which belong the reactions of territoriality, self-preservation and aggression. He now uses a cakra of thoughts based on love and kindness, and all his thoughts are immersed in kindness of heart. It is rather awkward in his position, for he has outgrown the position of a warrior, not yet having attained the position of a sage of profound vision, and he is still in the middle of a battlefield, amidst armies that are about to strike at each other. It is a situation that needs to be resolved, one way or another.

**40 Ancient family dharmas are destroyed
with the destruction of family.**

**When dharma is lost,
adharma prevails in the entire family.**

Family dharma is a principle according to which a certain family serves to embody souls with inclinations prevalent in this family. For example, carpenters will take birth in a family of carpenters, warriors in a family of warriors, and priests in a family of priests. The principle of family dharma is the basis of the caste system: this principle guarantees the inheritance of certain qualities. It guarantees that brāhmaṇas will take birth in a family of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas in a family of kṣatriyas, vaiśyas in a family of vaiśyas, and śūdras in a family of śūdras. Without this principle, a system of belonging to a caste under a criterion of birth would be immensely unjust, as it indeed is in India today, where this system is a mockery, and a great obstacle to progress. Ideally, such a system would merely state the condition of the society: according to the level of spiritual development, people can be divided into several basic groups, according to their natural inclinations.

There are people who have a tendency to engage in spiritual discipline, study of holy scriptures, and the like; there are those who have a tendency to protect others from violence, and to preserve order in the world; there are those who have a tendency to produce various devices and objects that will increase the welfare in the world, and there are those who are able to contribute to the world with physical labor alone, for they lack the abilities for anything higher. In an ideal case of family dharmas, people would take birth among their own kind, and there would be no frictions within the families caused by, for example, a wish of a child, born into a family of warriors, to study medicine, or because a child from a family of lawyers wants to become a painter. Such situations significantly reduce the effectiveness of society, making people's education more difficult, since the experience of the parents in their profession is practically worthless to their children. Knowledge and experience thus become wasted, and must be acquired again and again with each generation: since children no longer live with their parents, they need to rebuild the conditions necessary for their existence, such as a house and a source of income, from scratch.

This all creates situations like the one we have today, where people need to work like slaves in an industry in which they cannot even see the results of their labor; women have to work as hard as men, for there is never enough money, and when they come home from work, they still have to raise children and do domestic chores. Such chaotic life resembles hell, and such a situation is hard to endure.

**41 When adharmā prevails, o Kṛṣṇa,
the women of the family become corrupt,
and with the corruption of women, o Vārṣṇeya,
begins the mixing of castes.**

It is a duty of men to take care of the outside world, thus making sure that the inner circle of the family can remain the woman's domain, in which she can function untroubled. A man should, therefore, take care of the financial needs of the family, as well as the protection from the potential threats. When dharma starts to disappear, the inner core of the family becomes increasingly more exposed to the outside world, and eventually, a woman becomes forced to take care of the finances, feed the family, and protect it.

In such a situation, a woman becomes exposed to various temptations, and since most women, as well as most men, are not firm and resilient enough to resist them, it is clear that the women who are exposed to such pressures will lose the inner core of innocence, and their soul will become hurt and corrupt. Such a woman will raise her children in a wrong way, thus exposing them to various traumas, and the children will, having grown up, manifest rebellion against the authority of the parents, for instance by showing interest in all forms of activity other than those of their parents. Then, of course, the family dharma disappears completely, and such children grow up to be problematic parents, who keep imprinting their dysfunctional patterns upon their own children.

**42 The mixing of castes leads both the family
and its destroyers to hell,
and their forefathers are also destroyed
when sacrifices end.**

It is quite obvious that those dysfunctional families represent hell to their members, and that they also turn the world into hell, by making it abundant with all kinds of frustration, violence, injustice and filth.

43 Because of the evil deeds of those
who destroy families
and cause the mixing of castes,
countless dharmas of castes
and families are extinguished.

Destruction of a family tradition is the fault of its destroyer. For example, if one kills the father of the family, he forces the wife to either take care of the entire family herself, or to look for another husband. If she takes all the duties onto herself, she will be exposed to great pressure, she will suffer greatly, and her life will become a hell filled with hardship and worries. If, however, she finds another husband, it can be a great shock to herself and her children, and it also breaks the vow of fidelity given to her first husband. All those things hurt the innocence of the soul, wounding it and leaving the deep scars.

44 We have heard, o Janārdana,
that when family traditions are destroyed,
people get to live in hell.

Those guilty of such a state are grave sinners, whose state of consciousness is hell, and those, whose family traditions have disappeared, live in a chaotic world filled with conflicts and insecurity, and thus they, too, get to live in hell, even during their earthly lives.

45 Alas! A great sin we intended to commit,
having been ready to kill our cousins
out of greed for the pleasures of kingdom.

46 It would be better for me
if the armed sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra slew me,
unarmed and without resistance.

Arjuna now concludes that the consequence of killing his cousins on the battlefield would be a complete destruction of the entire society, and it seems to him that no justification could ever be found for such an act. Having envisioned all sorts of tragedies his engagement in this war could produce, he decides to be killed rather than participate in such evil.

47 Sañjaya said:

Having said that before the battle,
throwing away his bow and arrows,
Arjuna sat on the seat of his battle chariot,
crushed with sadness.

Arjuna thus made a decision, but he is deeply troubled and filled with anguish, since he is not convinced of its correctness, and now awaits his friend's response to his monologue.

Chapter Two

1 Sañjaya said:

Seeing him thus overwhelmed with compassion,
filled with sorrow, with eyes full of tears,
Madhusūdana said these words.

Arjuna has spoken from the state of spirit specific to the heart cakra. Thinking with his heart, as it can be said poetically, he came to a conclusion that any form of his action in role of a kṣatriya, a killer of enemies, would be an utmost injustice, which would turn the world into a hell. Let us now name the cakras:

Mūla-ādhāra, “root-support,” is a root cakra, placed in the area of perineum and anus, and has the function of processing the form of prāṇa responsible for controlling physical matter within the energetic body, and also plays a role in a man’s perception of himself as a body and is responsible for the sense of one’s corporeal nature. To this cakra belong the feelings of security, possession and territoriality, and if its functioning is compromised, a man will have problems with feeling security, which he will then attempt to reestablish by various forms of compensations, from taking excessive quantities of food (thus becoming obese), to attempts to rule others and to possess great quantities of things, in an effort to fill the inner feeling of emptiness and insecurity.

Sva-adhiṣṭhāna, “self support,” is the second cakra, placed in the area below the bladder, and is responsible for control of prāṇa, meaning the esoteric element of water. Feelings of vitality, vital energy, and control over body fluids, belong to its domain. As mūlādhāra controls excretion, svādhiṣṭhāna controls of urination, as well as the sexual functions. Being the cakra of prāṇa, it also controls the flow of one’s energy toward the external world, at least in a lower level, to which also belongs speech; it is therefore a cakra of truth, or lies. Lying or sexual infidelity result in defilement of this cakra and disturbances in its functioning.

Maṇi-pūra, “the city of pearls,” is a cakra in the area of the solar plexus, and is responsible for control of the astral, the esoteric element of fire, which is the substance of all thoughts and feelings of a lower order. It represents a domain of thought, intellect, and all forms of activity of mind and feelings that surround the personal ego. All aspects of existence, in which “I” is in the center, are focused in this energetic center. Various philosophical systems founded in selfishness and lack of care for others originate from this cakra.

We can thus see that in Arjuna’s case all of those lower cakras are perfectly pure and in perfect order, and that his thinking is not dominated by his own physical existence, since he is ready to renounce his own life, property and welfare for the sake of others and for higher interests, and he is not inclined to amass wealth and to obtain the ruling position for the sake of rule alone. He loves the truth and avoids lies, even in jest, and his sexual functioning is perfectly pure. His thoughts and feelings are not founded in selfishness, and he is not so very important to himself, always considering the good of others, seeing himself only as a servant, or an instrument of implementation of dharma in the world. Such purity enables him to function from the heart cakra.

Anāhata, “invulnerable,” is a cakra in the chest area, controlling the flow of mental substance, the esoteric element of air. Feelings of love, endearment, selflessness, of giving oneself, of spreading one’s being towards the world, and of caring for others all have their foundation in this cakra. It is a cakra that doesn’t observe self, thinking only of others and their wellbeing. It does not criticize, does not injure, does not want to inflict pain, taking pleasure only in kindness, love and thoughts intended for the

good of all. This, of course, is not a cakra of insight into the highest truth, or a cakra meant to express the greatest reality. Those centers are placed higher above. Anāhata is sufficient to avoid the lower human nature and to abide in the higher, still not managing to exceed human nature entirely. Unaware of the deeper Divine laws underlying events, it is often hurt and experiences the state of suffering because of events and states that appear to be evil, and disturb the gentle world of the heart.

Viśuddha, “perfectly pure,” is a cakra located in the throat area, responsible for touch with the causal substance, the feeling of causality, the deep consciousness that understands causes and roots of things, witnessing their results without personal judgment and interference. It is a cakra of speech, but a speech that testifies for the will of God in the world, “the Word that became flesh, and dwelt among us.”¹¹² A man of viśuddha does not judge whether the things are good for him or others. He simply witnesses the Divine plan, and works accordingly. Any sort of thinking, selfish or selfless, is quite obsolete here, since it can be seen that all things already took place in the spirit of God, and the world is made perfect by God’s presence. Thus only observing how God creates the world, a yogī living in the throat center resides in happiness beyond human comprehension.

Ājñā, the brow cakra, is placed somewhat below the point where the eyebrows touch, at the root of the nose, and its radiating area can be felt across the entire surface of the forehead. It is a cakra of insight into the highest reality, a cakra of Divine vision. It enables us to see the world the way God sees it, perfect in all aspects, ending all fears, extinguishing all insecurities, with only incredible clarity, power, beauty and reality remaining.

Sahasra-ara, “a lotus of thousand petals,” is a cakra located partially on the crown (top of the head) and partially above it, representing a state in which the observation of the Divine reality melts into being that reality. The spiritual symbolism portrays the difference between the areas of the brow and crown cakras as a difference between the states of spirit of the indigo-blue and violet colors, where “color” denotes that of consciousness. Without direct personal experience of those states, their descriptions cannot be understood.

¹¹² John 1:14.

Even higher cakras are located above the head of the physical body, and there is no point in talking about them in this context. The highest yogīs have managed to identify themselves with the levels, which those cakras touch, managing to dive into progressively more subtle Divine aspects, and, rising above lower animal beings driven by frustrations, fears, anxiety, hatred and greed, they first become true human beings, such as Arjuna, to later exceed that state in order to become the true sages. Outgrowing the state of wisdom, by a lasting desire for the Divine and in devotion to God, they acquire so many qualities of the unmanifested Absolute, that they become Divine personalities themselves. Such a personality of godhead is for instance Kṛṣṇa, whose consciousness is endless, and represents the highest goal; one who manages to feel Kṛṣṇa, to grasp His true nature, and to surrender to Him fully, without any reservation, attains His nature, reaching thus, in devotion, the highest perfection of existence. He thus closes the circle of evolution: from an imperfect emanation of the perfect but unmanifested Absolute, through various gradations of subtlety of manifestation, to the fully manifested highest perfection, which is the highest Puruṣa, Lord Kṛṣṇa. To Him, the Greatest of the Great, who is the refuge of the wise and the just, who fulfills all desires, extinguishing them forever, to Him I give my deepest respect, and at His feet I bow.

He, Greatest of the Great, now addresses his friend. It is difficult even to comprehend the vast difference of their positions; Arjuna is troubled with difficulties on the heart cakra, while Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests the highest Divine plan on earth, embodying and focusing the highest qualities of existence within his being, qualities that, to others, are only an unclear goal of vague longings. To Him, Arjuna's anxiety must appear quite unimportant, but He understands its origin. If Arjuna were to wage war from the position of the lower cakras, from the lower motives that belong more to the animal kingdom than to the human domain, he would commit a great sin and separate himself from the ideal of perfection. In order to save him from this peril, Kṛṣṇa has first led His friend into the domain of anāhata with a carefully planned intervention, and now, he must guide him even higher, into the fields of deep realization, if He wants him to participate in His plans. Arjuna too will then be able to see the forthcoming battle not as a family conflict, in which relatives eradicate each other out of lower motives,

but as an instrument of implementation of Divine will, in a far wider context and purpose.

2 **The Almighty Lord¹¹³ said:**

**Whence came this fault, unknown to men of honor,
that leads not to heaven, but rather brings disgrace,
to you, o Arjuna, in this decisive moment?**

3 **O Pārtha, submit not to despondency,
which is unworthy of you!
Cast aside pitiful faint-heartedness!
Rise, o destroyer of enemies!**

Lord Kṛṣṇa is now actually testing Arjuna's foundations in the area of heart; by slight provocation he wishes to test his determination and thinking.

4 **Arjuna said:**

**How can I fight Bhīṣma and Droṇa, deserving all respect,
with arrows in a battlefield, o Madhusūdana?**

Arjuna stays firm: respectable people are not to be slain, for it is ridiculous and insane, as well as a source of misfortune.

5 **It must indeed be better
to live of alms in this world,
than to slay those great men.
Be they even soiled by greed;
killing them, all the pleasures
I were to enjoy in this world
would be stained with blood.**

¹¹³ Śrī Bhagavān, as it stands in the original, can be translated also as “the blissful Lord,” as “the blessed Lord,” “the Lord Almighty,” or similar, but in translation I had in mind the following: although the word “Bhagavān” is sometimes used to address great dignitaries, the combination “Śrī Bhagavān” translates as “the Lord God” in the mind of the one who hears it, and I did not wish to introduce confusion by diminishing the strength of this form of addressing. Similar is the word Īśvara, which can sometimes be used for a mighty ruler, but it literally means “the Lord,” and is used to address God, mostly in the aspect of Śiva, while God in the aspect of Viṣṇu is usually addressed as the Bhagavān.

He also confirms his detachment from the lower three cakras, renouncing his own welfare rather than harm others. Any joy attained at a price of other's suffering he sees as stained with blood, impure, and renounces it.

- 6 We know not what is better,
to defeat or to be defeated.
Killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will fill our lives with bitterness.
Still, they face us in a field of battle.

Arjuna is still aware that he is facing armed warriors, and it is a duty of a kṣatriya to fight them, regardless of them being his cousins or not. He thus faces a grave dilemma to which he sees no solution.

- 7 Struck by weakness, I no longer know my duty.
I thus seek refuge in you: tell me, what am I to do?
I am your disciple; teach me, for in you I find my refuge.

He suddenly sees a solution: after trying and failing to find the solution with his own strengths, he will surrender to his wise friend to instruct him of the right course of action. He will thus solve the situation in which he knows not what to do, and in which he could inadvertently, by inactivity, do something evil.

- 8 I see nothing indeed
that could dispel the sadness that dries my senses,
not even if I were to have an unmatched kingdom on earth,
nor if I were to reign over gods.
- 9 Sañjaya said:
Saying this to Hṛṣīkeśa,
Guḍākeśa, the destroyer of enemies, also said:
“Govinda, I will not fight!” and went silent.

Having exhausted all the arguments he can think of, he turns to Kṛṣṇa to be instructed, no longer attempting to figure out a solution himself.

10 O Bhārata, unto him, who stood there
in sadness among the armies,
Hṛṣīkeśa smilingly uttered these words:

Arjuna has found himself in the position of a problem; he is overwhelmed by the problem and is therefore overcome with sadness. He, who is in the position of a problem, is of course unable to find the solution, since the solution demands a radical step out from the line of thinking that brought him to the paradox. Arjuna has expressed a line of thinking that closes the circle, that is not contradictory in itself, that explains everything in a satisfactory manner, that is highly moral, and from which the solution cannot be seen. Because of his faith in value of his thinking, Arjuna feels there is no solution to his dilemma. However, he is wise enough not to say that there is no solution, when he found himself in such a situation, but he, on the contrary, says what really is true: “I do not see a solution,” and also to find the real exit from the dilemma: “to you, I surrender; tell me what is to be done.” Since he has found himself in a position from which he himself cannot see the solution, the smartest possible thing to do is to take counsel of a wiser man, in order to be shown the solution.

Kṛṣṇa, however, speaks from a position of the one who is free from the dilemma. He sets on with a smile—to him there is no problem. The problem is insignificant to him.

11 The Almighty Lord said:
You grieve for those who are not to be grieved,
in words seemingly wise.
But the wise grieve for neither the living nor the dead.

Kṛṣṇa completely ignores the Arjuna’s entire speech, for the solution to the problem is not likely to be found in the sphere that created it. He shifts the entire perspective, in a way that makes Arjuna’s arguments completely irrelevant. Arjuna has been so involved in worldly thinking, which sees a man as a body that lives and dies in this world, and where the greatest importance is given to the events in that worldly life, that he has completely missed something of great importance: a life in the body is but a small, insignificant part of the wider life of the soul. Kṛṣṇa here states: “You speak not from the position of one who has true insight

into the reality.” Arjuna’s line of thinking appears to be wise, but since he is missing the wider order and purpose of things, his wisdom is only apparent, in fact being an illusion to be rejected.

12 **Never was there a time
in which I had not been, or you,
or all those noble people,
nor will there ever be a time
in which we will cease to be.**

13 **As the embodied man experiences in his body
childhood, youth, and old age,
he also attains another body.
This does not confuse the wise.**

A worldly life has its beginning in birth and its ending in death. The soul is not determined by time and space; it has neither a beginning nor an end. From the subjective position of an embodied man, from the position of the inhabitant of the body, his residence changes from birth to death, passing through different stages of development. Like all those different stages of development that are parts of the life of the body, so is the entire bodily existence merely a part of a wider plan, and the death of one body is merely a step toward new birth, and birth is merely a step towards death.

A person, who looks upon life as something that begins with birth and ends with death, will be burdened by all sorts of delusions. Attempting to arrange the world according to his concept of good, from a position in which a man’s life is brief and transitory, he will remain frustrated by the fact that the world seems to be arranged as a source of all possible sorts of suffering and causes of death of beings, and will conclude that the maker of that world is either indifferent towards life and wellbeing of men, which is why he would allow suffering and cessation of the existence of beings, or that he is evil, having intentionally created such a world, which is a source of all kinds of suffering. He might even be powerless before the nature of the world, unable to arrange it in a better way. In any case, a man who is troubled by such thoughts cannot live in peace with God; he will feud with God, object to him and will, in any case, think that he, himself, could do a better

job; he would create a world without suffering, in which people would live forever.

Let us see what such a world would be like. Let's say that people live forever. The human body and mind are limited, and after a time they would become a source of suffering, since the body would start to decay, and the mind to grow weaker; prolonging such existence, even if it were possible, would just prolong suffering and would in fact be hell. An eternal life, in a human body such as we have now, would thus be either impossible, or a nightmare. We would, therefore, have to change the body in a way for it to be able to last forever, so that it doesn't decay, and the mind would need to be much more powerful, because a mind that forgets things is not much of a prize, since an infinitely living being would tend to improve itself; it would aspire to better itself. Making a physical body that would live forever is not an easy task. The laws of physics, for instance the second law of thermodynamics, which says that organized systems have a tendency to revert to chaos, oppose every attempt to create an eternal organized system. It is difficult to imagine a system that would last for even a million years, let alone forever. Technological products of human civilization, machines and computers, have a fixed order of molecules and micro-elements, which limits their life cycle; the second law of thermodynamics causes the microscopic components of electronic devices to become inoperative sooner or later; the movement of atoms and molecules in the material of microchips will cause electric lines to be intermingled or broken sooner or later, and the problem grows with the increased integration of components on an even smaller space. The more complex the system, the shorter its life cycle. We could hardly imagine a computer of the kind that we use today, that would last longer than the human life span without periodic replacement of parts that malfunction. It therefore seems that fixed systems, that are initially made in their final form, represent an inferior solution, and are even more prone to decay than living beings. The idea of replacing a human body with some sort of a machine seems well conceived at first, but it appears that such a machine would demand incessant maintenance and a great technological basis.

The alternative lies in a different approach. Unlike our technology that creates things in their final and fixed form, living beings are created by a continuous sequence of changes: not only

do they evolve from a single cell at conception to billions of cells at adulthood, but they also continuously exchange matter with the surrounding world, thus replacing and upgrading their building material. Such an organism is capable of replacing its own worn-out parts with new ones to a certain extent, its flexibility efficiently neutralizing the inherent tendency of complex systems to revert to chaos. True, such a system becomes progressively less efficient in repairs of its parts with time, so the effectiveness of the system drops with age, until death takes place because of a failure of a vital system. Compared with fixed systems, such dynamic systems have both advantages and shortcomings. For example, computers can reproduce only by an extremely complex industrial process, while living things can reproduce in a very simple manner, without any external means. The computer can also be repaired only by an outside intervention, while living beings have a built-in system for repairing smaller injuries. A small malfunction of one part of a fixed system will most likely result in complete failure of the entire system, while a small malfunction of a part of a living organism can be either healed, or its function replaced by another part of the system.

On the other hand, the chaotic organization of living organisms limits the precision of their desired function; their improvement is subject to the evolution of genetic material, while the development of machines is immensely faster, for it depends primarily on intellectual concepts and technology. The jet plane can fly much faster than any bird or insect; a race car can develop much greater speed than any living racer. Spacecrafts can fly in space in which the complex living organisms cannot survive, and computers can process data much faster and in greater quantity than any imaginable living being.

Still, the thing both living organisms and machines have in common is inevitable decay. Although some simple plants can live for several thousands of years, after that time they, too, are bound to die. All other living beings live for much shorter time periods. Therefore, we can conclude that the very laws, which govern the physical universe, make creation of an organized system that would last forever, impossible; even stars cease to exist as such after several billions of years. All organized systems are prone to decay, since matter itself is organized through continuous changes of states, and there is nothing firm and unchangeable in the universe;

an enormous number of processes, as well as the interactions of various forces of attraction and repulsion, take place in each atom of physical matter. Such change, which is a constant of the world, makes the eternal existence of a system impossible. One, who would attempt to attain immortality in the physical world as such, would be facing an impossible task.

Immortality of the body is therefore unattainable. It is the physical universe itself that makes it impossible. But if we cannot make the body immortal, why not make the essence of a being, the soul, immortal, in order for it to survive the changes of states of the physical body, which it temporarily inhabits? Such a soul can, of course, not be a part of the physical world, for the world opposes permanence and eternity, but if we stop for a moment to think, we will see that this physical universe is not the only thing God might have decided to create. If He could create a universe with one set of laws, why would He not create an arbitrary number of other universes with different laws? In one universe the fundamental building blocks could be matter, energy and various forms of forces. In another, the building blocks could be thoughts and feelings. In third, everything could be built from pure realization. In God's spirit, which maintains all things, all those worlds are contained within the same "space," just as different programs, executed simultaneously, that occupy the same "space" within the computer. It is equally difficult to think and speak of space in both cases, but this is the analogy that is closest to us. If all those worlds are simultaneously present in God's spirit, then it is, undoubtedly, the spirit of God that is the fundamental reality in all those worlds. Like the dreamer who is the only objective reality in a dream, like the computer, that is the only objective reality in computer programs, so is God the only objective reality in all created things. Every feeling of reality that a being is capable of experiencing, each positive element in everything—they are all aspects of God's reality, which makes all other things possible, as all things experienced in sleep are aspects of the dreamer. We can say that there is the human body, which is mortal and transitory. We can say that there is the human soul, which survives the death of the body. We can say that the soul changes bodies, that it inhabits bodies, and that bodies are merely transient episodes in the eternal life of the soul. But, if the soul is indeed eternal, then God must be the essence of its eternity, for, since all the worlds are

given and maintained within God's spirit, only God can be real and indeed eternal, and so, we must conclude that the eternal soul is, in fact, a way in which we can observe God. God is the essence of the soul, its permanent and eternal core.

Knowing all that, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells his friend with a smile: you regret where there is no place for regret, and your wisdom is shallow. The wise, who know the truth, bemoan neither the living nor the dead. Those are merely games, lower events; transient are they, and the essence of things is not contained within them.

**14 Sensory perception, o son of Kuntī,
produces warmth and cold,
joy and suffering.
Unsteady, they come and go.
Witness them steadily, o Bhārata!**

Sensory perception consists of several steps, through which the physical world is projected upon the spirit of the observer. Let us take the sense of sight for an example. First, we have a source of light, a physical object that either radiates light, like the sun or electric illumination, or that reflects light from a radiating object, like for instance the moon, that reflects the light of the sun, or a table which can be seen when illuminated by a light bulb. Such objects emanate electromagnetic radiation in a spectrum perceivable by the eye, and this radiation passes through the transparent matter of the eye and its optical components, reaching the retina, which is very similar in structure to the sensors of video cameras. In the retina, as in a camera, light is converted into a sequence of electric impulses, by means of the photoelectric effect; the retina consists of a large number of cells sensitive to light, producing a weak electric current which is then conveyed through the visual nerve and into the visual cortex of the brain. There, in a series of processes, electric impulses are converted into an image perceived by the human mind. This image is observed by the consciousness, and, based on that, it perceives the physical world. The perception of the world is not necessarily the cause of the disturbance of spirit; the spirit can observe the world without identification with its role in it, but it can also identify completely with that role, where sensory impressions cause a continuous series of disturbances, to which we constantly respond.

A small child perceives the world in a way that, for the most part, resembles the perception of a camera. The child sees gold, but has no concept of its value. It observes only a glowing yellow object. When a thief comes and steals the gold, the child is not even in the slightest disturbed by this event. It only witnesses that a man came and took the yellow object. If the child liked to watch the bright yellow object, it might feel discontent with the object's disappearance, and cry. Regret is therefore caused by attachment of spirit to a condition in the physical world. The object was first at one place, and now it is elsewhere. The reason for displeasure is therefore not in the object, but in our wish to keep some sort of association with it, desiring it to be in one place, rather than another. But basically, it is quite irrelevant where the bright yellow object is. It simply *is*, as such, and we witness its existence, change and disappearance. In all that, attachment to things is the cause of both joy and suffering. The child is pleased when the yellow object glows, and suffers when a man takes it away. This is, basically, the case with all the sensory perceptions.

15 Truly, one who is undisturbed by them,
 steady in both suffering and joy,
 is worthy of immortality, o best among men.

Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to keep the innocence of a child, which maintains spiritual peace during association with objects. A child has no prejudice about things, nor does he attribute to them qualities that they do not possess. Those who see things not as such, but as a sequence of meanings associated with them in the course of time and because of various forms of conditioning, are likely to suffer when the universe fails to meet their expectations, and threatens their understanding of the world, to which they are so attached. One, who has no expectations, cannot be disappointed. One should, therefore, witness the truth of the world, like the screen in the projection hall, that witnesses the movies; movies begin, last and cease. The screen is void of image; it is white and uniform, merely reflecting the reality of the movies. It does not impose itself upon the movies, but merely witnesses their existence. When the movie ends, the screen does not keep a single image, but stays white and uniform, in its own nature. In all movies, the screen remains the witness to their existence, not judging their contents.

A man who witnesses the events of life, in a way in which the screen witnesses the movies, without attachment to the observed objects, who remains faithful to his true nature, which remains steady in all the events and things, who submerges himself into the mud of the world, but emerges from it like the flower of the lotus, pure and unstained by mud and water, who remains conscious of the deepest reality for the whole time, in all things—he is indeed worthy of immortality.

Immortality is everyone's true nature, but what good is that true nature to us if we are never aware of it, but keep changing our attitude about ourselves and the world, influenced by various worldly events; if we long for and desire transient things; if we identify ourselves with transient things, and if we live in the illusion that our existence is limited by the body and its limitations, and that it is the case with the others, as well? Worldly events, projected upon our spirit through the senses, threaten to completely cloud and obscure our perception of true reality, and we are never, or almost never, aware of our true nature, which is the eternal and lasting foundation of the entire reality. This is why Kṛṣṇa says that we are unworthy of it: one who despises wealth and the kingdom, in order to live in a hut shaken by four winds, is unworthy of his kingdom. Likewise, one who despises the immortality of the soul for the sake of the mortal world, is unworthy of his true nature, for he is not truly faithful to it. Only when, surrounded by the world, he remains persistent in immortality of his true nature, will he become worthy of it.

**16 The unreal does not exist;
the real never ceases to exist.
The truth of this is known
to seers of the highest reality.**

This is one of the most powerful statements ever made, containing the knowledge of the nature of the highest reality. Nothing that is real is subject to transience. That, however, which is unreal, does not in fact even exist; it is like a mirage in a desert. The truth is to be sought in that, which is real. By observing the temporary nature of objects, we notice that they do not represent the essence of reality, for they are always founded in something else. Everything that is transient is not supreme, but has a foundation in something else.

The supreme is that, which has no foundation in things other than itself; that which is self-reliant and self-made, eternal and permanent. Those, who have dedicated their entire lives to seek that, which does not change, which is always a constant in all things, which depends not on circumstances, and who have found it and made it their firm foundation, are seers of the highest reality, sages of steady insight.

Looking at every individual thing, we should ask ourselves: “Is this thing the supreme principle, the thing upon which everything else is made, or is it given in something else, dependent on something else?” Thus seeking the supreme, we will first establish that all the things that we perceive with our senses are merely images, projected upon our spirit. Rejecting them as illusions, having their foundation not in things but in our spirit, we keep seeking. We then discover the thoughts, chains of thoughts and feelings that are mutually stimulated and incited; one thought gives birth to another, and when one dies it provides the material from which others are born. Thoughts are rooted in the emotional charge, in what we shall call *vāsanās* and *saṃskāras*. *Vāsanās* are, basically, subtle desires that cause us to think one thing is superior to another. *Saṃskāras* are impressions stored within our consciousness, and they could with full justification be defined as prejudice. Experience creates impressions that remain stored in consciousness. An example of a *saṃskāra* is an African proverb: “He who is bitten by a snake fears a lizard.” The bite of a snake creates an impression, a memory of an unpleasant experience, which then colors all present and future experience; the sight of a lizard invokes the experience of a snake into the consciousness, producing the feeling of fear, which is related to the experience. In our quest for the highest, we will find within ourselves the enormous quantity of such *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās*, which constantly color all our experiences, interpreting the present on the basis of the past. Instead of perceiving that which actually is, we perceive its heavily distorted and colored image, wrapped in countless layers of interpretation, making the perception of the truth of a thing *per se* hard, or, eventually, even impossible. We should therefore apply different yogic techniques, such as for instance the techniques of resonance, upstream *kriyā* and the technique of the inner space, which I have conceived in my system of yoga, in order to break through the layers of those things, dissolving and

releasing them, until we reach the pure reality, underlying all experience.

This reality is the calm screen of pure consciousness, on which all things are reflected, but in which none of those things exists. This reality is that, which cannot be experienced, for He is the one who experiences all. He cannot be cast aside, for He is the one who casts aside. He cannot be seen nor heard, for He is the foundation of both sight and hearing. The eye does not see itself. Likewise, the Self, the deepest reality of a being, is always the the one who experiences, never the experience. The state in which the experiencer experiences himself, in which Self becomes self-aware, yogīs call the state of unity, the state of samādhi. In that state, the division between the one who observes, the process of observation, and that which is observed, ceases, for I Am. In that state, the experiencer is the object of experience, and so the difference between them is lost; the consciousness is absorbed in itself, instead of being absorbed in the world of illusions, passing from the world of multitude into the world of oneness, from the Relative in which there is a multitude of things, into the consciousness of the Absolute, which is One and undivided, One in all things, the foundation of all things, which is the Self in all beings, the core and the foundation of all beings, and the reality as the foundation of all things. Like matter, which is the foundation of all material things, so is the Absolute the foundation of all things, without exception. In all multitude, He is the only one who is, the only reality. That is the true message of this verse: that, which is not the Absolute, does not exist at all; it never exists. That which is, that which alone is, the Absolute that I Am, the Self of all beings, the foundation of all reality, He, who alone is, never ceases to exist, for He never *started* to exist in the first place. He is the eternal foundation of all, founded only in Himself.

17 Indestructible is He, know, who pervades all.

He can be destroyed by none.

The foundation of the entire reality, which is the only truth, cannot be destroyed. That, which is not founded in Him, does not exist, for it has no foundation in reality. That, however, which is real, cannot destroy it, for any attempt to do so will only put distance between it and the highest reality. Attempting to fight

reality, one would only distance himself from it, and either disappear in the unreal, if he completely renounces reality, or convert, repent his mistakes and embrace reality. The foundation of reality can therefore not be threatened by either the real or the unreal. The more forcefully one clings to the reality, the more real and powerful he becomes, and the more he opposes it, the more pale and vague he becomes, to vanish, eventually, in the realm of the unreal. The reality is therefore indestructible. Those, who attempt to kill God, end up killing themselves, for opposing God estranges them from reality, and so they perish. Those, however, who find their foundations in God, will become more powerful and more real. The parallel can be made with the teachings of Jesus: *Satan is a liar and the father of lies, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.*¹¹⁴ Likewise, *he who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.*¹¹⁵ For he who is founded in himself has no firm foundation in God, who is the only reality, but only in an illusion of his own personality, which is made of various illusory things, such as fears, desires, wrong beliefs etc. He, however, who renounces all those things for God, and entrenches himself firmly in Him, *will have the water of true life, and never will he thirst.*¹¹⁶ As St. Augustine says in his work *De Civitate Dei*, the cause of the ruin of the fallen angels met ruin because they sought a foundation in themselves, who are not the essence, instead of in God, who is the essence, while the cause of the glory of the good angels was that they adhered firmly to God and praised Him, receiving their glory not from themselves, but from God.

**18 All bodies are destructible;
eternal, they say, indestructible and infinite
is the inhabitant of the body.
So fight, o Bhārata!**

The inhabitant of all bodies is one. The Self is the Absolute Subject, one and undivided; He witnesses the world within all beings. Birth, growing up, mature age, old age and death are

¹¹⁴ John 8:44.

¹¹⁵ John 12:25.

¹¹⁶ John 4:10–14.

projected upon Him. Creation and destruction of bodies are like sunrise and sunset to Him: only transient events being repeated. To Him, there is neither a beginning nor an end. Undivided, He pervades and maintains all. Who could kill Him, and how? Certainly not Arjuna with his arrows.

**19 Neither he who thinks to be a killer,
nor he who thinks to be killed
see the truth.
He neither kills nor is killed.**

In the relative field, beings without the realization of the Absolute Subject, the foundation of the entire reality, observe the death of beings, coming to conclusions about the transitory nature of existence. Without insight into reality, they are deluded, for the Self is untouched by worldly events; it lives in all bodies, gives reality and existence to all, like the screen in the projection hall, giving support to all the movies projected upon it. But like events in a movie that cannot hurt the screen, the worldly events, in which bodies inhabited by the soul play their roles, can never hurt the Self.

**20 He is neither born nor does He die;
neither does He ever come to existence,
nor does He ever cease to exist.
Unborn is He and eternal, always existing, ancient,
never killed with the death of the body.**

Ātman, the Self, is not the participant in the process of incarnation, but its witness. The Self is not conditioned by the body, nor is it limited by it. One could more accurately say that the body determines a possible perspective of the Self. The Self is transcendental to the relative field, and then again, it gives that field reality and existence. It is the Reality that gives all things reality, but its whole is beyond the reach of things, unlimited by them. Ātman witnesses the life and death of the body, but itself it is unborn and immortal. He witnesses the creation and cessation of things, remaining eternal and intransitory; without either a creator or a destroyer. Not only is He therefore not killed with the death of the body, but He is not even born with the birth of the body. He

is beyond the field of death and rebirth, and the realization of that frees the being from the shackles of birth and death.

**21 He who understands that he is indestructible and eternal,
unborn and immortal, o Pārtha,
how can he kill or cause death?**

One meaning of this verse is this: people try to kill each other exactly because of their misconception about mortality. If they were to become free of such an illusion, they would instantly cease with acts, seeing them as futile. The other meaning is that he, who is rooted in the consciousness of the Self, which is the Absolute, sees that I Am One, in all beings. Knowing My true nature to be unborn and immortal, he is not deluded by a mistaken belief that I die with the death of the body, or that I am born with its birth.

**22 Like a man who discards ragged clothes
to take new ones,
so does the embodied man discard the old and ragged body
to pass into another, new one.**

One can say that, to the Self, the body is what clothes are to a man; clothes can be ruined, after which a man disposes of them and takes new ones. Likewise, bodies are used up and replaced, the embodied one remaining the same. As clothes cover a man's body, so does the body cover the Self, creating a superficial impression of itself as the reality of being. As clothes tell things about a man who wears them, creating the image which he projects into the external world, so does the body cast a shadow of certain qualities upon the Self, creating a certain impression on it. The Self, however, has no such preferences within itself, representing a well from which all qualities spring, but in which no qualities exist. Bodies are of all kinds, but the Self in all of them is one.

**23 Weapons cannot cut Him,
fire cannot burn him,
water cannot wet him,
nor can the wind dry him.**

**24 Unbreakable is He and unburnable,
unmeltable and undryable.
Eternal is He and all-pervading,
motionless and changeless,
always the same.**

The play of elements that form the world has no influence on that, which is beyond elements. As clouds can apparently cover the sun, so can elements apparently influence the Self, by influencing the body. But in fact, clouds do not cover the sun, but the eyes of the observer. In this way, the image of the obscured sun is created in the spirit of the observer, for the rays of light fail to reach his eyes.

Likewise, because of changes in the condition of the body, such as pain, pleasure, dream, awakened state, happiness, unhappiness and so on, beings, because of the identification of the Self with the elements of the world, think that the Self is involved in those events, and that it is a part of them. But regardless of all those things, the truth is that the Self is touched by all this in the same way, in which the screen in the cinema is touched by a movie. Apparently, it acquires the quality of the movie, and is necessary in order for the movies play; without the screen, projection would not be possible. But in all that, none of the qualities of the movie reach the qualities of the screen. A knife in the movie cannot cut through the screen. A thousand guns firing cannot pierce it. Images of wild fire cannot burn it, nor will a display of the ocean make it wet. The screen is completely transcendental to the movie. So is Ātman transcendental to the world.

**25 He is called invisible, incomprehensible and unchangeable.
Knowing Him as such, you shall not feel sorrow.**

Like the screen, which is the foundation of movies as such, although invisible during the movie, so is the Self, although concealed and apparently invisible, the foundation of existence of all beings. He who knows Him as such will not be touched by changes of the body: neither will he be overwhelmed with joy for something pleasant, nor will he be overwhelmed with sorrow for the unpleasant.

26 If, however, you think of Him as someone
 who again and again lives through birth and death,
 it is still not proper for you to bemoan, o Mighty-armed.

There is a different perspective, in which reincarnation is seen not as the series of events on the projecting screen, witnessed by the screen, but from the position of an actor who plays various roles. In one movie, he is a killer, and in another, a benefactor. In one, he is a policeman, and in another, a criminal. In all that, although apparently living and dying with his characters, the actor remains untouched. We can perceive the Self in the same way, if we think of it as the soul of an individual being. The soul is born and dies in the body, but survives the death of the body. This perspective is more shallow than the perspective of the all-pervading transcendental Self, but is a useful working model for explaining the world. From this position, if we think that the Self is the one who reincarnates, we still have no reason for concern, since the soul survives the death of the body.

27 For certain is the death of the living,
 as well as the rebirth of the deceased.
 It is thus inappropriate
 for you to regret the inevitable.

From this perspective, the Self born in a body must in that body also die, for death is imminent to those who are born. Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna that his concern that he will indeed kill his teachers and relatives is obsolete: having been born, they are destined to die. Their death is the inevitable reality, and it is only a matter of time when it will take place, and whether it will occur in a field of battle, or because of the inevitable decay of the body. Arjuna should, therefore, change his perspective, and be concerned with the issue of dharma, or legitimacy of his participation in the war, instead of being preoccupied with the death of his teachers.

28 All that is created is unmanifested in the beginning,
 manifested in the middle, o Bhārata,
 returning to the Unmanifested after its destruction.
 What is there to regret?

In the beginning, only the Absolute existed. Not adding anything to the Absolute, nor taking anything away from it, the Relative came to be—not through a relationship of cause and effect, where the Absolute would be creating the Relative or turning itself into it, since the Absolute is the sole and primary reality beside which nothings else exists—but in a way which is a mystery. Nothing except Him truly exists. It is a mystery how is it possible for other things to exist, things which are apparently not the Absolute. The existence of the multitude is, in fact, a result of an illusion that covers the reality. This illusion is also real, since it exists, for if it did not exist, it would not be able to cover the reality, nor to create various impressions. But this is an illusion, and it does not exist, for the Absolute is still the only, undivided reality, in all. How it is possible is a secret inconceivable to the mind, for it unites opposites that cannot be united by logic. Like division by zero, which is a paradox in mathematics, for it gives an undetermined result, so does the attempt to understand how is it possible for only the Absolute to exist, and the existence of the Relative still to be possible, lead to a paradox.

In all that, the relative field represents a foundation for games in which things are created and destroyed. Apparently, the things in it came to existence, and apparently in it they ceased to exist, after spending some time in existence. That is the case with all created things, from entire universes to living beings. There is no place for regret in all that, for it only pertains to the created, to that, which has its beginning and its end in time. That, which is beyond creation, which is the unmanifested foundation of all, is untouched by time and transition.

29 Some see it as a miracle;
some, however, speak of it as a miracle,
or hear it thus described.
And having heard about it,
they cannot comprehend it.

Those, who behold the Absolute and the Relative with direct insight, see the existence of the Relative as a miracle. They know that it is so, but since it surpasses the limitations of thought and speech, they can only say that it is a great wonder. Some, however, hear about it, not understanding how it is possible. In any

case, it exceeds the capabilities of the human mind, since a human mind cannot understand that something can simultaneously be and not be; it is trained to see opposites as mutually exclusive, and it fails to understand how they could ever be reconciled. Still, both the Absolute and the Relative exist simultaneously, although one apparently negates the other. The One without the other is the foundation of the multitude and duality; and still, He alone is, and the other is not.

**30 He, who is eternal and cannot be killed,
dwells in the body of every being, o Bhārata.
You should therefore not bemoan any being.**

Ātman—the eternal, immortal, one and undivided—dwells in all beings. He is the foundation of them all. Bemoaning a being is a symptom of ignorance of true reality, which is the foundation of all beings. Kṛṣṇa thereby concludes his revelation.

**31 If you consider your own dharma,
you will find no reason for doubt;
for there is nothing better for a kṣatriya
than a battle in accordance with dharma.**

After concluding his revelation, which basically neutralizes Arjuna's fear of committing a great evil by killing his cousins and teachers, Kṛṣṇa now changes the perspective and returns the focus to Arjuna's duty as a warrior. There is nothing better and more natural for a man than to follow his own dharma, and Arjuna's dharma is that of a warrior.

**32 Fortunate are kṣatriyas, o Pārtha,
before whom the gates of heavens
open up in this manner.**

In the tradition of kṣatriyas, a death in battle is thought to be a great blessing, for killed warriors are to go immediately to the heavenly kingdom of Indra.

**33 If you refuse to take part in battle,
which is in accordance with dharma,**

you will renounce your dharma,
and, losing your reputation,
you will also commit a sin.

Those warriors, however, who refuse a battle, or show cowardice, are disgraced, and beside dishonor on earth, they also inherit hell afterwards.

34 Men will speak forever about your disgrace,
and for a man of honor,
disgrace is worse than death.

35 “Out of fear he ran from the battlefield,”
these great fighters will think,
and those who admired you, will despise you.

36 Many bad words will be heard about you
from the mouths of your enemies,
who will ridicule your strength.
What can be more painful than that?

Kṛṣṇa now tells Arjuna about the quite concrete and immediate consequences of his decision not to fight. Arjuna is a man of honor, with a reputation as the greatest warrior of his age, victorious in many battles. Unjust disgrace, which he would gain by his decision not to fight, is a greater evil than death in battle.

37 Either you will die to win heaven,
or you will be victorious to enjoy life on earth.
So stand up, o son of Kuntī, be determined and fight!

So if Arjuna was to be killed in battle, his good reputation will remain, and he will end up in heaven. If, however, he refuses his duty as a warrior and backs away, he will be disgraced, and will end up in hell.

If he wins, he will inherit the earth, and attain great glory because of a glorious victory over mighty enemies. It is a win-win situation.

After fully dismissing Arjuna’s metaphysical doubts regarding rightness by calling upon a far deeper perspective of immortality

of the Self, Kṛṣṇa returns the discussion to a quite concrete sphere of a warrior's duty. A warrior can either fight or not fight. If he fights, he is doing his duty, and it doesn't matter whether he dies or not, but if he refuses to fight, he does not adhere to his duty and thus commits a sin.

**38 Same in both joy and suffering,
in gain and loss, in victory and defeat,
be thus in battle, and fight.
This way, you will commit no sin.**

Without attachment to the result, by simply following his duty, which is visible from his own nature, a man should act in the world.

However, one must ask, what does detachment from results actually mean? If Arjuna fights with his teachers out of hatred or greed, then his fight must be the result of those lower motives, and he is to remain attached to results of that quality. The result of those motives is attachment to the sphere of lowness.

It is still difficult to understand what it means to be equal in joy and suffering, and in other pairs of opposites. It is often interpreted as indifference; the one who is completely indifferent whether he is happy or unhappy is supposed to have attained the state of wisdom. I would, however, say that such a person is a miserable hypocrite. One who smothers joy and hurt in order to establish an impression of being untouched by those things, creates frustration in himself, that is bound to explode sooner or later, which is the case with all members of cults that are based on misunderstandings of the *Gītā* and similar scriptures, and the meaning of balance in good and evil.

In reality, those scriptures say that one whose insight is founded in the higher sphere, who sees that the One is the foundation of all things, who understands the truth that one can neither kill or be killed, that such a man will most certainly be balanced: his ecstatic state is not founded in transitory things such as gain or loss, victory or defeat, life or death, but in the immortal and intransitory nature of the Self, which is the Absolute. One, however, who is completely identified with his mortal being, and who perceives the things that happen to the body as inflicted upon the Self, will, of course, be troubled by loss and pleased by gain. He

will be pleased with the pleasant and repelled by the unpleasant. Attempting to fight such feelings will lead him nowhere, except for adding a layer of hypocrisy to the other, already ample, layers of his delusion. Various religious movements are abundant with such hypocrisy, and those phenomena must be noticed by seekers of the greatest reality, in order for those mistakes not to be repeated. After seeing what is to be avoided, they should dive into the depths of their own nature in quest for the immortal foundation, which is perfectly undisturbed by the small waves of the shallow sea of transitory things. With their consciousness thus anchored, they will be untroubled by either victory or defeat, gain or loss, the pleasant or the unpleasant. This is the true meaning of this verse.

39 Here I told you the teaching of sāṅkhya.

Hear now what yoga teaches on this matter.

**With your mind thus affirmed, o Pārtha,
you will discard the binding quality of activity.**

Sāṅkhya is mentioned as a theoretical worldview, unlike yoga, which is a practical approach to activity. Kṛṣṇa has in mind the wholesome yoga, the one that first attempts to attain perfect realization, and then, through various aggregate states of action—through perfect consciousness, perfect thoughts and perfect deeds—bring it toward the physical plane, thus bringing the qualities of the transcendental state of the Absolute to the lowest manifested plane, the plane of activity in the world of matter. A true state of consciousness of a being is that, which can be seen in his actions. It is quite easy to experience the state of enlightenment—a great many have experienced it. It is harder to think coherently about it, and even harder to say something that makes sense. This is the reason why some, who in such attempts meet the limits of their abilities, say that such a feat exceeds human abilities. The most difficult, however, is to actually function from the state of enlightenment. It is possible, true, but it demands an all-around maturity of personality, which is accomplished by incorporating the qualities of the Absolute into oneself. In such a process, thoughts, words and eventually deeds become perfect, completely aligned with the highest Divine, formerly unmanifested, states.

Attachments are qualities of the lower nature, which is influenced by ignorance. As the role of the realization of the Absolute becomes more prominent in a man's functioning, his actions start leaving the influence of personal motives, such as, for instance, desires and fears. Desires come from the feeling of deprivation, and from the natural need to end this deprivation. One who is not founded in the infinite ocean of the Absolute, is naturally filled with desires, erroneously thinking that fulfillment of desires will manage to fill his inner emptiness. Likewise, fears come as a natural consequence of the perspective of oneself as a transitory and mortal being, whom the forces of nature can kill or maim. Knowing the true nature of the being's Self to be the Absolute itself, all desires are extinguished in the infinite abundance of *being-consciousness-bliss*, which is the Absolute, in fulfillment beyond all hope. Likewise, all fears vanish in realization of one's all-pervading and indestructible, immortal nature. Actions performed from a position unconditioned by desires and fears thus end all attachments. It is, therefore, possible to act in the world in a perfect way, simply reflecting the perfect nature of the Absolute in one's activities, without the lower qualities that would otherwise color activities, making them imperfect and binding.

**40 In this yoga no effort is ever lost,
nor are there any obstacles.
Even a fraction of this dharma
frees one from great anguish.**

In yoga, the first step is the realization of the true Self. Only from that position can true realization be conveyed into action, turning an ordinary human being into a lighthouse of Divine presence in the world. The very beginning of yoga thus achieves, in the realization of one's true nature as the Absolute, freedom from great fears that fill the existence of a being, which, deluded regarding its nature, thinks itself to be small, insignificant, temporary and limited. The very beginning of yoga therefore guarantees great peace, which is beyond the reach of unenlightened beings.

Having achieved this perfect state, every action of a being is properly directed. Even when making mistakes, a correctly aligned being learns from those mistakes in an optimal manner. By making

mistakes, he also learns about rightness. Firmly established in his highest nature, he attempts to live this nature in the world.

There seems to be no difference between the actions of a yogī and the actions of an unenlightened man: they both find obstacles in their paths, they both make mistakes and face problems. The difference is not as apparent from the outside as it is from within. An unenlightened man is unfulfilled inside, and finds himself in a constant quest for fulfillment. This need causes him to act, most often in great frustration, and is always thwarted in his efforts, since fulfillment is not to be found in the world, where he seeks it, but in the Self. A yogī, however, is fulfilled from within, and acts from his inner abundance, attempting to express his fullness in the world, seeking an optimal, perfect way of expressing perfection. One of them, therefore, acts from the position of inner emptiness, often encountering obstacles, and all his efforts are in vain, for he eventually must admit defeat, which is destined to him from the beginning. The other, however, acts from the position of inner fulfillment, and the tragedies of life do not exist for him. All obstacles are harmless to him, and since he acts without desires for personal emancipation, already possessing everything of importance, for him there is no goal to be achieved, and if there is no goal, then its attainment cannot be hindered, and no effort is in vain. For him, life is not a struggle, but a game. The game has no goal or purpose. Its outcome is irrelevant, for the game is played for the sake of the game itself, not for the sake of the goal it would attempt to achieve.

**41 In this yoga, o son of Kuru,
a determined mind is focused in one;
an indecisive mind is manifold,
with many branches.**

The mind of a yogī dwells only on Self. Thus absorbed in Self, he radiates from himself the light of enlightenment into the world. The mind of an ordinary man, however, is directed toward many things of the relative world, which he either desires or fears, constantly attempting to fulfill desires and dispel fears, thus never being at peace. In all that clutter, he misses the very point of things, not knowing where to turn. To him, it seems that amassing wealth, or some similar thing, would make him happy, and is constantly

thwarted in his efforts. Even if he manages to reach that goal, its attainment leaves him unfulfilled, and the lack of fulfillment leaves him with frustration and confusion. The eternal fear of death and transition, and the constant lack of fulfillment that burns him from within like a living wound, are the causes of various kinds of suffering. Not a single individual goal in the relative sphere, nor all the goals taken together, can bring fulfillment. Even if a being wants to possess the entire universe and all Creation, being immortal and with an unlimited capacity for enjoyment of all those things, lack of fulfillment still eats at him. The entire universe, as well as all Creation, are merely an insignificant and unimportant part of the manifestation of the infinite Absolute, which is the foundation of all, and therefore there can be no substitutes for the realization of the final truth. Only the foundation and source of all things can provide complete fulfillment and pleasure, and extinguish various desires.

Therefore only the mind of a yogī is truly focused in one. Even when the unenlightened one attempts to focus his mind on the One, there remains a difference between him, his mind, the thoughts within his mind and the object of his thoughts. If those things are not united, the manifold nature of the mind will continue to exist. Only when the difference between the Self, the process of observation and the object of observation is gone, the mind is united in the Self and attains the highest peace. Since restlessness is an inherent state of the mind, which attempts to create a link between the Self and the world, the disappearance of the difference between the Self and the world also results in the cessation of the motion of mind, and therefore Patañjali, in his work *Yoga Sūtra*,¹¹⁷ says that yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind, or cessation of the whirlpools of mental substance. Such a condition is attained by renouncing everything that could be renounced, or everything that can be observed from outside, for it is not the Self. By renouncing everything that can be renounced, “*neti, neti*,”¹¹⁸ one gradually removes the identifications of Ātman (the Self) with different layers of apparent things (māyā) or limitations (upādhis). The identification of the Self with various bodies is common. This identification is resolved by

¹¹⁷ Sūtras are thread-bound brief instructions or essays on a certain subject.

¹¹⁸ “Not that, not that.”

observing bodies as changeable, and Self as changeless, wherefrom follows that Self is not the body, but that the body is merely a transient envelope of the Self. We thus break the identification with the physical body, which passes through the various stages of development, from birth to death, health, sickness, exhaustion and vitality, and the changeless nature of the subject is witnessed throughout the changes of those states. “I Am” remains the witness of all those changes. We can find examples in the vital energy of the body (prāṇa), which grows and weakens, and the mind, which is undeveloped at first, then develops to a certain extent, is more able at one time of day than another, its functioning depends on many things, and its only constant is perpetual change. All the mental organs can be observed from a distance, as things that belong to a being, not being its inalienable part. To confirm that, it suffices to read a good book on logic, in which the mental organs are analyzed in detail. The Self, unchangeable and steady, the eternal witness of all events, is therefore not given in either the mind, energy or body, but is covered by all those things, as the sun that can be covered by the clouds. The sun cannot be seen directly in its obscured state, but its diffused light still irradiates the clouds and the earth. We should apply the wind of discrimination to dispel the thick clouds of illusion, and know the ultimate truth of our real nature.

Everything that we possess, that we can either have or not have, is therefore not Self. The Self is not something we have, but on the contrary, I Am. Being ourselves in the present, we realize the true Self, and when we truly know it, the walls of illusion, creating an impression that we are merely corporeal, limited beings, are broken. The mind then stops moving as well, and the being realizes the truth: there is only One. The Absolute Subject is the only objective reality.

**42 Those who do not discern, and,
focusing on the words of the Vedas,
say that there exists nothing greater,
speak fancy words
devoid of substance, o Pārtha.**

In all the things that concern the sphere of spirituality, people are divided in two groups. The first group sees the words and

observes their substance, attempts to realize the meaning of the words and reach the goal at which they point. The other group does exactly the opposite: they engage in memorizing the words of the holy scriptures, in careful execution of the ceremonies and in repetition of the countless prayers, which they chant like parrots, never considering their true meaning. Those who have no insight, who focus their attention on words and form because of their laziness, self-righteousness and attachment to trivial things, dwell in the sphere of trivia, never managing to understand the true meaning of spirituality.

A good example of this mentality is the brāhmaṇa caste in India, or the sect of the pharisees in the times of Jesus. They will *tithe mint and dill and cummin*,¹¹⁹ and miss the most important things in spirituality: a firm foundation in God, the highest truth, and a life of that highest truth in the world. This is the reason why the Upaniṣads often criticize the hypocrisy of those who learn the Vedas by heart, comparing them to parrots, which learn words in a similar manner, failing to understand their meaning.

The example of learning the scriptures by heart and babbling empty prayers is rather obvious, but only a few people are immune to subtle variations on the theme. Every form of substitution of essence with form could be classified into this group. There, where the dirty elements of personality defend themselves from the light of truth by attempting to build a man's sense of value from form and outside appearance, instead of the eternal highest reality, exists the mentality of "speaking fancy words." One should, therefore, study the holy scriptures, think deeply about them, and then turn to yogic practice with the mind set on the goal of attaining that, from which there is no higher, and he should abandon all lower things along the path. Abandoning thus the words of the Vedas as well, one should cling to their essence, which is the immortal, eternal brahman, the Absolute. That is to be done at all times.

**43 Filled with desires, longing for the heavens,
they perform deeds
with favorable birth and well-being in mind.
In order to acquire abundance and pleasure,
they prescribe various rituals.**

¹¹⁹ Matthew 23:23.

On the ascending part of the path of spiritual progress, one should attempt to refine the definition of his own identity, and to refine his desires, which follow from the identity thus defined.

A man who sees himself as the body will want to prolong the corporeal form of his existence. If he cannot provide himself with eternal existence in one human body, and believes in rebirth, he will direct his desires toward a new birth, which would be compatible with his desires and inclinations. A great number of projections of an ideal future body is made from desires for pleasure of various kinds. The cause of that is the present lack of emancipation, whose cause a being fails to understand, but in his ignorance thinks that he has been thwarted in his desires for fulfillment by some aspect of his present condition, which he would then desire to change, thinking that his future existence would then be perfect, enabling him the perfect fulfillment and pleasure. A woman will thus wish to take birth as a man, thinking that men enjoy sex and life in general more, and that their life is easier. A man will, however, desire to take birth as a woman, thinking that women enjoy sex more and that their life is much prettier. Impoverished men will desire to be born wealthy, while the wealthy, thwarted in their longing for fulfillment, think that the poor people live better, for they are unburdened by the troubles of fortune. Ugly people will wish to be born as beautiful, while the beautiful people will think that their physical beauty causes everyone to ignore their personality, and they will desire to take birth in a body devoid of beauty. Thus constantly projecting the ideal of existence, beings extend their delusion. Fortune and fulfillment are not gained by changing the form of physical existence, for they are not based in the body and its existence.

With the increase of subtlety of thoughts, beings free themselves from shackles of the physical concepts of existence, perceiving themselves not so much as the physical, but more as the astral body. They then see existence in the astral world as ideal, allowing them free and unlimited existence as beings of mind and emotion, providing greater support for their thoughts and feelings, as well as desire for beauty and creativity, than is the case with the physical plane, which heavily defies the influences of spirit. A being holds that the astral plane will allow it to experience fulfillment of its creative efforts, which will have no limits defined by the coarseness of matter; every idea will be realized,

they will be able to create complex objects, works of art, perfect music; they will be able to think undisturbed by the demands of the body. Such a being, although more advanced than one enslaved by the concept of physical body, still thinks of itself in rather limited terms, and is satisfied with rather puny things. Defining its existence as that of the mind and creative consciousness, such a being enjoys the pleasures of creating and thinking, and his longings thus become more profound with time.

Having outgrown even that form of existence, a being is no longer satisfied with creating beautiful images and sounds, but has fewer and fewer images and forms in his deeper thoughts, and more and more essence that underlies those things. He thus ascends from the astral, which is the world of manifested images, into a deeper world of the causal, in which he dwells in profound, uninterrupted states of great consciousness and bliss, with no need to convey those things into forms and external things. Such a being perceives itself as spirit, and finds his joy within. In spite of the height and subtlety of his position, he has no desire to outgrow himself. He desires to make himself better, to make his consciousness more profound and beautiful; he enjoys great strength and beauty he reaches beyond form, still maintaining his individuality.

At one moment, the being realizes that outgrowing his individuality does not mean the negation of personality, but on the contrary, its true emancipation. Having lost himself as a central point, he does not fall into nothingness and nonexistence, but on the contrary, he realizes that every point *is* the center, that the center has no end, nor does anything outside it exist. As the soul used to perceive itself as the point in the center, around which its action span is located, it now perceives itself as all there is, as the center which itself *is* the action span, with no more localization in just one body of just one being, small or exalted, now living a life of the all-pervading being, which is brahman, for whom he realizes that He was here all along, as the dearest and the closest, the object of longing he dared not long for, for it was beyond all hope and all longing, giving happiness to moments of happiness, realization to moments of realization, and reality to moments of pure existence.

In all moments of glory, That rose up to the surface, in a small and insignificant measure, compared to what it is now: the infinite,

unlimited, all-pervading state which can be described as being, consciousness, and bliss, a state which is neither, but which encompasses and goes beyond all; sat-cit-ānanda, being-consciousness-bliss is the word forged by the self-realized sages in order to explain the state of brahman. A being which thus realizes his higher nature, renouncing the shackles of his own personality, returns to the relative existence, without ever losing knowledge of the truth. In all events, he understands the true foundation of things, living not as one who tries to attain fulfillment, but as one who is fulfilled beyond all hope, who understands the immortal nature of the truth in every being, in all creation, and who lives this nature in his life.

**44 Firm dedication is not born
in the confused minds of those
who are attached to pleasures and well-being.**

Beings whose focus dwells on the exterior world, who attempt to fulfill themselves with things from the outside world, are never successful in their efforts, and their minds are constantly in a state of flux. They are temporarily thrilled with gain, and then desperately disappointed with loss. Pleasant and unpleasant things constantly move their consciousness, thus conditioning their state of spirit, in a similar manner in which the waves of the sea rock a small boat. For this reason are their minds always void of firm dedication.

**45 The Vedas deal with the three guṇas.
Be without the guṇas, o Arjuna!
Free of duality, founded in true purity of spirit,
independent of possession,
be governed by the Self.**

The three guṇas are sattva, rajas and tamas. The guṇas are the forces that drive all creation, in which there are virtue and harmony (sattva), activity and motion (rajas), and inertia and stillness (tamas). All beings, as well as all created things, are under the influence of those forces, and the Vedas, which describe Creation and the relationships between created things, are also made of guṇas, and are under their influence.

That, however, which is not created, in which there are no qualities, and which is the foundation of all qualities—only that can be the foundation, upon which steadiness of spirit can be built. It is difficult to build a reliable structure on quicksand. If the foundation is in constant flux, if it is not firm and steady, everything that is built upon it will collapse. Men, who build on the marshes of their own limited personalities, and the desires and fears originating therefrom, build a life that resembles the crooked tower in Pisa: because of a bad foundation, it tilts and threatens to topple. Kṛṣṇa therefore advises Arjuna to make his foundations on the eternal and everlasting, beyond qualities and influences, on that which eternally is, and never changes in its persistence. The personality built upon the everlasting foundations of the Absolute never topples or sways; under the influence of winds and earthquakes, it remains steady. One should therefore not be rooted in oneself or the world, but in God—in that, which is never made, and is never passing. When one recognizes this higher reality as himself, all his troubles have come to an end.

**46 Of what use is a small well
to a man who lives in a place abundant with water?
Likewise, of what good are all the Vedas to him
who has realized the supreme brahman?**

Realization of the highest reality fulfills all desires and extinguishes all fears. It goes beyond all goals and hopes. When That is attained, there remains nothing more to be attained.

All sources of pleasure, virtue, beauty and other good things are such because they somewhere have their source in brahman. This is why people desire those things. Although brahman gives true value to those things, no single thing, not even all of them taken together, can contain all of His abundance. Compared with the inexhaustible oceanic bliss of brahman, the joy that originates from the world, as well as that which originates from all holy scriptures and words that speak of Him, resemble a small puddle of stale water. To one who thirsts in a desert, a small puddle of water can seem like a great prize; the soul, troubled by various hardships, sees little comforts that come from the holy scriptures as a great treasure. He, however, who swims in a great, pure river, will avoid muddy puddles inhabited by frogs. Thus will also a

sage, who has realized the highest reality, avoid the holy scriptures and religious ceremonies which, although containing the truth and speaking of it, most often present this truth in a form that is stained with misinterpretations, delusions and nonsense, as much as the water in a puddle is soiled by mud and frogs.

Those, who long for the highest realization, need to avoid the scriptures, religions and ceremonies to the greatest possible extent. After having established that brahman exists and that it can be reached, they should discard the scriptures and adhere to yoga, for only thus will they attain pure and unsoiled realization. If one needs to have leadership, this leadership should come from a teacher who is perfect in his knowledge of brahman, fully rooted in Him. Any other kind of leadership will not lead to the highest realization, but will, on the contrary, distract a man from it, as sharks drag a drowning man into the depths, where he is killed and devoured. One can indeed overcome the ocean of illusion, and it is not that difficult for one who knows that the immortal foundation of reality is that, which is closest and dearest to his being; to him, the ocean of illusion seems like a small puddle that is easily crossed in one step. To one, however, who seeks the highest reality elsewhere—in statues, rituals and churches—the essence of reality seems distant and beyond reach, and the shores of the ocean vanish in the horizon, and he, exhausted by the hardships of the world, sinks into the depths, and is destroyed.

47 To you belongs activity, but never its fruits.

**Do not consider yourself the cause of the fruits of action,
nor adhere to inactivity.**

People find the concept of activity performed with the goal of acquiring the fruits of actions to be self-evident. Today's entire economy is based on the principle of acting for the sake of the fruits, or, in other words, for the sake of profit. If someone is engaged in something that is not profitable, he is seen almost as a madman. This is the way in which "serious men" see those who put moral principles, or some other higher purpose, first, seeing profit as a collateral effect; they will be called "ridiculous" or "not serious." How much more will they ridicule those, who sacrifice their own personal well-being for higher principles! This mentality leads to situations in which a man will not give his fellow

man a glass of water if he does not find it profitable. Such a mentality is demonic, hellish, and makes it obvious that acting for the sake of the fruits, however logical it might seem at first glance, is in fact utterly wrong and misguided.

One should act always from higher motives, never for the sake of acquiring immediate results. A man should in his activities be motivated by the pleasure and joy derived from his usefulness to the world. He should be motivated by love toward other men, which urges him to do everything he can in order to serve them in the best way possible. In his actions, a man should express his creativity, a sparkling light of his consciousness, and after the deed is done, his only reward should be the inner pleasure for having performed a deed which is harmonious, good and beautiful, and which represents his service to God and to the world.

It rests upon others to reward the worker out of their gratitude, to show their love for him and respect for his contribution to the world and to their own well-being, expressed by rewarding him in the best way they can. They should shower him with abundance in order to support his actions. Then, seeing the gratitude and happiness of men, he will notice the usefulness of his own existence, and thus happily sing to the glory of the Lord and praise His gifts, which are showered upon him in abundance.

A worker should remain faithful to his feeling of rightness, even if the entire world unites in a conspiracy against him. If nobody rewards him, he is to continue the work in the best way possible. Great deeds are never the product of a spirit attached to the fruits; the inventions of great minds, such as Tesla and Einstein, were not the results of a desire for abundance, or attachment to the fruits of actions, but a result of a desire to express their own creativity, which reflects the Divine creative force. Such creative force creates great deeds, while deeds that are performed for the sake of profit are merely a moral perversion, and a great threat to the principle of humaneness, and to the well-being of the world as a whole.

Inactivity, or laziness, is another great trap set on a man's path. Those who are attached to the fruits of actions, will see detachment from the fruits as a call for inactivity. "Why would I act in the world," they will say, "if there is nothing for me in it? I would rather do nothing, and at least save myself the trouble." They are mistaken. For one never acts for his own sake, but for the sake of others. Others are the cause of a man's activities in the world. A

mother serves her children not for her own sake, but for theirs. A husband serves his wife not for his own sake, but for hers. A blacksmith forges not for his own sake, but for the sake of those who need his work. A farmer produces food not for his own sake, for he needs not such abundance of food. A builder builds not for his own sake, for he does not need such a large building to live in. They all work for the sake of others, because of the joy they feel when they are useful, when they perform great deeds to benefit the world. That is the true pay of a worker, the feeling of purpose, usefulness and greatness in which he participates. Money is not his pay; the money he receives is the duty of those who benefit from his labor. It is their duty to express gratitude to their benefactor, who possesses skills greater than their own, and uses them for the sake of their well-being. To him they should show their gratitude by giving him abundance of all the things he needs. Thus will they all, working for each other, attain the greatest good, and a mentality of deprivation and attachment to the fruits of action will disappear completely. Great deeds are never a result of those who act for their own benefit. Those, however, who act for the sake of acting, because the actions need to be performed, out of a wish to share their abilities, as a gift from God, with others—they inherit paradise in this life and afterwards, for they are those who are truly satisfied. Their actions, rooted in pleasure and righteousness, make the world a better place, and serve everybody's pride.

**48 Entrenched in yoga,
renouncing attachments, act, o Dhanañjaya!
Same in success and failure be,
for such sameness is called yoga.**

Finding his foundations in the immortal and eternal, a man loses every motivation for action except that of selfless service. For the world has nothing more to give him; how can the poor one give to the rich? In the world, he, immensely rich with the fortune of brahman, can indeed find nothing that could add to his infinite bliss, nor could anything from the world take anything away from his blissful state. All the desires and fears, which are the only motives in actions of ordinary men, disappear thus from his consciousness, and he withdraws into inner self-sufficiency.

Yet still, he does not cease to act. As much as lower motives disappear, they give way to higher ones. Having nothing to gain from others, the tension in his relationships disappears. Since his only motive is to give, to share his abundance with others, he is perfectly indifferent to the reactions of others. A man who needs something from others can be unhappy if he is hindered in his attempts to satisfy his needs. He feels disappointment or anger, which come from thwarted desires, or even anxiety and hopelessness, if the thwarted attempts to fulfill the desires reveal a vast number of inner fears, which would otherwise remain carefully hidden from the world. Indeed, such a man, although maintaining an appearance of health, happiness and well-being in his relationships with others, resembles a crooked tooth, whose outside appears to be healthy, while its insides are rotten and diseased, ready to collapse at the first opportunity. However, yogī, who drinks from the inner source of bliss, from which springs the nectar—quite unlike the joys of the world, which flow from the senses, in which nectar is mixed with poison, and which produces disease and weakness of spirit—regardless of all, keeps the perfect inner balance. He acts to express his inner wealth, according to dharma, without expectations of return or fear of consequences. Actions thus remain, but only actions that resemble the behavior of the rain, which falls without desire for its own benefit, but still makes possible the growth of plants, as well as life in general. Like the sun, that shines without desire for its own profit, the enlightened man also acts for the well-being of the world, although quite unattached to it. Unlike actions performed from the lower motives of unenlightened men, his actions contain greatness and harmony, greatly exceeding in their value the actions done from attachments. Those actions are therefore not done carelessly and clumsily from the state of indifference, which is only a weakness of spirit giving birth to more weakness. On the contrary, they are the bright radiation of infinite strength. A yogī is, therefore, very much like the sun, which does not receive, and does not even wish to receive anything in return from the earth, yet, with a mere fraction of its strength, it gives warmth, life and light to the earth.

49 Deeds devoid of greatness are far, indeed,
 from the spirit entrenched in yoga, o Dhanañjaya!
 Having found refuge in spirit, act.

**Worthy of pity are those,
who live for the fruits of actions.**

When I was passing through India, I had the opportunity to see, with my own eyes, testimony to the misunderstood message of the holy scriptures which talk about detachment from the material. The local ignorant people understood it in a way that in the material, one should act superficially, clumsily and lazily, and that deeds, which are done in a superficial manner and unwillingly, somehow provide testimony to the detachment of the worker's spirit from the material.

If God had created the world like they build their homes, with armature protruding from the concrete, with facades unfinished or covered with mud, and similar details, the stars would most likely work like two-stroke engines from East Germany, smoking and producing pathetic sounds. Because of errors in calculation of the gravitational constant, the entire universe would soon collapse, but not completely, for the law of gravity would fail just before, and such a pitiful ruin would thus stay as a testimony to the mindlessness of its creator.

For what can a deed display if not the quality of the consciousness of the worker? The universe is perfectly arranged, its laws perfectly precise and balanced. That is so because its Maker is perfect, perfectly balanced within himself, and so all his deeds are such. Unattached to the fruits of His labor, the Maker created this one, as well as the multitude of other universes, with laws precisely arranged, and with an incredible abundance of beauties. Utterly unattached to His work, He created perfection.

Bound by laziness and ignorance, mistakenly thinking that they are showing their detachment, ignorant and lazy men commit superficial, incomplete and ugly deeds, testifying to the state of their spirit. They are pitiful, as well as those who see such things and in their delusion fail to despise them, but on the contrary start to praise them as the fruits of virtue and spirituality. Never are actions devoid of greatness a fruit of the spirit which is firm in yoga; on the contrary: only greatness, power and glory radiate from such actions. Actions that are the fruits of radiation of inner perfection, which is a fruit of the desire for service without profit—such actions contain greatness. Those, however, who act for the sake of results, are worthy of pity. Always thwarted in their desires,

they fail to attain their goals, and their actions are colored by desires, passions and fears, imperfect and often miserable.

No motive, however, produces deeds as miserable, as the motive of indifference and “detachment.” However imperfect deeds motivated by passions can be, they are still immensely better than those resulting from laziness and inertia. A passionate worker colors the work with his desires and fears, and thus degrades the greatness of his work, which fails to reflect perfection. Yet such a deed is often worthy and useful. The deed, however, which results from ignorance or laziness, does not contain greatness or value in any of its aspects. It is flawed in its entirety. If actions performed from the state of yoga produce fruits of undiminished greatness; if deeds done from attachment cause the greatness of the deed to be compromised, then the deeds done from ignorance and laziness do not contain greatness in any of their parts or aspects. Those deeds are utterly worthless, and exist only to the disgrace of their creator.

**50 The one of firm spirit is here freed
from both good and evil.
So dedicate yourself to yoga.
Yoga is the art of action.**

Good and evil are merely consequences of the attachment of spirit to the field of action. What reward or punishment can a rock suffer, if by falling it commits something that would be judged as good or evil by men? A landslide can collapse and create a dam, which can prevent a flood, thus saving many lives. Likewise, a landslide or a volcano eruption can cover a city or a village, thus killing many people. In all that, rocks fall, and this is their only “karma.” A rock is not rewarded if it falls on a place which men judge to be wrong, nor is it rewarded if it falls on a place which men judge to be proper. It acts without attachment, in accordance to the laws of nature to which it is subject.

A man is greatly superior to a rock, and possesses free will, as well as consciousness capable of deciding. If this consciousness acts in accordance with the higher laws, it contributes to the harmony in the world. Such a man does not act of his will, but of the will of the Lord: *not My will, but Yours be done.*¹²⁰ As Jesus said:

¹²⁰ Luke 22:42.

*I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*¹²¹ This is the true example of activity from detachment, activity from the state of yoga. Like a rock, that is unbound by human concepts of good and evil, but answers only to the laws of nature, an enlightened man is dependent only on God, free from the limited human concepts of good and evil. His actions are instruments in the hands of dharma, not in the hands of his free will, and so, as in case of a rock, there remains none to be rewarded or punished. However, unlike a rock, that is not the case because of the absence of consciousness or will, but because consciousness and will dwell in God, and can in no way be removed therefrom.

**51 The sages of affirmed spirit,
renouncing the results of actions,
indeed attain liberation
from the shackles of birth,
attaining the state
that is free from suffering.**

Every action done out of personal motives, out of attachment to the fruits of action, possesses a binding quality. To the degree in which the worker clings to the fruits of action, the fruits of action cling to him as well, for to every action there is a reaction of an equal amount and opposite direction. This is one of the fundamental laws of nature, which applies not only to the mechanical relationships as defined by Isaac Newton in his third law, but in a much broader sense, encompassing also the subtle area of causality.

Attachment to the fruits binds consciousness to the field of results, and those attachments condition the rebirth of the doer, in accordance with his desires and longings. Those who are attached to the fruits of the physical plane are born in the material world. Those who are attached to the fruits of the astral plane, such as, for instance, the emotional and intellectual states, are born in the astral, while those who are attached to their own existence as the core of activity, are reborn in the causal. Those, however, who have renounced their own selves, who have dispelled the illusion

¹²¹ John 5:30.

of limited personality, realizing that the infinite and all-pervading brahman is the sole reality—they receive neither death nor rebirth, for what is there to be reborn? The Self is eternally beyond birth and death. One whose attachments are focused on the Self, withdrawn fully from the worldly domain, inherits the eternal freedom, which is the quality of the Self. All suffering, caused by attachment to the transient and imperfect, then ends in that, which lies beyond the boldest of hopes.

**52 When your spirit leaves the dense forest of illusion,
then will you become indifferent
toward both that, which you have heard
and that, which you are yet to hear.¹²²**

The holy scriptures, revelations, speeches of the wise and those of lesser wisdom—it all confuses the spirit of the one who has not personally experienced the truth. To a man who dwells in a position of illusion, the truth can sound as likely as any lie. From his position, he cannot judge rightly; it is even possible that, because of his conditioning by delusions, lies seem more plausible than the truth, for they are closer to that, which he often perceives as himself; *for he is of his father the devil, and he wants to do the desires of his father.*¹²³ In such a state of delusion, he appears to be in a vicious circle with no apparent exit: he does not perceive the truth because he is deluded, and because of the deluding influence of his condition, he is unable to recognize the truth, and thus discard his delusion.

Fortunately, things are not as bad as they sound. There are ways in which such a vicious circle can be broken, and they consist of techniques of purification, the techniques of yoga. With those techniques, a man's consciousness gradually becomes rooted in reality, by breaking the patterns of delusions, wrong functioning, and other garbage which forms the majority of an ordinary man's consciousness. The only delusion so great, that not even yoga can defeat it, is the one that convinces a man that he should

¹²² A wordplay, meaning both "everything you have already heard" and "all the Vedas." The Vedas are called śruti, which means "that, which is heard," "revelation." Kṛṣṇa therefore speaks of the indifference to the Vedas, revelations and other similar things.

¹²³ John 8:44.

not, or cannot practice yoga, and that the practice of yoga is useless. Such a man is left to the mercy (or lack thereof) of various forces, and his spiritual progress will undoubtedly be slow, dependent on learning by personal experience, and through the process of reincarnation.

One, however, who has discovered the truth, is no longer dependent on the stories and instructions of the śruti, “revelations,” or the various holy scriptures, for he can now himself create such scriptures, for the benefit of others. He now truly understands their meaning, and is not confused by frequent ambiguities. In everything he hears, his awakened spirit is able to discern reality from delusion.

**53 When your mind,
confused by the heard,
becomes firmly united,
then will you attain the state of yoga.**

The state of yoga is therefore a state of true realization. Here, we are not dealing with instructions that are meant to lead us to attainment of the goal; on the contrary, we are dealing with descriptions of the goal itself. But the qualities of the goal must determine the quality of the path, for if the path contains not the qualities of the goal, it will not lead to the goal. The path consists of approaching the goal: by vague feeling at first, and then with greater and greater understanding, and finally with clear realization beyond doubt. Often can on this path the holy scriptures bring about more confusion and misunderstanding than benefit. For all those reasons, it is wise to practice yoga to the greatest possible measure, in order to replace vague convictions and attitudes with direct insight into the truth as quickly as possible, for only then will the mind become firm, merged into one. Religious convictions are often such an obstacle, that a man literally refuses to save himself with yoga because of mistaken beliefs based on misinterpretations of the scriptures—on the contrary, he rushes into his undoing. In his disturbed consciousness, in which good appears to be evil and evil appears to be good, the unreal concept of God, created on the foundations of illusion, appear to him as the supreme goal, and he, worshiping his delusion, falls deeply into annihilation, instead of saving himself by clinging to the

reality. Engaged in hypocrisy, which he calls a holy duty proscribed by the scriptures, he, thus worshiping the delusion, becomes a part of the world of illusion, building in it his firm foundations. It is questionable how many lifetimes it will take for him to repair the damage thus created, and whether he will succeed at all.

We should therefore put aside all theoretical matters, such as the religious and all other beliefs, and let experience show the truth. Those things might be true, but if we never personally experience anything in these matters, of what use is it to us? We can only become even more deluded than we already are. We should hold onto practice, to the yogic techniques of purification and the refinement of spirit, which will, thus refined and subtle, be capable of greater understanding, and adhere to the truth much more firmly. How can one of impure spirit love the purity of the truth? It isn't possible. He will either hate it, or fear it. It is therefore necessary to purify the spirit, and it will then, because of its purity, love the truth and adhere to it, rooting itself firmly and unflinchingly in the reality. Only a pure soul can truly love God, for it possesses His nature.

54 Arjuna said:

**What are the designations of a man of steady insight,
who is focused in unity, o Keśava?
How does he speak, how does he sit, or walk?**

Arjuna suffers from the same misconception as most men: that spiritual strength must manifest through a standard form. People expect a spiritual person to eat certain kinds of food, dress in a certain way, walk in a certain way and sit in a certain way, in order to stand out from other people. Indeed, such people exist, and have always existed, but among those who have crucified Jesus and would crucify him again today, if they managed to recognize him, by some wonder. They exist among those, who nurture falsehood, wearing the garments of spirituality, who attempt to replace the essence with form; among the pharisees of all kinds, dressed up as priests, svāmīs, ordained men of all religions, praying in the temples of all religions.

What special clothes and food does God, who is the foundation of all things, have—He, who manifests Himself in all things? He sees no difference between pure and impure, between spiritual and

unspiritual, between one form and another. All forms serve as manifestations of the infinite, unmanifested fountain of treasures, which is the Absolute. All those things are imperfect, and the highest reality resides not in them, and still, they all reside in the spirit of God, who constantly and incessantly maintains them in Himself, giving them existence. One who is engaged with things, placing one before another, fails to understand the truth about things, which is that the only true reality is God. One who fails to perceive that gives importance to the appearance and form of spirituality, seeing one form as superior to another. One who sees all those things as the same, equally insignificant and void of substance, gives appearance no heed whatsoever. In a temple can thus the greatest spiritual force be embodied in a man who cleans the temple or works in the garden, while the priests, starting with the highest one, might be empty figures without substance. While the pharisees keep upholding the Sabbath, the yogīs uphold brahman and reside in Him. The pharisees can display their spirituality in front of the world, for their spirituality is indeed worldly: it is made for the world to see it and testify to it, while the spirituality of a yogī is such, that it testifies for itself before God, and God testifies for it, and the world, not knowing God, seldom understands such spirituality. Such spirituality, indifferent to form, provokes hatred and hostility in men of the pharisee mentality, which is abundant in all religions, and they, again and again, in all ages, kill and persecute men of true spirituality, whom they see as a mirror in which they perceive their own ugliness and vanity.

55 The Almighty Lord said:

Abandoning in fullness all the desires
that reside in spirit, o Pārtha,
in Self satisfied with Self alone,
he attains the steadiness of spirit.

Arjuna asks about the exterior, while the Lord answers considering only the interior. Arjuna asks “how do they walk,” and Kṛṣṇa responds “their consciousness is merged within Self.” Lord Kṛṣṇa thus advises: “Turn your eyes from the irrelevant and to the relevant; from the form and to the essence.” Having attained the essence, the forms of its manifestation may be manifold. Likewise, if

the essence is not attained, the attempts of its substitution vary. Some attempt to stuff their inner emptiness with food, some strive to gratify the senses, some attempt to fill their minds with knowledge, some attempt to perform good deeds, while others wear the symbols of religion. The form of those substitutes can vary from case to case. Likewise, ones who are founded in reality, whose spirit is steady, can manifest their inner fulfillment in various ways, or choose not to manifest it at all, remaining in a state of peace. In any case, the judgment of one's spiritual condition, based upon the observation of his outside behavior, is of questionable value, to say the least. For the false saint will most often appear more saintly than the real one, and the person of marginal spiritual strength will put upon himself more symbols of spirituality than an avatāra. For instance, in Kṛṣṇa's time, there was a number of hermits who wandered throughout the forests, engaged in one form of spiritual discipline or another. By outside appearance, one could not tell which one of them had truly renounced the urge for pleasing the senses, and which one was merely pretending, his weaknesses merely waiting for an opportunity to surface. In the condensed *Mahābhārata*, we had the opportunity to see how ṛṣis and hermits often lost control at the sight of a beautiful woman, or, under the influence of unpleasant circumstances, how they used to cast a curse upon someone. Such a thing could not happen to a man who is fully established in the highest pleasure. Still, they were praised as the princes of spirit. On the other hand, we have Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, who appear to be mere warriors, without great spiritual pretenses, Kṛṣṇa himself being a complete Divine incarnation, pūrṇāvatāra, and as for Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa himself said in *Mahābhārata* that he is the embodiment of a third of His being. In spite of appearance telling us that Kṛṣṇa is only a king of the Yādavas, wise men such as Vyāsa and Nārada bow before Him and pay their deepest respects. That is so because their consciousness is not deluded by appearance, and the exterior, which says that one who dresses up like a saint is truly established in sainthood, and that the one who dresses up like a king is merely a politician, does not confuse them.

The criterion for one who has realized Ātman is therefore his consciousness. He has renounced all desires, abandoning them for the sake of Self. His spirit is thus firmly established and steady.

56 With mind undisturbed by misfortunes,
free from the ties of happiness, fear and anger,
he is said to be a sage of steady spirit.

The spirit, which is not completely established in Ātman, can still be influenced by various attachments, such as desire, fear, anger, etc. The spirit which, in spite of the worldly events of senses, retains inner balance, not turning his eyes from the Self and into the world of senses, is called steady.

What does that, in fact, mean? Often is such steadiness identified with indifference, which is, of course perceived from the position of ego. The ego, not being self-sufficient, can only manage to attain indifference, but it doesn't put it beyond its vanity and futility; on the contrary, indifference even further submerges the ego in those lower qualities. Only when a man outgrows the definition of himself as a limited being, striving for trivia and fearing trivia, can he, in the turbulent sea of the world, attain the steadiness of spirit. This steadiness means neither inactivity nor indifference, nor isolation from the world. It also does not mean insensitivity, nor coldness of heart, but on the contrary, it means the kind of warmth and love that is beyond reach of those who are utterly immersed in attachments, and who can hardly even grasp it.

For example, if an avatāra or a yogī talks to a beautiful woman, he will not attempt to show her coldness, indifference or even contempt, as the false prophets dressed up as saints often do, maintaining the farce of celibacy with great effort and against their desires and inclinations. To such a false prophet, a woman is a painful reminder of all his attachments and filth, surfacing in contact with her, and he often reacts with hatred and contempt. Because of the abundance of such persons in various "religious" groups, the misogynist mentality is often prominent there, often to such an extreme degree that those groups think of women as literally a lower breed of beings, who are then humiliated and abused in various ways. Yogī, who talks to a woman, is on the contrary utterly untouched by her physical body, speaking directly to her soul. He respects her body, giving it love and support, but his focus is on the soul, which he awakens and uplifts by the touch of his consciousness. That is so because a yogī has no motive for action other than loyalty to his inner, supreme reality.

Depending on needs, and on the law of dharma which rules over things, the yogī adapts his actions in the world, and those actions, which the unenlightened can interpret in one way or another, remain always beyond their ability to comprehend. A yogī, therefore, acts in the world not as an indifferent statue, but as a being which radiates enormous consciousness and love into the world. Other beings are most often utterly unable to comprehend such love, inventing instead various ridiculous rationalizations according to their level of understanding. A correct approach would, however, mean adoration and devotion to such a yogī, who is an embodiment of the Divine reality; it would mean surrender of one's own will to his, and humble learning before his feet. Instead of trying to rationalize such a yogī, people should attempt to understand him, and the difference between those two things is awesome. To rationalize, or explain, means to create a judgment of someone from one's own unchanged position. To understand, however, means to change one's own position in order to encompass something new and different.

**57 He, who is free from such influences,
who neither boasts in good nor mourns in ill,
he is of steady insight.**

A man's consciousness behaves like a chameleon, acquiring the color of the environment. The mind thus acquires the qualities of that, upon which it dwells. Insight is a contact between consciousness and reality. If a man's consciousness resides in the Self, which is the highest reality, then his insight is firm, for the consciousness and reality are in direct contact; they are united. If, however, consciousness is in contact with the transitory and ever-changing world of the senses, and ruled by appearance which tells it that it is separate from the essence of reality, consciousness then appropriates the qualities of its changing and unsteady environment, itself becoming unsteady and in a state of constant flux. The insight is then, if we can in this context even speak of insight, not steady, but on the contrary, it wavers and is devoid of firmness. That is so because consciousness, instead of dwelling in the reality, dwells in the field of the unsteady and the unreal. In the relationship of unreal things and the ego, itself also unreal, there are many uncertainties, and the changes of states are everlasting. The

ego, scared and wanting to ascertain its own existence, in circumstances that apparently favor its preservation tends to think of itself as the ruler of the world, infinitely boastful and arrogant, and a mere needle of unpleasant circumstances, reminding it of its transient and fragile state, suffices to face its inflated appearance with sudden decompression, throwing it into another extreme, that of bemoaning itself and lamenting over its destiny. It is, of course, utterly devoid of steadiness, and even trying to attain it from the position of ego would be hypocritical.

The only way in which a man can attain steadiness while surrounded by the world is transcendence of the world, or, in other words, a shift of focus of consciousness toward true reality, which is the eternal witness of its own persistent and everlasting nature. Recognizing this changeless reality to be himself, a man automatically becomes calm and filled with faith in the future. Fearing not for his own existence, he has no need to raise himself above other beings, whom he also sees as forms of the eternal and formless Ātman/brahman. He thus lives in harmony with both himself, the world, other beings and destiny. All that harmony comes from the persistence of insight, which is founded in recognition of one's self as the Self, which is Absolute, taking the place of the limited and apparent personality made from projections of the sensory impressions upon the mind.

**58 Having withdrawn his senses from sensory objects,
as a turtle that withdraws its limbs into the shell,
his insight is steady.**

A man's consciousness branches from its core toward the external world through the gates of the senses. As the senses are withdrawn inward, consciousness is calmed, and the motion of vital energy, otherwise directed outwards, is drawn inwards and upwards. In the technique of upstream kriyā, which I have formulated in my system of yoga, fundamental part is the withdrawal of the senses, and the withdrawal of thereby internalized energy upwards. The energy is drawn upward automatically, as a consequence of devotion and surrender of control. The withdrawal of the senses, however, results from a voluntary decision and conscious effort. Only after the yogī has withdrawn his senses into himself, thus giving up the world, can he practice the yogic

technique of purification and development of his energetic system. Only by renouncing his influence on the world by means of his organs of action and sensory observation of the world, can the yogī acquire the ability to direct the focus of his consciousness onto his inner space and into devotion to God; he accelerates the speed of his spiritual progress by the spiral upward movement of kuṇḍalinī, allowing the healing vital force to purify and refine his energetic system.

Speaking about the steadiness of insight, Lord Kṛṣṇa means establishing the vertical line of energetic flow from the root cakra through the central energetic channel (suṣumnā nāḍī), where the energy/consciousness flows through all the cakras, to eventually flow out through the crown. Since the cakras correspond with certain levels of consciousness, where the increase of the depth of consciousness corresponds with the physical height of a cakra, such a vertical flow of energy means the awakened state of a yogī's consciousness, and its focus in the Highest. When it is withdrawn from objects of the senses, the insight resides in a man's inner world. In order not to continue its preoccupation with sensory images taken from memory, as well as the various projections of the future and past, even in this inner world one should first remember God, and then focus his consciousness onto Him and keep it there. For that purpose I recommend any image or word, a fragment of a holy scripture, or a recollection of a past experience, which will invoke the state of devotion to God. When devotion to God is attained, consciousness is gradually calmed. Even in a direct vision of the Highest, because of the accumulated subconscious or unconscious contents, consciousness continues to move by inertia in order to process the remainders of thoughts or feelings.

One should, therefore, keep the consciousness on God and remain calm, therewith completely preoccupying his attention, and the activity of mind would soon cease, after a period of time that can vary from several minutes to several hours. In a vision of God, one should contemplate his own qualities, comparing them to the Divine ones, purifying them until God manages to radiate through the gates of his body, utterly unhindered, in fullness. For that reason I call my yogic system darśana-yoga.¹²⁴ In Sanskrit, darśana

¹²⁴ This yogic system consists, among other things, of the yogic techniques that can be found in the book *A Yogi Approach*, as well as on the Internet, at <http://www.daniel.org>.

means insight, a blessing of the vision of God, a Divine vision. Yoga means unity, a merge into one. Darśana-yoga therefore means union with God attained through Divine vision, or, in other words, acquiring Divine qualities through insight.

With persistent practice of yoga, meaning the ascending flow of energy/consciousness withdrawn from the senses, and with gradual adjustments to the system of increased flow, by widening and purifying the energetic channels and the organs of consciousness, the consciousness becomes increasingly more suitable to receive Divine qualities, and to manifest them. This culminates when the state of complete purification has been attained—the final stage of evolution, in which the highest qualities of existence can be sensed and expressed in fullness. In spite of the limitations of the physical plane, consciousness can be so refined through practice of this yogic method, that it becomes able to feel Īśvara himself, who is God, in the sense of a person which is the embodiment and focus of all the highest qualities. In a single moment of such insight, a being reaches the goal of evolution and, therefore, complete freedom from the cycle of birth and death. For, you see, after death, a being can discard everything except the highest achievements attained during his lifetime. I can personally testify to that, having witnessed and observed the process of the bodily death, and the form of afterlife existence of men I used to know. In all cases, their existence was determined by the highest qualities alone, the qualities they managed to touch and realize during their lifetime; everything else disappeared, as utterly irrelevant. After I managed to understand the principle of evolution, my understanding was confirmed by God.

It is a great comfort to beings, knowing that they are not expected to attain the impossible, and that God judges them not by their weaknesses, but by the peaks of their strength. Those, who manage to feel God in His highest aspect during their lifetimes have their peak in the greatest of all heights, and their rebirth, in order to develop further, becomes obsolete. They thus attain freedom from rebirth. It is a great comfort and joy to know that so little is asked from us, and that so little is sufficient for such a great accomplishment. This knowledge itself should motivate people to dedicate themselves to yoga wholeheartedly. Free from the fears of hell and punishment, practicing yoga in order to realize God during this lifetime, they will attain freedom from rebirth.

Many of the things I say will sound confusing: how is it possible for me to say that yoga begins with a Divine vision, and, at the same time, that a vision of God guarantees freedom, which is the purpose of yoga? Such a mess originates from the confusion in terminology. Let us, for example, imagine the sun that melts a block of ice. First, it melts the ice into water. Then it turns water into steam. After that, let us imagine the steam heating up to such a degree that it gradually comes to possess all the qualities of sunlight: its warmth, color and light. God is like the sun: it warms up the ice of a potential being, and by melting, it is given life. The water of life then turns into the steam of consciousness. The steam of consciousness then heats up more and more, until its temperature equals that of the sun.¹²⁵ A being, attaining in the beginnings of yogic practice some degree of contact with reality, resembles a block of ice, upon which shines the sun. It then begins to absorb the warmth and light of reality, truth and consciousness. In contact with that reality, the ice of ignorance and attachment melts, until the being, having acquired the progressively more subtle Divine qualities, becomes Divine itself; or, in other words, until he manages to feel the highest temperature of consciousness, the one that is the quality of God himself, in His inner nature.

Like the sun that melts a block of ice, so does the impersonal brahman, the supreme reality, apparently take the form of a multitude. And so, in the Relative, under the influence of the sun, which is brahman, evaporates the ice of man. Although unmanifested, He expresses His nature through manifestation. A being, representing in reality a localization of Ātman/brahman, is then manifested. As a being acquires the qualities of the Almighty to a greater extent, so does Ātman within him manifest Himself more and more. When the being in its evolution manages to touch the Almighty, it closes the circle of relative manifestation. Such refinement of a being's consciousness is the attainment of a goal far greater than the mere knowledge of Ātman. In knowledge of Ātman, a being knows that I Am indeed eternal, everlasting and all-pervading, that I Am the foundation and the essence in all beings, their Self. Still, this switching from the consciousness of a

¹²⁵ I would implore the physicists to spare me the comments about the decomposition of the molecules of water into the atoms of oxygen and hydrogen; this is only an analogy, and every analogy has its limits.

relative being into the consciousness of the Absolute, is from the position of a relative being something that begins, lasts and ends in time. When such an experience of samādhi ends, the being remains on the same stage of development on which he was before he entered samādhi, although now he possesses an immortal perspective. This immortal perspective will, of course, not have much value if it remains something that is entered and departed in time. Only when a relative being attains such a degree of purification, that he has nothing left to go back to in the Relative, when in the Relative his purification touches the highest Lord, who is a way to perceive to perfect Ātman/brahman from the relative position, then the being attains the highest perfection, reaching the final goal, never again to be reborn.

**59 One who refrains from sensory pleasure
still feels a longing for the pleasures of the senses.
Having experienced the Highest,
such a tendency disappears.**

A man's actions are motivated by a desire for pleasure. All the things people do, they do in order to attain fulfillment. It is therefore futile to attempt to control the senses by restraining them, refraining from sensual pleasures. For the problem is not in the sensual pleasure, but in the inner emptiness, and striving for the pleasures of senses is not a disease, but a cure, although a flawed and imperfect one. Unfortunately, this cure sometimes additionally contributes to the disease: in his striving for sensual pleasures, a man additionally involves himself with attachments of all kinds, resulting in additional disturbance in the mirror of the mind. This puts additional distance between a man and inner peace, which is a necessary prerequisite for any kind of insight into reality, and thus the achievement of real happiness. The solution is, therefore, not in depriving the spirit of even such a small source of pleasure as is the one that comes from the senses, but in showing it the greater, deeper pleasure, that comes from the inner fulfillment of spirit, and finding the purpose of existence, which is none other than God himself. When insight dwells on God, all desires are extinguished, and hopes are fulfilled beyond all hope. Nobody could, however immodest he might be, dare to even dream about that, which is attained easily and without effort when God

is seen. Imagine as much as we wish, we will fail to comprehend it, and however high we set our goals, He outshines them immensely. We should, therefore, renounce false modesty, and attempts to fulfill our own desires, and turn toward God, in order for Him to grant us fulfillment. Instead of attempting to bind our senses, renouncing pleasure, as we are oft ill advised, we should renounce the lower goals, and by renouncing lower goals we will gradually find that goal, from which there is no higher. Seeing Him, we will lose any desire for lower forms of pleasure.

Even in a Divine vision, the mind still remains engaged in processing the remaining sensory impressions, memories and intellectual residue that usually keeps preoccupying its attention for some time. As the vision of God becomes longer, the mind is gradually calmed and extinguished, becoming perfect in its utter absorption in God. Like an automobile that keeps running forward by inertia after we depress the accelerator before coming to a halt all by itself, so does the mind, after we stop feeding it with fuel of desires for sensory objects, keep performing its tasks by inertia, before spontaneously coming to a halt. The process of its deceleration can be quite long if we have accumulated large quantities of unprocessed material of desires, fears, frustrations and other garbage into the unconscious part of our personality during our lifetime. In order to accelerate this process, techniques of yoga, that dissolve and remove this subconscious residue, were invented. Some techniques of meditation merely sweep the garbage from the conscious area, in order to accomplish swift attainment of the state of meditation. That is attained at a price of compressing the greater quantity of garbage into smaller space. My system of yoga, however, sees no advantage in accomplishing the rather spectacular results in the first week of practice, and prolonging this state of initial accomplishment without further improvement during the following fifty years.

I see a greater advantage in diving into the residue of the unconscious, in order to dissolve it and remove it with a technique of yoga, however difficult and painful this process might be because of facing the traumas of the subconscious. A yogī who thus starts to purify himself, fearless, armed with the mighty weapons of yoga, observes the things he used to fear to confront. Dissolving and releasing his fears and traumas, he frees himself from a heavy burden, and so, after several months or years spent in self

analysis and purification of personality, he attains a state, in which deep meditation becomes something spontaneous. The insight into progressively deeper Divine aspects, and attainment of progressively higher states of consciousness, comes normally with practice. Such a state, however, is not attained by those who want to get results at a cheap price. Their kind will rather engage in some technique that makes it possible for them to work with *prāṇa*, or to attain a shallow meditative state quickly, flattering their weaknesses in order not to disturb them too profoundly. Painful indeed is the experience of contact with one's own weaknesses, and people by no chance wish to hear about them. It is for that reason that they will rather try all the methods of instant enlightenment and spiritual fast food. Of course, that will all lead to inevitable disappointment. Some will come to a conclusion that the spiritual field contains nothing of value, and that the entire story about enlightenment was invented in order to cheat the gullible, and to take their money. Others will, however, swallow the bitter medicine, and stop looking for quick and easy fixes. The path to heaven leads first through the hell of our own unconscious. There reside the things that keep the vision of God beyond our reach. Only with the insight into those things, which remain in the unconscious field exactly because our consciousness is unable to face them, will we become able to achieve the true peace of spirit.

**60 The uncontrolled senses, o son of Kuntī,
swirl and distract the mind of even a reasonable man,
in spite of all his efforts.**

It is unwise to attempt to extinguish fire by adding fuel, for fuel is something that already participates in the process of combustion. Instead of finding the solution to the problem on a level on which the problem itself was created, we should make a qualitative leap in thinking, and look for the solution where we have failed to seek it before. The fire should be extinguished by that which is absent from the process of conflagration. Only that will extinguish it. Likewise, a great factor of the uncontrollable movement of the senses is the movement of the mind, which, driven by various sensory stimuli, constantly changes the objects of its focus. Attempts to control the mind will fail to produce peace of

mind, similar to the example of a man who cannot lift himself from the quicksand by pulling his own hair. He needs support beyond himself, which he will grab in order to pull himself out of peril.

**61 Controlling the senses, one should take refuge in Me.
Then will his senses undoubtedly be under control,
and his insight persistent.**

Such support a man can find in God. God dwells in a sphere that is far beyond the sphere of an ordinary man's consciousness. Men often attempt to control the senses by means of a mental hold, which will actually establish them even more in the sphere of mind and senses, keeping them in a state of constant preoccupation with the very things they wish to control. Instead, a man should divert himself from this entire sphere, and instead in the control of mind, he should seek refuge in God. The senses and the mind are in a state of eternal motion. Peace cannot be attained by attempting to calm the sphere of motion, but only through transcendence of this entire sphere, establishing oneself within the sphere of peace. Pleasure cannot be attained in the sphere of senses, for the state of senses is ever changing, and a desire for pleasure will be fulfilled only in part, never completely. Only by transcendence of this playground of change and flux, rooting oneself in the changeless and eternal Absolute, the Absolute subject; only by establishing oneself within Me, can lasting peace and fulfillment be attained.

**62 Thinking about the objects of the senses
creates attachment to them.
Attachment leads to desire;
desire leads to anger.**

**63 Anger leads to delusion,
and delusion leads to the wavering of memory.
When the memory wavers, the mind is lost.
Losing his mind, a man is ruined.**

When the mind turns toward sensory objects, it turns toward the objective world. In attempt to attain satisfaction, perceiving

himself in relationship with things, one develops attachment to a certain state of things; for, judging things relative to himself, he judges some as good, and others as bad. That gives birth to attachment to the good and repulsion from the bad. Repulsion is merely attachment with the negative sign. Attachment and repulsion always come in form of either a desire for the beneficial, or a fear of the harmful. In every such attempt, there is a possibility of either nonachievement of the good, or occurrence of the bad. Then arises frustration, which leads to anger—the merciless walk across corpses in attempt to attain personal gratification, or hatred and anger directed toward things and beings that represent obstacles or opponents, or even threats. Thus influenced by anger, one loses his objectivity, becoming so deluded by considering his role in the world of things, that he utterly loses recollection of the actual state of affairs.

Such a man finds even his memory unreliable—for it becomes more and more selective, colored with the image a man builds about himself and things; often will the memory of one’s thought processes, that accompanied an event, cloud the memory of the actual event to such an extent, that a man can no longer be certain whether an event took place in reality, or in his imagination alone. Likewise, one preoccupied with passions utterly loses contact with reality, and such a man often observes nothing beyond that which takes place within his own consciousness. People who are the extreme examples of such a condition are separated from reality to such an extent that they maintain no contact whatsoever with it, utterly failing to notice real events, in fact perceiving the world as a mere stage for their subjective, insane inner happenings, perceiving all beings and things as objects, with themselves at the center. Those beings are the object of study of the psychiatric science, which studies psychological disorders. Because of their utter separation from reality, those people are often completely beyond help. They most often degrade completely, sinking deeper and deeper into madness, until they are completely lost.

The difference between such utterly disordered men, and what is commonly called “normal,” is therefore not in quality, but in quantity. Most people are crazy to some extent, but only those who in their madness leave the borders of social norm determined by the average, are in fact called crazy and treated in psychiatric

institutions. The less crazy specimens, however, walk the streets, or even control the world, which we are unfortunate to witness in the world policy. Only those who are free from the attachments of the world of objects are truly balanced, and can be called psychologically healthy. They, void of attachments, perceive reality as it truly is, uncolored by their own longings or fears. The very moment attachments arise, objectivity is lost, and with it goes the connection with reality, as well.

**64 But he, who moves among the objects of senses,
without attachment or repulsion,
his senses controlled by the Self,
he attains the state of grace.**

He who turns not his eyes from the highest reality in order to act in the world, but on the contrary, surrounded by the world and acting in it, preserves the perspective of the highest reality, observing the true reality of all things, with his actions he testifies for the Self. In order to remain untroubled in the world of senses, his consciousness utterly in Self, he must again and again choose the Self among all things offered to him in this world. Thus confirming, even in the greatest of temptations, the final nature of his choice, he attains the state of grace, the final fulfillment. A man always receives confirmation only after having made his decision; before that, a confirmation could only weaken him, taking away his freedom of choice, in which he tempers his consciousness. Having made a decision, he will feel either a feeling of guilt and mistake, if he has chosen wrongly, or, however, happiness and harmony, if he has chosen rightly.

The man who chooses to stay firmly in Self, in spite of surrounding sensory objects, receives the confirmation in form of grace, an enormous ocean of bliss which confirms the correctness of his choice. One who would choose the Self only because it offers pleasure greater than that obtained by the senses, would in fact be immature. It is for that reason that a man who aspires to liberation faces many difficult trials, in which he has to choose the truth for the sake of truth alone, without any personal benefit, and, in fact, in spite of threats of suffering and death. One who so chooses is steady and perfect, and he receives infinite bliss as a confirmation of the correctness of his decision.

65 Thus attaining grace,
all his troubles come to an end.
Filled with happiness,
his mind soon becomes fully established.

Having received such a confirmation, having already overcome all temptations, and having made the right decision, one's consciousness becomes free from all traces of doubt, which necessarily remains present even after the correct decision has been made. For a wise man does not put too much trust in himself, and constantly examines his decisions and thoughts. Although backing his decision with his life and all his interests, inside him remains a question that asks: "What if I am wrong; what if I am deluding myself?" Having received confirmation in the state of Divine grace, even this trace of doubt vanishes, and his consciousness becomes utterly firm, for he is no longer alone: the entire reality now visibly backs him up, for he has attained the true experience of God, in which no doubt can remain. A man who is rooted in God, who surrenders his entire life to God, trusting in God to take care of him—such a man now receives confirmation that he has chosen rightly, in refusing to rely on any support other than God. However firm and unchanging his decision, he has remained troubled by anguish: is it only in his mind, and will God indeed stand behind him and support him? Maybe he is but a deluded sinner, imagining something, and God, of course, will have nothing to do with it, leaving him to fail miserably? Such thoughts keep haunting him until God comes to testify to him, shows Himself to him, and gives him unambiguous support: "Yes, you chose rightly, you have testified for Me, and I now testify for you. You have chosen Me as your foundation, and that I indeed Am." When such a man, after having experienced all sorts of temptations, is showered by worldly fame and fortune, he stays firm in God, knowing wherefrom originates all his abundance, remaining indifferent toward it, seeing it as something that comes and goes, for he now possesses its everlasting and immortal source.

66 One, who is not affirmed,
cannot have balance of mind.
Without balance of mind, there can be no peace,
and without peace, how can there be happiness?

Without foundations in the kingdom of Self, balance of mind and control of the senses are, therefore, not possible. If there is no balance of mind, peace is impossible, and without peace, there can be no happiness. Happiness is therefore possible only when one has firm foundations in the everlasting and the eternal, where true pleasure resides, independent of effort. Where there is a need to invest effort in order to attain happiness, there exists also a possibility of efforts being thwarted. Such a state of uncertainty results in endless restlessness, where one is constantly influenced by anxiety and strain, and it can be rightfully said that all but firm entrenchment in the Highest results in suffering.

**67 As the wind carries a ship across the water,
so can even one restless sense
that preoccupies the mind
take away a man's insight.**

Insight means the vertical line through which the energy/consciousness passes. If insight dwells on God, the passage is vertical, along the spine, passing unhindered throughout *suṣumnā*, from the root cakra to the crown cakra. If a man's insight turns from God to the mind, which tends to process sensory perceptions, consciousness is then diverted into the lower world of sensory perception and pleasures, and so, with focus lost, a his consciousness is thrown across the stormy seas of the world, like a small boat in a storm. Any of the senses will suffice to divert a man's insight from knowledge, if he allows himself to be misguided into preoccupation with it.

**68 Reliable is therefore the insight of him,
whose senses are thus withdrawn
from the objects of the senses, o Mighty-armed.**

Reliable is the insight of one, who has withdrawn his consciousness from the senses, whose flow of energy goes upward, and who focuses on God, whom he recognizes as his true Self. The one, however, who gives attention to the world of senses, who is controlled by the mind, it being the organ that unites all sensory perceptions, and who falls into the delusion that he is the mind, or that the mind is his self, will be rocked and shaken by the

unsteadiness of mind, in a world in which both pain and pleasure are transitory and unsteady, as well as the very existence of the beings. The yogī who withdraws his consciousness inward, thus gradually purifies the layers of sensory perceptions that usually drown the consciousness. Free from that burden, he becomes more and more able to comprehend the infinite greatness, power, consciousness and joy of the true reality of Self.

**69 What is night to all beings
is day to one who attained self control.
Where all beings are awakened,
the enlightened sage sees but night.**

One, who is immersed in inner peace, dwells in a state that is beyond the reach of ordinary men. He finds fulfillment in withdrawal into the inner void, into the perfect peace of the Absolute, which is perceived by ordinary beings as only nothingness and emptiness, which they fear. There are the common misinterpretations made by unenlightened men, who in their ignorance adhere to name and form, attempting to define even God as a thing besides other things, with which they can maintain a relationship. They fail to understand that God can never be one beside the other, but only the foundation of all, One without the other. In their ignorance, they think they are doing God a service by proving that the Absolute possesses senses and personality, seeing every other opinion as an insult to their imagined deity. How could the Absolute possibly have senses? What could He possibly sense? Undoubtedly only Himself, for in the Absolute there is no gap between perceiver and perceived to be breached by the senses that would make the experience possible. What senses are necessary to Him, who already knows everything, who is the foundation of all knowledge? Senses are necessary to one who doesn't know, and has yet to know. Likewise, personality is quality of all persons. The Absolute, however, is not a person, for Him to possess personality, for He is the very thing that all beings perceive as their own personality and consciousness. All personality has its foundation in Him. To the ones who do not know those things, who are deluded by the world of senses, in which name and form reign, the true realization of God seems as the darkness of nothingness; to them, knowledge of the highest reality is but a night,

from which they escape into a world known to them, but which is governed by illusion.

Those, however, who have realized the true nature of the Absolute as infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent, as the foundation of knowledge, truth, consciousness, reality, bliss and other, they see Him as the Self in all beings, who I thus Am, with no duality, deeply immersed in the source of all qualities, which by itself possesses no qualities. Having attained this realization, they dwell in perfect satisfaction and fulfillment. Knowledge of the sensory world, governed by name and form, which is given in qualities, in which everything is transient and temporary, the sages of true insight abandon, perceiving it correctly as night and darkness, in which there is no reality and truth, and which is not to be desired.

**70 He, into whom all desires flow
as do the rivers into the always full and steady ocean,
he attains peace, and not the one who cultivates desires.**

If an immensely wealthy man wins a lottery, his joy will be insignificant, since this gain, although a fortune compared to the property of an ordinary man, does not make a significant contribution to his already present wealth. In a similar manner, if a wealthy man is given a parking ticket by a policeman, he will not be disturbed even the slightest, for such a financial loss is utterly insignificant in comparison to his wealth. The ocean is so vast, that the rivers keep flowing into it, and the sun keeps evaporating it, and its abundance of water is never affected. Likewise, to a man whose inner abundance is infinite, whose bliss is that of the endless brahman, sensory perceptions make no contribution, nor could they take anything away from his bliss.

Deluded men often attempt to imitate such a balanced state, however without the attainment of the inner bliss that makes it possible. As Śaṅkarācārya said:¹²⁶

*Without victory over enemies,
Without lordship over the treasures of a great land,
The mere words "I am a king" do not make one such.*

¹²⁶ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 66.

Likewise, not having attained the bliss of brahman, one who pretends to have reached balance of the senses and of the mind, who pretends to be untouched by gains or loses, resembles an actor playing a role of a yogī. Furthermore, such actors, having completely misunderstood the holy scriptures, and not having had the opportunity to meet a true yogī who is founded in brahman, do not even know what such a state is supposed to look like, and so they act wrongly, making a mockery of themselves in the eyes of those who know. A yogī will behave, in all things, like an ordinary man, but harmoniously, with balance, and his consciousness would not be based on weak foundations. He would not have to act as if he were something special, for he has no desire to be special. He does not wish to excel himself above the others, but on the contrary, he wishes to give the others everything that he, himself, possesses. He wishes to teach them how they, themselves, could attain the great treasure in which he is abundant. Instead of trying to raise himself above others, in order to give importance to his injured ego, a yogī, who truly is above others, would rather act as if he were in no way different from an ordinary man, but, in a right moment, he will show his strength, in order to make it possible for the others to inherit him.

Lord Kṛṣṇa will thus, for example, act like an ordinary man; he will apparently be touched and angered by the same things as an ordinary man; for some things he will mourn, and for some he will rejoice. He does not show his infinite consciousness, which rises above the ordinary men's like a mountain above the fields, by putting himself on a pedestal, making a show of his transcendence. On the contrary, he descends to the level of ordinary people and, by his very example, by his very functioning, into which the highest beauty of the almighty Lord is woven, he shows people the highest goal, in order for them to be able to attain it. Thus acts a truly enlightened person, an embodiment of the oceanic consciousness. Those who comfort their ego by wearing signs of spirituality, without true greatness to back it up, resemble madmen who yell "I am Napoleon," or frauds who buy university diplomas, thinking that the title itself, without the knowledge to back it up, has any meaning. No one can say "I will be the president of the state," and have it come true just because of his strong desire. On the contrary, he needs to have the qualities of a president, with people admiring him for those qualities enough to elect

him. Similarly, no man can say “I am enlightened” and have it become true just because of his desire and mental focus. He must have the qualities of an enlightened man, which are entrenchment in the Absolute, refinement of personality, freedom from attachment and sin, and a completely Divine personality and actions. Then he does not even have to say “I am enlightened,” for that is a truth that testifies for itself, even if he were to remain silent.¹²⁷

**71 Renouncing desires,
one who lives without them,
without the feeling of “I” and “mine,”
attains the highest peace.**

The states of “I” (ahaṅkāra) and “mine” (mamatā) are qualities of a limited personality, which perceives itself as a point in the center, surrounded with “not-I,” things different from itself. In such a state, a being sees its existence as uncertain, fearing that even the little thing that is “I” will become “not-I,” or that, looking from his perspective, he will cease to exist, and disappear into nothingness. Attempting to create comfort zone between the “I” and the “not-I,” he creates the category called “mine,” which encompasses things that are not “I,” but are under his influence, or in his possession, thus protecting him from nothingness. Ahaṅkāra and matatā are therefore necessary results of the relative existence of a being, which is defined through the perception of self as separate from everything else, and limited. One who outgrows such a concept of self in realization of the supreme reality is indeed free, and his condition is that of harmony. Without desires for achievement, seeing that there is nothing to be achieved, for everything is achieved already, he attains the highest peace.

**72 It is the state of brahman, o Pārtha.
Having attained it, a man is not deluded.
Thus established, even in the mortal hour,
he attains extinction in brahman.**

When the state of brahman is thus acquired, a man perceives the truth beyond illusion. The one, who manages to establish himself

¹²⁷ Compare to Luke 19:40: *I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!*

in this manner, attains the state which is in Sanskrit called “brahmanirvāṇa.” Nirvāṇa is a term adopted by Buddhism from advanced Hinduism, which in a free translation means “extinction.” It is a place where fire goes when it goes out, or, in other words, by ceasing to identify with his relative being, by realizing himself as Ātman, which is brahman, by realizing that he truly is brahman, and that he was That for the whole time, that brahman is the sole consciousness in all beings, he attains the highest accomplishment. It would be wrong, however, to think that all the karma of a relative being thus ceases to exist; on the contrary. Never is Ātman reborn, but karman—actions and their fruits. Attachments and desires are reborn, and the consequences of binding actions. Ātman merely witnesses their reincarnation in another person. Only when those things become Divine, are all attachments that create rebirth resolved, and not by a mere experience of Self. As long as samādhi is merely an experience of a relative being, which enters it and departs from it in time, there exists also rebirth.

Premature is, therefore, the joy of those, who have managed to experience the state of the Absolute subject, and whose personality is, in all other respects, unrefined and non-Divine. I have seen even such deranged people who yelled at others: “I am God, I am the Absolute, bow before me!” all because samādhi was experienced by an immature and unrefined lower personality. In such a case, after departure from the state of samādhi, the ego somehow manages to proclaim itself to be the very thing that utterly negates it, thinking that “I,” from the position of the Absolute subject, means “I” from the position of ahaṅkāra, the lower ego, which perceives itself as separate from everything else. Such an immature being can, in his boastful madness, create only scandal, bringing the teaching of the nonduality of Ātman and brahman a bad reputation. Exactly this situation, in which some deluded person says “I am God,” is what unenlightened people perceive the teaching of nonduality to be. By criticizing such a thing as nonsense, they are at the same time both right and wrong. They are right thinking that it is utterly senseless for a being, limited in all regards, to claim to be God, for God is in no way limited. They are right to say that God would never be boastful and arrogant, for God is not a thing among other things, to give any importance to relationships between them; for what would the all-fulfilled God have to attain if one was to bow before Him? Nothing. One’s

worship cannot add anything to God, just as one's godlessness cannot take anything away from Him. Being the one who gives fulfillment and existence to all, He has nothing to gain from anyone, but the beings, however, can increase their reality and fulfillment by worshipping Him. Those who praise Him, affirm Reality in the depths of their being, while those who renounce Him, have their foundations in illusion. Worship of God therefore gives nothing to God, giving, however, everything to us.

The difference between a purified, enlightened personality, and a diseased ego of a psychopath, who stole samādhi by raping his personality or by drugs, is visible from behavior after the experience. A purified saint will then bow before everybody, praising the Lord in everyone, for he sees Him residing there. He will bow before everybody's feet, and will serve everyone, seeing brahman in all. Even when he decides to criticize someone, he does it by affirming brahman in him, attacking the illusion. He will never boast, saying "I am God," but he will, on the contrary, say "my beloved Lord is indeed everything." In the greatest ecstasy he will say that I Am, without the other, when he merges with the Self in love and admiration, the Self which he perceives as the object of his admiration, adoration and love. A saint is, therefore, the embodiment of all the Divine qualities; he behaves in a way that is worthy of the one who perceives God as All, as the foundation of all things, from a speck of dust to a being of highest consciousness. One, however, who is immature, whose ego is weak, and who, instead of wishing to bow before everybody, wishes the others to bow before him, who is not sure of himself, who fears for his own existence, which he perceives as weak, miserable, threatened and limited, he will forget all the lessons that are to be learned from the experience of Self, utterly deluded by the demands of the ego. The experience of Self at first says "I is Him, everything is Him," in savikalpa samādhi, and then, in nirvikalpa samādhi, he realizes that "He is my Self, I am Him, He is all that is, I Am." To a mature personality, departure from the state of samādhi gives a reason to serve everybody, for he realizes the unity of all. The one, however, who failed to absorb the true message, whose personality is immature, will boast and try to rule others, as if he had not seen that there are no others.

When Kṛṣṇa, therefore, says that one who attains the state of brahman, even at the time of his death, attains the highest freedom,

extinction in brahman, and is not reborn, He has in mind the mature personality of a saint, who melts away in his beloved, who utterly loses himself in God, and therefore finds extinction in brahman. One, however, who wishes to preserve himself, who wishes to return into himself, is reborn, for the goal of perfection is beyond his reach.

Chapter Three

1 Arjuna said:

**If You praise knowledge above action, o Janārdana,
why then do You force me to commit
this atrocious act, o Keśava?**

Let us now make a small resumé: Arjuna first expressed his perspective of the battle as a godless fratricidal slaughter, declaring his wish not to have any part in this, and also, confused by the conflict of duty and rightness, he asks Kṛṣṇa to teach and guide him. Kṛṣṇa then revealed unto him the teaching of the immortal nature of the Self, praising, finally, transcendence above action. From all that, Arjuna concluded that he is wise, who renounces all in realization, and that realization should be the goal of one's longings; in no part of Kṛṣṇa's revelation can there be seen why killers of their own brothers and relatives would possess high qualities and realization. In this light, it is understandable why Arjuna, although instructed in things of greatest importance, fails to see how fighting his relatives would be their practical application.

- 2 With those apparently contradictory statements
you are confusing my mind.
Therefore I implore You, tell me clearly
how am I to attain the greatest good.**

Kṛṣṇa on one hand says that one should perform his duties and fight, and on the other hand he says that one should renounce all binding and sinful activities, and dive into the brahman. On one hand he says that the transcendental Self is neither born nor does it die, but is eternally unborn and immortal. On the other hand he says that those who perform sinful acts in their delusion, fall, while those who are unattached acquire the greatest good. It is obvious why Arjuna failed to see the clear instructions regarding his course of action.

3 The almighty Lord said:

**As I said before, in this world
there are two paths, o Sinless one:
the yoga of knowledge for men of thought,
and the yoga of action for men of deed.**

This reflects upon the mention of sāṅkhya and yoga in verse 2:39. One could, however, say that, since thoughts are merely a more subtle form of action, the yoga of knowledge also represents a certain form of the yoga of action. For every action begins in thought. Thoughts then take more and more concrete forms, finally finding their expression in words either spoken or unspoken, being a clear solidification of the direction of thoughts, and in deeds, as the final degree.

4 Neither will refraining from action

**lead a man to inactivity,
nor will renunciation itself
lead him to perfection.**

Inactivity, or transcendence of the field of action, is not synonymous with refraining from action, where a man is forced to act by his very nature, but opposes it and thus appears not to be active. Such a man acts indeed, but in a subtle field of thoughts, where he invests great effort into opposing his own nature. Unlike people who have misunderstood the very point, and try to attain peace of spirit by attempting to control it by force and by opposing their own nature, and who thus live in a state of great inner turmoil, with only an appearance of peace on the outside, yogīs attain peace by withdrawing their consciousness from the

sphere of action, by renouncing their influence and worldly interests, withdrawing their senses and organs of action into consciousness, and thus surrendering to God. This looks like a difficult and great achievement, but is in fact something that every darśana-yogī performs on a daily basis in the practice of upstream kriyā. Withdrawal of the senses from the world, and the internalization of consciousness, are elementary steps, at which even beginners succeed. Such a state is a state of true inactivity, where a man is dormant to the world, as Kṛṣṇa said in verse 2:68.

The same thing applies to renunciation; there are those who understand it correctly, renouncing their attachments to the world, surrendering to God. Those, however, who have misunderstood it, try, still dwelling in the worldly sphere with their senses and organs of action, to renounce this or that. Renunciation within the world is useless and hypocritical; one should renounce the world as such, in whole. Even one sense, dwelling in the sphere of the world, suffices to bind the spirit to the external. Only when the senses and consciousness are fully withdrawn from the world, and abide in devotion to God, does one attain true renunciation, which leads to perfection. Renunciation of a man who is bound by the world resembles a miser's renunciation of a part of his money. Staying apparently without it, he keeps thinking about it for the whole time, thus keeping the inner hold on it. His consciousness therefore constantly resides in the sphere of money. Likewise, a man who renounces certain things for the sake of some imagined spirituality, has to invest so much willpower, focus and mental strength into that renunciation, that he is actually engaged in the object of renunciation ten times more than those who do not renounce it, and basically only increases his attachment to that thing.

I once met such a person, who in his deep delusion desired to engage himself in renunciation of speech, a vow of silence. When a yogī is silent, his silence is a result of the calmed thoughts and withdrawal of the consciousness from the world of name and form. In such a state, he is left with nothing to think or speak, and so his silence is merely a spontaneous expression of his internal condition. This individual, however, although apparently not pronouncing the words, was thinking and speaking within himself so loudly that it seemed like a mixture of ridiculous and regrettable. I almost came to the point of telling him not to yell so loudly. These

words of Kṛṣṇa are meant to warn us of exactly such mistaken concepts of renunciation and inactivity.

- 5 **No one indeed can survive,
even for a moment, without acting.
For everyone is forced into actions
by the qualities of Nature itself.**¹²⁸

Theoreticians of sāṅkhya have summarized the practical experience of the reality in the following way:

All of Creation, therefore the entire relative sphere of existence, is divided into two fundamental principles: Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Both those principles have their foundation in the unmanifested brahman, being representations of the Unmanifested. Puruṣa is the principle of spirit, the active principle of consciousness, while Prakṛti represents the passive principle of nature, or various aggregate states of the subtlety of manifestation, based on three basic qualities, or guṇas: sattva, or virtue and harmony, rajas, or passion and dynamics, and tamas, or inertia, inactivity. In all the states of Prakṛti those three qualities exist, mixed in various ratios. It is, of course, a simplification, a model of interpretation of the reality which can be made differently, but it provides sufficient theoretical basis for the interpretation of experience.

Prakṛti is often wrongly translated as material nature. In a very broad definition of matter, that might even pass as a truth, but matter, meaning physical substance, along with all the subtle variations on the theme which together make our physical universe, is but the lowest, or one of the lowest aggregate states of Prakṛti.

Prakṛti is, depending on subtlety, or division of guṇas, divided into several fundamental levels, each of which is then further divided into sublevels. We can hardly speak of the levels as sharply separated; they are separated like the frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum—one melts into another through an infinity of tones, but we can still see the main colors, which dominate the spectrum:

The matter, or the physical substance. This level makes the material universes, such as our own. To this group also belongs **prāṇa**,

¹²⁸ In other words, the guṇas born from Prakṛti: sattva, rajas and tamas.

or subtle matter, which is so closely connected with physical substance that we are often hard pressed to establish where one stops and the other begins. In the analogy with the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum, matter would be represented by the red color, and prāṇa by orange. As it is difficult to establish where one ends and the other begins in a transition between red and orange, so it is with matter and prāṇa. Within beings, there are points of correspondence, or resonance with those levels, which are called cakras. The root cakra, or mūlādhāra, whose color is red, thus corresponds with the coarse matter, while the orange cakra above it, the svādhiṣṭhāna, corresponds with prāṇa.

The **astral**, or the subtle level of thoughts and emotions, or the level of kāma-manas, “desire mind.” Perceiving physical matter as the substance which makes up our own physical body, and prāṇa as its energetic states, we can also perceive astral as our own intellectual and emotional states. The lower astral, which tends toward descent into coarse matter, is closer to prāṇa, with which it comes in touch. The life of a being thus starts when the astral substance comes in touch with the higher prāṇa, which is merged with the astral in a way similar to that in which the orange color of the electromagnetic spectrum blends into the yellow, where the exact point of transition cannot be easily established. Thus merging with prāṇa, the substance of thoughts, emotions and desires, in its tendency toward manifestation in the material world, through the subtle prāṇa merges with the coarser, lower, and through that with physical matter. It thereby increases the degree of coherence, or organization of the physical substance, and so, in favorable circumstances, where matter itself is more prone to change, as it was the case with the primordial soup of amino acids and proteins, it creates more and more complex organized systems, thus creating the first simple living organisms. The blending of the levels of Prakṛti, and the tendency of the higher levels toward manifestation in the lower ones, is therefore responsible for the creation of life and its evolution from the lower forms toward higher ones.

Like matter that blends into prāṇa, and prāṇa into astral, so does the astral, as a level of form, blend into the level of substance, or realization: **the mental**. As the yellow color gradually turns into green, so does the astral, being the level of thoughts, gradually rise to obtain more and more reality and truth, culminating in a complete transition from the state of thought about a

thing, into the state of direct realization of that very thing. The mental is, therefore, the level of understanding. The mental, in its tendency toward manifestation, saturates the astral with itself. The astral, in turn, saturates prāṇa and matter. Physical matter thereby gradually becomes able to express qualities of the mental substance; a physical being manifests qualities of realization, love, truth, a sense of higher existence, a sense of religious thought, which culminates in devotion to God, which then leads to far higher levels. We can see the manifestations of the mental even in more advanced animal species; there are animals that, besides the physical, prāṇic and astral, possess also the mental body. In those beings, there are the cakras that represent the points of contact, or correspondence/resonance with those levels, which are the yellow maṇipūra cakra, in charge of the astral plane, and the green anāhata, which creates the link with the mental plane.

Like prāṇa, which melts into the astral through the increase of its subtlety, and astral, which in turn blends into the mental, so does the mental, by the increase of subtlety, blend into **the causal**, or the level of deep reality, which is the foundation of the relationships of cause and effect. Unlike mental, which is a level of profound human emotions, thoughts and states, such as nobility, selflessness, understanding, compassion and others, the causal provides profound insight into the origin of things and their relationships. The causal bears a quality of profound wisdom, insight into the reality and the realization. Beings adorned with a mental body are rather frequent on this earth; those, however, adorned with a causal body, are quite rare. Those who act from the causal, to whom it is the primary body, are immensely rare in this world, and are the great lighthouses of consciousness. The causal can be divided into several major levels, in a way similar to the transitions in the spectrum between light blue and violet, where there are several colors which we can perceive as significant. Similarly, the different levels of depth of the causal are manifested in a being's body through several cakras, of which the most important are the viśuddha, the blue cakra of throat, ājñā, the indigo-blue cakra of the brow, and the violet sahasrāra, the crown cakra. Other than those, there are also several big cakras in this area, such as the one in the tongue, as well as several cakras in the area of the head, which mostly have no traditional names, but yogīs invariably find them in their personal experience.

Beyond the causal, there are two more levels of reality. First among them is sometimes called **ātmic**, and elsewhere **nirvāṇic**. It is my opinion that both those names are wrong, but I use them for the sake of convention. On this level, there exist two separate principles, the white Śakti, and the ash-colored (or, as perceived by some, black) Śiva. Those two divine archetypes are involved in a constant game of mutual worship and its manifestation. In the process of this manifestation, they wear the “garments” of the lower levels of reality, such as violet, indigo, blue or white (for that is how the mental level is perceived—not as green, as one would expect), and they can descend even further, down to the physical plane. Men can therefore sometimes come in contact with a being which is, in all appearance, God, although it is made of the substances of the lower levels, such as the mental, astral, prāṇa or even physical matter. The term that most accurately describes such a phenomenon is “the Angel of the Lord,” meaning God’s projection upon matter of a lower plane, with purpose of communicating with some being that dwells there.

Above the ātmic plane, there is also **the paranirvāṇic** plane, whose name is as errant as that of the ātmic. It is the level in which Śiva and Śakti are united, inseparable: consciousness, or reality of that level is often displayed in artwork as Śiva Naṭarāja, or Śiva the Dancer, who dances a dance of creation and destruction. It is therefore the most fundamental level of nature, and its aspect that descends toward the manifestation is depicted in the form of Śiva the Dancer. Its other aspect, the ascending one, which tends toward utter tranquility, is displayed as a golden statue of Buddha in meditation; for gold is the color of this level. In utter tranquility, the golden Buddha passes from the sphere of nature into the sphere of true spirit, into the sphere of Puruṣa, rising above the “wall” that separates them.

All those levels, from the Dancing Śiva to the lowest physical matter, are merely passive means of manifestation of the spirit of Puruṣa. One who truly sees, whose consciousness is so refined that he can perceive himself as a being of the progressively higher levels, comes to realize that they are all but a body of the true soul, which is Puruṣa. A multitude of beings, the whole world, all the levels of Prakṛti, are therefore brought to life and set in motion by the descent of the spirit of Puruṣa; He is the one who gives life to all, the true momentum that set things in motion.

When Puruṣa looks upon Prakṛti, the process of creation of beings is thereby conceived. His infinite greatness is manifested through the variety of all things thus created.

As there is gradation and hierarchy in Prakṛti, it is the same with Puruṣa. The yogī who ascends toward the Highest, thus outgrowing Prakṛti, at first perceives himself only as Puruṣa. Later, he realizes that it is only the Puruṣa of this earth, which is also known by the name of Sanat-kumāra, also known as the King of the World. Where they speak of Christ as the King of the World, they think of Sanat-kumāra, the Puruṣa of the earth, or, to be precise, the earth/moon system. There also exists a Puruṣa superior to him who encompasses the entire solar system, then the one who encompasses the local constellation, and the one who encompasses this galaxy, this entire universe, and, eventually, the Highest Puruṣa, the Lord, Īśvara, who is the foundation of all, the refuge of all other Puruṣas, from whom, hierarchically, originates all Creation.

Everything described here, I have personally experienced, diving into progressively deeper levels of reality, and the words in which I express my experience, were collected from the literature of various traditions, in which I sought explanations for my experience. The terms I use are rather arbitrary and symbolic, and certainly not carved in stone. The point is that they all can be experienced, and that this experience can be attained through the practice of yoga.

Let us now take a look at this entire thing. It is obvious that we can speak of all Creation from two positions: of ascension and descension. The descension is the position of Īśvara, who creates all worlds by his mere glance, creating the worlds from higher to lower, in the entire range of qualities, from those that bear divine states to the greatest extent, to those that provide the greatest resistance to them. Ascension is the position of beings, and it is most interesting to us, from a purely practical standpoint. A being at first perceives itself as the physical body, a purely physical being. In spiritual growth, its physical aspect becomes marginalized, and the being begins to identify itself with its mind and emotions. In further growth, it perceives itself as a being of deeper and deeper reality, and, thus growing, it gradually attains higher and higher levels, until it finally grows beyond the most subtle level of Prakṛti. It then perceives itself as utter fulfillment, the state without desires,

the state of Puruṣa, who radiates His utter fulfillment and perfection, creating from it consciousness of the multitude of beings, thus bringing to life all the layers of Prakṛti. Growing in devotion and service, such a Puruṣa eventually rises to reach the Highest Puruṣa, and knows itself first as His servant and bhakta, and following that, he recognizes Him as his own Self. The being thereby closes the circle of emanation, and attains the highest goal in the Highest Puruṣa, finding it also to be his true origin.

All of that was said from the position of the Relative. The Unmanifested, however, is the foundation of it all, being both its foundation and essence. The unmanifested brahman is the foundation of all manifestation. It is often the case that men, who have an experience of samādhi in which they recognize themselves as brahman, are not sufficiently spiritually advanced to reach the state of Puruṣa with their consciousness. Thinking, however, that they have reached the final destination, they fail to understand the words of *Bhagavad-gītā* and similar scriptures, and they thus attempt to translate Puruṣa as another word for brahman—it is a common thing in human psychology, the desire to reduce the unknown to the known. Unfortunately, some of those beings even call themselves avatāras, divine incarnations, not having any idea what the word itself is supposed to mean.

The avatāra is not one who recognizes himself as brahman, for there are also drug addicts and madmen who have recognized themselves as brahman under the influence of drugs, and such realization can also be realized by accident. On the contrary, an avatāra is one who is a point of contact between the Divine aspects of Puruṣa and physical matter, and who bears those aspects within physical matter. The difference is, therefore, in the fact that he, who knows brahman, is not necessarily the one to have developed Divine qualities, unlike an avatāra, who possesses them in fullness. Having no knowledge of that, ignorant people, who present themselves as avatāras, find themselves in paradoxical situations when people ask them: “You say that all is God. How come you are avatāra, and I am not? We must then all be avatāras.” The avatāra is, therefore, not one who is an embodiment of brahman, and not even the one who has attained the realization of that fact through personal experience, but only one who bears within himself the qualities of Puruṣa, who himself is the personality of godhead. Such an avatāra is for instance Kṛṣṇa. His words, therefore, confuse people who fail to

understand that His speech about Himself is a mixture of the perspective of the one who knows brahman, and the perspective of God himself. A part of His words can thus be spoken by anyone who has ever entered samādhi and knew Self; the other part, however, can be spoken only by those, who have attained the highest goal, who have turned themselves into complete Divine embodiments.

None of that has immediate relevance to this verse, but it is essential to know it in order to correctly understand the parts of *Gītā* that follow. Without such background, which is taken implicitly, it would be difficult to correctly understand the meaning of the latter verses. Let us now return to this one.

A being is a mere localization of the substances of the different layers of Prakṛti. Those layers are in constant interaction, depending on their qualities. Such activity of a being can be either harmonious or disharmonious, depending on the degree of its alignment with the higher laws and the will of God, but the activity never ceases. Even the cellular metabolism of physical beings, which is a fundamental sign of life, is a form of action, a constant interaction of molecules in cells. Any attempt of inactivity opposes the very nature of a being, its very existence: a being that does not act ceases to exist at that very moment. It is, therefore, the qualities of nature that determine the quality of a being as active.

**6 One who controls the organs of action,
while contemplating sensory objects in his thoughts,
is deluding himself, and is called a hypocrite.**

When I first started my yogic practice, after an immensely powerful experience of the initiation,¹²⁹ I was inclined to think, under the influence of the literature I read about the subject (Hare Krishna pamphlets and Sai Baba's books), that results are the most important thing in spirituality, meaning the symptoms of enlightenment. Also, under the influence of such literature, I decided that it would be best for me to start regulating my behavior in a way prescribed by the scriptures, thus immediately attaining the behavior of an enlightened person, at least on the level of actions. Real enlightenment, I thought, would be the result of correct behavior.

¹²⁹ We'll come back to that some other time, perhaps.

And so, I became a vegetarian, which indeed improved my health. I stopped drinking coffee and alcohol, I played with celibacy, I started to think and speak in a standard and quite predictable scheme, which is a sort of a rule among all followers of similar nonsense, and I must have been extremely annoying to everybody in my environment. I meditated at least two hours a day, and with all those spiritual things I managed to turn myself into a shadow and mockery of my former personality, after a period of a couple of months. Since all the aspects of my personality resisted this kind of rape, I decided that the holy scriptures were right, saying that a man's lower nature is the enemy in his spiritual progress, thus only increasing the pressure of control.

About that time, I started to think, and asked myself about certain things. First, how is it possible, if I am to spiritually progress with such practice, that I have deteriorated in almost all respects? My creativity dropped, compared to what it was before; my life force decreased, I lost my sense of humor, I started to become more and more dry, and I constantly judged others according to the criteria of my "spirituality," without even a trace of true spiritual experience during the entire period. Besides, I could hardly concentrate on meditating for a mere hour at a time, yet I was able to spend ten hours in continuous programming work, which demands great concentration. I started to see my previous condition, which I was inclined to see as my sinful worldly past (which cult members usually do), as the good old times—for those times were, in fact, the ones that brought me to the moment of initiation, to the moment of a Divine vision, while this "yoga" had almost brought me to ruin. Then, of course, I changed the entire approach, which eventually led me to the understanding of the true principles of yoga, the awakening of kuṇḍalinī, and development and systematization of the true yogic techniques.

Is it really possible that the Indian "dignitaries," who advise discipline and the control of senses are indeed utterly clueless, and that their "spirituality" represents a direct opposite to God, and that their recommended practice represents a variation on the theme of a cargo cult—a mere simulation of the symptoms of enlightenment, which they happened to see somewhere, but of which they know nothing? It is quite possible. A man, who only begins to engage himself in such things will hardly be inclined and able to recognize such a "holy" person as a charlatan and

ignoramus, since those people seem to be abound in knowledge of various scriptures, having also a multitude of followers who, without exception, consider them to be either divine incarnations or saints. Still, with years of practice and gradual understanding of the principles of yoga, I came to the conclusion that the greatest number of the Indian “gurus” are, in fact, utterly clueless, and that their advice is utter nonsense, formed from the age-old misinterpretations, that were then additionally flavored with a layer of traditionalist hypocrisy. That is the reason why their followers lose every contact with reality and, shrouded in spiritual garments, become practically the least spiritual specimens of human species, looking more like mindless automatons, than oceans of consciousness and power. There are, of course, exceptions from that circus, people who indeed understand the principles of yoga and whose example helped me greatly to conceive my own yogic system, and whose teachings confirmed my doubts.

From that perspective, I came to ask myself, how could I ever miss the quite unambiguous, evidently clear warning of *Bhagavad-gītā* regarding such hypocrisy? It happened, obviously, because the traditional commentators already possessed ready-made answers, which they used to skillfully shift the focus from those parts onto those, in which everything other than their hypocrisy and ignorance is criticized. The control of the organs of action and the senses, without true transcendence, without focusing the spirit on God, without the yogic approach that uses simple, elementary techniques that internalize the spirit almost immediately, withdrawing it from the senses and their objects, is therefore mere hypocrisy. There, residing constantly in the world of the senses and their objects, the spirit is firmly bound, and the one thus creates himself an illusion of being engaged in spiritual practice, while, in fact, he achieves nothing. Such control of spirit is utterly unnatural, and is bound to break sooner or later, for which there is always an explanation—insufficient discipline, senses uncontrollable like the wind, attachment to the worldly, etc.—which is, of course, cured by the increase of control over the mind and the senses, up until the utter destruction of the practitioner, which invariably follows, sooner or later.

The truth is completely different: from the very beginning, we should immediately start contemplating God, we should withdraw within and surrender to God. We should pay the senses and

the mind no heed whatsoever, for that upon which we concentrate gets the focus of our energy and thus grows, becoming more intense. That, however, from which we remove our attention weakens and disappears. If we, therefore, use the technique of upstream kriyā and more advanced techniques, such as the technique of inner space, in order to simply change the point of focus, thus dying to the world, the result is not only the refinement of our personality into a Divine one, but all those other things as well, such as control of the mind and the senses, which ignorant people recommend not as the fruits of practice, but as techniques to be practiced. The peace of spirit is already here, within. It is not to be attained by attempting to still the senses, but by turning the spirit from the senses, within. A man then faces the vast abundance of impurities, made in various stressful events, leading to all sorts of mental disturbances.

With the technique of yoga, we should open up toward each and every distraction (such structures are in yogic tradition called *saṃskāras*, which is a common designation for all the disturbing structures created by past experience); we should face it and let it pass, live through it, during which the mechanism of upstream kriyā is activated spontaneously, freeing the yogī from such garbage. That should be repeated until the entire spirit is vacated from disturbances. Then, we should turn from the clearly visible *saṃskāras* to those that have transpired into the realm of unconscious, using the technique of inner space, with which we locate them according to their point of resonance, which determines their location in the energetic system. That is because the *saṃskāras* are grouped around the energetic bodies, and, accordingly, the *cakras*, on the entire vertical axis of the body, which corresponds with the vertical of the levels of reality. We will, thus, have *saṃskāras* attached to the material level and to our relationship with matter; *saṃskāras* of the *prāṇic* level, which disturb the pure flow of energy and our relationship toward energy, its motion and distribution; *saṃskāras* of the astral plane, which hinder the flow of the emotional and intellectual states, causing irregular and intransparent functioning of the being's astral body; *saṃskāras* of the mental plane, which disturb realization and profound feelings of love, stopping them and contaminating them; and, of course, *saṃskāras* of the higher levels and the higher bodies. Every contamination, every sense of imperfection of some level or some

body, has to be removed by a technique of yoga, observing the perfect harmony and transparency in that body.

Such purification leads to the state of complete perfection of a man in all his aspects. No form of violent control is necessary in this approach, and, in fact, control can only get in the way. The path of yoga is a path of natural and spontaneous behavior, the path of sincerity and facing the reality. Having purified himself, becoming able to face his own personal reality, the yogī also attains insight into the global reality, and the reality of other beings. In practice of finding his own weaknesses and impurities, the yogī acquires such a perfection of insight, that a superficial glance cast at a person suffices to give him understanding of all the mechanisms of that person's functioning. Of course, consciousness and love come in package with that power, making its abuse utterly impossible, and so, a yogī's look will be the look of understanding and help, and not the look of condemnation.

**7 Far beyond him is the one
whose senses are controlled by the mind,
who performs the yoga of action
with active senses and without attachments.**

He, however, whose spirit has outgrown the sphere of senses, not attempting to find fulfillment in the sphere of objects, has established true control of the senses, by focusing on a far greater source of pleasure, which is found within, and which brings true fulfillment. He does not have to try to control either the mind, or the senses, or the organs of action. He merely does what needs to be done in the world, simply responding to the needs of a situation, instead of constantly projecting a layer of his expectations and fears upon the situation. Undisturbed by those things, his actions are harmonized with objective reality and therefore correct, failing to bring him the various frustrations, which necessarily follow from attachments to results and inevitable disappointments. To a man who attempts to establish a violent control of his senses, the senses and their objects become enemies to be brutally fought, and his strength is invariably exhausted in such a fight, bringing him to defeat. One who does not see the world and the senses as the source of potential fulfillment will also fail to see them as a potential threat.

The danger of the senses comes from attempts to attain fulfillment through them, which is impossible, and produces, instead of fulfillment, the greater and greater attachment, involvement and distance from reality. A yogī draws his fulfillment from a source far deeper than that of the world of senses. The senses and the organs of action can, to him, be only a form of expression of that fulfillment, and if he is hindered in its manifestation, this hindrance will in no way disturb his inner fulfillment. This is the reason why an attached man will see a yogī as indifferent toward the world, but it is not so, and all who have ever seen even one true yogī will know that. He will seem involved in the world at least to the same extent as, if not more than, any other man; he performs his duties with inexhaustible energy and intensity. His deep foundations are visible in other things, but not in the withdrawal from actions and indifference; the emotional capacity of a yogī, his ability to experience and feel, is the direct opposite of indifference, for the feelings of a yogī are infinitely deeper, more refined and powerful than the feelings of ordinary men, and that is also the case with the subtlety of his thoughts. The key factor of his depth and power is his very detachment, his freedom from desires, expectations and frustrations. Indifference is, however, the death of life and spirit; it is a much greater evil than hatred, and if we were to introduce the division into guṇas, hatred would come from rajas, while indifference would come from tamas, thus being a far less favorable condition. The indifferent presence in the world, as well as the indifferent actions, are therefore not designations of a powerful spirit that has outgrown the world, but in fact of a weak spirit, deluded by the lowest quality of the world, that of dullness, inertia and laziness.

8 Perform, therefore, your duty.

Indeed it is better to work than to be idle.

**Without activity, indeed,
even the preservation of your body
would be impossible.**

All beings are, therefore, active by their very nature. Inactivity is no sign of transcendence, nor spiritual achievement, and spiritual achievement, however, leads not to lack of activity, but to the kind of activity that is correct and perfect. For harmony in actions is a result of harmony of spirit, which we call enlightenment.

- 9 Except for the actions of yajña,¹³⁰
all worldly actions are binding.
So, o son of Kuntī, act
for the purpose of yajña, without attachment.

A sacrificial ceremony, yajña, is often understood as a ceremony in which a man gives something to God, or gods. Looking more carefully, a ceremony where a man pours some butter into the flame can hardly be interpreted as a great gift, but its purpose, however, is not to make God wealthier, nor to impoverish the man who performs it, but is a symbolic act, through which a man tells God: “You are important to me.” When a man offers a part of what he has obtained to God as a sacrifice, with this act he tells God: “I have received everything from You. All that I have, I have because of Your grace. I therefore offer You that which I received from You, for You to know that I recognize the source of my welfare. To You, I pay my respect and express my gratitude.” Sacrifice is, therefore, not an expression of a desire for personal benefit, but its exact opposite: recognition, gratitude and detachment. One who adheres to things to such an extent, that he dares not give up even the smallest part of those things, shows thereby lack of faith in the source of his welfare, thus separating himself from that source, and his abundance eventually dries out. It is often the case for the wealthy men to become extremely miserly, watching every penny more closely than people who are actually impoverished. Their attachment to wealth, and the fear of being without it, eventually produce the very result of their wealth abandoning them—what we fear is often what we attract. Likewise, when a man is poor and in trouble, he is likely to seek refuge in God, but when he becomes wealthy, he often becomes arrogant and starts saying things like “what did God have to do with it; it was all achieved by my own strengths.” He thus separates himself from the source of abundance, and is often left without it. One, however, who remains generous after having attained a great fortune, who both gives and receives with equal pleasure, not creating obstacles to the flow of energy in the form of wealth, becomes richer and richer, instead of becoming impoverished by giving things away. Sacrifice is exactly that factor, which introduces abundance

¹³⁰ The Vedic sacrificial ceremony.

into a man's life, since the readiness to renounce a part of one's wealth means realization of the inexhaustible nature of its source, and thus affirming the value of his source, he further increases his connection with it. Activity with the purpose of yajña is therefore a liberating activity, activity of freedom, while claiming the fruits of actions strengthens attachments, causing poverty and weakness.

10 Creating, in ancient ages,
man together with yajña,
the Father of all beings¹³¹ told him:
“Herewith you will prosper
and fulfill your desires.

11 Pleased with your sacrifice,
the gods will answer your prayers.
Thus helping each other,
you will attain the greatest good.”

The gods here symbolize the laws of nature and the elements, such as earth, water, fire, air and others. One who sacrifices to gods remains thus transparent to the forces of nature, not limiting himself to his small and self-sufficient personality, remaining thus a part of nature. The natural elements, therefore, find expression in him, manifesting themselves through him to a greater extent, and he, in gratitude, opens toward them more. Thus living in harmony, the gods and men advance in well-being. A man is then blessed with abundance, and abundance serves overall harmony, since a transparent man does not keep it to himself alone, but allows it to flow where it is needed. For sacrifice to gods means also the gratification of the needs of the elements; where there is a lack, a noble man will direct his fortune. Where he notices poverty, he will pour in wealth, thus serving Kubera, the treasurer of gods. If he sees ignorance, he will introduce an educational system, serving thus the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī. Where he sees a desert area, he will introduce a system of irrigation, thus serving Indra, the lord of rain, Varuṇa, the deity of water, and Pṛthivī, goddess of land. This example clarifies the symbolism of deities and elements. In such mutual assistance, it is

¹³¹ Brahmā.

visible how a man becomes an instrument of harmony of the elements, while on the other hand obtaining from the elements everything he needs—not only for himself, but also in order to provide a service to a greater whole. Such growth in service makes a man greater, while selfishness makes him smaller.

**12 Pleased with your sacrifice,
the gods will give you everything in abundance.
But one who enjoys their gifts
without offering them to the gods first,
he must be a mere thief.**

He, who relishes the fruits, develops a fear of losing them. Because of fear and insecurity, he develops a need to keep more and more things to himself, thinking “I have acquired this; I won’t give it to anyone!” He thus distances himself from the source of his fortune, and behaves like someone who steals the crumbs from a table, and in fear of someone taking them away from him, repeats, “They are mine! They are mine!” He is indeed a thief, who lives in separation from the whole, disregards the needs of the whole, and has no faith in God’s grace. If the owner of a rich home invites someone for lunch, this person will dine there abundantly with the permission of the owner, and, giving thanks to his host, return to his home pleased. Thus staying on good terms with the host, he has no fear of staying hungry. The one, however, who lacks faith, responds to the call, and besides dining, he also puts things from the table into his bag. Because of his guilt, he gives no thanks to the host, but leaves in haste. The host discovers his act and its causes, and invites him no more. It is the same with the forces of nature. One who has faith does not put things into his pockets in order to provide for tomorrow, for he believes those laws will provide for him.¹³² Free from the mentality

¹³² Matthew 6:25–33: *For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory*

of deprivation, he is indeed showered with grace. In his good fortune, he gives to others, allowing fortune to flow where it is needed, thus becoming a factor of well-being. The one, however, who fears, spares even in abundance, having no faith in the benevolence of higher forces, and so grace indeed soon leaves him. It is therefore proper to be generous in all things, to give and take generously, and to express gratitude for the received. In that gratitude, one is harmonized with the laws that provide, and his cup runs over in abundance.

**13 The righteous, who eat the remnants of yajña,
are free from of all sorts of sin.
The sinners, however,
who prepare food for themselves alone,
they eat but a sin.**

One who expresses gratitude for what has been received, and offers it to its source, thinking: “It is only with Your permission that I enjoy this. You’re the one who decides whether to give to me or not, and I have obtained nothing by my strength alone, but only through Your grace,” he is indeed free from attachments to fruits. Thus acting in all aspects of life, a man remains fully transparent, and his actions are perfect. The one, however, who sees himself as the source, thinking: “I earned this by my strength, and no other has the right to claim it; it is mine,” strengthens his attachments to things, weakening his bond with the source of all. Of course, he does eventually lose those very things, like a river that stops flowing if its source runs dry. Besides losing everything, he remains involved in the sphere of things, also because of his attachment, claiming besides the merit also the demerit, remaining thus bound to the sphere of things. He, however, who says “It is God who did this,” leaves both praise and blame to God. This way, neither sins nor good deeds cling to him, but God

clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear for clothing?” For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

alone, to whom he belongs, and who belongs to him. Sinners are therefore attached to themselves and to things, while the righteous are attached only to God, thus attaining liberation.

**14 Beings are created from food;
food comes from rain.
Rain comes from yajña,
and yajña is born from activity.**

**15 Know that activity originates from Brahmā.
He, however, has his foundation in the Indestructible.
Yajña, therefore, manifests the eternal nature of brahman.**

Beings need food in order to exist. The “rain,” from which food is made, is a term that denotes the favorable conditions of nature that form the environment that favors life. Favorable conditions, however, originate from harmony, which is attained by the transference of beings to natural laws, therefore from yajña. Yajña itself is born from action, or the dynamics of creation, which is the foundation of harmony of all things. This foundation itself has a foundation in the Maker of the World, Brahmā, who, in turn, is founded in the unmanifested brahman. Yajña is therefore a manifestation of a deeper harmony in a man’s life and his activities.

**16 One, who fails to participate
in the circle of activity thus initiated,
whose life, filled with sin,
passes in the gratification of the senses,
his life is futile, o Pārtha.**

The cycle of manifestation, founded in the Absolute, is the cycle of continuous expression of the Unexpressed. A man who opens up toward his source, which is always, in the final sense, the Absolute, who acknowledges and respects this source in his life, who receives all from Him and gives all to Him, such a man is a part of a wider plan of Divine manifestation. Such a man is a part of the wider whole, which sings to the glory of the Lord by its very existence.

The one, however, who holds himself to be the center of all, who claims credit for all that he possesses, who acquires and spends

everything for his sake alone, is like a barren tree, which never bears fruit. The existence of such a tree is futile, of use only to itself. A man who lives such a life is void of purpose, he lives only for his vanity and arrogance, never outgrowing himself. In order for a man to outgrow himself, he must open up toward that, which is higher than himself; he must receive that, which is beyond him. A man therefore attains emancipation by outgrowing himself, for the limited human ego if it is not outgrown, can never achieve anything but stagnation, or even degradation.

A man should constantly ask himself: "How can I be of greatest service to the world?" Having felt the answer to that question, he should act accordingly. People often act in the world in a wasteful manner, spending great quantities of the world's resources, which will, in the long run, undoubtedly lead to destruction, if something doesn't change. Sparing, or depriving oneself of things, is a poor solution. There is no great evil in spending great amounts of things and living in abundance, if, in return, a man provides the world with more than he takes. A man who gives much is allowed to take much, as well. A man who gives much is like a great tree, which gives abundance of fruits. Such a tree might consume much water, but that does not matter, as long as the tree bears fruit. If a tree is barren, even a small consumption of water can be a valid reason to fell it, but no one will fell a tree that bears abundantly. Likewise, a poor man, who fails to contribute to the world, even by good words or thoughts, is but a burden, without whom the world would be better off, and even the few worldly resources he spends in order to extend his existence are spent in vain. A wealthy man, however, who lives in great abundance, but who acts like a beneficial, uplifting force in the world, a man of noble thoughts and deeds, is a great blessing to the world, and nothing he spends during his lifetime is spent in vain. One noble deed erases a countless number of vicious ones. We should thus always act as the forces of blessing in the world. We are the children of God; it would be quite appropriate if we acknowledged that fact, and lived accordingly.

**17 But one who finds satisfaction in Self,
radiant with the light of Self,
in Self alone utterly pleased,
for him there are no deeds to be done.**

The one, whose foundations are not in himself, but in the all-pervading and all-blissful Self, does not act out of necessity, or personal benefit; for there are no pleasures in the world that would increase the pleasure that is already in his possession, nor is there anything in the world for him to fear. His kingdom is not of this world.¹³³

**18 Never does he act for the sake of benefit,
nor does he ever neglect his duties.
There is no being in this world,
whose refuge he would need to seek.**

Such a man finds his personal benefit to be irrelevant, and it never motivates his actions. Duty, however, charts his role in the world, and the reasons for his physical existence, and so he performs his duties perfectly, radiating his inner fulfillment into the world by such actions. His support is not in this world, for he is supported by the very foundation of the world.

**19 So act always without attachments,
performing your duties.
Acting thusly, a man undoubtedly attains the Highest.**

A man who in his actions bears the qualities of the Source of all things, the unmanifested Absolute, refines the qualities of his personality by his actions, thus managing to grasp, feel and incorporate into his personality all the subtle levels of manifestation, until he eventually reaches the Highest, the fullness of manifestation of all the Divine qualities. In this manifestation he thus closes the circle, from unmanifested fullness, to the fullness of manifestation. Such a state is easiest to attain by action, for action indeed is the test of acquired knowledge. True knowledge is that, upon which we dare to act, and upon which we dare to build our lives. That, which we can not only think and speak, but also implement by our actions, reflects the true qualities of our personality. Likewise, actions create the need for progressively higher qualities, in order for them to be successful: *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For*

¹³³ John 18:36.

*everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*¹³⁴ So, the one who shows need for something higher by his actions shall receive that higher quality, for *believe that you have received, and it will be granted you.*¹³⁵ If someone, in his actions, lacks not will, faith and good intentions, but strength, his strength will be increased, for things go to him who needs them; power goes to him who needs it and uses it. Thus daring to do things that exceed his power, a man constantly outgrows his limitations, growing far beyond his previous limitations, to eventually attain the highest goal. We should therefore strive not for lower goals out of false modesty, but on the contrary, we should renounce lower limitations and fly into the heights of spirit.

20 Through work indeed have King Janaka and others attained perfection.

**Having in mind the well-being of the world as well,
it is also appropriate for you to act.**

Janaka is the often mentioned king who attained perfect realization. The realization is, therefore, not a consequence of withdrawal from action, but it is quite compatible with the duties of a king, which means utter involvement in affairs of the state. In order to rule in a perfect manner, one must obtain the qualities of perfection, for perfect action cannot be a result of a disharmonic spirit. Indeed, we do have examples of those, who managed to attain perfection in their actions. Kṛṣṇa thereby concludes his revelation about the purifying aspect of worldly actions. Having finished it, he turns Arjuna's attention toward the other aspect: the well-being of the world. It follows from selflessness: for a man who does not act for his sake alone, acts for the well-being of others, and it is appropriate for him to provide a perfect example with his actions, and to provide an uplifting influence for other people. It is visible, for instance, in the example of Jesus: being perfect, he did not have to do anything, nor did he have anything to gain from his actions in the world. Nevertheless, he acted constantly, uplifting the consciousness of men, even at the price of his own life. His actions are an example of both actions of detachment, as well as actions done for the well-being of the world, thereby providing guidelines to those, who seek perfection.

¹³⁴ Matthew 7:7-8.

¹³⁵ Mark 11:24.

21 **Whatever a great man does, others follow.
Whatever example he sets,
the world follows in his footsteps.**

A very small number of men think with their own heads and make their own decisions; the majority, by inertia, follow social norms, and think, speak, and behave in a socially acceptable and accustomed manner. Rarely do we encounter someone who successfully challenges conventions, and manages to produce a positive change in the system. The majority then, again, travel the path that he has paved for them.

Because of such mentality, the great responsibility rests upon leaders, those providing the example. Even people who indeed do think with their own heads need the example, in order to choose whether they want something, or not. In spiritual development, the most important thing is to see an example of a truly enlightened man. Through such an example, one can see the qualities of the goal, and eliminate various misconceptions regarding enlightenment, thus saving himself years of delusions and wrong choices.

After all, it is useful to see an enlightened man, if only to see that enlightenment is possible and attainable, for if there were no such examples, one could even consider the entire story about spiritual progress and yoga to be something people had made up in order to protect themselves from the ugly face of reality. The example of an enlightened yogī clearly shows it not to be so. In other aspects of human activity, people are inspired by those who stand out in some respect: for example, Arjuna was an inspiration to warriors, because of his skill, courage, determination, noble spirit, and other virtues. If he failed to put an end to evil by his own example, the entire purpose of existence of the warrior caste would come in question. If that were to happen, the entire society would become vulnerable to the enemies of all kinds. Upon him therefore lies the responsibility of establishing guidelines for others to follow.

22 **There is nothing, o Pārtha, in all three worlds
that I would need to do,
nor is there anything out there for me to attain.
Still, I act constantly.**

The consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, the Highest Lord, is beyond all things created. Of all the relative things a being can come in touch with, Ísvara, the Lord, is the highest and the greatest. His quality is such that His sight alone brings one into immediate contact with the Absolute, with the all-pervading and omnipresent Self. There is, therefore, no significant difference between the experience of the Lord, and diving into the greatest depths of one's own nature; the contact with Lord's consciousness alone has the result of one's self-realization. We should, therefore, in any case, strive toward Him, for we shall thus accomplish all the goals worthy of accomplishing.

Being the goal of spiritual progress, and the essence of all that is good and great, He has nothing to attain, for in comparison with Him, all other things are but insignificant crumbs. He, who is the fulfillment of all desires, has no desires to be fulfilled. The only valid reason for His actions can therefore, without doubt, be only the emanation of His fullness, which fills all the worlds with glory.

**23 Indeed, what would happen if I, o Pārtha,
even once failed to act perfectly?
All the people would follow my example.**

**24 If I failed to act, all worlds would fall to ruin.
I would be the cause of confusion
and the destruction of those beings.**

If God himself were to provide a flawed example, such a flaw would undoubtedly be considered rightness, or, however, the beings might start to question God's perfection. If that were to happen, everybody would lose the guidelines of rightness, and, thus lost, they would adhere to wrongness, thinking it to be rightness. They would thus soon be ruined. Without the Highest to show the path, the entire spiritual progress becomes almost an impossible venture. For in yoga, a man constantly questions himself, with God as the point of reference, removing from himself everything that is not Divine, while at the same time acquiring the Divine qualities which he lacks. Without God as the role model, or with God as a flawed example, how could one possibly attain perfection? Such a venture might be quite impossible, and it is more likely that everybody, without exception, would fail and be destroyed.

Beside that, God acts primarily by turning His sight onto Prakṛti. The lifeless, thus touched by the blissful nature of His consciousness, comes to life, taking the form of the countless beings, constantly created from passive matter, evolving through countless lives, until they reach utter perfection, in which they will be able to return His look, bearing the same quality in themselves. If God were to divert His sight from Prakṛti, all life and consciousness of beings would utterly vanish; their souls would be extinguished, and they would all be immediately destroyed. That, indeed, takes place in the moment of pralaya, the final destruction of the Creation at the end of the great cosmic cycle. It would therefore suffice for God to stop animating the world for a single moment, and the world would vanish instantly, together with all beings.

**25 As ignorant men act from their ignorance, o Bhārata,
so must the wise do without attachment,
in order to set an example.**

**26 Let the wise man refrain from confusing
the spirits of ignorant men, who cling to action.
Let him rather, correctly established,
motivate them by his own example.**

Activity is a constant of the world. A human society is maintained by the constant activity of people, which makes the functioning of a civilization possible. A man has to perform the duties appointed to him, regardless of his attitude toward them; someone, for instance, performs actions out of frustration, which makes him attempt to prove his value before others and himself, and out of motivation for money. He is therefore attached, but still does the work well, in spite of being driven to act by lower motives. The other one, however, has no such lower motives in his action, but acts simply because of the pleasure he feels within, and which he expresses in his deeds. He is not attached to actions, but acts perfectly nevertheless, even better than the one who is attached, and besides, he works with great ease and without effort. Enlightened men should thus, with their actions, provide an example to the unenlightened, who will then see them as role models to be followed, eventually attaining the perfection themselves.

27 It is, indeed, the qualities of Nature that act.

Confused by the ego,¹³⁶ the soul thinks: “I act.”

Puruṣa never comes in direct contact with Prakṛti. Puruṣa merely looks upon Prakṛti, directing the focus of His consciousness upon her. Then, influenced by His “look,” by the life-giving influence of His consciousness, the qualities of Nature start to acquire some of His qualities. This creates life at first, and then rudimentary consciousness, which is refined through time and evolution, eventually managing to bear all the qualities of the look of Puruṣa, thus attaining the supreme degree of refinement. That, which we observe as our soul is, in essence, two things. From the absolute perspective, our soul is, in fact, the infinite Absolute, and we perceive ourselves to be the limited souls because of the influence of the deluding quality of Creation, which creates the appearance of existence of the multitude. This appearance, however, is in function of the manifestation of the Unmanifested, and is not a pathologic structure, as some are inclined to believe, thinking that only the Absolute matters, explaining the existence of relative Creation with a ridiculous concept of God’s “split personality disorder.” Such views are merely a result of their confusion, and of insufficient evolvment of their relative personality.

Those who truly see, understand that the Relative is no anomaly, nor would it need to be united with the Absolute, for that is certainly impossible: the Absolute is One without the other. He is in Himself united, and within Him, there are no divisions. How could anything possibly be united with Him? There is no way; it is quite impossible. It is, however, possible to understand that I Am One. But knowing it to be so, one also knows that the entire relative field is only a perspective of Me, adding nothing to Me, nor taking anything away from Me, and that the multitude of the Relative creates no division in the One. It is a mystery, which can be understood only by direct insight, and in no other way, for a human mind is a rather miserable instrument for understanding the things of such magnitude. In the perspective of the Relative, what is, then, our soul? We certainly possess individuality, but that individuality is the result of our perception of ourselves as the body, as a number of limitations and localizations, which make

¹³⁶ Ahaṅkāra.

us perceive some things as self, and others as non-self. One of the systems that enable such perception is ahaṅkāra, or ego, integrating the limitations of the relative bodies into a single projection onto the true “I.” Because of the influence of ego, the soul calls the agglomerations of substance of Prakṛti “I,” and acts from this conviction.

**28 But one, who knows the truth
about the qualities of Nature
and their behavior, o Mighty-armed,
and sees that it is the interaction
of the qualities of Nature,
he does not submit to attachment.**

The truth about the qualities of nature and their behavior is that the sum of all movement in Nature is merely a consequence, taking place when God looks upon the passive Prakṛti, which initiates a chain of events. Because of the infusion of His look into those worlds, dead matter comes to life, it is set in motion on various levels of subtlety, and, at a certain point, it reaches the state of self-consciousness, in which such a living being can say: “this I am.” This is the beginning of the existence of ego. Its creation is not a negative phenomenon, for individuality is one of the important Divine aspects, and by the creation of a self-conscious individuality, the Divine is expressed to a great extent. When this individuality grows in quality, it begins to suspect that all things are connected, and is then freed from selfishness and other lower qualities. The unmaking of ego is therefore not accomplished by the negation of ego, but by its expansion into infinity. Knowing the deeper laws and the purpose of things, he ceases to identify with the role and position of merely one body. With the growth of insight, one realizes that he is a mere reflection of Puruṣa onto Prakṛti, and, turning his eyes inward, to the great depths of his own consciousness, he then knows himself to be the Puruṣa, who brings to life not only his body, but in fact the entire world in which he lives. Observing that, without involvement with the limited perspective and without identification with it, he observes that it is only the forces of nature that act, incited by the look of Puruṣa, and not in a single one of those things, or in their interaction, is there “I.” In those things alone, there are no life and

consciousness, but still, they are set in motion by the one true life and consciousness, which is Puruṣa.

The example of this we can find if we see how one fan, which is in operation, rotates the propeller of another fan, which is turned off, and it looks as if they are both rotating equally, although in truth, the rotation of one is merely the passive reflection of the true, active rotation of the other. In the Relative therefore exist the two basic aspects: one is the Maker, and the other is the Field of Making. Puruṣa is the Maker, He is the living, conscious force that sets things in motion, and Prakṛti is the field of His action and making; that, which He can set in motion and create. It is all difficult to understand, and there are but few, who were successful in that, but with yoga, such understanding can be attained. Such insight solves some paradoxes, such as whether or not God is separate from the world, and how He can possibly create. For if God is separate from the world and its Maker, then God is relative and not absolute, for the world is then an independent principle, separate from God. If, however, the world is given in God, how could we possibly speak of the Creation; the world then has no objective value, but is only a kind of God's dream. Both those statements are true. From the position of the Absolute, everything is brahman, the highest reality—nothing else exists. But in the Relative, which is the expression of that unexpressed, there is the Creator and there is the Creation, there is the dynamics of making, and God is completely different from the world. Failing to understand that, people who are capable of understanding only one of those two aspects cannot comprehend the validity of the other, and such lack of understanding gives birth to intolerance. Those, who think that only brahman exists, will see the worshipers of God who is separate from the world to be deluded men, on a lower ladder of insight, while the worshipers of the personal God will see those who claim that all is God as maddened and insane, for such an idea is obviously ridiculous: for all is not God, nor does all possess Divine qualities, and it is therefore obvious that God, who possesses all the Divine qualities, cannot be identical to something that barely possesses any value whatsoever.

Such misunderstanding arises from the human mind, which tends to be exclusive, and to ignore all possibilities but one, which it sees as the only truth. With spiritual progress, a man begins to understand that truth is a highly complex matter, and that it is

often possible for two opposite things to be merely different aspects of a far wider reality, and that the affirmation of one does not necessarily mean the negation of the other. Theologies that impose such limitations result from inherent human limitations, but the knowledge of reality is not to be attained by classifying the reality and putting it into labeled folders meant for the things we understand, but by outgrowing our limitations, adapting ourselves to the vastness of the reality, instead of the opposite, which we often attempt.

**29 Those who are fooled
by the activities of the qualities of Nature
are attached to their activities.
He, who knows the truth,
should not cause their confusion.**

There is no point in telling him, who sees himself as a limited being, and acts from the position of his limitations, that he is mistaken, and explaining to him the things he could not possibly understand. Those, who do understand the truth, have not attained such a state by being told about it and having accepted the explanation, but by acquiring insight into the more and more subtle aspects of reality with practice of yoga that resulted in the achievement of perfection. It is therefore better to explain things from a position which people can comprehend, and teach them how to gradually attain the perfect insight themselves, than to merely describe the reality to them, and expect them to understand it. When we speak to such a man about detachment, he will, invariably, because of his limitations, understand it either as indifference, or clumsiness and carelessness in performing one's duties, or laziness, or all of the above. The only thing he could never understand, is the true state of detachment in action, for such understanding belongs to a level of consciousness higher than that, to which he currently belongs, and so it cannot be reached by changing the contents of the present state of consciousness, but only by refining and raising the consciousness to a higher level. There, the understanding of detachment takes place automatically. It is therefore wiser to act perfectly from the position of detachment, and to show its qualities by one's own example, than it is to tell people things which they are destined to misunderstand.

**30 Surrendering all actions to Me,
fully established and conscious in Self,
without a desire for gain and a feeling of “mine,”
free yourself from faint-heartedness, and fight.**

One who is founded in the highest reality of his being, in the all-pervading Self, who grows and obtains strength from this foundation, and who does not claim the reward for his actions, surrendering both himself and his actions to God, he acts in freedom, and does not develop weakness and attachment.

**31 Those, who follow this teaching of mine
always, with faith and devotion, without objections,
are freed from the bondage of action.**

**32 Those, however, who fail to follow
this teaching that I present,
who object, deprived of all wisdom, deluded,
know that they will find ruin in their own mindlessness.**

There seem to be two kinds of attitudes regarding each and every teaching that offers salvation. First is the attitude of those who desire the truth greatly, as a thirsty man in the desert desires water. To such a man it suffices to tell the truth, and he will immediately adhere to it with all his heart, thinking himself fortunate for having the opportunity to hear about it. That is the way in which think they, who have experience, for they have already tried out various wrong approaches, which made them capable of recognizing the truth intuitively, having acquired a refined taste for it during their efforts invested toward the good, and indeed, they soon achieve enlightenment.

The other kind of people constantly finds objections to everything; they might claim to desire to see God and to hear His teaching, saying that they would instantly accept it, but when it comes to that, they would immediately come up with several objections: God will not be the kind of God they would imagine; for they would make up a better and more Divine God; they will laugh at His truth, as if it were a bunch of naive nonsense, for of course, they know better. They will reject the true knowledge of reality as unreal, for their ideas seem better to them. In any case,

the only things, that are not to be expected from them, are devotion and faith, and that is so because they do not strive for good and truth within themselves, finding those qualities to be repulsive. They wander throughout the marshes of ignorance, firmly entangled in the vines of mistaken opinions, sinking into the quicksand of self-righteousness. They therefore constantly experience failure, and if they fail to repent and convert, they are bound to face utmost ruin. Objections and criticism are never a sign of strong spirit, but on the contrary, they are a sign of weak spirit, completely covered with ignorance and frustrations. Such a man will want to submit everything to the illusion of his personality, and in such a state, he will find objections to everything, for he sees the reflections of his own flawed nature in all things. True, even a righteous man will sometimes object; he will express his confusion and will ask for an explanation, but that he does in good faith, wanting to accept an explanation, and having obtained it, he clings to it firmly. Those of impure spirit, however, never accept the truth and constantly ask for proof, not in order to believe, but in order not to believe. They will close their eyes, surrounded by evidence, constantly repeating: “We have the best intention to believe, but unfortunately there is no evidence.” A wise man will, however, even with very little observation of reality, come up with all the right conclusions, because the more powerful the mind, the less proof it needs in order to make the right conclusions; the weak-minded are those, who do not wish to understand even when the truth is right before their eyes. It is therefore not that people have insufficient evidence regarding the nature of the reality, but that they are unwilling or unable to understand it.

It is, however, wrong to accept everything indiscriminately, because ignorance is mixed with truth in all things. The simple rules, such as “we should accept everything,” or “we should reject everything,” lead nowhere; the only solution lies in developing the ability to discriminate, which will make it possible for us to take this mixture that surrounds us, and separate that which is real, and which leads to realization, and firmly embrace it, rejecting that, which is unreal and leads to ruin.

33 All beings are subject to Nature.

Even a wise man desires to act, according to his nature.

What could ever be attained by restraining from action?

Activity is a constant of Nature, of which all beings are but a part. Activity is therefore inevitable to all beings, and the only question that remains is whether it will be correct or incorrect. It is in the nature of a wise man to strive for perfection, and to express perfection. When he thus acts, according to his nature, his deeds will be perfect, being a reflection of his consciousness in the Nature, reflected perfectly because of the purity of his being, perfectly manifesting the perfection. Refraining from action is not a sign of enlightenment; inactivity, in fact, says absolutely nothing about a man. It is the deeds that tell the tales; for one's greatness can be seen in his actions.

The qualities of Nature are those that act; true. But a being as such is a part of Nature, thus representing an expression of those qualities in action. There is, of course, a time for a retreat from action, a time to meditate, in which one comes in touch with his own true nature, from which he draws fulfillment and inspiration. But he will desire to express this fulfillment in the world through actions, in the same manner in which the unmanifested Absolute desired to find a field of his expression, thus leading to the existence of the Relative, in all its complexity and manifold nature. If the Absolute did not lose anything thereby, what do we have to fear then, if we seek expression of our nature in activity? We will certainly not lose the eternity and immortality of our true nature, for it is beyond loss or gain, and eternally Is. Our true nature will always await us. Why, then, would we not act in the Relative, when the Eternity is already guaranteed—free from pressures, fears and desires, playing in a way that expresses our true nature? We will thus only confirm it to be our eternal choice.

**34 In the senses, both attraction and repulsion
from objects of the senses are given.
They will become an obstacle on the path
of him who comes into their realm.**

Inactivity is therefore on one hand impossible, and on the other pointless; even if a being were able to exist without activity, and it can not, such existence would serve no purpose, for all beings are a part of Nature, which itself is a means of expression of God, and the activity of beings is in function of that expression, and so, with proper action, aligned with God's will, a being participates

in God's plan, thus perfectly fulfilling the purpose of its existence. It would therefore be wrong to restrain the senses and organs of action from their connection with the world, for their very purpose is to create a connection with the world. We should only take care for the senses to remain in the service of the manifestation of consciousness, so that consciousness would not become enslaved to the senses, which can create confusion and distract one from his path.

For example, the senses are inclined to confuse the pleasant and the useful, as well as the unpleasant and the harmful, and so, something harmful can appear to be useful just because it is pleasant, while something useful can appear to be harmful simply because it is unpleasant. For instance, candies have a pleasant taste, but they inflict harm upon the organism, while some kinds of tea of bitter and unpleasant taste can be highly beneficial to health, and have a healing effect. The similar applies to other things as well; flattery is usually pleasant to people, while criticism is mostly unpleasant. This will cause them to often fall prey to flatterers, who tell people what they want to hear so that they could more easily control them, after their wakefulness has been lost. On the other hand, a wise man's sharp criticism is seldom answered with gratitude; on the contrary, it is more likely for a wise man to face mortal danger if he tells people the truth.

**35 It is better to pave one's own path poorly,
than to pave the path of others with excellence.
Even death on one's own path is better,
for in the path of others' lies danger.**

“One's own path,” or “one's own dharma,” is a thing often mentioned, but seldom understood. People often, encountering the first obstacle, say “this is undoubtedly not my path,” turning toward some other thing in a similarly shallow and superficial manner. On the other hand, there is the opposite extreme, according to which a man should, at all cost, persist in what he is doing, although it can be but a source of suffering to him and others; this verse is often used to justify the godless rigidity of the caste system in India; for one's dharma is supposedly determined by varṇa (the caste, “color”) and jāti (the birth), and now one should follow it to his death, and if someone has a problem with

that, he'd better learn how to live with it. We are obviously dealing with something rather complex, and one's own personal dharma is obviously that, in which he feels at home, in which he expresses his own innermost nature. For instance, a warrior like Arjuna expresses his nature on one hand in the duties of a warrior, in fighting for justice, and on the other hand in friendship with Kṛṣṇa and the others. His dharma is manifold and complex, and it is hard to say that he is merely a warrior, or that he is merely Kṛṣṇa's friend. Still, his path is very clear and unambiguous, for in everything he does, the virtue is the fundamental underlying principle, this virtue being dynamic, and seeking expression in activity. If he were to conclude, under the influence of his impressions and thoughts, that his path is incorrect, like for instance when he decided not to fight, for it appeared to him that he would thereby commit an atrocity, he would turn from his path of naturally performed noble deeds and onto a side road of forced inactivity, where he would never find peace. To some person, it would be natural not to fight in a war, but on the contrary, to be horrified at its cruelty, but such reaction is not natural to Arjuna, who is a warrior and champion of the army. To him, it is natural to seek the strongest opponent and fight him, for that is the way in which he best expresses his love for truth and righteousness.

Like Arjuna, every man has a path of his own, according to the degree of his spiritual evolvment, on which he performs the deeds which he feels, with all his heart, to be right, deeds that flow naturally from his functioning, and any forward motion on this path is possible only when the present position is acknowledged. For if one were to ignore his present position, his deeds would no longer follow naturally from the structure of his personality, but from the contents of the mind, or convictions regarding what is, and is not to be done. It is alright to make mistakes on one's own path. Mistakes reveal the presence of a problem, and so, by the nature of the mistakes, it is possible to find the problem and solve it. If, however, an action is not a result of a man's natural state, but arises from convictions that were formed in his mind, then it is utterly irrelevant whether such actions are good or bad; they are bound to lead the man to ruin. Let us, for instance, take the example of an actor, who plays a role of a noble character in a theater all day, for instance Lord Śiva. While acting, he behaves like Śiva, but this behavior does not follow naturally from his

personality, and is something artificial, added onto the personality of the actor like clothing. Acting as much as he likes, his thoughts do not become the thoughts of Śiva, nor is his power such. His consciousness will be that of an ordinary man, and his evolution as a person is possible only if he remains aware that he is only an actor. If, however, he truly believes he is Śiva, he might end up in a lunatic asylum, with valid reasons. That would mean a heavy detour from his path.

An example of the fact that it is better to pave one's own, although less deserving path, than the other's, exalted, is given to us by so-called spiritual seekers, whom we often have an opportunity to see. They know it is a good thing to be a saint and a spiritual person, and they also have some idea about how such a saint should behave. Instead of simply stating it as such, and working on self-improvement with the goal of achieving the qualities of holiness from their imperfect position, they often choose to jump across several ladders, immediately starting to act like saints.

Of course, such a person is a saint in the same sense in which an actor who plays Jesus in a theater, is Jesus. Such a sudden jump across ladders can only have him break his neck. He will never achieve holiness in such a manner, but he will certainly leave his path of an honest man, and it will often be very difficult for him to find himself again in all that mess of his own making. In such a loss of self in a world of delusions and appearances, a man faces destruction, very real and tangible. As we can approach God by coming in touch with the reality, and by going from a lesser reality toward the greater reality, we can also distance ourselves from God by coming in touch with illusion, going from a lesser illusion toward the greater one, which culminates in the state of utter delusion, where there is no kind of contact with reality whatsoever. Like the actor who indeed starts to believe he is the character he plays, which can cause him to end up in a psychiatric institution, so can a spiritual seeker, under the influence of prolonged self-deception, utterly lose contact with his own reality, which will be his ruin. It is therefore better to be utterly honest with oneself, and to accept the real difficulties of our own actual position, than to replace the unpleasant reality with a pleasant fiction. It is better even to die solving our own problems, for our death would then be in service of their solution, and will not interrupt the process. However, if we delude ourselves by imagining that the

problems do not exist, we threaten to make our lives utterly futile. In the best scenario, we will merely lose precious time, and in the worst scenario, we can ruin ourselves completely.

36 Arjuna said:

**What forces a man to commit a sin, even unwillingly,
as if he were driven by some force, o Vārṣṇeya?**

It sometimes seems that people perform their actions almost unconsciously, like puppets on strings, guided by the forces applied to them; most people perform their deeds almost instinctively, without thinking, and great evil often arises therefrom. Arjuna has the opportunity to see the threat of great danger emerging before his kin, all because of the unreasonable deeds of men. Likewise, he thinks that he will act sinfully if he wages war, and still, something inside him forces him to do just that, causing his confusion. Because of all that, it is essential for him to know the cause of such a condition, in order to divert himself from sin, for if he fails to understand the principle under which all those things take place, he will hardly be able to change the course of events.

37 The Almighty Lord said:

**It is desire and anger,
born from the guṇa of passion.¹³⁷
They are the all-consuming cause of sin.**

Desire and anger are the underlying foundations of Duryodhana's desire to rule all, which is the cause of the present imminent destruction of the kṣatriyas. They are also the cause of Arjuna's desire to defeat the army of Kurus in battle. Those are the mechanisms of rajas, the guṇa of activity and passion, which cause instinctive actions, where reaction follows action without thinking, and aspects of the soul have no opportunity to act at all. If a stranger hits us while we walk the street, anger will instinctively arise in us, and it will want to find expression through a violent reaction. In such a situation, profound contemplation of the true nature of the situation will not arise in us, but we will, however, wish to automatically respond with violence. Those mechanisms

¹³⁷ Rajas.

cause the quantity of evil in the world not to reduce, but however to remain constant or grow. This quality of rajas is an enemy of the soul, for it can completely disrupt manifestation of the soul's higher aspects; this quality resides in the lower layers of manifestation, closer to physical matter itself, and because of that fact, it can come between the soul and the field of its manifestation; the additional problem is that those reactions reside in the domain of ahaṅkāra, or ego, the autonomous system that controls the senses and organs of action, and so ahaṅkāra, under the influence of rajas, takes control of a man, who now behaves like a mindless automaton, or a lower animal. Because of such mechanism of reaction, the substances like cortisone, the hormone of stress, or adrenaline, are created in the man's physical body, additionally strengthening the mechanisms of anger, at the same time disturbing the state of the body, thus disrupting the soul's influence on a man's behavior, since the lower bodies need to be calmed down in order for the soul to be able to manifest itself. Because of all that, it is obvious why Lord Kṛṣṇa calls this mechanism an all-consuming cause of sin, and the greatest enemy.

**38 As smoke covers a fire,
as dust covers a mirror,
as fetus is covered by amnion,
so do passions cover objectivity.**

Such mechanisms of disturbance therefore cloud the connection between man's higher aspects and the physical plane, on one hand clouding judgment and hindering objectivity, and on the other hand creating a tendency toward a certain form of action. In such a situation, where a man loses objectivity because of the influence of passions, also becoming prone to violent actions and sin, the soul in its higher nature becomes utterly obscured.

**39 Wisdom is covered
by this eternal enemy of the wise
in form of desire, o son of Kuntī,
voracious like fire.**

The bottom of the sea cannot be seen if the surface is disrupted by waves. Likewise, the subtle aspects of consciousness cannot

find expression in a situation where consciousness is filled with coarse events, such as passions or anger. In order to act from a position of wisdom, peace of spirit is essential, as well as freedom from attachment. A combination of restless spirit and attachments results in utter loss of every form of objectivity, and also of every trace of nobility and love. Therefore, granting those lower mechanisms any kind of expression will only cause them to increase in power. If we give desire and anger a finger, they will devour the entire arm, and then the body as well. We should therefore never pay those qualities any heed, nor should we act from them in any way. On the contrary, if they arise, we should observe the entire situation from a distance, wait for the disturbance of the lower levels to go away, and only then are we to speak or act. If we need to say something unpleasant to someone, let us rather say it with a calm head, rather than under the influence of passions. In the opposite case, the loss of objectivity combined with passions will lead to all kinds of trouble, and will most likely cause a man's destruction. You wouldn't want to spend the rest of your life in jail just because you gave in to your lower instincts and killed someone who insulted you, would you?

**40 The senses, mind and reason
are where this desire is seated.
Covering the wisdom through them,
it deludes the embodied man.**

The seat of desire is in the astral body, which is the body of mind and emotions, coordinating the senses and the sensory perception. When the activity of the astral body is increased, it will find itself in the way of the manifestation of the higher bodies in the physical, and if we allow it, it will take over completely, for we are dealing with the mechanisms of the animal kingdom, meant to perform swift action in a threatening situation, where defense or escape are necessary. In such a situation, it is of vital importance to act immediately, which is why those mechanisms are so fast. As effective and reasonable as they might be in the animal kingdom, where territoriality and force rule, in the world of men they have exactly the opposite result of turning men into animals, degrading their actions to the level of a pack of wild beasts fighting over a piece of meat. The lower systems, thus disturbed, can

of course not serve as the means of manifestation of the subtle consciousness, but only as a source of deluding impressions, that use great effort to convince the soul of the objective nature of something that is merely a result of man's resurfacing animal heritage.

**41 Putting thus in order the senses before all,
o best of Bharatas, harness that source of sin,
which destroys wisdom and knowledge.**

The one true way of harnessing the automatism of rajas is the constant presence of the consciousness in the senses, or, in other words, bringing the senses and man's lower nature under the full control of the spirit, which has to be constantly awake and alive. A man who thus functions will not fall under the influence of the lower forces, which have no difficulty to dominate a dormant spirit. The cure for anger and passion is therefore the awakened state of spirit that is present in the senses, preventing the autonomous mechanisms from being activated, which is guaranteed to happen in its absence, in situation where the senses are left to themselves, wandering aimlessly among attractive and repulsive objects. When the spirit is pointed at a clearly defined goal, focusing on that goal through the senses and organs of action, then are those organs brought under its rule, and do not function independently. An example of that is a surgeon in the operating room, who can operate for ten hours straight, disregarding the demands of his body, completely focused on the task before him, performing it with greatest precision. Such is the true control over the lower nature; when the spirit acts in it, everything obeys its commands, but when the spirit allows itself to be ordered around by the senses, and when it is not firmly focused on the task ahead, then it is constantly showered by the demands of the senses, which are inexhaustible.

**42 It is said that the senses are subtle.
The mind is more subtle than the senses,
and even beyond it is the subtlety of spirit.
There remains That,
which is beyond even the spirit.**

The senses are subtle, for they reside in the astral body, in that part of it which is bound with prāṇa. The physical senses merely

mediate between the physical world and the astral body, in which recognition and understanding of the observed takes place. It is the mind, however, that makes judgments based upon observation, exceeding the senses in its subtlety, for it resides in the higher part of the astral. The spirit, however, is a still deeper aspect of a man, the one that gives true understanding, determining the man's long term directions, unlike the lower mind that controls short term events in the world of senses. The mind judges the world by the senses, but the spirit decides about the deeper guidelines of existence. Still, they are only organs, through which Self maintains its presence in the world. And so, there is a vertical line of the manifestation of Self: from objects, through the senses and mind to the spirit, and, eventually, to Self. This connection goes both ways; in one direction it tells Self about the world, and in the other, it allows Self to act in the world.

**43 Thus knowing Him who is above spirit,
harness Self with Self alone,
and conquer thus, o Mighty-armed,
the enemy in the form of desire,
which is difficult to conquer indeed.**

True control of the senses is therefore attained by focusing the spirit onto the Highest. When consciousness is thus immersed in the deepest reality, sensory impressions, as well as activities of the lower nature, will be utterly irrelevant, and will not have any control over the man. Only when one is lost, when he loses his true perspective, when he forgets his true nature, only then can he fall under the deluding influence of the various lower forces. The wind dispels the clouds with ease, but it cannot move a mountain, for the foundations of a mountain are firm. Likewise, a man who is established in his true nature of the highest Self, will not be moved by the winds of sensory perception, but will remain firm and steady in all circumstances. Lord Kṛṣṇa thus recommends a firm vertical line between the world and Self to be established in both directions, where Self will be established as the supreme master of the senses, as their foundation and purpose, so that man's lower aspects will never have the opportunity to get in the way.

Chapter Four

- 1 The Almighty Lord said:
In the beginning, I revealed this
indestructible yoga to Vivasvān.
He revealed it to Manu, who in turn
taught it to Ikṣvāku.

I'm afraid that all the names mentioned here are, today, in the domain of legend, and there is nothing that would connect them with our reality, nothing that could be used to make them closer to the reader. The reason for that is the great passage of time, because of which we cannot tell for certain whether the mentioned persons really existed, or are they simply symbols, or mythical beings, such as Heracles or Adam. What could we, alternatively, say if Kṛṣṇa had stated that in the beginning of the world, he declared this knowledge unto Adam, the father of mankind, who in turn revealed it to his sons, Cain and Abel, and that this ancient knowledge had been lost in the ancient times before the great flood? We could undoubtedly only shrug.

Some say that Vivasvān is merely another name of Sūrya, the god of the sun. Others, however, say, probably based on better grounds, that we are dealing with the founder of the solar dynasty of warriors. Whichever be true, it makes no difference to us, since it, in either case, fails to tell us anything of importance.

- 2 Thus having received it in the disciplic succession,
the royal sages knew it.
But in the long ages, this yoga was lost.

Whatever the names of the dignitaries in mention, whoever they were, the point came across perfectly: after a long period of time, not only the disciplic succession, which preserves a teaching, but even the very memory of the persons and events in its beginnings can be lost. After a sufficiently long time, it all passes into the realm of legend. All the events from the beginnings of civilization are now only vague legends, whose factual basis is today difficult or impossible to establish. Those events were not even that ancient; the history of ancient civilizations begins somewhere around the fifth millennium before Christ. Even in that period of time, scriptures and excavations are unreliable. What took place before that period? It is indeed difficult to know. Only seven millennia are therefore quite sufficient for us to completely lose the historically relevant memory of our past; if civilization existed before that time, what do we know about it? Nothing. We can only comfort ourselves with thinking there to have been, in fact, no ancient history at all, and that our ancestors at those early times used stone hatchets to hunt mammoths. Maybe it is true; maybe we are indeed dealing with mere exaggerations and the ancient myths, especially in India, where it is almost a matter of prestige to date scriptures and events in a past as ancient as possible.

Where, then, is the truth in all that? In the following fact, perhaps: in India, it is hardly possible to find a disciplic succession that remained uninterrupted through more than five hundred years. So what are we to make, then, of those lists of names, leading back to the Creator himself? They are mere counterfeits, if you ask me; a comfort to those who are not able to bear responsibility for their teaching themselves, wanting to shift responsibility and credit to the tradition. There is, unfortunately, little comfort in tradition. As Kṛṣṇa says: the traditions are being lost; they vanish with a long passage of time, and even the memory of them is lost. Every tradition lasts only for as long as the teacher manages to fully train at least one disciple. In the moment when the teacher dies without a competent heir, the succession becomes a farce, which continues to exist often for the sake of mere tradition,

although its essence be dead. Such a succession can be reformed, but it is then no longer original, just as the Catholic Church is no longer a successor of Christ and Peter; it is a successor of the reformers who built on the ruins that remained after the dark period of Avignon and the Borgias.

According to what I had the opportunity to see, the time needed for a succession to be broken is most often somewhere around three generations, for the intensity of the teaching itself has the tendency to weaken with each generation. The first generation is the founder himself, often a true Divine incarnation or a great saint. With his charisma and power, he makes foundations in the form of students. Most often, none of those students has the power of the founder, great saints as they may be; an example can be found in the disciples of Jesus. They're all undoubtedly persons of remarkable spiritual strength, but they fall far short of the magnitude of Jesus. Their disciples are, however, hardly even remembered today; it is the third generation in which the true strength had been lost, and the mere form persisted, the basic form of teaching without much contact with the essence. Because of all that was mentioned above, we can see how reaching for authentic disciplic successions is a mere trick, used in order to deceive the ignorant.

What would it take, then, to make a disciplic succession that would continue uninterrupted? Undoubtedly not intellectual knowledge; for many people today have knowledge about Jesus, yet very few of them can raise the dead and walk on water. Conveying mere information is, therefore, not the thing that makes a valid disciplic succession. A truly firm chain of succession is possible only if it conveys the essence, and not merely the form through which it manifests. Such essence can be found only in the firm foundations in the Divine, in the reality that is the foundation of all. Only those, who have received the insight of that reality, who have established themselves in that reality and who grow from it, and who are able to confer the insight of that reality upon others, can be considered the true links of the chain of disciplic succession. It is, however, often the case that a disciple only partially inherits the teacher, and so that, which the Master possessed in fullness, they come to possess only in part, lacking some essential elements. In such a compromised chain of succession, the degree of a link's basis in the reality falls with geometric progression

with each iteration, which provides the explanation for my observation about the three generations. Let us illustrate this by making a small graph of the square root function. Let the x-axis represent the length of the disciplic succession, and the y-axis represent the numerical value of the teacher's strength, on a scale from 1 to 10. Let us assume that the founder of the succession has the value of 10 on this scale. Let us say that the strength of his successor is the square root of the predecessor. His immediate successor will then have the value of 3.16, which fits the observation rather nicely; for the successors of Jesus hardly bore more than a third of his strength, if even that much, but even that is enough to regard them as saints, with full justification. Their successors, however, according to this function, would have the value of 1.77, which is already rather poor, and it is a reason why we remember Timothy only by his mention in the epistles of Paul. Their successors, however, have the value of 1.33, and the value drops still, going toward the value of 1. Let us say that this very value, 1, is that on which it is utterly irrelevant whether there is a succession or not. Let us also observe that in the root function, the greatness of the first teacher does not play such a major role; a difference between the initial values of 1,000 or 10 delays the succession's collapse for only two or three generations, not more. It all perfectly fits the observation, and therefore gives us material for consideration.

The conclusion presents itself: the only reliable disciplic succession would be that, in which every link of the chain would be immediately connected with God, as the essential foundation of the lineage, and only then, when enlightenment is immediately present in the consciousness and life of each disciple in the succession, will it be guaranteed to succeed. Everything else is a mere game of broken telephone, in which accuracy falls with the square of the distance from the source.

Let us take the solar system, as an example of such a phenomenon. The only true source of light in it is the sun.¹³⁸ That is so because the thermonuclear reaction of fusion takes place in its core, in which the light elements fuse into the heavier, accompanied by radiation of excess energy in the form of electromagnetic

¹³⁸ Let us, for now, forget the less significant sources of light, such as volcanos, forest fires and man-made artificial sources.

radiation. Several planets orbit around the sun, and they are illuminated by the sun in reverse proportion to their distance from it; or in other words, the closer they are, the more light and warmth they receive. It reminds us of the disciples of a great teacher: those who are closer to him, are irradiated by more warmth and light. Those, who are farther away, receive less. The disciples of those disciples are comparable to the moons orbiting those planets. If they are illuminated only by the planet which reflects the light of the sun, we again have the example of the root function, in which the light exponentially falls with each iteration. The disciplic successions, which thus collapse and become degenerate, tell us that we should strive to be as close as possible to the sun, that we should absorb as much of its light as possible and radiate it into the world.

It sounds correct, but it is in fact immensely stupid; it reflects a submissive mentality and is a cause of destruction of all spirituality in the world. For we do not need the cursed sun, we need to develop a thermonuclear reaction of fusion within ourselves, which we can do only by ceasing to be the planets, and by becoming the stars. Only then will we attain the true source of strength, and have something to radiate. We will then be self-enlightened, we will shine and produce warmth from within our own being, unlike pieces of charcoal that glow in the fire, but when pulled out, grow cold and black, thus showing their true nature, that of cold darkness. We can expose a dark and cold soul to the company of saints and avatāras as much as we like; in their company, it will indeed show some virtues, but when it is removed from that company, it grows cold and returns to its own. This makes the primary difference between the successions of religion and the successions of yoga. The successions of religion are those that try to turn men into passive followers, who will merely collect and reflect the light of those above them. The successions of yoga, however, are those that pay little heed to tradition, but on the contrary, tirelessly persist on such a transformation of the individual being, that will cause him to shine all by himself, like the nuclear oven of the sun. Such a man, who is by his own nature founded in God, who is by himself realized, who sees the foundation of each disciplic succession in his own true nature, he is the true foundation of the spirituality in the world, unlike the lineages of submissive tradition worshipers.

- 3 This ancient yoga,
which is the highest secret,
I reveal before you today,
for you are my friend and bhakta.

Let us notice that Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna yoga, or the principle of establishing oneself in a correct manner. If he wanted Arjuna to become dependent on him, he would give him only the bottom line, the desired pattern of behavior for him to uphold. Instead, Kṛṣṇa teaches him to find the right foundations, from which everything else will follow.

Arjuna is Kṛṣṇa's friend; furthermore, he is his bhakta. Let us now dwell on this term, which is usually abused to the point of mockery.

Bhakti is a stage above friendship. Bhakti is a state of admiration out of devotion, of respect, appreciation and admiration. Bhakti is a state in which we admire someone for his virtues, in which we wish to be like him, but not by chopping his head off in order to reduce him to our own size, but by looking into the heights where we find him and sing: "All glory to You!" Such spontaneous admiration and adoration is bhakti. With such adoration, we ourselves develop the very qualities we admire; we do not worship in order to stay small and weak, but completely without motivation—we express admiration to him who is worthy of admiration, only because it is the right thing to do, only because it makes us feel good and right. One who admires the good, grows in goodness. One, however, who admires evil, grows in evil. Unmotivated adoration therefore means our growth in goodness, without any particular effort invested in our personal growth. By means of respect and admiration, we open up toward he whom we respect, and, praising his good qualities, we give them the supreme place in our own lives. People are often mistaken, thinking that criticizing something will show their superiority to that thing, raising them above it. On the contrary, criticism will only separate and distance them from the object of criticism. That, however, which we admire, we attract into ourselves, and grow toward it.

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are in a relationship of mutual respect and admiration; they are both honorable men and great warriors, each rejoicing in the glory of the other. Besides that, Arjuna is aware of

the fact that Kṛṣṇa is a Divine being, and so he spontaneously pays him respect, like for instance when he and Duryodhana visited Kṛṣṇa while He was asleep, where Arjuna remained standing at the bedside with folded hands, as a sign of respect. Those are utterly spontaneous manifestations of his inner attitude. It is thus obvious that such an attitude is a fertile ground for receiving the highest knowledge, for in Arjuna there exists no doubt in neither Kṛṣṇa, His knowledge and greatness, nor His intentions, and this attitude allows him to easily absorb everything Kṛṣṇa teaches him. This is the reason why Kṛṣṇa clearly states that this Arjuna's attitude is the very reason why He is revealing the highest teaching unto him.

4 Arjuna said:

**Later was Your birth
and earlier the birth of Vivasvān.
How am I to understand
that You taught him at the beginning?**

The fact that Arjuna admires Kṛṣṇa does not mean that his critical mind has been dulled, and that he merely absorbs the undigested knowledge like a parrot, in order to later repeat it without understanding. On the contrary: it is a sign of respect to the teacher to listen to his words attentively, to find a part that sounds contradictory, incomprehensible or meaningless, and to point it out immediately, in order to clarify things. Otherwise, a student whose critical abilities are not active while listening to the teacher is simply unworthy of being a student, for he does not accept the message in the proper manner.

Let us notice the formulation through which Arjuna points out his observation: "How am I to understand it?" A wrong use of the critical mind is that, which acts from the position of ego. Ego then constantly awaits something, that would elevate it above someone else. From such a position, when a man hears something that, to him at least, sounds contradictory or meaningless, he will immediately attack his partner in conversation, mocking him, thinking the thing, which he is unable to understand, to be nonsense, and the thing, the meaning of which he is unable to comprehend, to have no meaning whatsoever. Constantly assuming to be right, he perceives every disagreement with his opinion

as others' mistake. It is therefore quite clear that such a man can never advance, and that he will hardly ever outgrow his delusions.

Arjuna is much wiser; to him, it does not matter whether he's right or wrong—he cares only about finding the truth. Being right is something that matters to insecure people, to people who care about others' opinion of them, in order to be able to maintain an illusion about themselves, wherewith they attempt to compensate the lack of substance. Arjuna, of course, is not such a person; he is a man of honor, who strives toward truth and virtue, obtaining his sense of value from harmony with truth and virtue. This is why his mind is clear and pure. If he fails to understand something, he immediately says: "I do not understand this, and I am confused; please explain it, so that I could understand."

It is said that the most intelligent people are those, who ask many questions. That is so because they are not afraid of being perceived as stupid, for they know that they are not. Fools, however, know that they are fools, and live in constant fear of exposure. This is why they dare not ask questions, thinking that questions reveal ignorance, so they "wisely" remain silent, thus remaining fools.

5 The Almighty Lord said:
Many births did I take,
and you as well, o Arjuna.
I know them all, but you do not,
o subduer of enemies.

The answer to this dilemma is, of course, reincarnation; Lord Kṛṣṇa is not speaking about *this* incarnation of his, but of one in a distant past. Since Arjuna does not remember his former embodiments, he does not realize that this could be the case, that it could be all the same to Kṛṣṇa which of his incarnations was involved, and that He maintains the continuity of His consciousness in all births.

The difference between the two friends now becomes apparent. Arjuna is not an ordinary man; on the contrary, he rises above the people of his time in all things, being an ideal human being. Like him, Kṛṣṇa too is perfect in all respects. Still, the difference between them is that Arjuna acts without knowing, instinctively; his true nature is unknown to him. Kṛṣṇa, however, remains the

sovereign ruler of all things, completely awake in the highest realization. Death and rebirth in no part cloud His consciousness, unlike that of other beings. That is so because Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Highest, and there is no force in the sphere of Creation, that would be equal or superior to Him. The qualities of Nature are His servants, not masters. The ignorance therefore has no power over Him. He knows who He is, where He comes from, and where He is going.

**6 Although I am unborn and indestructible in My nature,
although I am the Lord of all beings,
remaining in My own nature,
I am born through My own power of making.**

At the same time, God remains unmade, unmanifested and incomprehensible. He, utterly transcendental to the manifested sphere, at the same time is embodied through direction of His willpower. Because of the paradoxical nature of His embodiment, through which He at the same time stays in His original state and also takes physical form, His embodiment will confuse most people. For if God is born in a body, He then limits and localizes Himself. If God is incarnated as a man, we might think that the angels of heaven are left without the object of their worship, at least for the duration of God's embodiment. If, however, He remains bodiless, if no change takes place in the higher spheres, a man will be inclined to think that God is not in fact embodied, but that we are dealing with some sort of His energy in action. Still, it is not so.

Let us, rather, imagine the following: God is the source of light, and the entire Nature is a glass board stained with color. The various mildly lit stains on the board represent beings which are created when God casts His "look" upon the glass board, and because of the partially thinned layer of color on the glass. The incarnation of God could be described in the following manner: God removes the color from the glass on one spot completely. Then the original pure nature of the light passes through the glass, utterly unhindered by the stains of color. At the same time, the original, utterly pure light becomes visible from the other side, in the physical world, while the light remains in its original, transcendental state on the other side of the glass. There we find the

solution to our paradox. The avatāra, an incarnation of God, is a hole in the illusion, a window through the world, through which we can perceive God. The object of worship of all the virtuous and holy thus obtains the human form, which is the entire glory of God molded into a human form. We can in no way describe all of His glory, nor can we perceive it in whole, but we can humbly bow before it, and sing songs in His praise. May God our Lord be eternally praised in His entire greatness! Let all beings eternally praise Him, for it is only right and appropriate! All glory to Him!

**7 When dharma wavers, o Bhārata,
and adharmā prevails,
I Myself then take birth.**

All engineers know that the quality of a machine is inversely proportional to the number of its malfunctions, or the necessity for later interventions in its functioning. The engineer, whose constructions need the least maintenance, and which function perfectly all by themselves, is therefore considered the best.

How are we, then, to understand this statement? For created worlds are governed by precise laws. In the physical universe there are laws such as gravity, electromagnetism and weak and strong nuclear interaction. There are also precise laws that arrange the movement and interaction of particles on the micro and macro scale, which thus create more complex structures, which, in turn, make possible the creation of more and more complex forms of matter: from leptons and quarks to subatomic particles, from subatomic particles to atoms, from atoms to molecules, from simpler molecules to complex ones, from complex molecules to living beings, and from simpler living beings to more complex ones. Such complex structures are subject to the laws of forces, motion, exchange of energy, and the like.

All those things function in perfect harmony, which is the responsibility of physical laws, which God created as perfect in the very beginning, and there is no need for additional interventions in the functioning of the universe, in order to maintain them. Because of all that, the statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa seems paradoxical, saying that He needs to become embodied in order to correct imperfections in the order that rules the world. Still, things are

somewhat more complex, and proper understanding of this complexity will reveal the answer to our dilemma.

Creating the world, God had two available options. The first option was to create a completely deterministic world, in which everything could be foreseen perfectly, and over which He would have complete control. Such a world, as well as all the beings inside it, would be wholly dependent on His will, and would only passively reflect it. Such a world would be perfectly arranged, and, unfortunately, perfectly useless as well. That is so because there is not much use for a passive automaton that merely reflects its creator's will, without any possibility for surprise or novelty. God therefore rejected such a model of creation as useless.

The other possibility remains: the creation of a dynamic system, in which God sets the basic terms and rules of the game, the fundamental laws which then take a life of their own, and not even God Himself can tell for certain what will come out of it all, and what this world will look like at a given point in time. Indeed, to Him, the result itself is not as important as the process of making. For God created the world by creating beings to whom He delegated certain aspects of His personality, which He did by looking upon a certain subtle layer of Nature, creating within it dynamics of motion, which brought about further links in the chain of creation. Feeling His consciousness of the Highest Puruṣa, He created countless numbers of Puruṣas who adore Him by observing His entire glory. This brought to existence a multitude of gods, or archangels and angels, if you will. Those gods bear different aspects of the Infinite, and in those aspects they create, they manifest themselves, thus celebrating the Lord. Their will is free, for they were made such by their Maker, and they manifest their will by exploring all the possibilities granted to them by the Maker. One of those possibilities is to limit one's consciousness in various ways, in order to materialize it more concretely in greater diversity, in which various aspects of the inner fullness would be expressed as separate forms. Some aspect of such a perfect being may find its expression in the form of an entire universe filled with beings and things, with dynamics of motion and making, all reflecting the spirit of its Maker.

In contact with Prakṛti, Puruṣa first takes the form of the dynamics of making, of Śiva the Dancer. In His descent deeper into Creation, He divided Himself into male and female aspects, Śiva and Śakti. Deprived of inner wholesomeness and self-sufficiency,

they express their desire for one another in a wish to be reunited, through an infinite abundance of consciousness, devotion, structures of purity and truth, and various energies and levels of consciousness, in which they manifest God's glory in the world by celebrating each other. In further materialization of their intentions, they first create the level of causality, in which object is separated from subject, and cause from effect, thus introducing the separation of things. In that separation, they descend further, creating knowledge and understanding, or the mental level. Materializing even further, knowledge/essence is manifested through various forms, in which it is mirrored and reflected. This creates the astral plane, whose laws are now very close to that which we perceive in physical matter. Wishing to further materialize the structures and forms made on the astral plane, and to give them a firm and solid form, in order for one to be more distinct from the other, the physical world was created, with its abundance of beings and firmly separated forms. It is therefore God's desire to be celebrated in all things, and for His glory to shine throughout all the levels thus created, and for the Creation to return His look, the look filled with Him.

In such solidification, at the moment in which realization is defined, its opposite is also defined; not because it would have a foundation in God, representing a part of His manifestation, but by the very nature of things. In the moment when things become defined through their opposites, therefore on the astral, things such as evil, ignorance and disharmony begin to exist. If we go back to the guṇas, sattva, rajas and tamas, then the solidification of the Creation toward the physical plane means the increase on the part of tamas at the expense of sattva, and also at the expense of rajas. This culminates in a state of complete theoretical immobility, which would, on a scale of manifestation, be a ladder below matter, in which dynamics and virtue would be reduced to zero, with only the forces of inertia, ignorance and stillness prevailing. Such a state would be one big nothingness, as the complete opposite of God, who is one great Everything.

Because of the conflict of the forces of virtue and non-virtue, of good and evil, harmony and disharmony, which is a necessary consequence of the solidification of God's manifestation in progressively more coarse layers of Prakṛti, a situation, in which evil prevails and good is compromised, is therefore possible. Then, in

that great game, God intervenes, coming to the rescue like the cavalry in Western movies, when forces that praise Him and manifest Him are jeopardized. He reveals Himself before them, appearing before them as a role model, in order for them to be strengthened in their essence by praising Him, in order for them to remember their origin and goal, thus suppressing negativities. Likewise, the opposite forces see the embodied God as their enemy, the opposite of their own desires and nature, and so they despise Him; they hate Him and attempt to destroy Him. That is, of course, utter folly, for in an attempt to destroy the essence of reality, they only separate themselves from it even further, thus sinking deeper into nothingness, until they either repent and convert, or disappear completely into the darkness of total nonexistence.

**8 In order to rescue the righteous and destroy the evil,
in order to reestablish the principles of dharma,
I take birth age after age.**

God is, therefore, embodied in order to show beings the goal of their orientation; seeing Him as their goal, the righteous bow before Him, thus reinforcing the inner core of their being, while the wicked hate Him and run away from Him, thus separating themselves from the reality and going toward their final destruction, thus ceasing to create any more disturbance with their presence in the world. God delivers the righteous with His very presence; for His presence alone is, to a righteous man, the highest blessing and salvation, and he has no other desires. Thus having seen God, he renounces all lower longings, and achieves the highest liberation, remaining forever established in the Lord. Of course, it is up to a man to renounce his attachments and outgrow his weaknesses, and that is one thing God cannot do for him; if the incarnation of God were the single factor in the salvation of beings, one could rightfully ask why God is not constantly embodied in the world. This, however, opens another issue, for God comes when He is needed. When nobody needs Him, He remains unmanifested, for people seem satisfied with the lower forces. Only then, when people find everything lower than God insufficient, when they constantly thirst for God and God alone, would there be a reason for His permanent appearance in the world. When God is present in the hearts of men, He also appears in the

world. When He is absent from the hearts of men, when people are filled with desires for lower things, then they get to belong to lower things, in which God does not interfere.

The lower forces, such as dharma, which determines the rules of incarnation in order for beings to learn and evolve, are quite sufficient in a vast majority of cases. They fail only when one's desire for God grows to such extent, that such development is no longer optimal; for faster progress could be made in God's presence. Then God descends, takes form and acts. The system is therefore well arranged: those who are of the world, belong to the world's care, and the world satisfies their needs perfectly. Those, however, who belong to God, who desire God, and who are of God, they belong to God's care. Everyone therefore gets what he really desires, and what really matters to him. This is metaphorically described in the holy scriptures in the following way: when a man dies, if he belonged to God in life, if he was devoted to Him, the messengers of God come to greet him and lead him to God. If, however, he did not belong to God in life, but instead to the lower, binding forces, after death he is received by the messengers of Yama, who lead him before the face of Yama/Dharma, the god of justice, who shows him a mirror in which he sees all his actions and their consequences, and those consequences create his rebirth. So it is those who belonged to God in life, who come to Him after death to find peace, while those, who belonged to the world, who strove for the world during life, get to belong to the world again in a new life.

9 My birth and My activities are Divine.

**He who truly understands it,
after leaving this body is not reborn.
He comes to Me, o Arjuna.**

The one, who is able to recognize the essence of a Divine incarnation, is therefore able to look into God Himself, and to recognize Him as such. His consciousness is so refined, that his spiritual progress has come to an end, and he gets to belong to God forever. He, who even once manages to touch God with his consciousness and insight, is thought to be perfect, and all his sins and failures are forgotten: he belongs only and solely to God, in eternity.

Without such insight into God, it is therefore not possible to attain true understanding of His birth and actions, and so, God here reveals an exquisitely important matter, essential in order to understand the human goal, as well as the plan of reincarnation. New births are essential to beings, until they manage to touch the Highest; any other goal would, continued into eternity, be a curse and a source of suffering. Only the Almighty provides the endless source of immense bliss and true fulfillment, and only He can be the final and supreme goal, compared to which everything else is insignificant.

**10 Free from attachments, fear and anger,
fully established in Me, finding their refuge in Me,
purified by the austerity of knowledge,
many have attained My reality.**

To the one, who fails to reach the highest reality, new birth is a blessing, another chance to continue his efforts of finding perfection. To him, however, who has attained that goal, who experienced all the lower things and renounced them for the sake of the Highest, a new birth would be only an obsolete and unnecessary source of suffering. This is the reason why such people are not reborn: they have nothing to gain by rebirth. If they are born, it is for the purpose of serving others, with the purpose of helping God's plan to be manifested.

Without renouncing the lower qualities, however, it is not possible to attain purification, and without purification, it is not possible to know the Highest. Purification from lowly things is therefore imperative; it is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of liberation, which cannot be ignored, for to ignore it would mean to fall into lowliness, and walk away from the goal toward which we strive.

One might think that the fact that a single moment of knowing the Highest guarantees liberation, provides a reason to relax and appropriate a "no problem" mentality. Such a line of thinking is not the quality of those who attain liberation. For to reach that one moment of realization, one needs great foundations of purity, as the construction of a tall pyramid needs a firm and wide basis, and firm ground as a foundation. He who strives toward spiritual heights, without having previously solved the problems

on lower levels, will find himself in a situation similar to that of a boat driver who attempts to row a boat tied to the shore. Without resolving such attachments to the lower levels, he will not get far, and in spite of all the efforts invested in rowing, he will remain motionless. And where still are the distant shores of the Divine reality! One should always have this in mind in the practice of yoga: attachments and lowly things are our greatest enemies, and it is they, that pose the greatest obstacle to our progress. This is why the application of purifying techniques is imperative. When purifying techniques are applied, liberation is easily attained in a short period of time; all attachments are dissolved, and the soul thus ascends to more and more subtle spheres of insight, until it finally manages to gain insight into the Lord Himself. Without purifying techniques, every attempt to meditate is an exercise in futility, which can be seen in the example of the many practitioners of quick and easy techniques of meditation, who think that they can buy the perfection cheaply. As much as they practice, they attain no progress worth mentioning, except the common progress in arrogance. How could they ever attain liberation? How could one gain even a partial insight into the Highest of the high, if he at the same time nurtures attachments to all kinds of lowliness? This is therefore the reason why Lord Kṛṣṇa here mentions freedom from attachments and passions, and purification by means of true knowledge, as the necessary prerequisites of coming to the Divine reality.

Still, this reality has been reached by many. In that very thing lies comfort: it can be achieved, and many have achieved it already, and so everybody should work on joining them.

11 In the same way in which one approaches Me, I respond.

In every way, o Pārtha, people follow My path.

According to their spiritual progress and inclinations, people develop various ways in which they strive toward God. In each and every one of those ways, God supports them and meets them with open arms.

For God is the all-pervading reality. He knows no limitations. However we approach Him, He will know the orientation of our being and our true desires, and will repay us in kind. But in all that, God is the one who merely responds. Our free will is the factor which determines that, to which we are to belong. If we do

not desire God, He will let us be, according to our wishes. If however we adhere to Him, He will respond by adhering to us. In all that, it is essential to see that we are the decisive factor: we decide what we want. God is not the exclusive right of some; He offers Himself to all without exception, and everyone who so desires can surrender to Him and reach Him. Everyone's natural inclinations can prove to be useful in that; whatever be the way in which one perceives perfection, if he puts his devotion and faith to it, God will reveal Himself before him in that form, thus confirming his orientation. Gradually, such a man will grow beyond all limitations and achieve perfection.

**12 Those, who seek fulfillment in deeds,
they worship the gods,
for success born from action
comes quickly in the world of men.**

As the Lord said, deeds bring success quickly in the world of men, but such success is “of this world”; it is the treasure corroded by rust and eaten by moths.¹³⁹ Such deeds certainly bring success; they bear fruits quickly, but those fruits do not last. Still, actions according to one's own dharma bring another kind of fulfillment, that which comes from the feeling of harmony because of performing one's duties. Such labor, offered to the gods,¹⁴⁰ or the elements of Nature—for it is only the qualities of Nature interacting¹⁴¹—without attachment, brings fulfillment to one's activities. Those, who desire fulfillment in their activities, will therefore act from yajña, without attachment.

**13 I created the four castes
according to the division of qualities and activities.
Although I am their maker,
know that I am inactive and changeless.**

¹³⁹ Matthew 6:19–21: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

¹⁴⁰ See 3:10–13.

¹⁴¹ See 3:28.

The four castes are that of sūdras, vaiśyas, kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas. By the division of qualities (tamas, rajas and sattva) the sūdras act primarily from tamas, colored with rajas, which means that their mind is undeveloped, and they act from ignorance and lower motives, primarily those of self-preservation, procreation and sensual gratification. Vaiśyas act from rajas colored with tamas, which means that they act in order to amass wealth, achieve material benefit and acquire sensual pleasures. The kṣatriyas act from rajas colored with sattva, which means the passion of ruling in virtue. The brāhmaṇas, however, act from sattva colored with rajas, which means that they act primarily from virtue directed toward activity. The purposes of actions are traditionally divided into kāma, artha, dharma and mokṣa, or enjoyment, benefit, righteousness and liberation. According to such a division, sūdras act primarily for sensual gratification, vaiśyas act primarily for material benefit, kṣatriyas are primarily motivated by righteousness, while brāhmaṇas strive primarily toward liberation, or the attainment of spiritual perfection. This division is, of course, imprecise, and in most part arbitrary, but it tells us that all people are not the same, but are divided according to spiritual development, which is a difference that needs to be recognized in practice. Even at first glance, it is obvious that various people strive toward the different goals, and each analysis, that tries to ignore this fact, is to be denounced as reductionist, that which attempts to oversimplify matters by ignoring essential aspects. So, we can see that the goals in life of physical workers, as well as their thought processes, are greatly different from the longings and thought processes of students of philosophy and theology. Physical workers are generally unable to even understand what students are dealing with, they are unable to grasp the depths of their thoughts, and lack any desire to take their place; in any case, they think that colleges are useless things that serve the primary purpose of idle contemplations of people who live off the work of others. Since people are inclined to judge others by their own standards, physical workers, who find fulfillment in hard labor, and in the pleasures of food and sex, will also project their motives upon other people, and so they will think that everybody shares their limitations, and since their thoughts are extremely coarse and materially focused, they see value only in physical labor, meant to produce a change in the coarsest and the most visible aspects of matter. We had the

opportunity to experience the tragedy that takes place when such primitive minds take control of the state in communist regimes. There, such physical workers, unable to grasp the importance of intellectual work, used to disown intellectuals and force them to do “honest work” in factories and fields.

Like physical workers, who judge others by the limitations of their own primitive nature, so do some intellectuals think there to be a potential intellectual in all, sometimes brought to surface because of a better education and external conditions, and sometimes not, in less favorable conditions. This way, a set of external causes is supposed to be responsible for the differences between intellectuals and physical workers. It is, of course, as wrong as physical workers’ idea that all men are, in essence, like them. When such intellectuals get power over the state, they start making laws that create a different kind of problem, for they attempt to turn everybody into intellectuals, in the same manner in which farmers would want to make everybody into farmers, for they see only the intellectual work to be truly valuable and useful, seeing transportation of matter from one heap to another only as the means, and never the goal of functioning, seeing the only purpose of physical labor in the implementation of intellectual ideas.

We can therefore see, in this example of the two groups most often mentioned in Western contemplations of the subject, that there are clear differences between people, caused by a different degree of spiritual development. The Hindus have divided them into four, rather than two groups, and so we have physical workers as the first group, craftsmen and merchants as the second, the rulers, army and police as the third, and spiritually inclined people as the fourth. We should, however, notice that a certain kind of intellectual workers would be classified as vaiśyas rather than brāhmaṇas, for a simple reason: a mechanical engineer is, in fact, a sophisticated variation on the theme of a blacksmith, and an engineer of botanics is a highly educated kind of gardener. Only intellectuals of the higher fields of study, whose interests are directed at the knowledge of higher truth and reality, such as, for instance the physicists who investigate the origin and nature of the universe, hoping to acquire knowledge of its purpose, or those who engage in philosophy or theology, attempting to find final answers and to reveal the truths about God and the world, would be considered brāhmaṇas.

Of course, a division into four classes is as imprecise as a division into two, and can be only a working model, established by tradition. It would be closer to the truth if we were to make a classification of the classes according to the primary cakras, because, according to the cakra from which one primarily acts, we could determine the class to which he belongs, which would, of course, increase the number of classes, and one would also have to acknowledge the many transitional states. Śūdras could be located on mūlādhāra, with the additional influences of svādhiṣṭhāna. Vaiśyas would be rooted primarily on svādhiṣṭhāna, with quite a large influence of maṇipūra. Kṣatriyas would act from maṇipūra and anāhata, while brāhmaṇas would act from anāhata, with the influences of maṇipūra and other cakras. People whose primary cakras are viśuddha, ājñā and higher ones are so rare, that the Vedic scriptures give them titles such as ṛṣis, siddhas, yogīs, and the like. They go beyond the system of castes at the higher end, and criminals and other social slime leave the system on the lower end.

With the system of varṇas, or “colors,” for which the Portuguese word “casta” was used in later times, comes also the system of āśramas, or divisions into the periods of life. Those periods are that of a disciple (brahmacarya), of a family man (gṛhastha), of abandoning the family and dedicating oneself to the spiritual, which is the equivalent of retirement—sannyāsa, and the final period of life, the period of complete renunciation of the world, “withdrawal into the forest,” or vānaprastha. It was commonly held that the Vedic man would have to devote the first twenty years of his life to study and preparation for the duties to come; then he was to create a family and raise children, caring for the welfare and progress of the family, and when the children grew up, he was to retire and devote his time to the study of scriptures and spiritual work. Before death, he was to sever all worldly ties, and go meditate in utter solitude, and eventually leave the body in the state of enlightenment. Such a division, of course, remains used more in the sphere of theory than it is the case with the castes; for it is not quite clear which castes are encompassed by the system of āśramas—it is very unlikely that a physical worker would be able to follow the two latter stages, and so one should assume that it was pertinent either to the brāhmaṇa caste alone, or to the caste of kṣatriyas as well, for whom it was rather common to renounce the duties of rulers in the latter period of life,

leaving for the forests in order to indulge in austerities. This entire system is highly reasonable, but it would be wrong to reduce spiritual discipline to the latter period of life. That is so because it seems that the greatest success in yoga is achieved by the young men, whose energetic system is still fresh and transparent, and I would recommend one to practice yoga from before puberty until death, for only that would guarantee maintaining the proper spiritual state during life. A long term accumulation of impurities during life can lead to extreme contamination of the system, which could be very difficult or even impossible to repair in old age. Also, the good condition of the system, which is able to tolerate a high level of energetic charge and load, is essential for achievement of extremely profound spiritual states. If a man has practice in that since youth, his system will preserve great vitality and capacity up until mature age, but if he neglects yogic practice in youth, it would later be very difficult to make up for.

The maker of the system of classes, or the entire system of evolution from which they originate as the different steps on the staircase of evolution, is in any case the Lord Himself, giving life and consciousness to all beings, as well as providing the initial impetus to all growth. Although He creates beings, and although they evolve and act by His grace alone, He remains uninvolved in action, like the sun that provides the energy that evaporates the oceans, creating rain and winds, and thus favorable conditions for life and growth of beings, still remaining quite untouched by all its actions. Like the sun that stimulates activities by its radiation alone, so does God give impetus and foundation to all growth and motion, by His existence alone.

**14 I am not involved in activity,
nor do I desire its fruits.
One who knows Me as such
is not bound by his activities.**

Like the sun, which is the cause of all motion and life on earth, still remaining uninvolved in actions that take place there, acting not from a desire to be fulfilled in this manner, but its radiation being only a reflection of its inner nature, so does God create the world, not by His actions, but by His nature. The existence of the world simply follows from God's nature, like the radiation

of warmth that follows from the nature of the sun. When this radiation of God falls on the fertile ground of the world, the multitudes of beings are then being created, all developing life, consciousness, existence, bliss and other qualities, depending on the amount of God's light they have absorbed. They then praise the Lord by growing in Divine qualities, like the multitude and diversity of life on earth that celebrates the benevolent radiation of the sun, which brings them all life.

Self, the all-pervading reality of all beings, is the foundation of the totality of relative manifestation, acting not in relative things, nor being influenced by them.

The statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa is therefore valid in two ways: both from the position of Self, and from the position of the Highest Puruṣa. The similarity of those two positions is a lasting source of conflict between the various schools in India, for each of them believes its interpretation to be the only correct one, each of them finding the parts of *Gītā* that utterly confuse it, and that cannot be correctly interpreted in its light. Because of all that, one should renounce one-sided study of *Gītā*, and accept the many layers of Lord Kṛṣṇa's speech; for He is at the same time both the knower of Self and the Highest Lord. Because of that, in the Relative, manifested sphere of reality He speaks from the position of Īśvara, the Lord, and in the Absolute, He speaks from the position of the all-pervading Self. There is a very fine line between those two, and it takes a spirit sharpened by the practice of yoga, experienced in all aspects of reality, to understand the subtle differences—between the fullness of being, as the sole reality in all, and the foundation of all manifested, the final goal of desires of all beings. God's personal aspect of Īśvara is not less valuable than the impersonal aspect of the supreme Self, the Absolute Subject, nor is it the other way around; both those aspects are equally Divine, and people should understand them both; within them, they should aspire to know the Self, the Absolute Subject, which is One in all beings, while at the same time worshipping the Lord, which is indeed appropriate for him who understands the essence of all things, for all reality praises Him, and in praise of Him it finds fulfillment.

He, who truly understands it, sees that God is never involved in action, neither in His relative aspect of the Lord, nor in the Absolute aspect of supreme reality, but is a witness of manifestation,

and fullness that is manifested without involvement. He sees that God never acts, but that His presence conveys His glory by creating, maintaining and destroying beings and worlds, He has the insight of the core of the cores, and acts in a similar, Divine way. From the Absolute side, He witnesses the transcendental nature of Self, its immortality beyond birth and life, and on the relative side, He acts like a rose: He touches the world with His scent, and does good. A righteous man is, therefore, in all things like the Lord: like the Lord, who shines upon all beings with His consciousness and bliss like the sun, so does a righteous man live, like a rose that absorbs the light of the sun and serves the world with its scent. Uninvolved, perfectly beautiful, he acts from the position of liberation.

**15 Knowing that, the ancient seekers of liberation acted as well.
So act, as they once did.**

Liberation does not imply inactivity; to seek liberation does not mean to cease acting, but to purify the consciousness from the mechanisms that condition wrong actions. When those mechanisms are removed, activity is no longer a factor of enslavement in a man's life, for from the position of orientation toward freedom, it does not matter whether a man acts rightly, or does not act at all. Furthermore, correct action brings a man to an even greater degree of contact with the higher aspects of reality, and if a man confirms his proper understanding of things with his actions, he then makes progress at much greater speed, than would be possible if he remained inactive. For it does not suffice to only know the truth; one should also testify to it with his actions, for the only true knowledge is the knowledge, upon which we base our actions, it is the knowledge that we have completely absorbed. Because of the failure to understand this law, the words of the holy scriptures often remain mere words in the lives of their followers, regardless of their apparently faithful adherence to those very scriptures. This is the the reason why the world is in such a pitiful state, in spite of the fact that most of its inhabitants are faithful believers. Poor correspondence between beliefs and actions shows us that we are dealing not with absorbed, practical understanding, but rather with superficial beliefs that always wither in contact with the rough aspects of life. Knowing that,

“the ancient seekers of liberation” acted, in a correct way of course, in the way of karma-yoga, in which deeds are but a reflection of things understood, and the correctness of that which is understood is verified by the criterion of fruits. The imperfect nature of understanding can there be seen in the imperfect nature of the deeds, making it possible to identify the imperfections and to correct them.

16 What is activity, and what is inactivity?

This question confuses even the wise.

**I will explain to you the form of activity
that will deliver you from evil.**

A man who works hard, who appears to be utterly involved in the world of action, but who acts with knowledge that his actions are but a form of service, a reflection of his understanding, intentions and states of spirit, and not a means of acquiring benefit; who acts to give, instead of acting to gain, he is unbound by action, he does not act. He does not create the binding forces between himself and the world in which he acts. He, however, who restrains himself from action, attempting to meditate in detachment, who attempts to attain indifference toward all things, he is in fact extremely attached to the world, for were he not, it would not matter to him whether he acted or not. The fact that inactivity means so much to him is a sign that he must fight his attachment to action. In his efforts to attain inactivity, he invests a great amount of spiritual effort in order to control the senses and organs of action, an effort far greater than that which would be invested in the action itself. Although apparently inactive, he finds himself in a difficult struggle against various forces, and he can therefore not be considered inactive.

There are many layers here, however; even people who have a great degree of insight can be dismayed and deluded regarding action and inaction—it can be seen from the fact that the spiritual seekers often dream of leaving the world in order to dedicate themselves to realization, ceasing to act in the world. They are undoubtedly deluded, for if the world and activities were indeed such an evil, posing such an obstacle in the quest for salvation, would God then make the world such, that action be such necessity? Those seekers of truth will find themselves confused, and

they might even think the entire world to be a big trap, almost diabolically conceived in order to aggravate spiritual efforts. It could never be so, if we believe God to want people to be saved, instead of ruined. And indeed, with true insight into the truth we can see it to be so; not only that the world is not meant to make spiritual efforts more difficult, but it is made exactly in order to make them easier, where activity be an exquisite diagnostic tool, through which we can easily understand all of our flaws, all of our faults, and check the reality of our spiritual progress. It is enough to merely test ourselves in action; if we do the right thing with ease, then we have mastered true knowledge. If, however, action causes us difficulties, if we act wrongly, develop attachments and suffer, then our realization is not perfect, and mistakes in action serve as signposts, pointing us to things we need to work on, with immense accuracy. Such a perspective is far closer to reality, and of much greater use in our longing toward perfection.

17 One should indeed understand activity.

**And wrong activity should also be understood,
as well as inactivity.**

Activity is a difficult thing to comprehend.

Activity cannot be classified as a mere change of state of the objects of activity; for activity starts with the change of state of the spirit itself, with a movement within the mind which, through a sequence of processes, eventually leads to visible activity. Wrong activity is as difficult to determine; one could mistakenly classify every activity that does not fit his preconceptions, as well as every activity that has unpleasant consequences for him, as wrong. Still, wrong activity is only that which has no foundation in God, and which does not manifest that foundation in a correct manner. Nor is inactivity a mere absence of visible motion and labor; the mere motion of thoughts toward the objects of activity is a form of activity, for every action is conceived in the mind first, and only then implemented. Inactivity of one who sits idly, restraining the sensory organs and organs of action, while at the same time dwelling on the objects of the senses, is mere hypocrisy.¹⁴² Because of that, true understanding of the nature of activity is not

¹⁴² See 3:6.

a simple task, and correct understanding of activity is the very part of the spiritual puzzle that makes the difference between true spirituality implemented in activities, and a form of hypocrisy based on wrong understanding.

**18 He who sees inactivity in activity,
and activity in inactivity,
is wise among men.
He is united in his activities.**

So, he who sees that it is only the qualities of nature that act, that it is the *guṇas* that interact with each other in order to produce the various results—he sees inactivity in activity, for he is not deluded by the thought “this is mine,” and “I do this,” but constantly witnesses the transcendental nature of his true Self. Activity in inactivity is, however, the nature of the manifestation of the Lord, a way in which He creates the world: through radiation of His own nature, instead of activity. Activity binds him who performs it, while the radiation of one’s own nature does not produce any bonds (see the commentary on 4:14). So, he who realizes the unmanifested and transcendental nature of Self, remaining firmly established in it, and at the same time acts without acting, who manifests himself by witnessing his inner bliss, like the Lord Himself, he attained the true wisdom and perfection in activities; his activities are united, for they remain firm in the highest reality.

**19 Him, whose deeds are free from desire,
whose deeds have been incinerated
by the flame of knowledge,
knowers of reality call wise.**

Every motion of spirit, observing there to be something for it to gain, is a form of desire, more or less subtle. Desire comes to existence as a result of unfulfillment, which in turn is caused by separation from the foundations of reality, from the Divine reality, which is the foundation of all things, and the source of all joy and fulfillment. Free from the desires is only he, who has realized himself as That, who drinks the nectar of fulfillment from its source, which is the eternal and transcendental brahman. His

desires have indeed been extinguished, unlike the desires of one who restrains them, bringing himself to a state of artificially produced indifference, thus further silencing the flame of Divine presence within his own being. The flame of knowledge is ignited by discernment between various forms of reality, as well as various forms of actions. He, who thinks Self to be the doer, and that God creates the world, will undoubtedly in his mind think about the motives for such action, thinking them to originate from inner unfulfillment, or the imperfection of being, which cannot dwell peacefully within oneself, but seeks fulfillment elsewhere. Realizing that fullness remains perfectly fulfilled,¹⁴³ that the Absolute loses nothing with all the manifestation, nor does He gain anything by it, and that God acts not by making the world, but like the sun that creates motion and life on earth without acting, a man is freed from every form of compulsion and similar motives in his actions, thus attaining wisdom in activity.

**20 Renouncing attachment to the fruits of activities,
always satisfied, without dependencies,
although quite preoccupied with his activities,
he undoubtedly does not act.**

Activity is therefore a state of spirit, a state of attachment to the field of activity, in which the spirit thinks: "I act." For him who thinks that he acts, there must be a reason from which he acts, and then there must also be attachment to the results of action. If there exists none who acts, then there can be no attachment. If there is no attachment, then there is no dependence on circumstances that favor or harm our intentions. Such an approach frees a man from pressure; there are no more desires and fears to color a man's perspective of the world. Free from pressure, he acts in accordance with his nature, and becomes utterly preoccupied with activity itself. Although his mind is completely involved in things that need to be done, his inner peace remains undisturbed, independent of circumstances and events, for he does not act for the sake of achievement; he no longer tries to achieve fulfillment by activity in the world of objects, for his fullness has been attained from within, and is independent of things and their fluctuations.

¹⁴³ *Īsopaniṣad.*

- 21 **Without attachments,
with mind and soul put in order,
abandoning any sense of possession,
acting with body alone,
he is always free from sin.**

Because of such a correct attitude, there is no need for possession, and the comfort gained from things, and the term “mine,” created in order to protect the small “I” from the hostile nothingness which he thinks to surround him, in order to create a comfort zone.

He who had realized the truth about himself, fears no worldly event, and he is also free from any worldly desire. His spirit is free; he testifies for and realizes his eternal freedom and detachment, and thus free, he continues to act in the world, without pressures and burdens, with body alone. Thus acting, without clinging onto the fruits, he is also not bound to sin, for sin comes as a consequence of the “I act” attitude.

- 22 **Thus pleased, having gone beyond duality,
free from envy, firm in both good and ill,
he is not subject to attachment even while acting.**

Only he, who has realized reality, who has gone beyond the concept of duality that separates the “I” from the “not I,” who is filled with the infinite bliss of Self, can be free from lower attachments, and firmly established regardless of events. Only his actions can be truly detached; all others can only attempt to replace detachment with indifference, which is such a poor substitute, that even sin is better.

- 23 **The deeds of him who is detached,
free, firm in wisdom,
which are done from yajña alone,
they leave him without a trace.**

A wise man thinks: “God gives to me, and to God I return; nothing belongs to me.” Acting thusly, all his deeds represent an act of yajña, a sacrificial ceremony. He does not act and he does not claim ownership, but observes all actions and things as those of God. Not thinking that something belongs to him, he does not

create attachments to things. Everything indeed belongs to God, even motions within Nature. One who sees that Nature belongs to God, seeing himself as a part of Nature, acts according to his own nature, seeing that natural forces implement the will of God in this nature of his. His actions therefore do not cause the chains of relationships of cause and effect, which would need to be dissolved later. His activity is a fire that burns upon a rock; when the fuel is spent, it is extinguished, unlike fire that burns in a forest, which finds new fuel after the old is spent, and expands by devouring everything in its path. This is the nature of activity performed from attachment: the force invested in activity is not spent in activity alone, but creates attachments to other things as well; it feeds with frustrations and hopes, thus expanding and creating greater and greater involvement and attachment. The fire of activity driven by desires for fulfillment spreads like a wild fire, thus causing endless restlessness within consciousness, trying to find fulfillment in the ever-changing world of things, and, always in vain, continuously attempts to act in order to achieve that fulfillment. Such a man thinks “I act” and “I need to possess,” wanting to increase and expand himself with possession, while in fact he only manages to increase his delusions, and eventually faces disappointment: in the death of the body, all his possessions disappear, they cease to be his own, and the comfort they used to provide him proves false. True comfort comes from knowledge of that, which is not dependent on activity, possession and passions. Such comfort comes from wisdom, and he, who is firm in it, acts when necessary and as much as necessary, in a correct way, well measured and appropriate to the situation. After the deed has been performed, he no longer dwells on it. His activities, or attachment of his consciousness to activity and its objects, thus vanish without a trace, like fire that is extinguished when its fuel has been spent.

**24 Brahman is the ceremony of sacrifice,
in which the sacrificed brahman is offered
by a brāhmaṇa into the fire which is brahman.
To brahman undoubtedly comes he,
whose activities are united in brahman.**

In Christian terminology, we would say that a proper sacrificial act, which is founded in God, is that in which everything is

observed as that of God: the sacrificial offer which belongs to God is offered on the altar which is of God, and the offering is done by a man who is aware of his belonging to God. With this act, God's presence and God's supreme place in one's own life are brought to awareness. This is a form of action that is united in God, for God pervades it in all aspects.

The term "brahman" here of course denotes the Absolute, the transcendental supreme reality, unmanifested, eternal and all-pervading—the supreme positive principle in all. He who observes this supreme principle as such, and lives not in an illusion, where he would attempt to give himself the supreme place, will live in freedom and perfection; a fulfilled man finds his only joy in praising God—with his thoughts, consciousness, words and deeds. Such actions devoted to God lead to God alone, and nowhere else.

**25 While some yogīs offer yajña to the gods,
others, however, offer perfect sacrifice
into the fire of the supreme brahman.**

Some yogīs recognize the authority of the elements of nature over things, acknowledging their position with sacrifice. Others, however, who have realized the One, who is beyond the natural elements, who is their source and foundation, the One who is beyond all things, who pervades all things and who gives reality to all, Him they praise as the supreme origin and foundation, thus making a sacrifice of far greater perfection. It is true that natural elements are responsible for all the states of things that are made from them, and that the importance of their role has to be acknowledged; without rain, soil, warmth, light and similar natural conditions, man could not live and function. How much more are we then to praise the Almighty, in whom the very elements of nature are founded, to whom they owe their existence and reality? In the same way in which the entire plant is satisfied when its roots are watered, the perfect sacrifice is, likewise, the one that recognizes and praises the foundation of all things. This is why such an offering is said to be perfect. The fire of the supreme brahman is the realization of the supreme truth; one who knows the final truth, who is completely awake in the Highest, he has performed the perfect offering, for he has recognized God as his foundation, as well as the foundation of all other

things. He claims neither sin nor credit, but stays founded in God alone.

**26 Some offer hearing and other senses
into the fire of control;
some offer sound and other objects of senses
into the fire of senses.**

Control is the supervision of senses; the senses are not allowed to wander freely, but are subjected to control. A man's mind thus always dwells on that, upon which it is supposed to dwell, and does not wander around, aimlessly changing the objects of observation. He, who thus keeps the senses in focus, he offers them as a sacrifice, and, because of such concentration, deepens his consciousness. It therefore does not remain in the superficial realm, where the senses would keep it if they were allowed to rule man without control, but moves deeper, into the realm of deeper intellectual contemplation, where the senses no longer control man, but man controls the senses. It is a state of awakening to reality, in which a man, as a conscious being, chooses the object of his observation, no longer wandering chaotically throughout the world, influenced by forces of attraction and repulsion, to which his senses are subject. Such a man of controlled senses can survive even long unpleasant periods, or resist many attractive temptations, if he deems it necessary by deeper judgment. The surveillance is here the fire that gives the senses to God; for fire, in Vedic mythology, is thought to be the deity which conveys sacrifice to other gods, and this image is to be kept in mind; that which is cast into the sacrificial flame has been given to gods, and is unclaimed by man; it is his duty to offer it.

Others, however, taste the objects of senses, but here the senses are the flame that conveys impressions to God. The one, therefore, who incinerates all sensual impressions by the senses, thus living in the present, instead of always processing images from the past, or imagining the ideal future, he is the one who sacrifices the objects of senses.

So, some control the senses correctly, not acting according to the whims of senses, which tend toward the pleasant, avoiding the unpleasant, all for greater happiness in the future; one would thus suffer an unpleasant situation in order to enable success to

another, or would in some other way delay gratification, like a student who studies for a long time, against the desires of his senses, all with a purpose of acquiring the knowledge and skills he will need later in his life; he is therefore a yogī. Like him is a man who does not gratify his desires, but does that, what he feels to be good and true by his deeper insight. In the example of a student, those who gratify their senses and allow them to wander uncontrolled might enjoy themselves in the present, but they will remain uneducated, and will probably live in misery in the future. Those, however, who study diligently in order to acquire knowledge and skills, might not enjoy themselves in the present, but in the future they will get a good job and prosper.

Others, however, act not from contemplation of future, but in the immediate present, in an ideal way, caring about neither the past nor the future. Such an approach can be easily confused with hedonism, which cares only about the immediate gratification, and which takes place when the senses are impure and out of control; senses that are pure and calm in themselves can act optimally in the present, for they do not keep images that would later obscure future events, thus creating layers of prejudice. Such behavior is a quality of the Zen masters, who live in the present, in which they act in an optimal manner, failing to keep the image of that, which has been done, in their consciousness; as Jesus said: *So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*¹⁴⁴

**27 Some, desiring wisdom,
offer activity of the senses
and motions of the breath of life
into the fire of spirit controlled by yoga.**

The spirit controlled by yoga therefore leads to the cessation of activity of the senses and of movement of prāṇa. There are different ways in which such a condition could be achieved, with different techniques of yoga. In darśana-yoga, it is achieved by the upstream kriyā, which vacates the energetic system from impurities, thus leading to spontaneous cessation of activity of both the senses and mind, in a state of peace and balance that follows. One

¹⁴⁴ Matthew 6:34.

could say that a darśana-yogī surrenders his mind, thoughts and other energetic states, as well as the focus toward the external world of senses, by turning his consciousness inwards, thus surrendering to God. This is how he controls his spirit, for if he fails to do that, he will not be able to practice the technique correctly. That, of course, is not that difficult to achieve, and even the complete beginners manage to do it, for it is not some great achievement or goal, but a first stair on a tall staircase. A man must withdraw his consciousness from the world and retreat inward, if he wants to practice this technique of yoga; consciousness that is directed outward stops the possible processes of purification and balancing of the system, so that the only period, in which an ordinary man manages to separate himself from the world of senses, to an even small extent, is the period of sleep. Even then, a mind filled with different charges from daily activity causes dreams, which are most often merely spontaneous discharges of random sensory and emotional states. The method of vacating the system in sleep is slow and often ineffective, unable to keep up with the increased load on the system, and so the various systems of yoga have developed different methods of removing that load, the methods that are effective to a smaller or greater extent.

A necessary prerequisite for such release is the transcendence of the field of senses; the consciousness must withdraw from the senses, it must not reside in them, for otherwise the attempt to vacate the mind from sensory charges would be as futile as a man's attempt to lift himself by pulling his own hair. A machine in operation cannot be repaired. It first needs to be stopped, and only then can one disassemble it, remove the malfunction, then reassemble it and turn it back on. All the techniques of yoga that actually work are based on this principle. In order to withdraw consciousness from the senses, a certain act of consciousness is needed, a shift of focus. In the technique of upstream kriyā, it is attained in several possible ways. One is contraction of the perineum, which is a sort of a hand brake for the system; such a contraction leads to cessation of the turns of energy that feed the senses, turning consciousness from the outside world inward, in the same way that takes place when a man, during sexual arousal, turns inward in order to prepare himself for orgasm.

In such a state of consciousness, when consciousness is completely removed from the senses, a man surrenders to God, for

instance by repeating a certain word in his mind—a mantra, which reminds him of God, such as “God!” “Jesus!” “Kṛṣṇa!” etc., or by remembering an image that opens the door of devotion to God in his mind, while he searches for God within as the foundation, to which he wants to surrender. The surrender to God opens the vertical energetic channel, *suṣumnā nāḍī*, and when a man’s control over his own consciousness gives in and is surrendered to God, in the same way in which a man, in the beginning of an orgasm, renounces control and surrenders his consciousness, energy rushes vertically through *suṣumnā*, performing a strong purifying effect on its spiral-upward motion through the system. Such a “draught” takes away the various kinds of unease and stress that move the mind and keep it in a constant state of disturbance. An orgasm is, basically, a form of shallow energetic motion that partially resembles upstream *kriyā*, but strikes into certain cerebral tissues, thus producing the energetic discharge of pleasure. *Kriyā* passes through other parts of the system, and the energy that was set in motion does not divert or spill into the system, but closes the circle between man and God, thus purifying the man and making him conscious and alive to a much greater extent.

**28 Some, however, sacrifice their property,
some sacrifice by austerity and yoga,
while other seekers of austere vows
offer their knowledge of the scriptures and their learning.**

To sacrifice property is to use it according to *dharma*, in a way in which a man thinks his property to be something that has been given to him in order for him to use it as an instrument of common good; one who holds that nothing belongs to him, but that his duty is to serve the common good according to his abilities, performs sacrifice with his property. He acts as an instrument of correct and righteous distribution of goods in the world, seeing himself as neither the owner, nor claiming the credit, but seeing himself only as the means.

With austerity and yoga sacrifice those, who have renounced their worldly role, thinking a man’s proper role to be that of a seeker of truth; in quest for truth, they thus renounce every attachment and possession, surrendering to God, which makes their sacrifice perfect.

A sacrifice of knowledge and learning is that, in which a man uses his knowledge for the well-being of all, and not as a means of feeding his own arrogance. Such a knower tends to uplift the others, acting selflessly to the well-being of the world, asking for neither merit nor praise. With his knowledge he serves God, for true knowledge and learning is a means of manifesting deep wisdom, which is a Divine aspect. They are the true knowers and scientists, and not those who use their knowledge in order to humiliate others, who happen not to possess some trivial information known to them. A true knower excels among others with his devotion and service, and not with arrogance and egotism.

29 Others, dedicated to prāṇāyāma,
offer prāṇa to apāna, and apāna to prāṇa,
thus stopping the motion of prāṇāpāna.

Prāṇāyāma means a discipline of breath, the techniques of breathing which influence the state of spirit through the prāṇic flows and breath. The speed of breathing and superficiality of thoughts are proportional values; the more shallow the thoughts, the quicker the changes of the mind's directions; the lesser the concentration, the faster we breathe. And the opposite applies too: a man who is intensely focused on a precisely defined task will practically cease breathing for a period of time. It can be seen that there is some sort of connection between breath and spirit, and based on deeper observations performed in that direction, an entire array of breathing techniques, collectively known as prāṇāyāmas, have been invented.

Prāṇa and apāna are the two basic forms of prāṇa, or energy; the name is confusing, for the word prāṇa denotes both all forms of vital energy and energetic movements together, as well as the one single division of such energy. In this meaning, prāṇa designates the hot, solar prāṇa, which passes through the right side of the body, through the piṅgalā nāḍī, or sūrya nāḍī, "the solar channel," which begins in the area of the root cakṛa, goes through the spine and ends in the right nostril. That form of energy accelerates physical metabolism and the movement of the mind, and is symbolically joined with the guṇa rajas. This form of energy has the quality of focusing the mind toward the future, on planning the future events, extroverted nature, and dynamic creativity, as

well as the various forms of passion. Prāṇa is a flow of energy that plays a role of assimilation of substances in the organism, the “fire” of digestion and metabolism.

Apāna is the second basic form of energy: the cold, lunar prāṇa, that passes through the left side of the body, through iḍā nāḍī, which like piṅgalā starts in the area of the root cakra, passes through the spinal column, and ends in the left nostril. Apāna slows down metabolism and plays the role of inactivity, of cooling the system, of inertia and rest, and is symbolically joined with the guṇa tamas. Focus of the mind toward the past, introverted nature and inactivity, as well as the various forms of laziness and depressive states are the qualities of the energetic system which is primarily driven by apāna, and directed through iḍā. Apāna also plays the role of elimination, or excretion of substances from the system.

Energy moves through the system around the spinal column, changing sides in certain time intervals; we can follow such a change of sides by observing which nostril is more open. When the right one is more open, we function from piṅgalā; our system is in the phase of assimilation and activity. That is the right time to take food, since digestion functions best at this time. Likewise, that is also the right time to engage in the kind of work that is focused outward, as well as to plan the future. When the left nostril is more open, we function from iḍā, and the system is in the phase of elimination. It is the right time for urinating and excretion, and all other forms of cleansing the system, as well as for contemplating the past and past events. At that time, digestion is slow, and so it is unwise to take food, since slow digestion will cause food to remain undigested in the digestive tract for a long time, which can cause various harmful processes of rotting and decay of the ingested food, which can result in poisoning of the organism.

Energy that circles around the spinal column is the basic engine of human activities in the world, making them possible. Still, this mechanism is a great enemy of meditation and the inward motion of consciousness, since it holds the consciousness in the state of processing worldly experiences. Because of that, yogīs have ages ago invented methods for stopping such movements of energy, directing the energy/consciousness into the third, central energetic channel: suṣumnā nāḍī.

Suṣumnā, or brahma nāḍī (“the channel of Brahmā”) is the vertical axis of the soul’s incarnation through the body, and it is the

soul's connection with God. When energy moves through that channel, a man lives in reality and in the present; the ascent of energy upwards through *suṣumnā* is the equivalent of deeper devotion to God, or greater existence in reality. Movement of energy through *suṣumnā* is possible only when the motion through *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* has stopped, and when the rotations of energy around *suṣumnā* cease. Of course, it cannot be done easily, since the rotation of energy through *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* represents the stream of our thoughts, which are conditioned by all sorts of experiences and blockages that fill our consciousness. Because of all that, any attempt to take an ordinary man and simply stop his energy and direct it into *suṣumnā* would resemble an attempt of an automobile driver to stop the car to a halt from full speed. He would most likely lose control over his vehicle, and probably get killed in the process. Likewise, any attempt to cease the motion of energy with some sort of a hand brake, with purpose of directing it into *suṣumnā*, would most likely produce heavy damages to the mind and the energetic system, leaving a man's mind in a state similar to that, in which his body would be if he happened to fall from the tenth floor. Because of all that, the mind needs to be calmed down in an indirect, and much more gentle manner.

One such way is the classic *pūraka-kumbhaka-recaka prāṇāyāma*, or the regulated ratio between inhalation, retention of breath and exhalation. The basic prerequisite of such *prāṇāyāma* is the purification of the organism by techniques of purification such as *naulī*, *netī*, *kapālabhātī*, *baghi* (*vamana dhautī*), *basti*, *śaṅkha-prakṣālana* and like, and the proper choice of food, and most important of all, one would need to regulate his life according to the moral principles of *yama* and *niyama*. When a reasonable degree of purification has been attained, one would have to achieve peace, or stillness of the body (*āsana*). Only then could one attend to *prāṇāyāma*, for the attempt to control subtle movements of energy in the disturbed state of the system, which would be inevitable without prior preparations, could not result in anything positive, and the techniques of *prāṇāyāma* themselves have come to a bad reputation exactly because practitioners paid no heed to traditional warnings, thinking they knew better. It seems that they didn't know better, after all.

After such stabilization of the system, one would first need to balance the energetic currents of *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, in order to make

them balanced and equalized, without the random whirlpools that invariably take place in the prāṇic system. It is attained by the controlled regime of inhaling through the left nostril, and exhaling through the right. Since it is difficult to achieve by effort of will alone, practitioners should close the right nostril with a finger while inhaling, and the left while exhaling. Then they should, in the same way, inhale through the right nostril and exhale through the left, and then repeat the process. If pressing the left nostril with a finger distracts attention, which is most often the case, the entire exercise can be simplified by paying attention to the left or the right nostril during inhalation, which often has even better results.¹⁴⁵

The time ratio between inhalation and exhalation is traditionally set to 1:2, which means that exhalation should last twice as long as inhalation. The period of time in which it is measured is called mātra.¹⁴⁶ It is extremely important to remember the following if we decide to indulge in such practices: the mind should *never*, under no circumstances, be preoccupied with counting the mātras, or by measuring the time interval. Thinking about numbers and ratios creates such a form of control of breath, that instead of filling the system with prāṇa and revitalizing it, does the exact opposite, so the practitioner after a period of time needs to stop practicing and take a deep, shaky breath, which is a natural, real prāṇāyāma, performed by a man's system in order to recharge itself with energy. If that happens, it is an unmistakable sign that we are doing it wrong, and at that moment we should immediately stop the practice, for any further persistence in the wrong approach can result only in damage to the prāṇic system.

In which way, then, are we supposed to practice prāṇāyāma? The first and basic rule is that involvement of the mind in the process has to be the least possible, preferably none. All breathing movements need to be completely natural. The second rule is that one should not attempt to achieve the perfect ratios immediately; it would suffice to merely balance the breathing, not suddenly, for this is the practice for the beginners, and there are no positive points being given for advancing too quickly. On the contrary, it

¹⁴⁵ This form of practice is traditional, and can be replaced with a combination of the techniques of resonance and the upstream kriyā. In a state of peace that follows kriyā, when the impurities and restlessness have left the system, a yogi

it a rule with *prāṇāyama* that one should hasten slowly. The third, most important rule, is that the energy system is filled with that, upon which the mind is focused during inhalation. If we think about the ratios of breathing, we will limit the movement of energy. If, however, we think about something beautiful, if we breathe with full lungs, then we will fill ourselves with *prāṇa*. It can be noticed that we breathe deeply and slowly when we are surrounded with beauty, peace and harmony. When we are surrounded with restlessness, haste, pollution and stress, we, however, breathe shallowly and swiftly. That shows us the correlation between the degree of stress within the mind, and the pattern of breathing. Because of all that, the more advanced forms of *prāṇāyama* should not even be attempted until we are relaxed to such extent that our breathing becomes deep, calmed and balanced. Such harmonization of mind and breath can be most easily attained by the technique of resonance, in which we, during the exhalations, resonate a nasal tone, “nnnnnnn,” “mmmmm” or the like, colored by our present emotional state. When that tone becomes a deep and even “ommm,” without emotional oscillations, then our breathing becomes peaceful and deep, the muscle spasm is lost, and then we can begin the more serious, deeper practice of yoga.

Pūraka/recaka prāṇāyāma, or the balance of inhalation and exhalation, is in yogic terms a beginner’s *prāṇāyāma*, which means it is an advanced technique for westerners, which needs to be mastered in fullness before they even consider switching to more advanced techniques, which include *kumbhaka*, or retention of breath. That is so because everybody is inclined to think that they are the ones for whom more advanced techniques are meant; they all ignore “beginner’s” techniques, and look for something “more powerful,” failing to realize that they are far beneath the status of a beginner in any serious yogic system. In the system of *darśana-yoga*, some men who would be considered masters of yoga in other systems, I see as mere beginners, for the point is not to lower the criteria of enlightenment in order to flatter someone’s ego, but to

can directly, with asymptotic inhalation enter the state of *kevala kumbhaka*, at will. That, of course, I would recommend only to the most advanced practitioners with vast experience, for the improper practice of this exercise can lead to various problems.

¹⁴⁶ Comp. Greek “metron,” measure. *Mātra* can be, for instance, a heartbeat, or one second.

elevate people's consciousness in order for them to meet higher criteria. Because of all that, one who obeys instructions with discipline, deeply contemplating each detail, always noticing and correcting his faults, has every chance to attain perfection, while those who hasten recklessly and without thinking, desiring only easily acquired praise, often come to a quite miserable end.

So, the point is not to recklessly hasten into the advanced practices and to skip steps, in order to superficially perform advanced practices, but to achieve true understanding of the functioning of one's own system. It is therefore more prudent to spend several weeks or months experimenting with the technique of balancing the breath, without great pretense, than it is to hasten, accomplish nothing and injure oneself. For the progressive calming of spirit and the discharge of the layers of stress leads to an increase in the states of pleasure and bliss, which is quite soon felt in the form of general excitement and joy. It is a sign that our system is properly filled with *prāṇa*, and that we are approaching the point of balance of the energetic currents, progressively.

As we feel greater bliss, inhalation becomes extended in a specific way: the closer we come to the full intake of breath, the slower we inhale, until inhalation appears to come to a full halt, but we in fact continue to inhale the bliss of devotion, and dwell in the ecstasy of infinite inhalation. The *khecarī mudrā* then takes place spontaneously—the tongue rises backward and touches the palate; when we drink the nectar, it pours down and fills the entire body. This nectar is quite real, although a *yogī* feels it mostly as a spiritual state, and is called *soma*, or *soma rasa*, the nectar of bliss and immortality, *amṛta*. The *yogī* thus drinks the ocean of the nectar of the bliss of devotion, *bhakti rasāmṛta sindhu*.¹⁴⁷ Such a state is called *kevala kumbhaka*, the spontaneous retention of breath, without any effort, and without need for inhalation and exhalation.

The prolonged state of drinking the nectar leads to physiological changes, of which the most noticeable is the pleasant, almost floral scent that radiates from the *yogī's* body. The second, far more important change, is easy entry into deep meditative states, and a constant state of ecstatic excitement of surrender. In such a

¹⁴⁷ Which is, by no accident, the title of a book by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the disciple of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who knew about the symbolism of those words, and their mantric power.

state, the spirit is spontaneously turned toward inner bliss, which is also visible by the eyes that are turned upward. In such a condition, the yogī inhales the bliss of devotion through suṣumnā, the central energetic channel, while the nectar pours down from the moon (the top of the cranium), which completely purifies body and mind, regenerates all the systems and leads to the discovery of supernatural abilities, siddhis.

Of course, in order for a yogī to even approach such a state, he needs to pass through a long lasting process of purification of his entire being, for in such a forceful condition of the system, all the impurities are awakened and magnified, bringing the focus of spirit onto themselves, thus interrupting the process of prāṇāyāma.

Here again we come to the techniques of purification of the system of darśana-yoga: they are not intended for saints, but for sinners: they are intended for those who are by no means ready to practice the prāṇāyāmas because of their poor condition, which would undoubtedly produce their destruction if they were to engage in them. So, these techniques are meant for all, without exception. With the techniques of resonance and upstream kriyā, and later with the technique of inner space, we need to purify our entire being, and bring it to a condition in which it would be capable of receiving the true bliss, and only then is there a point in practicing the other techniques, those intended for drawing the power from the system, for awakening all the capacities and potentials of a human being.

Lord Kṛṣṇa here describes the technique of prāṇāyāma in a few words, so that only a handful of yogīs with experience will be able to understand them; he does so because the actual techniques were mostly kept in secrecy. “Offering the prāṇa to apāna” and the opposite, means to merge inhalation with exhalation and exhalation with inhalation. When breath, thus joined, ceases to move, it is called the asymptotic intake, or kevala kumbhaka.

WARNING! The fundamental rule with all those practices is that they should *never* and by *no means* be practiced without previous consultations with a guru, who is an expert in the energetic system and the techniques, and can directly, with his consciousness, repair any possible damage or correct wrong movements of energy that can take place during practice, and who can directly see or feel the movement of energy within the student’s system, thus seeing whether he practices correctly or

not, and advise him the specific technique adjusted to the particular qualities of his system, which means to lead him into the correct state of spirit and thus directly show him everything necessary. He who decides to practice those techniques on an individual basis and without a competent teacher, exposes himself to a grave danger to the physical and mental health, and to his life as well; and this is a warning that should never be taken lightly. Without leadership and guidance of a guru, practically nobody will be able to successfully identify the necessary energetic motions and states of consciousness that make a difference between correct and incorrect practice.

Without a teacher's guidance, one can practice "only" the fundamental techniques of darśana-yoga: the basic meditation, resonance, upstream kriyā and, later, the technique of inner space. Advanced students, who have attained a high degree of purification, because of their great experience and knowledge of the energetic system, can discover the laws of prāṇāyāma all by themselves, and even written instructions such as these can be quite sufficient for them to correctly understand the principles, according to which they should practice. Beginners, however, can in no case correctly understand written instructions, for they lack practical experience. They will understand it all backward and in the worst way possible, and the consequences can be grave. Because of that, they need expert guidance.

**30 Others, restricting their food,
offer breath to breath.
They are all knowers of yajña,
thereby purified from sin.**

Lord Kṛṣṇa here mentions the various ways one can attain freedom from attachment, from those of worldly activity, to those of retreating within, completely. So, there is not just one approved path; the paths can be different, but the common principles remain. What matters is the fundamental principle which is common to them all, and that is to seek the pleasure in Self, in the foundation of reality, and not in the world of manifestation, for the Manifested never contains the fullness of things. The fullness always remains in the sphere of the Unmanifested, and is to be sought there. The Manifested is a good field of expression of this

fullness, but one who attempts to find fulfillment in it will remain forever hungry and thirsty.

The correct approach to the world is therefore yajña, the sacrificial ceremony. In the sacrificial ceremony, a man does not claim ownership, but acknowledges God's primary role. His life he surrenders into God's hands, for he knows that it is where he had received it from. If God takes his life back, his worldly activities have come to a happy conclusion. If, however, God returns him his life, mind, body, energy and the food that he offered to him as a sacrifice, he uses them as a gift from God, as something trusted to his care, and takes such leftovers of yajña as a mercy of God, using them in accordance with God's will.

Such an attitude of detachment, and life in constant awareness of the grace of God, are the nectar of immortality, for what is death to him who dies before every meal, offering his life to God? Within him there is nothing that could die, and if there is nothing to die, there undoubtedly remains nothing to be reborn. It is therefore the life of liberation, life in the state of the eternal brahman.

**31 Eating the leftovers of yajña,
which are the nectar of immortality,
they reach the eternal brahman.
Not even in this world is there a place
for him who does not offer sacrifice,
let alone in the other world, o best of Kurus.**

Activity from the state of yajña is a necessary prerequisite of correct activity; one who acts from attachment, thinking himself to be the owner and the doer, acts in separation from the wider laws of the world in which he lives, and functions more as a disease of the world than as its organ of action. It is therefore said that he has no place even in this world. The higher worlds belong to those, who feel to be a part of the Divine in a deeper sense, where growth in the depth of consciousness is achieved by the greater depth of sacrifice and devotion.

**32 All those kinds of yajña are mentioned
in the words of the Vedas.
Know that they are all born from activity.
This knowledge will guide you to liberation.**

The Vedas are also called karma-kāṇḍa, because they deal primarily with forms of activity necessary for attaining perfection. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore says that the authority of the holy scriptures also stands behind the kinds of sacrifices that he has mentioned, for sacrifice is born from activity itself.¹⁴⁸ He who sees sacrifice as a correct and transparent expression of the dynamics of making, he will observe the Maker as the one who creates and acts, and himself as free from activity and the ties originating therefrom. He will thus attain liberation.

Śaṅkarācārya claims¹⁴⁹ that activity is not opposite to ignorance and so it cannot dispel it, and that no kind of activity can lead to liberation, for activity is necessarily founded in the sphere of the relative, in the sphere of objects, and liberation does not reside there. Of course, we should have in mind that Lord Kṛṣṇa also says that one who acts without attachment, from transcendence, is within himself inactive. Between their claims there therefore exists no contradiction.

One who acts without attachment, from yajña, observes that it is a mere interaction of the guṇas of Nature in the world of the manifested, while I Am inactive. This is the reason why Lord Kṛṣṇa too says that liberation is attained by knowledge, and that correct actions are a mere consequence of the correct application of knowledge, true realization and insight onto the sphere of objects, and are therefore a consequence of liberation, not its cause.

**33 Yajña of knowledge is better than yajña of property,
o subduer of enemies. All activities,
without exception, o Pārtha, excel in knowledge.**

It is better to sacrifice one's own delusions, than to pour butter into the flame. So, the best sacrifice must be that, which leads to

¹⁴⁸ See the commentary on 3:14–15.

¹⁴⁹ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 7: *The immortality attained through any objective thing must at one time come to an end, for the scriptures clearly state that karman (activity) is never the cause of liberation.*

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 11: *Activities are meant to purify the heart, and not to realize the essence. The essence can be realized only by proper discrimination, and not with karman (activity) of any kind.*

Ātmabodha 3: *Activity cannot dispel ignorance, for it is not its opposite. Only knowledge can dispel ignorance, like the light that destroys the deep darkness.*

rejection of mistaken views and opinions. Activities of all kinds can, at best, lead to correct knowledge and transcendence, and that is their highest purpose. Every kind of further activity is merely in service of the wisdom thus attained; activity gives knowledge the means of expression.

**34 Know, that through respect, inquiry and service
you will receive such knowledge
from those who know reality.**

Between the knower and the seeker there must be such a relationship, that will motivate the knower to explain profound truths and important matters; nothing can be learned from someone, toward whom we feel no admiration and respect. The knower embodies the knowledge in his person; he represents a manifested form of wisdom. To the extent he values knowledge, the student will value a teacher who bears and embodies such knowledge.

Devoted service to the teacher is a sign of dedication to that, which the teacher as such represents. Then the knowledge, which resides in the teacher, spontaneously flows toward him who respects and accepts it, and so, the devoted student himself becomes the knower and a man of wisdom. We need not look far to find an example of such a relationship; it is clearly visible in the relationship between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Arjuna is sincere, devoted and full of respect, and he addresses Kṛṣṇa in that manner. His approach motivates the Lord to reveal unto him the highest secrets, although they have found themselves in a place and time quite inappropriate for such conversations, on the battlefield, amidst armies preparing to wage war. Indirectly, the Lord hereby tells Arjuna that he has chosen correctly and acted properly: he has approached the teacher in a right way, and accepts the knowledge in a right way.

**35 Knowing that, you will never again
be so deluded, o son of Pāṇḍu,
for you will see all beings within Self, which is I.**

Having done well, learning from the best of teachers in an appropriate manner, Arjuna will soon be free from delusion; the

Lord here indirectly promises him the attainment of realization and success.

**36 Be you even the most miserable of sinners,
the boat of wisdom will carry you safely
across the ocean of misery.**

Wisdom, or the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, and the orientation toward the real, are an immensely powerful means of liberation. For he, who possesses those qualities, will easily free himself from all the impurities of consciousness, and attain perfection, for he will, among the things that surround him, always choose the right ones. In this way, he will soon attain perfection. The problem is, those qualities belong only to a sinner who has repented and converted from sin; one who firmly adheres to sin, and is enslaved by it with all his heart, is a true sinner, who abides far from salvation. Because of that, we should also notice that conversion and knowledge of one's sinfulness are the first steps on the path that leads to true wisdom. With the attainment of wisdom, perfection soon follows. It is therefore obvious that the term "sinners" in this context does not denote those who firmly adhere to sin and do not renounce it, but those who have sinned greatly, but have repented, still having been left with the consequences of the sin: the various hardships and all sorts of misery, that usually associate with people who act wrongly. Such a condition is grave, but can be easily overcome with a proper attitude, where all consequences of sinful past activities are soon resolved and dissolved, and the man soon becomes pure and perfect.

**37 Like the burning flame that incinerates fuel into ashes,
so does the flame of knowledge, o Arjuna,
turn all activities into ashes.**

The word "jñāna" is difficult to translate into any language, which is also the case with the majority of Sanskrit words; on one hand it means knowledge, and on the other, wisdom. Jñāna is that knowledge, which comes from insight into the essence of things, from understanding the essence and knowing things for what they indeed are. It also arises from discernment of the finer points of relationships between the real and the unreal, for jñāna

implies viveka, discrimination. That is the knowledge of which the Lord speaks: it is not knowledge in the sense in which the word is used by modern man, where knowledge of mere information is considered to be true knowledge, but rather a kind of knowledge that a microprocessor has about the code it is executing: immediate, direct, perfectly accurate, and above all, operational. Unlike the user of a computer, the microprocessor is not deluded by the images displayed on the screen; it understands those images from within, it sees them as they really are, and that is the very source of its power over them, it can do with them as it pleases. He who knows the reality in such a manner, resides in peace, observing things from within their essence, and all the bonds, that disrupt the correctness of activity, vanish.

**38 In this world there is nothing
as excellent as knowledge;
he who is perfect in yoga,
with time, finds it within himself.**

Such knowledge of things from within themselves comes as a consequence of a long lasting practice of yoga, in which a man is rooted in truth, and always discards the unreal and the illusory in a continuous line of decisions. He eventually remains with nothing but the firm and unwavering core of reality.

**39 The knowledge is acquired by him,
who is full of faith, thus focused in activity,
and with the senses under his control.
Having attained knowledge,
he soon reaches utmost peace.**

Faith is a necessary prerequisite of knowledge, and not the other way around, as people often mistakenly think. For faith is a state of a spirit open to experience, unlike doubt, which creates obstacles to experience. Faith motivates a man to activity that is of the quality of that toward which he strives, even at the times when he still lacks direct and perfect experience. With such a growth in faith, he increases the degree of correspondence between his personal knowledge and the reality, until he finally becomes completely filled with knowledge, and the need for faith as such vanishes. As

much as the senses can contribute to the experience of reality, they can also contribute to a man's confusion; in a situation where a man attempts to outgrow his old worldview, based on a lower kind of understanding, and to acquire a higher worldview, the senses will appear to confirm everything he is fighting against, and which poses an obstacle to his growth. This is the reason why, paradoxically, a man will see better with his eyes closed. Later, when a man becomes fully grounded in reality through a lasting insight into the reality, the senses will no longer be his enemies; the senses will witness the reality of the sensory world, which will be observed by the spirit without attachments or any kind of bias. He finally understands the principles according to which the world functions, and in his spirit there is no longer any confusion to be invoked and amplified by the senses. Still, it is extremely important for the beginner to bring his habits under control, as well as the senses and behavior, in order to get even the opportunity to acquire experience that will strengthen his faith, eventually leading him to the fullness of knowledge. Having attained such knowledge, in the relief of great achievement he attains the peace of him, who knows that none can take away from him that, what he has gained.

**40 But he who is without wisdom,
without faith, who doubts, he finds ruin.
There is no happiness for the suspicious mind,
not in this world nor in another.**

Doubt can often be quite a handy quality, which can save a man from all kinds of illusions. Such doubt is, basically, the quality of discrimination between the real and the unreal, *nitya-anitya viveka*. As useful as such doubt might be, there is also the pathological kind of doubt, which brings to question even the reality itself, and separates a man's spirit from it. This, however, demands additional explanation.

We often encounter the mistaken belief that a man judges things based on arguments and evidence. It is, however, true that not everything can be an argument to everybody, which applies even more where evidence is concerned. What is a clear argument to one person, will be quite unclear and incomprehensible to another. That is so because people have an existing worldview and

a fund of knowledge, and depending on that worldview, they will deem some things acceptable, and others not. A physicist will see marginal statistical evidence regarding the existence of an elementary particle, acquired from an accelerator, as quite acceptable, but even the far better body of evidence regarding the existence of telepathy will be utterly unacceptable to him, simply because in his worldview, there is a place for mesons and quarks, but there is no place for God, soul and the interconnectedness of all things, which exceeds the material existence. To somebody else, however, who has a different worldview, it will be no problem to accept the existence of God, but understanding how man could walk on the moon will remain beyond him, for the Bible says nothing about walking on the moon.

We can therefore see that worldview, or a willingness to accept, greatly limits the logical processes in people's minds, and that for the acceptance of some argument, coherence and logical accuracy of the argument itself will not be of paramount importance, for what matters is a man's readiness to accept the argument based on his worldview. Because of some sorts of worldview, people will be inclined to believe in all kinds of nonsense, while on the other hand doubting even the most elementary truths. I can assume that we all had the opportunity to see the examples of such functioning.

The other important aspect, which we need to keep in mind in our attempts to explain things, is the degree of expertise, or knowledge, of an individual to whom we attempt to explain things. For people are far from being equal in their abilities to understand, and the entire system of education is our evidence: the subject matter of mathematics for the first grade of elementary school does not have many things in common with the subject matter for the first year of mathematical studies in college. That is so because the system of education is based upon a correct premise that, in order to acquire a certain form of expertise, people need a long lasting, gradual education which starts with the very basics, wherefrom more complex understanding is build, eventually leading to the degree of competence necessary to understand the faculty. When we express a certain statement, we should first establish whether we are expressing it to a first grader or a college student. It is true that scientific evidence must be such, that everyone be able to understand it, and repeat it from the given premises by correct reasoning. Still, "correct reasoning" often implies several decades

of a highly sophisticated education. The evidence from the field of physics will be evidence only to a physicist; to an ordinary man from the streets, such evidence will mean nothing. The same applies in the case of mathematics, biology or any other highly specialized scientific discipline.

While a physicist can, and must, doubt any evidence brought before him by another physicist, and seek its flaws and examine it carefully, to an ordinary man, it would be better to learn from either of the two physicists in argument, for no matter how hard they could argue about some detail, they both base their discussion on the assumption of a great body of knowledge of the basic things, which an ordinary man would lack, and for this reason he will be unable to grasp even the basic ideas about the matter in question. The best thing a man could do in such a situation, of course if he is interested in physics, would be to get an expert physicist for a teacher and to slowly learn the basics of physics and mathematics from him. In order to do that, he would need to have faith; a man who does not know, and doubts both knowledge and the knower, will always remain ignorant. An ordinary man cannot tell whether what the physicists teach him is true or false, simply because he does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to make such a judgment. He is in a position of ignorance, and the only thing that can bring him out of his ignorance is faith. If he has faith, he will trust the teacher and study diligently, and absorb knowledge that will strengthen his faith in being taught correctly, and he will learn even more diligently, to finally become a true knower. Only then will he be able to afford the luxury of questioning things; only then will he be able to question the disputable opinions of his peers from a position of knowledge, for in this position, the motive for doubt is not the darkness of ignorance, but the desire for knowledge. All that applies to physics, applies at least in equal measure to the sphere of spirituality as well. As in physics, without faith and dedication there can be no progress; as in physics, doubt serves a positive purpose only if it is based on knowledge, and not if it stands between knowledge and man. As in physics, the evidence is understandable only to those who know, while others can be told only a simplified theory, and a method of achieving the degree of expertise necessary in order to gain true understanding. As in physics, time spent in learning does not guarantee success.

Because of all that has been said, it is clear why Lord Kṛṣṇa values faith so highly, calling doubt a cause of ruin and misfortune.

**41 Having renounced activities through yoga,
dispelling the doubts with knowledge,
founded in Self, he is never bound in his activities,
o conqueror of wealth.**

Here, the Lord describes him, who has attained the perfection of knowledge, renouncing the binding qualities of activity through the practice of yoga, who has embraced knowledge through faith, and dispelled doubt and ignorance, who has realized Me as the foundation. Such a man is on one hand correctly established, and on the other hand correctly manifested, for the foundation of his being is manifested with complete transparency through his activities.

**42 So with the weapon of Self-knowledge
slay this doubt born from ignorance
which has found root in your heart, o Bhārata.
Seek your foundation in yoga, rise, and fight!**

The Lord invites Arjuna to attain realization, and to renounce ignorance through correct insight, ignorance that is the foundation of his indecisiveness. As a solution to Arjuna's dilemma, the Lord recommends finding correct foundations in the Absolute, which will produce purity in actions; Arjuna will then be able to fight, thus performing his duty, but filled with realization of the nature of Self, and of the nature of God's activities in the world. Knowing that, correctly established, he will become an instrument of implementation of the will of God, and every trace of selfishness and indecisiveness will vanish from his spirit.

Chapter Five

1 Arjuna said:

You praise, o Kṛṣṇa, first renunciation of activities
and later the yoga of activity, as well.

Tell me clearly, which of those two is better?

It is indeed not obvious what Lord Kṛṣṇa had in mind when he spoke of renunciation of activity; in some verses, he seems to speak of physical inactivity, as well as the inactivity of the mind, and complete cessation of even breathing; and on the other hand, he keeps praising the correct activities founded in yajña, or transcendence. It is therefore unclear whether the state of transcendence can be achieved only by complete cessation of every form of mental and physical activity, diving into the depths of one's true nature, or is such transcendence a mere state of spirit, which can then either act or not act from this state of detachment. In this case, it would be preferable for one to act, because of the well-being of the world. Arjuna is in a sensitive situation, and is not inclined to start guessing on the matter.

2 The Almighty Lord said:

Both the renunciation of activity,
and activity from yoga lead to perfection.

Still, of those two, activity from yoga is better.

Renunciation therefore exists in two aggregate states, both being the greatest good. The first state is the separation of the spirit from the qualities of Nature, the achievement of transcendence and peace in the knowledge of the highest reality. The second state takes place when indulgence in activity does not interrupt the state of realization, for activities are not based on attachment, but on freedom. Such activity on the one hand does not disturb perfect meditation, and on the other hand it conveys the quality of the transcendental sphere into the sphere of the created world. In both states, perfection is present, and the spirit abides in eternal freedom. However, the yoga of activity is better, for it possesses all the qualities of meditative contemplation, and besides that, it also possesses the qualities of perfect activity in the world. This does not make meditative contemplation an inferior spiritual discipline; on the contrary, it is so perfect, that it is the very core from which active spirituality grows. Still, active spirituality goes a step further, giving the means of expression to the perfection of meditation.

- 3 **Know, that the true renunciate is he,
who never despises nor desires;
free from duality, he is easily liberated
from attachments, o Mighty-armed.**

Renunciation is not the state of poverty, but the state of detachment from possession. Superficial renunciation can hide all sorts of attachment; we can often witness how the poor criticize the rich, filled with “righteous” anger; still, becoming rich themselves, they become as bad or even worse than those, whom they used to criticize. It is therefore obvious, from the example of wealth, that non-possession of an object does not guarantee detachment from it; detachment is possible only when the spirit finds a far greater source of pleasure than that offered by some object. Such a source of pleasure is provided by higher perspective. Let us find an example of such a perspective. Imagine, for instance, that today you had an accident, in which you lost your life. Your body is dead; only your soul continues to exist. With death of the body, you lose all your possessions, all family ties and duties, all the irrelevant things that might seem so important to you at this moment. You don’t have to be at work tomorrow, you don’t have to do anything; nothing is expected from you.

You realize that, finally, everything is all right. Having realized that, you return to the body and continue your life. You see that it is transitory, that all worries and desires come from the body, thus also being transitory. It will all pass, and true peace will remain. This peace has the quality of eternity; as long as the life of the body might last—a decade or two, three, even five decades—it is but a moment. You can live your life without coercion, in peace and harmony, without struggle and anxiety. In such peace and lack of need, that fills you in the moment of realization, you can sense a glimpse of peace enjoyed by a true yogī. That is what is meant by detachment, and not the indifference of one who doesn't care. Detachment is the life of freedom, the life of joy without coercion, the life of safety and knowledge that everything will be alright, and that all the misfortunes and problems will pass, that they do not matter, that they have no foundation in our highest reality, which is beyond their influence.

**4 Only an ignorant man will see a difference
between s̄āṅkhya and yoga, and not a sage.**

The one who succeeds in either
enjoys the fruits of both.

**5 That which can be attained by s̄āṅkhya
can also be attained by yoga.**

He who truly sees, knows
that s̄āṅkhya and yoga are the same.

S̄āṅkhya, as a discipline of discrimination and contemplation, is based on the same form of transcendental consciousness as the yoga of activity; only he who fails to see beyond the surface can see them to be different. He who knows, who sees the core of being, sees the same depth of contemplation in a meditating yogī and in a yogī who constantly acts in every way. He, who attains perfect depth of contemplation, will be able to act perfectly, for his soul is pure. Likewise, one who manages to act perfectly has also attained perfection of meditation, for there are no perfect activities without perfect consciousness. Those two paths are therefore one and the same, and the only advantage of active yoga is that it uplifts the world, and acts on manifestation of God's nature, which is the very purpose of making.

People often ask whether one should first accomplish perfect purification of being by meditation and yogic practice, and only later act, if that be the will of God, or should they act from the very beginning, even imperfectly, thus learning from their mistakes and improving their activities. I see no contradiction between those two. A man should act, at the same time watching his actions through an awakened eye of discrimination, watching his own motives. When he sees imperfections, he should meditate and practice yoga in order to remove them, so that learning from the mistakes themselves not be necessary; such a thing would indeed be slow, and could hardly be accomplished in fullness in only one life. With the help of yoga, what would otherwise be difficult, is easy, and that, which would be impossible, becomes attainable. Yoga and meditative contemplation are therefore the philosopher's stone, that purifies activities and spirit, making them perfect. It joins the meditative discipline of sāṅkhya with the active spirit of karma-yoga, in such a way that all difference between them soon vanishes. In such an approach, one can no longer see whether a man purifies himself more with self-analysis, or with actions and experiences that result from activity. Experiences lead to introspection, and introspection in turn leads to realization, the validity of which is verified by actions, which in turn produce experiences, and thus the ascending spiral continues, until the perfect purify has been attained.

**6 Renunciation alone without yoga
leads to misfortune, o Mighty-armed.
A wise man, who is focused in yoga,
comes to brahman without delay.**

Here, yoga means realization of the highest reality. Renunciation is a state in which a man, who has attained the higher, renounces the lower; he who has realized the truth will not strive for unimportant and transitory things, for they can only disturb the perfection of his fulfillment, having nothing to add to it in any way. He, however, who has not achieved fulfillment, and renounces lower things which he sees to be valuable and important for his happiness, only contributes to his misery, for he has not attained the higher, and is left without the lower. If, however, he focuses on the Highest, he soon attains the highest perfection. The partial vision of perfection, onto which a man fully

focuses, soon becomes the dominant quality of his life, and his consciousness fully withdraws from all lower things. When we therefore say that the path must have the quality of the goal, we mean this: from the insight of reality, a yogī progresses toward the perfect insight of the highest reality, as his soul becomes more pure, and he becomes more and more capable of receiving the great secrets that reside in the deep and infinite ocean of brahman.

- 7 **Focused in yoga, with purified soul,
having attained perfect self-control,
having conquered the senses,
his self being the Self of all beings,
although he acts, he is never attached.**

He who has achieved the degree of complete purification by the practice of yoga, or establishment in reality, who sees himself only as the infinite spirit of God, the matchless Absolute, who is indeed All, who is the spirit of life and the “I am” consciousness in all beings, both evolved and unevolved, he does not see things in relationship to himself. In him, there is no idea of self related to something else, the idea that is the true cause of attachment. For he knows himself as He, in whom there are no relationships, and who is in no relationship of any kind, to whom the laws of space, time and property cannot be applied. If such a wise man acts, he acts not in order to gain something, for he is indeed All, and the idea of property is vastly inferior to the reality of being. He acts only from motives of selfless service, and this is activity from yajña, activity free of motivations, and attachments that follow therefrom.

Let us take the example of Jesus. What was there for him to attain with his activities? Only persecution and death, nothing else. Still, in spite of all that, he constantly acted in order to uplift people, in order to spread the correct perspective of the reality and obey the will of God in every possible way. When it was the will of God for him to be praised, he was praised. When God wanted him to be put to shame and death, he gave himself to be ridiculed and killed, at no time resenting his malefactors, for it was all the will of God. Those actions of his, together with the attitude on which they were based, are the true meaning of this verse.

- 8 **He, who is united and knows the truth,
thinks: “I do not act at all.”
While he looks, hears, touches,
smells, eats, walks, dreams, breathes,**

He is united, who observes no duality, but on the contrary dwells in awareness of the undivided nature of the Highest Self. Looking from this perspective, he sees himself as transcendental to all the aspects of duality, which includes activities, as well. Activities are possible only in the world of change, for in Self change does not exist. Self is the Absolute Himself, eternal and changeless. In Him there is no division into the initial and the final state, nor action that forms a relationship between them. In Self, there is only constant perfection, to which nothing can be added or taken away from.

- 9 **talks, lets go, catches,
opens and closes his eyes,
he sees that it is only the senses
that act among the objects of senses.**

He, who is thus established in transcendence, witnesses the changes of transitory, relative things and their relative relationships. He observes the Relative as the superficial and unreal play of shadows, which from this perspective it indeed is. Abiding in the fullness of bliss and emancipation, he is untouched by the relative games, which in the best case contain partially, and in a small measure, That which I Am in fullness. Such relative movements exist in the world of objects, in which exist the objects and their relationships, as well as the senses that witness those relationships. There, however, where there is the undivided supreme reality, which is the foundation of it all, which is transcendental to it all, where there is no duality, where there is One without the other, those games are observed in a way in which a dreamer observes his dream, knowing at the same time to be dreaming. In a dream, there exists nothing that would not be a reflection of the dreamer's nature; in no experience, which we are capable of experiencing, is there anything that would not already exist within us. The external event is a mere incitement that changes consciousness in a way that brings a limited aspect of our inner nature in a

relationship with the world of objects. Therefore every aspect of love, happiness, knowledge and the like merely a limited manifestation of something that we already possess within ourselves: such a feeling was not obtained from without, but on the contrary, an external event merely triggered something that we have always carried within ourselves. The purpose of the world is therefore only to remind us of ourselves, and to awaken the qualities of Self within us in fullness. He, who sees the origin of all the states of consciousness within himself, will turn away from the sensual world inwards, where in time he will indeed find Me, as the foundation of all. He will thus obtain lasting peace and fulfillment.

**10 He who surrenders all activities to brahman,
and, thus abandoning attachments, acts,
is untouched by sin, like a lotus flower
that is untouched by water.**

He who has been established so perfectly, who realized that brahman, the Absolute, is the supreme and undivided reality, and that beside Him there is nothing else; who realized that the Absolute Subject is the only objective reality—he manages to keep such a perspective of transcendence within the illusory world of objects, and to act from this position, keeping inner peace even when surrounded with utter chaos of the outside world. He is untouched by worldly gifts; they do not cause him to be attached, and he who acts from such a position will not be inclined to walk away from the path of perfection and rightness. He therefore never sins, for sin is a mere consequence of separation of personal will from the will of God, and also from the line of rightness, dharma, which connects all things in the manifested world.

**11 Acting with body, spirit, mind
and even with the senses themselves,
yogīs, abandoning attachments,
work on self-purification.**

The perfect activity is the goal. Activities that strive toward perfection are a path toward that goal. That is so because each deed reflects a part of the nature of the doer. The doer can therefore observe the true condition of his spirit by observing his own

deeds, as well as the imperfections of his thoughts and deeds, for there is no use in self-deception, there is no use in convincing oneself of one's own purity, if that purity has no foundation in reality.

The yogī will therefore observe himself with the highest degree of objectivity, for his goal is not to be right, but to be perfect. He constantly questions the voice of his consciousness, finding faults in his actions, listening to it in order to be able to act better, more purely and with greater transparency. When he finds his fault or weakness, he is happy, for he is now able to remove it. Great is the gratitude such a yogī will feel, toward everything that could help him discover and remove his own weaknesses and faults. He will never be angry at one who warns him of his faults; on the contrary, he sees the entire world as a gift from God, given to him in order to find his own weaknesses, remove them by acting, and become perfect, in likeness of God. Instead of being frustrated by the world, as are those who are attached and who seek fulfillment in the world, he even in the least favorable of circumstances feels only gratitude because of being given an opportunity to learn, bestowed upon him by the infinite mercy of God. That is a true path of perfection.

**12 One who is united,
who has abandoned the fruits of activities,
attains perfect peace.
One, however, who is not merged into one,
who acts from desire, who adheres to the fruits of activities,
he is firmly bound.**

One, who knows the truth, approaches the world as a philosopher's stone, that will help him obtain perfection; surrounded by the world, he will purify his own nature, he will remove the wrong identifications and delusions, he will make choices in which he will reject the lesser and choose the greater, and he will thus, eventually, turn his nature into a fully Divine one. Such achievement is possible only by growth through constant choices, made possible by the world of objects. It makes it possible for us to carve the infinite potential of our true nature into a jewel of our manifested relative personality, thus becoming gods, which we can all be if we so choose. The world should thus be seen as a priceless gift from God. One who looks thusly, acts from the position of detachment, and approaches the world in a manner in

which it is meant to be approached. One, however, who is lost in the world, who doesn't understand the world to be merely a mirror, in which we can see the things that lie within us, as objectively manifested—he sees the world as a shop in which there are things he would like to possess. In such delusion, he will strive to possess those things, and will be thwarted by all things that prevent him from achieving that, failing to see that every possession of that kind is as illusory as the possession acquired in sleep. Of what meaning is it to us if we build a house in a dream, when it will vanish as soon as we wake up? Likewise, of what use is it to amass wealth and things, when they are a mere abstraction? The greatest benefit that we can acquire from a dream is to know ourselves, and learn. The same is the benefit that we can have from the world, and this lasting benefit greatly outweighs every apparent and transient one, which we could acquire by possessing things and coming into a position of influence over them.

**13 Renouncing in spirit all attachments,
the inhabitant of the body enjoys happiness
in the city with nine gates.
He neither acts nor causes activity.**

Correct activity is, therefore, that from the position of transcendence. He, who observes the world in this manner, will value things by how much can be learned from them. Those from which one can learn are good, while those that do not lead to knowledge are useless. Seeing that anything can teach us something, and that even bad things are good as an example of what is to be avoided, he will observe nothing bad in the world, nothing that would pose an obstacle or a problem. He acts, but not for the sake of achievement, but for the sake of verifying his knowledge. From such a position, he is free from every need for achievement; he enjoys happiness and peace, which are a consequence of the inner harmony.

Let us take death as an example. To an ordinary man, death is something terrible—it is a negation of his entire being, the end of his personal world. To a yogī who is aware of his own immortality, death is undesirable only when it interrupts his process of learning, forcing him to pass through the cycle of learning again in the next life, in order to reach the point in which he was interrupted in the former incarnation. To him, death is not a negation

of existence or anything like that; it can, in the worst case, be a slight annoyance. This yogī will see life and death of other beings in the same manner; he will be saddened by the death of one who wasted his life without learning anything of value; death of a man who used his life for learning and growth will fill him with joy, for his brother lived well and right. How different that is from the perspective of worldly men, who are pleased when a man dies whose life was full of corruption and useless, yet grieve and mourn when a noble man dies, for he is no more! Of course, the fact that someone is not physically among us can be a source of grief, but this grief has meaning only on the level of body, not on the level of deeper reality. It is thus possible for one to simultaneously rejoice in the end of a fruitful incarnation of his brother, while at the same time being saddened because he will never again meet him in body. It is only natural, and does not in any case mean a lack of perspective or insight. In this very example, we can so clearly see the difference between true transcendence and indifference. A yogī is never indifferent. He is deeply touched by all things and experiences them profoundly, but they touch him in a manner utterly different from that of an attached man, and his motives are different as well. A yogī will feel both joy and sadness, but seldom for the same reasons as the people around him.

**14 The Lord does not create
neither activities nor their fruits,
nor does He incite beings to action,
nor is He responsible for the connection
between he who acts and the fruits of his activities.
It is the doing of Nature.**

People often live with the mistaken belief that God punishes or rewards people for their deeds. They come to that misconception because they think God to be the highest principle in all, and all to originate from Him, and since He is perfectly righteous, He judges according to His righteousness.

The truth is quite different.¹⁵⁰ Created worlds, the created Nature, are governed by the laws of harmony and order, which have

¹⁵⁰ John 3:17: *For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

their origin in the perfection of the Absolute, whose reflection they represent. Since harmony opposes disharmony, one who creates disharmony by his actions will meet the opposition of the forces of Nature, and will be either prevented, or destroyed. Likewise, one who represents a force of harmony will be empowered by the forces of Nature. Since Nature has its origin in God, one could simplify things and say that God punishes some things and rewards others, but indeed, such relationships of cause and effect have their origin in the laws of Nature. He who is attached to the world, is to be judged by the laws of the world. He, however, who is attached only to God, is free from all judgment, for judgment is not a quality of God. It is therefore said, with full justification, that *he who sins is enslaved by sin*,¹⁵¹ and God wishes men not to be slaves, but on the contrary, to be free in Him.

15 The Almighty does not accept anyone's sin, nor merit.

Wisdom is covered by a cloak of ignorance.

Because of that, beings are in illusion.

God is completely transcendental to the world, although He is the highest good. God is not a judge who rewards or punishes. Indeed, we are the ones who, among the numerous things, choose, according to our own preferences, and our choices determine our destiny; if we sin, we suffer, and if we do good, we live in peace. Deeds can get us only so far, giving us the things of Nature, but in this manner it is impossible to achieve transcendence. God cannot be reached by the deeds of the world, but by outgrowing the world within spirit. Thus turning our eyes inwards, we achieve a state that is untouched by worldly achievements, that transcends both heaven and hell. God can therefore not be bought by actions, nor can He be angered by them. The only thing we can accomplish in this manner is to bring our consciousness and our will closer to God, or, however, to bring them farther away from Him. It is therefore we who determine the course of our existence and destiny, and not God. God is perfectly full and wholesome in His nature, and pervades all things with His Self. If we so desire, we can choose to belong to Him in any moment, recognizing Him as the essence of our own being, as its origin and purpose; renouncing

¹⁵¹ John 8:34.

the reflections of the moon on the surfaces of water, we turn our eyes to the moon itself, knowing it to be their source and reality. One who has achieved success in that, sees Self as the only reality in all things, seeing everything else as mere reflections, good because they originate from a perfect source, but unsteady, transitory and apparent, mere reminders of the reality they imperfectly represent, and to which they point through by their qualities.

16 But in them, who have destroyed ignorance with knowledge, knowledge reveals the Almighty, like a rising sun.

One who came to know Self, sees the world of objects as a play of shadows and unsteadiness, as a thin veil of paradox, an illusion that both is and is not, for all is indeed brahman. Knowing the nature of this world of shadows, he is never again deluded by it. Such knowledge can be expressed by the exclamation “It is You!” or “It is He!” or “Om Tat Sat,” “He is that reality,” in realization of the fullness of personality of the fundamental principle, which is closer to a man than even the closest friend or a lover. He finally recognizes that voice in the depths of his own soul, which was there always, constantly, which never went away, although it was often quite dimmed and silenced by a man’s dedication to other things.

17 With their minds founded in That, with their souls founded in Him, focused at Him, utterly devoted to Him, utterly cleansed by wisdom, they achieve the final perfection.

It is one thing to acquire insight into perfection, and quite another to be fully founded in it. Such a foundation demands purification of mind, perception and activities. Of all that, perfect purity of activities is the most difficult to achieve, and it therefore represents the utmost achievement. Activity is the fundamental quality of this world; its very purpose is to manifest, or act. Activity is therefore the very means for us to gain the best possible benefits from the world; this world is not meant for meditation in inactivity. Through activity we can purify ourselves, and through activity we can testify to our purity. He whose entire life reflects

God, who testifies God and praises God with his entire life, has indeed achieved the highest perfection, for even in the world of activity, as a most difficult of temptations, he maintained all the qualities of the Divine nature.

**18 In a brāhmaṇa of high learning and humility,
in a cow, elephant, dog, and even in the lowest of outcasts
the enlightened see the same.**

The Self is the all-present reality of all beings; as much as its manifestation might differ between beings, as is the case with those mentioned above, their foundation is the same; I Am One in them all. Differences exist in the degree of manifestation; differences also exist in a being's orientation, but the fundamental reality in them is the same.

**19 Even during life have they defeated birth and death
whose mind is thus established.
Impeccable, indeed omnipresent is brahman.
They are therefore founded in brahman.**

Those, who even in life severed identifications with everything but the one true reality, have obtained the state of jīvanmukti, liberation during life. Brahman, the highest reality, is all-pervading and omnipresent. He who knows himself as such, dwells in a state of true realization, which is the state of freedom. It is an extremely high achievement; it does not suffice to have only a passing experience of unity. It is necessary for unity to become the true, active foundation of the being, which overpowers every form of illusion and identification with the transient.

**20 The knower of brahman,
firmly established in brahman
neither rejoices in the pleasant
nor is he disturbed by the unpleasant.
His mind is firm, free from illusion.**

**21 They, whose spirit is untouched
by external pleasures,
find happiness, which is in Self.**

**With Self in firm unity with brahman,
they enjoy the highest happiness.**

He, whose mind is founded in the Absolute, thinks and acts in a way that reflects the state of the Absolute, without adding to it or taking anything away, utterly impeccable. Such a perfect sage perceives himself to be nothing but the all-pervading Self, which is the foundation of every form of pleasure, fulfillment and bliss. Every achievement is deemed great if it reflects even a mere speck of the state of brahman. What can we then say about the fulfillment of spirit of he, who fully enjoys brahman itself? Such bliss is impossible to comprehend, and nothing short of direct experience will help. The spirit that is thus fulfilled does not wander around, it does not change the point of its focus nor its orientation, for there is nothing that could compare to his condition, let alone become an alternative to it. His mind is therefore firm, completely untouched by lower forms of pleasure, let alone unpleasant-ries, which are an utterly ridiculous term in such a condition. For what could possibly threaten such a sage—perhaps a threat to his body? How could he be harmed, who knows himself as the foundation and source of all things? The very idea is ridiculous. The mind of such a Divine being is utterly pure, persistent, and free from every trace of all forms of ignorance and illusion. Free from all doubts, he resides in the highest fulfillment and peace.

**22 All pleasures that come from the touch of senses
are only a source of suffering, o son of Kuntī.
They have a beginning and an end.
A wise man is not satisfied with them.**

The world of senses has its foundation in the unchanging and immortal brahman. Still, being illusory, it does not contain the fullness of being, and can in no way be a substitute for brahman, and is therefore not a real alternative to it. To those, who attempt to find fulfillment in such a transitory world of shadows, it will be an infinite source of disappointment and pain. Wounded by a knife of illusion, they can find the only cure in the nectar of brahman. Only in Him, who in fullness possesses that, of which the entire world is but a vague image, can one find the lasting pleasure. Perceiving not the objects of the senses, but the inner

perception invoked by sensory experiences, we can discover the path we are to walk; the inner sense of pleasure, love, truth, realization and other magnificent human experiences is based on the undivided bliss of the true reality, which is the fullness of that, which we are used to perceive in fragments, mistakenly perceiving them to be caused by sensory experiences.

**23 He who is united can even in this life
resist the incitements of desire and fury.
He is a happy man.**

He who has recognized the state of sat-cit-ānanda, being-consciousness-bliss, or the fullness of fulfillment which is brahman, dwells in a state which represents something beings would not dare to dream of, even in the wildest of their dreams, for it would seem to be too good, and therefore impossible. Beings wounded by the sufferings of the illusory world are accustomed to finding pleasant and unpleasant things mixed together, constantly changing places, according to the rule that every good brings about some evil, and the other way around. In the sphere of reality, however, such things have no foundation. Sat-cit-ānanda does not belong to the sphere of duality, and has no equivalent state of the opposite sign, unlike all relative experiences. It can be said that it has an antithesis in the entire field of the Relative; as much as the world is governed by the duality of all things, the Absolute is free from all duality, to the extent where even the relative world has no existence apart from Him, but is, on the contrary, founded in Him and made of Him. It is a mystery, a state that can be experienced, but we can't think or speak of it; we can state the basic guidelines in order for a seeker, desiring realization, to be able to find it. He, however, who has found it, dwells in a state that cannot be compromised by the things that would cause a non-united being to feel either desire, which has a cause in unfulfillment, or, however, rage, which has a foundation in frustration, which is also founded in unfulfillment. Those things have no effect on a fulfilled man.

**24 One who finds happiness within,
who finds fulfillment within,
who is filled with light within himself,**

**this yogī, whose soul is brahman,
attains extinction in brahman.**

People attempt to find “something” that will give them fulfillment. In fact, they seek experience that will lead to the awakening of a certain state within them. Not believing this state to reside in them and to belong to them, they attempt to achieve and repeat pleasant experiences, facing all sorts of hindrances and disappointments. At the moment in which they give up this shadow hunt, and turn their eyes inward, they begin to discover the subtle laws of their own spirit, eventually knowing the source of all pleasure to be the foundation of their own soul. Such a yogī, who has realized Self, attains nirvāṇa, or extinction, for in such devotion to his innermost nature he loses every trace of ego, whom he previously thought to be himself. Even when he returns from this state to the relative world, and continues to act in it, he remains merely an embodiment of the immortal brahman, never again a deluded being. Extinction, or a place where fire goes when it is extinguished, is therefore not a negation of a man’s essence, but on the contrary, his utmost emancipation.

**25 Such perfection is attained by those ṛṣis
who are free from sin,
who have renounced duality,
immersed in realization,
who enjoy doing good to all.**

**26 Men of profound peace,
free from desire and anger,
who have focused their thoughts
and attained emancipation,
soon reach this, utmost perfection.**

The attainment of perfection cannot be stolen by force or drugs; it is a consequence of wholesome development of personality, refinement of desires, ascent of consciousness, moral perfection, and devotion to God. Those who lack those qualities can achieve only temporary and passing experiences of brahman, which will, however, have no permanent connection with their relative being, and most often, instead of being bridges that bind heaven

and earth, they will become madmen who scream “I am God.” A truly perfect man perceives the knowledge of brahman to be the final and unquestionable revelation of his beloved Lord, to whom he then completely surrenders. Such a man, who is otherwise of noble and perfect nature, in enlightenment achieves fullness of his perfection, as well as complete emancipation.

Only a ripe fruit drops from the tree spontaneously. Likewise, only a noble man, a man of knowledge, filled with good qualities, who strives toward God with dedication and devotion, reaches God whom he desires, recognizing in Him the fulfillment of all his desires and longings. He naturally strives toward enlightenment, finding it to be the highest goal. A man who strives toward devotion, in the vision of God achieves the utmost fulfillment, thus reaching the final perfection. God is the final goal, attained only by those, who are not satisfied with anything else.

**27 Abandoning external ties,
his eyes focused at the point between the eyebrows,
having attained balance between prāṇa and apāna
that flow through the nostrils**

During the separation of consciousness from the senses, or the external world (for consciousness can dwell on the outside world even when the senses are inactive), when a yogī withdraws his consciousness that resides in the senses and the organs of action, in a way in which a turtle withdraws its limbs into the shell, the eyes automatically roll upwards, which resembles eyes directed to the root of the nose, or a point between the eyebrows, which is basically the same. At that point, breathing is also calmed, the turns of energy through iḍā and piṅgalā cease, and the yogī breathes through suṣumnā. The inner state of consciousness that corresponds with such an energetic state is a state of complete peace, balance, harmony, utter clarity of consciousness and presence in the present moment. Of course, there are always people who think that by imitating the symptoms, they will achieve such a state, and so they attempt to simultaneously turn the eyes upward by an effort of will, and to restrain breath, of course for the whole time focusing their attention on those things and failing to achieve transcendence. Such attempts, which can be encountered in various schools of yoga, are utterly useless, and can only produce

exhaustion. A true state which manifests those symptoms can be achieved by a technique of upstream *kriyā*, which says nothing about the need to balance breath and to turn the eyes upward, but those are the very things that happen spontaneously during practice, even to beginners.

**28 a wise man, who strives toward liberation,
having attained the control of senses, mind and breath,
who abandons the desires, fear and anger,
is indeed eternally free.**

The *yogī* who has achieved transcendence (the symptoms of which are explained in previous verse), who in practice of purification removes all forms of lower worldly reactions from his consciousness, who through such practice achieves complete purification of soul and its perfect establishment in the Highest, has achieved liberation during life.

It does not suffice to merely abandon the desires temporarily, as well as fears and other disturbances and passions, for instance during meditation. There are many who easily attain success in such things, and still, they have only to leave the state of meditation, to find themselves in a situation of crisis, and all the things they appeared to have solved will suddenly surface. It is therefore not enough to merely attain peace; it is necessary to permanently remove the causes of restlessness, which is achieved by submerging all the elements of personality, in all their aspects, into the presence of God. It is achieved by entering the Divine state in meditation, once we manage to reach it, and then, from this perspective, to turn the look toward the lower elements of personality, to which we give this perfect perspective as a cure for their imperfections. By saturating all the aspects of our personality, as well as the organs of perception and action, with such a state of Divine nectar, we purify our entire being, thus removing all possible causes of fall from the state of harmony, which would undoubtedly be awakened in situations in which the meditative consciousness is not possible, and which would awaken all the old, memorized responses to such situations. Existence in the Divine presence, and saturation of the entire being with the Divine, is the only guarantee of perfect activity and consciousness. He, who once managed to achieve such perfection, even when God

removes him from His presence in order for him to perform certain things that can be performed only in this manner, continues to function optimally, since the old, mistaken reactions have been completely erased. Such a removal from the Divine presence, from the state of darśana, is also a very good test of achievement: if we have any imperfections, in such separation they will become visible. If even then, after the long separation, nothing arises, except, of course, for the inextinguishable thirst for God, it is a sign that perfect purity and freedom have been attained. Such a yogī is not reborn, for in him there is nothing to be reborn; he belongs to God completely. There is nothing worldly in him, that would demand birth in the world; like a lotus flower, that remains pure even when surrounded by water and mud, so does a jīvanmukta reside in the world, not acquiring its qualities.

**29 Knowing Me to be the enjoyer of sacrifice and austerity,
knowing Me to be the Highest Lord of all the worlds,
knowing Me to be the benefactor of all beings,
he attains peace.**

A yogī who has his only purpose in God, who, in practice of purification, has outgrown every desire for lower things, who finds God to be the source of nectar that saturates the worlds, providing life and consciousness, throws himself into the very source of this nectar, and becomes this nectar himself, finding there peace and fulfillment.

Chapter Six

- 1 The Almighty Lord said:
He who performs his duties
without attachment to the fruits of labor,
he is a sannyāsī, and also a yogī,
and not one who is without fire
and does not act.

Sannyāsa, or “renunciation,” is way of life in which a sādhu¹⁵² completely rejects all worldly goals and duties, lives from charity, and is engaged only in spiritual progress and teaching. A sannyāsī is therefore one, who has rejected the world, and turned completely to the world of spirit.

A yogī is one, who dedicates himself to the spiritual practice of transcendence of the world, and by withdrawing consciousness from the senses and the organs of action, attains liberation from all kinds of attachments and sin. From this state of liberation, he acts for the benefit of the world, free from any kind of selfishness and personal motives.

It is therefore obvious that a yogī is at the same time also a sannyāsī; although activities in the world are not strictly prohibited to him by any formal rules, detachment from those things

¹⁵² He who practices sādhana, a spiritual discipline.

follows from the very definition of his spiritual practice. One, who manages to act in detachment, has therefore mastered yoga, and has therefore also achieved sannyāsa. That is so because detachment in activity is not possible without detached consciousness, and detached consciousness is impossible without inner fulfillment, which makes turning toward the world of objects, in order to acquire pleasures and achieve fulfillment, obsolete and unnecessary.

A fireplace in which fire burns constantly is a symbol of Vedic home, or family life. Likewise, fire is a symbol of a Vedic sacrificial ceremony. “One who is without fire” is therefore one who is engaged in neither family life nor the life of formal religion, which are the qualities of a sannyāsī. The Lord says true detachment in activity to be a sign of achievement, unlike mere restraint from actions. Transcendence having been achieved, activities are no longer binding as such, and it is therefore, from a spiritual perspective, completely the same whether a man acts with body and mind or not. Action and property are obstacles to spiritual progress only when one is conditioned by them and attached to them.

**2 Know that, which is called sannyāsa,
also to be yoga, o son of Pāṇḍu, for he,
who does not reject the foundation of desire,
does not become a yogī.**

Yoga contains all the essential aspects of sannyāsa, for the practice of yoga implies transcendence, which is the essence of sannyāsa. The foundation of desire is lack of fulfillment, or misdirection of desire for fulfillment toward the external, instead of toward the internal world. Because of such a mistake, one is involved in numerous attachments and makes numerous mistakes, that condition him even further and bind him with karmic ties, and he is thus completely lost. Seeing the nature of this pattern of behavior, wise men have determined that renunciation of this behavior is necessary in any effort intended to attain lasting liberation, and a radical cut, in a sense of cutting all ties to worldly life and worldly mode of behavior, presented itself as an obvious solution. As ideal as such a solution might be at some occasions, saving a beginner of weak will-power in the beginning of spiritual practice from returning to the old worldly patterns, it is by no means ideal as

such. For after a man frees himself from servitude to a number of worldly habits that are mostly useless or harmful, there remains the basic cause, which made him become involved in such things in the first place; ignorance of his own true nature and a misguided longing for fulfillment. If this original problem is not solved, if a sannyāsī does not become a yogī, failing to direct his spirit toward the Highest, which will undoubtedly grant him complete fulfillment, leaving no place for desires, he will then sooner or later succumb to some temptation, for mere renunciation without fulfillment is often a cure worse than the disease, leaving one in worse condition than that, in which he was originally found. Since a true sannyāsī, who wants to persist in practice and achieve true, and not only formal renunciation, must necessarily progress toward the state of yoga, it is clear that the opposite also applies, and that a true yogī, who made progress in practice, must necessarily achieve true renunciation, for, filled with the bliss of the Almighty, he loses every interest in lower joys, that come from the world of sensory objects, and every form of external experience. We therefore see sannyāsa and yoga to be very interconnected disciplines, having a common purpose and essence.

- 3 For a wise seeker on the path of yoga,
the activity is said to be the path.
For him who has reached yoga,
the path goes through cessation of activity.**

Yoga is a state in which a being is made whole by correct recognition of itself as Ātman. Only in achievement of such a state does every form of desire for attainment of a better state, which is fundamental motive for activity, cease. Thus residing in the state of freedom, the being does not act; only God within him acts, for having attained the unity with the foundation of reality, every identification with the unreal ends. For those, however, who have not yet managed to attain utter fulfillment, the path goes through following their own inner desire toward greater pleasure, for such longing causes them to discard everything that is not the highest, and the highest of all is undoubtedly God.

Such a longing for improvement is a drive of every form of human activity; no benefit is attained by repressing such a longing, and even lesser benefit is acquired from being satisfied with

lower goals. God is never attained by those, to whom lesser things are sufficient. Those who are modest in goals, remain modest in achievements, as well. True modesty, which is a virtue, does not therefore lie in being satisfied with little things, and in humiliating oneself, but only in a state in which all glory is given to God: that is true modesty, which is the highest virtue, and toward which we should strive.

We should strive toward great things and great goodness, for by striving toward them and enjoying them, we will desire even more the source of those things, and praise it with great zeal. We should therefore desire goodness, and that desire will produce actions, whose qualities are colored by contemplation of the goal. Contemplating great and noble goals, we produce great and noble deeds, which honor the world and our Maker, while contemplating lower goals we create miserable, selfish and evil deeds, colored by ignorance and lowliness. Having that in mind, let us imagine what must deeds be like, in which God is contemplated. Those deeds must undoubtedly contain the greatest goodness and virtue, and are an excellent contribution to the well-being of all. Such activities are therefore a path toward not only personal perfection of the seeker who thus acts, but to perfection of all Creation as well.

Only in the achievement of the Divine, which is the highest goal, does a being cease to act; not because activity would be absent from its organs of action, but because there is no vision of a deed different from the activity itself; in his vision of the infinite, the concept of activity as a process vanishes. Instead of the “I act” attitude, there is “things are being done,” which gives way to “everything is in God” attitude, which eventually culminates in ecstasy, which says “God is.” The seeker therefore tirelessly acts in his quest, while he who has found, rests at his goal.

Such peace, as well as the nonexistence of the idea of oneself as the doer, produces activity which is completely Divine, untouched by any lower influence. The Lord therefore says that peace is the path of one who knows.

- 4 **Only when a man does not cling onto
the pleasures of senses and the fruits of deeds,
after having renounced the foundation of all desires,
is he said to have achieved yoga.**

Yoga is a state of union, the state of enlightenment. In that state, there is no difference between the one who experiences, the experience itself, and the object of experience. Likewise, in the One, who contains within Himself all the things that we usually attempt to achieve through sensory experiences and activity, all incitement for activity and sensory experience is completely lost. The foundation of all desires is the perception of self as separate from God. When such perception is seen to be illusory, and God is seen to be the sole reality, then is the flame of desire extinguished. For what remains there for him to desire, who already possesses in fullness all, that objects of desire could give him only imperfectly and partially?

- 5 **A man's soul is the instrument of his deliverance.
Let a man not humiliate his soul;
it can be his friend, but also his enemy.**

A man, basically, consists of two components: what he truly is, the soul, and what he presently, according to the degree of his spiritual development, thinks himself to be. In the Upaniṣads, that is illustrated by an image of two birds in a tree. One bird dwells in peace and radiates a steady glow. The second bird eats the fruits from the tree, some sweet and some bitter. Eating a sweet fruit, it rejoices, and eating an especially bitter fruit, it feels repulsion toward both the tree and its fruits, and looks up toward the other, shining bird, which eats not from the tree, and enjoys steady happiness. The bird thus gradually rises toward the top of the tree, upon which dwells the golden bird. Having attained the highest position on the tree, it sees not that it has grown closer to that bird, but that it *is* that bird, and always has been. The bright, Divine bird represents its soul, its true nature, which dwelt unstained in transcendence, while it, or that with which it had been identified in a certain moment, had been eating the fruits of experiences from the tree of the world.

The ascension of the being that is identified with the unreal is possible only through a longing toward an elevated goal. Although it would seem logical to advise a man to seek his true Self, let us for a moment think about what could he possibly recognize as his Self? Undoubtedly only his illusions, mistaken identifications with various natural states, or the aggregate states of natural energy

and its qualities. To advise such a man to strive toward his own nature would lead to a phenomenon common in some spiritual circles, where all keep repeating “we are one” and “God is within us,” often becoming firmly established in egotism, ignorance, and all forms of attachment, instead of attaining transcendence of those qualities. On the contrary, it is wiser to tell such a man, who is so identified with falsehood, that God is not within him at all, and that he has rebelled against God and has put distance between himself and God. For God represents qualities that are either completely absent from such a man, or can be sensed only as a potential and in traces. Such a man is more likely to recognize God in that toward which he strives, or even doesn’t dare to strive at all, than in that, which he presently is. Let us imagine the example of the bird, which eats the fruits from the tree. If we tell that bird that it, right now, is that perfect shining bird, what will we accomplish? It does not see itself as such; that knowledge will come to it only after it has been purified enough by experience to understand such a concept, when such realization will come by itself, naturally. No one indeed has attained realization of self as brahman by being told so by someone else, and having absorbed this knowledge, but because his consciousness has changed in a way to make this possible.

How does such a change take place? How does a man, from a being preoccupied with pleasant and painful experiences, become a being conscious of his wholesome and transcendental nature? Undoubtedly, it happens only when he in fact attains the qualities of that true nature. The “worldly” bird must rise toward the position of the heavenly bird; it must admire it and aspire toward its position. It must in its life appreciate its qualities more than its own, and acquire and manifest them to a greater and greater extent. A man should therefore worship his soul, give it the supreme place in his life. This way, his actions and states of spirit will possess more and more of the Divine qualities of the soul, and fewer and fewer of the worldly qualities of ignorance and attachment, until, finally, nothing but the highest reality remains, and the man sees that he truly is all that wonderful and magnificent, toward which he has always been striving. If, however, he despises the soul, deeming its qualities unworthy, and removes himself from them, he will gradually sink deeper and deeper into ruin. The first case is friendship between a man and his soul: one makes friends with his soul, grows closer to it and, eventually,

comes to realize that they are identical. In the second case, one is an enemy of his soul; he moves away from it, and there are less and less of its qualities in him. If he so continues, he will separate from it completely, fall into the deepest hell and vanish there into nothingness. The bird of the soul will, of course, observe all that, in its brightness on the top of the tree, untouched in its bliss.

- 6 To him, who attained self-control,
his soul is a friend, but to the one who has not,
his soul will remain his enemy.**

A man who attained self-control is undoubtedly one who is united within himself, who aspires to attain the qualities of his own highest nature, who within himself lives, and desires to live Divine qualities, avoiding their opposites. Such a man is in a relationship of friendship with his soul: he does what his soul desires, adhering to the voice of his consciousness, through which his soul speaks to him. He acts in harmony with his soul and wishes for the harmony to grow into utmost unity. He, however, who listens not to the voice of his soul, will experience various problematic situations, caused by his soul in order to snap him away from the wrong path, in order for him to awaken and to stop rushing into his destruction. A great number of things that are usually called karma are exactly those “bricks,” used by the soul to hit the mindless ego, which identifies with trivia and thus performs all sorts of sinful deeds. I have often had the opportunity to see situations where a man’s soul has been separated from his lower being to such an extent, that his soul used to apologize for the way in which his body behaved, helplessly spreading hands over a fool which pays no heed to it at all, and over whom it has lost any influence.

- 7 To one, who has attained self-control,
who abides in the highest peace,
who is completely absorbed in the Highest Self,
equal are the cold and the warm,
happiness and unhappiness, glory and disgrace.**

External influences, or the states of the body and mind, are quite significant to one, who perceives his existence completely

through those lower bodies. In this mode of existence, he will perceive the bodily feeling of cold as “I am cold,” or “I am warm”; the social reputation of his lower being he will perceive as “I am famous,” or “I am dishonored,” and similar. Being identified with those states, he will see some as better than others. But, to a man who has left the body, the temperature of the grave is of no significance; the states of the body which he has abandoned have no meaning to him whatsoever. Likewise, he can no longer identify happiness and unhappiness, as well as fame and disgrace, with the states of the body, in which his soul no longer resides. This is very much the case with a man, who during the life within his body knew his true nature, which is the nature of the immortal and all-blissful soul, which resides in the body, but is identified with it no more than a man usually identifies with a shirt that he wears for a long time. Similar to the reliable knowledge that his nature will not even the least bit change if he changes the shirt, a self-realized person knows that his nature is independent of the state of the body, or its coming to existence, change and disappearance.

Of course, it is quite clear that such a man will not treat his own body carelessly, exposing it to fatal influences if that is not necessary, like a man who will not carelessly soil a beautiful shirt, just because his nature will not change if he puts it into laundry, or throws it away and takes another, new one. He will watch over his shirt and take care of it, and if it happens that in spite of his care and good will it does become soiled, he will not mourn too much, but shrug and change clothes. The attainment of a human body is not easy, and much good can be done with it, and even an enlightened man will often keep his body functioning for many years with at least as much care as anyone else, in order to be able to serve his disciples, or to be useful to the world in some other way.

**8 A yogī, whose soul is filled
with knowledge and realization,
his senses firmly founded in spirit,
is equal in experience of dirt, rock and gold.**

To a man who attempts to attain fulfillment from the world of objects, some objects will seem more valuable than others, in a sense of thinking that their possession will bring him some sort of happiness. Because of some of their qualities, such as persistence

under the influence of weather, in the case of gold, or rareness and beauty of gemstones, a man attributes them with value greater than that of some other things, although those things might be more important to his well-being; people will thus, for instance, strive toward gold, yet pollute the rivers, seas and the atmosphere, although gold is not necessary for their lives, and air and water are.

The enlightened man does not think in such a way. Since he is fulfilled within, he does not seek fulfillment in the world of things, therefore having no need to attribute things with qualities which they do not possess, and therefore sees everything with equal eyes; gold is only a metal, diamonds are merely translucent rubble. He sees those things as things, not as spiritual abstractions, as do those, in whom the word “gold” will invoke various images of abundance and satisfaction; an enlightened man will see only gold. Similar is the approach of some scientists, to whom gold is merely a conductor, better than copper and therefore very useful in electronics and similar fields, and diamond is a very useful substance in industry, because of its sturdiness and optical qualities. Unlike men who see those things either as jewelry or a sign of abundance, they also see those things as useful, but in a quite different way. It is therefrom obvious that the value of things is not contained in the things as such, but only in human spirit which gives them value. For iron is also incredibly useful, but is abundant and easy to produce, which makes its market value low. People seem to define value of things only through deprivation, through the lack of something, and so they will unreasonably despise valuable things which they possess in abundance, at the same time equally unreasonably praising things they lack. It seems that such an attitude comes from lack of gratitude. People thus fail to see the blessings they already possess, and constantly long to possess things in order to achieve perfect fulfillment on the physical plane. One who sees that the material plane can never provide such fulfillment, and who does not even seek it therefrom, but on the contrary aspires for the treasures of spirit, accepting his infinite omnipresence with gratitude, instead of aspiring for transitory trivia, is on the right path, and soon attains perfection.

- 9 **Noble is he, who sees
benevolent people, friends and enemies,
impartial ones and mediators,**

**malevolent ones and his cousins,
saints as well as sinners
with the same eyes.**

Still higher is the degree of achievement of one, who sees other people not in relation to himself, or as objects that influence him in a certain way, but as independent individuals, equal to him, that in the same way as he represent embodiments of the infinite and perfect spirit. He will not despise or praise a man only because he is in a certain condition and in a certain relationship with him, but will on the contrary see a man objectively, as he truly is, and will take an appropriate stand toward him.

**10 Let a yogī always meditate in solitude,
alone, spirit awakened and controlled,
without desires and possession.**

Here begins the description of yogic practice, as it is usually seen by tradition.

A yogī is therefore a person who has decided to dedicate himself to self-realization, ending all disruptive associations, removing himself from all external sources of disturbance. To an advanced yogī, external influences pose no hindrance; knowing what he is looking for, he can concentrate on it and recognize it even amidst all kinds of disturbance. As an example of that, we can imagine a man who listens to a common tune playing silently in a very noisy place; even if he fails to hear all the parts, he knows what song it is and has no difficulty to follow it, and reconstruct even the parts that are obscured beyond recognition. However, a man who has never before heard this song will not be able to follow it. This is why the perfect peace is essential to the seeker, who attempts to feel, for the first time, something previously unknown to him; once he is successful, he will be able to remember it in any circumstances, isolating this state amidst disturbances. A yogī who only attempts to achieve realization must therefore retreat into solitude, far from all kinds of disturbance, and withdraw his spirit from the external world, directing his focus inward.

**11 On a pure and holy place,
placing the seat neither too high nor too low,**

**setting the kuśa grass on the ground,
covering it with deer skin and soft cloth,**

The place upon which a yogī meditates must be clean, not only in the physical sense, but also in the sense of purity of subtle energetic levels. Just as there are more and less enlightened men, there are places that are more or less transparent to certain subtle substances; such places are called places of power, or the cakras of the Earth. Choosing the place on which to build convents and places devoted to meditation and spiritual achievements, wise men used to choose exactly those spots; this is often the reason why churches are located on the most powerful and purest places in the whole territory. Such a place influences a man in a way that helps the achievement of certain states, for not only does it not disturb him, but it also surrounds him from all sides with the desirable state, to which he only needs to open in order to attain it. Spiritual progress is thereby greatly alleviated; a man could dedicate himself to resolving his own personal faults alone, without being additionally burdened by things projected upon him by a negative environment. This is why good company and the correct choice of a place for meditation are immensely important.

The kuśa grass and the deer, or tiger skin are probably a traditional form of an energetic insulator, which separates the body of a yogī from the ground, in order for the earth currents not to disturb the subtle energetic currents that are created in the yogī's system; such insulation, as well as the āsanās, or favorable positions of the body, reduce the probability of accidental energetic outbursts and the accompanying disturbances of consciousness. Of course, a Master will not be disturbed even by the most unfavorable of circumstances, but in such circumstances, one could hardly become a Master in the first place. In the beginning of practice, one needs to take all the precautions that will reduce the likelihood of failure, or a distraction from the right path.

**12 thus having found the right place, with focused mind,
let him control the consciousness,
the senses and the organs of action,
and purify his soul with yoga.**

In the beginning, one should therefore create the prerequisites for meditation, from the favorable environment to the favorable

focus of spirit. Afterwards, there follows what is called *yama* and *niyama* in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. It is a series of prescriptions, or, more accurately, moral qualities necessary for a practitioner of yoga in order for him to be successful in his practice, and those qualities must be acquired and polished until he has gained full mastery of them. Those qualities are very similar to those in the ten commandments of the Bible; a man should not desire others' possessions, he should not steal or cheat, he should not lie, nor should he perform deeds of violence in any way, not even in thought. He should be devoted to God, separated from the world and filled with desire for liberation. He should be noble, enjoy doing good to others, resent no one, and create no kinds of attachments. He should be moderate in food, drink, sleep and all other aspects of activity. This way, he creates the proper prerequisites, or a harmony of life that can be a good foundation to the liberating practice of yoga. He, whose life shows that his goal is not to be involved in lowly things, but on the contrary, who strives with his entire being toward the higher, he finds yoga to be the logical continuation of his longings. To one, however, who lives an immoral and wicked life, yoga is as appropriate as a saddle to a frog.

That, of course, does not mean that yoga should be practiced only by those who are pure and perfect; on the contrary, it is intended for those who only desire to attain such a state. Still, it is clear that a person who claims to desire liberation from lowliness, while at the same time striving for those very lowly things, is not an ideal example of a potential practitioner of yoga. Demands for moral purity are therefore of extreme importance, for they eliminate candidates who are not serious; in order to try to achieve moral purity of this kind, it is not necessary to be spiritually perfect to an extreme degree—members of various religions readily accept all kinds of deprivations in order to appease God, of whom they have only an intellectual concept. If a *yogī*, who is filled with faith in the possibility of achievement of the utmost perfection, who strives toward the Highest, is unable to repeat even their modest achievements, then he undoubtedly has no intention to persist in practice, and it would be very prudent for him to reconsider his motivations.

**13 Motionless, keeping the body, head and neck erect,
let him direct his look upon the root of the nose,
diverting his look to neither side.**

Here we encounter the next steps in yoga; first comes the proper posture of the body, which enables undisturbed meditation. As examples of body postures that assist the awakening of consciousness and its rise, padmāsana and siddhāsana are most frequently mentioned. Both postures are very powerful, for they assist the awakening of great force within the system, and are therefore ideal for extracting the maximum from the system. When a man attempts to reach that, which is hard for him to attain, or that, which he has never managed to attain before, I recommend those very positions of the body. Still, because of the very intensity of the energy that they awaken, those postures can actually become a hindrance in a situation when a man attempts to attain the state of peace. In such meditations, I would recommend some position in which the body feels comfortable, and the yogī can hardly even feel his own body, becoming free to dedicate himself to the observation of his own inner states, without disturbances. Of course, he should not choose a position in which he would be likely to fall asleep.

The root of the nose, or the point between the eyebrows, is a place upon which the eyes are automatically focused when a man withdraws consciousness from the outside world, turning it inward. When the senses shut down, the eyes automatically turn upward, without any voluntary effort. Lord Kṛṣṇa here therefore advises a yogī to take a proper posture of the body, with the spine erect (such position is automatically taken when the consciousness is awake and ready), and to withdraw his consciousness from the senses, remaining in that state, maintaining the transcendental state. When this state is maintained, several things are accomplished. First, the energetic currents in the system are calmed. Second, such a state grows deeper the longer we stay in it.

A great obstacle for a yogī to overcome is a desire to abandon the meditative state as soon as the results are felt; that is often justified by the thought “good, we have achieved the results, enough practice for today.” On the contrary, meditation should only then begin, and it is exactly then, that one should persist.

14 Filled with profound peace, without fear,
 founded in celibacy, with spirit under control,
 his consciousness focused on Me, thus sitting,
 let him come to realize Myself as the Highest.

The fear mentioned is, paradoxically, the fear of actual success in yoga, which all practitioners feel to a certain extent. Some feel it to such an extent that they will even subconsciously do everything to avoid even the very opportunities for meditation. Others will end meditation as soon as they start to feel results. Some feel fear, and become so agitated, that their consciousness leaves the field of spiritual experience. Others, however, feel great excitement of the unknown and the new, but they surrender and continue the meditation, which will bring about the often extremely powerful experiences, including the experience of the presence of God, darśana, which will lead to nirvikalpa samādhi or similar elated states, if one continues to surrender.

Such a fear is a result of inertia, which is a quality of all beings, and has its root in ignorance, which makes a being think that his condition, which is known to him, is better than the unknown, of which he will have no control, although the latter can be far superior. Every yogī theoretically understands that the thing toward which he aspires is better than that which he already possesses, but such fear can be completely removed only by prolonged experiences and lasting practice, which reprograms certain physical reactions that are not easily “persuaded” of anything. A similar situation takes place with the death of the body; as much as a man can know what awaits him after death, in the immediate encounter with death he will experience anxiety and a form of fear, simply because the body reacts to death even worse than it does to the unknown; both are literally the negations of its essence, and the body opposes them powerfully. Of course, that too can be healed by lasting experience. Filled with such experience, a yogī will feel profound peace and fulfillment when entering meditation; no kind of haste or desire will produce such an effect, since we are not dealing with a rational problem that could be solved by rational means.

Celibacy, or brahmacarya, is a synonym for the period of life that is dedicated to study, in which a man is sexually inactive. The point of such sexual inactivity is to withdraw the energy that would otherwise be spent in sexual intercourse, in order to direct it toward the upper, intellectual and spiritual functions. Thereby we achieve two things: more energy remains available for spiritual activities, and, at the same time, the energy of the system is harmonized on a higher level, since the lower frequency

of the purely sexual energy no longer disturbs the energies of a higher order. Of course, when we speak of celibacy, we should have in mind that powerful spiritual experience resonates also with the physical sexual octave, so that purely physical arousal regularly accompanies spiritual experiences of the higher order. That is so because higher energy means greater contact with life and reality, which arouses the spirit and the body equally. This often disturbs yogīs, who perceive sexual arousal to be a sign of doing something wrong, or not being spiritual enough. A second possible disturbance takes place when a yogī misunderstands such arousal, and starts to masturbate or engages in sexual intercourse. This should be carefully avoided, since we would thereby stop the experience and lose the depth; sexual arousal is perfectly in order, and in fact means that we are doing the right thing, but we should not take any actions regarding that, but should continue to meditate, understanding sexual arousal to be normal.

In such a state, consciousness should be directed toward God, and the symptoms described above mean that we are indeed very close to Him. A yogī should therefore focus only on God, surrender completely to Him and adore Him. In such a focus on God, the yogī understands that I am always here, that I am One in all beings, the supreme, highest, only reality, the One without the other.

**15 Constantly practicing in this manner,
gaining control of his soul, a yogī attains peace,
and in utmost extinction reaches My abode.**

A onetime experience of a higher state of consciousness would hardly suffice to remove all imaginable impurities from consciousness, and it is therefore necessary to adapt the system to more frequent and longer periods of unity with God. Then, the entire system, having attained the Divine qualities, loses any kind of individual characteristics that would distinguish it from the state in which it abides, and, therefore loses the need to return into the former state; for the former state is no more. Such a man is said to have attained paranirvāṇa, the utmost extinction, for everything that is not God is extinguished. He thus attains the state of Godhead, for only God can reside there, nothing else.

**16 Yoga is not for him, who eats too much or too little,
who sleeps too much or sleeps not at all, o Arjuna.**

Balance of all the bodily systems is a prerequisite of any kind of advanced yogic practice; although unbalanced people can use beginners' techniques of yoga to attain balance, they should not indulge in more advanced forms of practice, because various dangers prey upon an unbalanced man.

**17 He, who is moderate in eating and rest,
moderate in his activities,
moderate in sleep and waking,
can attain freedom from suffering by yoga.**

Yoga is an instrument that will bring a balanced man to enlightenment, but it is not an almighty magical wand that will turn an utterly deranged man into a saint overnight. If that were possible, there would be no need for the system of karma and reincarnation through which beings spiritually evolve and improve themselves, for it would be rendered obsolete by yoga. Only those, who have attained sufficient purification and orientation toward goodness through that system of fundamental spiritual progress, enough so to additionally accelerate their spiritual advancement by conscious insight into the mechanisms of spiritual progress, which otherwise take place in the realm of the unconscious, can use yoga to replace learning through the lessons of life, thus significantly accelerating their spiritual growth. Of course, the system of karma is flexible, adapting to such a positive change and cooperating with it. A man thus receives the very experiences that will advance and properly guide his yogic efforts.

**18 Having calmed his spirit,
he is undoubtedly founded in Self.
He, who is thus freed from all longing,
is said to be truly united.**

Complete steadiness of spirit, and its persistent and steady foundation in Self, is a consequence of systematic yogic practice, which purifies the spirit and removes all possible causes of distraction of attention.

- 19 **Like the flame of a candle
which flickers not in a place without wind,
is the mind of a yogī who is absorbed in meditation,
constantly occupied by the realization of Self.**

Like the flame of a candle, that is peaceful when there is no wind to disturb it, so is the mind of a yogī peaceful in Self, for his consciousness withdraws from the sphere in which there are disturbances, and they therefore have no influence over it. For all disturbances influence a man who sees himself as the body and the mind, or the limited ego, which finds itself in a position of needing some things, and avoiding others. He thus desires some and attempts to avoid others, which creates an incessant flow of disturbances that can be permanently interrupted only by transcendence. In such a state, in which there exists only the certainty of infinite bliss, one abides in the stillness of perfection.

- 20 **It is a state in which the thoughts cease,
calmed by the practice of yoga,
where Self observing Self
remains satisfied with Self.**

The state of brahman is the state of self-sufficiency, a state in which division into the object, subject and their relationship, or the observer, observed and the process of observation, ceases. In such a state, brahman experiences, brahman is the experience and the object of experience, the bliss and the blissful, the realization and that, which is realized. Because of this unity of realization and he who realizes, this state is called the state of Self-realization, for I Myself Am.

- 21 **Knowing such infinite joy,
that goes beyond the senses,
and is reached by wisdom,
thus established, he does not waver.**

The state of brahman cannot be attained by the senses, for the senses act in the world of objects, forming relationships between the objects and the one who experiences. The one who experiences can therefore not be experienced by the senses, but only by

wisdom, which leads consciousness inward, where we realize the essence of that which was mistakenly thought to be found in experiences; the bliss that comes from the senses is only a partial awakening of the inner, all-encompassing bliss of Ātman. Finding That, he sees Him as the essence of all, remaining established in Him.

**22 Having attained it, he sees there to be
nothing higher to be attained;
thus established he is unshaken
even by the gravest of hardships.**

It is impossible to achieve anything higher than that which gives reality to all kinds of experience. He, who reached such reality, and who thus abides in the state of self-realization, is untouched by experiences in the world of objects; in this world, he will play a role he needs to play, but his inner peace will remain untouched by events. Whatever the hardships, they cannot touch the core of immortal bliss which is My nature. Whatever the joy, it can add nothing to the source from which all joys take their reality. In any way, to him who has attained self-realization, the world has nothing to either offer, or take away.

**23 Such cessation of unity with pain
is known by the name of yoga.
This yoga should be practiced
with firm resilience and determination.**

The direction of spirit toward the world of objects, and an attempt to acquire pleasure through achievement of some objective state, is a state of unity with pain, since pain is a necessary consequence of the lack of Self-realization. Only he, who has found the source of all things, who has established himself therein and finds fulfillment therein, only such a yogī remains free from suffering. In this state one should always abide.

**24 Having abandoned all contemplation
of desires and their objects,
and controlling all the aspects of the senses by his mind**

25 step by step, he should withdraw, with patience in spirit
and, having established the spirit in Self,
he should do nothing else, not even in thought.

26 Wherever the disturbed and wavering spirit should wander,
it should be brought back under the control of Self.

Here we have a description of the process of withdrawing the spirit from the world inwards, or the extraction of consciousness from the domain of illusion and into the domain of reality. The first step toward that is to freeze the activity of consciousness, which adds up to more or less violent interruption and cessation of all activities and desires directed toward the external world, and withdrawal of energy of consciousness from futile attempts of achieving fulfillment in such a misguided way. After the driving wheel of misguided activities has been stopped, there follows the withdrawal of consciousness inward, or upward, in order for the spirit to find its roots within Self, instead of the world. Such inward focus needs to be maintained, for the spirit will under the influence of habits want to change the point of focus, which might return a careless yogī into the world of illusion, if he diverts his look from reality; it is especially likely if we have in mind the fact that, in the beginning, observation of reality is almost completely buried under vast amounts of noise. This noise comes from various sources of disturbance, which are abundant in the impure spirit of an ordinary man. In such a situation, a man can be rescued by a combination of mental tranquility and firm focus on the inner reality. Continuity of practice is of extreme importance to a beginner in yoga. Unlike the experienced Master, who has gathered vast experience of the various deep states of consciousness in his long practice, and who is able to return into those states by more or less simple techniques even amidst grave external circumstances—for instance a noisy and stifling bar, or an alley crowded with traffic—a beginner who lacks experience, and who does not yet know the keys that can help one discern the signal of reality from the loud voice of illusion, will need all the help he can get. He will need peace, an ideal and pure environment, as well as continuity of practice, since experiences of transcendence pale quickly amidst sensory noise, and the attained is likely to be lost soon. If we pave a road often, we acquire two

benefits. The first is better knowledge of the path, and the second benefit lies in the fact that the road often traveled becomes a well paved path, which is much easier to notice.

The more often we sink into meditation, the less difficulty we will have repeating the experience, because the power of habit will spontaneously move our consciousness in a proper manner. The opposite also applies: the more a man indulges in mistaken, wicked and evil activities, which distract the consciousness from the domain of reality and bring it into the domain of illusion, the less likely will it become for him to turn toward reality, which makes sinful activities anything but benign. Although it is reasonably easy to repent and convert from sin, deep submersion into sin makes the probability of even thinking about repenting, as an option, increasingly unlikely, since our consciousness starts to move always between the sinful choices, among which it is practically impossible to choose something noble and good. Such a sinner becomes more and more dependent on the external intervention of someone who takes pity on him and helps him, thus giving him insight into possibilities beyond the sinful sphere in which his spirit moves. However, the sinner, who has accepted the evil as good and adheres strongly to it, will most likely despise and reject such assistance, often trying to ruin the very one who tries to help him. Because of such a set of circumstances, it is possible for us to notice how perilous the sin really is; not only does it condition man and bind him to the unreal, but it also blocks the door that leads to salvation. This is illustrated by the following story.

Once upon a time, a saint died and went to heaven before God. Because of his compassionate nature, he immediately asked for the whereabouts of his mother, who had died before him. At his plea, God showed him a black, evil soul that suffered in the infernal flames. The saint became greatly saddened, and asked God to help her. God answered him that she abides there by her own choice, for her nature is such that this place is most appropriate for her. Since the saint could not believe that, God sent an angel to bring his mother's soul into heaven.

The angel flew and grabbed the black soul, and ten exactly like her grabbed hold of her, in order to deliver themselves from the flames. The angel lifted them all with ease, and started bringing them to heaven. Seeing that the others held on to her, the black

soul started kicking them away, and as they fell back into hell, the angel's burden became more and more difficult to bear, and when the soul has kicked all the others into hell, the angel could no longer hold her, and she fell back into the flames. The saint then saw the truth: there is no place in heaven for those, who have no compassion for others, and who have no love and mercy in them.

This story illustrates the point of yoga very well: as a man nurtures virtues in himself, his future choices of virtue become more likely, until the choice of virtue becomes a certainty in complete liberation, instead of being just likely. Likewise, a choice of sin increases the probability of future choices of sin, until that probability becomes a certainty in the utmost non-existence of hell. The same applies also to meditation, as well as all other activities. The more frequent and lasting the practice of meditation, the greater the probability of entering a deep state of reality, until a man eventually progresses to a degree in which meditation becomes his primary state of consciousness, from which he speaks and acts. From a perilous trail through a jungle, with practice of yoga the path toward enlightenment becomes more and more like a four-lane highway, well illuminated and safe.

**27 Indeed, greatest is the happiness enjoyed
by a yogī of a deeply peaceful mind,
who has extinguished the urge for action
and who is without flaw and of the nature of brahman.**

Here we have several things that are extremely difficult to achieve, and which we should deeply ponder, in order not to take them lightly. The key statement is that the highest happiness is achieved by a yogī who is without fault and of the nature of brahman; it is equivalent to the statement that only fire can unite with fire. By rejecting the unreal and choosing the real, a yogī gradually acquires more and more of the nature of perfection, and when there is nothing in him that would be different from perfection, he is then said to be united with brahman, that he is brahman. It is therefore obvious how high a demand this is, but it is also obviously necessary. No instant enlightenment is possible—no simple means, such as a mere change of perspective, which is advocated by some spiritual schools, will lead us to perfection. Only profound and lasting saturation with reality, in which all

impurities and imperfections disappear from one's soul, renders possible the achievement of utmost perfection, which needs to be reflected in perfection of thought, word and deed, in which God must be manifested.

When we therefore encounter a wicked man, whose thoughts are unclear, whose words reflect not the clarity of reality, and whose deeds are chaotic, disorganized and sinful, and who claims to be enlightened, we can know beyond doubt that he is lying, and that we are dealing with a deluded man. The enlightenment is such a high goal, that on the path toward it a man gradually turns into a place of pilgrimage, into a walking temple of the infinite brahman, who is brahman and in whom there is nothing else. Such perfection simply radiates, it has to be felt without the possibility of error, for an enlightened man simply radiates higher reality into everything he comes in touch with, and the descent of virtue, with which he radiates, saturates the world around him. Every place where he abides is turned into a temple, and each of his acts is a blessing of God.

That is so because a yogī, with his practice of discrimination between the real and the unreal, and with constant choices of the real, becomes a radiating point of higher reality, which performs a catalytic effect on his environment. Even a beginner in yoga can in this manner influence his environment, in the same manner in which a sinner is a bad company that is to be avoided, for such company increases the probability of mistaken actions. Even the very company of a saint can provide a man with such inspiration that he, after such association, can himself become a saint as well, which indeed used to happen in all cases when such men walked the earth. Great yogīs, such as Milarepa, had such a powerful purifying effect on the world, that it was sufficient for most men to simply see them, to have lit within them the lighthouse of higher reality, which guided them unmistakably toward enlightenment, provided that they continued to move toward it.

A saint who attains such a state thus enjoys oceanic bliss, whose quality he has fully acquired, to the extent where there remains nothing in him that would be different from that. He literally glows with the light of brahman, which is being-consciousness-bliss. Gradually, by adhering to reality and to such Divine qualities, a beginner attains such a perfect state, which then flows through him and into the world.

**28 Thus always meditating,
a flawless yogī easily attains brahman,
which is the highest joy.**

A yogī, who constantly meditates as described in the previous verses, thereby easily attains the state of brahman, manifesting through himself, with such practice, more and more of the qualities of the Absolute, the final reality, and, eventually, reaches the state in which meditation no longer exists as a concept. He, who has completely acquired the qualities of brahman, no longer has within himself anything that would be different from brahman, and so the concepts of meditation and leaving meditation become pointless. As stated in the commentary on the previous verses, the practice of yoga increases the degree of correspondence with reality, until it becomes complete, or until the yogī attains the state in which there is no longer anything in him, that would differ from the highest reality. Likewise, with sinful practice a man increases the area of correspondence between himself and the unreal, until he finally disappears in the unreal, when all traces of reality vanish from him.

**29 With self firm in yoga,
he sees everything with the same eyes,
seeing Self in all beings, and all beings in Self.**

He, who resides in the state of brahman, sees that I Am One in all beings; he observes the undivided nature of Self, the Reality in all beings, and from that position he sees the final truth of all things, which is that I am All. I give reality to all beings, and they all have their existence within Me and by Me.

**30 He who sees Me in all, and all in Me,
for him I am not lost, nor is he lost to Me.**

In such a state, when I observe that I am One, that there is nothing but Me, separation from reality disappears from a being's spirit. Every insecurity, which has its foundation in the lack of knowledge of the final reality, disappears, and there comes the recognition of Him, who is here for the whole time, who accompanies a man's soul through all events in all worlds, but of whom

the soul is most often not even aware. Now, when the enlightenment takes place, every concept of separation is lost, in the infinite ecstasy of knowledge that He is here, that He is my true, deepest nature, that He is always here and that He Is, without there really being any other; this reality is my very soul, for I Am the highest brahman.

**31 Such a yogī, firm in unity,
who worships I who dwell in all beings
in spite of everything, he always lives in Me.**

Knowing Him in all, I bow before all sides of the world, again and again, for He is everywhere, He is here. He is all-pervading, His nature is infinite, and there is no end to the joy of my soul in knowledge that there is no difference between Myself and Him. I am One, I am Him. In that reality, may He be praised, always and forever.

**32 Beholding with the eye of Self,
he sees everything as one, o Arjuna,
joy and suffering alike.
Such a yogī is thought to be perfect.**

In Myself, the highest reality, there are no divisions, although I hold all worlds and all beings within My spirit. The states of beings are irrelevant, for reality is beyond their reach. Every experience, be it pleasant or painful, is equally desirable, for it does not change the state of reality. My bliss is such, that in its light all worldly joys and sorrows are mere shadow play, utterly insignificant things, that disturb My state in the same degree in which the clouds, whose shadow falls upon the ground, disturb the brightness of the sun.

**33 Arjuna said:
In this yoga that you have described as balance,
o Madhusūdana, I see no persistence,
for restless is the state of the mind.**

Arjuna's comment shows deep insight into the essence of the problem. For the point of meditation is to overpower the noise

that comes from the field of senses and their objects, and to accomplish the steady state of highest consciousness. The basic problem, which Arjuna notices, is restlessness of the very instrument of a man's consciousness, which is supposed to be in service of attaining peace. If the mind is restless, how then will the state of peace be accomplished?

34 **Wavering is the mind, o Kṛṣṇa;
turbulent, strong and unyielding.
It is as difficult to control,
I think, as the wind itself.**

The mind is therefore restless, and fed by sensory stimuli in the world of experience. As long as that is so, Arjuna thinks, it would not be possible to attain a lasting state of peace and realization.

35 **The Almighty Lord said:
The wavering mind
is most certainly hard to control, o Mighty-armed,
but with practice, o son of Kuntī,
and detachment, it can be conquered.**

The Lord agrees with Arjuna in part: the mind is indeed wavering and unsteady, which is a problem, but this problem can be solved. What it takes is to saturate the consciousness with reality, which will separate it from the sphere of the unreal, which feeds the turnings of the mind, which then spins like a whirligig. When consciousness leaves the field of senses and dives into meditation, the energy that is contained within the mind causes its prolonged activity in search of things it could preoccupy itself with. However, if the spirit is filled with the bliss of Self, the mind gradually calms down and becomes steady. That is accomplished by practice, or repeating the experiences of transcendence until it becomes a habit. Since the mind is a creature of habit, and because of its innate quality of inertia, after a certain period of time spent in the practice of yoga it actually starts to make the practice easier, as much as it used to disturb it in the beginning. This makes the practice difficult in the beginning, since a yogī must fight the multitude of habits that act like a heavy driving wheel, which is difficult to set in motion, but once it has been set in motion in the right direction,

it actually starts to assist the yogī. Instead of the habits of worldly activities, the mind acquires the habits of meditation and diving into reality, and so, his practice becomes easy and natural. If a beginner persists in the beginnings of his practice, if he applies unyielding focus to stop the mind, subdue it and direct it in a proper manner, if he withdraws it from futile worldly contemplations and onto discrimination between the real and the unreal, the mind will turn into a wonderful tool, that leads a man to enlightenment. But in any case, we are dealing with a problem that is not to be treated lightly, for lack of discipline in practice will in any case result in the destruction of the practitioner, for he will be unable to overcome the obstacles that will appear before him.

**36 A man of uncontrolled mind
will hardly reach yoga, I think,
but a man who tries, whose aspirations
are genuine and well-guided,
he can indeed attain it.**

Even a sharp-minded man, with a great ability to discriminate, will encounter difficulties; he, however, whose mind is out of control, wandering around freely without a goal and a clearly given direction, thus wasting his life on a series of pointless or harmful activities—such a man will not attain success in yoga, nor in any other activity worthy of mention.

Still, it is possible to achieve perfection, even with little control of mind, and with proper direction. Yoga demands discipline and focus, but not in a measure that would be deemed super-human or impossible, but on the contrary in a very ordinary degree. In fact, a great number of colleges demand more from a man than does the practice of yoga that brings liberation; some colleges put such high demands upon students, that many of them break or give up. Still, the number of people who finish such difficult studies greatly exceeds the number of people who attain enlightenment, which means that we are dealing rather with determination and will-power as the basic prerequisites, with everything else being more or less secondary; it is either unimportant for the achievement of enlightenment, or we are dealing with qualities that are acquired and developed along the path.

Let us stop to think about this for a moment: according to my experience, it is much more difficult and demanding for a man to graduate from a demanding college than it is to become enlightened. Still, people subject themselves to almost super-human efforts in order to break the world record in an Olympic discipline, or make some excellent sports team, or to finish a difficult college, while only a few decide to invest proportionally less effort to attain the infinite bliss, the highest goal which is absolutely matchless and impossible to exceed. At the same time, a great multitude of men profess to believe in the existence of God. Weak is their belief, pitiful and insufficient, for if they truly believe in Him, how come they do not attempt to realize Him in their lives?

37 **Arjuna said:**

**What kind of goal does he attain
who does not succeed; who has faith,
but steps away from yoga
because of his wavering mind, o Kṛṣṇa,
and fails to attain perfection in yoga?**

As in a college, in the practice of yoga we necessarily have to consider the possibility of failure: he who passes the majority of exams, and still fails to graduate, has invested a great quantity of time and effort, failing to attain the goal; as far as formal education is concerned, his position is the same as if he had never bothered to study at all.

He, who decides to engage in sports at the highest level, and fails to produce results, is in a still more difficult position: in order to practice sports, he has had to give up all other kinds of activity; he has neglected his mind, society and social relationships, he has reduced his life to one thing alone, in which he has failed to produce success. It could be said that his life has been spent in vain, and unsuccessful.

What must then be the fate of one, who has practiced yoga, who has severed all his worldly ties, who has given up everything in order to dedicate himself to mystical practice, and who has failed to produce success?

38 **Distracted from the path toward brahman,
without support underneath,**

is he not left without anything, o Mighty-armed,
dispelled as a cloud in the wind?

Such a man, who has rejected the world without reaching the perfection, apparently is left without anything, like a being who rejected the body in order to attain immortality of soul, which eventually slipped away from him. With his worldly life destroyed, and spiritual goal unattained, he must apparently find himself in a grave situation, and Arjuna's question is more than appropriate.

39 **This is my doubt, o Kṛṣṇa.**

I ask you to dispel it.

None but you, truly, can dispel my doubt.

Arjuna is becoming slightly ecstatic; he already formed firm faith in Kṛṣṇa and His Divine nature, and he is now literally swallowing and absorbing everything the Lord tells him; earlier, in the beginning of the conversation, his mind was mostly preoccupied with the situation on the battlefield and his original dilemma. Now, during their conversation, he has come to understand that he has the opportunity to speak with an immense treasury of wisdom, with a being who literally has the power to answer all the questions he always wanted to ask, having had no one to ask. This is why the tone of the conversation slightly changes, from discussing an urgent dilemma on the battlefield, into a conversation between a disciple and the teacher, regarding all the relevant questions, in which the disciple wishes to learn everything that will help him make spiritual progress. The entire matter thus gains far greater depth, and becomes universally applicable, as a study book of spirituality intended for all without exception, applicable to all situations. Arjuna seems to be quite free from the anxiety that used to trouble him, and his mood during the conversation has turned into an ecstatic state, a stream of happiness within his heart, which celebrates the wisdom of the teacher in silent peace; here silently begins Arjuna's ascent into the depths of the resources of the throat cakra.

40 **The Almighty Lord said:**

O Pārtha, not in this world

nor in another is he to be destroyed.

**Never indeed, my son, are they destroyed
who aspire toward the good.**

The world is saturated by the Divine laws of righteousness, which protect and strengthen the good and weaken and destroy the evil. These laws are the very force that stands beneath the evolution of consciousness and life, from lower forms and toward higher ones. Because of all that, a being who aspires to attain perfection finds his efforts supported by the entire universe, although it might not appear that way at first. Still, the efforts of a yogī, even if they are superficial and weak in intensity, are a matter of such priority in the eyes of dharma, that such a yogī is instantly supported in his efforts by a great Divine strength, guarding him from dangers of all kinds. Paradoxically, death, disease, poverty and all kinds of material difficulties are often not aggravating circumstances, but a great grace that showers upon a yogī, helping him to develop resilience, firmness and clarity of consciousness, and also helping him to focus his efforts.

**41 Having reached the worlds of the righteous,
after having spent there a great number of years,
he who has strayed from the path of yoga is born
in a home of pure and noble people.**

**42 Or he is born in a family of yogīs gifted with wisdom,
although such a birth is difficult to attain in this world.**

The very intent to attain yoga elevates a man beyond the level of theoretical religion, as well as the level of performing good deeds in order to gain certain merit that is supposed to elevate a man. Because of that, an unsuccessful yogī, who either fell or strayed from the path toward enlightenment, or who has, for some reason, died before having attained perfection, first goes to heaven, which is the highest state of consciousness and bliss he is able to comprehend and experience. Later, after having been properly prepared, he takes on a new physical body with the purpose of finishing his work. The conditions he thus gains are the optimum, the most perfect possible position for his further efforts.

Although this position is here described in a way that implies the achievement of all that a man could hope for, the truth is still

significantly more complex. For perfect surroundings are not necessarily an ideal starting position; often, even grave circumstances, or, however, a combination of the grave and the favorable ones, can have an extremely positive effect. For example, Milarepa, the great Tibetan yogī, was born into a wealthy and respectable family, but in his early childhood his father died and he was struck by grave poverty and hardships, which led him to perform various sinful deeds, which in turn led him through great difficulties on the path toward enlightenment. Still, in the end, it turned out that those difficulties had hardened him to such an extent that it is difficult to find his equal. Under the pressure of hardships, his consciousness evolved into the strength and firmness of a diamond. Other saints passed through very similar hardships, and so it seems to be of much greater significance to dharma that a man be born into a general situation that will benefit his spiritual progress, playing the role of properly directing him, rather than to provide him with a pleasurable life, as those verses imply. We can therefore assume that they are a sort of simplification, the truth being that even an unsuccessful yogī is in a position of great grace, and achieves success that is difficult to achieve by any other means.

43 There, he soon reaches
the level of achievement of his former body,
and thus, o son of Kuru,
continues to grow toward perfection.

As a man before birth, in the womb, passes through all the evolutionary phases, from a single cell organism, a fish, reptile, to something that roughly resembles a human being and eventually a man, so does a man's consciousness, after embodiment, pass through all the phases of his previous spiritual evolution, as his higher bodies become active, becoming consciously present in the physical. A man who invests effort in his spiritual progress finds himself in a situation in which such progress is made extremely simple for him, and he soon passes through all his previous evolutionary phases, after which he faces the very same problems that were left unsolved in his previous incarnation. We should mention that this is the case with all the beings in general, for we are dealing with a universal rule, but in the case of a yogī, it all happens much more quickly and with greater intensity than average.

44 Even the prior practice alone
 spontaneously attracts such an outcome.
 Even the seeker of yoga goes beyond the Vedas.

The practice of yoga brings a man closer to perfection, so that, according to the law of resonance of the like, the very laws of the created world work in a yogi's favor. For his very longing toward perfection attracts the perfection itself, as it wishes to be manifested in his life, since the manifestation of perfection is the very goal and purpose of the entire created world.

Vedas here mean the ceremonial religiosity, the religiosity of deeds and rules. Even he, who merely attempts to move from theoretical to practical spirituality, from the mediated approach to dharma by deeds, and to the immediate approach of knowledge, far exceeds the first, and acquires the benefit that is way beyond any that could be attained by any kind of sacrifice and deed. People often fail to understand the difference between the means and the goal, and so they think formal religiosity, which is a mere aid to beginners without practical experience, to be almost the goal itself. It would seem that the purpose of righteousness and truth were to bring a man to the point in which he could adhere to some sort of religious prescriptions, instead of the other way around.¹⁵³ The purpose of all the holy scriptures and their prescriptions is to make people dedicate themselves to the practical search for God. This means that even he, who decides to search for yoga, has transcended the holy scriptures, and how higher still is he, who has managed to attain perfection through such practice!

45 Persistent and diligent in practice,
 such a yogī, pure from sin,
 purified by many births,
 attains the highest goal.

A beginner who has chosen rightly, behind whom stands the force of dharma, who persists in practice, soon attains the utmost perfection. This is the culmination of the long lasting spiritual progress, in the form of hundreds and thousands of incarnations that preceded such an event, bringing him to the position in which

¹⁵³ Mark 2:27: *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.*

he could start the practice of yoga, for his spirit has attained a sufficient degree of evolverment for him to be able to see yoga as the only cure to worldly misfortunes.

**46 A yogī is greater than a man of penance;
greater even than a sage, and a man of deed.
Be therefore a yogī, o Arjuna.**

The practice of yoga is the very goal of all other forms of spiritual practice; yoga is an immediate, conscious focus that is the goal of all other forms of spiritual practice, in which only accidentally and inadvertently can there be attained a small piece of that, which is in yoga attained according to a plan and with a clear direction and understanding of the principles involved. A yogī is therefore better than a man who aspires to spirituality by means of sacrifice and penance, through mental understanding or activity; all those approaches at best lead to the beginning of yogic practice, and from there directly to perfection. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore advises his disciple and friend to adhere to the practice of yoga, as an ideal step that would follow from his previous efforts.

**47 Of all the yogīs, as the most perfect I see him,
who always worships Me in deep faith,
whose soul always abides in Me.**

People who pave the path of yoga are different in degree of achievement; from a beginner to a fully enlightened Master, such as described here by the Lord. Such a Master worships the Lord in faith, his soul devoted to Him, fully united with Him. Such a yogī, who is perfect in realization of brahman, who manifests the fullness of knowledge by worshipping the Lord with all the aspects of the Divine consciousness in which he abides, is the final perfection of being, and the final goal of the cycles of spiritual evolution.

Chapter Seven

- 1 The Almighty Lord said:
Now hear, o Pārtha, how you will,
focusing your mind on Me, in practice of yoga,
seeking refuge in Me,
realize Me beyond any doubt.

Since Arjuna is in a favorable state of consciousness, being open toward the teacher, adoring Him and admiring Him, accepting Him for what He truly is—the Almighty Lord, the time has come for the Lord to start giving him the aspects of realization much more intimate, than it was the case before. Earlier, when Arjuna was still fighting his doubts and critically questioning things from this position, it was not possible to convey the actual knowledge; gradually, as Arjuna opened up, as trust in the teacher’s knowledge and adoration of His greatness grew in him, there grew in him also the ability to receive, the empathy which responds to greatness with devotion, with adoration and acceptance. To understand this situation is necessary in order to understand what the Lord confers upon him in the following verses.

- 2 I will explain to you in fullness
that wisdom and realization,

**knowing which, there will remain nothing else
in this world for you to know.**

This realization, which exceeds everything else, after which there remains nothing more to be known, is the knowledge of the Lord Himself, Īśvara, the Highest Puruṣa, which is Kṛṣṇa. Such realization contains within itself also the knowledge of the highest Self, or Ātman/brahman, which is the knowledge of the Absolute as the foundation of all existence, as well as the knowledge of the goal of evolution in the Relative, which is the high point of the thousands and millions of births, and billions of years of the ascent of consciousness through the various forms of life and levels of manifestation. Such knowledge of the Lord closes the circle, from the completely unmanifested to completely manifested Absolute, and is utterly beyond comprehension of the mind: the relative Absolute, a point in which there is no difference between the Relative and the Absolute, where the potential and the manifestation come in touch, without a point of transition.

**3 Among thousands of men,
perhaps only one aspires to perfection.
And among those who aspire to perfection
and who have attained it,
perhaps only one truly knows Me.**

Perfection in this context means the realization of Self, which is brahman. A man who has realized Self is thought to be perfect; still, as the Lord here says, only a small number of those, who have attained this state, reach a still higher state, evolving gradually in the Relative through all the layers of the Manifested, from the lowest matter to the highest Puruṣa, thus attaining the vision of the Lord, who is above all.

**4 Earth, water, fire, air, space,
intellect, mind and ego
are the eight parts of My nature.**

Here, we have the account of the layers of what we could call the lower human nature, as well as the lower nature of the manifested world. Unlike some other places, where the elements denote the

levels of reality, earth, water, fire, air and space here represent aspects of the physical world, that what today's physicists would attempt to express in particles and forces. Manas, buddhi and ahañkāra are the three non-physical aspects of a man's lower nature, and are spiritual in almost the same degree as a man's legs and arms; the difference being that the arms are physical, and those are mental organs. A man's thoughts and spiritual states are merely movements of the thought substance, with which the soul continues to mistakenly identify even when it grows beyond identification with the physical body.

**5 Other than this lower nature, o Mighty-armed,
know there also to be My higher nature,
which makes the life in beings,
and gives life to the created world.**

The lower nature is like a glove, which is useful only if a living hand acts in it. Likewise, the lower human nature is useful only if it is inhabited by the soul, a man's higher nature, which acts through it. As with man, it is also the case with the entire universe, which represents only the lower nature of a higher being, which manifests itself through it, thus creating the life of all beings in it. That higher reality, the higher nature, is the driving force behind the evolution of life and consciousness of physical beings, which all represent merely radiating points, through which shine but a few aspects of this Divine reality.

**6 It is the origin
from which all beings take birth.
In Me, therefore, the totality of the world
is created and dissolved.**

This is very difficult to properly understand, since Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks from a unique position, involving at least two aspects.

In order to explain, I will use a comparison with a computer. A computer consists of two basic parts, hardware and software. Hardware is the computer itself, the physical data-processing machine. Software consists of the operating system and all the programs that can be executed on the computer. In this comparison, God is hardware, and the world is software. Both hardware and software

exist, they are real, but software is in a specific position of a conditional reality, since it is made real only by its execution on the computer. Outside of the computer, it has no objective reality; its reality is merely that of a potential, a description of something that, in reality, exists only when executed by the computer. Software is therefore in a gray area between illusion and reality; on one hand, there exist only hardware and its states, and on the other hand, there exists also software, since we can observe it as real; it is being executed on the computer, and we can observe it. Although it has no existence independent of the computer, it still exists as an independent category.

Here we have a description of the relationship between the Relative and the Absolute. The Absolute is hardware, and the Relative is software. The Relative does not exist in any way, except as a perspective from which the Absolute can be seen, as a manifestation of the potentials of the Absolute. Although it does not exist outside the Absolute, and so it can be said that only the Absolute really exists, the Relative also exists, for we can observe it, we can experience it, but the truth is that the Absolute is the sole reality in all, while the Relative is merely a play of His aspects and states. In this manner, we can explain the fact that God is perfect although there exist imperfect things, for there is nothing contradictory in the statement that while hardware is perfect, it can execute bad programs. Even bad programs can be relatively good, since we can, in comparison with them, see the greatness and quality of good programs, which we might otherwise fail to notice. Besides that, even bad programs are better than none at all—as bad as they might be, they draw and utilize the qualities of the hardware and show them to some extent, without which the qualities of the hardware would remain unutilized and unmanifested; they manage to manifest an alternative to perfection, which is one of the main purposes of the world. Without a freedom to choose non-God, free will could hardly be called free.

In this analogy, not all the aspects of software are equal and of the same value; of them all, the system software is of greatest importance—the operating system which enables the execution of all other programs. In this picture, the system software is Puruṣa, and the application software is Prakṛti. All the applications access the hardware by calling upon the resources of the operating system,

which puts the hardware at the applications' disposal. From this position, the hardware and the operating system are synonymous: the hardware can be reached only through the operating system, by calling upon its resources. If an application does not wish to utilize the resources of the operating system, it turns out that it cannot exist at all, for its very execution depends on the operating system, let alone its operation. This shows us the importance of devotion to God. The degree of an application's devotion to the operating system is seen in the degree to which it utilizes the offered resources of the hardware, respects the laws according to which the applications must behave, and cooperates with other applications. The more it draws from the operating system, the greater its strength, and in the greater measure will its existence celebrate the greatness of the hardware. If an application plays dirty, attempting to crash other applications, and access the hardware in an invalid and unauthorized manner, the operating system will declare a "general protection fault," stop its execution and send it to the place where fire goes when extinguished.

Although demanding some knowledge of computers, this analogy explains a complex problem in a satisfying manner. On the one hand, it explains the fact that nothing but brahman exists, since brahman is the only reality. On the other hand, it explains the position of a relative being in relative Creation, which finds its fulfillment in love and adoration of the Lord, who, in the Relative, represents complete manifestation of the Absolute.

**7 Above Me there is nothing, o Dhanañjaya;
everything is arrayed upon Me,
like pearls on a string.**

God is the highest reality, from which all real things originate.

**8 I am the flavor of water, o son of Kuntī.
I am the light of the sun and the moon.
I am the sound of Om in all the Vedas,
the sound in the space, the manliness in men.**

Water is rightly thought by the Hindus to be the bearer of flavor, since the sense of taste can sense only things that are soluble in

water. The flavor of water is therefore the essence of the essence, the foundation of existence.

The sun and the moon are the origins of light on the earth, in day and in night, and the Lord is the foundation of light in them—God illuminates even that which gives light to other things.

Om, or praṇava, is the fundamental vibration into which is “modulated” the sound of all the Vedic mantras. The Lord is, therefore, the essence and foundation which carries all the Vedas, all the holy scriptures, for it is He who gives holiness to a scripture. The following three verses are to be interpreted in the same manner.

9 I am the pleasant scent of the earth, and the warmth of fire,
I am the life in all beings, and the virtue of penance.

10 Know Me, o Pārtha, as the eternal seed of all beings.
I am the wisdom of the wise, and the courage of the brave.

11 I am the power of the strong,
free from desire and attachment.
I am the yearning of all beings,
which does not oppose dharma,
o best of Bharatas.

God is the only positive principle in all. All that is good originates from Him. He is the only reality, the only thing that can be experienced as real. He is the essence of the essence, the very core of all.

12 Know, that all the states,
be they of sattva, rajas or tamas,
are created by Me.
Still, I am not in them—they are in Me.

As stated in the commentary on the sixth verse, in the comparison with a computer, God makes possible the existence of all things, just as all the states of programs are made possible by execution on the computer. Although the computer is present in all programs, and although it is all the computer, the truth is that programs are in the computer, and that the computer is not in programs.

**13 Blinded by the states of those three qualities,
the entire universe is deluded, failing to know Me,
who Am above them, and changeless.**

In the computer analogy, such delusion can be compared with a situation where one is so preoccupied with the programs that are executed on the computer, that he fails to notice the very existence of the computer, but thinks that the programs are self-sufficient and executed all by themselves, and not in something that transcends them and gives them reality. Such delusion is analogous to the opinion of people who observe the world, failing to see God in the world, who is obvious to every awakened and reasonable being. They think that the entire universe exists in nothing, or that it is the bearer of its own reality, and that all that they observe as reality is only a byproduct of the interaction of the laws within this universe. Such a perspective is possible only due to the limitations of mind and insight, for even a slightly deeper observation reveals aspects of the perfect God who is manifested in this world.

The situation is analogous to what would arise if we were to bind a man's senses perfectly with the computer, and execute some simulation or a game on the computer. If we were to go even further, and repress or erase the man's memory of the state that existed before the merge with the computer, he would be able to perceive only the simulated, computer-generated world. In this situation, especially if the simulation is exceptionally good and consistent, how many people would be able to conclude that it is not the utmost reality, but merely a sensory deception, a reality which is given within a higher reality? Not a very great number, certainly. There would always be those who would, guided by the higher aspects of their consciousness, sense and establish the actual state of affairs; most of people would, however, succumb to the illusion. Among those victims of illusion there would probably arise a breed of "scientists," who would invent the "laws of physics" of such a world, by observing simulated reality, and like our own scientists, explain to the ignorant masses, from the heights of their knowledge, why things need to be exactly as they are, and not even slightly different, since every variation would lead to destruction or non-existence of the world, and therefore render God an obsolete hypothesis; if He exists, then He has no influence

on the world whatsoever, since the laws of the world must be exactly as they are and not a least bit different. I probably don't even need to mention how ridiculous such a "scientist" would seem to someone who observes the simulation from without.

**14 This Divine illusion of Mine,
which is made of qualities,
is indeed difficult to transcend,
but those, who surrender to Me,
they undoubtedly go past it.**

One can leave the sphere of illusion only by surrender to God, who is the reality. Since the entire sphere of illusion is given within the reality, the reality saturates it in a way similar to that in which butter saturates milk, or in a way in which salt saturates sea water. The reality and its aspects can be found in everything, and if we apply the ability of discrimination, we can move from each partial aspect of reality toward the fullness of the reality, by absorbing into ourselves more and more of reality, and this process of isolating and choosing the real is called surrender to God. He who completely surrenders to God no longer has in himself any aspects of illusion or delusion, for he is fully saturated with the highest reality, and completely united with it.

**15 I am not sought by criminals,
deluded ones and the lowest of men.
With illusion disturbing their minds,
they develop a nature of demons.**

The alternative to God, who is the highest reality, is chaos and disorder. Those who adhere to pointless chaos and illusion develop an existential pattern which is best described as demonic. Failing to perceive reality, they are inclined to see other beings as objects, as things that are either useful or useless or harmful to them. Because of such an attitude, they become devoid of compassion, and are therefore capable of all kinds of cruelty and evil deeds. For if someone who is deluded sees all beings as illusory and transitory, without reality and meaning, as a mere agglomeration of protein capable of thought, then there is literally no atrocity, that such a person will be unable to come up with, in

order to accomplish his perverse and godless ideas. Worst of all, it seems that the mental layout of such demons has become a sort of official orthodoxy for today's world, controlling political and social movements, as well as the direction of scientific advances.

There are therefore only two possible orientations for a being to choose: he will either surrender to God, or he will surrender to illusion; there is no third. Everything else is only a matter of degree, and cannot be maintained in the long run without collapsing toward one of the polarities.

**16 There are four kinds of those,
who worship Me, o Arjuna.
There are the ones who are unhappy,
who desire knowledge, who desire benefit
and also those who know,
o best of Bharatas.**

There are many motives which make people turn to God. One is a lack of fulfillment, or an unfavorable state in which a man finds himself because of attachment to unreal things, and because of his deluded state of consciousness. After a while, because of a mixed sense of pain and revulsion, he turns to God and begs for His assistance.

The second motive is a desire for knowledge; a man who seeks truth, a philosopher, will in his quest sooner or later come to the need of turning to God as the source of wisdom; but such knowledge is intellectual, mostly dry and empty, for such a man sees God more as something from which he could benefit (where the benefit would be to acquire knowledge) and be made whole, rather than seeing Him as the goal, to whom he would want to surrender without reservation.

The third motive is the desire for benefit. A vast number of believers of all religions constantly shower God with their desires, or the recommendations of things God would be supposed to do for them. That makes sense on the one hand, for if one wants to fulfill his desires, it is best to seek Him, from whom all gifts originate, and who has the ability to grant his requests, and that is only God. On the other hand, it is foolish to address the immensely wealthy king, who is merciful and willing to grant our pleas, with a desire for him to give us something trivial, such as

health, money and other benefits. It would be better to ask for his grace, for if we are in his grace, then will we be constantly showered with his wealth, for what is his, will be ours as well. We should therefore seek the very source of all fortune, and not only grab from the source and leave. The cup with which we grab will sooner or later run empty, but the source will never run dry. If we therefore get to possess the source of all well-being, we shall never lack anything.

The fourth motive is knowledge that, besides God, there is no other refuge; that to Him there is no real alternative. Such a wise man takes refuge in God with full devotion; he abides completely in Him and never abandons Him. Such a man does not see God as a source of benefit, but as the goal of all his longings, and chooses only Him, abandoning everything else.

**17 Of them all, the best is he who knows,
always single-minded in devotion.
He is dear to Me, and I am very dear to him.**

Of course, it is he who knows, because of his devotion and utter dedication to God, utmost unity with God and his joint nature with God, who is the dearest to the Lord.

**18 Noble are they all, but the one who knows
is indeed the true Self, I think;
for he will, with firm mind,
take refuge only in Me, the highest goal.**

Since he who knows rejects all unreal things and adheres only to the highest reality which is God, he is the pure Self, devoid of all attachments and impurities of the soul. Because of his perfect purity, his only desire is for God, and the only state of his soul is devotion to God in utter knowledge of reality.

**19 After many births, such a man of knowledge comes to Me,
knowing that Vāsudeva is indeed everything.
Still, such a great soul is rare.**

By evolution, beings gradually, through a vast number of incarnations, evolve to a degree where they are able to grasp the

Highest, to know Him as the goal of their longings, and to surrender completely and without reservation to Him. Such a great soul recognizes Vāsudeva, the Highest Puruṣa, as the totality and essence of manifestation, and devotes himself to worship and adoration of Him, in whom he recognizes his innermost reality.

On the one hand, such great souls are rare in this world; they hardly ever appear here. On the other hand, this world is not exactly a place where such souls would want to abide, and so this isn't a great wonder after all. When this world becomes a place where a being completely devoted to God would feel at home, instead of the present state, where the world bears more resemblance to a lair of lions, governed by robbers and godless murderers, in which there is no place for God and the pure devotion of an innocent soul, then will we probably get to encounter more of them.

**20 With their wisdom disturbed by desires,
people serve other gods,
and under the influence of their own nature
they follow various prescriptions.**

The consciousness of men is often disturbed in such a way that the lower good, which they can understand, will seem more valuable to them than the greater good, which they are unable to comprehend. That is unfortunately the case with most men, who will, if they are offered God in one hand, and a billion dollars in the other, most likely choose the dollars. The fact that any comparison between the foundation of all reality and some trivial value, which can buy nothing of importance, is meaningless, poses no problem for such men. The "other gods" can be money, power, pleasure and similar things, which eventually have their foundation in God, but contain not in themselves the fullness of emancipation, so that they necessarily leave one who attains them unfulfilled. We are therefore not dealing with a problem of worshipping other deities, but with a problem of being satisfied by little, and setting one's goals too low. As long as one is satisfied with less than perfection, the attainment of his goals will leave him in a state of unfulfillment and disappointment.

**21 Whatever god he chooses to worship,
it is I who strengthen his faith.**

22 In such faith, he seeks the refuge of the deity
in order for his desires to be fulfilled.
But indeed, it is I who fulfill them.

23 Passing are the fruits of desires
harbored by those, who lack wisdom.
For he who worships the deities, comes to the deities,
while he who worships Me, comes to Me.

God is the reality beyond all. Every kind of worship consists of some idea of perfection and a concept of an ideal achievement. Of course, every such concept is directed toward some Divine aspect, but unfortunately not to the whole, which is God himself. He who worships a limited concept of God will attain benefit, for God will grant him his request, but since his worship is limited, his achievement gets to be limited as well.

The greatest problem with prayers directed at a specific goal is that he who asks might happen to receive exactly what he asks for. He might then realize that it would have been much better for him to have surrendered to God, in faith that He will choose what is indeed best for him, and what he needs. However, deluded by ignorance, he doesn't know what he needs and what he needs not desire, and could therefore not attain fulfillment even if God decided to play the role of his personal wishing well, fulfilling all the desires he could think of. In fact, it is actually very likely that he would manage to destroy himself. Because of all that, it would be the greatest blessing for the majority of people if their desires were not fulfilled. Thus desiring transitory things (for only God is lasting, and Him they do not desire), they attain transitory fruits in transitory worlds, and after brief fulfillment they inherit disappointment. Unlike them, those who surrender to God attain the final perfection, for God, who knows best what they need, first arranges all the necessary prerequisites for them to be purified and to be able to dwell in Him completely, and then delivers them to Himself. They therefore remain blissful in eternity.

24 Those without knowledge think
that I became manifested from the Unmanifested,
not knowing My higher, changeless,
transcendental nature.

This is a criticism of pantheist minds, who say that all is God, thinking that the unmanifested God became the manifested world, worshipping the world and adoring the nature. They are deluded, for although the nature is a manifestation of God's greatness, God remains eternally transcendental and changeless. The entire field of Creation adds nothing to and takes nothing away from His transcendence, although He maintains the entire created world in Himself, like the computer from our analogy, which maintains all the programs and gives them reality. They think, to stay with our analogy, the illusory world within some program to be the computer itself, and thus deluded, they worship it. If they were to approach the situation from the opposite direction, and bow before God in His transcendental state, they would inherit the highest good, for they would choose the very source of all Creation, and this source would therefore choose them. In such a state, they could recognize in God the fullness of all Creation, but in fullness of all Creation it is impossible to know God, for it does not touch His original, transcendental, changeless and eternal nature, which is forever untouched by the created world.

25 Covered by yoga-māyā,
I reveal Myself not before all.
I, unborn and inexhaustible,
am not known to the deluded world.

Beings whose consciousness is preoccupied with the world, never stop to turn their eyes toward God, who is the source and essence of the reality of the world. They thus remain deluded by their own choice, choosing not to turn from the world and toward God, and thus know the actual reality. To them, however, who choose to turn toward Him, and to address Him with an attitude of surrender and devotion, God indeed reveals Himself, and accepts them into His inner nature. Free will is therefore the factor that determines our destiny—making a choice for either the illusion, or God.

26 I know all past, present and future beings, o Arjuna,
but I am known by none.

All beings have their reality in God, and are given in God, but He is beyond knowledge of any being; actually, it is not quite so,

for He can be known by devotion, wherewith a being enters His presence, but in this state there is only God and the adoration of God—there is no being to say or think: “I know God.” No; in such state, God knows Himself, which is the reason why it is called the state of Self-realization, for the Subject Is Himself; I Myself Am.

**27 Confused by the dualities
of attraction and repulsion, o Bhārata,
all the beings are born in delusion,
o destroyer of enemies.**

Here we encounter the central problem of Christianity: the issue of original sin. It is a theory which says that people are originally born sinful, and they need to save themselves from this state by choosing God. This is the general thought; let us forget the pointless theological construction around it. Indeed, this theory makes sense, on more than just one level. In fact, the entire plan of Divine manifestation apparently goes from utmost illusion toward the complete realization; the evolution of beings goes from unconscious matter, through living beings, conscious beings, to beings that know God. It can therefore be said that all that is created starts as imperfect, and under the influence of the Divine force it strives toward perfection. The essence of that imperfection is the lack of knowledge of God, or the lack of strength, which one could use to surpass illusion and surrender to God. In the state of illusion, a being lives in a state of unfulfillment and attempts to gain fulfillment in the world of illusion. In such a shadow hunt, the being is attracted by a promise of the pleasant, and repelled by a threat of the unpleasant. This is the natural state of things, gradually to be outgrown by devotion to God, or, in other words, the greater degree of knowledge of transcendental reality.

**28 People of pious deeds, who are free from sin,
who are free from the illusion of duality,
worship Me with persistent determination.**

Those, therefore, who outgrow the natural limitations of the illusion, or the original sin in which all beings take birth, abandon sin, perform deeds of virtue, acquire knowledge, and in that

knowledge they dedicate themselves to the worship of the Lord. After having understood the nature of the world, they no longer succumb to the illusion, and thus free from all doubts that trouble those who have no experience, they persistently adhere to God alone. They do so because experience has shown them that all but Him is either futile, or represents His reflection that is mixed with lower things. Understanding that in fullness, they discard everything else, and surrender completely to God.

**29 Those, who for the sake of liberation
from old age and death take refuge in Me,
they know the true brahman, the true Self,
as well as Divine activity, in its fullness.**

This is not to be understood in the sense of some sort of a desire for benefit, according to which one would be afraid of old age and death, taking refuge in the Lord, who would rescue him. On the contrary, one would be better advised to say that such men, after having realized the nature of the world, become free from the desires for the worldly experiences of birth, old age and death, for they see those things only as an obsolete source of suffering, which adds nothing to the state of existence with the Lord without a physical body. They therefore reject every form of attachment to the body and the world in which the body acts, and remain in the bliss of Spirit and Truth. They therefore realize the final reality, the Absolute (brahman), which is the highest, true, transcendental Self, and with the insight of the Lord they acquire also the insight of the fullness of activity, which finds its perfection in harmony with God, making all activities Divine.

**30 Those, who recognize Me
as the Lord of both the natural,
the Divine and the sacrifice,
even in their mortal hour,
their mind is anchored in Me.**

God is the essence of all that is created, and also of that which is not created; He is the Lord of heaven and earth, of all visible and invisible. Sacrifice is good if it contributes to the state of transcendence, and transcendence is the Lord Himself, and the Lord

is therefore also the essence of sacrifice. Everything that is good and positive originates from Him, who is the fullness of all goodness. He, whose mind is firm in this knowledge, wavers not even in the moment of his death, but remains conscious of God. He lives in God and dies in God, and after death he remains in God for all eternity, beyond time and transience, in the lasting bliss of supreme and highest reality.

Chapter Eight

- 1 **Arjuna said:**
What is brahman?
What is the individual self?
What is activity, o Highest Puruṣa?
What is the cause of the material,
and what of the Divine nature?
- 2 **Who and what is the cause of yajña,
here in this body, o Madhusūdana?
How can they, who attained self-control,
know You at the time of death?**

Arjuna now asks a series of questions regarding the concepts which the Lord mentioned in the previous chapter, and which are either quite new and unknown to him, or known to him in some other meaning, and so he wishes to know the meaning in which Kṛṣṇa uses them.

Let us notice how Arjuna addresses Kṛṣṇa as “Puruṣottama,” the Highest Puruṣa, addressing Him thus as the Lord of all beings.

- 3 **The Almighty Lord said:**
Eternal is brahman, and Highest.
The individual Self is one’s own personal being.

**The cause of creation and life of beings
is called karman, activity.**

Brahman is the supreme reality, the transcendental Absolute.

The individual self (adhyātma), or jīvātman (the self of a living being) is the localized subject; that, what a being perceives as itself. Such self is relative; it is observed as separate from everything else in the relative world, within Creation. With the change of perspective, there comes the insight that Self is one, and that it is in fact brahman. In the Relative, adhyātma is the subject of experience and spiritual progress, as well as of karman. It is the “I” that experiences the relative things.

Karman, or karma, is action, activity, the change of states within the created world. Under this law of constant movement and change, the beings are born, they change and are destroyed, in order to be reborn according to those same laws.

**4 The material nature is passing,
while the Divine nature is Puruṣa.
The cause of sacrifice in this body am I,
o best of the embodied men.**

The material nature is Prakṛti. It is the passive nature, which consists of various energies, various degrees of subtlety, and does not manifest itself, but is a field of manifestation of Puruṣa. The Divine nature is Puruṣa, which is manifested in the material nature, while at the same time remaining in His original state, as a hand entering a glove obtains the appearance of the glove, without ceasing to be a hand, a part of human body. Likewise, Puruṣa in some of His aspects manifests through Prakṛti, remaining at the same time in His own inner nature of fullness.

The cause of sacrifice, or its essence, is transcendence as such. Sacrifice is a state in which a man renounces attachment in his actions, the perfection of this being the Lord, who is engaged in all kinds of activities, which are, because of His supreme transcendental nature, quite of the nature of sacrifice, to the extent of Him being the embodiment of sacrifice, as well as being its essence, nature and purpose. Each sacrifice has a purpose of attaining transcendence, and the essence of transcendence, which makes it worthy of achievement, is the perfect fullness and bliss, which

is the Lord. The Lord in the body is therefore the perfect sacrifice. This understanding of the issue of sacrifice casts new light on the issue of sacrifice of Christ in Christianity, since we come to realize that the very existence of Christ within the body is the essence of sacrifice, which is perfectly redeeming and which provides salvation, and not his death, as people often think.

**5 He, who in the moment of his death
leaves the body remembering Me,
he attains My nature.
That is beyond doubt.**

Here we have several layers of possible understanding. On one hand, the obvious interpretation says that the moment of death is the crucial point of a man's life, a turning point which determines his destiny. What a man remembers on his deathbed, is exactly what is most important to him, what he appreciates above all, and where his existence is focused. A man who is attached to possession will think about his possession on his deathbed, and about what is going to happen to him. Another man will think about his family, what will happen with his wife, with his children, and the like. A man to whom God was the cornerstone of existence during life, will on his mortal hour think only of God; he will yearn to know Him, he will desire His proximity, and will be filled with joy because the time of his unity with Him grew close. Such a man therefore belongs to God, and goes to Him, never to return.

The other layer of thinking says the following: human nature is an onion with many layers. A man can be extremely devoted to God, and still think, on his deathbed, mostly about the destiny of those who were entrusted to him during life, and whom he now abandons. He will care about them and try to protect them, at least with the knowledge that everything will be all right. He will not think about his own destiny, but only about the destiny of others, knowing that God takes more than enough care of him, and that he will get his due anyway, as he did during life. If we think about Kṛṣṇa's words in a narrow and literal way, we would have to decide that a man from this example has not attained perfection, because he thinks about his family, and not about God. But the real truth is that he does not have to think about God, for

he lives God, always. He constantly dwells in God, and lives the Divine life, which is manifested in care for others and their benefit. His devotion to God is manifested in the lack of care for his own destiny, which originates from the deep and lasting understanding of Divine nature, as well as the nature of the laws of karma, which always provide a man with what he needs and what he deserves. Thus in deep understanding and faith, he does not need to attempt to attain something he already knows will be granted, but looks at how he could, from this position, do good and praise God. Having that in mind, it turns out that there is in fact no contradiction, since this man in fact does think about God, even deeper than he who constantly repeats “God, God,” in order not to forget God under the influence of other thoughts.

**6 To whomever he gives his thoughts
while leaving his body,
to him undoubtedly he goes, o son of Kuntī.**

What applies to leaving the body in the consciousness of God, applies also to leaving the body in other states and considerations; since the moment of death is basically the most important moment in life, we have the opportunity to observe there the predominant inclination of a man’s soul, and so a righteous man will await death filled with joy for being united with God, while a sinful man will await death filled with fear and anxiety. A man who is attached to the world will feel sorrow and fear for leaving the world, and will continue to desire the world after death. He, however, who aspires to God, will rejoice because his bodily existence is over, and he can now be in God without disturbance caused by corporeal existence. Of course, as explained in the commentary on the previous verse, this issue is complex and should be approached with much care and insight and without superficiality, to avoid making shallow and superficial judgments, such as the belief that a man who cares about his children is attached to the material, and that a man who constantly mentions God is a saint, for very often the truth is exactly the opposite.

**7 You should therefore always dwell firm in Me, and fight.
Surrendering reason and mind to Me,
you shall undoubtedly reach Me.**

As it became apparent from the more careful interpretation of the previous verses, the key to belonging to God is devotion to Him, and full dedication and absorption of the soul in God. He, who thus arranges the guidelines of his life, will not need to care about what he will think in his mortal hour; he will most likely think the same as he did in the rest of his life.

**8 Thus meditating with spirit united,
with thoughts in steady focus,
he reaches the highest Divine Puruṣa, o Pārtha.**

He, therefore, who abides in the state of spiritual focus on the Divine, gradually knows and grows beyond the progressively more subtle levels of reality. After surpassing identification with the various layers of Prakṛti, he breaks even the identification with Prakṛti itself, and knows himself to be Puruṣa. Later, in that state, he attains progressively greater degrees of subtlety, as he grows in devotion and service, and so, in the state of the highest achievement, he becomes able to behold God Himself, and, with time, to attain His nature.

**9 He who meditates about the All-knowing,
The Oldest, The Governor, smaller than the atom,
who maintains all, who is beyond comprehension,
bright as the sun, beyond darkness,**

**10 thus meditating in the mortal hour, with steady mind,
filled with devotion and the power of yoga,
completely withdrawing the breath of his life
into the place between the eyebrows,
he attains the highest, Divine Puruṣa.**

He who meditates on Divine attributes, who is completely pre-occupied with them, gradually starts to attain understanding of those attributes, and then even the attributes themselves, himself becoming a treasury of Divine qualities. That, however, cannot be attained by mere imagination, but only through gradual purification of one's own being with yoga, as well as the ascension of consciousness into higher and higher realms of reality. The attributes mentioned in those two verses are merely general guidelines; God

is the source of all knowledge and all-knowing, He is the source of all creatures, and is transcendental to time. He is the supreme force, to which all other forces are subordinate. He is smaller than the smallest, for He creates and maintains even the smallest. He is greater than the greatest, for even the greatest abides in Him. He is beyond comprehension, for He is the source of all knowledge, and cannot be known by anything, that is not already in Him. He is the light of reality and truth, and is transcendental to darkness and ignorance.

About Him, thus described, we should always think, we should eternally worship and celebrate Him; as in life, so in death. The yogī, who thus meditates on Him, withdraws the focus of his vital force into the ājñā cakra, the “third eye,” which is the true organ of insight, and with this insight he beholds the glory of the Almighty, and praises Him therewith. Thus praising the Lord, he abandons all lower identifications, ascends beyond the layers of material nature, and surrenders to God in the highest fulfillment, glory and magnificence.

**11 Of Him, whom the knowers of the Vedas call The Eternal,
whom enter those who attained self control,
and for the sake of whom they accept the vows of chastity,
I will tell you now in brief.**

Lord Kṛṣṇa is now about to explain the subtle differences between aspects of reality, which are indeed so subtle, that even the knowers can confuse them.

**12 He who focuses in yoga, closing all the gates of the body,
withdrawing the reason into the heart
and the breath of life into the head,**

The gates of the body are the senses and the organs of action. Withdrawing the reason into the heart does not mean withdrawal into the heart cakra, for “heart” is here meant as the core of the being, so that we are here dealing with the withdrawal of the reason into the suṣumnā nāḍī, or into devotion to God and transcendence. Withdrawal of the breath of life into the head is the basic prerequisite for ascension into higher worlds; in the head, there are the control mechanisms of insight (ājñā and some other

cakras), which direct the consciousness onto the object of observation. Observing God through the cakras of the head, the consciousness is surrendered to God and leaves toward Him.

13 pronouncing brahman in one syllable Om, remembering Me, thus leaving the body, he attains the highest goal.

Pronouncing the brahman in the syllable Om represents the complete tranquility of consciousness, in which consciousness is completely united with the fundamental carrying vibration of the Creation—praṇava, or the syllable Om. Such tranquility is accompanied by insight into God, the Creator of the world, to whom a being returns, leaving the sphere of Creation.

Praṇava is the dance of Śiva the Dancer, the symbol of the most subtle layer of Prakṛti, the fundamental driving force of all Creation. He who pronounces this sound, is identified with the initial impulse of Creation, and by transcendence of this impulse he knows Puruṣa, thus attaining the highest state a being could attain: the state without desires in complete fulfillment.

**14 To a truly united yogī,
with mind always peaceful,
who always remembers Me,
I am very easy to reach, o Pārtha.**

To a yogī, who in practice has attained the purity and subtlety of consciousness, who has transcended all the layers of creation, the vision of God is a mere matter of a shift of consciousness toward Him, and represents no problem. Such a man in any case lives in the world only to carry the glory of the Lord, and when the time comes to leave the body, he meets God with ease.

**15 Having reached Me,
having attained the final goal,
great souls no longer return
into the place of change and misery.**

In transcendence of Prakṛti, having learned from the created world all that was to be learned, having attained the perfect purity and subtlety of consciousness, having attained the highest

perfection, enlightened yogīs, wealthy with devotion, forever remain in the world of transcendence, in the bliss of a state of which nothing can be said, for it is way beyond any such attempt. Such perfect yogīs enjoy that state, which God designed to be the real purpose of existence, and which is the purpose of the entire machine of Creation and evolution; its purpose is to create perfectly pure souls, capable of friendship with God, souls that are His peers in devotion, and who are capable to comprehend and receive His devotion. This is a state in which the Divine is manifested in fullness. Such souls have obtained their spiritual profile by their choices, of their own free will, choosing always God and the Divine, outgrowing all lowly things and imperfections, and now, in eternity, they inherit their final choice: the perfect, eternal life in the perfect and eternal God. For such souls, there is no more going back; they are forever free from all suffering, and therefore from rebirth, as well. If such a Divine soul does descend into the world, he does so as an avatāra, a Divine incarnation, in order to bring liberation to others.

**16 He who ascends to any world,
including the world of Brahmā,
has to return, o Arjuna,
but coming to Me, o son of Kuntī,
he is born no more.**

Brahmaloka is a world, or the state of brahman, known in yoga as the nirvikalpa samādhi. Even those who enter such a state have to come back, and, according to their karma, accept birth, for their purity is not perfect, and the evolution of their soul is incomplete. Every such “trip” into higher experience is only a temporary state; only the complete purity of him, who is able to look unflinchingly into the Highest Lord, into Puruṣottama, is a guarantee of liberation from rebirth.

**17 The day of Brahmā lasts a thousand yugas,
and equally long is the night of Brahmā;
so say those who know.**

The closest equivalent to the day of Brahmā is the period between the Big Bang and the Big Collapse; the period between the

expansion of the universe from singularity, a point of infinite mass compressed into infinitely small space, and its return into singularity under the influence of gravitational attraction. This period is the day of Brahmā; the night of Brahmā is the period of non-manifestation, which lasts as long. Each of those two periods lasts for an extremely long time. About them, *Mahābhārata* teaches the following:

One great cycle is called mahā-yuga, and consists of four yugas: kṛta, tretā, dvāpara and kali. In *Mahābhārata*, the duration of the yugas is expressed in heavenly years. Each heavenly year lasts 360 human (solar) years.

Kṛta-yuga lasts	4,000 years (heavenly)
	400 years lasts the dawn of this yuga
	400 years lasts its dusk
totally lasts	4,800 heavenly years or 1,728,000 ordinary ones

Tretā-yuga lasts	3,000 years
	300 years lasts its dawn
	300 years lasts its dusk
totally lasts	3,600 heavenly years or 1,296,000 ordinary ones

Dvāpara-yuga lasts	2,000 years
	200 years lasts its dawn
	200 years lasts its dusk
totally lasts	2,400 heavenly years or 864,000 ordinary ones

Kali-yuga lasts	1,000 years
	100 years lasts its dawn
	100 years lasts the dusk of this yuga
totally lasts	1,200 heavenly years or 432,000 ordinary ones

The overall duration of the whole mahā-yuga is 12,000 heavenly years or 4,320,000 ordinary (human) years; in other words, it lasts as long as ten kali-yugas. The thousand mahā-yugas make one day of Brahmā, and a thousand more make the night of Brahmā.

The basic characteristics of each yuga, according to *Mahābhārata*, are the following:

Kṛta-yuga is the best period of mahā-yuga, which is why it is called kṛta—perfect. Everyone is without flaw in his faith. Virtue

is not perverted. There is no buying or selling, no sickness or malice, no misery nor greed... The only effort is the renunciation of the world, and it is enough to only think about a thing, to receive it. There exists only one Veda, and the Nārāyana, the soul of all creatures, is of white complexion.

Tretā-yuga is the next period, in which people still value truth and virtue, but now they attempt to get what they desire by ritual and sacrifice. They never walk away from virtue, but the virtue now decreases by one fourth. The four castes adhere to their respective duties. Nārāyana, the soul of all creatures, becomes red.

Dvāpara-yuga is the next period, in which virtue decreases into half, virtue wavers between darkness and light, and Nārāyana becomes yellow. The Vedas are divided into four parts. Mental capabilities have decreased, and only a few remain with the truth. Sin comes to exist, and people become prey to various illnesses.

Kali-yuga is the final period of mahā-yuga, in which there remains only one-fourth of virtue. It is the age of iron, and Nārāyana is of black complexion. The Vedas and virtue cease to be respected. This period is ruled by diseases, disability, anger, fear of deprivation, and human nature becomes corrupt. Vice is increased immensely.

In the end of this final period, comes complete annihilation.

The thousand mahā-yugas makes one day of Brahmā, and one thousand more make the night. The life of Brahmā, which lasts a hundred years (360 days each), is one big cycle in the life of the universe, after which there comes pralaya, the utmost destruction of the universe, after which another great cycle is to take place.

18 At the beginning of the Day

**all that is manifested is created from the Unmanifested,
and in the beginning of the Night
it dissolves again in the Unmanifested.**

The Unmanifested is the very same potential, from which all beings are constantly created, in which they have their reality, and which is the foundation of both saints and sinners. The difference between saints and sinners lies in the fact that sinners are dissolved in the potential consciousness which is the foundation of the reality, after their relative existence is eaten by nothingness, while saints embody in themselves the fullness of reality, and inherit the bliss of Divine manifestation.

**19 This multitude of beings are born, again and again;
they disappear in dusk, to take birth at dawn.**

Beings who fail to attain perfection even in such a long period of time, such as the day of Brahmā, which is longer than four billion years according to the calculation from *Mahābhārata* (or more likely, several tens of times more, according to one of the possible calculations of modern science, which estimates the present age of universe to some eighteen billion years, and the universe is still in the phase of expansion), return to nothingness from which they originate; into the potential energy of Creation, which abides in God.

**20 But there is another, eternal and transcendental nature,
different from the Unmanifested, which is never destroyed.
When everything is destroyed, it remains.**

The Unmanifested is brahman, the highest reality, the transcendental Absolute. In it, there are no beings; it is the potential from which all beings are made. It is the highest reality, the final truth, and is not nothingness, as one could mistakenly assume, but a final unity of all things, in which there is but One.

This eternal, transcendental nature of which the Lord speaks, which is neither the created world nor the unmanifested Absolute, is the reality of Puruṣa.

**21 This unmanifested and unpassing,
they say to be the supreme destination.
Having reached it, none returns.
That is My highest abode.**

This is the great mystery, the highest unknown, before which the logical mind collapses, for Puruṣa is the relative Absolute. He is relative, but not worldly, nor material. He is manifested, and still eternal. He is God and the glory of God, God's abode inherited by God and perfect souls, who had reached the goal of evolution.

**22 This Supreme Puruṣa, in whom all beings are contained,
who saturates all, can be reached by complete devotion.**

Devotion and service are the fundamental qualities of Puruṣa; he who develops those qualities, abides in this, highest reality. One, therefore, by devotion, admiration and adoration attains that, which is eternally of that quality, and in which nothing else can exist. This devotion is not of the quality of illusion, and one who fails to purify and elevate himself by yoga cannot even understand what qualities and states we are dealing with. It is therefore unwise to attempt to feel those qualities without adequate preparation and training, for it is not possible. It is no more possible than it would be for a child, who heard about the computer for the first time, to understand the secrets of the newest computer systems, such as those utilized by armies and banks, by simply thinking about computers. Such thinking is useless; one should acquire knowledge of the architecture of computers, of operating systems, programming languages, communication protocols and the like. It takes knowledge of mathematics and some knowledge of physics; it takes an extreme amount of fundamental knowledge that appears to have no relationship with computers whatsoever. A man who hears that devotion is needed in order to enter the eternal kingdom of God, and who, based on that, attempts to feel such devotion, is engaged in futile work. It is obvious that his misguided effort will end up by imagining devotion, which is merely an illusion, a sort of hysterical state.

True devotion is a quite different quality; in it, there are no emotions, nor thoughts, nor any kind of worldly qualities. There is only the purity of an experienced yogī, who while in the beginner stages developed the lower kind of devotion, the one which is the quality of the mental level. Later, he outgrew it in the realization of the causal, the subtle states of Divine power which maintains the world and manifests itself as rightness in all things. Going past this and to still higher material energies, he reaches the Divine aspects manifested in Nature; he reaches Śiva and Śakti of the ātmic level, whose mutual admiration gives incentive to the Divine manifestation in the world. Such a yogī transcends even this elated state, and realizes the united consciousness in primordial motion, Śiva the Dancer, who pronounces the primordial syllable Om in His dance of creation and destruction; a dance, which represents only a slight motion of the motionless consciousness, which is then divided, on a lower level, into Śiva and Śakti. The yogī then goes beyond even this, primordial and fundamental

level of Creation, only then knowing the Puruṣa, only then having revealed the force of devoted service, when he discovers complete fulfillment, and forever extinguishes all desires in the nectar of devotion. Such devotion is therefore not a thing that could be attained by anyone, by a mere wish and by hysterical emotional outbursts. We are dealing with the crown of the act of making, the purpose of existence of all the worlds; we are dealing with God's innermost nature, which such a perfectly devoted yogī can share with Him, who is his only and highest love.

23 **O best of Bharatas,
I will now tell you about the times
in which a yogī leaves the world,
to return or not to return.**

In the Indian tradition, there is a belief in favorable and unfavorable periods for various activities, and therefore also for abandoning the body. Although there is truth in that, belief in such forces can be quite dangerous, for it weakens a man's will to overcome the circumstances, which is necessary prerequisite for attaining liberation.

24 **Fire, light, day, the light half of the moon,
and the six months of the northern solstice:
people who leave then,
if they know brahman, leave to brahman.**

25 **Smoke, night, dark period of the moon,
and the six months of the southern solstice:
yogīs who leave then,
leave to the world of the moon,
but they get to come back.**

26 **Two are the ways of leaving the body:
in light and in darkness, so say those who know;
one without coming back, and the other to return.**

According to this belief, the state of the world in some way predestines the movement of the soul after death. There may be truth in that, since the entire world is but a body to the Divine

Puruṣa, and the states of the world in some way reflect His states, but I think that such an effect is only peripheral and marginal. That I believe because a man's destiny is determined by the qualities of his soul, and not by the times of day and year. If an enlightened man, who realized God, dies even in the least favorable of periods, he will beyond doubt go to God, and will not be reborn. If, however, a wicked man of lowly consciousness dies even in the most favorable period, he will still be born in a body determined by his karma. That is beyond doubt.

Still, we could all notice that, in spring, beings are abundant with the forces of creation, manifestation, life and all the attachments to the world and worldly things, while in the autumn beings experience feelings of transience, mortality, timeliness and futility of the worldly. It is clear that such thoughts will, to a great extent, color the minds of most people—which means everyone but true yogīs, who are always aware of the reality of the Divine and the illusory nature of the worldly, regardless of the times of year, solar flares and phases of the moon.

**27 A yogī, o Pārtha, who knows those ways, is never confused.
So always be firm in yoga, o Arjuna.**

In any case, it is good to be firm in yoga, for then a man does not need to care whether it is summer or winter, day or night, light or darkness, for his soul is always filled with God, and he cares about no such things, with those influences being marginal and irrelevant. His destiny will then always stay under favorable omen.

**28 A yogī inherits a reward beyond the study of Vedas,
sacrifice, penance and charity;
his reward is greater than the reward for those things.
He attains the supreme, original abode.**

Deeds produce fruits in the world of deeds, while transcendence leads from this world of transience into eternity, to God, where a yogī gets to abide forever. Such a reward contains in itself all the blessings that all other rewards, that come from worldly things, could possibly contain. At the same time, it exceeds them all infinitely, so that a yogī never even looks back for such trivia,

having acquired an infinitely greater treasure, which is not eaten by rust and moths,¹⁵⁴ and which is vouched for by the eternal Lord Himself.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 6:19-21.

Chapter Nine

1 The Almighty Lord said:

**Upon you, who are without malice,
I will confer this highest knowledge and realization
which will make you free from evil.**

The key to receiving knowledge is harmlessness, the innocence of the student, who opens up toward the teacher and follows him in a way a sunflower turns toward the sun. The student accepts, thinks about what he has heard and asks, if anything remains unclear. He is guided only by the desire for knowledge. A noble man, as a student of yoga only can be, has no other interests but realization of God and attainment of perfection. In a long series of lives and experiences, he has become convinced that he is to aspire only for goodness, and goodness he accepts and in it he persists whenever he has the opportunity. When he encounters the teacher, such a noble man rejoices, and praises his immensely good fortune, for that is indeed a great blessing, which is not given to everyone. Having that in mind, he does not even think about criticizing the teacher or arguing with him. It is clear to him that the teacher is the one who knows, and that he is the one who doesn't know, and he approaches the situation from this position. Of course, if he doesn't know, he will ask, for as long as he doesn't understand, but asking the questions, he invests all his

powers into understanding the answer; he asks not out of curiosity or arrogance, or only to hear himself speak, but from a position that resembles that of a man who is struck by a mortal illness, and who has encountered a doctor who can help him heal. To such a man, the very idea of boastful arrogance is extremely remote, let alone the insults or argumentativeness, or suspiciousness and doubt. With gratitude he receives everything the teacher gives him. This is the way Arjuna approaches Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such an approach, combined with the enormous strength of his mind, creates an extremely favorable atmosphere, in which the Lord feels the same desire to give him knowledge, as Arjuna feels to receive it. Such devotion and purity of the student only stimulate the teacher to bestow on him an abundance of grace.

2 This is the royal knowledge, the greatest secret.

It leads to the greatest purification.

**It is subject to immediate experience,
in accordance with dharma,
easily attainable and eternal.**

This knowledge, which represents the crown of all knowledge, is the knowledge of God. With the knowledge of God, a man attains everything, and after this achievement there remains no other, higher. Knowledge of God is possible only through devotion, which is the highest secret, known only to those who are able to feel devotion. With devotion, everything is easily attainable, for devotion makes a man receptive to direct experience; devotion is the state of sincerity, which creates direct contact between consciousness and reality. Devotion to God opens up a bhakta toward the direct experience of God, toward unity with God. With devotion, we reject all forms of impurity and burden from our souls, which then remain light and pure, and ascend toward God. Devotion thus leads to the highest purity, for it is the opposite of all causes of defilement, such as selfishness, arrogance, ignorance and egotism. In the same moment in which we surrender to God, God responds, and we find ourselves in His presence. The purpose of the created world is to manifest Divine qualities in beings, which is the purpose of karma and reincarnation, as well as the fundamental law which governs all, the law of dharma. Since devotion leads to that very goal, which is realization

and possession of Divine qualities, devotion is in accordance with dharma, and opposes it in no aspect. Devotion is easy to attain; it lies in the deepest nature of a being, for the highest, true longing of all beings is that toward God. The results acquired by devotion are not of temporary quality, for they are not of the temporary world; by devotion, a yogī walks into the domain of eternal life and reality, beyond time and transience. The yoga of devotion is therefore the highest achievement of yoga.

**3 People who fail to follow this path,
o Destroyer of enemies,
return, without having attained Me,
to the path of the mortal world.**

People who are not devoted to God act from lower motives, and those motives determine their destiny, according to the laws of karma. Only by devotion, and with attainment of the Lord himself, does one achieve the final liberation, for this dissolves all the selfish and lower motives. Those of the lower goals return to the world in order to get the opportunity to learn and evolve, and eventually, finally, achieve a state in which the longing for God will outshine all other longings, and then, in devotion to the Almighty, they will attain the highest goal, from which there is no more return.

**4 In My unmanifested form,
I saturate the entire world with Myself.
All the beings are in Me, but I am not in them.**

This verse is, again, easiest to explain using the computer analogy: all the programs that are executed on the computer are in it, but the computer is not in them. The computer is manifested through all of them, executing them, and aspects of the computer's capabilities are shown in each of them, to some extent. Still, the opposite does not apply, for the computer is not given in the programs, not even all of them combined. The theories saying that God is the totality of the world are wrong, for they result from a very mistaken assumption that God is a sort of a sum of all things, or that the totality of nature is God. No—God is not made of all things, but all things are made of God, and dwell in God.

However, He remains transcendental to them all—like all the programs that exist in the computer, and owe the computer their existence, and the computer owes them nothing at all—it would continue to exist even if they all were to cease to exist, quite independent from them all. The programs are an expression of the computer, but no opposite relationship exists.

- 5 **Still, I am devoid of it all.
Behold My Divine power!
I am the maker and the maintainer of beings,
remaining transcendental to them all.**

The computer itself is in no way conditioned by the programs; it is, if we stretch the analogy, Absolute and transcendental; it is the fundamental reality, the root and the support, the creator and the destroyer of programs with complete sovereignty, and its nature is in no way involved in all that. In the computer itself, there are actually no programs; it continues to exist even if they are not executed. Still, the programs are in it. This analogy is obviously quite applicable, since even the paradoxes can be transferred quite well.

- 6 **Like the mighty wind, that blows from all sides,
but stays always located within space,
know thus all beings to reside in Me.**

As it became apparent with the analogy of the computer and the programs, and additionally illustrated by an example of wind which is located within space, God is the reality in which all is contained, on which all depends, and which remains completely superior and transcendental to all aspects of the manifested world.

- 7 **All beings, o son of Kuntī,
in the end of kalpa enter My Prakṛti,
and in the beginning of the next kalpa
I manifest them again.**

Kalpa is another name for the day of Brahmā (see 8:17). In the beginning of the day of Brahmā, as it is stated in the eighth chapter, God from His Prakṛti, the energy of Nature, manifests a multitude

of beings, which then evolve under the influence of His sight. Beings that achieve perfection of devotion before the end of this vast period of time take part in the eternal Divine life, while the others return into the Unmanifested at the end of the kalpa, into the great reservoir of Divine potential energy, from which, in the beginning of the next kalpa, starts another cycle of manifestation, a new attempt.

8 **With the help of My Prakṛti,
I again and again create
this multitude of beings,
by the very force of Nature.**

Beings belong to Prakṛti, representing its diverse aspects, but the entire process exists in God, and the process of evolution itself is incited by His reality, which beings absorb and from which they grow; if they absorb it in whole, they go to God, and if they are not successful, they return into the potential of Nature. There are, therefore, two possible endings for a being: in the state of utmost realization and emancipation in God, where the being develops its personality to the fullness of the Divine Personality, or in the negation of personality, where the continuity of the being's personality ends. That is so because the personality of a being is given in God, and if a being fails to look for its emancipation in God, it ceases to exist as such when the spirit of God withdraws from the energy of Nature.

When God leaves the Nature, with Him also leave those, who have evolved into the independent, Divine Puruṣas, beings who have evolved from the transcendental brahman into the Divine personalities, into the personal Divine qualities, for only they can reside in God, since they in themselves have none of the lower, binding qualities of Nature. They have long ago outgrown identification with the levels of Prakṛti, in the early stages of their spiritual growth. Unfortunately, to the majority of mankind such a thing is but a distant future, since even the mental level of Prakṛti poses a problem to most of them, let alone anything beyond. However, a kalpa is an extremely long period of time, for those who have time to spare. Those, however, who cannot wait, and who burn from the desire for God, they get to know Him here and now, not waiting for the uncertainty of the last moment.

- 9 **Still, I am unbound
by all those activities, o Dhanañjaya.
I remain untouched and unbound by them.**

Brahman, the transcendental and unmanifested Absolute, is utterly unbound by the Relative, for, as strange as it might sound, He neither creates the Relative, nor is He in any relationship with it, since relationships are something that exists only in the relative domain, where things are defined through their relationships with other things. The Absolute, however, is defined within Himself, and not through a relationship with something else, and He also exists not in a relationship with something, but as the foundation of the whole reality. In the computer analogy, no application can point to the computer in relationship with itself, for the computer is the superior and transcendental sphere of existence; all that a program can point to is what resides only in sphere of software, which is analogous to the relative sphere of existence. The computer, which exists in the Absolute sphere, remains completely untouched thereby.

- 10 **Under My supervision, Prakṛti creates
all moving and motionless beings.
This, o son of Kuntī,
is the driving force of the world.**

The consciousness of beings manifests as a result of association of the energetic layers of Nature (physical matter, prāṇa, astral, mental, causal and others) with God's sight. Under the influence of God's sight, beings "evaporate" through Prakṛti, increasing the subtlety of the aggregate state of their existence, from the purely material consciousness, through the elementary energetic and emotional states, the complex states of love and consciousness, all the way to the fullness of God's perfection, where God's sight encounters itself, closing the circle from the bottom to the summit of the energies of Nature.

- 11 **Ignorant ones fail to recognize Me
when I descend into the human body,
for they are unaware of My transcendental nature
of the Almighty Lord.**

On the lower levels, a complete Divine incarnation is not very much different from an ordinary man; both have apparently similar features. The difference between them is that the physical body of an avatāra manifests the highest Divine nature, while an ordinary human being is a mere agglomeration of physical, prāṇic, astral and some mental substance, animated by the sight of God. An ordinary human being is therefore only a vague shadow of a perfect Divine being, and still, looking with mere physical eyes, the difference between them is not easy to notice. Only he, who in himself realizes the fullness of perfection, who is capable of beholding the Lord with the eyes of his soul, has eyes that can recognize Him when He descends into a body, when the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us.¹⁵⁵

Still, in order to observe the Divinity of an avatāra, utter perfection is not necessary; on the contrary, even the desire for goodness suffices, the desire for truth and perfection. Such a man will see in an avatāra qualities to which he himself aspires; if not the highest Divine ones, then at least the highest he in his present state is capable of comprehending. Thus will he, although not knowing the whole, adhere to a part of it which is known to him, and worship it, with full devotion and adoration, gradually getting to know His nature in a greater degree. The presence of an avatāra in this way brings salvation to the world, in the form of a possibility of swift and easy progress to all, who are inclined toward the beautiful, good and great. Still, God will be recognized and worshiped in fullness only by those, who themselves possess His nature.

They, however, who fail to accept the embodied God, who reject Him, recognizing His qualities as undesirable, they condemn themselves to damnation, to the extent to which they reject Him.

**12 With thwarted hopes and futile deeds,
with useless knowledge of the disturbed spirit,
in the deluded nature of asuras and rākṣasas
they find refuge.**

To those, who reject the Divine, only the demonic remains as an alternative. Unless they convert from this path, they undoubtedly find their ruin.

¹⁵⁵ John 1:14.

13 **But great souls, o Pārtha,
finding refuge in the Divine nature,
adore Me with calm minds, knowing Me
as the inexhaustible foundation of the beings.**

Unlike beings who identify themselves with the worthless energies of Prakṛti, wanting to possess that, in which there is no lasting reality, bhaktas who are devoted to God go beyond all those lower things, to find comfort only in the permanent, eternal, original, infinite and perfect. They, understanding the temporary nature of the material, aspire only for the Divine. With their entire being focused on this, they recognize the Absolute as the fundamental, supreme and only reality, which makes everything real. Discarding all realities of the lower kind, which have their foundation in God, they choose God as the foundation, seeing everything else as merely an imperfect reflection of the perfection of God.

14 **Singing always My glory
they serve Me diligently,
with determined devotion,
always in the state of unity.**

Seeing the Lord as the final reality and the final perfection, bhaktas praise Him, constantly and incessantly. Finding in Him the highest happiness, from this happiness they rejoice, they praise Him with word, song, deed, with their entire life and the entire soul. Abiding constantly in His glory, overwhelmed with bliss of the unity with God, they praise Him in loud voice, carrying His glory before all Creation.

15 **Adoring Me with the sacrifice of knowledge,
others worship Me in unity,
in duality, in diversity, in all forms.**

God is the infinite joy. He is simultaneously the transcendence and the fullness of manifestation. He is the perfect unity and the perfect relationship. He is always the same, yet eternally diverse. He is simple and clear, and yet infinitely manifold, complex and incomprehensible. Infinite are His glories, and worthy of being described forever, of being counted and adored. Endless is the

Lord, the source of infinite joy, the foundation of all creatures and the abode of highest perfection. Before Him I bow, always and forever!

16 I am the Vedic rite, I am yajña,
I am the food offered to the ancestors,
the herb and the mantra.
I am the butter, the fire and the sacrificial offering.

God is the essence of all the aspects of a Vedic sacrificial rite, for each form of religious thought and religious act, which is directed to that, which a man perceives as the Divine, is directed to Him, more or less perfectly. From the basest idol worship, to the most perfect devotion in an endless Divine vision, every form of worship is directed to God. According to their level of consciousness and their spiritual progress, people aspire to the Almighty in ways more or less perfect, and if they persist in their evolution, rejecting the less perfect forms of worship and choosing the higher, eventually they will attain perfection.

17 I am the father of this world,
the mother, the support and the forefather.
I am the object of knowledge,
the purifier, the syllable Om.
I am Ṛg, Sāma and Yajur.

God is the foundation of the world, the goal of all longings, the knowledge in those who know, the purity and the process of purification, the vibration on which the created world is made, and the holiness in the holy scriptures.

18 I am the goal; I am the maintainer,
the Lord and the witness.
I am the home, the refuge and the best friend.
I am the creation, destruction
and the foundation which is the support,
I am the treasury and the indestructible seed.

God saturates the entire reality. He is close and dear to us: closer than the closest, dearer than the dearest, the eternal comfort in all

situations and circumstances, on which a man can rely in every moment. On the other hand, He is the supreme power, the Lord of all things, in whose glory the worlds bathe. Likewise, He is the witness of all things, He is always here—everywhere, all-knowing. He is the Creator, the Maintainer and the Destroyer of the universe. He is the infinite source of all abundance that saturates the Creation, and which beings in various circumstances, in various ways feel and taste. He is the seed from which all things grow, the seed in which all is contained.

**19 I give warmth, I send and keep the rain.
I am the immortality and death,
existence and nonexistence, o Arjuna.**

All qualities are founded in God and originate from Him. All the laws of Nature have their foundation in Him. He is the death of the transitory and the life of the immortal; He is the existence in the highest reality, and non-existence in the illusion. All that is real and unreal has its foundation in Him.

**20 The knowers of the three Vedas,
they who drink soma, pure from sin,
adoring Me with sacrifice,
they aspire to heaven.
Having reached the kingdom of Indra,
they enjoy the heavenly pleasures.**

**21 Having had enough of the heavenly spaces,
with their merit exhausted,
they return into the world of mortals.
Thus they, who follow the teaching of the Vedas,
desiring the fulfillment of desire,
attain death and rebirth.**

This is universally applicable, not only to knowers of Vedas, but also to followers and believers of all religions, who practice religious ceremonies with purpose of achieving happiness and well-being in the next life. They indeed attain such a state, but such religion is a form of barter, where the limited buys the limited, where limited religious practice buys limited fulfillment. Afterwards,

a man must return to the point of growth where he had stopped, in order to elevate himself from this position and to get an opportunity to attain complete growth.

The kingdom of Indra, Svarga, is a form of an astral paradise, filled with various forms of pleasure—all of them, however, rather shallow in depth. In any case, this place is superior to the physical world, and provides greater pleasure. Still, although it is better to aspire to that, than to be satisfied by the mere physical world, it is still better to aspire to things still higher, which are not passing, and where bliss has the quality of eternity.

**22 But to them, who focus on Me alone,
who worship Me with undivided devotion,
I bring protection and lasting achievement.**

To aspire to God with undivided yearning is possible only for those, who have grown beyond all the lower goals, which they have tried and rejected as unsatisfactory. With this alone, they are unbound by lower things, remaining beyond their touch. Free from the lower, and founded in the Highest, they abide in God in eternity, without a possibility of some lower aspiration being awakened in them, which would remove them from this state, and return them to the lower spheres. The entire cycle of birth, death and rebirth serves the purpose of polishing and strengthening the human soul, shaping it through a number of choices. As long as there is something other than God in a man's mind, which he would want to experience or possess, he will find himself in a position to experience it. When God remains as the only choice, the only desire and a goal of longings, when everything else is cast aside as unsatisfactory, then there is no more rebirth, only the eternal abode in God, who is the supreme joy and the highest fulfillment, in whom all desires are extinguished.

**23 And they, who worship other deities,
serving them with faith,
they indeed worship Me,
o son of Kuntī, but in ignorance.**

Any form of respect for virtue, in any aspect, indeed represents the worship of God. All religions have, to some degree,

touched the perfect Divine essence, and contain some of its aspects. Even the worship of the forces of Nature, and the lower deities and saints, which would be called idol worship by some, has a redeeming quality, for it is the opposite of selfishness; of whichever God a man seeks refuge, whatever name he calls Him, he basically aspires to something greater than himself, and seeks its assistance, although not knowing its real nature and extent, and his faith is, essentially, based on the ignorance of the nature of that, to which he prays. Such religiosity is therefore commendable; it has an uplifting quality, and will bring a man who practices it closer to the knowledge of reality, for it will produce and evolve in him the qualities of devotion, faith, nobleness and hope, which are the qualities of great souls.

God is the background, the foundation and the essence of all positive qualities, and it is certain that he, who through his religion aspires to goodness, in fact aspires to God, the true and real God. This God is indeed the one who answers his prayers, however imperfect. God is also the one who guides him from the imperfect to the perfect.

As imperfect as such worship might be, it should nevertheless not be condemned, but it should, on the contrary, be assisted in its growth into something more perfect, into the direct experience of God.

**24 I indeed am the enjoyer
and the Lord of all sacrifice.
Still, not knowing Me truly, they fail.**

Those, who serve different Gods and different theological concepts (which includes modern science with its faith in the value of knowledge), worship the various separate aspects of the all-pervading and perfect God, and although they receive various blessings bestowed upon them by the Lord, and which they, because of their faith, accept from Him, their degree of understanding is limited, as well as their achievement, and they, asking for the limited, receive the limited. Failing to attain the highest goal, they still attain the lower goals, and are successful to some extent, so their failure is not grave; they do not walk in the opposite direction from the goal, but indirectly toward the goal.

25 Those, who worship the gods, come to the gods;
 those, who worship the ancestors, come to the ancestors,
 those, who worship the spirits and demons, go to them
 and those, who worship Me, come to Me.

In his worship, the worshiper creates greater correspondence between himself and the object of his worship. That is so because contemplation of an object allows a man to acquire its qualities. In yoga, that is called *saṁyama*, which consists of *pratyāhāra* (which is most often omitted from this context, but which is still a significant factor), *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. *Pratyāhāra* is the separation of consciousness from the senses to an extent sufficient for consciousness to contemplate the object which is not in the direct reach of the senses. *Dhāraṇā* is the ability to focus the consciousness onto a desired object for a longer period of time, where consciousness isn't allowed to stray from it. It is followed by *dhyāna*, meditation, or contemplation of the object, where a man identifies himself with the object of contemplation, goes deeper into it and acquires more of its qualities. As the final degree, there comes *samādhi*, where there is no difference between a man's consciousness and that, on which he meditates when the complete unity is achieved. With *saṁyama* on strength, a man gains strength; *saṁyama* on some Divine aspect leads to the appropriation of the qualities of that aspect, and *saṁyama* on the reality leads to the complete realization of the reality, or enlightenment.

He who thus meditates is most certainly not at fault, and is on the right path. The Christian can thus perform *saṁyama* on Jesus and gain his qualities and union with his nature, which will, because of the perfect nature of Jesus, result in complete perfection of such a practitioner. A Hindu can perform *saṁyama* on *Kṛṣṇa*, *Rāma*, *Śiva* or *Śakti*, thus developing the Divine qualities of those Divine aspects, resulting in utmost perfection. A Muslim can do *saṁyama* on the all-pervading truth, Allah, thus gaining knowledge of the highest reality, and thereby liberation and perfection. By a correct choice of the object of focus, as well as the undivided devotion and perseverance, perfection is easily attainable through such meditation. Worshiping the deities, a man is led toward the sphere of such Divine aspects, to the limits of depth of his meditation, of course. Those who constantly contemplate their ancestors and deceased relatives, after death come to them. Those, however,

who engage in spiritism and magic, attempt to call ghosts, and worship various demons (unfortunately, this too happens), go to the sphere in which such beings exist. Those, however who reject everything lower, and who focus on the Highest Lord, they undoubtedly go to Him, thereby attaining the utmost perfection, returning no more to the world of death and time.

**26 If one offers Me with devotion even a leaf,
flower, fruit or water,
I accept the pure gift of the devoted heart.**

In everything a man does, God looks not at his deeds, but at the state of his soul while he does them. It is therefore unimportant which gift a man will offer to God; what matters is the sincerity of heart with which a man offers it. If a man is hindered in doing great and noble deeds only by his abilities, it is the same as if he had done them. If one wanted to do much good, but was limited by circumstances, and so he does good only to the extent of his abilities, it is the same as if he had done all the good he wanted to, for his sincerity in doing good was shown, and who is proved faithful with few, can also be trusted with many.¹⁵⁶

**27 Whatever you do, whatever you eat,
whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give,
in whatever austerity you engage, o son of Kuntī,
do it as an offering to Me.**

The entire life has to be lived for the glory of God, as a hymn to the Lord. Everything must be founded in Him and offered to Him. Observing the Lord in all and above all, a man gets to be completely founded in the Lord, and nothing but Him has power over him.

**28 Thus will you be free
from the good and bad fruits of action.
Firm in the yoga of renunciation and perfectly free,
you will come to Me.**

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 25:21.

Devotion to God means transcendence of the field of activity. Deeds performed with such an attitude are free from reaction, for they lack selfishness and desire for possession. He, who completely and without reservation surrenders to God, is not bound by the chain of karma.

One could say: "I understand why one would want be free from the fruits of bad deeds, but why discard also the fruits of good deeds?" Certainly, good deeds and their fruits are much more desirable than the evil fruits that result from evil deeds. Still, these are all but things in the sphere of things, and a chain of gold is still a chain. One should be free from chains of all kinds, for attachment to the world by the fruits of good deeds is still attachment to the world, and perfection is attained only by freedom from the world, and by devotion to God. Of course, it is easier to renounce merit than demerit, and he who performs evil deeds cannot be considered honest in his aspiration for the highest goodness. One should therefore first renounce all evil deeds and replace them with good ones, focus only on goodness, and then from relative, worldly goodness focus on the highest, transcendental goodness. With such focus, a man is gradually freed from the world and its attachments, until he finally achieves the perfect freedom in God.

29 I am the same to all beings.

I value none more and none less.

**But he, who worships Me with devotion,
he is in Me and I am in him.**

God is the sun that shines equally upon the good and the wicked.¹⁵⁷ He approaches all the same, but not all approach Him the same. Like those who approach fire in order to get warm, and who receive its warmth, and others do not, however impartial the fire, so does the blessing of God shower upon those, who are devoted to Him and who receive it into themselves. Therefore, although all can receive the same, the treasure goes to those who take it. He, who receives God into himself and acts from Him, is completely united with God: between him and God there is no difference.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 5:45.

¹⁵⁸ John 10:30.

30 Were he even the most miserable of sinners,
he who worships Me with devotion,
is to be considered righteous,
for he chose rightly.

He who chooses God, as sinful as his previous life might be, is blessed, and all his sins are forgiven, as they were to the criminal who was crucified alongside Jesus.¹⁵⁹ He, who chooses God, has chosen perfectly, and all that remains is for him to show, by his deeds, the firmness of his choice, and after having done that, nothing more remains there for him to do.

31 He soon attains rightness
and reaches the lasting peace.
Know, o son of Kuntī, that those
who are devoted to Me
are never lost.

He, who has chosen God in his consciousness, will undoubtedly confirm his choice by his deeds, although a man's physical aspect is the most inert, and reacts to changes most slowly. When the choice of the Divine is confirmed even in actions, this means that a man's establishment has been made complete. When a man abides in Divine consciousness, when his soul is enlightened in God, all the aspects of his existence gradually acquire Divine qualities, and he soon becomes perfect. Unlike him, a man who puts more and more distance between himself and God gradually loses touch with Divine qualities; his thinking and actions become chaotic, and he sinks deeper and deeper into the abyss of nothingness.

32 Those who seek refuge in Me,
be they even men of lowly birth—

¹⁵⁹ Luke 23:39–43: *One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

**women, vaiśyas and śūdras—
even they attain the highest goal.**

If we have in mind the nature of the castes, as a form of division of men according to desires and inclinations, then it becomes apparent why the Lord sees it as surprising that even persons, whose goals in life are sensory gratification and material benefit, can attain perfection by devotion to Him. Still, it seems unjust to qualify women as persons of lowly birth.

It would be senseless to judge this statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa as a form of sexual discrimination or male chauvinism, especially having in mind His life, and His attitude toward women, whose company He enjoyed keeping, and whom he, in any case, thought to be at least as good as men. From this perspective, his statement would appear to hold a dose of objectivity. The issue is of course complex, but it is my opinion that women can achieve exquisite results in the practice of yoga, as well as men, and my most advanced students are men and women alike. Of course the method of working with men and women cannot be the same, but it is my opinion that the key factor is the degree in which the teacher has mastered the qualities of both genders. Such mastery is the key that gives him the ability to improvise the approach, which will be best suited for his male and female students. I would therefore advise beginners, who are trying to find the teacher, to look at the condition of his or her disciples, preferably of their own gender, rather than the teacher and his qualities, for that is where mistakes are easily made. If one sees that the students of his (or her) gender have attained significant progress in comparison with average people, and that there are enlightened beings among them, one should surrender to such a teacher freely and without fear. If, however, one sees students who are in a bad shape, frustrated, disoriented, imagining achievement without actual experience, if they in no way excel compared to the average, or even worse, if they are in worse shape than the average, such a “teacher” would be best avoided in a wide circle, regardless of how wise his words might seem, since there is obviously a problem somewhere. It is better for one to put his head into a bucket full of water and drown, than to choose a wrong teacher, for the consequences of the choice of a wrong teacher are much more severe.

It is easy to attain spirituality in which everybody is smiling sweetly; we can find that all over. It is a greater problem to attain spirituality in which the real and living God is known, which is, unfortunately, a rare sight. Likewise, the followings, where the disciples praise the teacher aloud, and speak of their “experiences,” are to be avoided in a wide circle, since we are most definitely dealing with imagined experience. He who has actual experience will speak of it only in an extremely intimate atmosphere, among his peers, for that is the holiest of holy things to him, much more private than his sexual life. That is especially the case with talking about the teacher. The teacher is most sacred to the disciple; he is the most sacred thing to his soul. False teachers are praised aloud; likewise, false disciples, who fail to understand anything, will speak aloud of their achievements and of the glory of their teacher. They, who make a circus out of spirituality, should be immediately marked as frivolous, if not worse.

Spirituality is a matter of one’s innermost nature, not the exterior. Where ceremonies and rules are pronounced, where the accent is put onto appearance and surface, the interior is most likely neglected.

**33 How much more is it the case
with virtuous brāhmaṇas,
and devoted and wise kings!
Therefore adore Me, you who found yourself
in the world of sorrow and passing!**

If even people who are marked as handicapped in their spirituality, “the men of lower birth,” can attain perfection by devotion to God, how much easier must it be for those, who are predestined for spirituality by the qualities gained by birth! A man whose natural longings are toward righteousness and knowledge will reach God easily. Therefore is everyone, without exception, advised to focus on God, for that is the only true cure for human suffering.

**34 Always thinking of Me, adore Me with devotion,
offer Me sacrifice, pay Me respect.
With your soul completely preoccupied with Me,
thus united you will come to Me.**

The conclusion of the science of liberation is therefore that one's entire life should be saturated with devoted adoration of the Lord. That, which preoccupies the soul, is reflected in deeds. The focus should therefore be on the Almighty; the Almighty should be the foundation of existence and all considerations, and the result will be liberation and perfection. I am the only reality. Knowing that, I am united in perfection.

Chapter Ten

1 The Almighty Lord said:

Hear more of My highest word, o Mighty-armed,
which, desiring your well-being, I speak to you,
for you are in My favor.

As Arjuna opens up to Kṛṣṇa's word, and accepts into himself more and more of His nature, so does the Lord have the desire to speak about His nature, because relevance of His words extends far beyond the mere situation in which they presently find themselves. There were battles in the past, and there will be battles in the future; they do not have the significance that would make one remember them in particular. Sacred texts however, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, either do not exist at all, or they are extremely rare. In this light, the fact that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa speak amidst the armies in a field of battle, with battle almost having begun, loses significance, for these are no longer mere instructions regarding the correct approach to warfare; this is a complete Divine revelation, where the Lord Himself speaks about His inner nature. One might say that this is primarily to Arjuna's credit, for had he not followed Kṛṣṇa's revelation so carefully, and had he not motivated Him to further elaborate with his questions, all those secrets would have remained unrevealed. This shows us that, in the spiritual relationship of student and teacher, we encounter the

same laws as in an electric circuit: it does not suffice to possess the source of energy alone—one also needs to possess the appliance that is capable of utilizing it fully. The teacher is the source of energy, but if there is no student who needs this energy, it will remain in the state of potential, unutilized. If we elaborate on this further, we will come to a rather interesting conclusion: if the world lacks truly great teachers, it might be so because there are no great students. As a matter of fact, how could we possibly know, in such a situation, whether there are any great teachers in the world, or not? Had the situation, such as the one we find here in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, not taken place, the wisdom of Lord Kṛṣṇa might never have been revealed, and we might have never found out about His greatness. The Lord Himself tells us that this is not His first embodiment, and it is undoubtedly not the last one. Therefore, unfortunately, follows that the majority of such embodiments were not even noticed, and the probable reason for that is exactly the lack of people’s ability to ask questions that would need to be answered by Divine wisdom. Fortunately, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the result of a situation where someone needed exactly that, which the Lord came to offer—and that is Himself.

2 Not even the multitude of gods
and great sages know my origin,
for I am the source
of both the gods and the wise.

All the wise have their foundation in the wisdom of God, and all Divine beings have their foundation in God’s divinity. Still, they fail to see the foundation from which they originate, and have no power over it, but it has the power over them. God is in all beings, but not all beings are in God—not all of them have the same degree of awareness of their origin. Even those, who have realized themselves as brahman, have touched only a mere speck of the shining glory of God. For they have tasted the state of omnipresent, infinite reality, in a small, insignificant measure, like a man, who watches from a great distance, and sees an enormously great star only as a pale speck of light in the sky. Although the knowledge of men is of God, although their nobility and goodness is of God, it is far from that, which indeed abides in God; it is all mere trivia, and lacks true greatness. Still, since they give

those small specks such great value, and dedicate their entire lives to them, how much more still would they desire the source of all those things, if only they knew it! A man's focus on God is the answer to all the needs of a human soul, the only true answer, which contains fulfillment that cannot be had enough of, that cannot be outgrown, for in all of its aspects it is infinite and perfect.

- 3 **The mortal one, who knows Me
as unborn and without origin,
who knows me as the Great Lord of the worlds,
he is without delusion, and free of all sin.**

Here is given the definition of liberation; it is the state of a man who knows God, Īśvara, who is the manifested brahman. With his very ability to grasp it, the man has finished the cycle of evolution, he no longer needs rebirth in order to progress spiritually.

- 4 **Consciousness, wisdom, lack of illusion,
patience, truthfulness, control over the senses and mind,
happiness, unhappiness, birth and death,
fear and fearlessness,**

- 5 **nonviolence, balance, undemanding nature,
penance, generosity, glory and shame,
are the various states of beings,
all having their origin in Me.**

In our comparison with a computer, there exist various programs of various qualities, but they take all those qualities from the computer; it can even be said that the programs are only a way, in which the computer shows that, which exists within it, in form of a potential. Although there are good and bad programs, they all without exception manifest the strength of the computer, and even bad programs have the good quality that, compared to them, the good ones look especially good, and so they, too, indirectly contribute to the glory of the computer.

In the second comparison, with a laser beam that first melts, and then evaporates a block of ice, the quality of warmth—or energy, dynamics—which the water appropriates, has its source in the laser beam. The water takes, in part, what the laser beam

possesses in fullness. To the extent to which the ice is exposed to the laser, it will absorb its warmth. Exposure to the ray of powerful energy can be compared with devotion to God. They, who surrender to Him, will grow warm in His light, and acquire its qualities, and they will therefore become Divine. They, however who do not expose themselves to this light, will remain in darkness, frozen and cold.

Both comparisons reflect the reality in a way, but of course nothing can fully convey knowledge of God's greatness. God as a person (Īśvara) is like a sun, which gives warmth to all beings in the world, giving them all, without exception, the warmth and light; those who expose themselves to it will grow warm, while others will freeze in darkness. On the other hand, God as the Absolute (brahman) is like the computer, in which the various programs are executed (all the different universes with a countless multitude of beings), and thus represents the omnipresent, fundamental reality in all.

**6 The seven maharṣis and the four Manus,
who are like Me, are born from My mind,
and from them all the creatures of the world.**

Although the real meaning of this might be rather vague, I will attempt to find an explanation that will, hopefully, be based on solid grounds.

Within Puruṣa there are many divisions; there is a multitude of, let us say, spiritual beings, gods, above whom is the Lord, Puruṣottama. They are divided by the degree in which they take part in the nature of God. It is hard to know anything for certain in such matters, but I think that we will not find ourselves in great error if we say that Īśvara, with His consciousness, created the other Puruṣas and maharṣis and Manus, and that they went on to create a multitude of all kinds of spiritual beings. They all reside in God, and are very difficult to distinguish from Him, since they all have the qualities of devotion and service, qualities that the Lord possesses in fullness. Later, the process of creation led to the animation of the passive Divine energy, Prakṛti, or Nature, which brought about further divisions and solidification. That, which we observe as ourselves, is close to the very bottom of this chain of creation, and human beings mostly have a very vague concept

about even the levels of Prakṛti that immediately exceed the physical plane, let alone that, which is described here.

**7 He who truly knows
this abundance of My greatness,
he is completely preoccupied with yoga.
That is beyond doubt.**

He who is truly capable of comprehending the truth of that, directly through experience, he has attained the perfection of yoga; his spirit is completely saturated with perfection, and he has completely discarded all lowliness and lesser goods.

As hard as such a goal might be to attain, it is definitely possible, and there exist those who have attained it. Of course, I can testify from my own experience that, without systematic practice of a powerful yogic technique, such a thing would be utterly impossible. Obstacles that are encountered along the path are difficult to overcome even with the help of yoga; it requires focused consciousness, and tremendous energy, in order to even touch the levels of reality far beneath the perfection of which the Lord speaks. Without such techniques that increase the power of a man's consciousness by several degrees of magnitude, I fail to see even a theoretical possibility for an ordinary man, whose consciousness is not properly directed, and whose energy is negligible compared to a yogī's, to attain any significant progress in that direction. This is why I fail to see any purpose in explaining the high states of consciousness to those, who do not practice yoga; there exists not even the slightest possibility for them to ever understand the true meaning of such descriptions.

There exist the various techniques of yoga. A man's spirit is extremely complex, and can be approached from several directions, in a number of ways. Every such direction is a form of yogic technique. From such techniques, which all have their place and purpose, I made a selection of those that represent the most powerful and most direct means of purifying the soul and increasing spiritual reach. Of course, since different people have different needs, such a selection will not be optimal for all; for this reason, it is wise to seek a teacher who is experienced and able to improvise a technique that will be best suited to meet the needs of a particular individual, and appropriate for his spiritual

condition. Still, such a system must necessarily contain the fundamental practices, such as the resonance and upstream kriyā, because the achievement of perfection without such powerful techniques seems highly unlikely to me. Simply, the amount of impurities that reside in an ordinary man's spirit is such, that the techniques of lesser effectiveness will simply not be up to the task, and those of greater effectiveness, even if they exist, are unknown to me.

One should not fanatically hold on to one single approach, and one single system. The path can be adjusted, improvised. The goal is the only thing that matters, and the goal is God himself. If a technique does not suit a man's system, or if he is unable to practice it properly, he should by all means consult with the teacher, who will guide him. Faith in techniques alone is a sort of blasphemy; techniques are merely the means, a tool, a way to focus spirit, and should by no means be "holy cows." "Holy cows" are good only for making holy hamburgers. If I had held strictly to various prescriptions and schoolbook techniques, as recommended by various yogīs, I would have failed to ever produce any progress, let alone write this text. Improvisation based on knowledge is therefore the key to success, in this and every other field of human activity. During practice, a yogi's system constantly changes states, and he must constantly adjust to those states, approaching each of them in an appropriate, original manner. Yoga is creative and dynamic, not static. Powerful techniques for working with the energetic system were the results of listening to the system, of following its states and needs, and improvisation based on observation and experience. There are, of course fundamental techniques, that do not vary significantly between individuals, and they are the basis of yogic practice and the "official" system. Still, every advanced practitioner will soon develop his individual, original variety of the technique, which will suit him best, allowing him to advance most quickly, assisted by the experience of the teacher and other practitioners.

If techniques differ, it is even more the case with individual perception and experience of the higher states of consciousness. Those levels exceed the conventional human experience so much, that it is extremely unlikely for two men to speak of them in the same manner; it is as likely as the possibility of two poets describing the same sunset with the same words, or two painters painting

a scene identically. This is the reason why the words used in order to describe the higher levels, as well as God himself, differ so greatly, and still, in all of them we can see the note of common experience. Those, who see the holy scriptures as contradictory, most often do so because they look at them from the wrong perspective. To see those texts as literal descriptions, or photographic images of an actual state, is simply wrong. However, if we see them as the inspired works of poetry, we will be much closer to the truth. In any case, the purpose of poetry is not revealed if we merely learn it by heart, and the purpose of holy scriptures is not revealed if we mindlessly and literally adhere to their words. They serve the same purpose as the works of poetry: to convey the inspiration which originally brought the work into existence. From such a text, we should take not words, but inspiration, the consciousness from which they came. Instead of absorbing the words from a book, we should, rather, absorb the consciousness from which the words originate, and then will we, ourselves, be able to speak about the object of experience. In all that, the experience itself can never be praised enough, as well as yoga that is meant to give us experience; we should therefore accept the wise counsel of the Upaniṣads: abandoning all scriptures, including this one, a wise man would then attend to yoga.¹⁶⁰

All theological considerations are irrelevant if we fail to attain realization. When we attain it, the whole of theology is only one of its possible means of expression, and does not contribute to the experience in any measure, except in the sense that enlightened ones will sometimes enjoy praising the Lord with thoughts and words. The conclusion is, therefore, that all the holy scriptures serve only to motivate people to strive to attain the direct experience of that, which they describe. Once we have decided that this is indeed what we want, there remains only to engage in yogic practice until the goal is attained.

8 I am the source of all. Everything originates from Me.

¹⁶⁰ Paraphrased from Amṛtabindūpaniṣad 18:
*A wise man, who, having studied the scriptures
Adheres to the attainment of knowledge
Desiring grain leaves the husks—
This and other scriptures.*

**Knowing that, gifted with deep understanding,
the wise worship Me.**

All qualities have their foundation in the Absolute, in God. Nothing exists, that would not have its foundation in Him. The wise, who either witness the truth of that by direct insight, or feel that to be the truth, adore and worship the Lord, praising Him in all kinds of ways, but primarily by absorbing Him and His qualities, becoming completely that, which they admire.

This is true for properly directed beginners in worship, as well as for enlightened sages. The only difference is that the worshiper only feels, and this feeling feeds his efforts, while a sage knows and sees; in him, the faith gave place to the certainty of knowledge.

**9 With Me in thoughts, their lives dedicated to Me,
assisting each other, talking about Me,
they find satisfaction and happiness.**

Are we here talking about the true knowers, or only about seekers of knowledge? It seems not to matter. As the Lord says, “even the most pitiful of sinners, who decided for Me, is to be held righteous,” for close is his utmost perfection. Those who are perfect, as well as those on the path, spend their time in contemplation of the goal; some in fullness, others imperfectly, but on the path toward perfection. Perfect ones aid imperfect ones, and imperfect ones see and worship the Lord in those who are perfect. Thus keeping company on the foundations of truth and reality, supporting each other in rightness, they remain firm on their path toward the utmost fulfillment.

God is here. God is here *now*. He is here, right beside us. He rejoices with us, He weeps with us. He is with us in moments both happy and unhappy. Each of our joys or troubles is also His. God is closer to us than the closest, dearer than the dearest. God is our best friend, the lover of our innermost soul. There is no one, nor can there be one, who could possibly be closer. Friends and lovers can leave us, but God is with us, beside us, within us, from all sides and within, from the beginning until the end of the world, and far beyond. Let us notice Him. Let us return His love, return even a small fragment of attention with which He cares about us. For He is not a distant, insensitive force, He is the one

whose refuge we seek when we run away from the distant and the insensitive. It is enough only to notice Him, to pay attention, and all our anxiety will disappear forever.

**10 To those, who are always preoccupied with devotion,
who love Me with all their hearts,
I give the yoga of knowledge,
which brings them to Me.**

Those who are devoted to God, who have the willingness and longing, but who lack knowledge, receive from God whatever they lack, for God is the fullness of knowledge. With devotion to God, the essence of knowledge pours into the bhakta, making him great among the sages. It is the knowledge of God's nature, the knowledge of yoga, the ability to discern between the real and unreal, which is the essence of wisdom, and which can be absorbed in no other manner, and is not taught at the universities. Only he, who is devoted to God, can know Him; only he can comprehend His innermost nature. That is so because we cannot think or talk about God as an object, as a thing beside other things. God is the foundation and the essence, the very basis and the axis of the world. The vast multitude of worlds and beings live in Him. How could a being possibly know Him, if it doesn't open up to the essence of all things by devotion to Him, the essence which will then be perceived beyond all? The reality is known by truth, which is devotion to reality. The truth reaches its fullness when utterly joined with reality. The bhakta therefore, by devotion to God, receives more and more of the knowledge of God, and when he completely unites with God, attaining His nature in fullness, he attains the complete knowledge of God, which is the knowledge of being.

**11 As a mercy to them, I,
who abide in their souls,
dispel the darkness of ignorance
with clear light of knowledge.**

As a bhakta opens up toward God, the Lord fills him, to a greater and greater extent. Like the light of the sun, that fills a room when we remove the dark shades and open up the windows, so does the

light of God fill the one who surrenders to Him. Where there is light, the darkness cannot be. Where there is God, there can be no ignorance, for ignorance is merely a lack of awareness of God's presence. In this presence, the soul encounters its fullness, it attains complete fulfillment, and every trace of fear and insecurity is lost from her, for I Am.

12 Arjuna said:

**You are the highest brahman, the highest abode,
You are the greatest purifier.
You are the original Divine Puruṣa,
the unborn God of the gods.**

Such devotion is the present state of Arjuna, who is mighty among saints. His devotion sings hymns to the glory of the Lord. His excitement radiates from him, like the sun that rises from behind the clouds, for his soul feels the joy of fulfillment. Drinking the nectar of the Lord's word, he rejoices, and from his joy, he praises the Lord. The joy of his heart bursts through the throat center, through viśuddha. The light of the throat flows like a stream of praise in the glory of the Lord, and he remembers everything the Lord said about Himself, and confirms His greatness from the depths of his heart: "You said that you are the highest brahman, and you are. You said that you are the highest abode, and that is the eternal truth. You are the greatest purifier, for you are the purity itself, which takes away all impurity from the human soul." Arjuna speaks out from his devotion, it pours from the heart into the throat, and on its path finds the words to express itself, and the best and the most suitable are the very ones, which the Lord used to describe Himself. Arjuna is free from all fear, from all doubt. He is in the state of devotion, in the state of Divine ecstasy, such as that enjoyed by the great saints and yogis in their deep meditations. He drinks the nectar of bliss with full throat.

13 All the ṛṣis speak so of You.

Nārada said so, and Asita, Devala and Vyāsa.

And You, Yourself, have revealed Yourself as such before me.

In his rapture, Arjuna uses also solid arguments, the evidence behind his claims; the greatest evidence is the word of a sage who

knows the highest truth. Arjuna now remembers their words, which they used to praise Kṛṣṇa, all of them, on various occasions. And as the crowning argument, there is the word of the Lord himself. For if the word of a sage is evidence, because of his insight and greatness, how much more power and value must have the word of the Lord himself, who is the foundation and essence of the wisdom of a sage!

**14 Everything you have told me
I hold to be the truth, o Keśava.
You, o Lord, neither gods nor demons
can reach nor comprehend.**

Devas and asuras, or gods and demons, are the main powerful beings of the Vedic mythology; the fundamental forces of nature, both good and evil, fighting for supremacy. All the Vedic rituals are meant to appease those very forces. The Lord is transcendental, beyond those forces, beyond their comprehension and reach.

**15 Indeed, only You know Your own person, o Highest Puruṣa,
o origin of beings, Lord of all, God of the gods,
o Lord of the entire world.**

The Lord is the greatest. He is the foundation of all existence. No one can know Him, for no one can comprehend His greatness, without becoming one with Him. Therefore, always He alone knows Himself; if one becomes purified to the extent of being able to know Him, in the process of his purification he becomes the Lord, so that always only He knows Himself. The Highest Puruṣa is the final degree of evolution of beings, the end of evolution, the final goal. He is the fundamental light, whose shades are the multitudes of beings and worlds. In everything, He sets things in motion, He is the conscious and active principle, which shines throughout the many levels of Creation, creating from His fullness the infinite diversity.

**16 It is appropriate for You indeed
to speak about Your Divine glory,
which pervades all those worlds.**

People often see modesty as a quality of great men. It is so because of many reasons, but the prevalent one is ignorance. For people in their ignorance must fight ego, which attempts to give itself importance and feed on self-appraisal and praise from others. Seeing that to be the path that leads to ruin, people have come to the conclusion that it is best for a man without objectivity, who lives in an illusion, not to speak about his own virtues, for he will destroy himself, and his virtues will become void. For such a man, it is better to speak about the virtues of others, while ignoring his own. Still, such a cure for boastful arrogance has meaning only for people who are not objective, who perceive themselves as a limited personality among other limited personalities, obsessed by fear of her own temporary nature and irrelevance, which attempts to create an illusion of her own value in comparison with others by false pride and boastfulness.

What could be the meaning of the modesty of an enlightened man, who perceives things objectively? If facts say something, he will perceive it and say it. If things are not so, he will perceive and say that, as well. If he tells someone the state of facts, it is never colored by personal interests, such as fears and desires, for he perceives only the reality. Since he fails to identify with the body, he needs not use modesty, which, from his perspective, is but a lie, a lack of objective perspective. For why would he belittle or excel one body, or one mind, only because he currently acts through it? Why, it is merely a body, and merely a mind, substances of various levels of energy, which currently belong to him, and of which he can form a judgment, as he can of other bodies and minds. If his mind is powerful, he will state it without need for modesty. If it is weak, he will state that as well, but that will not be modesty, but a mere statement. Others can attribute to him motives of either arrogance or modesty, but indeed, in him there is only the reality, which speaks of reality.

If that is the case with an enlightened man, how much more must it be the case with the Lord himself, who is the essence and the foundation of all? When He praises Himself, it is pure objectivity, which is expressed for the very same reason which made Him create all the worlds and all the beings, the reason from which He set the entire process of evolution in motion: in order to spread His glory, in order to create more beings who are able to grasp and comprehend it, who will carry in themselves the

highest Divine attributes. If that is arrogance, then life in beings is also arrogance, and joy is also arrogance, for those are only fragments of the glory of God, with which He celebrates Himself. When He speaks of Himself to Arjuna, He fulfills his basic intent, which is to give Himself, to give fulfillment to those who want it. This Arjuna of course understands, he understands Kṛṣṇa's need to give Himself, to serve all beings by elevating them, for that will spread His glory. If mind is to be praised, if life is to be praised, if consciousness is to be praised, if love is to be praised, how much more is then the Lord to be praised, who is the foundation and the essence of those qualities? And if He is to be praised by one who knows Him in any measure, how much more does He then need to praise Himself, knowing Himself in fullness!

**17 How am I to understand You, o Yogī,
always thinking about You?
In which forms am I to envision You, o Lord?**

Arjuna wants to understand everything there is to understand about the Lord. He wants to absorb everything that has any connection to the Lord, all the aspects of His greatness, in order to praise Him, and in order to never lose the memory of Him.

**18 Tell me again in detail, o Janārdana,
all Your yogic abundance.
For I can never have enough of the nectar of Your words.**

Arjuna is in a state of ecstasy, he literally drinks the nectar of bliss, which he obtains by worshiping Kṛṣṇa. That is why he wants to hear more; every word, which the Lord says of Himself, resonates with Arjuna's system in such a way, that it produces the nectar of the bliss of devotion, amṛta. He therefore, speaking of drinking the nectar of the Lord's word, does not speak only metaphorically, and yogīs with experience will know that he speaks quite literally; the bhakta literally drinks the energy, which in his system causes bliss like nectar, he literally has the sensation of swallowing it. Such blissful devotion is not a state of hysteria, from which ignorant men sometimes attempt to imitate it, but a real touch with the purifying bliss of the higher energy, the higher consciousness.

19 The Almighty Lord said:

I will now describe to you My Divine glories,
but only the greatest of them, o glory of the Kurus,
for My greatness has no end.

The Lord wants to say that He will only state the general guidelines of His greatness.

20 I am the Self, o Guḍākeśa,
which resides in the heart of every being.
I am the beginning, the middle
and the end of all beings.

The self of a being is the being itself, its core, its “heart.” This core of being, its essence and reality, is God, or the radiation of the Divine reality, which is perceived by a being as itself.

People often interpret this verse by saying that the self literally resides in the area of heart. The argument for this hypothesis is that the majority of men will perceive the mental body, which indeed resonates with the heart cakra, as themselves.

Still, it is an illusion, since the Self is not localized. It is not localized in a specific place, for that would mean that it is not located elsewhere, which is not true. The Self is God Himself, and He is omnipresent. Indeed, there are various doors through which the light of Self radiates through a man and into the world, and, depending on a man’s specific qualities, he will perceive himself either in the head, or in the heart, or in a toe. A yogī who has attained Self-realization observes everything as Self, and not only one body, or a part of that body, such as the heart. If, however, we understand this verse in its proper meaning, in which the “heart” means the essence, the core—that, around which everything else is woven, then we will understand its real meaning. And indeed, as we dive deeper into the core of our own being, we get closer to the true Self, and therefore to the Divine reality, which is all-pervading. Because of that all-pervading nature, the Lord speaks the following sentence: He is indeed not only the essence, but everything at all; in Him everything begins, lasts and ends.

21 Among Ādityas I am Viṣṇu,
among the sources of light I am the sun,

among the maruts I am Marīci,
among the stars I am the moon.

Those images convey the glory of the greatest among the great: that what is Viṣṇu among the Ādityas, what is the sun among the sources of light, what is Marīci among the maruts (the stormy companions of Indra), what is the moon among the stars on the night sky, that is the Lord among all things: the greatest, who outshines everyone in glory, abundance and light. This is also the meaning conveyed by the following verses.

22 Among the Vedas I am Sāma-veda,
among the gods I am Vāsava,
among the senses I am the mind.
In all beings I am consciousness.

Sāma-veda is the Veda which speaks of the ceremonies of soma, the intoxicating nectar. Although it seems possible that the Aryans originally produced soma as a beverage made from a certain plant, which they used in order to intoxicate themselves, in the yogic terminology soma is a certain substance produced by a yogi's body, in order to support his functioning in elated states of consciousness (see the commentary of 4:29). Vāsava is Indra, the ruler of the devas. The mind is the Lord of senses, and consciousness is the essence of being.

23 Among the Rudras I am Śaṅkara,
among yakṣas and rākṣasas I am Kubera.
Among the vasus I am Agni,
and among the mountains I am Meru.

Rudra is the raging Vedic god, "the destroyer," and Śaṅkara is the name of Śiva, in His merciful aspect.

24 Among the priests, know that I am Bṛhaspati, o Pārtha.
Among the commanders of armies I am Kārttikeya,
I am the ocean among the waters.

Bṛhaspati is the priest of the gods. Kārttikeya is the commander of the armies of heaven, born from Śiva and Pārvatī in order to lead the army of devas in a battle against asura Tārakā.

25 Of maharṣis I am Bhṛgu,
of words I am the syllable Om,
of yajñas I am japa.
Among the motionless things I am Himalaya.

Japa is the repetition of a mantra, aloud, silently or within oneself.

26 Among the trees I am banyan,
among the Divine sages I am Nārada.
Among the gandharvas I am Citraratha,
among the siddhas I am the wise Kapila.

27 Know, that I am the Uccaiṣravas among the horses,
born from amṛta.
Among the best of elephants I am Airāvata,
and among men I am the king.

28 Of weapons I am vajra,
among cows I am Kāma-dhenu,
among the causes of conception I am Kandarpa,
and among the serpents I am Vāsuki.

Vajra is the weapon of Indra. The word “vajra” means at the same time “the thunder” and “the diamond,” and both translations together convey the image. Kāma-dhenu is the mythical cow that fulfills all desires, the bovine variation on the theme of a wishing-well. Kandarpa is Kāma, the god of desire, the equivalent of the Greek Cupid and Roman Eros.

29 Among the nāgas I am Ananta,
Varuṇa am I among the beings of water.
Among the forefathers I am Aryaman,
among the supervisors I am Yama.

Ananta is the seat of Viṣṇu. In the images he is often depicted as a snake with a thousand heads, that rises above Viṣṇu, a symbol of awakened kuṇḍalinī which radiates through the crown cakra.

30 Among the Daityas I am Prahlāda,
among the destroyers I am Time.

**Among the animals I am the lion,
among the birds I am Vainateya.**

Prahlāda is the pious son of the demonic King Hiraṇyakaśipu, whom his demonic father used to molest incessantly because of his pious nature. Eventually, God himself appeared in the form of a man-lion (so called Narasiṃha avatāra) and killed the king, crowning Prahlāda in his place.

Vainateya is Garuḍa, the mount of Viṣṇu.

**31 Among the purifiers I am the wind,
among the warriors I am Rāma.
Among the fish I am the shark,
and among the rivers I am Gaṅgā.**

Rāma is Rāmacandra, the righteous king from Rāmāyaṇa.

**32 In all things I am the beginning,
the middle and the end, o Arjuna.
Of all knowledge I am the knowledge of Self,
in discussions I am the conclusion.**

Knowledge of Self is the highest knowledge, for it gives a being the insight of the essence of all, and, being the knowledge of the subject, it greatly exceeds the knowledge of the objects, or things with which the subject is preoccupied.

The conclusion is that, to which all the parties in a discussion aspire, and, being the knowledge of the truth, represents the purpose of any discussion.

**33 Of the letters I am the letter “A,”
of the compound words I am the word of two syllables.
I am indeed the unpassing Time,
I am the all-seeing provider.**

**34 I am the all-devouring death,
and the creation of all that is to be.
Among the female qualities
I am Glory, Success,
Word, Memory, Mindfulness,
Patience and Perseverance.**

The female qualities are not possessed by women alone, but for certain reasons, they can be called female, since the female system is constructed in a way that is most suitable for manifestation of those qualities. The female qualities are perseverance, tradition, preservation of the learnt, security, expression through speech, conveying knowledge to the next generation, and the like.

- 35 Among the hymns of Sāma-veda I am Bṛhat-sāma,
among the verses I am Gāyatrī.
Among the months I am mārḡasīrṣa,¹⁶¹
and among the seasons I am the floral spring.

Gāyatrī is a verse which is thought to contain the essence of all Vedas. In the beginning, the brāhmaṇas needed to know all the Vedas by heart in order to receive initiation. Later, as the caste became a matter of formality, an interpretation was invented, according to which it would suffice to know Gāyatrī by heart, as a minimum which needs to be met by a brāhmaṇa during initiation. Gāyatrī is the following:

*om bhūr bhuvah svaḥ
tat savitur vareṇyam
bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*

- 36 Among deceptions I am gamble,
I am the greatness in all that is great,
I am the victory, I am the adventure,
I am the strength of the mighty.

Gamble is the greatest of deceptions, because it gives the appearance of honesty and the apparent possibility of gain. This is why a man, who engages in gamble, can ruin himself more thoroughly than in any other way. It seems that the Lord mentions this because of Arjuna's good knowledge of the evils that can arise from gamble; therefrom originated all the misfortunes to which they are now exposed, and which brought about this war.

¹⁶¹ First month in the ancient Indian lunar calendar, November–December.

- 37 Among the Vṛṣṇis I am Vasudeva,
 among the Pāṇḍavas I am Dhanañjaya.
 Among the wise men I am Vyāsa,
 among the men of thought I am Uśanas.

Vasudeva is the father of Kṛṣṇa.

- 38 Among punishments I am the whip,
 I am the skill in those who aspire to victory.
 Among the secret things I am silence,
 I am the wisdom in the wise.

The whip is the greatest among punishments because it teaches the punished man a lesson, but leaves him alive, and, unlike imprisonment, does not expose him to the peril of bad association and the destruction of personality. The whip therefore provides a painful lesson, which deters one from further evil, but does not destroy him, unlike some other forms of punishment.

- 39 I am the seed of all that exists, o Arjuna.
 There is no created being, either moving or motionless,
 that could exist without Me.

The seed is that, from which everything grows. The seed contains in itself the entire potential plant. Similarly, God not only represents the seed of all beings, but also their essence, the energy of their consciousness, their existence, and He also provides the substance from which their bodies are built, their thoughts and emotions. How amusing must it be to Him when someone, thinking with the substance given to him by the Lord, says that God does not exist. Does not exist, and yet he is all within Him. It is the essence of illusion. Gradually, perceiving the reality, the foundation of all, the gradations of subtlety in things, a man starts to perceive that by going into the essence, we eventually come to God, for if we seek the foundation of any particular thing, we will find it in God.

- 40 My Divine abundance has no end, o conqueror of enemies.
 What I have just told you is but a glimpse.

The Lord provided only the hints, the general guidelines, the signposts. That is the direction in which we need to seek, but we should look at the moon, not the finger pointing at the moon. It is difficult, if not impossible, to speak about God in clear statements; all our vocabulary and intellectual apparatus are made for the purpose of navigating through the world of the senses. Because of that, we can think and speak about God only because of the happy circumstance that the senses contain some of the Divine aspects, although only their vague and distant shadows, and so it is possible to give the guidelines, the signposts that need to be followed in order to reach God. God is not only bliss, but through bliss we can get an approximate idea about what God must be like, what some of His qualities must be like. Realization is not God, but through realization we can grasp some of the immense intelligence, which is also one of the Divine aspects. The reality alone is not God, but through reality we can grasp some of the final reality, the Absolute reality, the highest possible reality, and in this way too we can touch some of the infinite glory of God. We should therefore cherish everything that is good and powerful, everything that is true, blissful and great, for thereby we cherish God, and come in greater touch with His original nature.

And knowing that, it becomes apparent, as a flash in the night, that we ourselves, our innermost nature, our true, real and immortal being, are also one of the Divine aspects. We thus understand, that for the entire time, constantly, in ourselves we carried a signpost that pointed to God, for indeed, since God is omnipresent and all-pervading, He must undoubtedly be present also within us, and must pervade our own being.

**41 Know everything abundant, beautiful and glorious,
to be a manifestation of only a fraction of My glory.**

We should remember this, and keep repeating it to ourselves, lest ever lose sight of it. In everything beautiful, in everything powerful, in everything great; God is He, whom we admire; God is the source of greatness, beauty, truth, reality and wonder. He is all that—all of it originates from Him. In everything that surrounds us, there are signposts to God. Through everything that we perceive, by discernment we can reach Him: in that, which lacks greatness, we see where He is not, and its opposite can lead

us to Him. Wherever there is greatness, by seeking the greatness of the great, and the power of the mighty, we find Him.

**42 But why do you need, o Arjuna,
the knowledge of that?
By a mere fragment of Myself
I pervade and maintain all Creation.**

The entire Creation, with the multitude of universes of all the levels of reality, is animated by a mere sight of God—an insignificant, quite small fraction of His being.

How naive are the concepts which say that God became the Nature! Why, the Nature not even closely has enough greatness, to contain Him. The entire Creation is a small thing, a pack of trivia, and all the joy that can be obtained from it is a mere glimpse of the true joy, which is God. That is the thing to which we need to aspire.

Chapter Eleven

- 1 Arjuna said:
In Your mercy, you have told me
the utmost secret called adhyātma,
which has dispelled my delusion.
- 2 About the appearance and disappearance of beings,
as well as about Your unpassing glory, o Lotus-eyes,
I have heard from you in detail.
- 3 You are such, as you have described Yourself,
o Highest Lord, but I wish to see You
in Your aspect of the Almighty, o Highest Puruṣa.

When people say they would want to see God, we are mostly dealing with mere provocations, and, thinking that God does not exist, they do not see such a challenge as potentially perilous. They are quite certain that none will answer it. If, somehow, they believed there to be even the slightest probability of it being answered, they would probably be scared to death, and run away into some dark corner.

Let us just take a look at the Bible, for example, to see how ignorant men insulted Jesus, ridiculing the very idea of him indeed being the embodiment of God. When someone tells them

the truth and warns them about their errors, people will often, without thinking, reply with something like “who are you to tell us those things, a new Messiah?” If they, by any chance, approached people with respect, and if they believed in the omnipresent nature of God, they would be inclined to see the Messiah in every rock, and it would be much more difficult for them to decide to act from a position of assuming there to be no saints or avatāras in the world, and that all men are governed by the same lowly things as they. Because of all that, we can again see the confirmation of an old principle that the saints see saints and the embodiments of God everywhere, and the sinners see only sinners. It is so common, that it suffices merely to look through the spectacles, through which a certain individual observes the world, in order to find out many things about his soul.

The similar applies to Arjuna: if we look carefully at the above verses, we can see the complete lack of any doubt in what he is saying. In his thoughts, there is not even the slightest trace of skepticism, nor does he test the Lord in any way. To him, it is quite clear that the Lord has told the truth about Himself; his heart tells him that Kṛṣṇa is the Almighty, and his only desire is to know more of His nature, to get better insight, in order to be able to worship and adore Him better. A great soul finds the greatest pleasure in admiring those, who are better and greater than himself, and Arjuna is indeed a great soul.

There are people who seem to think that a certain precedent is given here: if someone tells us that he is God, we should, like Arjuna, tell him to show us his aspect of the Almighty, in order for us to be sure. Of course, those men belong to the group that put the crown of thorns on the head of Jesus¹⁶² with perfectly calm conviction, since, in their world, a Messiah is not possible,

¹⁶² Matthew 27:29–31: *And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.*

Also Matthew 27:39–44: *And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is*

and it is therefore *obvious* that they are dealing with a fake. No other possibility exists for them. If they had even considered the possibility that Jesus in fact *is* the Messiah, they would have acted at least like Nicodemus, who, deeply troubled, came to Jesus to talk at night; and when all the disciples of Jesus ran away, this very Nicodemus, who was not certain of the true nature of Jesus, was the one who had buried him.

Let us imagine, for the sake of test alone, how we would approach someone who claims to be God, and we are not really certain whether he is, or not. Well, I assume that anyone with any brains in him would deeply consider, and would rather bow low before a cheat, than insult the embodiment of the Almighty with doubt. If it turns out that we are dealing with an impostor, it is the least of our problems: we were bowing before God anyway, whom we thought him to be, and the law of karma will take care of anything else, anyway. But, if God Himself was present before us, if a saint or the Almighty showed Himself before us, and we failed to show our deepest respect and devotion, to find the refuge of our souls in Him, then we have committed an act for which we will have a hard time forgiving ourselves, if we succeed at all.

After having shown God our deepest sentiments, after surrendering to Him the heart of our being, there remains for us only to ask Him to show us more of His Divine nature, in order for us to be able to admire Him more. That is exactly what Arjuna is doing.

**4 If You, o Lord, think that I am capable of seeing it,
then show me, o Lord of yoga, Your unpassing being.**

Arjuna is wise enough to think that it is not quite certain that *he* is worthy of seeing God. He does not doubt Kṛṣṇa, but he is less certain about himself. That can be quite a lesson to the arrogant men who constantly doubt God, but who are, on the other hand, quite pleased with themselves, and never put themselves in question. It seems that a dark soul can best be recognized by his great conviction of his perfection, or at least relative perfection—“maybe

the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'” The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

I am not perfect, but others are even worse.” When we encounter a man who sees himself as evil and sinful, we are probably dealing with a saint, for none indeed will think such a thing about himself unless, at the same time, he is not beholding the light of God, for it is so powerful and fulfilling, that a saint can without difficulty criticize his own faults, without having an impression of losing anything; it seems that we can objectively perceive our present condition only when we outgrow it into something better. Otherwise, we would be so insecure, that we will constantly attempt to reassure ourselves of our own value; if we had real faith in our value, we would find that to be unnecessary.

- 5 **The Almighty Lord said:**
Behold, o Pārtha, the hundreds
and thousands of My Divine forms,
diverse, in many colors and shapes.
- 6 Behold, o Bhārata, the Ādityas, vasus,
Rudras, Aśvins and maruts.
Behold many wonders, unseen before.

All the mentioned deities are the aspects of the Almighty; although they can be thought of as individual beings, and although they can be perceived as such, it is wiser to see them only as different ways of beholding the One. In touch of the Divine Puruṣa and Prakṛti, there arise the countless possibilities of pouring the Divine aspects from the sphere of unmanifested into the sphere of manifestation, and we can therefore, in the created world, observe the countless “gods,” or the points of touch of God with the world, and the many ways of His manifestation in the world. This provides an explanation for the countless multitude of gods in Hinduism, which so unnecessarily outrages Western theologians.

Of course, if we consider this more deeply, the entire created world is some sort of a manifestation of His aspects, although, as the Lord says, of a quite insignificant part of Him.

- 7 **In My body now behold, o Guḍākeśa,**
the entire world united in One—
all that is in motion and motionless,
and everything else, that you desire to see.

The One is manifested in the entire world, in all Creation. The One is the foundation of the entire multitude of beings. Arjuna's consciousness observed this multitude, under the influence of māyā, or the illusory quality that "breaks" the light of One in such a way, that He is observed as the multitude, creating the division in observation, which creates the possibility of something existing in relationship with something else. In such, relative world, which is indeed no more than an illusion, every being thinks itself to be individual and separate from others, and this veil is mostly impregnable for beings.

**8 But with your own eyes you cannot see Me.
I therefore give you the heavenly sight.
Behold now My Divine glory.**

It would be easy to say that the Lord removed the veil of illusion from Arjuna's eyes, and that Arjuna then became capable of perceiving the true, undivided reality of Self, in its entire glory.

That would, I believe, be a great, enormous devaluation of the nature of this event. The experience of oneness exists on many levels, with different depths of insight. Arjuna's experience is most likely the highest achievement, and a thing without a precedent; his experience comes as a result of the intervention of Īśvara Himself. The experience is felt by an immensely capable yogī, who is practically, according to his qualifications, the first thing next to God. And last, but not least, the experience comes as a result of preparation through conversation, in which Arjuna's consciousness was gradually expanded and purified to the degree where in him exists only devotion to God and the desire to know more of Him.

Many yogīs, as well as ordinary men, have experienced the state of Unity, in various ways and in various degrees, depth and detail. Such experiences are, in fact, quite common; so common, that there is a danger of underestimating Arjuna's experience, and classifying it in the group of the experiences of samādhi. I agree that this experience is of a similar quality, but most likely exceeds everything in quantity, or depth.

**9 Sañjaya said:
Having said that, o king,**

**the greatest Lord of Yoga, Hari,
showed Pārtha His Divine form.**

It is significant that Kṛṣṇa is here called the Lord of Yoga; for yoga is the state of unity, and the Lord, the Highest Puruṣa, is He, who literally represents the embodiment of Unity, the supreme Divine aspect which is One in Himself, and who bears the consciousness of the Original. The state of yoga is His fundamental attribute, for someone is a yogī to the degree, to which he has realized Him, and become harmonized with Him.

**10 Many mouths, and eyes, and wondrous sights;
adorned with heavenly jewels,
and armed with heavenly weapons, raised for battle,**

**11 Wrapped up in heavenly wreaths, clothes and scents,
stood His form, marvelous, bright,
endless and all-pervading.**

One needs to know how to interpret this description. For we should look at each word not by trying to visualize the picture, putting it together in our mind from the images of the individual objects described, but by trying to feel what each separate word tells us. What does a glance of one's lips tell us? From a position, from an angle, in a certain state of spirit? A lot; from the position of the lips and eyes, we can learn much of one's thoughts. Let us now imagine a vision, in which the inner nature of endless God is conferred upon Arjuna through the changes of the billions of subtle hints of emotions, facial expressions, expression in eyes, lips, muscles in the cheeks, all those things through which he learned to look into a human soul. Literally, an infinite multitude of all those aspects is opened up to him simultaneously, and he acquires the insight of the infinite range and subtlety of the consciousness of God, who has revealed Himself to him.

Were such experience not poured into his consciousness in this manner, he would most likely understand much less, only an unrecognizable glimpse of a certain state. This way, all the aspects of subtlety pour throughout his bodies, from higher to lower, and convey to him the pictures, in a way he is able to comprehend, through certain symbols and meanings.

How does a warrior perceive power, strength and focused consciousness? Through the weapons, through the arms that bear the weapons raised for battle. The consciousness is focused through the weapons, and resides in them. The consciousness is focused and powerful. The reality is reflected in that consciousness.

At the same time, the wreaths of flowers, the scents, beauty, joy... The playfulness of a butterfly over a meadow of flowers, from all angles, from the heart and the petals of each flower looking at the sun and absorbing its warmth. The children making floral wreaths and running through the meadow barefooted, bringing the flowers to mother and father, putting the wreaths on them. Love, beauty and joy woven into those wreaths.

A focused pilgrim, full of love and devotion, brings a wreath of flowers into the temple of Viṣṇu; remembering His glory, he pays Him respect by adorning, with his wreath, the shoulders of His statue.

The stars are being born in each moment. In a nebula of interstellar gas, the local concentration of gas and gravitational compression of hydrogen took place. In the core of a young star, the oven of fusion is lit in the flash of light. The light sings the song of Creation, which celebrates God; it is condensed first into life, then into consciousness, and then into devotion to God. In His eyes, in the corner of His lips there is this flash. On the flowers around His neck, in the weapons that He bears, there is the light so dense, that the matter of this world is a mere breath of emptiness, and a thin cloud. The look in His eyes is the very idea of firmness, of which the firmness of a diamond is but a distant glimpse. At the same time, the playful joy of children dancing in the meadow of flowers is only a vague glimpse of the Eternal Joy, residing in the corner of His lips.

Each flower around His neck bears more light than the millions of suns. Each petal glows with bliss. Still, it is not painful to behold, and it does not hurt the eyes, for light is only the closest concept that can carry the experience to the reader. The light is not visual, it is the state of spirit in which there is no ignorance, it is the state of purity and vision.

In His weapons there is the infinite power. Still, this power does not frighten: it encourages. It is the power of protection, the strength that feeds the virtuous and the brave.

His scent... the scent of sudden solution, of a problem yet unsolved. The scent of sudden joy, without a reason, the happiness

that comes from freedom. The scent of the levity of consciousness. The sweet dreams of a pure, righteous soul. The scent of the ages long past, the ages before Time came to be. The scent of the distant spaces, beyond world. The scent of truth and virtue, the scent of bliss, which comes from the realization that He is here, that the perfect bliss is here and now, and it will never pass, that everything but Him will pass.

Knowledge that He is the only destiny and reality.

**12 If thousands of suns were lit in the sky at the same time,
their brightness would resemble the shine
of this magnificent being.**

The light of the sun is but light. Imagine the light which, besides all the qualities of light, also radiates reality, truth, the essence of intelligence, the supreme power, the greatest goodness, the greatest beauty, the reality which glimmers in so many different ways, and in so many different aspects... that I could die describing them, one by one, always and forever, overwhelmed...

In this world, we can only say how powerful this light is, but that says practically nothing of its nature. It is the light of realization, the light of truth, the light of reality, love, virtue and bravery. It is the light in the child's eye, the same light, the spark of life, but so powerful that its strength creates a stream of bliss in a human heart, so powerful that it can instantly kill the unprepared. The vast, infinite light, the light of millions of suns, but the suns that radiate reality, and the essence of light and consciousness. Nothing, nothing at all in this world can convey the full impression of that, for even the totality of the world is merely a shadow of God's toenail.

**13 Here, in the body of the God of gods,
the son of Pāṇḍu beheld the entire universe,
divided in multitude and founded in One.**

It would be wrong to understand the statement "here in the body" only as a metaphor. Let us just remember what the lovers are capable of seeing into each other's eyes and bodies, even if they are only projecting their ideal onto another person. A Divine vision resembles it only by analogy, for here, there is no

place for projection—the ideal archetype *indeed is* there, where we see it; in fact, a great part of the positive shock comes from the realization that we do not need to imagine anything, for the reality enormously exceeds our fantasies: it is, in fact, that which we used to touch in our fantasies, always imperfectly, and that toward which we strove, our strivings always thwarted.

The form which Arjuna saw was human, in a sense in which the human nature is only an imperfect, vague attempt at reflecting this perfection, which Kṛṣṇa is whole contains in Himself. Not only human nature, but also the final terms, such as Intelligence, Consciousness, Life, Reality, Joy, Truth, Beauty, Bliss—the fullness of perfection in all possible aspects, the totality of existence in all possible aspects, the essence of life, and everything we consider to be the highest ideals of existence, when we are struck by insanely unjustified optimism and faith in human species—all of it, and immensely more, was shown to Arjuna in a kaleidoscopic vision of the Divine aspects, through the changes of facial expression, the symbols and movements, the incredible amount of subtlety and finesse, which serves the purpose of conveying the inexpressible, through a number of layers of progressively lesser subtlety, into the mind of a human being, in a form he will be able to comprehend, without compromising the fullness of experience in any way.

**14 Then, overwhelmed with wonder,
with goosebumps all over his body,
with folded hands and head bowed
Dhanañjaya respectfully addressed the Lord.**

Only a man who has an experience of a Divine vision, regardless of its degree and intensity, can understand this, at all. That is so because a man, who comes in touch with an obviously superior sphere of existence, behaves in a quite specific way, difficult to understand for those who do not share a similar experience.

Everybody is familiar with fantasies, make-believe, creating one's own private, small world, filled with that which we, limited in our abilities, are able to perceive as desirable, ideal, good and beautiful. A woman will imagine an ideal husband, who will possess the qualities she is able to recognize and understand as desirable; he might even possess some negative qualities as well, which she learned to believe to be inevitable. A man will, similarly,

imagine an ideal woman. It will all take place in some sort of an ideal, desirable world, filled with all the familiar good things, that we are capable of recognizing and which we would choose for ourselves, if we were allowed to.

In all that, the only constant is that all those things are our creations. They all bear our mark, the mark of our limitations and reach. We will never choose that, which is too good for us to imagine, for a simple reason—it indeed *is* too good for us to imagine, and so we simply can't.

Let us now imagine what must it be like for a man who is shown something that indeed is too good for him to imagine, which he is not able to even imagine, or comprehend, which is so far beyond him in all respects, that his entire being, with all the abilities to fantasize, imagine, make-believe and perceive, is simply too narrow and too crowded to comprehend even a fraction of what is being shown to him—there exists no possibility of imagining, and such ideas can be easily disregarded. The mind is simply unable to imagine something that is beyond its capacity—in fact, such a thing needs to be carefully introduced to it, and dimensions of the higher reality must be slowly and gradually translated, or it would otherwise either remain empty, or simply disintegrate under pressure.

The emotional state of a man who experiences such a thing can be imprecisely described as a mixture of astonishment, rapture, wonder, bliss, admiration, adoration, fear and devotion. When, in the form of a being shown to us, in his look, appearance, message conveyed by existence alone, we see something that goes beyond even our boldest dreams... well, let us say that we begin to feel some of that, which God has in store for those who love Him.¹⁶³

15 Arjuna said:

**In Your body, o Lord, I see assembled
all the gods and all beings;
Brahmā the Maker sitting in the lotus;
also all the sages and the serpents of heaven.**

The basic need of a man who beholds God, whose heart is filled with God, is to praise God and adore Him. People without

¹⁶³ 1 Corinthians 2:9.

spiritual experience often attempt to draw a parallel between that, and their shallow worldly experiences, thinking adoration to be a form of humiliation of oneself before something vain, and from that position, they desire to affirm their value and fill their emptiness, attempting to present themselves as individual, independent beings who kneel before none. Within, they are empty, desperate and more that half mad.

Unlike those empty and feeble beings, who have a need to elevate themselves, the saints who behold God have only the need to praise Him, whom they recognize as such an ideal, that they, in their limited existence, are not able to even *invent* something, that would come close to Him. They recognize Him not only as the goal of all their longings, as fulfillment of all hopes and desires, as a scream of utmost happiness, that goes beyond all hope, as a final victory—but also as freedom from their ego. There is no need to elevate ourselves, when we can be without ourselves—we no longer need ourselves, for He exists, He, the final, supreme goal, He whom we recognize as that unimposing, profound and silent presence, which was always, without exception, with us, in all, and which we only failed to recognize, but still we aspired to everything it stands for, and tried to reach it through the things of the world, remaining always disappointed.

And now He is here, and we see Him. He is here. Nothing else, ever, shall we need. He is real and here. The key to utmost fulfillment was present all along, and the highest reality resides in the core of being.

16 I look at Your infinite form,
 with a multitude of arms,
 bellies, mouths and eyes.
 But I fail to see Your beginning,
 middle or end, o Highest Lord, o Almighty!

The vision is, at the same time, both immensely detailed and infinite. Through the finite symbols that a human being can recognize, the endless infinity of God's inner nature is displayed.

17 I behold You with crowns, scepters and discs,
 shining with light all around.
 It is indeed difficult to look at You,
 like a blazing fire, and the infinite light of the sun.

The sight of God is bliss and fulfillment, but this fulfillment is so forceful, that it would pulverize and incinerate an unprepared man. Only Arjuna's great purity is the cause of his ability to come this far in receiving the vision. Most people experience either something much more superficial, of lesser intensity, or are able to behold it for a much shorter period of time, for a mere moment, a fraction of a second. The mighty consciousness can pulverize, it can frighten. But he who beholds it, attains its inner nature, his old, lower nature dies, and he attains initiation into the nature of that, which he beholds. It is therefore said that one cannot behold God and survive; for nothing of our old, lower nature survives. We remain holy, and fundamentally changed.

18 I see You as the unpassing, and the Highest.

You are the supreme foundation of all.

You are the eternal guardian of dharma,

You are the eternal Puruṣa, I think.

The entire created world is governed by a system of laws, which have the quality of the highest, perfect righteousness. People often wonder how such a system functions, and they rarely manage to figure out the truth.

Dharma functions by placing beings in a perspective of the highest perfection, which is God. In this perspective, they observe themselves and their position, and from that position, they judge themselves. Every impurity in a soul that beholds God hurts like a living wound, and creates a feeling of guilt, sinfulness and heavy remorse. From that remorse, a being desires to become better, and according to that wish, he chooses the direction of his future existence in which he will correct his mistakes, amend his guilt, and be able to stand tall before the Lord, and look straight into His eyes. In the mighty bliss of a Divine vision, a being would rather die instantly and vanish, than in any way attempt to deceive anyone, or lie about his condition. In the situation where a being is offered the infinity, the being itself best perceives the price that needs to be paid in order to attain it, and in this knowledge, there is not even a trace of regret regarding the sufferings it will have to endure on the path to perfection. The goal is certain. God is certain; He is steady and lasting. We are the ones who have to decide what garments we shall wear in His presence. The

very devotion to God, the very insight into His nature, is the reason why a being chooses its future life in the mirror of dharma, intended for purification and evolution. The only thing that matters, is to be worthy of Him. All lower goals are lost in this vision.

As hard as people might try to imagine God's righteousness, the reality is far more beautiful and magnificent. When people attempt to envision the last judgment, I assume they will come up with practically everything but that, which actually takes place: we get to be shown the perfect beauty, all burden is removed from our soul, and in the perspective of this beauty and perfection, we get to know ourselves.

Unfortunately, the look in the mirror is often extremely painful to a soul who has lived a physical life filled with sin and lowly things, with limitations imposed upon self and others, increasing the amount of pain in the world. It is a great thing if we manage to turn the direction of such a life while we are still in the physical body, and it is a still greater success to live a life filled with the highest values. When such a perfect being looks at God, he has no need to lower his eyes, for he has looked into His eyes during life, he lived his look within the world, and in His look, his soul can bathe in eternity. For such a man, there is no need for rebirth in the physical world, for in him there are no traces of the physical, that would need to repay debts to the physical; there is only the Divine, which will belong to God, forever.

19 You are without beginning, middle or end;

You are of infinite glory, of countless arms.

**The sun and the moon are Your eyes,
the blazing fire is Your face.**

All Creation receives warmth from Your glow.

The entire relative world is only a way of looking at God. When this truth is revealed to a man, as it was revealed to Arjuna, he then perceives how all Creation praises the Maker, who is reflected in it all, and shines through all Creation, with the bright glow of His innermost nature. The inner Divine nature is manifested through the outer, through the world of objects. Such a seer joins the song that praises God, in a way in which human beings are supposed to praise Him, and which is their true purpose: to consciously observe the Divine nature of the world, and

to embody the hymn of Power that bursts blissfully in all, the hymn to God the Maker, Maintainer and Destroyer. All Creation celebrates God, and especially so the beings of great insight, for there is no true insight and consciousness without the insight of the glory and power of God. There, where God is not praised, there is no value. Where there is no insight of God, there is no insight at all. Where devotion to God is not present, there is no realization. And where God is not present as the very force of devotion, no true devotion can exist.

**20 You indeed pervade the earth,
the worlds of heaven and all in between;
having seen Your marvelous, terrible sight,
all three worlds tremble, o Highest Soul.**

All the beings tremble in a Divine vision, because of the reason previously described: the greatness and perfection of God are such, that one cannot behold them with peace, or for long, but will rather escape into darkness. The purity of light is too much for some to bear, and so they run away in the opposite direction. In any case, he who is not fully purified and perfect, has a certain breaking point, at which he needs to lower his glance, for the Divine light is too strong. Only a perfect soul, which is completely pure and perfect, whose quality is indistinguishable from the quality of the Divine presence, can endlessly rejoice, surrender to God completely, and never look away. A number of higher worlds are filled with beings that constantly and unflinchingly look at God, and absorb His brightness, radiating it on into the world. However, they do so from a certain distance, the least they can comfortably endure. A greater proximity to God will fill them with fear and inflict them pain, and a greater distance does not satisfy them, for they want to be as close to Him as possible. In the higher worlds, the degree of evolvment of beings can be seen directly in this manner: beings closer to God are brighter, more brilliant, for they to a greater extent absorb and radiate the light of God. Eventually, a being becomes so close to God, that there is no longer any difference between the two, and the being then observes that he no longer looks toward God, but from God. That is so because the state of consciousness makes the person. He who is able to raise his consciousness to a level on which he

can abide in God, as his state of consciousness, observes that he himself became the object of his observation.

21 Inside You indeed enter the multitude of the righteous.

Scared, some worship You with folded hands.

“Glory to You!” exclaims a vast number
of siddhas and maharṣis,
praising You with full hymns.

Such perfect beings, who can unflinchingly observe God and recognize His highest nature as the object of their desire, are united with God, and are described here. Actually, it would be wrong to think that they are becoming one with God, because such a mental construction assumes the loss of one’s individual existence, while, in reality, we are dealing with recognition and affirmation of one’s own existence; recognizing God as the essence of his own soul, a being attains complete emancipation, and the emancipated being is, by definition, Divine. Yes, indeed we can observe how a being is united with God, but to the being itself, that is perceived as realization and recognition of his own innermost nature, and realization of the highest potential, realization of the goal of all longings and desires.

On a level only a fraction below this, when the light of God bathes and freshens the human soul, which gathers from Him the light and life, a being celebrates God with God’s energy. With only a slight advance from this position, God no longer celebrates Himself; God then *is*.

**22 Rudras, Ādityas, vasus and Sādhyas,
Viśvas, Aśvins, maruts and the forefathers,
the multitude of gandharvas, yakṣas, asuras and siddhas—
they all gaze at You, in wonder.**

All the higher beings, beings of greater evolvment and of the higher levels, spend their time looking at God.

**23 Seeing Your immense form, o Mighty-armed,
with many mouths, eyes, many hands,
thighs, feet, with many bellies, with many fierce teeth,
all the worlds tremble, and I with them.**

24 When I see You reaching the sky,
blazing, in many colors, mouth wide open,
with big bright eyes, I fear in my heart,
and I find neither courage, nor peace, o Viṣṇu.

25 When I see Your mouth and Your teeth,
terrible, resembling the fires of time,
I no longer know the four directions,
and I find no peace. Have mercy,
o Lord of gods, o refuge of the universe!

Arjuna now observes another thing the Lord wants to show him: His aspect of destruction. Beside the role of supporting virtue, God's appearance in the world plays yet another role: that of a destroyer of evil and lowliness. For where the infinite light shines, the darkness cannot prevail.

26 Into Your mouth rush all the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the vast number of princes, Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
the son of the chariot driver¹⁶⁴
and with them also the leaders of our warriors.

27 They rush head down into the terrible mill of Your teeth.
Some of them are hanging between the teeth,
heads pounded into dust.

28 Like the currents of many rivers
that flow toward the sea,
so do they, the heroes among men,
rush into Your flaming jaws.

The entire army gathered in Kurukṣetra will therefore be destroyed, according to the will of God.

29 Like butterflies, that rush into the blazing fire,
into ruin, so do those creatures recklessly rush
into Your mouth, to be destroyed.

¹⁶⁴ Karṇa.

Butterflies rushing into the fire are a common metaphor used in Indian scriptures, symbolizing a relationship between uncontrolled desires and one's destruction. Like nocturnal insects, who follow their instinct to move toward the light, even when it leads them to immediate destruction, so are people often unable to contain themselves, and do things that will bring them ruin, only because of their mindlessness, habits, passions and lack of virtue.

**30 With tongues of fire You embrace all the worlds,
everywhere, consuming them.
The bright rays of Your being shine, o Viṣṇu,
filling the entire world with light.**

In the same way in which God brings the final fulfillment to the righteous, who recognize in Him their goal and perfection, He also brings destruction to all that opposes Him. Where there is light, there cannot be darkness. That is the fundamental law of the world. Likewise, where God is manifested, no lowliness can prevail.

**31 Tell me, who are You, in this terrible form?
Glory to You, o Greatest, have mercy.
I wish to know You, the original being.
I do not understand Your actions.**

Arjuna is filled with respect, admiration and knowledge, as he observes God's destructive aspect. Still, in spite of that, he does not understand it. He does not understand where the destruction is directed, and what is its purpose.

**32 The Almighty Lord said:
I am the mighty Time that destroys the world,¹⁶⁵
and now my preoccupation is the destruction of the worlds.
Even without you, none of the arrayed warriors
of the opposing armies will survive.**

Because of the birth of many demonic beings on earth, who with their actions opposed righteousness and created great disturbance,

¹⁶⁵ Compare to 10:30.

there arose the need for the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in order to strengthen the positive forces by His appearance and actions on the one hand, and provide the mortal blow to the evil on the other hand. That is, of course, merely the explanation of the immediate situation.

The deeper explanation is that the Divine aspect of destruction is woven into all manifestation, as Time, or transience. From the lower perspective of a being who is identified with things to which it is attached, this is bad, for a being would want some things to last forever. However, from the Divine perspective, all that would last forever, and would not be God himself, therefore the final perfection, would mean limitation and suffering. The transience of all worldly is therefore the consequence of God's compassion, which prevents beings from remaining static for a long time, and from freezing their development at a certain point. God is therefore the Time, which breaks the static nature of the created world, and accelerates evolution toward the Divine.

33 So stand up, and achieve glory!

Overcome your enemies, and enjoy the reign on earth.

They are all slain by My hand, anyway.

Be only My instrument, o Left-handed!

The attribute "left-handed" refers to Arjuna's ability to shoot arrows with both hands.

34 Droṇa and Bhīṣma, Jayadratha,

Karṇa and other brave warriors,

whom I have already killed, slay!

Fear not, but fight: you will defeat your enemies!

Arjuna's problem is therefore nonexistent. However concerned he might be with the issue of destroying the teachers and respectable people, it is the fact that all beings are passing and mortal, and that they will die anyway, and besides that, their immediate death is inevitable, and is in accordance with God's intent. They will therefore in any case die, however he decides. It is therefore better for him to kill them in battle, according to his duty, for he will thus, besides performing his duty, also be the instrument of

God's will. This is quite a turnaround in Kṛṣṇa's explanation of His own desire for Arjuna to fight and win, and it became possible only after His true nature had been revealed. Before that, the words "fight, for I have thus decided" would hardly have achieved the desired effect.

That is also the mortal blow to the religious theories regarding the universal and unquestionable value of nonviolence; it is obvious that violence can sometimes be not only useful and necessary, but also the manifestation of the Divine will and intent in the world. It is therefore unimportant whether an act is violent or nonviolent, but whether it is in service of the manifestation of the Divine in the world, or not. Removal of a great number of malefactors from the world is undoubtedly a violent act, but in the long run it is useful, and leads to harmony and happiness in the world. Also, the nonviolent course of actions can be a cowardly act, and can increase the presence of evil in the world. We should therefore align ourselves with the will of God, and observe what is appropriate for us to do in a certain situation; no general opinions can replace the living and awakened consciousness, which forms dynamic and enlightened judgments.

35 Sañjaya said:

Hearing those words from Keśava,
Arjuna, with palms folded, trembled,
bowed, and again, filled with fear,
addressed Kṛṣṇa with a trembling voice.

We must not lose sight of the perspective of unquestionable authority, from which the Lord addresses Arjuna. Arjuna for the entire time literally looks at His infinite power, righteousness, consciousness and omnipresent, all-pervading nature. Also, God's universal perspective far exceeds his personal ability to comprehend. This forcefulness of the experience literally gives Arjuna goosebumps all over his body.

36 Arjuna said:

With full right is the world happy
and enjoys praising You, o Hṛṣikeśa.
It is proper that all the rākṣasas run from You in terror,
and the multitude of siddhas bow low before You.

All that is good originates from God. All that is evil desires to run away from Him. In the created world, this is the way in which all things function. The wise bow before God, for they perceive Him as the final fulfillment of their longings, while the wicked run away from Him, for in Him they see their destruction, and negation of their essence.

37 **And how would they not bow before You,
o Highest, who are above all,
who gave birth to the Maker, o Infinite Being,
the Lord of gods, who are the refuge of the universe.
You are indestructible, the being and non-being,
and everything beyond.**

God is the fundamental reality. Everything that is real, is such because God's sight is cast upon it, animating it. However contradictory, opposing and diverse be the forces of the created world, none of them has existence independent from God; as there can be no program in the computer that would be independent of the computer, so can nothing in the created world exist, without God as the necessary prerequisite of its existence. God is the supreme, primary reality.

38 **You are the first God, the original Puruṣa.
You are the highest refuge of the universe,
You are the knower and the known and the highest goal.
You pervade all, o Thousand-Forms!**

The Lord is the essence which contains the fullness of all things. The entire world is created as a result of radiation from His being. The number of His manifested aspects is countless, and still, all Manifestation contains nothing compared to the infinite glory of His inner, true nature, which Arjuna now witnesses.

39 **You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa,
moon, Prajāpati and the Forefather.
Glory, may all glory be to You! A thousand times!
Again and again! Glory to You!**

40 **Glory to You in front and in behind!
Glory to You from all sides, o Universal!**

**Infinite is Your power, and Your valor is endless.
You pervade all, and You are therefore all.**

Everything created exists at the glory of the Maker. The brightness and glory of His being are the cause and the source of the whole of the joy of all beings in all worlds. Lord Kṛṣṇa is not the immediate maker of the world; His greatness is such, that merely one of the secondary aspects of the radiation of His being gives birth to the Maker of the world, and serves as an impetus of making. His greatness is immense, beyond comprehension. No one, no one indeed can grasp it, for he himself is in His grasp.

All-pervading and all-creating nature of God leads, of course, to the conclusion that nothing exists independent from Him and as separate from Him, and in a way, He is indeed all; all beings, and all the states of beings, as well as all worlds and all their states. Everything that happens, happens within Him, for without Him, there is indeed nothing.

**41 If I have offended You, speaking carelessly and lovingly,
calling You “o Kṛṣṇa, o Yādava, o friend,”
seeing You only as my friend, knowing not Your greatness**

**42 if I have offended You in any way, o Acyuta,
in play, in a game, lying down, sitting or at a meal,
alone or in company, I beg Your forgiveness, o Infinite one.**

It now came to Arjuna’s mind that the being, whom he considered his friend, with whom he relaxed and had fun, looked at girls by the river, waged war, sang, ate and talked, is in fact the Almighty Lord Himself, whose true nature was hidden before him. From his present position, all those previous activities seem somehow undignified and inappropriate, for only the constant, firm adoration would suffice—that is how Arjuna thinks now.

**43 You are the father of this world, of all moving and motionless.
All the world praises You, who are the highest teacher.
You have no equal. How could anyone possibly be above You
in all three worlds, You, who are beyond comparison?**

**44 Therefore I, bowing low before You,
falling on My knees, beg of You,**

respected Lord, forgive me.
Be merciful with me as a father with his son,
as a friend with his friend
and as a man with his beloved!

For this reason Arjuna now corrects this “shortcoming,” and offers the Lord the appropriate degree of respect, and recognizes Him in His true, original glory.

Of course the Lord Himself by no means considers Arjuna’s relationship with Him to be lacking, nor does He think it to be disrespectful, or lacking recognition of the real state of things, for Arjuna had indeed treated Kṛṣṇa as his best friend and a person of highest confidence, which God indeed is, to all of us. The relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the physical plane therefore illustrates the relationship between God and the soul, for that should indeed be a relationship of trust, devotion, admiration and respect. The entire show of Creation serves that very purpose, to reflect on the physical plane some of that Divine association, cooperation and love, that originates from the higher Divine reality. Looking from that position, Arjuna is indeed the ideal human being.

45 I am happy, for I saw that, which was yet unseen,
and still, my spirit is shaken by fear.
Show Me again, o Lord, Your human form.
Have mercy, o Lord of gods, o refuge of the worlds!

46 I wish to see You as before, with the crown,
scepter and disc in hand, in Your previous form,
with four arms,¹⁶⁶ o Thousand-Arms, o Universal form.

It all became too much for Arjuna, who is utterly overwhelmed with the force of the experience, to the point of wanting to return to the previous state, for as much as looking at God fills Him with bliss, it still puts great pressure on the limitations of endurance of his being; the mystics recognize this as the state in which the bliss is such, that we are certain that we couldn’t endure it for a second

¹⁶⁶ The “four arms” seem to denote the arms holding the weapons, for the weapons are as another pair of arms to a warrior.

longer, and yet it is so delicious, that we could die on the spot, forever drinking it from the sight of God.

47 **The Almighty Lord said:**

**Out of love for you, o Arjuna,
I have revealed before you, with My power,
this highest form. Full of brightness,
universal, endless, it is My original form,
and none but you has yet seen it.**

It seems that Arjuna's insight of God's nature was so powerful and profound, that no human being before him had managed to experience anything of this magnitude—and indeed, no holy scripture, which could be chronologically dated before *Gītā*, seems to describe anything that could compare with this. Of course, it is a fact that an immense multitude of beings constantly behold God at any single moment, which Arjuna too could witness in the previous verses, but it is highly questionable whether any of those beings would be able to accomplish such a feat during a life in the physical body, which greatly aggravates such efforts. Arjuna managed not only to see the Divine aspect, but also to talk about it.

Of course, we should mention that Kṛṣṇa indeed showed something similar before; to His mother Yaśodā He showed, in His mouth, the entire created world, and to those gathered in Hāstinapura He showed an aspect of His higher being. Of course, both lack the width and depth of Arjuna's experience.

48 **Not by the study of Vedas, nor by sacrifice,
generosity, ritual, nor austere penance,
could anyone see Me in the world of men,
in this form, but you, o hero of the Kurus.**

There can be no bargaining with God; a Divine vision cannot be deserved by any means other than devotion to God. That is so because devotion to God bears in itself the Divine quality, and thus God in man, present in devotion, resonates with God the Lord of the world, leading man to supreme realization.

49 **Fear not, and be untroubled
having seen this terrible aspect of Mine.**

**Without fear and with joy in your heart,
behold again My human form.**

In any case, the Divine vision had served its purpose, and it is no longer needed; since Arjuna is disturbed by the force of experience, its continuation would represent violence over his being, and the Lord therefore closes Arjuna's spiritual eye, making him blind to the reality of a higher order. Arjuna's ordinary human senses will thus take control, and he can return to the normal state.

50 Sañjaya said:

**Having said that to Arjuna,
Vāsudeva showed again His previous form.
The mighty being, again of gentle appearance,
had calmed his fear.**

51 Arjuna said:

**Seeing again Your gentle human form,
o Janārdana, I have regained my composure
and returned to my own nature.**

As much as the vision of God be a great and potent experience, a human being can hardly function in such a state. I too, on several occasions, had to ask God to hide Himself from my consciousness, for I could not dedicate myself to work with my students in such a state of fulfillment; I would simply remain fully turned inwards, toward the Divine vision, completely ignoring my duties in this world, which is by no means what I wanted. Paradoxically, in the state of fulfillment, a man can become very reduced in efficiency, having no goals to attain, and all the problems appearing trivial to him. In such a state, I could not understand the problems people are usually facing as serious, for how can there be problems in the presence of God? The continuous Divine vision would undoubtedly be useful to me, but I would most likely be of little use to others. However, as much rational justifications as that might have, after a longer period of separation I would give the entire world and everything on it for a mere moment of closeness to Him.

52 The Almighty Lord said:

It is difficult to see this aspect of Mine

**which you have just seen.
Even the gods¹⁶⁷ constantly long to see it.**

The vision of God's inner nature is the goal of evolution of all the advanced spiritual beings, "gods"; as hard as they might try, before achievement of utmost perfection they are never completely successful.

**53 Not by Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by mercy,
nor sacrifice, can I be seen in this form,
in which you have just seen Me.**

All the aspects of religious practice are mere trivia, the minor things that can lead, at best, to development of the good qualities of personality, which in turn can lead, very slowly, to the development of the truly Divine qualities in a man. Such a vision, seeing God in His fullness, can be attained only by the grace of God, which cannot be deserved by deeds, ceremonies or the like, but only by development of the truly perfect qualities of personality, which are refined to such an extent that they aspire wholly and without exception to the Divine, which is then certainly revealed.

**54 But with undivided devotion
I can be, in this aspect, indeed known,
seen and entered, o Mighty-armed.**

Devotion to God is therefore the only quality in man that is truly Divine, for it is God himself manifesting within man, and such a Divine presence within leads to the complete manifestation of God in a man's life.

**55 He who acts for Me, who sees Me as the Highest,
who is devoted to Me, who is unattached,
who is free from hatred of any being,
he comes to Me, o son of Pāṇḍu.**

All those mentioned qualities represent the points of correspondence between a man's consciousness and God. As that

¹⁶⁷ The devas.

correspondence grows, a man's being becomes closer to God; when this correspondence becomes complete and undivided, we can say that God has been fully manifested in a man, or that the man in fullness came to God.

Chapter Twelve

1 Arjuna said:

Who is more perfect in yoga,
those who contemplate You in devotion, or those
who contemplate the unmanifested and transcendental?

The question, basically, adds up to the following: which is better, to worship Īśvara or know brahman? Is it better to surrender to God in the created world, where He is manifested as the fullness of all qualities, or should one withdraw his consciousness from the sphere of manifestation and into the sphere of transcendence, where exists only One, the unmanifested foundation of all manifestation, the undivided supreme reality?

2 The Almighty Lord said:

Those, who meditate on Me,
who contemplate Me, always in devotion,
rich with highest faith,
I consider to be the perfect yogīs.

The Lord therefore thinks the achievement of those who worship Īśvara to be more valuable. Why is that so?

Well, the obvious answer can be found in the statement that it is better for the world to exist, besides God, for otherwise there

would be only God. If that is so, it is then possible to logically conclude that something can be achieved through the world, that would otherwise be impossible.

The world represents many different possibilities; on one hand, we can state that the world is an alternative to God. In certain, coarse levels of the created world, it is even possible not to observe the existence of God—it is possible to perceive the world without God. If a being, in spite of all that, resides in God, if he puts God, in all His aspects, above all that is opposite to Him... well, it seems that such a thing indeed holds true value. The sphere of transcendence cannot be lost, for nothing can exist, lest it have That as the foundation, and the necessary prerequisite of existence. The transcendental and the unmanifested will not go anywhere. Each criminal and thug has the all-pervading Absolute for his foundation; as well as each rock, each leaf, and blade of grass. But in the manifested world, challenges are possible. There, the gain has its opposite in loss; happiness has its opposite in suffering. Things are here revealed through their opposites. It is possible to realize and not to realize; it is possible to live a life completely filled with Divine qualities, thus manifesting the Unmanifested in the created world, recognizing oneself as the Divine qualities, and thus belonging to God. The opposite of that is also possible—to be a direct opposite to everything Divine, and thus completely remove God from one's own world. It is possible to oppress all Divine qualities wherever we find them. Everything between those extremes is also possible.

He, who in his physical life knows the Lord, Īśvara, the manifested God, the manifestation of the fullness of Spirit, he who worships Him with devotion and humility, has attained the supreme goal, to which nothing more can be added. The foundation in the Absolute belongs to all beings, but to him, who is able to touch this unmanifested Absolute through the Manifested, belongs besides the origin also the goal, and his is the achievement of highest perfection.

3 But they, who contemplate the unpassing,
incomprehensible, unmanifested, omnipresent,
unimaginable, changeless, lasting, eternal,

4 with all senses under control, always focused,
wishing well to everyone, they also come to Me.

He, who focuses his insight at the highest reality, in search for the foundation of all, eventually finds God to be this final reality. He, who aspires to virtue, rejecting all the opposites, by rejecting the lower for the sake of the higher, he will attain, gradually, the realization of the Highest.

On this path, various pitfalls are possible, of course. Depending on their personal qualities, different people will hold different things to be real, and so, even here in the very beginning, it is possible to make mistakes. Likewise, initial achievement can be mistaken for the highest goal. Some experiences can be misunderstood. It is possible, and maybe the most dangerous of all if we, in our quest for the highest, and because of misguided thinking, reject the good things together with the bad, thus becoming empty shells devoid of all joy in life, devoid of a Divine spark. That can often happen to seekers who attempt alone, without guidance of an enlightened Master, to identify the path and the goal; they are known to read a holy scripture, which says that the enlightenment is achieved by detachment from the world, and to start killing every trace of what they consider “worldly” in themselves. In such endeavors, the first to suffer are most often the very qualities that could be the signposts to perfection: love, desire, passions and longings. Instead of rejecting the wrong orientation of those longings, which is the cause of attachment and suffering, they reject the passion and longing itself, which is the very scream of thirst for God in man, striving for Him, whom he does not know, but without whom he cannot find peace and fulfillment.

It is proper to desire, but to desire God. It is proper to be filled with longing, but with longing for God. It is proper to love, but to love God. It is proper to aspire, but to God. The only problem with longings and desires is being satisfied with the little things, because of setting one’s goals too low. If we start fighting desires, we will indeed stop desiring things and persons, but at a price of inner dryness; we will not gain God, but we will still lose the world. Also, we will renounce the very motor of search for happiness: the desires and longings, which are the very things in us that point to God. It suffices to look at the direction where our desires point, and observe our feeling while we desire, in order to be able to easily touch God Himself, from mere analysis of this feeling, because it is God whom we seek and sense—for He is the

true fulfillment of desire, which we mistakingly associate with the worldly things.

There is probably not even a single good advice, that would be beyond someone's misunderstanding; the instructions about focusing on the Supreme can therefore often be understood in a completely wrong way, from which there follows that instead of going for the higher from the lower, we should reject even that lower for the sake of some mental abstraction. Let us consider which is higher: "God" as we perceive Him through churches, religions, scriptures and ceremonies, or the true and sincere love that we are able to feel in the moments of innocent desire? Which one is more valuable, in which one are we closer to reality? In which one are we closer to the core of our own being, to our own highest purpose? In a sincere conversation with our mate or a best friend, or while we preoccupy ourselves with something we think to be religion? The only moments of true religion happen to men when they dare to desire without restraint, for the fantasies, which they attach to the objects of their longings, have more in common with the Divine, than any other thing in their experience. But only when they see it, when they recognize it, people can through such understanding advance to the point of renouncing the worldly substitute for the true joy of the soul, which finds its fulfillment in God, its foundation, lover and best friend.

- 5 **A more difficult task lies before them,
who direct their look at the Unmanifested.
For the Unmanifested, as a goal,
is very difficult to achieve
during life in the body.**

The entire vital energy of a man is directed toward the world, toward the exterior qualities and life in the Relative, in the world of manifestation. Turning the look toward the Unmanifested must therefore include a struggle against the force of life, against all the instincts of one's own body, as well as against all the laws of the physical world. The achievement of the Unmanifested, as the final goal, during life, necessarily assumes utter withdrawal into the sphere of unmanifested, abandoning the physical life as such. Because of this, such a path is not very practical. It is therefore better to find and live the Divine in the manifested world,

where our desires and instincts can help us, than to keep fighting them and expose ourselves to the possibility of defeat.

**6 But they who adore Me,
surrendering all their actions to Me,
who see Me as the Highest,
contemplating Me they achieve yoga.**

The problem lies not in the world, but in being deluded by the world. God is manifested in the world, and in the world it is very possible to achieve the highest goal. The key to that achievement is personal purity, which is attained by practice of yoga and devotion. If we live a Divine life in the world, it can be said that we are unbound by the world and that, indeed, we are not of the world. The negative qualities of the world are shown only if the soul is deluded, and thus gives supremacy to that which is not supreme, entangling itself into relationships of cause and effect, which follow from attempts to attain fulfillment through the world, and which cause only the increase of suffering and unhappiness. If, however, we take God for our goal, and focus our entire being onto Him, perceiving the world only as a place in which we can manifest the happiness of our unity with God, then will we by no means perceive the world as a source of frustrations and suffering. Of course, it is quite possible that we, thus established, will not find much use for the world. This world is of greatest use to those, who want to go as far as possible from God; to those, however, who desire to be in God's presence, such a world can represent only a means of sharpening the ability to discriminate, and in that case it will be useful primarily because of the great amount of obstacles and hindrances we need to overcome. Having attained perfection, we will find no use whatsoever for either this world, or any other.

The only thing that matters is therefore the desire for God, contemplation of God and devotion to God. Such a state of meditation is yoga in the narrow sense—a state of unity with God. Devotion to God and contemplation of God are the Divine qualities, they are of God and lead to God, and he, who is in such a state, walks the path that is made of the substance of the goal.

- 7 To them, whose mind abides in Me, o Pārtha,
I soon become deliverance
from the mortal circle of this world.

Contemplation of Divine attributes leads to their appropriation, and if we keep our sights on God, our souls will appropriate His qualities. Appropriating Divine qualities, we are liberated from the world, for under the look of God, every trace of worldliness dies in us; where there is one, there can be no trace of the other.

The mortal circle of the world, *saṃsāra*, represents the cycle of birth, attachment, death and rebirth in a futile attempt of finding fulfillment in a place which is void. It resembles an attempt to drink water by licking the sand in a desert. Not only will we not drink, but we will achieve the exact opposite. In the case of thirst, contemplation of water will not quench it, for the thought of water is different from the water itself, but in the case of spiritual thirst, contemplation of that which would quench it can indeed lead us to fulfillment. In love, what matters is not the object of love, but love itself. We do not need the object in order to feel love, and love is the very thing that fills our hearts. If we are focused less on the attempt of its physical satisfaction, and more on all the ideal qualities which we associate with it, the achievement of the Divine presence becomes a matter of immediate experience.

- 8 Anchor your mind in Me alone,
unite your reason with Me,
and in Me then shall you live.
That is beyond doubt.

The instruction is therefore very simple; we should first feel God, which is, in fact, the most natural thing for any being. We should focus our consciousness on God, and our entire being will then acquire His qualities, thus abiding in Him. After a certain initial period of time necessary for adjustment, or purification and deification of our nature, what remains is the presence of God living in a body.

- 9 But if you cannot make your mind firmly entrenched in Me,
then find Me in a steady practice of yoga, o Dhanañjaya.

Of course, it is not likely that everyone will immediately manage to focus, correctly and without exception, on God; most will need a considerable amount of practice and purification. Such practice will purify our souls to a degree sufficient for us to look at God, and, later, to fully acquire Divine nature by devotion.

**10 If you cannot even practice,
then surrender all your actions to Me.
By acting for Me alone, you shall reach perfection.**

It is indeed difficult to understand this verse. For how can we surrender our actions to God, if we are unable not only to know what God indeed is, but even to practice, in order to attain purification sufficient for such realization? The answer comes from the experience with the practitioners of yoga. There are people whose condition is not good enough for them to engage in the energetic techniques of yoga, but it is good enough to aspire to something better. They then continue to act according to their preferences, and learn from their experiences and from their actions, and God, attracted by their desire, gradually leads them through those experiences. And so, they first attain experience; from experience there comes insight, and from insight there comes peace. In peace, it is possible to dedicate oneself to yoga, and from yoga there comes the insight of God. From the insight of God, there comes perfection. Therefore, by actions directed according to the desire for realization, they gradually reach the highest goal. Because of the grace of God, not even they are lost, who are unable to work on enlightenment directly—the desire for enlightenment alone, even without adequate abilities, suffices to properly guide a man on the path toward perfection.

**11 If you cannot do even that,
then find refuge in Me by devotion,
abandoning all the fruits of action,
under the guidance of the higher Self.**

As in the previous verse, here too we need to think before discovering the meaning. For if a man is unable even to act for the sake of God, how would he then find refuge in Him by devotion? How will he abandon the fruits of action, and how will he be

under the guidance of Self, if he does not know what Self is, or what its guidance might be?

The answer is very similar to the answer from the previous verse, only a fraction lower. We should have in mind that a man's destiny is only in small part controlled by his conscious personality; the majority of his actions result from unconscious motives. In the case of a man who aspires to spiritual achievement, but lacks abilities, the higher I, his Divine nature, is already present, and has a reasonable amount of influence; under its influence, a man's actions and experiences are directed in such a way, that they lead his conscious mind to understanding in an optimal manner, in order for it to attain recognition of the Divine, and discern between that, and all the other things that surround him. In all that, it suffices to only aspire to God, to act in accordance with one's own higher feelings, to act without attachment and to engage more in observation and learning than in fulfillment of desires. When we act in such a manner, the Divine qualities become more and more apparent in our actions, correctness is more present, and that gradually leads to the appearance of devotion to God. Gradually, a man's consciousness becomes evolved enough for him to be able to engage in yogic practice in a controlled and focused manner, and the immediate consequence of that is his enlightenment.

The situation is therefore such, that a man who even unconsciously aspires to perfection, advances in that direction with great leaps. Of course, if we act with attachment, out of selfish motives, in order to accomplish our short-sighted goals and acquire shallow benefits, then we will advance either slowly or not at all, and every effort, that God invested in desire for our salvation, will be nullified by our endeavors on self-annihilation.

**12 Indeed better than practice is knowledge;
above knowledge there is meditation,
and above meditation there is renunciation
from the fruits of action.
Renunciation is immediately followed by peace.**

The practice of yoga therefore leads to knowledge; it is of course not the kind of knowledge that we acquire in school, but rather the kind of knowledge that makes the word "God" create not the chaotic and vague concepts in us; rather, it makes us well acquainted

with the subject, and we know quite well where to look in order to find it. It is therefore the kind of knowledge that helps us identify a small speck of the Divine presence. That must, of course, be followed by meditation onto that, which we thus realized, which will increase our insight immensely. When the light of Divine presence is lit within our soul, there arises utter indifference toward anything worldly, lower, which is the true meaning of renunciation; with the discovery of the higher, we become indifferent toward the lower. When we thus direct our entire being to God, we achieve peace and utmost balance, for our soul encountered its fulfillment.

**13 He who hates no being, who is kind, compassionate to all,
who is free from attachment and egotism,
who is equal in suffering and joy,**

Such a state of spirit is a quality of him, who adheres to Divine qualities; he absorbs and radiates goodness and harmony. Of course, that does not mean that such people are stupid and benevolent beings, who smile brainlessly, but on the contrary, the kind, harmonious and balanced strongholds of spiritual power. Kindness and compassion come from the insight and deep realization, and not from weakness and indecisiveness. Softness is not the result of a lack of firmness, but comes from love and goodness, that in turn arise from an association with the consciousness of God, from whom radiates the infinite reality. This reality relates to everything in a loving manner, and because of such fulfillment, a man loses any need for self-justification and proving his value; instead, he is filled with profound peace and happiness. In such fulfillment, he remains firm through the entire span of the ever changing external experiences, which can be either pleasant or unpleasant—he is, in fact, not very much concerned with this, for his kingdom is of a quite different world, and the happiness he receives therefrom infinitely outweighs all the crumbs the world could throw at him, be they tasty or not.

**14 he who is patient, modest and balanced in mind,
controlled by Self, constant in firmness,
with mind and reason directed at Me,
he who is so devoted to Me, is dear to Me.**

Such a soul, obsessed with God, firm in inner peace, unyielding in her mental focus that appropriated the Divine quality, God observes as completely His own.

**15 He who touches not the world,
who is untouched by the world,
who is free from joy, envy,
fear and sorrow, is dear to Me.**

He who is, within his soul, obsessed with God, who fully withdrew his focus from the world and dedicated all of his attention to God, who is firm as a rock surrounded by the waves of the changing worldly events, him does God see as a member of His spiritual family, as a friend. In the same way in which such a man relates to God, God relates to him. Since God remains always open and accessible to all, the only narrow point is in the man: it is the man who decides how he'll relate to God, and how he'll perceive Him—as a dear friend, or as an obstacle in accomplishing his worldly goals.

**16 He who is modest, pure, smart,
untouched by worries, fearless,
renouncing all endeavors,
who thus surrendered to Me, is dear to Me.**

**17 He, who feels neither joy nor sorrow,
nor desire, nor yearning,
renouncing both good and evil,
who is filled with devotion, is dear to Me.**

Paradoxically, greater demands for happiness lead one to the withdrawal of consciousness from the world, which can no longer meet them; looking from a distance, that seems like an undemanding attitude, for such a man will be satisfied even without clothes, and with mere crumbs of food, seeing everything else as superfluous. To people without understanding, it will seem as if he had renounced lots of things, but in reality, he has renounced only the lower things, which he saw to be a source of trouble and misery, rather than the means of fulfillment. Why desire the worldly things, which offer an ocean of suffering for each crumb

of pleasure, when we can drink the ocean of bliss from the eyes of God, asking for no price other than the complete inner fulfillment? Such a man, who is quite indifferent toward the world, will not fall prey to many worries and anxieties, which trouble ordinary people, nor will he be enslaved by a multitude of ambitions, which people in their mistaken understanding trust to bring them happiness. Such a man, who takes much from God, we can recognize as the one who is devoted to God. Because of his focus onto the source of all bliss, in his fulfillment he becomes utterly indifferent toward everything the world can offer him.

**18 He who is the same to both friend and enemy,
in glory and shame, in praise and admonishment,**

**19 who is the same in both cold and warm, joy and suffering,
who is free from the bonds, who is silent, always satisfied,
without home, with stable mind, full of devotion,
such a man is dear to Me.**

A man who is filled with realization, who is filled with bliss, who understands the inner nature of all things, who in his fulfillment loses the limited concept of his personality, and along with it also territoriality, the sense of possession, aggression, the need for control and the like, such a man no longer perceives the world the way he used to. The world is no longer divided along the line of relationship with him: into useful and harmful, friends and foes, pleasant and unpleasant—everything is perceived objectively, and this objectivity comes as a consequence of true freedom from the world.

**20 They, who truly follow the immortal path here described,
who, full of faith and devotion, observe Me as the highest,
they are dear to Me above all.**

They, therefore, who are utterly preoccupied with God, who are utterly devoted to God, who live in God and who have outgrown all worldly attachments and reactions, abide in a state of utmost freedom, and live in a state of friendship and trust with God—the feeling which God has toward all beings, they finally return, and the love of God thus becomes mutual.

Chapter Thirteen

1 Arjuna said:

What are the field, and the knower of the field?

What is Prakṛti, and what is Puruṣa?

What is knowledge, and what is the object of knowledge?

That, o Keśava, I wish to know.

“The field” can, in this context, be interpreted as the “field of action,” or in more detail, as the world of objects of observation and activity, in which activities are possible. The knower of the field, in this context, is the subject, observing that which can be observed.

2 The Almighty Lord said:

This body, o son of Kuntī, is called the field.

**He who knows that, is known by the wise
as the knower of the field.**

So, the field symbolizes the body. If we look at it this way, the entire world is presented to us through our bodies, since all our perceptions of the physical plane come through the body. Still, the body, and the world as well, are only the passive means of Divine manifestation; they are only the energy, which is not manifested, and which does not realize, but is a mere medium of

manifestation and realization. God is the one who manifests, and the soul, which is created as an aspect of His manifestation, endeavors to realize God, and the success of this endeavor is perceived as the realization of one's own true Self.

Knower of the field is here the Self, which observes itself as transcendental to the sphere of action, or the sphere of things and energies. There is therefore a division, into him who knows, and that which is known.

- 3 Know Me, also, as the Knower in all bodies, o Bhārata.
Knowledge of the field and of the knower of the field
I consider to be the true knowledge.**

Self is the subject, always and in all things. Where there is observation, there is also he who observes, and He is one, undivided in all beings, the sole foundation of reality and experience. Realization of Him as the experiencer, and the knowledge of the object of experience, as well as the understanding of their relationship, is the knowledge of Self.

- 4 Hear now what I am about to tell you, in brief,
about the field, its composition and changes, its origin,
and about the knower, his nature and influence.**
- 5 About brahman spoke the ṛṣis in various hymns,
clearly expressing the essence.**

There is, therefore, no need for additional explanations. Brahman is the highest truth, the supreme reality, the undivided and unmanifested Absolute, which is the foundation of the entire Manifestation. He is that, which has no foundation, and is the foundation of all, which maintains all, is present everywhere, and is still perfect in His transcendence. In the world of dreams, brahman is he, who dreams. The dreamer pervades the dream from all sides, and yet, nothing in the dream is He.

- 6 The five basic elements, ego, mind
and the Unmanifested (avyakta), ten senses
and reason, as well as the five objects of senses,**

The five basic elements are earth, water, fire, air and space/ether. The ego (ahañkāra) is a man's aspect, responsible for perceiving oneself as separate from everything else, and which is developed in childhood; before it develops, a child cannot establish the difference between self and others. The mind (buddhi) represents the ability of deeper thinking, or abstract thought. The Unmanifested is the original state of the potential substance of Nature, or the three guṇas in inactive form. The ten senses are, in fact, the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) and the five organs of action (tongue, arms, legs, anus and the genitals), united by reason (manas), as the eleventh. Reason is therefore the organ of coordination of the senses and the organs of action. The five objects of senses are of course the objects of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

- 7 **desire, hatred, pleasure, pain,
understanding, mindfulness, will—
that is the brief description of the field
together with its aspects.**

Here we have the various aspects of the lower functions of the psyche, directed at the body and the worldly activities. Desire is direction toward the objects; hatred is repulsion from them. Pleasure is the sensation which arises under the influence of pleasant stimuli, and its opposite is pain, which arises from the effect of unpleasant stimuli. Understanding, mindfulness and will are somewhat higher qualities, but still directed toward the sphere of the body, and submerged in bodily understanding.

- 8 **Humility, modesty, harmlessness, patience, honesty,
service to the teacher, purity, perseverance, self-control,**
- 9 **detachment from the objects of senses,
as well as the absence of egotism.
Observation of the evil that arises from birth,
death, old age, disease and suffering,**
- 10 **detachment, absence of desire for a son, wife,
home and the like, persisting indifference
toward perceptions
of the desired and undesirable,**

11 unyielding devotion to Me in the yoga of unity,
retreat into solitude,
dislike of the company of men,

12 persistence in the knowledge of Self,
the awareness of the purpose
of the knowledge of reality.
All of that is called knowledge,
and its opposite is ignorance.

The accounted qualities are, unlike the lower ones, that are directed toward the body and the sensory/active organs of the body, the aspects of presence of the soul in man; those are the qualities of transcendence, and represent the true, higher man. Only after the lower, territorially-animal nature has been brought under control, do there manifest the far subtler aspects of the soul, culminating in full possession of the Divine qualities. A man is therefore the more noble being, the less in him manifest the qualities of the bodily, and more the qualities of the spiritual. Such a state, in which the nature of the soul is manifested, and in which the soul is known to be one's own true nature, is the state of realization, or knowledge.

13 I will describe unto you that,
which needs to be known
and knowledge of which leads to the Immortal.
Without beginning is the highest brahman.
For Him it can be said neither that He is the existence,
nor nonexistence.

The Absolute is beyond manifestation, beyond the world. To the world, He does not exist, and so it can be said that He is non-existence. Where there is duality, there is no unity, and therefore no Absolute. Still, He is at the same time the totality of existence, and so nothing exists but Him. There exists only brahman, and everything else is only a way of perceiving Him, like programs that represent the various ways of perceiving the computer. Everything else is therefore of only apparent existence.

Brahman, or the Absolute, is not even the origin of the causal chain, or the uncaused first cause; being transcendental, He is not

even the cause of the world, for the world in fact does not exist—the world is a mere result of the possibility that One can be perceived as Many; if we decide to look from this perspective, we can. If we do not, the world immediately disappears for us, and we perceive there to be only God. That is the meaning of the words of Jesus, who said that one cannot serve two masters, God and the world; to one we must be unfaithful.¹⁶⁸ For if we observe God, we do not observe the world; the world becomes utterly insignificant to us. If, however, we observe the world, God is lost from our consciousness, and becomes distant, a mere object of thought, whose existence is a matter of belief or disbelief.

14 Everywhere are His arms and legs,
 everywhere are His eyes, heads and mouths,
 everywhere are His ears.
 Thus encompassing all, He exists in the world.

God's conscious presence in the world is complete; of course, this comparison with the sensory and the organs of action is a mere image, conveying this impression. God is all-active, all-present and all-knowing. All beings are in the hand of God, and in His sight. All beings abide in the heart of God, and God is the closest to them all: He is the very essence of each and every being.

15 Shining in the actions of all senses,
 and still without the senses.
 Unattached, supporting all;
 without the guṇas.

In the words of Kenopaniṣad: *He has no eyes, but makes the sight possible. He has no ears, but makes the hearing possible. He has no arms, but without Him, there is no touch.* Brahman is the eternal subject, the observing Self. The sensory organs and the mind create the images, but the Self is he who perceives, the awareness witnessing the events, always the eternal experiencer.

Also, being the foundation of reality, He needs no senses as the mediators in perception; He always perceives by being. The

¹⁶⁸ Matt. 6:24.

computer needs not look at the monitor in order to know what is on it, since the picture on the monitor is a mere byproduct of the functioning of the computer. Likewise, brahman is the foundation of the entire reality, He does not need to perceive anything indirectly, for everything we put our finger on is Him, everything is merely a consequence of looking at Him.

Maintaining the entire world, He is in no way involved in the activities of the world, although the world and the activities would not exist but for Him. He is inactive, and yet He is the foundation and support of all activity.

16 He is without and within beings.

Moving is He and motionless.

Because of His subtlety, He is incomprehensible.

At the same time He is both far and near.

The qualities of brahman can be described by a number of contradictions; still, if we have correct understanding of the subject matter, they will not confuse us. I personally think there not to be much use in describing brahman to those who do not have experience of Him; listening to the descriptions of bread will not make their bellies full. It is better to show them a direction in which to look and to tell them what to seek, and they themselves will then experience the Supreme, and from that experience will they describe Him.

Brahman is closer than the closest, dearer than the dearest. In all that is dear, He is the one who is dear to us. In all that is bright, it is He whose light we see. In all that is dark, we observe His absence. In all that is real, we sense a trace of His reality.

Let us therefore travel toward that, which is closest to our hearts, which dwells in the core of our being, and which we attempt to find in the world and its things for the whole time. Let us find out what is it that we seek, and let us use this feeling as a signpost, and we shall, undoubtedly, soon find Him.

Brahman is beyond comprehension, for it is always He who comprehends. It is impossible to point a finger at something and say: "this is brahman," for it is always He who points the finger. Only in the Self-witnessing reality, where there vanishes the difference between the subject, object and their relationship, arises the state of self-realization of brahman.

- 17 **Undivided is He, but apparently divided in the beings.
Thus understood, all beings He maintains,
destroys and again gives them birth.**

Brahman is one and undivided, but from the changed perspective, in the Relative, He appears under the veil of divisions. If we take a sieve and put it onto the surface of the sea, we will get an appearance of many tiny lakes of seawater, but their existence, however real it might appear, is but an illusion. In the same way apparent is the multitude of subjects in the beings, for brahman is the one Self in them all.

Within that perspective, the process of birth and death of beings takes place; as the waves on the sea surface rise and vanish, and their place is occupied by the new ones, so is Self manifested in the created world through a multitude of beings, in a whirlpool of constant change; still, I am constant, changeless and eternal.

- 18 **He is the light of lights,
which is said to be beyond darkness.
As the knowledge, the known and the goal,
He resides in all hearts.**

The Self is the fundamental reality, the fullness of all. Everything positive that we perceive is merely a partial reminder of His infinite glow. In Him there is no darkness, ignorance, lie and suffering. In Him there are no limitations, no transience and no duality. In Him there is nothing but the eternal, highest being-consciousness-bliss.

I am the closest of all, I am present here. I am the essence of knowledge, I am all there is to be known, and I am He, to whom beings aspire, in all their longings.

- 19 **To you I have briefly described the field,
as well as the knowledge and the known.
My bhakta, having understood it,
becomes worthy of My state.**

The bhakta, therefore, a being devoted to God, by discernment between the real and the unreal, as well as discernment between

the spiritual and the material nature, attains the highest subtlety of personality, thus abiding in the highest state of consciousness.

The state of consciousness is the person. That sounds a bit awkward, but it is true. He who steals is a thief. He who performs good deeds is a benefactor. If someone steals, and says that he, in fact, is not a thief, we can only laugh at him, because theft makes a thief. If before he was not, now he is. Likewise, the quality of one's consciousness defines his position. God is defined by the highest realization, the highest bliss, the highest reality and the highest truth. He who has known the highest truth, therefore becomes God; he abides in the state of godhead. If you stop to think a bit longer about this, you will see it to be true. The difference between heaven and hell is only in the state of consciousness. That is also the difference between a demon and an angel. He who acquires the highest qualities is the Highest. Acquiring the Divine qualities, he climbs on the ladder of evolution, and if one has all the qualities of God, we can only state that he *is* God. No other conclusion makes sense.

**20 Know, that Prakṛti and Puruṣa
are both without beginning.
Know also that all forms
and all the guṇas are born from Prakṛti.**

Prakṛti and Puruṣa are the two aspects of the relative world, the spiritual and the material. They both have no beginning, for they are but a way of looking at brahman, and the moment of creation never was, for brahman is transcendental to time. Since they can exist, they do. It is a great mystery, the utmost secret of creation.

All the levels of subtlety of the created world, from Śiva the Dancer to a piece of rock, are only the aggregate states of Prakṛti, which is given light and fullness by the touch of the spiritual Divine aspect of Puruṣa.

**21 Representing the source of consequences and the means,
Prakṛti is said to be the primordial principle.
Representing the source of experience, pleasure and suffering,
Puruṣa is said to be the primordial principle.**

Prakṛti and Puruṣa both can be said to be the foundation of all Creation; Prakṛti is a field on which the ballgame is played, it is both the ball and the bodies of players. Puruṣa, however, is the meaning, the essence and the consciousness of the players, who move not according to a lower automatism, but in their motion they however manifest the spiritual longings.

Prakṛti is therefore the origin of all things, objects and energies. It creates a balance of cause and effect, as well as all the interactions of the various substances. Puruṣa, however, is the consciousness which moves in all that, which is manifested, which realizes and lives. Prakṛti is the life, and Puruṣa is he who lives it. Puruṣa can therefore not be reduced to mere interactions of Prakṛti, nor the other way around; Prakṛti cannot be reduced to the states of Puruṣa.

Those are the two principles, whose mixture forms the entire span of Creation, the entire relative Creation, of which our physical universe is but an insignificant fragment.

22 When Puruṣa resides in Prakṛti,

He experiences the guṇas created from Prakṛti.

**Attachment to the guṇas is the cause
of His birth in good or evil wombs.**

The soul is therefore merged with the body; it perceives the body as self, and experiences the various states of the world in which it resides, depending on the qualities and subtlety of the level on which it is embodied. Attachment to experience, or identification with the qualities of Prakṛti, is the engine of rebirth. Only after recognizing Self as the highest Spirit, and not as the sum of qualities and states of the world, does one acquire freedom from rebirth, because the circle of desire-accomplishment is broken; the spirit desires the spiritual, and is therefore granted the spiritual, suffering no longer because of the identification with that, which is not in his nature, and whose limitations cause him pain.

23 In that body there also exists, indeed,

**the observer, the approver, the supporter, the enjoyer,
the great Lord and the highest Self,
whom they call the Highest Puruṣa.**

24 He who knows such Puruṣa and Prakṛti,
together with the guṇas,
for him, whatever he does,
there is no rebirth.

All life in the world represents the manifestation of the Divine life. He, who recognizes the Almighty as the only being that lives in the world, or in other words, who evolves to such a degree that he recognizes himself first as a being of the lower layers of Prakṛti, then the higher, and eventually as the Puruṣa Himself, first in the lower, and then also in His highest aspects of the Almighty Lord—he has accomplished the goal of evolution, and for him there is no more rebirth.

25 Some, in meditation, know Self in Self by Self,
others with sāṅkhya-yoga,
and some, however, by karma-yoga.

It is possible to achieve realization in many ways; by diving into the depths of one's own soul, in search of the highest reality; by refining one's own consciousness by yoga in order to know the still higher layers of subtlety of Prakṛti and Puruṣa, eventually knowing ourselves to be the Almighty; or, however, by developing the positive and high qualities of consciousness in activity, becoming thus the means of Divine manifestation, and the presence of God in the world. All of those things can be combined, or joined in various ways. What matters is to attain the goal, and the means can be improvised in any suitable manner.

26 Some, not knowing Him, worship Him
according to what they heard from others.
They also go beyond death,
adhering to such instructions.

He, who failed to realize God himself, can hear from another person about the nature of God, and where one is to look for Him. Incited by those instructions, he will start engaging in spiritual practice, and so he himself will soon find realization, with no need for mediators, and will attain liberation from worldly attachments.

27 **Whatever be there born, moving or motionless,
know it to be made, o best of Bharatas,
from a combination of the field
and the knower of the field.**

The entire world which we perceive is therefore a combination of spiritual and material aspects, which are intermixed and interacting.

28 **He sees, who sees the highest Lord
as the same in all beings,
the unpassing within the passing.**

He therefore sees, who has realized the transcendental Absolute to be the foundation of all Manifestation; Myself, the One, apparently divided in the beings, and the foundation of all, beyond time and space.

29 **For he who sees the one Lord existing in all,
destroys not the Self by the Self,
and therefore attains the highest goal.**

He who thus sees, is not deluded by the appearances of division, such as those of race, caste, biological species and like, which cause intolerance of one being toward others, in his state of worldly delusion. He, who knows Me as the foundation of all things, who sees that I look through all eyes—he will not destroy and abuse under the influence of delusion, but on the contrary, he will celebrate His life in all things and all beings.

30 **He sees indeed, who sees
that all activity is performed by Nature alone,
and that Self does not act.**

I never act. I Am. I am the eternal witness in all. I am the unpassing and unchanging. I eternally witness the changes in Nature, the wavering of its substance, the various relationships and laws. It all has its foundation in Me, and none of it exists outside Me. Only I Am.

31 When a man realizes
that all the different beings reside in One,
and that all evolves from himself,
he then becomes brahman.

The enlightenment is therefore attained by him, who realizes the true and undivided nature of the reality, the Absolute Subject. It is hard to say that he becomes brahman; it would be better to say that he recognizes that he was brahman for the entire time, but did not know it. Now he at the same time is, and also knows. The nature and realization are therefore united, and this state is therefore called the state of Self-realization.

32 Having no beginning, being without the guṇas,
this highest Self, undecaying,
although residing in the body, o son of Kuntī,
neither acts, nor is soiled by actions.

33 Like the all-pervading space
which is never soiled, because of its subtlety,
so is the Self, omnipresent in the body, never soiled.

34 As one sun gives light to the whole world,
so does the soul, o Bhārata, enlighten all the fields.

The Self is like the screen, onto which we can project various movies, good and bad, moral and immoral, and yet, the projection having been finished, none of the images from the movies leaves a trace on the screen; it will remain white and unchanged. It is the same with Self: it lives in an infinite number of beings, of whom some are evil and some good, some highly evolved and some not very much so. None of the states of those beings has any influence on the Self; it does not become better because some being in which it lives is good, nor does it become any worse because it gives life to a criminal. Still, the opposite applies: to the extent in which a being allows the nature of Self to reflect in it, to that extent does it become evolved, good and Divine, to that extent it realizes the highest potentials of its own nature, and becomes an instrument of Divine expression in the world.

35 Discerning thus between the field
and the knower of the field,
liberating themselves
from the bondage of Nature by insight,
they, who see with the eyes of knowledge,
attain the highest goal.

Beings, therefore, who realize the transcendental nature of Self, who recognize God as their best friend and the essence of their innermost nature, who recognize God as the fulfillment of all their desires, attain the insight of the nature of the highest reality, realize this reality in themselves, and thus, in the attainment of the Highest, they have nothing higher still left to attain.

Chapter Fourteen

- 1 **The Almighty Lord said:**
I will reveal to you, again, the high knowledge,
the best of all knowledge, realizing which,
the wise have reached the final perfection.
- 2 **Those who sought refuge in this knowledge
and attained unity with Me, are no longer born
when the worlds are created.**

He, who became aware of himself as the Supreme, as He, who animates the worlds and sets them to motion by His sight, he no longer desires for anything lower; he abandoned identification with Prakṛti and its layers, he outgrew even the lower aspects of Puruṣa, to find utter fulfillment in the Almighty. The games of the exterior, of creation and destruction, which influence those attached to Nature, have no influence on him; he abides in God, fully of God's nature and quality.

Certainly, we have touched all those issues in the commentary of previous chapters; as the Lord Himself says, this is merely repetition, stating the same in a different way, in order for us to understand better.

- 3 **My womb is the great brahman.
Therein I lay the seed.**

**Therefrom, o Bhārata,
all the beings gain birth.**

Brahman here obviously does not denote the Absolute, as is the case in other places; here, this term seems to denote Prakṛti, as the fundamental energy of the manifested world. The Lord here speaks from the position of Puruṣa. When Puruṣa enters Prakṛti, the created world is animated. From this touch, the potential energy is created, which gradually turns into the manifested, and we can observe this process as the evolution of matter and of beings; yes, matter too evolves, for physicists know that in the moment of creation of the universe, the heavy elements from which our planet is made had not yet existed—only hydrogen and some helium. All the other elements were made by fusion in the cores of stars, or in supernovas. The fire in which a golden ring was forged is therefore by no means the warmest place its atoms used to inhabit; before that, they also experienced the explosion of a supernova.

With the touch of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, the entire mechanism of Creation is set in motion, giving birth to the meaning and purpose. Prakṛti, without the touch of Puruṣa, is capable only of chaos, entropy. The touch of Puruṣa is an aspect of order and consciousness, which we can observe even here in this wilderness, in the physical plane, which is as distant from God's consciousness as something can possibly be, without freezing in the darkness of utter nonexistence.

**4 Whatever forms take birth, o son of Kuntī,
from any womb, the great brahman is their womb,
and I am the father, who lays the seed.**

All bodies have their origin in Prakṛti, and all the spiritual aspects in the created world, in all beings there present, have their origin in God.

**5 Sattva, rajas and tamas—those guṇas, o Mighty-armed,
originating from Prakṛti, firmly bind to the body
him who is embodied, unpassing.**

The embodied soul observes itself as the body, because of the joining of its qualities with the qualities of Prakṛti. The Nature

and the soul mix in the same way in which the movie theater, as the field of action, and the projection of a movie, as the essence, together create an experience of watching the movie. The movie alone without a movie theater, as well as the movie theater without a movie, will not create such an experience.

A being that lives in the Nature is therefore not only of spiritual, or only of worldly nature, but comes to existence when they are mixed. Because of such a mixture, a being identifies with the energies of Nature, of which his bodies are composed. Because of the qualities of those bodies, as well as the natural environment, a being is inclined to run in circles of attachment, perceiving happiness through certain circumstances within Nature, which is followed by frustration because of the unsteadiness of all those things, which, in turn, leads to repeated attempts of emancipation through the Nature, resulting in unhappiness.

**6 Of them, sattva is light and healing,
because of its purity, and forms attachment
to happiness and knowledge, o Sinless one.**

Attachment to knowledge and purity is still attachment, although more noble than some other kinds. We can demonstrate it on the example of a man who aspires to perfection, but who perceives it as his own perfection, observing himself as separate from God. We go beyond this attachment by devotion to God and to His perfection, for in His beauty we are lost, and here all our limitations disappear. We are therefore freed from the Nature only after surpassing our own nature, as well, which is possible only through identification with that, which surpasses it, namely God. That, however, is possible only through devotion.

**7 Know, that rajas is passion in its nature,
the source of longing and attachment.
It binds, o son of Kuntī, the embodied one
by attachment to activity.**

Rajas is the guṇa of motion, dynamics, desires and passions. Desires force a man to act, and activity gives birth to new desires, since it never provides complete fulfillment. We are freed from rajas by seeking virtue and knowledge of reality, in all that we

observe and do. From rajas, we thus gradually grow into the mode of sattva.

- 8 **But know, that tamas is born from ignorance,
and deludes all embodied beings.
It firmly binds, o Bhārata, with madness,
laziness and inertia.**

Tamas is the quality of ignorance, superficiality, inertia, laziness, numbness and unconsciousness. It is a quality that represents extinction of all the qualities of spirit; there is no sin greater than ignorance, for no other thing separates us from everything Divine to such an extent. We become free from ignorance and stupor by action, developing passions and the joy of life; every form of activity, even the wicked and vicious, is better than nothingness and darkness, in which all consciousness is extinguished. Insects may be extremely cruel and insensitive, but they are still an improvement, compared with rocks. It shows us the difference between rajas and tamas; tamas is indeed the greatest evil. We should therefore defeat it by activity and passions, and later we can think about spiritualizing the passions. For as long as we are controlled by tamas, or numbness, stupor, insensitivity, indifference, unconsciousness and other qualities of darkness, there is not much hope for us.

- 9 **Sattva binds to happiness,
rajas to activity, o Bhārata,
while tamas, hiding the knowledge,
binds to madness.**

Attachments to the qualities of Nature can therefore be manifold, from those posing an insignificant obstacle which is easily overcome, to those that bind the soul to the blackest darkness, threatening complete annihilation. If we are sinking into quicksand (representing tamas), in which we see a crocodile moving in our direction (representing rajas), it would be best for us to grab hold of the crocodile, who will get us out of the mud, and later, we shall see. The crocodile might eventually kill us, but quicksand will kill us certainly and without ifs. Compared to them, the “danger” of sattva resembles danger before a man who for the sake

of lesser misses the greater. That is indeed a danger and a loss, but even a lesser good leaves him in the state of goodness, and he can afford to make such mistakes. They, however, who live in a literal hell and darkness of the lower qualities, cannot afford such a luxury. They need to immediately and instantly work on saving themselves from the imminent ruin.

10 Sattva rises, o Bhārata, over tamas and rajās.

Rajās over sattva and tamas.

So does tamas rise, having overcome sattva and rajās.

Each guṇa achieves domination by rising above the other two. Of all combinations, the most dangerous is the one in which tamas prevails; then the qualities of nothingness overcome all the positive longings, and one finds himself under threat of immediate ruin. On the other hand, when sattva overcomes rajās and tamas, liberation is indeed near.

**11 When the light of knowledge appears
in all the gates of this body,
then know that sattva prevails.**

In other words, when all the senses and the organs of action are purified, when perfect harmony acts in them, and the Divine is manifested. A man, therefore, who is under the influence of sattva, is able to perceive the Divine, through beauty, reality and harmony, and to act in a Divine way, creating those same things in the world. Sattva is therefore a guṇa that makes the most obvious presence of the spiritual qualities in the world.

**12 Greed, activity, endeavor, restlessness and desire
appear when rajās prevails, o best of Bharatas.**

Rajās is a quality that makes the nature of the soul more directed toward the world, than it is the case with sattva. Sattva is the quality of contemplation and spirituality. It is the quality of peace, which results from greater orientation of the soul inward, and from greater fulfillment with inner joy. When the soul is more oriented toward the world, it loses touch with its inner nature, attempting to gain what it has lost by actions in the world. A

rajasic soul is therefore restless, active, passionate, focused at fulfillment of desires and attainment of goals.

**13 Darkness, madness, inertia and delusion are born
when tamas prevails, o descendant of the Kurus.**

A further step in the orientation of the soul toward the worldly is tamas. Tamas is a state in which the soul falls when it completely forgets its inner nature, when it becomes completely materially oriented. Then it finds no fulfillment, not even enough so to incite it to activity. Instead, it simply decays in its motionless stupor, completely deluded regarding the nature of the world and itself.

**14 When an embodied man dies in the mode of sattva,
he goes to the pure worlds of those who know the Highest.**

A man's state during life determines his destiny after death; for that, which we have chosen during our entire life, is obviously that, which we desire; that, through which we perceive ourselves. Those who lived in paradise during their life in this world, will undoubtedly go to heaven after death, as well. To those people, the physical world is a very coarse place, which does not reflect the needs of their souls, and so they will, in another life, find themselves in a more appropriate environment.

**15 One whom death finds in rajas,
is born among those
who are attached to activity.
And if he dies in tamas,
he falls into a womb of darkness.¹⁶⁹**

Rajas is the quality of worldly activities, strengthening the bonds that bind us to this world. He, therefore, who was during this life constantly preoccupied with the world, will most likely continue to be preoccupied with it in the next life, as well, for he did not evolve enough for the world not to satisfy him; he perceives the world as a place of fulfillment of all his desires, and perceives rebirth in it as a great mercy.

¹⁶⁹ In other words, he is born in a body of a predominantly tamasic quality.

Beings, however, who live a life of dullness and darkness, who fail to use this body properly, but merely vegetate in dullness, and think slowly and dementedly about lowly things, they will, according to their spiritual qualities (if we can even speak about the spiritual in this context), take birth in a body of some lower being, which possesses the mental and spiritual abilities appropriate for them—therefore those specific to the lower animals. Of course, we are dealing here with the specimens of human species that can, even during this life, hardly be regarded as anything more than two-legged animals. Of course, in order to degenerate into subhuman lifeforms, it takes great effort in subduing one's own consciousness, if we have in mind what kinds of beings inhabit human bodies.

**16 The fruit of virtuous activities
is said to be sattvic and pure;
the fruit of rajas is suffering,
while the fruit of tamas is ignorance.**

**17 Knowledge originates from sattva,
greed from rajas.
Madness, delusion and ignorance, however,
originate from tamas.**

The fruits of activities in the certain modes bear the qualities of those respective modes.

**18 Those who follow sattva are elevated,
rajasic ones remain stagnant,
and those, who are of the quality of tamas, fall.**

If we see the guṇas in the light of spiritual dynamics, sattva then represents the dynamics of moving from the worldly toward the spiritual; it represents the quality of abandoning the world, although, paradoxically, the greatest beauty in the world results from sattva. Rajas, however, represents the quality of attachment to the world, in which there is exactly the right balance between the inner and the outer, for the soul to remain in the world, pre-occupied with the realization of its ideas, but that still fails to ripen either in the direction of the excessive delusion by the

worldly, which is the quality of tamas, nor does it move in the direction of outgrowing the world, which is the quality of sattva. And so, while the world continues to satisfy our demands, we shall continue to abide in it. Tamas, however, is the quality of fall and decay, in which the spiritual is lost among the forces of illusion and darkness. He who is under the influence of tamas, is actually under the influence of entropy, or the increase of chaos, in a system into which the order is by no means introduced. For him who gives in to tamas, there exists only the further fall into nothingness.

**19 When the knower realizes,
that outside the guṇas there is none who acts,
and knows Him, who is above the guṇas,
he then enters My nature.**

The qualities of Nature are the foundation of activity, for all activities are given within Nature. With realization of one's own nature as that of pure spirit, unconditioned by the natural states and changes, by raising her identification first from the coarse, and then also from the subtle natural states and levels, the soul realizes its origin and goal in God.

**20 Transcending all three guṇas,
which are the source of this body,
the embodied man enjoys the nectar of liberation
from birth, death, change and suffering.**

Seeking happiness within Nature, we will continue the cycle of suffering. Finding God as the source of all that we mistakenly sought in the world, we will achieve the final fulfillment, and there will be no need for further rebirth in the world; it belongs to those, who still see the world as the place of fulfillment, and who have not yet abandoned it in the desire for the Almighty.

**21 Arjuna said:
What are the signs, o Lord,
by which we are to recognize him,
who went beyond the three guṇas?
How does he act,
and how does he go beyond the three guṇas?**

Arjuna again seeks information about the symptoms of achievement, thinking that the spiritual state must show in the outward appearance.

22 **The Almighty Lord said:**

**He who despises not the light,
activity and delusion when they are present,
nor desires them when they are not;**

23 **who is indifferent and undisturbed by the guṇas;
he, who is firm and calm
in knowledge that only the guṇas act;**

24 **he, who is equal in both pleasure and pain,
who abides in Self,
to whom earth and gold are the same,
who is the same in both the pleasant
and the unpleasant, who has realization,
who cares not for praise or admonishment,**

25 **who is the same in both glory and disgrace,
to both friend and foe, who abandoned all longings,
he is said to have gone beyond the guṇas.**

Of course, the Lord now, as once before when asked a similar question, answers him about the state of spirit, and not about the external signs. The external signs might be unreliable, and so an ordinary hypocrite can mimic the behavior of a saint, but he cannot mimic his consciousness. It all adds up to the following: it is the man, who has abandoned the worldly for the sake of the spiritual, who finds fulfillment in the sphere of spirit and not in the world, and is therefore quite indifferent to the pairs of opposites and to various experiences offered by the world. Of course, the world is saturated by God, but he who followed those signposts to reach the goal, gains the fullness of bliss, and needs not care about the world, from which he can indeed neither gain, nor lose.

26 **He who always serves Me
with yoga of devotion and love,**

he is ready, going beyond the guṇas,
to be elevated into the abode of brahman.

God can be even *felt* only after having outgrown the identification with the energetic layers of Nature—the physical, prāṇic, astral, mental, the three causal levels, and the ātmic and paranirvāṇic—then, in the transcendental state of Puruṣa, we can feel, occasionally, a glimpse of the Almighty, of Puruṣottama, Īśvara. To abide constantly and without exception in His presence can only he, whose soul is so absolutely pure, that it is devoid of even the slightest trace of anything other than God’s highest, inner attributes of utmost devotion and reality.

27 For I am the abode of brahman,
the immortal and indestructible,
the eternal dharma and the utmost happiness.

Īśvara, the Highest Puruṣa, the Almighty Lord Kṛṣṇa, is brahman. He, in the Relative, is the manifested fullness of the unmanifested fullness, the relative Absolute, the highest goal and the the object of my highest longings. May my soul never be different from Him.

Chapter Fifteen

- 1 The Almighty Lord said:
There is a story about an unpassing banyan tree
with its roots above and branches below,
whose leaves are the verses of the Vedas.
He who knows it, knows the Vedas.
- 2 Downward and upward spread its branches,
nourished by the guṇas,
and the tiny branches are the objects of the senses.
And down into the world of men
reach the roots, ending in activity.

This “tree” is a metaphor for the created world and the process of manifestation of the Divine in the world, as well as the functioning of a human being. The roots of this being are in Puruṣa, the Divine spiritual aspect which descends from above into Prakṛti, at first into the most subtle, paranirvāṇic level, and then into the still lower layers and their divisions and aspects. Those are the “branches” of this tree. They spread on the one hand upward, toward the knowledge of God, and on the other hand downward, toward the realization of sensory objects; the tiny branches, or the finest twigs, represent the senses in touch with their objects; or the subtle nāḍīs and the nerve endings in the human

body. The thicker branches represent the inner structures that bind the senses and the mind, as well as the mind and spirit, forming a bidirectional link between God and the world, through man.

- 3 **The world understands not this form,
its end nor beginning, nor its existence.
After the firm roots of this tree have been severed,
with the powerful sword of detachment,**

The roots of this tree are in a man's outward orientation, toward the world, which form his vertical line of incarnation; these are his projections toward the world, through which he attempts to gain fulfillment, like a tree that uses the roots to derive water and food from the soil. For as long as a man is rooted in the world, for as long as he turns outwards, he maintains the connections with the world and inherits rebirth.

A man must break this circle of projections, by withdrawing his hopes and desires from the world and turning them toward God.

- 4 **one should seek the goal from which,
for him who reaches it, there is no return.
One is to seek refuge in the First Puruṣa,
from Whom, since origin, the entire world emanates.**

The tree of manifestation, as well as the focus toward matter, originates from Puruṣa. A being, created as a result of this manifestation, should aspire to Self-realization; he should recognize his own true nature as that of the Highest Puruṣa, who, in the manifested world, is that, which the unpassing brahman is in the Unmanifested. Indeed, they are by no means different. Recognizing therefore his original nature, understanding that he is not of the world, and that he can only give to the world, having nothing to gain, he becomes self-sufficient, finding refuge in the original nature of the Almighty, thus completely withdrawn from the world, with attachments severed.

- 5 **Devoid of arrogance and delusion,
having overcome the evil of attachment,
always founded in Self, whose desires fell aside,
free from the pairs of opposites,**

**such as pleasure and suffering, void of delusion,
they reach this eternal goal.**

They who aspire toward perfection, gradually, still on the path, appropriate its qualities. Having reached the fullness of the goal, they attain its quality in fullness. In the perfect realization, and in the supreme bliss, they become utterly independent of anything external.

**6 That, which is not illuminated by sun,
nor moon, nor fire: that is My supreme abode.
He who arrives here, does not return.**

The Divine is that, which gives light and reality to all things, in which everything is based. The Divine is that, which eternally gives, and never receives. For what could it possibly receive, being the foundation of all, the foundation from which everything grows? He, who recognizes himself as This, has nothing more to seek in the world, and the world can no longer claim him.

**7 My fragment, the eternal being in the world of beings,
attracts the five senses and reason as the sixth,
which are the fruits of Prakṛti.**

Jīva, or the living being, is a tiny ray of God's light shining through the mists of Nature. In the process of His association with the world, He creates around Himself the layers of different substances, from subtle to coarse. The being thus builds his subtle, astral body, made from mental and emotional substance, and in his aspiration toward manifestation and solidification of those qualities, he comes in touch with the physical body.

**8 When an embodied person receives the body,
and also when he leaves it, he carries those with him,
like the wind that carries the scent from its origin.**

The being thus brings its subtler aspects into the physical body, and uses them to set it in motion. With the death of the physical body, the interconnection between the subtle bodies and the physical body is lost, and the consciousness of the being thus returns

from the physical into the subtle realm. The being therefore, in the process of physical incarnation, brings the abilities of observation and perception into matter, and with the death of the physical, he bears those qualities with him, enriched by the experiences of the physical life.

All the aspects of a man's physical existence are merely a terribly limited, confined shadow of that, which incarnates in a human form. The liberation from the body in death is therefore always experienced as the liberation from a great and heavy burden, and a dungeon for the soul, and the soul, rejoicing in its liberation, does not even consider rebirth. However, refreshed by the experience of higher existence, it forgets the sufferings of the physical world, and the attachments, projections and the selectively beautified memories of the physical arise, so that it is drawn again into the physical plane, and gains another birth. Only the being, who finished its business with the physical plane, who resolved the attachments to it, even during the life in the body, who feels only indifference and a lack of attraction toward the world, whose inclinations and longings are switched elsewhere, only such a being has no need for rebirth.

**9 With ear, eye, touch, taste and smell,
with them and also with the reason,
he enjoys the objects of the senses.**

The ability to perceive the objects of the senses, and to experience them subjectively, are not the qualities of the physical, but of the astral body. Without the astral body, the physical body would be able to experience to the same extent as a camera connected to a computer, without there being any consciousness to experience and feel.

**10 Him who leaves, stays and enjoys,
who is connected with the guṇas,
perceive not those who are deluded.
Only they can see Him,
who see with the eye of knowledge.**

There are people who perceive man's existence to be merely a result of the interactions of physical forces and particles, who completely fail to observe and understand man's spiritual component,

and who fail to see the many indications pointing toward it, which are more than visible to wiser men. Those who perceive nothing but the coarse and the tangible, with the lower sensual mind, are deluded, and their consciousness is covered by a thick veil of illusion.

Atheism and materialism are therefore a disease of a soul that fell under a deluding influence of the lower forces of Nature. Gradually, as the soul learns and is strengthened by experience, it becomes capable of seeing through the layers of illusion, and starts to intuitively understand that, which it used to regard as improbable and unsupported by evidence.

**11 The aspirants, purified by yoga,
see Him in their own self.
The unpurified, who are without knowledge,
fail to perceive Him, in spite of all their efforts.**

Observation of the spiritual is primarily a matter of subtlety of spirit, and the correct perspective. If there is no subtlety, it is not possible to perceive either art, or beauty, or finesse, or anything high and subtle in general. Such a soul is like a rock, which fails to perceive even the hammer that breaks it; the entire worlds pass it by, and in its unconscious state it fails to perceive any of it, numbly claiming: "It does not exist."

He, however, who knows where to look, who is directed toward the inner soul, where he finds the foundation of the reality, with subtlety of soul increased by yogic practice, which purifies and builds a man's higher bodies, recognizes in the interior of his being the Divine soul, which is the bearer of not only his own reality, but the Reality in general. He, therefore, recognizes himself to be God.

**12 The light that abides in the sun,
and illuminates the entire world,
the light that is in the moon and in the fire,
know that light to be Mine.**

All the force, beauty, energy, brightness, consciousness and love, that pervade all the worlds and all beings, are the result of God's presence, and God's brightness. God is the sole positive principle

in all created things. Everything positive, good and beautiful is merely a fragment of God's brightness, which can, if we follow it, lead us to God.

13 Pervading all the worlds

**I support all beings with My power.
Becoming the moon,
I bring nourishment to the plants.**

Being the earth, God provides support to the physical existence of beings. The moon is here perceived as the master of fluids, or the juices that flow through plants, making them grow. God is therefore the bearer of physical existence and its dynamics.

**14 Inhabiting the bodies of living beings
in the form of their metabolism,¹⁷⁰
connected with prāṇa and apāna,
I digest all forms of food.**

God is also the foundation and the bearer of all the prāṇic, energetic movements and events, such as the chemical processes associated with assimilation, oxidation and the elimination of the substances from the body. He is the bearer and the mover of energy in all beings, visibly present in all of them.

15 I dwell in the hearts of all.

**I grant memory, knowledge, as well as their loss.
I am the goal of the study of the Vedas,
I am the maker of Vedānta,
as well as the knower of the Vedas.**

God is also the bearer of the intellectual and emotional activity of all beings. Like matter and prāṇa, the astral, mental and the higher levels also belong to Him.

**16 There are two forms of life in this world,
the passing and the unpassing.**

¹⁷⁰ Vaiśvānara, the flame that digests the food. Metabolism, meaning the processes of oxidation that take place in the cells, is the most accurate translation of this term.

**The passing includes all the creatures,
while the unpassing dwells in persistence.**

“This world” is the Nature, Prakṛti. It encompasses many levels, which form a multitude of worlds, on which an infinite number of beings is formed. Beings of the lower levels, such as those we can perceive, are passing and mortal; they lose one manifested form, and soon gain another. Beings of the higher levels, however, are constant and changeless, and some of them live the entire duration of the manifested world.

**17 But different is the Highest Puruṣa
who is also called the highest Self,
the indestructible Lord
who pervades and supports all three worlds.**

**18 Since I go beyond the passing
and I am higher even than the unpassing,
in the world and in the Vedas
I am called Puruṣottama.**

To all beings and levels of the created world, the foundation of existence and spirituality is therefore the Lord, the Highest Puruṣa. He animates all beings, from Śiva the Dancer of the paranirvāṇic level, to an ant and a rock of the physical plane. Both Śiva and the ant are aspects of the Almighty, although the existence of the ant is tiny and passing. It comes to existence in one moment, and in the next moment it dies, while Śiva Naṭarāja represents the Lord in the stillness of motion, who entered the Nature, and set in motion the process of Creation of all beings, by division of His aspects and qualities throughout the lower levels.

**19 He who knows Me, beyond all delusion,
as the highest spirit, knows everything
and he worships Me with his entire being, o Bhārata.**

He who knows the Lord, who does everything and maintains everything, who creates, destroys and pervades all, his spirit is free from delusion and attachments, and with his entire being he adores the Lord as his only treasure, his only refuge and the only

goal. Without exception he longs for the Lord, and praises His infinite fortune because of the ability to feel His endless, blissful being, whose mere existence heals all wounds caused by lower things.

**20 I have hereby taught you, o Sinless one,
the most secret of knowledge.
Knowing that, a man attains wisdom, o Bhārata,
and all his duties are fulfilled.**

He who knows this, who reaches the Highest Puruṣa, for Him all the goals have been attained, and his evolution has come to a successful end. He gets to abide forever in his highest accomplishment, in the heart of God Himself.

Chapter Sixteen

- 1 The Almighty Lord said:
Fearlessness, purity of heart,
steadiness in knowledge and yoga;
generosity, self-control, adoration,
study of scriptures, austerity, honesty,
- 2 nonviolence, truthfulness, composure,
renunciation, tranquility, harmlessness,
mercy, generosity, gentleness, humility,
determination,
- 3 forcefulness, forgiveness, will, purity,
absence of hatred, absence of pride.
Those are the qualities of a man
whose nature is Divine, o Bhārata.

Paving a path toward the Divine, a man acquires more of the qualities of the goal toward which he aspires, similar to an object that, on the path toward the sun, acquires more and more warmth. The accounted qualities are therefore the qualities of a man whose nature is Divine, who made progress on the path toward perfection.

- 4 Hypocrisy, haughtiness and arrogance,
anger, as well as roughness and ignorance
are the qualities of a man of demonic nature, o Pārtha.

The path toward God is not the only option. The choice of God is the choice of beauty, reality, love, greatness and power, which are the results of breaking the illusion of limited personality. It also consists of recognition of God, the all-pervading, omnipresent and all-blissful, as one's own final, deepest nature. Other than that, there is another option: the choice of one's own limited personality, of one's own ego. If the first path can be compared to the situation in which everything is perceived as the center of personality, to which there are no limits, the other path consists of the sharper and the more narrow limitations of personality, in which more and more things are alienated, and self is perceived as increasingly more limited, until, eventually, absolutely nothing remains, that would be seen as self. At that point, such a person will finally vanish in the depths of his own nothingness. Unlike a Divine man, who sees himself as everything, a demonic man observes nothing but himself, or in other words, nothing but his own vain falsehood. Such a demonic man, in a spasm of his inner emptiness, spreads hatred and fear throughout his entire environment. He is cruel, violent, lying, dishonest, arrogant and evil in all ways. He arrogantly attempts to insult and humiliate, for he himself feels to be worthless and lowly. He attempts to destroy, for he feels like nothing. He therefore attempts to share his inner emptiness with the world, unlike a Divine man, who wishes to share his fullness.

- 5 The Divine nature leads to liberation,
while the demonic leads to enslavement.
But fear not, o son of Pāṇḍu,
for your nature is Divine.

The Divine nature represents the Divine qualities of personality, which are the result of stepping toward God, and which further lead to God, for the more likeness a man shares with God, the greater attraction to Him he feels. The man, however, who has advanced on the path toward evil and nothingness, feels greater and greater repulsion from the good and the truth, and so he further advances toward the utmost darkness.

It is interesting how Arjuna, like all the saints, instantly recognized himself in the description of the demonic nature. The demons would undoubtedly recognize themselves in the description of the Divine. The Lord, of course, noticed that and comforted him, and I can almost see the unspoken smile at the end of the last sentence.

- 6 In this world, there are two kinds of beings,
the Divine and the demonic.
About the Divine we spoke in length.
Hear therefore, o Pārtha,
from Me now about the demonic.**

There are two basic orientations, and two basic directions: toward reality, and toward nothingness. All the possibilities in between are unstable in the long run, and have a tendency to collapse into one extreme or the other. Since the majority of the text so far consists of descriptions of virtuous and enlightened men, as well as their actions, a man could almost forget there to be the evil beings in the world, and he could then ask himself why this story takes place on a battlefield. Now comes the time to pay attention to this aspect, as well.

- 7 The demonic people know
neither the activity nor the inactivity.
They are void of purity, virtue and truth.**

Or, in other words, they do not know how to act correctly, and they are incapable of transcendence, since they are utterly involved with their egos. They lack the good qualities, since they despise them all, and consider them to be flaws. Actually, when we put it this way, it would seem that the wicked know that they are wicked, and that they are rejecting the good, but that is never the case; when we find a man who thinks so, we can know, with firm conviction, that we are dealing with a saint. A wicked man, on the contrary, thinks himself to be good, pure and righteous. He sees himself as righteous, and others as the guilty ones and the sinners. Thus deluding himself, he justifies violence toward others, for “they deserve it,” “they provoked,” “they attacked me.” In such thoughts, he becomes even more distant from reality, and,

performing progressively worse deeds, he also loses his mind in the hell of madness.

8 They say:

**“The universe is unreal, without foundation, without God,
born from the unity of male and female principle,
created from lust, that is all.”**

We can see that godless people have not changed much since the ancient times. However, because of advances in science, they have only slightly changed their explanations, and now they do not claim that the universe was created by the unity of male and female, but by accident, or from chaos. It is, however, no accident that they ascribe the original cause to chaos and chance, since chaos rules their consciousness. That is also the reason why they never seem to observe order and purpose, for, in their souls, they have utterly renounced God, who is the bearer of order and purpose. A noble, Divine man will thus always observe order, beauty and purpose, while a demonic being of darkness will observe only chaos, disorder, chance and ugliness.

The way of looking at the world and its origin is therefore only a consequence of a man’s nature; he projects his inner world outward, and observes only that, which is the predominant quality of himself.

9 **Advocating such opinions,
those lost souls, of limited mind,
as the enemies of the world perform cruel deeds,
directed at the destruction of all.**

He who perceives the world to be a result of the chaotic, lower forces, in which there is no higher order and purpose, in which there is no God as the fundamental bearer of morality, he is capable of doing anything to anyone, and justifying it as he pleases. This he, of course, does, and the consequences of his actions, which are very apparent and visible in today’s world, are the suffering of all beings, as well as the destruction of the entire planet. It suffices to see what terrible and cruel, godless things people do to each other, as well as to other beings and to the inanimate world, for us to receive immediate confirmation of that, which the Lord tells us.

How are we to fight such beings? First of all, good people need to engage themselves in worldly activities, and carry the glory of the Lord across the world. They must become loud enough for their voice to be heard, and gradually make their harmony louder than the cacophony of the forces of chaos. Also, they need to gradually remove all evil men from positions of power, and limit their influence in the greatest possible measure. Evil must be removed from this world, and deprived of any kind of influence. Let the evil ones live in their darkness as much as they like, but without influence and power, without any means to implement, in reality, that which resides in their filthy, diseased souls. If we keep weeding the garden of this world regularly, the weeds will be unable to find root.

- 10 Filled with unquenchable desires,
hypocritical, arrogant and insolent,
out of delusion they defend lies
and act from unclean motives.
- 11 Preoccupied with endless worries,
interrupted only by death,
they see the highest goal in enjoyment,
thinking that to be all.

This hardly needs any commentary, for it is quite clear. Such people, in their spiritual emptiness, turn toward the lower matter, as well as the dirty forms of *prāṇa* and astral. Because of such desires, they experience their filthy pleasures in torturing others, in abuse, lies and inflicting pain on other beings. They love to do evil, because it helps them create the appearance of their own power—as if it were difficult to do evil. Every mindless fool can use an axe to destroy an automobile or a computer, but it takes a great and powerful mind to make such machines. Any fool can kill, but who can give life? It is very difficult to give birth to a child, to raise and educate him, and still, every pathetic fool can take a gun and take his life. We can therefore see that destruction requires no greatness, no particular power and no strength, and that destruction holds no value. Those who think their ability to do evil represents strength, delude themselves, and are immensely stupid. Beside their dedication to evil deeds, they also dedicate

themselves to the gratification of the senses, thinking that the pleasurable stimuli will help them fill their inner emptiness. They are of course unsuccessful, and each attempt turns them more and more toward the exterior, until they eventually vanish.

**12 Bound by hundreds of shackles of hope,
dedicated to lust and anger,
they amass treasure in an impure manner
in order to gain sensual pleasure.**

The hopes of a demonic beings are directed only at the possibilities of self-gratification. They, before all, attempt to gain immortality, in order to endlessly prolong their physical existence, which they perceive to be self. Furthermore, they attempt to gain great influence over others, in order to satisfy their futile megalomania. In their efforts, they care about nothing, and are ready to sacrifice anything or anyone; they are ready to sacrifice even the most elementary aspects of well-being of other beings, in order to gain even the most irrelevant pleasures, for they value nothing but themselves, perceiving themselves to be something extremely narrow, tiny and pathetic.

A noble man also wants to please himself, but he perceives himself in all beings, and foremost in God, and so he, paradoxically, in his desire for gratification discards even himself, in the sense of a body and a limited soul, for Self he finds in the Almighty.

**13 “This I have earned today,
this desire I will fulfill,
this treasure belongs to me,
and that will be mine tomorrow.”**

**14 “This enemy I have killed,
and others I will kill as well.
I am the master, I enjoy,
I am successful, mighty and happy.”**

**15 “I am wealthy and of noble birth.
None is my equal. I will sacrifice,
I will give charity, I will enjoy.”
Thus deluded, because of ignorance,**

Empty, evil and wicked men delude themselves by boasting and arrogance; still, the only purpose of this arrogance and boastfulness is to hide the utmost inner emptiness, as well as their complete misery and impotence. Helpless, they behave as if they were mighty. Weak, they speak of their strength. Empty and immensely miserable, they boast with their wealth.

**16 seduced by endless imagination,
entangled in a web of illusions,
dependent on the gratification of passions,
they fall into a filthy hell.**

In their emptiness they reach the rock bottom, and die in the nothingness, which has become the nature of their being. After death, their souls disintegrate and vanish into nothingness, because they rejected all the Divine aspects long time ago, and now they no longer contain anything immortal.¹⁷¹ Still, that is an extreme case, and quite a number of incarnations can pass before that happens. Besides, it is a common case that someone looks like a demon, while he in fact is not, and on the other hand, one can appear to be a spiritual person, or even a saint, while his soul is the embodiment of darkness. Because of all that, it is not up to people to judge, but to engage primarily in realization and manifestation of the Divine, and renunciation of the demonic and void. The laws of karma, however, will take care of such individuals more than just well enough.

**17 Egotistical, stubborn, vain and intoxicated by treasure,
they perform sacrifice in words alone,
hypocritically, contradicting the scriptures.**

“Performing sacrifice” is a term which was, in the Vedic literature, synonymous with virtuous actions; so, if we correctly project the meaning onto the present world, we will say that such demonic

¹⁷¹ Wise men, such as Yogananda, said that the soul cannot be destroyed, for it is in essence one with God. That is of course true; however, it is not the soul that is destroyed, but that which remains after the soul has been utterly removed from its existence. An evil man renounces and alienates his soul to such an extent, that at one point he loses any touch with anything Divine and eternal.

men belong to the religions, they pronounce the words of the holy scriptures, and go to their temples only formally, while in fact they are the embodiments of the Devil, and his servants, who care for nothing outside their own vanity. Such men go to church in order to pray to “God” to fulfill their desires, to blame Him for their misfortunes, to rebuke Him for being unrighteous to them, and to complain to Him about their condition. Occasionally, they will use some form of barter, according to the principle of equity, to try to force God to do something according to their will, and when they do not get it, their hatred for God will only increase.

The other kind of such people are the preachers of various religions, who use religion and holy scriptures as a stick to wield over others, infusing fear and acting cruelly. Sooner or later, all the major religions become the refuge of such men. After true knowledge has been lost, the empty shell of religion is inhabited by parasites and obsessed by demons, using people’s mistaken belief that this abandoned body is still inhabited by its original owner. Knowledge of religion and its true essence are lost from the world at the exact moment when the virtuous and the noble withdraw from the world, and leave it to vain liars and criminals.

**18 Devoted to ego, force, arrogance, lust and anger,
those evil men despise Me in their own
and in the other people’s bodies.**

The basic thing that an evil man hates and despises is God, Reality, Light and Truth, in all beings and outside of them. It is this light that a sinner wants to kill, annihilate, erase from existence. I have seen universities that were literally built on the foundations of the intent of creating rational foundations for eliminating the belief in God’s existence, by such an interpretation of the world, in which the entire reality would be seen in a way suitable to godless men, and the mental layout of the students set in such a way, that they never even look at the world in any other way, making them utterly unable to perceive God, although He constantly surrounds them, from all sides. After their minds have been systematically programmed with selective blindness through education, they become the useful tools in the hands of dark souls. For it is all a matter of perspective. Mathematics and physics can be taught in both pious and godless ways. Mathematics

and physics are quite neutral in that regard. However, if they are abused, they become a weapon which can make the human mind blind to God and reality, opening his eyes to chaos, darkness and hopelessness.

What can possibly be the motive of a man, who tirelessly proves that he, himself, is but a body, prone to decay and worthless, and that the same is the case with others? What joy can he find in that? None. The reason for all that is fear, despair, hatred and misery. Men filled with those “qualities” simply act in such a way, increasing them even further. If they fail to convert and suddenly change perspective, they will be ruined, and it is possible for them to pull others down with them. In that terrible darkness, the basic characteristic is hatred toward the light and the truth.

**19 Them, who are full of hatred,
the worst of men, and evil,
I always cast into the wombs of demons.**

Such beings, who have chosen evil, are born under the law of righteousness in the worlds of demons or lower animals, those with qualities of cruelty, insensitivity and viciousness.

**20 Entering the wombs of demons, they, blinded,
from birth to birth never reach Me,
o son of Kuntī, and fall lower still.**

The descending spiral finds its end only in the utter disintegration of personality, where each of its parts is in a feud with every other part, as it was in feud with God and light, to begin with. Paradoxically, the utter obsession with self eventually leads to the loss of self, and the utmost selflessness leads to the achievement of the infinite Self.¹⁷²

**21 Three are the gates of hell,
leading the soul to ruin:
desire, anger and greed.
Therefore beware of those three.**

¹⁷² Compare to Matthew 10:39: *He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.*

Those three qualities are therefore those of ignorance, egotism and destruction. Gratification of those qualities fails to result in anything good, and leads only to hell. Still, in order for us not to misunderstand, this applies only in the above cited context. The utmost greed may be that for God, which leads to the rejection of all that is not Divine. The utmost longing can be that for God, which brings the utmost fulfillment. So, in another context, those qualities can be considered virtues, but if we understand that we are dealing with a description of beings that, in their own nothingness, destroy everything in their path and within them, beings that consume themselves in the force of their own hatred, destroying themselves and others, and who attempt to compensate their own emptiness with external things, in this context those qualities are not only the ticket to hell, but also the seat in the front row.

**22 He who is free from them,
the three gates of darkness, o son of Kuntī,
does good to himself,
and reaches the highest goal.**

So, if someone is profiled into the opposite of those mentioned qualities, he is undoubtedly on a good path, and if he yields to them, he faces destruction.

**23 He who ignores the instructions of the holy scriptures,
and acts under the guidance of desires,
he fails to attain either perfection,
or happiness, or the highest purpose of activity.**

“The instructions of the holy scriptures” must here be interpreted not as the letter of the scriptures alone, but as their true meaning. He who adheres to the letter alone, while missing the point, has done nothing of value. The essence of the scriptures is transcendence, desire for God and fulfillment with God, the aspiration toward reality and its attainment. Everything else is of a worldly quality, and fails to grant salvation.

**24 The scriptures are, therefore, the criterion of that
which is to be done, and that which is not to be done.**

**Know your duty, described in the scriptures,
and act accordingly.**

That also needs to be understood properly.

The scriptures alone are but a bunch of books. Since the books as such are no criterion for anything, it is obvious that we are here dealing with the contents of the scriptures, and their true meaning. The scripture is always a result of inspiration, it is a word of God spoken to a man, and a man needs to open up to this word and understand it properly. Blind and mindless repetition is useless, and none asks that from us. On the contrary, we are asked to accept the true spirit of the scriptures, the true realization of God, and to live the reality which inspired the scripture, to allow it to inspire our lives as well. Only then will we become able to act according to the instructions of the scriptures, for that accordance is but a fruit of a heart filled with God.

Of course, for a man who does not yet possess knowledge, it is better to follow the instructions of the scriptures, than some other source, as long as he does so reasonably, and without fanaticism. He who is blinded by wrong understanding of the scriptures, filled with fanaticism and coldness of the soul, he will be able to justify absolutely everything with scriptures and God's will, and will inherit ruin rather than salvation. We should therefore, in the study of the scriptures, utilize both heart and mind; we should ponder the essence and meaning of the scriptures, we should fill ourselves with the same spirit that created the scriptures themselves, and act in the world as the embodiments of the holy scriptures, as a Divine presence, revealing itself to the world.

Chapter Seventeen

1 Arjuna said:

The believer who offers sacrifice
but neglects the instructions of the scriptures;
is he in sattva, rajas or tamas, o Kṛṣṇa?
What is his condition?

Arjuna is obviously interested in the relationship between the holy scriptures and religious practice. It is possible to separate religious life from the scriptures? If so, of what quality is that separation?

2 The Almighty Lord said:

Three are the forms of religion
of the embodied beings:
sattvic, rajasic and tamasic.
Hear now, what I am about to tell you
about these.

3 Everyone's religion is according to his nature, o Bhārata.
Whatever a man's nature, such is also his religion.

Put simply, in a division into only three basic qualities (of course, the reality is more complex than that, but this simplification can

be more than sufficient to give us a solid impression), the spiritual inclinations and religious practice of a being will be of the same quality as his nature.

**4 Sattvic people worship gods,
the rajasic worship demons and evil spirits,
while the tamasic worship apparitions and ghosts.**

A noble man aspires to virtue and goodness; according to his aspirations, for an object of his worship he chooses the beings, which are superior to him in those qualities, and worships them because of their greatness and virtues. He adores them, and showers them with admiration. Such a man admires the gods, angels and, generally, all the beings in which God acts. He will choose a religion of greatness and love, a religion of power and spiritual force, for those are the qualities toward which he aspires. He wishes to raise himself above lower things, above attachments, ignorance and limitations, and seeks refuge of those, whom he sees as successful in those goals, and admires them because of their achievement. Such a man, noble and of good orientation, indeed attracts the benevolent and purifying influence from the worlds of angels and spiritual beings, and providing that his desire is strong enough, he might even attract assistance of some great enlightened Master, or even the Lord Himself.

Rajasic people, people of passions and worldly attachments, will worship beings, in this world or another, whom they see as the embodiments of material success, or whom they see as useful for their plans. Their religion is the religion of barter; they pray for material success and worldly goals. They pray for material benefit, family, success in business, solution to a worldly problem, destruction of enemies or pleasure in life. Limited by the world, they don't even think about praying for something outside or above it, for spiritual matters are something peripheral and irrelevant to them; they think those things to be the preoccupations of dreamers and psychically labile men, who have no touch with the true meaning of life, which is, according to them, contained in worldly power and achievement. Their religion is, therefore, most often directed toward materially oriented beings of the astral, whom we also know by the name of demons and evil spirits.

Tamasic people, who are in ignorance and utterly overwhelmed by illusion, do not have even the little common sense that would make them preoccupied with worldly activities, but live in a fog of their weak and disturbed minds, dreaming about various “supernatural” events. They often practice the lower forms of magic, out of curiosity or attraction to foul things. They invoke spirits, and consider indulgence in the dark sides of parapsychology, such as searching graveyards for the decomposing prāṇic/astral corpses of beings, or haunted places, to be spirituality. They are engaged in fortune telling, divining the future and imagining things, and they admire the “artists” and “mystics” of disturbed mind, considering their hallucinations and fancies to be the fruits of spiritual insights. The majority of members of spiritual movements unfortunately consists of such men; when we visit a lecture of some “spiritual authority,” regardless of his personal competence, we can notice that the audience consists mostly of people whose kind we could find in such great numbers only in a lunatic asylum. The same applies to various fairs of the charlatan New Age disciplines, where spiritually disturbed people engage themselves in illusory things without any foundation in reality, and all of that is, unfortunately, sold under the label of spirituality.

It is therefore no wonder that the rajasic and sattvic people tend to avoid such things; rajasic ones because they outgrew them, coming to understand their vanity and harmfulness. Sattvic people tend to avoid all forms of religion and formal spirituality, because of an intuitive feeling which tells them that those things have been contaminated with various lowly things, and that their place is not there. They will, paradoxically, rather engage themselves in anything, other than spirituality.

- 5 **They who, devoted to hypocrisy and egotism,
perform terrible austerities, unauthorized by the scriptures,
armed with the strength of greed and passion,**
- 6 **in their madness
they weaken all the elements of the body,
and Me who abide in the body.
Know their intent to be demonic.**

“Austerity,” or penance, is the ascetic form of spiritual practice. True austerity is that, in which a man is directed toward the

spiritual reality to such an extent, that he utterly ignores the body. If he goes too far, he might die of starvation and thirst, without even noticing. To a bystander, that might appear as terrible self-torture, but such a man would not be preoccupied with the body even enough to abuse it; he simply fails to notice it, and is not preoccupied with it, for his consciousness is utterly preoccupied with the spiritual. Of course, it is wiser to maintain the body in good condition, in order for it to continue serving us even after the final realization has been attained: we can then use this body to serve God, in this world, as well.

When rajasic people see how truly spiritual persons apparently neglect their bodies, and then attain great spiritual powers, they too wish to possess those powers, but for their worldly goals. They then start to torture and abuse their bodies, and are ready to starve themselves to death and mutilate themselves in various ways, all in order to blackmail some deity into fulfilling their desires. Indeed, I would say in jest that, occasionally, God does fulfill such a man's desire, out of pure compassion and pity for the poor guy. He, however, interprets that as a sign that his tactics have been successful.

They, who without knowledge torture their bodies, perform a sin both to the body, as well as to God, who lives in the body—for the true Self of all beings is indeed Divine. Their intentions are coarse and dark, directed toward fulfillment of their own desires and achievement of their own goals, and this entire practice is wrong, and, as the Lord says, demonic.

**7 Even the food that is to men's liking
is of three kinds, as well as worship,
penance and charity.**

All aspects of human activity bear the quality of human nature.

**8 The food that affirms life, energy,
strength, health, joy and happiness,
which is tasty and greasy,
strong and appetizing,
is dear to the sattvic ones.**

The food, therefore, which is healthy, freshly prepared, composed of fresh and good nutrients, which is wholesome and prepared with

love, which is filled with vital energy, and which increases the growth and development of beings, affirming life in all ways, is sattvic.

- 9 The food that is bitter, sour, salty,
too hot, dry and burning,
which causes pain, suffering and disease,
is to the liking of the rajasic ones.**

The food of extreme taste, smell and composition, which disturbs the balance of the body and mind, which does not incite composure of spirit, which feeds the passions and causes pain, which is in any way excessive or disharmonically prepared, as well as that prepared by persons of a disturbed mind and filled with desires and passions, is rajasic. Such food can occasionally be of use to awaken one from a tamasic stupor, but should otherwise be avoided.

- 10 The food that is stale, tasteless,
tainted or rotten, old or impure,
is dear to the tamasic ones.**

Tamasic food is that which causes sleep and drowsiness, which mortifies the body and mind, which takes more energy from the body than it provides, which is made of ingredients that are of poor quality or tainted, or prepared by men of dark mind, directed at evil. Such food should be avoided at all cost.

- 11 Sattvic sacrifice is performed by people
who follow the words of the scriptures
with firm conviction that they only need to worship,
without expecting the results.**

Sacrifice includes all activities that are not directed at personal, but rather toward general and higher benefit. That includes all activities that transcend personal ego, and are directed toward others, and such activities are a positive step toward outgrowing the delusions of one's own inner world, in which there is no place for anything other than ourselves, and fulfillment of our desires. This is the reason why such activities have a liberating quality.

12 Sacrifice offered, o best of Bharatas,
for the sake of the fruits,
or for the sake of boasting,
know to be rajasic.

Rajasic “sacrifice” is therefore that, which is performed with ego in the center, and whose purpose is also to acquire some form of personal benefit, be it self-appraisal, acquisition of some material benefit, or self-advertisement of some sort. Some people will thus perform “selfless” deeds, but only when the cameras are rolling, to take the testimony of their “virtue” across the world. An example are all those rich and famous “benefactors” who get their pictures taken for the newspapers and television, holding a check for a “large” amount of money (which is always excess money they do not need, and can give away freely) which they give to some “politically correct” recipient, whose current profile in the media will lift their popularity. They will never “throw away” their money into something that would not create positive publicity for them. Such “sacrifice” is nothing but a commercial investment, and has no spiritual value or significance. This kind of giving is, however, still better than nothing at all, or than abuse or exploitation. Still, it is far from giving out of purity of heart, out of desire for others’ benefit. Such activities should therefore not be abolished, but they should be purified and properly directed in order to be elevated into the mode of sattva.

13 Tamasic sacrifice is that
which opposes the scriptures,
in which there are no gifts of food,
which is not accompanied by the mantras and gifts
and which is done without faith.

The Vedic sacrificial ceremony is directed first toward the world of gods, and also represents celebration in the world of men; it is an affirmation of life and human values. As the sacrifice is offered to gods, out of gratitude for all that we have received from them in this world, so are the gifts of gods offered also to the people who have need for them—not only food, but also knowledge and other spiritual qualities, and so the Vedic ceremonies were known

as places of oral spreading of literature, because the scriptures and spiritually inciting stories were spoken aloud.

“Sacrifice” which lacks any of those qualities, which is of use to neither gods nor men, in which there are no positive values, is tamasic, a mere act of superstition, it is completely worthless, and is also harmful, since it diverts the consciousness of men from reality. This tamasic religion, together with its rituals, should be abolished.

**14 Worship of gods, the twice-born,
the teachers and the wise;
purity, honesty, self-control and nonviolence,
are the austerities of body.**

The austerities of body are therefore pure and noble actions, which are in agreement with the Divine reality.

**15 The speech which causes no disturbance,
which is truthful, pleasant and useful,
as well as the regular study of the holy scriptures,
are the austerities of speech.**

This needs to be properly understood, for there are many distorted interpretations of this and similar verses. In certain “spiritual” circles, there prevails the opinion that speech should be always pleasant to everybody, that one is not to argue with anyone, and is to agree with everybody, and, if it is impossible to agree, then one is to remain silent.

That is not quite true. For we should have in mind that the criterion of personal pleasure is not the bearer of rightness; the reality and truth are. The reality and truth are the primary values, Divine in their nature, and every form of rightness must be established primarily in them. Different things will be pleasant to different beings, and so, to wicked men, lies, slander and insults directed at virtuous things and persons will be pleasant, and the truth and its expression will be unpleasant. The more truth and clarity in some speech, the greater will be their anger, caused by the clear words of truth, that rip apart and destroy the false worlds of their mental fabrications. The reality will, therefore, to some people be extremely unpleasant, and the one who expresses it

will be perceived as an evil person, who probably deliberately, out of sadism, causes them pain.

The very same words, that inflict pain to sinners who adhere to lies, and who are based in hypocrisy, will awaken reality, happiness and the sense of truth, which illuminates the world with its beauty, in the souls of those who are inclined to reality, and who aspire to truth. The speech of the saints, which reflects reality, will therefore be pleasant to some, and unpleasant to others, depending on their personal relationship with truth and reality.¹⁷³

We can therefore see, that uncompromising testimony for the highest reality can sound so unpleasant to sinners, that it is quite possible for him, who is sided with truth without compromise, not to come out alive—Jesus was, for instance, crucified because of his love for God and truth, and because of his uncompromising testimony to reality. Paradoxically, those same men, who utterly lose control and wish to kill a saint on the spot, just so that they would not have to listen to him, will have no problem listening to a speech filled with lies, insults and nonsense, even speech that insults them, for as long as they know that it is not true. But if a man dares to be right, he will face serious problems, because everybody will, most likely, *pick up stones to throw at him*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ John 3:20–21: *For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.*

John 7:7: *The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.*

John 8:42–47: *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."*

John 18:37: *For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*

¹⁷⁴ John 8:59.

Still, pleasant speech makes much sense for a student, for one who still does not know the Almighty, and who is not yet united with the supreme reality. He must know that his realization is incomplete, that it is partial, and therefore has no absolute quality, from which the authority of speech could originate. Although observing something to be untrue, he should preoccupy himself with finding out the truth, rather than to lecture others from the position of his imperfection. He should adjust his speech to the positive, high qualities; he should adjust it to reflect virtue and goodness. Still, even such a man, whose perfection in knowledge has not yet been attained, has to testify firmly for that, which he knows with certainty, and which he does not doubt. If he fails to do so, he will separate himself from the reality, and harm his soul and his sense of truth with compromise. The truth therefore needs to be said, but only when we feel that the circumstances are right, and in a situation when it would be a greater evil to remain silent, than to speak. A criterion of good and evil in speech should, of course, never be our personal interest, but only the reality and goodness. I believe that sinful and evil men will not feel good listening to Jesus or Kṛṣṇa telling them about the qualities of their souls, but that by no means tells us, as they would love to conclude in their black hearts, that Jesus and Kṛṣṇa speak so because of their delusion, or because they reflect their inner dirt, as they themselves do. On the contrary, it only shows the infinite egotism of evil people, who in their arrogance assume that the very fact that something is unpleasant to them means it to be automatically untrue, and the only thing remaining to be established, is which exactly, of the possible low motives, should be ascribed to the person telling the truth. Of course, they should preferably go one step further, and break the mirror that shows a nasty image, and kill or silence the one who speaks the truth.

**16 Tranquility of spirit, lightheartedness, silence,
self-control, and purity of heart
make the austerities of spirit.**

Austerity of spirit is its purity, and orientation toward God. All those qualities reflect such a condition.

17 This triple austerity,
applied by a man of devotion and faith,
without expectation of results,
is considered to be sattvic.

A noble man, who is founded in God, bears the qualities of this nobility in all his actions and states—of body, speech and spirit. His spirit is pure, his speech is truthful and perfect, and his deeds are noble and harmonious.

18 The austerity that is performed hypocritically,
with intent of acquiring respect,
honor and fame, is of this world.¹⁷⁵
It is said to be rajasic,
and is unsteady and unsafe.

This rajasic form of austerity is the one we usually visualize when we speak of austerity as such; because of wrong understanding, austerity is seldom seen as harmony and purity of all the aspects of man, and most often as a sort of self-torture, directed toward the achievement of a goal.

In religious spheres, such “austerity” has most often the purpose of showing great “spirituality” of the practitioner, in order for the people to admire him, and is pure hypocrisy.

19 The austerity which is done
from a lack of understanding,
with self-torture,
or for the sake of destruction of others,
is said to be tamasic.

There are people who read a holy scripture, misunderstand it because of their ignorance, and start practicing the things they think are prescribed in this scripture. The result of their illusion is

¹⁷⁵ Compare to Matthew 6:16–18: *Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

that they inflict harm to their bodies and minds, and if they persist, they can utterly destroy themselves. Exactly in order to avoid such situations, the expert guidance of a teacher is needed, where a student can at least see what the goal of practice is supposed to look like, and according to that alone, he should be able to avoid the most obvious pitfalls, that reveal themselves as such in this context.

Also, there are those, who engage in fasting and “prayer” in order to harm others; those actions are of the quality of darkness, leading the one who applies them further into the world of darkness.

**20 That which is given out of duty,
to him who does not repay,
in an appropriate place,
in the appropriate time,
and to a proper person,
is called sattvic giving.¹⁷⁶**

Only those good deeds, that are done out of love for goodness, and out of desire to help others, have merit. Such inclination of spirit is noble, and if we confirm it with noble deeds, it grows stronger and becomes the fundamental quality of our personality. That way, by doing good to others, we in fact do good to ourselves, for we cleanse our souls and grow in the Divine qualities. For this reason we should, in fact, always be grateful to those whom we serve, for in serving them, we ourselves gain the greatest benefit, that of growth in spiritual qualities. He who receives should therefore be grateful, but he who gives should be even more grateful, for his benefit is greater.

**21 The giving, which is done in order to be repaid,
for selfish purposes, or with uneasy heart,
is said to be rajasic.**

¹⁷⁶ Compare to Matthew 6:1–4: *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

Such giving is no giving at all, it is barter; if we gain value in return, what did we give? If we are sorry because we haven't been repaid, why are we giving at all? Even a return in the form of expected gratitude is a form of barter. We should therefore give without expecting thanks or gratitude. Of course, if we are talking about spiritual qualities, gratitude will be the consequence of insight into the dimensions of the received, and so the student will always be grateful to the teacher, but not because the teacher would ask that of him, but because he understands the greatness of that, which was generously given to him.

**22 Giving at the wrong place or time,
to a person who is not worthy,
without respect or with an insult,
is called tamasic.**

Giving that humiliates him, for whom it is intended, is a grave sin and an insult, and only contributes to the amount of suffering and godlessness in the world. Such “giving” stains the giver even more than it does him, to whom the gift is intended; it belittles the dignity of the soul, and is of the quality of darkness. Every form of giving that is done without respect, is a sin.

**23 Om Tat Sat—that is the triple sign of brahman.
Therefrom, since the times of old,
originate the brāhmaṇas, the Vedas and yajña.**

Om Tat Sat is the mantra that originates from the Absolute consciousness; if we were to translate it, its meaning would be “He, The Almighty, is That Reality”; its meaning is, therefore, an exclamation of bliss, in which we see the source and the foundation of Reality, and this recognition fills us with utmost joy, which is sat-cit-ānanda. This joy, “It is You!” is the foundation of all goodness that we perceive, it is the foundation of all positive qualities in the world, of all virtue, and of all truly spiritual forms of religious activity—in all of them, He is praised, That Reality. Om Tat Sat, the mantra of the state of samādhi, is therefore the essence of spirituality.

**24 Therefore those, who study brahman,
instructed by the scriptures,**

**begin the acts of sacrifice, giving and austerity
with an intonation of Om.**

Mantra Om is the fundamental resonant vibration, by which all the mantras are chanted. Also, it represents brahman, the Absolute, in its aspect of support to all manifestation.

**25 With Tat, without thinking about the results,
seekers of liberation perform the acts of worship,
austerity and various forms of giving.**

Tat means “That!”; “I have found You!” That is an exclamation which means “so *this* is You!” Finally, we have found Him. There is no more doubt, there is no more fear, there is no more suspicion, for we have recognized Him, the love of our soul, whom we desired always and in all, and now we have finally found Him. All forms of worship therefore have their foundation in That, in recognition of Him in that, which we worship, which we adore and which we give.

**26 The word Sat means existence and virtue.
Also, o Pārtha, the word Sat
designates favorable activity.**

Sat designates reality, being, existence. Satya, the truth, has its foundation in Sat, the reality. The truth is therefore that which is real, existing, which is. The activity, which is based on reality, which bears the quality of truth, is Sat.

**27 Dedication to sacrifice, austerity and giving
is also called Sat.
Even the deeds of that quality are called Sat.**

All deeds that affirm the truth, which originate from reality, as well as the quality of reality which supports them, are Sat, real.

**28 That which is offered, given and used
as austerity without faith, is called asat, o Pārtha.
It means nothing, in neither this, nor the other world.**

That, which is the opposite of reality, has no foundation in it, and is therefore ruined. A thing that has no foundation in God cannot prevail, and he, who has foundations in such consciousness and such actions, undoubtedly finds his undoing. The deeds that bear not the quality of reality, are sinful and worthless, they cause suffering and destruction, and should all be abandoned, without exception. On the contrary, one should find foundations in reality, in God, who is the foundation of all reality, for that, which is founded in God, grows and is emancipated, and that, which opposes Him, decays and withers.

Chapter Eighteen

1 Arjuna said:

O Mighty-armed, I wish to know the truth
about abandoning the world and renunciation,
respectively, o Hṛṣīkeśa, destroyer of Keśi.

Abandoning the world and abandoning the fruits of action are very closely related issues, and what is interesting to Arjuna now is the difference between literal renunciation of all worldly activities, for instance by going into a forest to abandon attachments to the fruits of actions, and attaining transcendence amidst worldly activities.

2 The Almighty Lord said:

Renunciation of the activities based on desires
the wise call *sannyāsa*.
Abandoning the fruits of all deeds,
the wise call *tyāga*.

Hindu culture is not the only one in which there were arguments regarding this issue; such considerations are also known in Christianity.

The Lord starts with such a definition of both terms, that it becomes utterly irrelevant whether a man has abandoned the world

and left for the forest, or acts in the world, but not “of the world.” Again, there matters only the state of spirit, and not the activities themselves, for the activities are merely a consequence of the state of spirit. If the spirit is properly founded, activities can be manifold, but they will always be correct. If, however, the spirit is wrongly founded, all the actions will be wrong, however apparently right and in accordance with the holy scriptures they might seem to be.

Sannyāsa, or abandoning the world, is a state in which activity is not incited by desires, or their opposites, fears. It is therefore a state, in which actions are not governed by ego and its whims, but by the higher forces, that become active in a man’s life when he is preoccupied with God, instead of worldly things. His desires therefore withdraw from the world, and his actions in the world are motivated primarily by a need to observe the Divine harmony, which he feels within his soul, and love for all beings, which comes as a fruit of knowledge that the foundation of the entire reality is One, the same One, who is the highest love of his own soul. A man, who has attained realization, therefore radiates such knowledge with his entire being.

Tyāga is a state that is complementary to sannyāsa: sannyāsa being a state where activity is not desire-driven, tyāga is a state where the spirit, having acted, does not remain attached to the sphere of activity, but withdraws from it. Such a spirit enters the sphere of activity as a piece of gold enters water; gold, although submerged in water, does not become saturated with water, no matter how long it is exposed to water. When we remove gold from water, we can establish that it did not absorb water, nor did water have any effect on it whatsoever. An attached man, however, would rather resemble a sponge. When a sponge is submerged in water, it becomes completely saturated by water. Likewise, an attached man becomes completely governed by passions in touch with the sphere of activity, and lives in constant anxiety caused by expectation of results. When we act, we are constantly engaged in considerations of events, of the reactions of other people, of their response to what we did, the consequences of that, as well as being repaid, as if any of those things mattered. Others will do according to their preferences anyway, as we did according to ours. Why consider that, which has not yet happened,

and thus worry needlessly? When it happens, it will have a chance to claim our attention.¹⁷⁷

- 3 Some thinkers say that activity, as such,
needs to be renounced as evil.
Others say that deeds of sacrifice,
giving and austerity should not be discarded.**

There are therefore the two streams, one of which claims that every form of activity is problematic, and so one must utterly retreat from the world in his quest for salvation.

The other stream holds that the actions, which have a Divine quality, and are based on virtue and selflessness, do not pose a danger to a man, and do not cause attachments.

- 4 Hear now from Me about renunciation,
o best of Bharatas.
Renunciation, o best among men,
indeed manifests in three ways.**

In other words, like all other forms of activity in Nature, the quality of renunciation, too, depends on the three guṇas. Of course, I repeat, we are dealing with a simplification; still, such simplifications can be extremely useful, for they point out the underlying principle, and once we understand this principle, we can feel free to include all the finesse that accounts for countless differences. We shall also understand how mixed forces can create an appearance that we are dealing with one phenomenon, while in fact we are dealing with something completely different. Thus, for instance, a person who on the outside has all the qualities of a renunciate, who has renounced the world and is engaged solely in “spiritual” activities, can be exposed as a hypocrite without any spiritual qualities, who practices renunciation from pure egoism, for the sake of flattery to his ego, and sometimes even for the sake of achieving benefit and influence, while on the other hand, we can have a humble man who does his daily job, thinking constantly about God and His qualities, contemplating the Divine

¹⁷⁷ Matthew 6:34: *So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

in all he does. Of course, there can be a countless number of shades between those two extremes, but this does not reduce the value of the extremes, which quite clearly illustrate the point. This is also the quality of Lord Kṛṣṇa's descriptions: they illustrate the basic principles, underlying diverse human behavior, and when those principles become clear to us, we will learn how to discover the true nature of the perceived phenomena, in practice.

- 5 **The deeds of sacrifice, giving and austerity should not be discarded; they are necessary.**
Sacrifice, giving and austerity purify even the wise.

Actions of Divine quality are the next step, after realization and wisdom have been achieved. However difficult the achievement of wisdom might seem, manifesting it in the world, through the Divine activities, is more difficult still. Activities in the world are so complex, involving so many different forces and factors, that it takes a powerful and pure mind, armed with a great power of discernment, in order to find way in all those things, and act in a way which bears the Divine quality. There is not much use in merely abandoning the world, after having realized some basic things. Activities in the world can be extremely useful to us; such activities will establish our entire being, in all its aspects, in the Divine, for perfect actions in the world are possible only as a result of utmost perfection of being. Our activities in the world will therefore most certainly benefit the world, but we will benefit from them even more, for such an approach to the world will, paradoxically, bring us closer to God, than a wrong approach to the world could separate us from Him.

- 6 **However, even those deeds should be performed without attachment, abandoning the fruits.**
That, o Pārtha, is My firm and highest attitude.

Actions themselves can hardly have a quality of virtue. The quality of actions is determined by the state of him who performs them. Even the formally perfect deeds can cause attachment if they are done from an impure motive. For instance, if one feeds a million hungry men, builds thousands of schools

and hospitals, doing it in order to create an impression of being noble and virtuous, in order to flatter his own ego, this action by no means has a quality of transcendence and Divinity; it is worldly, for such is its motive. Only those actions, which are performed out of a sense of rightness, where one serves out of love and a feeling that this is how things should be done, without any consideration of self and one's own role, have the quality of transcendence, and do not bear the seed of attachment and expectation.

7 Indeed, it is not good to abandon one's duty.

**Abandoning duty out of delusion
is considered to be tamasic.**

A man who abandons duty because of illusion, who does not understand the principles of action and does not understand the underlying reasons for renunciation, acts from *tamo-guṇa*, out of ignorance, and such renunciation cannot have good results. The example of that are the various people who read a book on spirituality, fail to understand anything, but based on that they are ready to object the worldly attachments even to the enlightened Masters. Such behavior is based on a combination of ignorance and arrogance, and its fruit is suffering.

**8 When someone abandons activities
because they are painful
or out of fear of physical hardship,
he performs rajasic renunciation
which brings him no good.**

A rajasic man tirelessly strives for the fruits of action, and tasting painful or unpleasant fruits, he feels bitter disappointment with the world, and in this disappointment, he wishes to retreat from the world. His renunciation is of very poor quality, coming not from realization, but from disappointment, and all his worldly ties would reappear if the world happened to throw him a piece of candy, or, in other words, when some of his hidden desires are fulfilled. His desire for spirituality and renunciation of the world would suddenly vanish. Occasionally, every spiritual teacher has the opportunity to encounter those,

who approach him with great zeal and with apparently honest motives, but whose motivation is in fact only thwarted worldly expectation. The first trial for them to encounter, is the trial of fulfillment of all their worldly longings—such disciplic candidates are offered, by the world, everything they ever sought: a spouse, child, wealth, a good reputation, and the like. If they at this point understand that all those things are truly meaningless, and *then* renounce the world and return to the teacher, their spiritual desires are genuine, and they will be initiated into the teaching. If, however, they return to the world, and, deluded by the received trivia, utterly forget the spiritual aspirations that made them seek the teacher in the first place, the teacher will then rid himself of such non-disciples in order to have time for the real ones, and the rajasic, deluded and maddened men, pre-occupied with their worthless toys, fail to even understand the vast and incomprehensible dimensions of their loss, where for the sake of the limited and meaningless, they rejected the infinite value of liberation and realization of God, as the true source of bliss.

- 9 **When, o Arjuna, the prescribed actions
are performed just because it is proper,
renouncing both attachments and the fruits,
such renunciation is considered sattvic.**

A sattvic man does what he sees as proper and necessary, and his only motive for action is the sense of harmony, never his personal longings. Also, having performed an action, he does not contemplate its consequences, for he realizes that his limited mind can in no way comprehend the complexity of the world's functioning. He lets dharma, or the Divine law, care about the consequences, while he himself is quite pleased with the fact that he serves the higher order, and that his action is in accordance with the will of God. That is all he needs to know.

Of course, it is quite possible that even such a man occasionally involves himself in worldly thinking, if he forgets himself and tries to see things from the perspective of the men who surround him, instead of from the position of God. Still, such episodes of entanglement most often don't last long, and he soon remembers the right perspective.

10 **He who has renounced,
does not hate the evil deeds,
nor is he bound to the good ones.
Saturated by sattva and knowledge,
he is free from doubts.**

A man who has transcended the world is preoccupied with God alone. He is not deluded by the worldly criteria of good and evil, for he knows that even the apparently evil deeds can have greater good as their final consequence, and that the apparently good deeds can have awful results. Therefore, for example, will a soldier who kills enemies appear to do evil, in fact doing the great good, since his actions defend the innocent from slaughter, killing the aggressors. On the other hand, a man who acts like a peacemaker, who practices nonviolence in such situations, who does not oppose evil, apparently leaves the impression of a spiritual and noble man, while he is in fact a miserable sinner whose place is only in hell, for his misguided actions will have a consequence of death and suffering of thousands of innocent, who will be hurt because of his arrogant unwillingness to dirty his hands with the blood of the aggressors. Today's spirituality is often only an exercise in vain hypocrisy, giving value to worthless things, while the truly heroic deeds of true spirituality are left unnoticed, or even criticized as crimes. That is the consequence of a reversed, deluded perspective, and the lack of connection with God.

11 **Indeed, for an embodied being
it is impossible to completely renounce action.
He who renounces the fruits of action
is said to be a true renunciate.**

In the world, it is impossible to stop acting; a being needs to breathe, drink and eat, and if nothing else, that alone assumes activity. Even the termination of one's own life is a form of activity. It is therefore not a question of acting or not, but in which way to act, what attitude should one take toward activity, and what must be the the quality of proper activity. A man can truly abandon the worldly only if, in the worldly, he remains completely preoccupied with the spiritual, and a mere attempt to leave the world will bring nothing good. Transcendence in

activity, and not renouncing activity, is therefore the true quality of spirituality.

**12 The triple fruits of action,
pleasant, unpleasant and mixed,
inherits after death he who is attached,
but not the renunciate.**

In other words, a man who is under the influence of the fruits of action, who is attracted to the pleasant and repelled from the unpleasant, develops in himself further attachments to the sphere of activity, which, after his death, and after a period of bliss caused by freedom from the body, manifest his next incarnation. In other words, the hidden desires are manifested within and associated with the sphere of their expected fulfillment, which is the physical plane, and such a soul thus gains new birth in this world.

He, however, who acts from a sense of harmony and rightness, and not from his personal motives and desires, does not create attachments, and does not aspire to rebirth: he comes to Him, to whom he had aspired in life, and that is God. They, who in life desire worldly things, are therefore reborn in the world, and they, who amidst the worldly desire God, have no need for rebirth: God considers them His own.

**13 And now hear about the five causes,
o Mighty-armed, of which speaks sāṅkhya,
in order to achieve perfection in your activities.**

**14 The place of activity, he who acts,
the various organs of action,
the various kinds of activity
and the Divine as the fifth.**

In other words, each form of activity has its cause in the sphere of activity, which consists of the means and the field of activity, and the Divine which manifests in the world.

**15 Every form of activity
performed either by body,**

speech or mind, be it right or wrong,
is caused by those five.

All the aspects of activity are created by interaction of the forces of the world; if the Divine is manifested in action, the deeds are right, and if not, they are wrong.

16 He, therefore, who
because of poor insight
thinks that it is the Self that acts,
is mindless, and does not see the truth.

Self, the unmanifested Absolute, resides in the sphere of transcendence, and is never active, nor bound by action, like the movie screen that is in no way active during the projection of a movie, and is transcendental to the movie. "I" therefore never act, but things take place. That is how things should be observed.

17 He who is free from egotism,
whose mind is unsoiled,
although killing the beings,
he does not kill; he is not attached.

He who can perform even an apparently sinful deed, such as killing, without personal motives, but only for the sake of manifestation of the sense of rightness, does not commit sin with his actions, but rather manifests virtue.

18 Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and he who knows
are the triple incitement to action.
The organ of action, the activity, and he who acts
are the triple foundations of activity.

In activity, the basic factors are knowledge, or the subjective perception of the state of things, and the actual situation in which the action is performed.

19 According to the science of *guṇas*,
the knowledge, the activity and he who acts
exist in three modes, depending on the division of *guṇas*.
Hear now, what I am about to tell you about them.

The knowledge, as the state of spirit of him who acts, can be sattvic, rajasic or tamasic. The forms of activity are divided in the same manner, as well as the qualities of the person who acts. All those qualities together form the whole, for when we observe an action, never should the action itself be separated from its background, and from him who performs it, for that way we will never acquire insight into the situation, and something commendable will seem shameful, while something shameful might seem commendable.

**20 The knowledge,
which sees the one indestructible reality
in all beings, the undivided in the divided,
know to be sattvic.**

The true knowledge is therefore that, which observes brahman in everything, the all-pervading Absolute, which understands the underlying reality of all beings, as well as everything created and unmanifested.

**21 The knowledge that, discerning,
sees in all Creation only the various separate beings,
know to be rajasic.**

Rajasic knowledge is turned toward the world of division, where it fails to perceive the deeper meaning, but perceives the things separately and as such, and thus has the quality of the world, lacking the Divine perspective of true knowledge. Such **knowledge** will know all there is to know about particular beings, but about their purpose and essence it will know nothing. Based on such perception, one will make superficial and often ridiculous assessments of rightness, morality, good and evil, which are based on gratification of the personal ego, instead of manifestation of the all-pervading Divine.

**22 But the knowledge, which without warrant
focuses on one phenomenon alone,
as if it were all, which is without real object, and narrow,
is said to be tamasic.**

Tamasic “knowledge” can be qualified only as a great and deep illusion. Such “knowledge” is the quality of the “thinkers” who reduce reality into some stupid and oversimplified idea of theirs, which they try to see in everything, completely blind to the complexity and the finesse of reality; such a perspective is the quality of obsessive types, who see either sex and instincts, or social consciousness, or some similar thing in everything. Such a deluded man will try to classify everything into some irrelevant categories, and so one tamasic religion will try to classify all others either as gnostics, pantheists, m̄yāvādīs, personalists, impersonalists, atheists, or some other arbitrary category. Those classifications have in common only the total lack of any foundation in reality, being based only in a personal delusion of the man who makes them. Such “knowledge” deals with the illusory, it has no foundation in reality, and fails to bear even the relative, let alone the absolute truth, leading to further destruction of the mind of him who is engaged in such matters. Such considerations are more likely to bring one to a lunatic asylum, than to the knowledge of God.

**23 The actions recommended by the scriptures,
free from attachment, performed without love or hatred
by him who does not desire results:
such actions are said to be sattvic.**

As with knowledge, or observation of reality, in matters of action there are also divisions according to the guṇas. Sattvic action is therefore that, which is in accordance with the holy scriptures (which are a fine criterion of judgment of the value of deeds, of course in case that we are dealing with the truly holy scriptures, and in case that the consciousness making judgment is pure). Since the scriptures are a reflection of Divine presence and will on the physical plane, and the instructions to men regarding guidelines of action, the proper activity must be aligned to those guidelines. If, therefore, a holy scripture says *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind* and also *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*,¹⁷⁸ then it is by all means the criterion according to which deeds are to be valued, where deeds that express love for God and one’s neighbor will be right, and all

¹⁷⁸ Matthew 22:37–39.

others will be wrong. Of course, there are several problems with the scriptures, foremost being that they are big books in which much is said, and everyone can, according to his preferences, choose whatever suits him most in that particular moment, which will have a result of both the best and the worst actions of human species being justified by the holy scriptures. We should therefore state that a scripture is a poor guide if the soul is dirty.

If we, therefore, understand it in the sense that proper actions are always aligned with the Divine, which inspires the scriptures, it remains for us to conclude that the proper actions are those, which bear the quality of transcendence, in which the Divine is manifested, and from which personal motives are absent. If we thus understand proper activity, then there can hardly be any doubt in regard to its meaning.

**24 But the action performed by him who desires pleasures,
or out of egotism and with grave efforts,
is said to be rajasic.**

Rajasic actions are in agreement with rajasic worldview, meaning worldly. They are directed toward ego, and attempt to manifest ego. Ego will thus, in its perception of reality, invest often the grave efforts in order to accomplish its worldly goals, facing the constant array of hindrances and passing pleasures, from birth untill death, followed by a new birth, according to the desires of the being and its perception of happiness.

**25 The deeds performed out of illusion,
regardless of the consequences,
loss, injury or ability, are called tamasic.**

Unlike sattvic activity, which has its foundation in God, and rajasic, which has its foundation in ego, the tamasic activity has its foundation only in illusion. It is a result of ignorance, and manifests disturbed spirit, which does meaningless and deranged things because of his misconceptions. Such activity has no good qualities; it represents pure darkness, and is useful only as an example of abomination and outrage that can result from the union of activity and ignorance. The example of such activity is a religious war, where deluded fools, obsessed with misconceptions of

God, perform cruel and godless deeds, thinking they will appease God with those actions, and achieve liberation. In such illusion, not only do they not reach God, but they also ruin the world with their actions, and their souls with sin. The example of this are the fanatics who commit both murder and suicide in the terrorist actions, which they perceive to be in the service of God. The second example are preachers who teach illusion and fight true and valid teachings, again thinking to serve God with their deeds, for which they will be rewarded. They are all nothing but great trouble to both the world and to other beings, and the cause of all that is ignorance. Ignorance is, therefore, the greatest enemy of both the soul and the world, and its only fruit is suffering.

**26 The man of action who is free
from egotism and attachment,
armed with firmness and energy,
who is not under the influence
of success and lack thereof,
he is said to be sattvic.**

As in the case of perception and activity, the of action can also be divided according to the primary guṇas that manifest through them. Of course, all those three aspects are inseparable, and we cannot speak of one independent from the other two; the quality of the man of action is determined by his realization, and the quality of action is determined by the sum of qualities of the active man and his realization. Still, in each of those three aspects, we can notice some important things that clarify the complex situation to us.

The sattvic man of action is therefore defined by detachment from the world, and sattvic realization. His correct insight forms his personality, and it therefore appropriates the quality of that, which he contemplates. Contemplating the Divine, a man therefore appropriates the high qualities, and his entire personality becomes such.

**27 The man of action, who yearns passionately
for the fruit of action, greedy, cruel and impure,
subject to joy and sorrow, is said to be rajasic.**

The rajasic man of action is therefore characterized by egotistical thinking, or the rajasic worldview. According to his concept

of self and world, he forms his personal qualities, which become that of greed, cruelty and egotism, in all possible aspects. Such a man is constantly focused on the field of activity and its fruits, attempting to find his fulfillment therein. Depending on the temporary states of success and failure, he oscillates between enthusiasm and disappointment, between euphoria and depression.

**28 The man of action who is careless,
vulgar, arrogant, deceitful, evil, lazy,
fainthearted and indecisive,
he is said to be tamasic.**

Unlike the sattvic man of action, who has in himself the Divine qualities, and the rajasic, who at least possesses human qualities, the tamasic man of action is defined only by illusion, ignorance, delusion, roughness and other subhuman demonic qualities of personality. He has no incitement for action in himself, besides that originating from ignorance and illusion; when he acts, he acts in a filthy and sinful manner, and observes only illusion, never the reality of a situation, not even the worldly reality perceivable by an ordinary worldly man. Unlike a sattvic man, who belongs to the Divine worlds of angels, representing an unexpected gift in this world, and the worldly man, who is of this world, and belongs to this world, the tamasic man belongs to the worlds of demons and hell, and represents a painful boil on the face of the world, a disease created by contamination of this world by the infernal qualities of darkness and ignorance.

**29 Hear now, o Dhanañjaya,
how I will describe to you completely and in detail
the triple division of the mind
and persistence according to the guṇas.**

The mind is, in this context, the tool of discernment, or the means of judgment of reality and one's personal attitude toward it.

**30 The mind that knows activity and inactivity
and knows what is, and what is not to be done,
that knows fear and absence of fear,
attachment and freedom, is sattvic, o Pārtha.**

The sattvic mind is therefore that, which recognizes reality in a correct manner, and acts accordingly. It understands how things function, it understands human nature, and its activities have the quality of understanding. The sattvic mind therefore has the ability of discernment and its application in activity. Likewise, it has a pure sense of right and wrong, as well as the ability to connect this feeling with the world of activity in an appropriate manner, thus producing the result of harmonious, Divine activity.

**31 The mind, which does not understand dharma and adharma,
nor that which is, and which is not to be done,
is rajasic, o Pārtha.**

The quality of the rajasic mind is confusion, and lack of perception of the essence of reality, which has a consequence of disorientation in the world, as well as chaotic activity. A man who is preoccupied with himself, who observes all things as divided, and who has no insight of the underlying principle of reality, can also have no deeper understanding of reality. His judgment thereby has the qualities of relativism and limited insight, and his discernment between right and wrong is equally limited, and generally adds up to judgment according to which the pleasant is good and the unpleasant is bad.

**32 The mind surrounded by darkness,
in which adharma shows as dharma
and all the things upside down,
is tamasic, o Pārtha.**

To those we can rightly apply the statement from *Mahābhārata*: *When gods wish to destroy someone, they disturb his mind, and then evil appears to him as good, and he clings onto it with all his heart.*¹⁷⁹ The tamasic mind therefore has not even the limited perception of reality, such as that of the rajasic mind; its perception

¹⁷⁹ Sabhāparvan; comp. John 8:44–45: *You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.*

is completely illusory, all things are perceived upside down, and from the position of evil. The tamasic mind will thus object the righteous men with evil, while at the same time praising the evil ones as righteous. Spiritual abominations will be accepted as great teachers, while true teachers will be “exposed” as false prophets. Such a mind in its ignorance sinks deeper and deeper into evil, for it is not oriented toward reality, but toward nothingness. It thus perceives all the things that are valuable and Divine as opposite to its inner orientation, therefore perceiving them as evil and wicked, while at the same time it perceives the worthless, crazy and evil things as real and good, constantly choosing them as its own, and adjusting its actions and existence accordingly. Such a mind therefore has the quality not of flawed discernment, but of the utterly inverted one, and is in its judgment directed toward evil, not toward good.

**33 The persistence, which originates from the practice of yoga,
and which controls the activities of thought,
breath and sensory organs,
is said to be sattvic, o Pārtha.**

Persistence too exists in several aspects, and we therefore cannot say *a priori* that persistence, as such, is good. Persistence in virtue, such as described in this verse, is good.

In such persistence, the spirit is firmly based in the Divine reality, and the consequence of that is cessation of the rotations of mind (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*), and thereby of breath, as well. Of course, in preoccupation with the spiritual, consciousness is completely withdrawn from the world of senses, for one drinks fulfillment from its true source, and not from the manifested world, where the water of fulfillment is contaminated by filth of all kinds, and each pleasure is paid for manifold, like a few delicious blackberries paid for by many wounds inflicted by thorns, through which we had to pave a path in order to claim them.

**34 But for the persistence, which firmly binds one
to dharma, pleasures and fortune,
and according to the situation,
to desires and their fruits,
is called rajasic, o Pārtha.**

Persistent attachment to the worldly is also persistence, but we could hardly call it a desirable quality, worthy of possession. In fact, indecisiveness in the Divine is far better than persistence in the worldly.

Firm attachment to dharma is the attachment to the circle of bonds of cause and effect, or the wheel of saṃsāra, which conditions death and rebirth in the world.

**35 The persistence, because of which
a mindless man cannot abandon sleep,
fear, worries, faint-heartedness and passion,
is said to be tamasic, o Pārtha.**

The worst of all kinds of persistence is that, where the spirit is persistent in ignorance and illusion, where its nature is firm in sinfulness and flaw, or where, for instance, a man is firm in a state of suffering and worry.

In such examples, we can easily notice the danger of generalizations, where some quality is claimed to be *a priori* good. Nothing but God is good *a priori* and *per se*, but it depends on circumstances, motives and other factors. Firmness in realization is good, while firmness in ignorance is bad. Firmness as a term therefore does not mean much. The same applies to other terms, such as, for instance, love. Love for God is good, love for all beings is also good, but love for ego, love for material things, love for ignorance or love for lies, well, those are a bit different qualities, which can in no case be qualified as good or commendable. Each quality therefore depends on its objects, on the motives of its bearer and its direction, and the quality as such does not tell us anything.

**36 And now hear, o best of Bharatas,
what I am about to tell you about the triple joy,
which originates from practice
and certainly leads to cessation of suffering.**

Such joy is undoubtedly only the realization of God, for only that brings the utmost fulfillment and ends all suffering. It is not reached immediately, but through practice, gradually building the foundations in God.

37 The joy that is like poison in the beginning,
and turns out to be nectar,
which is born from the clear silence
of one's own mind, is said to be sattvic.

Withdrawal of consciousness from the sensory world is initially perceived as a loss, as separation from the good and desirable. Beings in the beginning of practice of withdrawal inwards therefore face difficulties, which seem like poison. Still, with persistence in practice, the ocean of inner bliss is gradually revealed, representing the realization of one's true nature, which is God, sat-cit-ānanda.

38 The joy that originates from the touch
of senses and their objects,
which resembles nectar in the beginning,
and turns out to be poison,
is said to be rajasic.

The senses offer a pleasure that is easily attainable. It is therefore easy to fall into illusion and direct oneself toward them, and to try to reach fulfillment through them. As we turn more towards the world of senses, we lose touch with our own inner nature, and thereby with reality, and become less capable of experiencing pleasure and fulfillment. Because of that, instead of retreating from the senses and turning inwards, beings even additionally contribute to the problem and increase their desire for sensory things, desiring the more and more extreme experiences. We can see the examples of that everywhere. It suffices to only take a look at adrenaline addicts, who find pleasure only in the extreme experiences of mortal fear, and we need not look any further. The similar applies also to the sphere of sexuality, where in the beginning a gentle kiss or a touch of hands brings enormous pleasure, and in the end, as the entire experience is more and more materialized and turned outwards, it all ends in perverted forms of sex, mixed with abuse and other dark activities.

The problem with the senses is that pleasure never originates from the senses, but from the sphere of spirit. All pleasures are to be sought within, and the more we go outside, the deeper we sink into oblivion. The utmost fulfillment, that can never be attained

from the senses, is attained when we retreat inward, into the supreme Divine reality, from which originate all the aspects of pleasure, which we used to mistakenly ascribe to the senses.

**39 The joy that initially and constantly deludes the soul,
and comes from sleep, laziness and carelessness
is said to be tamasic.**

This form of joy can hardly be called joy at all, but indeed, in a certain mode of spirit, which is of the quality of *tamas*, intoxication, ignorance, sleep, laziness, inactivity and the like qualities are perceived as a source of pleasure. Such pleasure is of the quality of stupor and unconsciousness, it is opposite to the qualities of the soul, and represents the quality of nothingness, chaos and darkness.

**40 There is no being on earth,
nor in heaven among the gods,
that would be free from those three guṇas
born from Prakṛti.**

When qualities are presented in this manner, it becomes obvious that every form of relative existence must be defined by them. Of course, the complexity of their relationships and interactions is great, and the best analogy is a television screen, on which the images of many colors are displayed by only three rays of light, of three different colors: red, green and blue. In the entire multitude of displayed colors, we might be hard pressed to perceive one of those three colors in a pure state, and we can get a wrong impression that they do not prevail, or that they are not the foundation of all other colors. Still, the correct observation reveals the truth.

Also, all that is present in the Nature has the qualities of Nature; were that not the case, a thing would undoubtedly completely belong to the sphere of transcendence, or, in this case, when the qualities of *Puruṣa* are complementary to the qualities of *Prakṛti*, it would have completely spiritual qualities, in their fullness. The possession of such spiritual qualities is therefore a sign of liberation from the need for Nature; from Nature we then have nothing more to gain, and also nothing more to learn.

- 41 The duties of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras, o Conqueror of enemies, are divided according to the qualities of activity according to the guṇas.

Here, we have the justification of the system of castes, or division into four *varṇas*, colors. The caste system, in the form known today, is pure injustice, which determines a man's position by his birth, and most often has no connection with his true qualities. However, according to some indications, it is merely a dysfunctional leftover of an ancient functional system, where people were indeed born in families which perfectly reflected their inclinations, and the exceptions either did not exist, or were extremely rare, and in those cases they were most often acknowledged; the examples from *Mahābhārata* include for instance Vidura, who was born in a caste of śūdras, but because of his wisdom, he performed the high function of a royal counselor. Karṇa was born in the caste of chariot drivers, and performed the function of a military commander, or general. The brāhmaṇas, who were inclined to the warrior skills, such as for instance Droṇa and his son Aśvatthāman, were also in positions of the military commanders. We can therefore see that the caste system was by no means rigid and inflexible, but was a credible reflection of the real state of society, and if exceptions appeared, they were treated adequately, and there existed no situation where a brāhmaṇa would be born in a family of śūdras, and, because of his position, would be forced to plow a field for his entire life, which is the situation today, and which justifies complete abolition of the caste system, as improper and opposite to human nature.

- 42 Peace, self-control, austerity, purity, forgiveness, as well as honor, knowledge, wisdom and faith are the natural duties of brāhmaṇas.

The qualities of the brāhmaṇas are therefore based primarily in *sattva*, and their basic quality is insight into reality.

- 43 Courage, excellence, firmness, skill, persistence in battle, generosity and dignity are the natural duties of kṣatriyas.

Kṣatriyas therefore have the predominant quality of rajas, influenced by either sattva or tamas. Ideally, the warrior puts his passionate worldly inclinations to good use of manifesting dharma when he is influenced by sattva. But from *Mahābhārata* we can clearly see that it is possible for warriors under the influence of tamas to threaten everything just and good, as was the case with Duryodhana and his army, which desired to annihilate all virtue, under the influence of arrogance and ignorance. Still, such a thing is a clear perversion, and is not an inherent quality of kṣatriyas.

**44 Agriculture, cattle breeding and trade
are the natural duties of vaiśyas.**

The natural duty of śūdras is service.

Like kṣatriyas, who have a natural orientation toward government and righteousness, vaiśyas have an orientation toward material benefit and well-being, and so they are engaged in production, trade and industry with those goals in mind. Their primary quality is therefore also rajas, but in its lower, material aspect. Śūdras are under the predominant influence of tamas, and their dharma is labor and service, where they will overcome their tamasic longings and be uplifted.

In an ideal case, all the castes should listen to the advice of the brāhmaṇas, who have the best contact with the supreme reality, and the purest insight. According to that advice, they could perfectly perform the duties for which they are suited, thus contributing also to their personal progress, as well as the benefit of the world.

**45 Dedicated to his duty,
each man achieves perfection.**

**Hear now, how he, dedicated to his duty,
attains perfection.**

A man achieves greatest progress if he lives and learns according to his personal inclinations and position; only by acknowledging his own position can he work to improve it.

**46 A man attains perfection
when in his duties he celebrates Him**

who is the cause of evolution of beings
and who pervades all this.

Each being is an aspect of radiation of the Divine reality through the Nature; by celebrating God in our lives, in our own way, with our creativity expressed through our personal inclinations, we can best celebrate the Lord, and be the bearers of His presence in the world.

47 Better is one's own dharma without merit,
than a great success in another's dharma.
Performing the natural, prescribed duty,
a man makes no mistakes.

It is therefore better to completely engage our souls in doing what we feel to be right, however flawed our actions might be, than to do something in which we feel no fulfillment, however successful we might be.

48 A man should not abandon his duty,
o son of Kuntī, with which he was born,
however flawed it might be.
For all without exception is surrounded by flaw,
like fire with smoke.

Each aspect of worldly activity is flawed; there is no significant difference between forging horseshoes and producing microprocessors. Both are merely manipulation of physical matter. It is thus better to feel enthusiasm and joy forging horseshoes, than to routinely and without pleasure produce computers, for it is with our enthusiasm and joy that we manifest God, and material deeds are only an incitement, and their significance is not primary. It therefore matters *how* we do, not *what*.

49 He, whose mind is attached to nothing,
whose reason is under control,
whose desires have left him,
attains the highest state of freedom
from activity in renunciation.

A man, therefore, who has found his joy in God, and made his foundation in Him, leaves the world in a way in which a ripe fruit leaves the tree. Even if he acts in the world, he does so out of a sense of rightness, and not out of need, or to accomplish his goals.

50 Hear now, o son of Kuntī, in brief
 from Me about the way in which he,
 who attained perfection, reaches brahman,
 which is the fullness of knowledge.

Only a man who attained spiritual maturity by evolution in the world can abandon the world and recognize himself as God. As long as he recognizes anything worldly as either himself or his fulfillment, he fails to reach this maturity.

51 Armed with a pure mind, controlling himself firmly,
 abandoning the sound and other sensory objects,
 abandoning love and hate,

52 abiding in solitude, eating little,
 controlling speech, body and mind,
 dedicated to meditation and yoga,
 equipped with lack of passion,

53 abandoning egotism, strength,
 arrogance, desire, anger, property,
 free from the concept of possession, and calm,
 he is ready to become brahman.

Only a man, who in his existence achieved the highest subtlety and composure, who in himself embodied the highest spiritual qualities, who discarded all the lowly things and things of the world as irrelevant, and who satisfies his interests in the sphere of spirit, is ready and worthy of final perfection and freedom.

54 Having become brahman, with calmed Self,
 he neither yearns nor mourns,
 he is the same to all beings,
 and thus lives the highest devotion to Me.

A man who recognizes himself as the supreme reality has the qualities of the all-pervading Being, which supports all the beings.¹⁸⁰ Bearing the Divine qualities, he shows his devotion to God, for he who beholds God, attains His nature, thus becoming in His likeness.

**55 With devotion he truly knows Me, as I truly am.
Then, knowing Me truly, he immediately enters Me.**

By devotion we obtain the Divine qualities. Since qualities indicate spiritual position, he, who possesses the fullness of Divine qualities, abides in the heart of God. In other words, that, which has all the qualities of God, is God.

**56 Constantly acting in all kinds of ways,
finding refuge in Me, by My grace
he attains the eternal, unpassing abode.**

The grace of God is vital nourishment to a saint; he depends only on That, he lives only That and desires only That. Thus acting in the world, he represents the embodiment of the grace of God. Perfectly established in God, he most certainly finds his final goal and highest peace in God.

**57 Discerning, surrender all actions to Me,
observe Me as the Highest,
dedicate yourself to the yoga of realization,
and focus your heart on Me.**

We should therefore dedicate ourselves foremost to finding God, where the primary role is played by the ability to discriminate, which discerns between God and His opposites. Having

¹⁸⁰ Compare to Matthew 5:43–48: *You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

recognized God, we should focus on Him, and dedicate our entire existence to Him.

**58 Having made your heart firm in Me,
you will, by My grace, overcome all obstacles.
However, if because of egotism
you fail to listen to My word, you are lost.**

Once focused on God, we should act from such firm foundations. Gradually, our deeds will become perfect, and the Divine will be completely reflected in them. If, however, instead of devotion to God we turn to intellectualizing, limited by our personal achievements, we shall never overcome our limitations, and it is even possible for us to make fatal errors. In devotion to God, even if we make mistakes, we soon correct them, for our orientation is right, and our sense of rightness leads us to God.

**59 If you adhere to egotism and think “I shall not fight,”
futile is your decision; your nature will force you.**

**60 That which now, o son of Kuntī,
from delusion you wish not to do,
you shall do still, even against your will,
driven by your own nature.**

As much as Arjuna intellectualizes about not wanting to kill noble teachers, it will suffice for someone to remind him of the insults inflicted to Draupadī, of the sufferings endured by his brothers in exile, and of the arrogant and evil behavior of the enemy, and he will immediately forget all their merit and slay them where they stand. It is in his nature, for Arjuna desires righteousness and goodness, and seeing something that opposes it, he feels a desire to destroy those things.

**61 The Lord abides in the hearts of all beings, o Arjuna.
With His māyā, He controls all beings,
like puppets on the strings.**

God is the supreme reality, the foundation of all other realities, including the reality of beings. Divine manifestation is the

fundamental and only positive quality, that we can encounter in the Nature. All the forces of the world originate from God. In the Nature, there are two basic poles, as we have seen: the Divine and the void. Depending on their proximity to either pole, the beings possess different qualities.

62 To Him, o Bhārata, surrender your entire being.
With His grace, you shall achieve the highest peace
and the eternal abode.

We should therefore surrender to God, who is the bearer of rightness and the fundamental, sole reality. With such correct alignment, we shall achieve fulfillment and perfection.

63 I have hereby revealed to you
the most secret knowledge.
Think about it in detail, and do as you like.

So, here ends Kṛṣṇa's revelation.

64 Hear again My highest word,
the most secret of secrets.
You are My dearest friend,
and I therefore tell you the highest good.

65 Onto Me focus your thoughts, be devoted to Me,
sacrifice to Me and thus shall you reach Me.
That is the truth that I reveal to you,
for you are dear to Me.

66 Abandon the idea of right activity,
and seek Me as your only refuge.
Do not worry, for I will free you from all sin.

Those three verses express the condensed essence of the teaching: he who surrenders to God, who focuses on God, and who acts from God and in a Divine manner, cannot err, for God is the bearer of rightness. All that can appear to be sinful in the actions of such a man, can seem to be such only because of imperfect perspective; good and evil are not given in things and deeds as such, but in our

orientation either toward God or toward the void; every deed, that originates from the foundation in God, is perfect, and there is no other way to achieve perfection in activity. Without God, a man cannot even properly intellectualize about rightness and wrongness, since God is also the bearer of true insight and knowledge, and therefore, without God, there can be no correct thought, either.

**67 You are never to explain this to him
who is not engaged in austere penance,
to him who is not devoted to Me,
to him who does not serve,
nor to him who insults Me.**

Speech about truth and highest reality must always be limited to those, who aspire to goodness and truth, and rejoice in them. *Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*¹⁸¹ If we speak about devotion to God to people who do not possess it themselves, who are base, evil and arrogant, they will humiliate the reality, and thereby us as well. They are not oriented toward the truth, and they are not to be told the truth. Rather, we should remove ourselves from them and surrender them to their ruin.¹⁸² *For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*¹⁸³ Every being, according to his inclinations, chooses either the Divine or the void, demonic. They who choose the demonic shall be destroyed, and they who choose God, shall attain their fullness in God.

¹⁸¹ Matthew 7:6.

¹⁸² Compare to Matthew 10:11–15: *And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.*

¹⁸³ Matthew 13:10–12: *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."*

68 He who, entirely devoted to Me,
tells this high secret to My bhaktas,
will undoubtedly come to Me.

69 Among the people there is none
who can do Me greater service than him,
nor will there on earth be anyone dearer to Me.

Such a man therefore manifests the Divine on the physical plane; he spreads the knowledge of God, and, telling about the Almighty on the physical plane, manifests the glory of the Almighty. Indeed, such a man is an embodiment of God Himself in the world, a Divine presence in the world.

70 With sacrifice of knowledge, I am worshiped by him,
who studies this holy conversation.

He who studies the *Bhagavad-gītā*, who contemplates the meaning of the word of the Lord, gradually establishes his mind in God, which is the true meaning and purpose of the sacrifice of knowledge. To read this text and contemplate it is therefore prayer and a sacrificial rite, and has liberating qualities.

71 Also, a man who listens,
full of faith and without blasphemy,
even he, liberated, shall attain
the happy worlds of the righteous.

Even a man who reads this text with interest is on the path of perfection, for even the interest in such matters is a sign of advanced spiritual interest, which will undoubtedly lead to the realization of God; it is just a matter of time and work on achieving the realization.

72 Have you, o Pārtha, heard this with calm spirit?
Is your illusion, conditioned by ignorance,
dispelled, o Dhanañjaya?

Finally, after the conversation and the conclusion, the Lord asks Arjuna whether he is now ready to fight, so that they could,

from the matters of theology and philosophy, turn to the practice of military skills.

73 Arjuna said:

Dispelled is my illusion,
and by Your grace, o Acyuta,
I have attained realization.
I am firm, and my doubts have disappeared.
I will act according to Your word.

Kṛṣṇa's word has therefore, beside the more important purpose of revealing the highest spiritual teaching, fulfilled also the less important purpose, because of which the *Bhagavad-gītā* formally came to existence: Arjuna is free from his dilemma, and is ready to fight. Of course, that took place only after his state of consciousness was changed, which is important to notice. It is the proof that true change on the plane of activity can take place only after a change of depth of insight, and attainment of true realization. The mere instructions about proper activity, without realization, will not produce the desired effect.

74 Sañjaya said:

I have thus heard this wonderful conversation
of Vāsudeva and the noble son of Pṛthā,
which raises the hair on my head.

75 By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard Kṛṣṇa,
the Lord of yoga, himself, directly,
revealing this highest and the most secret yoga.

Now we become aware of Sañjaya, who spoke the entire *Gītā* to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra in Hāstinapura, far from the battlefield, because of Vyāsa's gift of distant vision.

76 O king, whenever I recall this wonderful,
holy conversation between Keśava and Arjuna,
I rejoice, again and again.

77 And whenever I recall the marvelous form of Hari,
great is my admiration, o king,
and I rejoice again and again.

The vision that granted enlightenment to Arjuna, seems to have had the same effect on Sañjaya, as well, who saw the same, and now he, too, is filled with enthusiasm and devotion to God.

78 Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of yoga,
wherever there is Pārtha, the bearer of the bow,
there, I think, is the abode of happiness,
victory, abundance and order.

Thus ends the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the revelation of Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, about the highest reality and proper activity.

To You, o Lord, the foundation of the entire reality, the highest truth and fulfillment, I bow, and Your refuge I seek.

The greatest, the sole glory to You!

*Written in Starigrad, on Hvar island, 2001.
Translated to English in Zagreb, 2003.*

Addenda

Bhagavad-gītā*

* Given here are the Sanskrit original and the English translation, set apart from the commentary for clarity and easier reading. We would like to express our gratitude to the Sanskrit Documents site (<http://sanskrit.gde.to>) for their kind permission to use the ITRANS Sanskrit original.

Chapter One

1 *dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca*
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, gathered on the field of dharma,
on the field of the Kurus,
what did my sons and Pāṇḍavas do,
in their desire for battle?

2 *sañjaya uvāca*
dr̥ṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānīkaṃ vyūḍhaṃ duryodhanastadā
ācāryamupasaṅgamyā rājā vacanamabravīt

Sañjaya said:

Seeing the army of Pāṇḍavas,
arranged in battle lines,
King Duryodhana approached his teacher
and spoke the following words:

3 *paśyaitāṃ pāṇḍuputrāṅmācārya mahatīm camūm*
vyūḍhāṃ drupadaputreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmātā

Behold this mighty army of the sons of Pāṇḍu,
arranged into battle lines by your mindful disciple,
the son of Drupada.

4 *atra śūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjunasamā yudhi*
yuyudhāno virāṭaśca drupadaśca mahārathaḥ

There are heroes, mighty archers,
equal in battle to Bhīma and Arjuna:
Yuyudhāna, Virāṭa, and also Drupada,
mighty in his chariot of war.

5 *dhṛṣṭaketuścekitānaḥ kāsīrājaśca vīryavān*
purujikuntibhojaśca śaibyaśca narapuṅgavaḥ

Also Dhṛṣṭaketu, Cekitāna
and the brave king of the Kāśī,
and also Purujit, Kuntibhoja
and Śaibya, a hero among men.

- 6 *yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta uttamaujāśca vīryavān
saubhadro draupadeyāśca sarva eva mahārathāḥ*

There is also the courageous Yudhāmanyu,
and the mighty Uttamaujas,
and the son of Subhadrā,
as well as the sons of Draupadī.
All of them mighty warriors,
great on their chariots of war.

- 7 *asmākaṃ tu viśiṣṭā ye tānnibodha dvijottama
nāyakā mama sainyasya saṃjñārthaṃ tānbraṇvīmi te*

Hear, o champion among the twice-born,
for I will now tell you the names
of the commanders of my army.
I am telling you this
in order for you to know them better.

- 8 *bhavānbhīṣmaśca karṇaśca kṛpaśca samitiñjayaḥ
aśvatthāmā vikarṇaśca saumadattistathaiva ca*

Among them you are first; then come Bhīṣma,
Karṇa and Kṛpa, victorious in many battles;
also Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa and the son of Somadatta.

- 9 *anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ
nānāśastrapraharaṇāḥ sarve yuddhaviśāradaḥ*

There are many other heroes,
skillful with various weapons,
knowledgeable in skills of warfare,
willing to give their lives for me in battle.

- 10 *aparyāptaṃ tadasmākaṃ balaṃ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam
paryāptaṃ tvidameteṣāṃ balaṃ bhīmābhirakṣitam*

Countless is our army under the command of Bhīṣma,
while the strength of the army of the Pāṇḍavas,
commanded by Bhīma, is limited.

11 *ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathābhāgamavasthitāḥ
bhīṣmamevābhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi*

Line yourselves now in battle lines,
on various positions within our army,
protecting Bhīṣma above all.

12 *tasya sañjanayanharṣam kuruvṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ
siṃhanādaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ śaiṅkhaṃ dadhmau pratāpavān*

Increasing the joy of Duryodhana,
the brave Bhīṣma, grandfather of the Kurus,
roared then like a lion, and blew into his shell.

13 *tataḥ śaiṅkhāśca bheryaśca paṇavānakagomukhāḥ
sahasaiṅbhryahanyanta sa śabdastumulo'bhavat*

Shells then suddenly sounded,
as well as small and big drums, timpani, horns,
and a terrible sound was heard.

14 *tataḥ śvetairhayairyukte mahati syandane sthitaḥ
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śaiṅkhau pradadhmau*

Sitting on a battle chariot
behind the team of white horses,
Mādhava and the son of Pāṇḍu then blew
into their divine shells.

15 *pāñcajanyaṃ hr̥ṣīkeśo devadattaṃ dhanañjayaḥ
pauṇḍraṃ dadhmau mahāśaiṅkhaṃ bhīmakarmā vṛkodaraḥ*

Hṛṣīkeśa blew into Pāñcajanya,
and Dhanañjaya into Devadatta.
The great Bhīma of a wolf's belly
blew into the great shell Pauṇḍra.

16 *anantavijayaṃ rājā kuntīputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ
nakulaḥ sahadevaśca sughoṣamaṇipuṣpakau*

The son of Kuntī, King Yudhiṣṭhira,
blew into his shell Anantavijaya,
and Nakula and Sahadeva
into Sughoṣa and Maṇipuṣpaka.

17 *kāśyaśca parameṣvāsaḥ śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca sātyakiścāparājitaḥ*

The great archer, the king of Kāśī,
and Śikhaṇḍin, the great fighter,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa,
and also the invincible Sātyaki,

18 *drupado draupadeyāśca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivīpate
saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ pṛthakpṛthak*

Drupada, Draupadī's sons,
and the strong-handed son of Subhadra,
as well as many others, also blew into their shells,
o lord of the land.

19 *sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇāṃ hṛdayāni vyadārayat
nabhaśca pṛthivīm caiva tumulo'bhyanunādayan*

The terrible sound,
echoing strongly throughout the sky and land,
shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

20 *atha vyavasthitāndṛṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapidhvajaḥ
pravṛtte śāstrasampāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ*

Seeing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra aligned for battle,
with weapons almost away,
the son of Pāṇḍu, standing on his chariot
with a flag that bore the form of Hanuman,
raised his bow for battle.

21 *hr̥ṣīkeśaṃ tadā vākyamidamāha mahīpate
arjuna uvāca
senayorubhayormadhye rathaṃ sthāpaya me'cyuta*

Then, o king, he said unto Hṛṣīkeśa:
O sinless one, drive my chariot between the armies,

22 *yāvadetānnirikṣe'haṃ yoddhukāmānavasthitān
kairmayā saha yoddhavyamasmin raṇasamudyame*

so that I can see those,
who stand there desiring battle,
and whom I am to face in combat.

23 *yotsyamānānavekṣe'haṃ ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheryuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ*

Let me see those, who have gathered here,
ready for battle, wishing well
to the vicious son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

24 *sañjaya uvāca
evamukto hr̥ṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata
senayorubhayormadhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam*

Sañjaya said:
O Bhārata, Hṛṣīkeśa obeyed Guḍākeśa,
and drove the beautiful chariot,
putting it to a halt amidst the armies.

25 *bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ sarveśāṃ ca mahīkṣitām
uvāca pārtha paśyaitānsamavetānkurūṇi*

In front of Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
and all those rulers of the land, he said:
Pārtha, behold these Kurus, who have gathered here!

26 *tatrāpaśyasthitānpārthaḥ pitṛnatha pitāmahān
ācāryānmātulānbhrātr̥nputrānpautrānsakhīmstathā*

The son of Pṛthā then saw standing there his fathers,
grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers,
sons, grandchildren, many friends,

27 *śvaśurānsuhṛdaścaiva senayorubhayorapī
tānsamīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvānbandhūnavasthitān*

fathers in law, and well-meaning people in both armies.
The son of Kuntī, seeing all those relatives present,

28 *kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viśīdannidamabravīt
arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭvemaṃ svajānaṃ kṛṣṇa yuyutsum samupasthitam*

having been overwhelmed with compassion,
said in great anguish:
Seeing all my relatives, o Kṛṣṇa,
gathered here for battle,

29 *sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṃ ca pariśuṣyati
vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate*

paralyzes my limbs, and my mouth dries!
My body trembles, my skin shivers,

30 *gāṇḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāttvakcaiva paridahyate
na ca śaknomyavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ*

and Gāṇḍīva slips away from my hand.
I feel as if I am being consumed by fire!
My legs can no longer hold me,
and I would say that my mind is failing me.

31 *nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava
na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajānamāhave*

O Keśava, I sense a bad omen
and see no good in killing my cousins in battle.

32 *na kāṅkṣe vijayaṃ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṃ sukhāni ca
kiṃ no rājyena govinda kiṃ bhogairjīvitena vā*

I desire not victory, o Kṛṣṇa,
nor empire, nor pleasures.
What good is the empire to us, o Govinda,
pleasures, and life itself?

33 *yeṣāmarthe kaṅkṣitaṃ no rājyaṃ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca
ta ime'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāmstyaktvā dhanāni ca*

The very people for whose sake we desire kingdom,
joys and pleasures are here in the battlefield,
renouncing life and wealth:

34 *ācāryāḥ pitaraḥ putrāstathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā*

Teachers, fathers, sons,
as well as grandfathers,
uncles, grandchildren, fathers and brothers-in-law,
and other cousins;

35 *etānna hantumicchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana
api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kiṃ nu mahīkrte*

them, o Madhusūdana, I do not wish to kill,
even if I am to be killed,
not even for the reign of all three worlds,
let alone this single one!

36 *nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrānnaḥ kā prītiḥ syājjanārdana
pāpamevāśrayedasmānhatvaitānātātāyinaḥ*

What pleasure can we obtain
by killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, o Janārdana?
Only sin can fall on our heads
if we slay those who attack us here.

37 *tasmānnārḥā vayaṃ hantum dhārtarāṣṭrānsvabāndhavān
svajanaṃ hi kathaṃ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhava*

It is, therefore, wrong to slay our brothers,
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

What happiness can we obtain
from killing our own kin, o Mādhava?

38 *yadyapyete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasah
kulakṣayakṛtaṃ doṣaṃ mitradrohe ca pātakam*

Although they, blinded with greed,
see no injustice in destruction of family,
nor sin in betrayal of their friends,

39 *kathaṃ na jñeyamasmābhiḥ pāpādasmānnivartitum
kulakṣayakṛtaṃ doṣaṃ prapaśyadbhirjanārdana*

why would not we, who see clearly
the injustice in destruction of family,
divert ourselves from sin?

40 *kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātanāḥ
dharma naṣṭe kulaṃ kṛtsnamadharma'bhibhavatyuta*

Ancient family dharmas are destroyed
with the destruction of family.
When dharma is lost,
adharma prevails in the entire family.

41 *adharmābhibhavātkṛṣṇa praduśyanti kulastriyaḥ
striṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṅkaraḥ*

When adharma prevails, o Kṛṣṇa,
the women of the family become corrupt,
and with the corruption of women, o Vārṣṇeya,
begins the mixing of castes.

42 *saṅkaro narakāyaiva kulaghnānām kulasya ca
patanti pitaro hyeṣām luptaṇḍodakakriyāḥ*

The mixing of castes leads both the family
and its destroyers to hell,
and their forefathers are also destroyed
when sacrifices end.

43 *doṣairetaiḥ kulaghnānāṃ varṇasaṅkarakārakaiḥ
utsādyante jātīdharmāḥ kuladharmāśca śāśvatāḥ*

Because of the evil deeds of those
who destroy families
and cause the mixing of castes,
countless dharmas of castes
and families are extinguished.

44 *utsannakuladharmānāṃ manuṣyāṅnāṃ janārdana
narake niyataṃ vāso bhavatītyanuśūruma*

We have heard, o Janārdana,
that when family traditions are destroyed,
people get to live in hell.

45 *aho bata mahatpāpaṃ kartuṃ vyavasitā vayam
yadrājyasukhalobhena hantuṃ svajanamudyatāḥ*

Alas! A great sin we intended to commit,
having been ready to kill our cousins
out of greed for the pleasures of kingdom.

46 *yadi māmāpratīkāramaśāstram śāstrapānayaḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyustanme kṣemataram bhavet*

It would be better for me
if the armed sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra slew me,
unarmed and without resistance.

47 *sañjaya uvāca
evamuktivārjunaḥ saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat
viśṛjya saśaram cāpaṃ śokasaṃvignamānasah*

Sañjaya said:
Having said that before the battle,
throwing away his bow and arrows,
Arjuna sat on the seat of his battle chariot,
crushed with sadness.

Chapter Two

- 1 *sañjaya uvāca*
taṃ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭamaśrupūrṇākulekṣaṇam
viṣḍantamidaṃ vākyamuvāca madhusūdanaḥ

Sañjaya said:

Seeing him thus overwhelmed with compassion,
 filled with sorrow, with eyes full of tears,
 Madhusūdana said these words.

- 2 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
kutastvā kaśmalamidaṃ viṣame samupasthitam
anāryajuṣṭamasvargyamakīrtikaramarjuna

The Almighty Lord said:

Whence came this fault, unknown to men of honor,
 that leads not to heaven, but rather brings disgrace,
 to you, o Arjuna, in this decisive moment?

- 3 *klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitattvayyupapadyate*
kṣudraṃ hṛdayadaurbalyaṃ tyaktvottiṣṭha parantapa

O Pārtha, submit not to dependency,
 which is unworthy of you!
 Cast aside pitiful faint-heartedness!
 Rise, o destroyer of enemies!

- 4 *arjuna uvāca*
kathaṃ bhīṣmamahaṃ sañkhye droṇaṃ ca madhusūdana
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārḥāvarisūdana

Arjuna said:

How can I fight Bhīṣma and Droṇa, deserving all respect,
 with arrows in a battlefield, o Madhusūdana?

- 5 *gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvān*
śreyo bhoktuṃ bhaikṣyamapīha loke
hatvārthakāmāṃstu gurūnihaiiva
bhuñjīya bhogān rudhirapradigdhān

It must indeed be better
to live of alms in this world,
than to slay those great men.
Be they even soiled by greed;
killing them, all the pleasures
I were to enjoy in this world
would be stained with blood.

- 6 *na caitavidmaḥ kataranno garīyo
yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ
yāneva hatvā na jijīviṣāmaḥ
te'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ*

We know not what is better,
to defeat or to be defeated.
Killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will fill our lives with bitterness.
Still, they face us in a field of battle.

- 7 *kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ
pṛcchāmi tvāṃ dharmasammūdhacetāḥ
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṃ brūhi tanme
śiṣyaste'haṃ śādhi mām tvāṃ prapannam*

Struck by weakness, I no longer know my duty.
I thus seek refuge in You: tell me, what am I to do?
I am Your disciple; teach me, for in You I find my refuge.

- 8 *na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād
yacchokamucchoṣaṇamindriyāṅām
avāpya bhūmāvasapatnamṛddhaṃ
rājyaṃ surāṅāmapi cādhipatyam*

I see nothing indeed
that could dispel the sadness that dries my senses,
not even if I were to have an unmatched kingdom on earth,
nor if I were to reign over gods.

- 9 *sañjaya uvāca
evamuktvā hr̥ṣīkeśaṃ guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ
na yotsya iti govindamuktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha*

Saṅjaya said:

Saying this to Hṛṣīkeśa,

Guḍākeśa, the destroyer of enemies, also said:

“Govinda, I will not fight!” and went silent.

10 *tamuvāca hṛṣīkeśaḥ prahasanniva bhārata
senayorubhayormadhye viṣīdantamidam vacaḥ*

O Bhārata, unto him, who stood there

in sadness among the armies,

Hṛṣīkeśa smilingly uttered these words:

11 *śrībhagavānuvāca
aśocyānanvaśocastvaṃ prajñāvādāṃśca bhāṣase
gatāsūnagatāsūṃśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*

The Almighty Lord said:

You grieve for those who are not to be grieved,

in words seemingly wise.

But the wise grieve for neither the living nor the dead.

12 *na tvevāhaṃ jātu nāsaṃ na tvam neme janādhipāḥ
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param*

Never was there a time

in which I had not been, or you,

or all those noble people,

nor will there ever be a time

in which we will cease to be.

13 *dehino'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanaṃ jarā
tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati*

As the embodied man experiences in his body

childhood, youth, and old age,

he also attains another body.

This does not confuse the wise.

14 *mātrāsparśāstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ
āgamāpāyino'nityāstāṃstitikṣasva bhārata*

Sensory perception, o son of Kuntī,
produces warmth and cold,
joy and suffering.
Unsteady, they come and go.
Witness them steadily, o Bhārata!

15 *yaṃ hi na vyathayantyeṭe puruṣaṃ puruṣarṣabha
samaduḥkhasukhaṃ dhīraṃ so'mṛtatvāya kalpate*

Truly, one who is undisturbed by them,
steady in both suffering and joy,
is worthy of immortality, o best among men.

16 *nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ
ubhayaorapi dṛṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ*

The unreal does not exist;
the real never ceases to exist.
The truth of this is known
to seers of the highest reality.

17 *avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamideṃ tatam
vināśamavyayasyāsyā na kaścitkartumarhati*

Indestructible is He, know, who pervades all.
He can be destroyed by none.

18 *antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ
anāśino'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata*

All bodies are destructible;
eternal, they say, indestructible and infinite
is the inhabitant of the body.
So fight, o Bhārata!

19 *ya eṃaṃ vetti hantāraṃ yaścainaṃ manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate*

Neither he who thinks to be a killer,
nor he who thinks to be killed
see the truth.
He neither kills nor is killed.

20 *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
nāyaṃ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṃ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

He is neither born nor does He die;
neither does He ever come to existence,
nor does He ever cease to exist.
Unborn is He and eternal, always existing, ancient,
never killed with the death of the body.

21 *vedāvināśinaṃ nityaṃ ya enamajamavyayam
kathaṃ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṃ ghātayati hanti kam*

He who understands that he is indestructible and eternal,
unborn and immortal, o Pārtha,
how can he kill or cause death?

22 *vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāni vihāya jīrṇāni anyāni samyāti navāni dehi*

Like a man who discards ragged clothes
to take new ones,
so does the embodied man discard the old and ragged body
to pass into another, new one.

23 *nainaṃ chindanti śāstrāṇi nainaṃ dahati pāvakaḥ
na cainaṃ kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ*

Weapons cannot cut Him,
fire cannot burn him,
water cannot wet him,
nor can the wind dry him.

24 *acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo'śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo'yaṃ sanātanaḥ*

Unbreakable is He and unburnable,
unmeltable and undryable.
Eternal is He and all-pervading,
motionless and changeless,
always the same.

25 *avyakto'yamacintyo'yamavikāryo'yamucyate
tasmādevaṃ veditvainaṃ nānuśocitumarhasi*

He is called invisible, incomprehensible and unchangeable.
Knowing Him as such, you shall not feel sorrow.

26 *atha cainaṃ nityajātaṃ nityaṃ vā manyase mṛtaṃ
tathāpi tvaṃ mahābāho naivaṃ śocitumarhasi*

If, however, you think of Him as someone
who again and again lives through birth and death,
it is still not proper for you to bemoan, o Mighty-armed.

27 *jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyurdhruvaṃ janma mṛtasya ca
tasmādaparihārye'rthe na tvaṃ śocitumarhasi*

For certain is the death of the living,
as well as the rebirth of the deceased.
It is thus inappropriate
for you to regret the inevitable.

28 *avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata
avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā*

All that is created is unmanifested in the beginning,
manifested in the middle, o Bhārata,
returning to the Unmanifested after its destruction.
What is there to regret?

29 *āścaryavatpāśyati kaścidenam
āścaryavadvadati tathaiiva cānyaḥ
āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti
śrutvāpyenaṃ veda na caiva kaścit*

Some see it as a miracle;
some, however, speak of it as a miracle,
or hear it thus described.
And having heard about it,
they cannot comprehend it.

30 *dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṃ dehe sarvasya bhārata
tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvaṃ śocitumarhasi*

He, who is eternal and cannot be killed,
dwells in the body of every being, o Bhārata.
You should therefore not bemoan any being.

31 *svadharmamaṇi cāvekṣya na vikampitumarhasi
dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyatkṣatriyasya na vidyate*

If you consider your own dharma,
you will find no reason for doubt;
for there is nothing better for a kṣatriya
than a battle in accordance with dharma.

32 *yadṛcchayā copaṇnaṃ svargadvāramapāvṛtam
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddhamīdṛṣam*

Fortunate are kṣatriyas, o Pārtha,
before whom the gates of heavens
open up in this manner.

33 *atha cettvamimaṃ dharmyaṃ saṅgrāmaṃ na kariṣyasi
tataḥ svadharmaṃ kīrtiṃ ca hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi*

If you refuse to take part in battle,
which is in accordance with dharma,
you will renounce your dharma,
and, losing your reputation,
you will also commit a sin.

34 *akīrtiṃ cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te'vyayām
sambhāvitasya cākīrtirmaraṇādatiricyate*

Men will speak forever about your disgrace,
and for a man of honor,
disgrace is worse than death.

35 *bhayādraṇādūparataṃ maṃsyante tvāṃ mahārathāḥ
yeṣāṃ ca tvaṃ bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam*

“Out of fear he ran from the battlefield,”
these great fighters will think,
and those who admired you, will despise you.

36 *avācyavādāṁśca bahūnvadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ
nindantastava sāmārthyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim*

Many bad words will be heard about you
from the mouths of your enemies,
who will ridicule your strength.
What can be more painful than that?

37 *hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jivā vā bhokṣyase mahīm
tasmāduttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ*

Either you will die to win heaven,
or you will be victorious to enjoy life on earth.
So stand up, o son of Kuntī, be determined and fight!

38 *sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi*

Same in both joy and suffering,
in gain and loss, in victory and defeat,
be thus in battle, and fight.
This way, you will commit no sin.

39 *eṣā te'bhīhitā sāṅkhye buddhiryoge tvimāṁ śṛṇu
buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandham prahāsyasi*

Here I told you the teaching of sāṅkhya.
Hear now what yoga teaches on this matter.
With your mind thus affirmed, o Pārtha,
you will discard the binding quality of activity.

40 *nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*

In this yoga no effort is ever lost,
nor are there any obstacles.
Even a fraction of this dharma
frees one from great anguish.

41 *vyavasāyātmikā buddhirekeha kurunandana
bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām*

In this yoga, o son of Kuru,
a determined mind is focused in one;
an indecisive mind is manifold,
with many branches.

42 *yāmimāṃ puṣṭitāṃ vācaṃ pravadantyavipaścitaḥ
vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastīti vādinaḥ*

Those who do not discern, and,
focusing on the words of the Vedas,
say that there exists nothing greater,
speak fancy words
devoid of substance, o Pārtha.

43 *kāmātmānaḥ svargaṇā janmakarmaphalaprādāṃ
kriyāviśeṣabahulāṃ bhogaiśvaryagatiṃ prati*

Filled with desires, longing for the heavens,
they perform deeds
with favorable birth and well-being in mind.
In order to acquire abundance and pleasure,
they prescribe various rituals.

44 *bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānāṃ tayāpahṛtacetasām
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate*

Firm dedication is not born
in the confused minds of those
who are attached to pleasures and well-being.

45 *traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna
nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān*

The Vedas deal with the three guṇas.
Be without the guṇas, o Arjuna!
Free of duality, founded in true purity of spirit,
independent of possession,
be governed by the Self.

46 *yāvānartha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake
tāvānsarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ*

Of what use is a small well
to a man who lives in a place abundant with water?
Likewise, of what good are all the Vedas to him
who has realized the supreme brahman?

47 *karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaṇphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi*

To you belongs activity, but never its fruits.
Do not consider yourself the cause of the fruits of action,
nor adhere to inactivity.

48 *yogasthaḥ kuru karmaṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*

Entrenched in yoga,
renouncing attachments, act, o Dhanañjaya!
Same in success and failure be,
for such sameness is called yoga.

49 *dūreṇa hyavaraṃ karma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya
buddhau śaraṇamanviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ*

Deeds devoid of greatness are far, indeed,
from the spirit entrenched in yoga, o Dhanañjaya!
Having found refuge in spirit, act.
Worthy of pity are those,
who live for the fruits of actions.

50 *buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte
tasmādyogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*

The one of firm spirit is here freed
from both good and evil.
So dedicate yourself to yoga.
Yoga is the art of action.

51 *karmajaṃ buddhiyuktā hi phalaṃ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ
janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ padaṃ gacchantyanāmayam*

The sages of affirmed spirit,
renouncing the results of actions,
indeed attain liberation
from the shackles of birth,
attaining the state
that is free from suffering.

52 *yadā te mohakalilaṃ buddhirvyatitarīṣyati
tadā gantāsi nirvedaṃ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*

When your spirit leaves the dense forest of illusion,
then will you become indifferent
toward both that, which you have heard
and that, which you are yet to hear.

53 *śrutivipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niṣcalā
samādhāvācalā buddhistadā yogānavāpsyasi*

When your mind,
confused by the heard,
becomes firmly united,
then will you attain the state of yoga.

54 *arjuna uvāca
sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava
sthitadhīḥ kiṃ prabhāṣeta kimāsīta vrajeta kim*

Arjuna said:
What are the designations of a man of steady insight,
who is focused in unity, o Keśava?
How does he speak, how does he sit, or walk?

55 *śrībhagavānuvāca
prajahāti yadā kāmānsarvānpārtha manogatān
ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadocyate*

The Almighty Lord said:
Abandoning in fullness all the desires

that reside in spirit, o Pārtha,
in Self satisfied with Self alone,
he attains the steadiness of spirit.

56 *duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprahaḥ
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate*

With mind undisturbed by misfortunes,
free from the ties of happiness, fear and anger,
he is said to be a sage of steady spirit.

57 *yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehastattatprāpya śubhāśubham
nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*

He, who is free from such influences,
who neither boasts in good nor mourns in ill,
he is of steady insight.

58 *yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṅindriyārthebhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*

Having withdrawn his senses from sensory objects,
as a turtle that withdraws its limbs into the shell,
his insight is steady.

59 *viśayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasavarjaṁ raso'pyasya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

One who refrains from sensory pleasure
still feels a longing for the pleasures of the senses.
Having experienced the Highest,
such a tendency disappears.

60 *yatato hyapi kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ
indriyāṅi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ*

The uncontrolled senses, o son of Kuntī,
swirl and distract the mind of even a reasonable man,
in spite of all his efforts.

61 *tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ
vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*

Controlling the senses, one should take refuge in Me.
Then will his senses undoubtedly be under control,
and his insight persistent.

62 *dhyāyato viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate
saṅgātsañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate*

Thinking about the objects of the senses
creates attachment to them.
Attachment leads to desire;
desire leads to anger.

63 *krodhādbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtīvibhramaḥ
smṛtibhramāśād buddhināśo buddhināśātpraṇāśyati*

Anger leads to delusion,
and delusion leads to the wavering of memory.
When the memory wavers, the mind is lost.
Losing his mind, a man is ruined.

64 *rāgadveṣavimuktaistu viṣayānindriyaiścaraṇ
ātmaśāyairvidheyātmā prasādamadhighacchati*

But he, who moves among the objects of senses,
without attachment or repulsion,
his senses controlled by the Self,
he attains the state of grace.

65 *prasāde sarvadulḥkhānāṁ hānirasyopajāyate
prasannacetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*

Thus attaining grace,
all his troubles come to an end.
Filled with happiness,
his mind soon becomes fully established.

66 *nāsti buddhirayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā
na cābhāvayataḥ śāntiraśāntasya kutaḥ sukham*

One, who is not affirmed,
cannot have balance of mind.
Without balance of mind, there can be no peace,
and without peace, how can there be happiness?

67 *indriyānām hi caratām yanmano'nuvidhīyate
tadasya harati prajñām vāyurnāvamivāmbhasi*

As the wind carries a ship across the water,
so can even one restless sense
that preoccupies the mind
take away a man's insight.

68 *tasmādyasya mahābāho nigrhītāni sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṅindriyārthebhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*

Reliable is therefore the insight of him,
whose senses are thus withdrawn
from the objects of the senses, o Mighty-armed.

69 *yā niśā sarvabhūtānām tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneh*

What is night to all beings
is day to one who attained self control.
Where all beings are awakened,
the enlightened sage sees but night.

70 *āpūryamāṇamacalapratiṣṭham
samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat
tadvatkāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve
sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī*

He, into whom all desires flow
as do the rivers into the always full and steady ocean,
he attains peace, and not the one who cultivates desires.

71 *vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvāṅpumāmścarati niḥspṛhaḥ
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati*

Renouncing desires,
 one who lives without them,
 without the feeling of “I” and “mine,”
 attains the highest peace.

*72 eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha naināṃ prāpya vimuhyati
 sthitvāsyaṃantakāle’pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati*

It is the state of brahman, o Pārtha.
 Having attained it, a man is not deluded.
 Thus established, even in the mortal hour,
 he attains extinction in brahman.

Chapter Three

1 *arjuna uvāca*
 jyāyasī cetkarmanaste matā buddhirjanārdana
 tatkiṃ karmaṇi ghore māṃ niyojayasi keśava

Arjuna said:

If You praise knowledge above action, o Janārdana,
why then do You force me to commit
this atrocious act, o Keśava?

2 *vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṃ mohayaśiva me*
 tadekaṃ vada niścītya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām

With those apparently contradictory statements
You are confusing my mind.
Therefore I implore you, tell me clearly
how am I to attain the greatest good.

3 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
 loke'smina dviividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha
 jñānāyogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām

The almighty Lord said:
As I said before, in this world
there are two paths, o sinless one:
the yoga of knowledge for men of thought,
and the yoga of action for men of deed.

4 *na karmaṇāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmyaṃ puruṣo'snute*
 na ca sannyasanādeva siddhiṃ samadhiḡacchati

Neither will refraining from action
lead a man to inactivity,
nor will renunciation itself
lead him to perfection.

5 *na hi kaścitkṣaṇamāpi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt*
 kāryate hyavaśaḡ karma sarvaḡ prakṛtijairguṇaiḡ

No one indeed can survive,
even for a moment, without acting.
For everyone is forced into actions
by the qualities of Nature itself.

- 6 *karmendriyāṇi samyamya ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate*

One who controls the organs of action,
while contemplating sensory objects in his thoughts,
is deluding himself, and is called a hypocrite.

- 7 *yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate'ṛjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karmayogamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate*

Far beyond him is the one
whose senses are controlled by the mind,
who performs the yoga of action
with active senses and without attachments.

- 8 *niyataṃ kuru karma tvaṃ karma jyāyo hyakarmanāḥ
śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyedakarmanāḥ*

Perform, therefore, your duty.
Indeed it is better to work than to be idle.
Without activity, indeed,
even the preservation of your body
would be impossible.

- 9 *yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṃ karmabandhanaḥ
tadarthaṃ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara*

Except for the actions of yajña,
all worldly actions are binding.
So, o son of Kuntī, act
for the purpose of yajña, without attachment.

- 10 *sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk*

Creating, in ancient ages,
man together with yajña,
the Father of all beings told him:
“Herewith you will prosper
and fulfill your desires.

11 *devānbhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha*

Pleased with your sacrifice,
the gods will answer your prayers.
Thus helping each other,
you will attain the greatest good.”

12 *iṣṭānbhogānhi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ
tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ*

Pleased with your sacrifice,
the gods will give you everything in abundance.
But one who enjoys their gifts
without offering them to the gods first,
he must be a mere thief.

13 *yajñāśiṣṭāśīnaḥ santo mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ
bhujate te tvagham pāpā ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt*

The righteous, who eat the remnants of yajña,
are free from of all sorts of sin.
The sinners, however,
who prepare food for themselves alone,
they eat but a sin.

14 *annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍannasambhavaḥ
yajñādbhavati parjanyo yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ*

Beings are created from food;
food comes from rain.
Rain comes from yajña,
and yajña is born from activity.

15 *karma brahmodbhavaṃ viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam
tasmātsarvagataṃ brahma nityaṃ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam*

Know that activity originates from Brahmā.
He, however, has his foundation in the Indestructible.
The yajña, therefore, manifests the eternal nature of brahman.

16 *evaṃ pravartitaṃ cakraṃ nānuvartayatīha yaḥ
aghāyurindriyārāmo moghaṃ pārtha sa jīvati*

One, who fails to participate
in the circle of activity thus initiated,
whose life, filled with sin,
passes in the gratification of the senses,
his life is futile, o Pārtha.

17 *yastvātmaratireva syādātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭastasya kāryaṃ na vidyate*

But one who finds satisfaction in Self,
radiant with the light of Self,
in Self alone utterly pleased,
for him there are no deeds to be done.

18 *naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana
na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścīdarthavyapāśrayaḥ*

Never does he act for the sake of benefit,
nor does he ever neglect his duties.
There is no being in this world,
whose refuge he would need to seek.

19 *tasmādasaktaḥ satataṃ kāryaṃ karma samācara
asakto hyācarankarma paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ*

So act always without attachments,
performing your duties.
Acting thusly, a man undoubtedly attains the Highest.

20 *karmaṇaiva hi saṃsiddhimāsthītā janakādayaḥ
lokasaṅgrahamevāpi sampāśyankartumarhasi*

Through work indeed have King Janaka
and others attained perfection.
Having in mind the well-being of the world as well,
it is also appropriate for you to act.

21 *yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janah
sa yatpramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate*

Whatever a great man does, others follow.
Whatever example he sets,
the world follows in his footsteps.

22 *na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana
nānavāptamavāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi*

There is nothing, o Pārtha, in all three worlds
that I would need to do,
nor is there anything out there for me to attain.
Still, I act constantly.

23 *yadi hyaham na varteyam jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

Indeed, what would happen if I, o Pārtha,
even once failed to act perfectly?
All the people would follow my example.

24 *utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryām karma cedaham
saṅkarasya ca kartā syāmuḥpahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ*

If I failed to act, all the worlds would fall to ruin.
I would be the cause of confusion
and destruction of those beings.

25 *saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāṃso yathā kurvanti bhārata
kuryādvidvāṃstathāsaktaścikīrṣurlokasaṅgraham*

As ignorant men act from their ignorance, o Bhārata,
so must the wise do without attachment,
in order to set an example.

26 *na buddhibhedam janayedajñānām karmasaṅginām
joṣayetsarvakarmāṇi vidvānyuktaḥ samācāran*

Let the wise man refrain from confusing
the spirits of ignorant men, who cling to action.
Let him rather, correctly established,
motivate them by his own example.

27 *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyate*

It is, indeed, the qualities of Nature that act.
Confused by the ego, the soul thinks: “I act.”

28 *tattvavittu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate*

But the one, who knows the truth
about the qualities of Nature
and their behavior, o Mighty-armed,
and sees that it is the interaction
of the qualities of Nature,
he does not submit to attachment.

29 *prakṛterguṇasammūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇakarmasu
tānakṛtsnavido mandānkṛtsnavinna vicālayet*

Those, who are fooled
by the activities of the qualities of Nature
are attached to their activities.
He, who knows the truth,
should not cause their confusion.

30 *mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātmacetasā
nirāśīrnirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ*

Surrendering all actions to Me,
fully established and conscious in Self,
without a desire for gain and a feeling of “mine,”
free yourself from faint-heartedness, and fight.

31 *ye me matamidaṃ nityamanutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ
śraddhāvanto'nasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ*

Those, who follow this teaching of mine
always, with faith and devotion, without objections,
are freed from the bondage of action.

32 *ye tvetadabhyasūyanto nānutiṣṭhanti me matam
sarvajñānavimūḍhāmstānviddhi naṣṭānacetasaḥ*

Those, however, who fail to follow
this teaching that I present,
who object, deprived of all wisdom, deluded,
know that they will find ruin in their own mindlessness.

33 *sadṛśaṃ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛterjñānavānapi
prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati*

All beings are subject to Nature.
Even a wise man desires to act, according to his nature.
What could ever be attained by restraining from action?

34 *indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau
tayorna vaśamāgacchetau hyasya paripanthinau*

In the senses, both attraction and repulsion
from objects of the senses are given.
They will become an obstacle on the path
of him who comes into their realm.

35 *śreyānsvadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt
svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*

It is better to pave one's own path poorly,
than to pave the path of others with excellence.
Even death on one's own path is better,
for in the path of others' lies danger.

36 *aṛjuna uvāca
atha kena prayukto'yaṃ pāpaṃ carati pūruṣaḥ
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ*

Arjuna said:

What forces a man to commit a sin, even unwillingly,
as if he were driven by some force, o Vārṣṇeya?

37 *śrībhagavānuvāca*

*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ
mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenamihā vairiṇam*

The Almighty Lord said:

It is desire and anger,
born from the guṇa of passion.
They are the all-consuming cause of sin.

38 *dhūmenāvriyate vahniryathādarśo malena ca
yatholbenāvṛto garbhastathā tenedamāvṛtam*

As smoke covers a fire,
as dust covers a mirror,
as fetus is covered by amnion,
so do passions cover objectivity.

39 *āvṛtaṃ jñānametena jñānino nityavairiṇā
kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca*

Wisdom is covered
by this eternal enemy of the wise
in form of desire, o son of Kuntī,
voracious like fire.

40 *indriyāṇi mano buddhirasyādhiṣṭhānamucyate
etaivimohayatyeṣa jñānamāvṛtya dehinam*

The senses, mind and reason
are where this desire is seated.
Covering the wisdom through them,
it deludes the embodied man.

41 *tasmāttvamindriyāṅyādau niyamya bhatararṣabha
pāpmānaṃ prajahi hyenaṃ jñānavijñānanāśanam*

Putting thus in order the senses before all,
o best of Bharatas, harness that source of sin,
which destroys wisdom and knowledge.

*42 indriyāṇi parāṅyāhurindriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ
manasastu parā buddhiryo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ*

It is said that the senses are subtle.
The mind is more subtle than the senses,
and even beyond it is the subtlety of spirit.
There remains That,
which is beyond even the spirit.

*43 evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā saṁstabhyātmānamātmanā
jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam*

Thus knowing Him who is above spirit,
harness Self with Self alone,
and conquer thus, o Mighty-armed,
the enemy in the form of desire,
which is difficult to conquer indeed.

Chapter Four

- 1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*
imaṃ vivasvate yogam proktavānahamavyayam
vivasvānmanave prāha manurikṣvākave'bravīt

The Almighty Lord said:
 In the beginning, I revealed this
 indestructible yoga to Vivasvān.
 He revealed it to Manu, who in turn
 taught it to Ikṣvāku.

- 2 *evam paramparāprāptamimam rājarṣayo viduḥ*
sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa

Thus having received it in the disciplic succession,
 the royal sages knew it.
 But in the long ages, this yoga was lost.

- 3 *sa evāyam mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ*
bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyam hyetaduttamam

This ancient yoga,
 which is the highest secret,
 I reveal before you today,
 for you are my friend and bhakta.

- 4 *arjuna uvāca*
aṣaram bhavato janma param janma vivasvataḥ
kathametadvijānīyāṃ tvamādaḥ proktavāniti

Arjuna said:
 Later was Your birth
 and earlier the birth of Vivasvān.
 How am I to understand
 that You taught him at the beginning?

- 5 *śrībhagavān uvāca*
bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna
tānyaham veda sarvāṇi na tvam vettha parantapa

The Almighty Lord said:
Many births did I take,
and you as well, o Arjuna.
I know them all, but you do not,
o subduer of enemies.

6 *ajo'pi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro'pi san
prakṛtiṃ svāmadhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā*

Although I am unborn and indestructible in My nature,
although I am the Lord of all beings,
remaining in My own nature,
I am born through My own power of making.

7 *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṃ sṛjāmyaham*

When dharma wavers, o Bhārata,
and adharma prevails,
I Myself then take birth.

8 *paritrāṇāya sādḥūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

In order to rescue the righteous and destroy the evil,
in order to reestablish the principles of dharma,
I take birth age after age.

9 *janma karma ca me divyamevaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṃ punarjanma naiti māmetyi so'rjuna*

My birth and My activities are Divine.
He who truly understands it,
after leaving this body he is not reborn.
He comes to Me, o Arjuna.

10 *vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā māmupāsītāḥ
bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvamāgatāḥ*

Free from the attachments, fear and anger,
 fully established in Me, finding their refuge in Me,
 purified by the austerity of knowledge,
 many have attained My reality.

11 *ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāmstathaiva bhajāmyaham
 mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

In the same way in which one approaches Me, I respond.
 In every way, o Pārtha, people follow My path.

12 *kāñkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhiṃ yajanta iha devatāḥ
 kṣipraṃ hi mānuṣe loke siddhirbhavati karmajā*

Those, who seek fulfillment in deeds,
 they worship the gods,
 for success born from action
 comes quickly in the world of men.

13 *cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ
 tasya kartāramapī māṃ viddhyakartāramavyayam*

I created the four castes
 according to the division of qualities and activities.
 Although I am their maker,
 know that I am inactive and changeless.

14 *na māṃ karmāṇi limpanti na me karmaphale sprhā
 iti māṃ yo'bhijānāti karmabhirna sa badhyate*

I am not involved in activity,
 nor do I desire its fruits.
 One who knows Me as such
 is not bound by his activities.

15 *evaṃ jñātvā kṛtaṃ karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ
 kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṃ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṃ kṛtam*

Knowing that, the ancient seekers of liberation acted as well.
 So act, as they once did.

16 *kiṃ karma kimakarmeti kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ
tatte karma pravakṣyāmi yajñātva mokṣyase'subhāt*

What is activity, and what is inactivity?
This question confuses even the wise.
I will explain to you the form of activity
that will deliver you from evil.

17 *karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ ca vikarmaṇaḥ
akarmaṇasca boddhavyaṃ gahanā karmaṇo gatih*

One should indeed understand activity.
And wrong activity should also be understood,
as well as inactivity.
Activity is a difficult thing to comprehend.

18 *karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyedakarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ
sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt*

He who sees inactivity in activity,
and activity in inactivity,
is wise among men.
He is united in his activities.

19 *yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṃ tamāhuḥ paṇḍitaṃ budhāḥ*

Him, whose deeds are free from desire,
whose deeds have been incinerated
by the flame of knowledge,
knowers of reality call wise.

20 *tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgam nityatrpto nirāśrayaḥ
karmaṇyabhipravṛtto'pi naiva kiñcitkaroti saḥ*

Renouncing attachment to the fruits of activities,
always satisfied, without dependencies,
although quite preoccupied with his activities,
he undoubtedly does not act.

21 *nirāśīryatacittātmā tyaktasarvaaparigrahaḥ
śārīraṃ kevalaṃ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam*

Without attachments,
with mind and soul put in order,
abandoning any sense of possession,
acting with body alone,
he is always free from sin.

22 *yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ
samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate*

Thus pleased, having gone beyond duality,
free from envy, firm in both good and ill,
he is not subject to attachment even while acting.

23 *gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṃ pravīḷiyate*

The deeds of him who is detached,
free, firm in wisdom,
which are done from yajña alone,
they leave him without a trace.

24 *brahmārpaṇaṃ brahma havirbrahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṃ brahmakarmasamādhinā*

Brahman is the ceremony of sacrifice,
in which the sacrificed brahman is offered
by a brāhmaṇa into the fire which is brahman.
To brahman undoubtedly comes he,
whose activities are united in brahman.

25 *daivamevāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryuṇāsate
brahmāgnāvāpare yajñam yajñenaivopajuhvati*

While some yogīs offer yajña to the gods,
others, however, offer perfect sacrifice
into the fire of the supreme brahman.

26 *śrotrādīnīndriyāṅyanye saṁyamāgniṣu juhvati*
śabdādīnviṣayānanya indriyāgniṣu juhvati

Some offer hearing and other senses
into the fire of control;
some offer sound and other objects of senses
into the fire of senses.

27 *sarvāṅīndriyakarmāṅi prāṅakarmāṅi cāpare*
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juhvati jñānadīpīte

Some, desiring wisdom,
offer activity of the senses
and motions of the breath of life
into the fire of spirit controlled by yoga.

28 *dravyayajñāstapoyajñā yogayajñāstathāpare*
svādhyāyajñānayajñāśca yatayaḥ saṁśītavratāḥ

Some, however, sacrifice their property,
some sacrifice by austerity and yoga,
while other seekers of austere vows
offer their knowledge of the scriptures and their learning.

29 *apāne juhvati prāṅam prāṅe'pānaṁ tathāpare*
prāṅāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṅāyāmaparāyaṅāḥ

Others, dedicated to prāṅyāma,
offer prāṅa to apāna, and apāna to prāṅa,
thus stopping the motion of prāṅāpāna.

30 *apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṅānprāṅeṣu juhvati*
sarve'pyete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ

Others, restricting their food,
offer breath to breath.
They are all knowers of yajña,
thereby purified from sin.

31 *yajñāśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo yānti brahma sanātānam*
nāyaṁ loko'styayajñasya kuto'nyaḥ kurusattama

Eating the leftovers of yajña,
 which are the nectar of immortality,
 they reach the eternal brahman.
 Not even in this world is there a place
 for him who does not offer sacrifice,
 let alone in the other world, o best of Kurus.

32 *evaṃ bahuvīdhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe
 karmajānviddhi tānsarvānevaṃ jñātvā vimokṣyase*

All those kinds of yajña are mentioned
 in the words of the Vedas.
 Know that they are all born from activity.
 This knowledge will guide you to liberation.

33 *śreyāndravayamayādyajñājjñānayaajñāḥ parantapa
 sarvaṃ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*

Yajña of knowledge is better than yajña of property,
 o subduer of enemies. All activities,
 without exception, o Pārtha, excel in knowledge.

34 *tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
 upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ*

Know, that through respect, inquiry and service
 you will receive such knowledge
 from those who know the reality.

35 *yajñjñātvā na punarmohamevaṃ yāsyasi pāṇḍava
 yena bhūtānyaśeṣāṇi drakṣyasyātmanyatho mayi*

Knowing that, you will never again
 be so deluded, o son of Pāṇḍu,
 for you will see all beings within Self, which is I.

36 *api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ
 sarvaṃ jñānaplavenaiva vṛjinaṃ santariṣyasi*

Be you even the most miserable of sinners,
the boat of wisdom will carry you safely
across the ocean of misery.

37 *yathaidhāṃsi samiddho'gnirbhasmasātkurute'rjuna
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurute tathā*

Like the burning flame that incinerates fuel into ashes,
so does the flame of knowledge, o Arjuna,
turn all activities into ashes.

38 *na hi jñānena sadṛśaṃ pavitramiha vidyate
tatsvayaṃ yogasaṃsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati*

In this world there is nothing
as excellent as knowledge;
he who is perfect in yoga,
with time, finds it within himself.

39 *śraddhāvāṅlabhate jñānaṃ tatparaḥ saṃyatendriyaḥ
jñānaṃ labdhvā parāṃ śāntimacireṇādhighacchati*

The knowledge is acquired by him,
who is full of faith, thus focused in activity,
and with the senses under his control.
Having attained knowledge,
he soon reaches utmost peace.

40 *ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca saṃśayātmā vinaśyati
nāyaṃ loko'sti na paro na sukhaṃ saṃśayātmanaḥ*

But he who is without wisdom,
without faith, who doubts, he finds ruin.
There is no happiness for the suspicious mind,
not in this world nor in another.

41 *yogasannyastakarmāṇaṃ jñānasañchinnasaṃśayaṃ
ātmavantaṃ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya*

Having renounced activities through yoga,
 dispelling the doubts with knowledge,
 founded in Self, he is never bound in his activities,
 o conqueror of wealth.

*42 tasmādajñānasambhūtaṃ hṛtsthaṃ jñānāsīnātmanaḥ
 chittvainam saṃśayaṃ yogamātiṣṭhottiṣṭha bhārata*

So with the weapon of Self-knowledge
 slay this doubt born from ignorance
 which has found root in your heart, o Bhārata.
 Seek your foundation in yoga, rise, and fight!

Chapter Five

- 1 *arjuna uvāca*
sannyāsaṃ karmanāṃ kṛṣṇa punaryogaṃ ca śaṃsasi
yacchreya etayorekaṃ tanme brūhi suniścitam

Arjuna said:

You praise, o Kṛṣṇa, first renunciation of activities
and later the yoga of activity, as well.
Tell me clearly, which of those two is better?

- 2 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
sannyāsaḥ karmayogaśca niḥśreyasakarāvubhau
tayostu karmasannyāsātkarmayogo viśiṣyate

The Almighty Lord said:

Both the renunciation of activity,
and activity from yoga lead to perfection.
Still, of those two, activity from yoga is better.

- 3 *jñeyah sa nityasannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati*
nirdvandvo hi mahābāho sukhaṃ bandhātpramucyate

Know, that the true renunciate is he,
who never despises nor desires;
free from duality, he is easily liberated
from attachments, o Mighty-armed.

- 4 *sāṅkhyayogau pṛthagbālāḥ pravādanti na paṇḍitāḥ*
ekamapyāsthitaḥ samyagubhayorvindate phalam

Only an ignorant man will see a difference
between sāṅkhya and yoga, and not a sage.
The one who succeeds in either
enjoys the fruits of both.

- 5 *yatsāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ tadyogairapi gamyate*
ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṃ ca yah paśyati sa paśyati

That which can be attained by sāṅkhya
 can also be attained by yoga.
 He who truly sees, knows
 that sāṅkhya and yoga are the same.

- 6 *sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkhamāptumayogataḥ
 yogayukto munirbrahma nacireṇādhiḡacchati*

Renunciation alone without yoga
 leads to misfortune, o Mighty-armed.
 A wise man, who is focused in yoga,
 comes to brahman without delay.

- 7 *yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ
 sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannāpi na lipyate*

Focused in yoga, with purified soul,
 having attained perfect self-control,
 having conquered the senses,
 his self being the Self of all beings,
 although he acts, he is never attached.

- 8 *naiva kiñcitkaromīti yukto manyeta tattvavit
 paśyaṅśruṅvanspṛśaṅjighrannaśnangacchansvapañśvasan*

He, who is united and knows the truth,
 thinks: “I do not act at all.”
 While he looks, hears, touches,
 smells, eats, walks, dreams, breathes

- 9 *pralapanvisṛjangaḥḡannunmiṣannimiṣannāpi
 indriyaṅīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan*

talks, lets go, catches,
 opens and closes his eyes,
 he sees that it is only the senses
 that act among the objects of senses.

- 10 *brahmaṅyādhāya karmāṅi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ
 lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatramivāmbhasā*

He who surrenders all activities to brahman,
and, thus abandoning attachments, acts,
is untouched by sin, like a lotus flower
that is untouched by water.

11 *kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalairindriyairapi
yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye*

Acting with body, spirit, mind
and even with the senses themselves,
yogīs, abandoning attachments,
work on self-purification.

12 *yuktaḥ karmaphalaṃ tyaktvā śāntimāpnoti naiṣṭhikīm
ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate*

One who is united,
who has abandoned the fruits of activities,
attains perfect peace.
One, however, who is not merged into one,
who acts from desire, who adheres to the fruits of activities,
he is firmly bound.

13 *sarvakarmāṇi manasā sannyasyāste sukhaṃ vaśī
navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvanna kāraṇan*

Renouncing in spirit all attachments,
the inhabitant of the body enjoys happiness
in the city with nine gates.
He neither acts nor causes activity.

14 *na kartṛvaṃ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ
na karmaphalasaṃyogaṃ svabhāvastu pravartate*

The Lord does not create
neither activities nor their fruits,
nor does He incite beings to action,
nor is He responsible for the connection
between he who acts and the fruits of his activities.
It is the doing of Nature.

15 *nādatte kasyacitpāpaṃ na caiva sukṛtaṃ vibhuḥ
ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*

The Almighty does not accept anyone's sin, nor merit.
Wisdom is covered by a cloak of ignorance.
Because of that, beings are in illusion.

16 *jñānena tu tadajñānaṃ yeṣāṃ nāśitamātmanaḥ
teṣāmādityavajjñānaṃ prakāśayati tatparam*

But in them, who have destroyed ignorance with knowledge,
knowledge reveals the Almighty, like a rising sun.

17 *tadbuddhayastadātmanastanniṣṭhāstaparāyaṇāḥ
gacchantyapunarāvṛttiṃ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ*

With their minds founded in That,
with their souls founded in Him,
focused at Him, utterly devoted to Him,
utterly cleansed by wisdom,
they achieve the final perfection.

18 *vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ*

In a brāhmaṇa of high learning and humility,
in a cow, elephant, dog, and even in the lowest of outcasts
the enlightened see the same.

19 *ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣāṃ sāmye sthitaṃ manaḥ
nirdoṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*

Even during life have they defeated birth and death
whose mind is thus established.
Impeccable, indeed omnipresent is brahman.
They are therefore founded in brahman.

20 *na prahṣyetpriyaṃ prāpya nodvijetprāpya cāpriyaṃ
sthirabuddhirasammūḍho brahmaid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ*

The knower of brahman,
firmly established in brahman
neither rejoices in the pleasant
nor is he disturbed by the unpleasant.
His mind is firm, free from illusion.

21 *bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā vindatyātmani yatsukham
sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukhamakṣayamaśnute*

They, whose spirit is untouched
by the external pleasures,
find happiness, which is in Self.
With Self in firm unity with brahman,
they enjoy the highest happiness.

22 *ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkḥhayonaya eva te
ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*

All pleasures that come from the touch of senses
are only a source of suffering, o son of Kuntī.
They have a beginning and an end.
A wise man is not satisfied with them.

23 *śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prākṣarīravimokṣaṇāt
kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegam sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ*

He who is united, can even in this life
resist the incitements of desire and fury.
He is a happy man.

24 *yo'ntaḥsukho'ntarārāmastathāntarjyotireva yaḥ
sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto'dhigacchati*

One who finds happiness within,
who finds fulfillment within,
who is filled with light within himself,
this yogī, whose soul is brahman,
attains extinction in brahman.

25 *labhante brahmanirvāṇaṁṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ
chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtabhite ratāḥ*

Such perfection is attained by those ṛṣis
 who are free from sin,
 who have renounced duality,
 immersed in realization,
 who enjoy doing good to all.

26 *kāmakrodhaviyuktānāṃ yatīnāṃ yatacetasām
 abhito brahmanirvāṇaṃ vartate veditātmanām*

Men of profound peace,
 free from desire and anger,
 who have focused their thoughts
 and attained emancipation,
 soon reach this, utmost perfection.

27 *sparśāṅkṛtvā bahirbāhyāṃścakaṣuṣcaivāntare bhruvoḥ
 prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau*

Abandoning external ties,
 his eyes focused at the point between the eyebrows,
 having attained balance between prāṇa and apāna
 that flow through the nostrils

28 *yatendriyamanobuddhirmunirmokṣaparāyaṇaḥ
 vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ*

a wise man, who strives toward liberation,
 having attained the control of senses, mind and breath,
 who abandons the desires, fear and anger,
 is indeed eternally free.

29 *bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram
 suhr̥dam̐ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā mām̐ śāntimṛcchati*

Knowing Me to be the enjoyer of sacrifice and austerity,
 knowing Me to be the Highest Lord of all the worlds,
 knowing Me to be the benefactor of all beings,
 he attains peace.

Chapter Six

- 1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*
anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ
sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnirna cākriyaḥ

The Almighty Lord said:
He who performs his duties
without attachment to the fruits of labor,
he is a sannyāsīn, and also a yogīn,
and not one who is without fire
and does not act.

- 2 *yaṃ sannyāsamiti prāhuryogaṃ taṃ viddhi pāṇḍava*
na hyasannyastasaṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana

Know that, which is called sannyāsa,
also to be yoga, o son of Pāṇḍu, for he,
who does not reject the foundation of desire,
does not become a yogī.

- 3 *āruruḥṣormuneryogaṃ karma kāraṇamucyate*
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇamucyate

For a wise seeker on the path of yoga,
the activity is said to be the path.
For him who has reached yoga,
the path goes through cessation of activity.

- 4 *yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate*
sarvasaṅkalpasannyāsī yogārūḍhastadocyate

Only when a man does not cling onto
the pleasures of senses and the fruits of deeds,
after having renounced the foundation of all desires,
is he said to have achieved yoga.

- 5 *uddharedātmanātmānaṃ nātmānamavasādayet*
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ

A man's soul is the instrument of his deliverance.
Let a man not humiliate his soul;
it can be his friend, but also his enemy.

6 *bandhurātmātmanastasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ
anātmanastu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat*

To him, who attained self-control,
his soul is a friend, but to the one who has not,
his soul will remain his enemy.

7 *jītātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ*

To one, who has attained self-control,
who abides in the highest peace,
who is completely absorbed in the Highest Self,
equal are the cold and the warm,
happiness and unhappiness, glory and disgrace.

8 *jñānavijñānatṛptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ
yukta ityucyate yogī samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ*

A yogī, whose soul is filled
with knowledge and realization,
his senses firmly founded in spirit,
is equal in experience of dirt, rock and gold.

9 *suhṛṇmitrāryudāsīnamadhyasthadveṣyabandhuṣu
sādhuṣvaṇi ca pāpeṣu samabuddhirviśiṣyate*

Noble is he, who sees
benevolent people, friends and enemies,
impartial ones and mediators,
malevolent ones and his cousins,
saints as well as sinners
with the same eyes.

10 *yogī yuñjīta satatamātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ
ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīraparigrahaḥ*

Let a yogī always meditate in solitude,
alone, spirit awakened and controlled,
without desires and possession.

11 *śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiramāsanamātmanah
nātyucchritam nātinīcam cailājinakuśottaram*

On a pure and holy place,
placing the seat neither too high nor too low,
setting the kuśa grass on the ground,
covering it with deer skin and soft cloth,

12 *tatraikāgram manah kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyah
upaviśyāsane yuñjyādyogamātmaniśuddhaye*

thus having found the right place, with focused mind,
let him control the consciousness,
the senses and the organs of action,
and purify his soul with yoga.

13 *samam kāyaśirogrīvaṃ dhārayannacalam sthiraḥ
samprekṣya nāsikāgram svam diśaścānavalokayan*

Motionless, keeping the body, head and neck erect,
let him direct his look upon the root of the nose,
diverting his look to neither side.

14 *praśāntātmā vigatabhīrabrahmacārivrate sthitaḥ
manah saṃyamya maccitto yukta āsita matparaḥ*

Filled with profound peace, without fear,
founded in celibacy, with spirit under control,
his consciousness focused on Me, thus sitting,
let him come to realize Myself as the Highest.

15 *yuñjannevaṃ sadātmānaṃ yogī niyatamānasah
śāntim nirvāṇaparamāṃ matsamsthāmadhigacchati*

Constantly practicing in this manner,
gaining control of his soul, a yogī attains peace,
and in utmost extinction reaches My abode.

16 *nātyaśnatastu yogo'sti na caikāntamaśnataḥ
na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna*

Yoga is not for him, who eats too much or too little,
who sleeps too much or sleeps not at all, o Arjuna.

17 *yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā*

He, who is moderate in eating and rest,
moderate in his activities,
moderate in sleep and waking,
can attain freedom from suffering by yoga.

18 *yadā viniyataṃ cittamātmanyevāvatiṣṭhate
niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ityucyate tadā*

Having calmed his spirit,
he is undoubtedly founded in Self.
He, who is thus freed from all longing,
is said to be truly united.

19 *yathā dīpo nivātastho neigate soḥamā smṛtā
yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogamātmanaḥ*

Like the flame of a candle
which flickers not in a place without wind,
is the mind of a yogī who is absorbed in meditation,
constantly occupied by the realization of Self.

20 *yatroparamate cittam niruddham yogasevayā
yatra caivātmanātmānaṃ paśyannātmani tuṣyati*

It is a state in which the thoughts cease,
calmed by the practice of yoga,
where Self observing Self
remains satisfied with Self.

21 *sukhamātyantikam yattad buddhigrāhyamatīndriyam
vetti yatra na caivāyam sthitaścalati tattvataḥ*

Knowing such infinite joy,
that goes beyond the senses,
and is reached by wisdom,
thus established, he does not waver.

22 *yaṃ labdhvā cāparam lābhaṃ manyate nādhikaṃ tataḥ
yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*

Having attained it, he sees there to be
nothing higher to be attained;
thus established he is unshaken
even by the gravest of hardships.

23 *taṃ vidyād duḥkhasaṃyogaviyogaṃ yogasaṃjñitam
sa nīscayena yoktavyo yogo'nirviṇṇacetasā*

Such cessation of unity with pain
is known by the name of yoga.
This yoga should be practiced
with firm resilience and determination.

24 *saṅkalpaprabhavāṅkāmaṃstyaktvā sarvānaśeṣataḥ
manasaivendriyagrāmaṃ viniyamya samantataḥ*

Having abandoned all contemplation
of desires and their objects,
and controlling all the aspects of the senses by his mind

25 *śanaiḥ śanairuparamed buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā
ātmasaṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet*

step by step, he should withdraw, with patience in spirit
and, having established the spirit in Self,
he should do nothing else, not even in thought.

26 *yato yato nīscarati manaścañcalamasthiram
tatastato niyamyaitadātmanyeva vaśaṃ nayet*

Wherever the disturbed and wavering spirit should wander,
it should be brought back under the control of Self.

27 *praśāntamanasaṃ hyenaṃ yoginaṃ sukhamuttamam
upaiti śāntarajasaṃ brahmabhūtamakalmaṣam*

Indeed, greatest is the happiness enjoyed
by a yogī of a deeply peaceful mind,
who has extinguished the urge for action
and who is without flaw and of the nature of brahman.

28 *yuñjannevaṃ sadātmānaṃ yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ
sukhena brahmasaṃsparsāmatyantam sukhamāśnute*

Thus always meditating,
a flawless yogī easily attains brahman,
which is the highest joy.

29 *sarvabhūtaṣṭhamātmānaṃ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
ikṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ*

With self firm in yoga,
he sees everything with the same eyes,
seeing Self in all beings, and all beings in Self.

30 *yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṃ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāham na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati*

He who sees Me in all, and all in Me,
for him I am not lost, nor is he lost to Me.

31 *sarvabhūtaṣṭhitam yo mām bhajatyekatvamāsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate*

Such a yogī, firm in unity,
who worships I who dwell in all beings
in spite of everything, he always lives in Me.

32 *ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṃ paśyati yo'rjuna
sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ*

Beholding with the eye of Self,
he sees everything as one, o Arjuna,
joy and suffering alike.
Such a yogī is thought to be perfect.

33 *arjuna uvāca*

*yo'yaṃ yogastvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana
etasyāhaṃ na paśyāmi cañcalatvātsthitim sthirām*

Arjuna said:

**In this yoga that you have described as balance,
o Madhusūdana, I see no persistence,
for restless is the state of the mind.**

34 *cañcalaṃ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham
tasyāhaṃ nigrahaṃ manye vāyoriva suduṣkaram*

**Wavering is the mind, o Kṛṣṇa;
turbulent, strong and unyielding.
It is as difficult to control,
I think, as the wind itself.**

35 *śrībhagavānuvāca*

*asaṃsayam mahābāho mano durnigrahaṃ calam
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate*

The Almighty Lord said:

**The wavering mind
is most certainly hard to control, o Mighty-armed,
but with practice, o son of Kuntī,
and detachment, it can be conquered.**

36 *asaṃyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo'vāptumupāyataḥ*

**A man of uncontrolled mind
will hardly reach yoga, I think,
but a man who tries, whose aspirations
are genuine and well-guided,
he can indeed attain it.**

37 *arjuna uvāca*

*ayaṭiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāccalitamānasaḥ
aprāpya yogasaṃsiddhiṃ kām gatiṃ kṛṣṇa gacchati*

Arjuna said:

What kind of goal does he attain
who does not succeed; who has faith,
but steps away from yoga
because of his wavering mind, o Kṛṣṇa,
and fails to attain perfection in yoga?

38 *kaccinnobhayavibhraṣṭaśchinnābhramiva naśyati
apraṭiṣṭho mahābāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi*

Distracted from the path toward brahman,
without support underneath,
is he not left without anything, o Mighty-armed,
dispelled as a cloud in the wind?

39 *etanme saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa chettumarhasyaśeṣataḥ
tvadanyaḥ saṁśayasyāsya chettā na hyupapadyate*

This is my doubt, o Kṛṣṇa.
I ask you to dispel it.
None but you, truly, can dispel my doubt.

40 *śrībhagavānuvāca
pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśastasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇakṛtkaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati*

The Almighty Lord said:
O Pārtha, not in this world
nor in another is he to be destroyed.
Never indeed, my son, are they destroyed
who aspire toward the good.

41 *prāpya puṇyākṛtām lokānuṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ
śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yogabhraṣṭo'bhijāyate*

Having reached the worlds of the righteous,
after having spent there a great number of years,
he who has strayed from the path of yoga is born
in a home of pure and noble people.

42 *athavā yogināmeva kule bhavati dhīmatām
etaddhi durlabhataraṃ loke janma yadīdṛśam*

Or he is born in a family of yogīs gifted with wisdom,
although such a birth is difficult to attain in this world.

43 *tatra taṃ buddhisamyogaṃ labhate paurvadehikam
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ saṃsiddhau kurunandana*

There, he soon reaches
the level of achievement of his former body,
and thus, o son of Kuru,
continues to grow toward perfection.

44 *pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hrīyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ
jijñāsurapi yogasya śabdabrahmātivartate*

Even the prior practice alone
spontaneously attracts such an outcome.
Even the seeker of yoga goes beyond the Vedas.

45 *prayatnādyatamānastu yogī saṃśuddhakilbiṣaḥ
anekajanmasaṃsiddhastato yāti parāṃ gatim*

Persistent and diligent in practice,
such a yogī, pure from sin,
purified by many births,
attains the highest goal.

46 *tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ
karmibhyaścādhiko yogī tasmādyogī bhavārjuna*

A yogī is greater than a man of penance;
greater even than a sage, and a man of deed.
Be therefore a yogī, o Arjuna.

47 *yogināmapi sarveṣāṃ madgatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvānbhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

Of all the yogīs, as the most perfect I see him,
who always worships Me in deep faith,
whose soul always abides in Me.

Chapter Seven

- 1 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha yogam yuñjanmadāśrayaḥ
asamśayaṁ samagram māṁ yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu

The Almighty Lord said:
 Now hear, o Pārtha, how you will,
 focusing your mind on Me, in practice of yoga,
 seeking refuge in Me,
 realize Me beyond any doubt.

- 2 *jñānam te'haṁ savijñānamidaṁ vakṣyāmyaśeṣataḥ*
yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyajjñātavyamavaśiṣyate

I will explain to you in fullness
 that wisdom and realization,
 knowing which, there will remain nothing else
 in this world for you to know.

- 3 *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye*
yatatāmapī siddhānāṁ kaścīnmāṁ vetti tattvataḥ

Among thousands of men,
 perhaps only one aspires to perfection.
 And among those who aspire to perfection
 and who have attained it,
 perhaps only one truly knows Me.

- 4 *bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhireva ca*
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā

Earth, water, fire, air, space,
 intellect, mind and ego
 are the eight parts of My nature.

- 5 *apareyamitastvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām*
jīvabhūtām mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat

Other than this lower nature, o Mighty-armed,
know there also to be My higher nature,
which makes the life in beings,
and gives life to the created world.

6 *etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅītyupadhārāya
ahaṃ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā*

It is the origin
from which all beings take birth.
In Me, therefore, the totality of the world
is created and dissolved.

7 *mattaḥ parataram nānyatkiñcidasti dhanañjaya
mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*

Above Me there is nothing, o Dhanañjaya;
everything is arrayed upon Me,
like pearls on a string.

8 *raso'hamapsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śāsisūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu*

I am the flavor of water, o son of Kuntī.
I am the light of the sun and the moon.
I am the sound of Om in all the Vedas,
the sound in the space, the manliness in men.

9 *puṅyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu*

I am the pleasant scent of the earth, and the warmth of fire,
I am the life in all beings, and the virtue of penance.

10 *bījaṃ māṃ sarvabhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam
buddhirbuddhimatāmasmi tejastejasvināmaham*

Know Me, o Pārtha, as the eternal seed of all beings.
I am the wisdom of the wise, and the courage of the brave.

11 *balam balavatām cāham kāmārāgavivarjitam
dharmāviroddho bhūteṣu kāmō'smi bharatarṣabha*

I am the power of the strong,
free from desire and attachment.
I am the yearning of all beings,
which does not oppose dharma,
o best of Bharatas.

12 *ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāstāmasāśca ye
matta eveti tānviddhi na tvahaṃ teṣu te mayi*

Know, that all the states,
be they of sattva, rajas or tamas,
are created by Me.
Still, I am not in them—they are in Me.

13 *tribhiraṅṅamayairbhāvairbhīḥ sarvamideṃ jagat
mohitaṃ nābhijānāti māmebhyaḥ paramavyayam*

Blinded by the states of those three qualities,
the entire universe is deluded, failing to know Me,
who Am above them, and changeless.

14 *daivī hyeṣā ṅṅamayī mama māyā duratyayā
māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṃ taranti te*

This Divine illusion of Mine,
which is made of qualities,
is indeed difficult to transcend,
but those, who surrender to Me,
they undoubtedly go past it.

15 *na māṃ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ
māyayāpahṛtajñānā āsuram bhāvamāśritāḥ*

I am not sought by criminals,
deluded ones and the lowest of men.
With illusion disturbing their minds,
they develop a nature of demons.

16 *caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna
ārto jijñāsuarthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

There are four kinds of those,
who worship Me, o Arjuna.
There are the ones who are unhappy,
who desire knowledge, who desire benefit
and also those who know,
o best of Bharatas.

17 *teṣāṃ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktirviśiṣyate
priyo hi jñānino'tyarthamaḥ sa ca mama priyaḥ*

Of them all, the best is he who knows,
always single-minded in devotion.
He is dear to Me, and I am very dear to him.

18 *udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tvātmaiva me matam
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā māmevānuttamāṃ gatim*

Noble are they all, but the one who knows
is indeed the true Self, I think;
for he will, with firm mind,
take refuge only in Me, the highest goal.

19 *bahūnāṃ janmanāmante jñānavānmaṃ prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvāmiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

After many births, such a man of knowledge comes to Me,
knowing that Vāsudeva is indeed everything.
Still, such a great soul is rare.

20 *kāmaistaistairhṛtajñānāḥ prapadyante'nyadevatāḥ
taṃ taṃ niyamamāsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā*

With their wisdom disturbed by desires,
people serve other gods,
and under the influence of their own nature
they follow various prescriptions.

21 *yo yo yāṃ yāṃ tanuṃ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati
tasya tasyācalāṃ śraddhāṃ tāmeva vidadhāmyaham*

Whatever god he chooses to worship,
it is I who strengthen his faith.

22 *sa tayā śraddhayā yuktastasyārādhanamīhate
labhate ca tataḥ kāmānmayaiavivihitānhi tān*

In such faith, he seeks the refuge of the deity
in order for his desires to be fulfilled.
But indeed, it is I who fulfill them.

23 *antavattu phalaṃ teṣāṃ tadbhavatyalṣamedhasām
devāndevayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti māmapi*

Passing are the fruits of desires
harbored by those, who lack wisdom.
For he who worships the deities, comes to the deities,
while he who worships Me, comes to Me.

24 *avyaktaṃ vyaktimāpannaṃ manyante māmabuddhayaḥ
paraṃ bhāvamajānanto mamāvyayamanuttamam*

Those without knowledge think,
that I became manifested from the Unmanifested,
not knowing My higher, changeless,
transcendental nature.

25 *nāhaṃ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho'yaṃ nābhijānāti loko māmajamavyayam*

Covered by yoga-māyā,
I reveal Myself not before all.
I, unborn and inexhaustible,
am not known to the deluded world.

26 *vedāhaṃ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṃ tu veda na kaścana*

I know all past, present and future beings, o Arjuna,
but I am known by none.

27 *icchādveṣasamutthena dvandvamohena bhārata
sarvabhūtāni sammohaṃ sarge yānti parantapa*

Confused by the dualities
of attraction and repulsion, o Bhārata,
all the beings are born in delusion,
o destroyer of enemies.

28 *yeṣāṃ tvantagataṃ pāpaṃ janānāṃ puṇyakarmaṇām
te dvandvamohanirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍhavrataḥ*

People of pious deeds, who are free from sin,
who are free from the illusion of duality,
worship Me with persistent determination.

29 *jarāmaraṇamokṣāya māmāśritya yatanti ye
te brahma tadviduḥ kṛtsnamadhyātmaṃ karma cākḥilam*

Those, who for the sake of liberation
from old age and death take refuge in Me,
they know the true brahman, the true Self,
as well as Divine activity, in its fullness.

30 *sādhibhūtādhidaivaṃ mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ
prayānakāle'pi ca mām te viduryuktacetasaḥ*

They, who recognize Me
as the Lord of both the natural,
the Divine and the sacrifice,
even in their mortal hour,
their mind is anchored in Me.

Chapter Eight

1 *arjuna uvāca*

*kiṃ tad brahma kimadhyātmam kiṃ karma puruṣottama
adhibhūtam ca kiṃ proktamadhidaivam kimucyate*

Arjuna said:

What is brahman?

What is the individual self?

What is activity, o Highest Puruṣa?

What is the cause of the material,
and what of the Divine nature?

2 *adhiyajñāḥ katham ko'tra dehe'sminmadhusūdana
prayānakāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ*

Who and what is the cause of yajña,
here in this body, o Madhusūdana?

How can they, who attained self-control,
know You at the time of death?

3 *śrībhagavānuvāca*

*akṣaram brahma paramam svabhāvo'dhyātmamucyate
bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṃjñitaḥ*

The Almighty Lord said:

Eternal is brahman, and Highest.

The individual Self is one's own personal being.

The cause of creation and life of beings
is called karman, activity.

4 *adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaścādhidaivatam
adhiyajño'hamevātra dehe dehabhṛtām vara*

The material nature is passing,
while the Divine nature is Puruṣa.

The cause of sacrifice in this body am I,
o best of the embodied men.

5 *antakāle ca māmeva smaranmuktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṃ yāti nāstyatra saṃśayaḥ*

He, who in the moment of his death
leaves the body remembering Me,
he attains My nature.
That is beyond doubt.

6 *yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaranbhāvaṃ tyajatyante kalevaram
taṃ tamevāiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ*

To whomever he gives his thoughts
while leaving his body,
to him undoubtedly he goes, o son of Kuntī.

7 *tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu māmanusmara yudhya ca
mayyarpitamanobuddhirmāmevaiśyasyasaṃśayaḥ*

You should therefore always dwell firm in Me, and fight.
Surrendering reason and mind to Me,
you shall undoubtedly reach Me.

8 *abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nānyagāminā
paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ yāti pārthānucintayan*

Thus meditating with spirit united,
with thoughts in steady focus,
he reaches the highest Divine Puruṣa, o Pārtha.

9 *kaviṃ purāṇamanuśāsītāraṃ
aṅoraṇīyaṃsamanusmarenyaḥ
sarvasya dhātāramacintyarūpaṃ
ādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt*

He who meditates about the All-knowing,
The Oldest, The Governor, smaller than the atom,
who maintains all, who is beyond comprehension,
bright as the sun, beyond darkness,

10 *prayānakāle manasā'calena
bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva
bhruvormadhye prāṇamāveśya samyak
sa taṃ paraṃ puruṣamupaiti divyam*

thus meditating in the mortal hour, with steady mind,
filled with devotion and the power of yoga,
completely withdrawing the breath of his life
into the place between the eyebrows,
he attains the highest, Divine Puruṣa.

11 *yadaḥśaraṃ vedavido vadanti
viśanti yadyatayo vītarāgāḥ
yadicchanto brahmacaryaṃ caranti
tatte padaṃ saṅgrahēṇa pravakṣye*

Of Him, whom the knowers of the Vedas call The Eternal,
whom enter those who attained self control,
and for the sake of whom they accept the vows of chastity,
I will tell you now in brief.

12 *sarvadvārāṇi samyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca
mūdhnyādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇamāsthito yogadhāraṇām*

He who focuses in yoga, closing all the gates of the body,
withdrawing the reason into the heart
and the breath of life into the head,

13 *omityekākṣaraṃ brahma vyāharanmāmanusmaran
yaḥ prayāti tyajandehaṃ sa yāti paramāṃ gatim*

pronouncing brahman in one syllable Om, remembering Me,
thus leaving the body, he attains the highest goal.

14 *ananyacetāḥ satataṃ yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ
tasyāhaṃ sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ*

To a truly united yogī,
with mind always peaceful,
who always remembers Me,
I am very easy to reach, o Pārtha.

15 *māmupetya punarjanma duḥkhālayamaśāsvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ*

Having reached Me,
having attained the final goal,
great souls no longer return
into the place of change and misery.

16 *ābrahmabhuvanāllokāḥ punarāvartino'rjuna
māmupetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate*

He who ascends to any world,
including the world of Brahmā,
has to return, o Arjuna,
but coming to Me, o son of Kuntī,
he is born no more.

17 *sahasrayugaparyantamaharyad brahmaṇo viduḥ
rātriṁ yugasahasrāntāṁ te'horātravido janāḥ*

The day of Brahmā lasts a thousand yugas,
and equally long is the night of Brahmā;
so say those who know.

18 *avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyahaṛāgame
rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaaktasaṁjñake*

At the beginning of the Day
all that is manifested is created from the Unmanifested,
and in the beginning of the Night
it dissolves again in the Unmanifested.

19 *bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate
rātryāgame'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavatyaḥarāgame*

This multitude of beings are born, again and again;
they disappear in dusk, to take birth at dawn.

20 *parastasmāttu bhāvo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktātsanātanaḥ
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati*

But there is another, eternal and transcendental nature,
different from the Unmanifested, which is never destroyed.
When everything is destroyed, it remains.

21 *avyakto'kṣara ityuktastamāhuḥ paramāṃ gatim
yaṃ prāpya na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama*

This unmanifested and unpassing,
they say to be the supreme destination.
Having reached it, none returns.
That is My highest abode.

22 *puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyastvananyayā
yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvamideva tatam*

This Supreme Puruṣa, in whom all beings are contained,
who saturates all, can be reached by complete devotion.

23 *yatra kāle tvanāvṛttimāvṛttiṃ caiva yoginaḥ
prayātā yānti taṃ kālam vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha*

O best of Bharatas,
I will now tell you about the times
in which a yogī leaves the world,
to return or not to return.

24 *agnirjotirahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam
tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmadevī janāḥ*

Fire, light, day, the light half of the moon,
and the six months of the northern solstice:
people who leave then,
if they know brahman, leave to brahman.

25 *dhūmo rātristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyaṇam
tatra cāndramasaṃ jyotiryogī prāpya nivartate*

Smoke, night, dark period of the moon,
and the six months of the southern solstice:
yogīs who leave then,
leave to the world of the moon,
but they get to come back.

26 *śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate
ekayā yātyanāvṛttimanyayāvartate punaḥ*

Two are the ways of leaving the body:
in light and in darkness, so say those who know;
one without coming back, and the other to return.

27 *naite sṛtī pārtha jānanyogī muhyati kaścana
tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna*

A yogī, o Pārtha, who knows those ways, is never confused.
So always be firm in yoga, o Arjuna.

28 *vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva
dāneṣu yatpuṇyaphalaṃ pradiṣṭam
atyeti tatsarvamidam viditvā
yogī paraṃ sthānamupaiti cādyam*

A yogī inherits a reward beyond the study of Vedas,
sacrifice, penance and charity;
his reward is greater than the reward for those things.
He attains the supreme, original abode.

Chapter Nine

- 1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*
idaṃ tu te guhyatamaṃ pravakṣyāmyanasūyave
jñānaṃ vijñānasahitaṃ yajjñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt

The Almighty Lord said:
 Upon you, who are without malice,
 I will confer this highest knowledge and realization
 which will make you free from evil.

- 2 *rājavidyā rājaguhyam pavitramidamuttamam*
pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartumavyayam

This is the royal knowledge, the greatest secret.
 It leads to the greatest purification.
 It is subject to immediate experience,
 in accordance with dharma,
 easily attainable and eternal.

- 3 *aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa*
aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyusaṃsāravartmani

People who fail to follow this path,
 o Destroyer of enemies,
 return, without having attained Me,
 to the path of the mortal world.

- 4 *mayā tatamidaṃ sarvaṃ jagadavyaktamūrtinā*
matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṃ teṣvavasthitaḥ

In My unmanifested form,
 I saturate the entire world with Myself.
 All the beings are in Me, but I am not in them.

- 5 *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogamaīśvaram*
bhūtabhṛnna ca bhūtaṣtho mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ

Still, I am devoid of it all.
Behold My Divine power!
I am the maker and the maintainer of beings,
remaining transcendental to them all.

6 *yathākāśasthito nityam vāyuh sarvatrago mahān
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthānītyupadhāraya*

Like the mighty wind, that blows from all sides,
but stays always located within space,
know thus all beings to reside in Me.

7 *sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṃ yānti māmikām
kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpātau viśṛjāmyaham*

All beings, o son of Kuntī,
in the end of kalpa enter My Prakṛti,
and in the beginning of the next kalpa
I manifest them again.

8 *prakṛtiṃ svāmavaṣṭabhya viśṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūtagrāmamimam kṛtsnamavaśam prakṛtervaśāt*

With the help of My Prakṛti,
I again and again create
this multitude of beings,
by the very force of Nature.

9 *na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya
udāsīnavadāsīnamasaktam teṣu karmasu*

Still, I am unbound
by all those activities, o Dhanañjaya.
I remain untouched and unbound by them.

10 *mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram
hetunānena kaunteya jagadviparivartate*

Under My supervision, Prakṛti creates
all moving and motionless beings.
This, o son of Kuntī,
is the driving force of the world.

11 *avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīṃ tanumāśritam
param bhāvamajānanto mama bhūtamahēśvaram*

Ignorant ones fail to recognize Me
when I descend into the human body,
for they are unaware of My transcendental nature
of the Almighty Lord.

12 *moghāśā moghakarmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasah
rākṣasīmāsurīm caiva prakṛtiṃ mohinīm śritāḥ*

With thwarted hopes and futile deeds,
with useless knowledge of the disturbed spirit,
in the deluded nature of asuras and rākṣasas
they find refuge.

13 *mahātmānastu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtimāśritāḥ
bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādimaṅgalyam*

But great souls, o Pārtha,
finding refuge in the Divine nature,
adore Me with calm minds, knowing Me
as the inexhaustible foundation of the beings.

14 *satataṃ kīrtayanto mām yatantaśca dṛḍhavrataḥ
namasyantaśca mām bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate*

Singing always My glory
they serve Me diligently,
with determined devotion,
always in the state of unity.

15 *jñānayajñena cāpyanye yajanto māmupāsate
ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham*

Adoring Me with the sacrifice of knowledge,
others worship Me in unity,
in duality, in diversity, in all forms.

16 *ahaṃ kraturahaṃ yajñah svadhāhamahamauśadham
mantra'hamahamevājyamahamagnirahaṃ hutam*

I am the Vedic rite, I am yajña,
I am the food offered to the ancestors,
the herb and the mantra.
I am the butter, the fire and the sacrificial offering.

17 *pitāhamasya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ
vedyaṃ pavitramoṅkāra ṛksāma yajureva ca*

I am the father of this world,
the mother, the support and the forefather.
I am the object of knowledge,
the purifier, the syllable Om.
I am Ṛg, Sāma and Yajur.

18 *gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṃ suhṛt
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṃ nidhānaṃ bijamavyayam*

I am the goal, I am the maintainer,
the Lord and the witness.
I am the home, the refuge and the best friend.
I am the creation, destruction
and the foundation which is the support,
I am the treasury and the indestructible seed.

19 *tapāmyahamaḥaṃ varṣaṃ nigṛhṇāmyutsṛjāmi ca
amṛtaṃ caiva mṛtyuśca sadasaccāhamarjuna*

I give warmth, I send and keep the rain.
I am the immortality and death,
existence and nonexistence, o Arjuna.

20 *traividya māṃ somaḥ pūtapāpā
yajñairiṣtvā svargatiṃ prārthayante
te puṇyamāsādyā surendralokaṃ
aśnanti divyāndivi devabhogān*

The knowers of the three Vedas,
they who drink soma, pure from sin,
adoring Me with sacrifice,
they aspire to heaven.

Having reached the kingdom of Indra,
they enjoy the heavenly pleasures.

21 *te taṃ bhuktvā svargalokaṃ viśālaṃ
kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṃ viśanti
evaṃ trayīdharmamanuṣṭrapānā
gatāgataṃ kāmakāmā labhante*

Having had enough of the heavenly spaces,
with their merit exhausted,
they return into the world of mortals.
Thus they, who follow the teaching of the Vedas,
desiring the fulfillment of desire,
attain death and rebirth.

22 *ananyāścintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryuṣāste
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham*

But to them, who focus on Me alone,
who worship Me with undivided devotion,
I bring protection and lasting achievement.

23 *ye'pyanyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajantyavidhipūrvakam*

And they, who worship other deities,
serving them with faith,
they indeed worship Me,
o son of Kuntī, but in ignorance.

24 *ahaṃ hi sarvayajñānāṃ bhoktā ca prabhureva ca
na tu māmabhijānanti tattvenātaścyavanti te*

I indeed am the enjoyer
and the Lord of all sacrifice.
Still, not knowing Me truly, they fail.

25 *yānti devavratā devānpitṛnyānti pitṛvratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām*

Those, who worship the gods, come to the gods;
those, who worship the ancestors, come to the ancestors,
those, who worship the spirits and demons, go to them
and those, who worship Me, come to Me.

26 *patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tadahaṃ bhaktyupahṛtamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

If one offers Me with devotion even a leaf,
flower, fruit or water,
I accept the pure gift of the devoted heart.

27 *yatkarōṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam*

Whatever you do, whatever you eat,
whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give,
in whatever austerity you engage, o son of Kuntī,
do it as an offering to Me.

28 *śubhāśubhaphalairaivaṃ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ
sannyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māmupaiśyasi*

Thus will you be free
from the good and bad fruits of action.
Firm in the yoga of renunciation and perfectly free,
you will come to Me.

29 *samo'haṃ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham*

I am the same to all beings.
I value none more and none less.
But he, who worships Me with devotion,
he is in Me and I am in him.

30 *api cetsudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ*

Were he even the most miserable of sinners,
 he who worships Me with devotion,
 is to be considered righteous,
 for he chose rightly.

31 *kṣīpraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati
 kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*

He soon attains rightness
 and reaches the lasting peace.
 Know, o son of Kuntī, that those
 who are devoted to Me
 are never lost.

32 *māṃ hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpāyonayaḥ
 striyo vaiśyāstathā śūdrāste'pi yānti parāṃ gatim*

Those who seek refuge in Me,
 be they even men of lowly birth—
 women, vaiśyas and śūdras—
 even they attain the highest goal.

33 *kiṃ punarbrāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayastathā
 anityamasukhaṃ lokamimaṃ prāpya bhajasva mām*

How much more is it the case
 with virtuous brāhmaṇas,
 and devoted and wise kings!
 Therefore adore Me, you who found yourself
 in the world of sorrow and passing!

34 *manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru
 māmevaiśyasi yuktvaivamātmānam matparāyaṇaḥ*

Always thinking of Me, adore Me with devotion,
 offer Me sacrifice, pay Me respect.
 With your soul completely preoccupied with Me,
 thus united you will come to Me.

Chapter Ten

1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*

*bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ
yatte'haṃ prīyamānāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā*

The Almighty Lord said:

Hear more of My highest word, o Mighty-armed,
which, desiring your well-being, I speak to you,
for you are in My favor.

2 *na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ prabhavaṃ na maharṣayaḥ
ahamādirhi devānāṃ maharṣiṇāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ*

Not even the multitude of gods
and great sages know my origin,
for I am the source
of both the gods and the wise.

3 *yo māmajamanādīṃ ca vetti lokamaheśvaram
asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate*

The mortal one, who knows Me
as unborn and without origin,
who knows me as the Great Lord of the worlds,
he is without delusion, and free of all sin.

4 *buddhirjñānamasammohaḥ kṣamā satyaṃ damaḥ śamaḥ
sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ bhavo'bhāvo bhayaṃ cābhayameva ca*

Consciousness, wisdom, lack of illusion,
patience, truthfulness, control over the senses and mind,
happiness, unhappiness, birth and death,
fear and fearlessness,

5 *ahiṃsā samatā tuṣṭitapo dānaṃ yaśo'yaśaḥ
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṃ matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ*

nonviolence, balance, undemanding nature,
penance, generosity, glory and shame,

are the various states of beings,
all having their origin in Me.

6 *maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavastathā
madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ*

The seven maharṣis and the four Manus,
who are like Me, are born from My mind,
and from them all the creatures of the world.

7 *etāṃ vibhūtiṃ yogam ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ
so'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṁśayaḥ*

He who truly knows
this abundance of My greatness,
he is completely preoccupied with yoga.
That is beyond doubt.

8 *aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ*

I am the source of all.
Everything originates from Me.
Knowing that, gifted with deep understanding,
the wise worship Me.

9 *maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaśca mām nityaṃ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

With Me in thoughts, their lives dedicated to Me,
assisting each other, talking about Me,
they find satisfaction and happiness.

10 *teṣāṃ satatayuktānām bhajatām prītipūrvakam
dadāmi buddhiyogaṃ taṃ yena māmupayānti te*

To those, who are always preoccupied with devotion,
who love Me with all their hearts,
I give the yoga of knowledge,
which brings them to Me.

11 *teṣāmevānukampārthamahamajñānajaṃ tamaḥ
nāśayāmyātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā*

As a mercy to them, I,
who abide in their souls,
dispel the darkness of ignorance
with clear light of knowledge.

12 *arjuna uvāca
paraṃ brahma paraṃ dhāma pavitraṃ paramaṃ bhavān
puruṣaṃ śāśvataṃ divyamādidevamajaṃ vibhum*

Arjuna said:
You are the highest brahman, the highest abode,
You are the greatest purifier.
You are the original Divine Puruṣa,
the unborn God of the gods.

13 *āhustvāmṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣirnāradastathā
asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṃ caiva bravīṣi me*

All the ṛṣis speak so of You.
Nārada said so, and Asita, Devala and Vyāsa.
And You, Yourself, have revealed Yourself as such before me.

14 *sarvametadṛtaṃ manye yanmām vadasi keśava
na hi te bhagavanvyaktiṃ vidurdevā na dānavāḥ*

Everything you have told me
I hold to be the truth, o Keśava.
You, o Lord, neither gods nor demons
can reach nor comprehend.

15 *svayamevātmanātmānaṃ vettha tvaṃ puruṣottama
bhūtabhāvana bhūteśa devadeva jagatpate*

Indeed, only You know Your own person, o Highest Puruṣa,
o origin of beings, Lord of all, God of the gods,
o Lord of the entire world.

16 *vaktumarhasyaśeṣeṇa divyā hyātmavibhūṭayaḥ
yābhirvibhūtibhirlokānimāṃstvaṃ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi*

It is appropriate for You indeed
to speak about Your Divine glory,
which pervades all those worlds.

17 *kathaṃ vidyāmahaṃ yogimstvāṃ sadā paricintayan
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo'si bhagavanmayā*

How am I to understand You, o Yogī,
always thinking about You?
In which forms am I to envision You, o Lord?

18 *vistareṇātmano yogaṃ vibhūtiṃ ca janārdana
bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptirhi śṛṇvato nāsti me'mṛtam*

Tell me again in detail, o Janārdana,
all Your yogic abundance.
For I can never have enough of the nectar of Your words.

19 *śrībhagavānuvāca
hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hyātmavibhūṭayaḥ
prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me*

The Almighty Lord said:
I will now describe to you My Divine glories,
but only the greatest of them, o glory of the Kurus,
for My greatness has no end.

20 *ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūṭāśayasthitāḥ
ahamādiśca madhyaṃ ca bhūtānāmanta eva ca*

I am the Self, o Guḍākeśa,
which resides in the heart of every being.
I am the beginning, the middle
and the end of all beings.

21 *ādityānāmahaṃ viṣṇurjyotiṣāṃ raviraṃśumān
marīcirmarutāmasmi nakṣatrāṇāmahaṃ śaśī*

Among Ādityas I am Viṣṇu,
among the sources of light I am the sun,
among the maruts I am Marīci,
among the stars I am the moon.

22 *vedānāṃ sāmavedo'smi devānāmasmi vāsavaḥ
indriyāṅāṃ manaścāsmi bhūtānāmasmi cetanā*

Among the Vedas I am Sāma-veda,
among the gods I am Vāsava,
among the senses I am the mind.
In all beings I am consciousness.

23 *rudrānāṃ śaṅkaraścāsmi vittiśo yakṣarakṣasām
vasūnāṃ pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ śikhariṅāmaham*

Among the Rudras I am Śaṅkara,
among yakṣas and rākṣasas I am Kubera.
Among the vasus I am Agni,
and among the mountains I am Meru.

24 *purodhasāṃ ca mukhyaṃ mām vidhi pārtha bṛhaspatim
senānīnāmahaṃ skandaḥ sarasāmasmi sāgaraḥ*

Among the priests, know that I am Bṛhaspati, o Pārtha.
Among the commanders of armies I am Kārttikeya,
I am the ocean among the waters.

25 *maharṣīnāṃ bhṛgurahaṃ girāmasmyekamakṣaram
yajñānāṃ japayajño'smi sthāvarānāṃ himālayaḥ*

Of maharṣis I am Bhṛgu,
of words I am the syllable Om,
of yajñas I am japa.
Among the motionless things I am Himalaya.

26 *aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṅāṃ devarṣīnāṃ ca nāradaḥ
gandharvāṅāṃ citrarathaḥ siddhānāṃ kapilo munih*

Among the trees I am banyan,
among the Divine sages I am Nārada.
Among the gandharvas I am Citraratha,
among the siddhas I am the wise Kapila.

27 *uccaiḥśravasamaśvānāṃ viddhi māmamṛtodbhavam
airāvataṃ gajendrāṇāṃ narāṇāṃ ca narādhipam*

Know, that I am the Uccaiḥśravas among the horses,
born from amṛta.
Among the best of elephants I am Airāvata,
and among men I am the king.

28 *āyudhānāmahaṃ vajraṃ dhenūnāmasmi kāmadhuk
prajānaścāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇāmasmi vāsukiḥ*

Of weapons I am vajra,
among cows I am Kāma-dhenu,
among the causes of conception I am Kandarpa,
and among the serpents I am Vāsuki.

29 *anantaścāsmi nāgānāṃ varuṇo yādasāmahaṃ
pitṛṇāmaryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṃyamatāmahaṃ*

Among the nāgas I am Ananta,
Varuṇa am I among the beings of water.
Among the forefathers I am Aryaman,
among the supervisors I am Yama.

30 *prahlādaścāsmi daityānāṃ kālaḥ kalayatāmahaṃ
mṛgāṇāṃ ca mṛgendro'haṃ vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām*

Among the Daityas I am Prahlāda,
among the destroyers I am time.
Among the animals I am the lion,
among the birds I am Vainateya.

31 *pavanaḥ pavatāmasmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtāmahaṃ
jhaṣāṇāṃ makaraścāsmi srotasāmasmi jāhnavī*

Among the purifiers I am the wind,
among the warriors I am Rāma.
Among the fish I am the shark,
and among the rivers I am Gaṅgā.

32 *sargāṇāmādirantaśca madhyaṃ caivāhamarjuna
adhyātmavidyā vidyānām vādaḥ pravadatāmaham*

In all things I am the beginning,
the middle and the end, o Arjuna.
Of all knowledge I am the knowledge of Self,
in discussions I am the conclusion.

33 *akṣarāṇāmakāro'smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca
ahamevākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṃ viśvatomukhaḥ*

Of the letters I am the letter “A,”
of the compound words I am the word of two syllables.
I am indeed the unpassing time,
I am the all-seeing provider.

34 *mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaścāhamudbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām
kīrtiḥ śrīrvākca nārīṇaṃ smṛtirmedhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā*

I am the all-devouring death,
and the creation of all that is to be.
Among the female qualities
I am Glory, Success,
Word, Memory, Mindfulness,
Patience and Perseverance.

35 *bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnaṃ gāyatrī chandasāmaham
māsānāṃ mārgaśīrṣo'hamṛtūnāṃ kusumākaraḥ*

Among the hymns of Sāma-veda I am Bṛhat-sāma,
among the verses I am Gāyatrī.
Among the months I am mārgaśīrṣa,
and among the seasons I am the floral spring.

36 *dyūtaṃ chalayatāmasmi tejastejasvināmaham
jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvaṃ sattvavatāmaham*

Among deceptions I am gamble,
I am the greatness in all that is great,
I am the victory, I am the adventure,
I am the strength of the mighty.

37 *vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo'smi pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ
munīnāmapyahaṃ vyāsaḥ kavīnāmuśanā kavīḥ*

Among the Vṛṣṇis I am Vasudeva,
among the Pāṇḍavas I am Dhanañjaya.
Among the wise men I am Vyāsa,
among the men of thought I am Uśanas.

38 *daṇḍo damayatāmasmi nītirasmi jigīṣatām
maunaṃ caivāsmi guhyānām jñānaṃ jñānavatāmahaṃ*

Among punishments I am the whip,
I am the skill in those who aspire to victory.
Among the secret things I am silence,
I am the wisdom in the wise.

39 *yaccāpi sarvabhūtānām bījaṃ tadahamarjuna
na tadasti vinā yatsyānmayā bhūtaṃ carācaram*

I am the seed of all that exists, o Arjuna.
There is no created being, either moving or motionless,
that could exist without Me.

40 *nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām parantapa
eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūtervistaro mayā*

My Divine abundance has no end, o conqueror of enemies.
What I have just told you is but a glimpse.

41 *yadyadvibhūtimatsattvaṃ śrīmadūrjitameva vā
tattadevāvagaccha tvaṃ mama tejomśasambhavam*

Know everything abundant, beautiful and glorious,
to be a manifestation of only a fraction of My glory.

42 *athavā bahunaitena kiṃ jñātena tavārjuna
viṣṭabhyāhamidaṃ kṛtsnamekāṃśena sthito jagat*

But why do you need, o Arjuna,
the knowledge of that?
By a mere fragment of Myself
I pervade and maintain all Creation.

Chapter Eleven

- 1 *arjuna uvāca*
madanugrahāya paramaṃ guhyamadhyātmasaṃjñitam
yattvayoktaṃ vacastena mohō'yaṃ vigato mama

Arjuna said:

**In Your mercy, you have told me
 the utmost secret called adhyātma,
 which has dispelled my delusion.**

- 2 *bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāṃ śrutau vistaraśo mayā*
tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa mähātmyamaṇi cāvuyayam

**About the appearance and disappearance of beings,
 as well as about Your unpassing glory, o Lotus-eyes,
 I have heard from you in detail.**

- 3 *evametadyathāttha tvamātmānaṃ parameśvara*
draṣṭumicchāmi te rūpamaiśvaram puruṣottama

**You are such, as you have described Yourself,
 o Highest Lord, but I wish to see You
 in Your aspect of the Almighty, o Highest Puruṣa.**

- 4 *manyase yadi tacchakyaṃ mayā draṣṭumiti prabho*
yogeśvara tato me tvaṃ darśayātmānamavyayam

**If You, o Lord, think that I am capable of seeing it,
 then show me, o Lord of yoga, Your unpassing being.**

- 5 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ
nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇākṛtīni ca

The Almighty Lord said:

**Behold, o Pārtha, the hundreds
 and thousands of My Divine forms,
 diverse, in many colors and shapes.**

6 *paśyādityānvasūnrudrānāśvinau marutastathā
bahūnyadr̥ṣṭapūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata*

Behold, o Bhārata, the Ādityas, vasus,
Rudras, Aśvins and maruts.
Behold many wonders, unseen before.

7 *ihaikasthaṃ jagatkṛtsnaṃ paśyādya sacarācaram
mama dehe guḍākeśa yaccānyad draṣṭumicchasi*

In My body now behold, o Guḍākeśa,
the entire world united in One—
all that is in motion and motionless,
and everything else, that you desire to see.

8 *na tu mām śakyase draṣṭumanenaiva svacaḥṣuṣā
divyaṃ dadāmi te caḥṣuḥ paśya me yogamaīśvaram*

But with your own eyes you cannot see Me.
I therefore give you the heavenly sight.
Behold now My Divine glory.

9 *sañjaya uvāca
evamuktvā tato rājanmahāyogeśvaro hariḥ
darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṃ rūpamaīśvaram*

Sañjaya said:
Having said that, o king,
the greatest Lord of Yoga, Hari,
showed Pārtha His Divine form.

10 *anekavaktranayanamanekādbhutadarśanam
anekadivyaḥbharāṇaṃ divyānekodyatāyudham*

Many mouths, and eyes, and wondrous sights;
adorned with heavenly jewels,
and armed with heavenly weapons, raised for battle,

11 *divyamālyāambaradharaṃ divyagandhānulepanam
sarvāścaryamayaṃ devamānantam viśvatomukham*

wrapped up in heavenly wreaths, clothes and scents,
stood His form, marvelous, bright,
endless and all-pervading.

12 *divi sūryasahasrasya bhavedyugapadutthitā
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syādbhāsastasya mahātmanaḥ*

If thousands of suns were lit in the sky at the same time,
their brightness would resemble the shine
of this magnificent being.

13 *tatraikasthaṃ jagatkṛtsnaṃ pravibhaktamanekadhā
apaśyaddevadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavastadā*

Here, in the body of the God of gods,
the son of Pāṇḍu beheld the entire universe,
divided in multitude and founded in One.

14 *tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hr̥ṣṭaromā dhanañjayaḥ
praṇamya śirasā devaṃ kṛtāñjalirabhāṣata*

Then, overwhelmed with wonder,
with goosebumps all over his body,
with folded hands and head bowed
Dhanañjaya respectfully addressed the Lord.

15 *arjuna uvāca
paśyāmi devāṃstava deva dehe
sarvāṃstathā bhūtaviśeṣasaṅghān
brahmāṇamīśaṃ kamalāsanasthaṃ
ṛṣīṃśca sarvānuragāṃśca divyān*

Arjuna said:
In Your body, o Lord, I see assembled
all the gods and all beings;
Brahmā the Maker sitting in the lotus;
also all the sages and the serpents of heaven.

16 *anekabāhūdaravaktranetraṃ
paśyāmi tvāṃ sarvato'nantarūpam
nāntaṃ na madhyaṃ na punastavādiṃ
paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa*

I look at Your infinite form,
with a multitude of arms,
bellies, mouths and eyes.
But I fail to see Your beginning,
middle or end, o Highest Lord, o Almighty!

17 *kirīṭinam gadinam cakriṇam ca
tejorāśim sarvato dīptimantam
paśyāmi tvām durnirikṣyam samantād
dīptānalārkaadyutimaprameyam*

I behold You with crowns, scepters and discs,
shining with light all around.
It is indeed difficult to look at You,
like a blazing fire, and the infinite light of the sun.

18 *tvamakṣaram paramam veditavyam
tvamasya viśvasya param nidhānam
tvamavyayaḥ śāśvatadharmagoptā
sanātanastvam puruṣo mato me*

I see You as the unpassing, and the Highest.
You are the supreme foundation of all.
You are the eternal guardian of dharma,
You are the eternal Puruṣa, I think.

19 *anādimadhyāntamanantavīryam
anantabāhuṃ śāśisūryametram
paśyāmi tvām dīptahutāśavaktram
svatejasā viśvamidaṃ tapantam*

You are without beginning, middle or end;
You are of infinite glory, of countless arms.
The sun and the moon are Your eyes,
the blazing fire is Your face.
All Creation receives warmth from Your glow.

20 *dyāvāpṛthivyoridamantaram hi
vyāptam tvayaikena diśaśca sarvāḥ
dṛṣṭvādbhutaṃ rūpamugraṃ tavedam
lokatrayam pravyathitam mahātman*

You indeed pervade the earth,
the worlds of heaven and all in between;
having seen Your marvelous, terrible sight,
all three worlds tremble, o Highest Soul.

21 *amī hi tvāṃ surasaṅghā viśanti
kecidbhitāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti
svastītyuktvā maharṣisiddhasaṅghāḥ
stuvanti tvāṃ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ*

Inside You indeed enter the multitude of the righteous.
Scared, some worship You with folded hands.
“Glory to You!” exclaims a vast number
of siddhas and maharṣis,
praising You with full hymns.

22 *rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā
viśve’śvinau marutaścoṣmapāśca
gandharvayakṣāsurasiddhasaṅghā
vikṣante tvāṃ vismitāścaiva sarve*

Rudras, Ādityas, vasus and Sādhyas,
Viśvas, Aśvins, maruts and the forefathers,
the multitude of gandharvas, yakṣas, asuras and siddhas—
they all gaze at You, in wonder.

23 *rūpaṃ mahatte bahuvaktranetraṃ
mahābāho bahubāhūrupādam
bahūdaraṃ bahudaṃṣṭrākarālaṃ
drṣṭvā lokāḥ pravṛyathitāstathāham*

Seeing Your immense form, o Mighty-armed,
with many mouths, eyes, many hands,
thighs, feet, with many bellies, with many fierce teeth,
all the worlds tremble, and I with them.

24 *nabhaḥspr̥ṣaṃ dīptamanekavarṇaṃ
vyāttānanaṃ dīptaviśālanetraṃ
drṣṭvā hi tvāṃ pravṛyathitāntarātmā
dhr̥tiṃ na vindāmi śamaṃ ca viṣṇo*

When I see You reaching the sky,
blazing, in many colors, mouth wide open,
with big bright eyes, I fear in my heart,
and I find neither courage, nor peace, o Viṣṇu.

25 *damṣṭrākarālāni ca te mukhāni
dṛṣṭvaiva kālānalasannibhāni
diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma
prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa*

When I see Your mouth and Your teeth,
terrible, resembling the fires of time,
I no longer know the four directions,
and I find no peace. Have mercy,
o Lord of gods, o Refuge of the universe!

26 *amī ca tvāṃ dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ
sarve sahaivāvanipālasaṅghaiḥ
bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputrastathāsau
sahāsmadīyairapi yodhamukhyaiḥ*

Into Your mouth rush all the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the vast number of princes, Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
the son of the chariot driver
and with them also the leaders of our warriors.

27 *vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti
damṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni
kecidvilagnā daśanāntareṣu
sandṛśyante cūrṇitairuttamāṅgaiḥ*

They rush head down into the terrible mill of Your teeth.
Some of them are hanging between the teeth,
heads pounded into dust.

28 *yathā nadīnāṃ bahavo'mbuvegāḥ
samudramevābhimukhā dravanti
tathā tavāmī naralokavīrā
viśanti vaktrāṇyabhivijvalanti*

Like the currents of many rivers
that flow toward the sea,
so do they, the heroes among men,
rush into Your flaming jaws.

29 *yathā pradīptaṃ jvalanaṃ pataṅgā
viśanti nāśāya samṛddhavegāḥ
tathaiiva nāśāya viśanti lokās
tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛddhavegāḥ*

Like butterflies, that rush into the blazing fire,
into ruin, so do those creatures recklessly rush
into Your mouth, to be destroyed.

30 *lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāl
lokānsamagrānvadanairjvaladbhiḥ
tejobhirāpūrya jagatsamagram
bhāsastavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo*

With tongues of fire You embrace all the worlds,
everywhere, consuming them.
The bright rays of Your being shine, o Viṣṇu,
filling the entire world with light.

31 *ākhyāhi me ko bhavānugrarūpo
namo'stu te devavara prasīda
vijñātumicchāmi bhavantamādyam
na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim*

Tell me, who are You, in this terrible form?
Glory to You, o Greatest, have mercy.
I wish to know You, the original being.
I do not understand Your actions.

32 *śrībhagavānuvāca
kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛtpravṛddho
lokānsamāhartumiha pravṛttaḥ
ṛte'pi tvām na bhaviṣyanti sarve
ye'vasthitāḥ pratyānikēṣu yodhāḥ*

The Almighty Lord said:
I am the mighty Time that destroys the world,
and now my preoccupation is the destruction of the worlds.
Even without you, none of the arrayed warriors
of the opposing armies will survive.

33 *tasmāttvamuttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva
jivā śatrūn bhūṅkṣva rājyaṃ samṛddham
mayaivaite nihataḥ pūrvameva
nimittamātraṃ bhava savyasācin*

So stand up, and achieve glory!
Overcome your enemies, and enjoy the reign on earth.
They are all slain by My hand, anyway.
Be only My instrument, o Left-handed!

34 *droṇaṃ ca bhīṣmaṃ ca jayadrathaṃ ca
karṇaṃ tathānyānapi yodhavīrān
mayā hatāṃstvaṃ jahi mavyathiṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān*

Droṇa and Bhīṣma, Jayadratha,
Karṇa and other brave warriors,
whom I have already killed, slay!
Fear not, but fight: you will defeat your enemies!

35 *sañjaya uvāca
etacchrutvā vacanaṃ keśavasya
kṛtāñjalirvepamānaḥ kirīṭī
namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇaṃ
sagadgadaṃ bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya*

Sañjaya said:
Hearing those words from Keśava,
Arjuna, with palms folded, trembled,
bowed, and again, filled with fear,
addressed Kṛṣṇa with a trembling voice.

36 *arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagatprahṛṣyatyanurajyate ca*

*rakṣāṃsi bhītāni diśo dravanti
sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṅghāḥ*

Arjuna said:

With full right is the world happy
and enjoys praising You, o Hṛṣikeśa.
It is proper that all the rākṣasas run from You in terror,
and the multitude of siddhas bow low before You.

37 *kasmācca te na nameranmahātman
garīyase brahmaṇo'pyādikartre
ananta deveśa jagannivāsa
tvamakṣaram sadasattatparam yat*

And how would they not bow before You,
o Highest, who are above all,
who gave birth to the Maker, o Infinite Being,
the Lord of gods, who are the refuge of the universe.
You are indestructible, the being and non-being,
and everything beyond.

38 *tvamādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas
tvamasya viśvasya param nidhānam
vettāsi vedyaṃ ca param ca dhāma
tvayā tataṃ viśvamanantarūpa*

You are the first God, the original Puruṣa.
You are the highest refuge of the universe,
You are the knower and the known and the highest goal.
You pervade all, o Thousand-Forms!

39 *vāyuryamo'gnirvaruṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ
prajāpatistvaṃ prapitāmahaśca
namo namaste'stu sahasrakṛtvaḥ
punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste*

You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa,
moon, Prajāpati and the Forefather.
Glory, may all glory be to You! A thousand times!
Again and again! Glory to You!

40 *namaḥ purastādatha pṛṣṭhataste
namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva
anantavīryāmitavikramastvaṃ
sarvaṃ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ*

Glory to You in front and in behind!
Glory to You from all sides, o Universal!
Infinite is Your power, and Your valor is endless.
You pervade all, and You are therefore all.

41 *sakheti matvā prasabhaṃ yaduktaṃ
he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti
ajānatā mahimānaṃ tavedaṃ
mayā pramādātpraṇayena vāpi*

If I have offended You, speaking carelessly and lovingly,
calling You “o Kṛṣṇa, o Yādava, o friend”,
seeing You only as my friend, knowing not Your greatness

42 *yaccāvahāsārthamasatkṛto'si
vihāraśayyāsanaabhojaneṣu
eko'thavāpyacyuta tatsamakṣaṃ
tatkṣāmaye tvāmahamaṇṇam*

if I have offended You in any way, o Acyuta,
in play, in a game, lying down, sitting or at a meal,
alone or in company, I beg Your forgiveness, o Infinite one.

43 *pitāsi lokasya carācarasya
tvamasya pūjyaśca gururgarīyān
na tvatsamo'styabhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo
lokatraye'pyapratimaprabhāva*

You are the father of this world, of all moving and motionless.
All the world praises You, who are the highest teacher.
You have no equal. How could anyone possibly be above You
in all three worlds, You, who are beyond comparison?

44 *tasmātpraṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ
prasādaye tvāmahamīśamīḍyam*

*piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ
priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum*

Therefore I, bowing low before You,
falling on My knees, beg of You,
respected Lord, forgive me.
Be merciful with me as a father with his son,
as a friend with his friend
and as a man with his beloved!

45 *adr̥ṣṭapūrvam hṛṣito'smi dr̥ṣṭvā
bhayena ca pravayathitam mano me
tadeva me darśaya deva rūpam
prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa*

I am happy, for I saw that, which was yet unseen,
and still, my spirit is shaken by fear.
Show Me again, o Lord, Your human form.
Have mercy, o Lord of gods, o refuge of the worlds!

46 *kirīṭinam gadinam cakrahastam
icchāmi tvam draṣṭumahaṃ tathaiva
tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena
sahasrabāho bhava viśvamūrte*

I wish to see You as before, with the crown,
scepter and disc in hand, in Your previous form,
with four arms, o Thousand-Arms, o Universal form.

47 *śrībhagavānuvāca
mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṃ
rūpam param darśitamātmayogāt
tejomayaṃ viśvamanantamādyam
yanme tvadanyena na dr̥ṣṭapūrvam*

The Almighty Lord said:
Out of love for you, o Arjuna,
I have revealed before you, with My power,
this highest form. Full of brightness,
universal, endless, it is My original form,
and none but you has yet seen it.

48 *na vedayajñādhyayanairna dānair
na ca kriyābhirna tapobhirugraiḥ
evanrūpaḥ śakya ahaṃ nṛloke
draṣṭuṃ tvadanyena kurupravīra*

Not by the study of Vedas, nor by sacrifice,
generosity, ritual, nor austere penance,
could anyone see Me in the world of men,
in this form, but you, o hero of the Kurus.

49 *mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍhabhāvo
dṛṣṭvā rūpaṃ ghoramīdrīmamedam
vyapetabhīḥ prītamanāḥ punastvaṃ
tadeva me rūpamidam prapaśya*

Fear not, and be untroubled
having seen this terrible aspect of Mine.
Without fear and with joy in your heart,
behold again My human form.

50 *sañjaya uvāca
ityarjunaṃ vāsudevastathoktvā
svakaṃ rūpaṃ darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ
āśvāsayāmāsa ca bhītamenaṃ
bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapurmahātmā*

Sañjaya said:
Having said that to Arjuna,
Vāsudeva showed again His previous form.
The mighty being, again of gentle appearance,
had calmed his fear.

51 *arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭvedaṃ mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ tava saumyaṃ janārdana
idānīmasmi saṃvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtiṃ gataḥ*

Arjuna said:
Seeing again Your gentle human form,
o Janārdana, I have regained my composure
and returned to my own nature.

52 śrībhagavānuvāca

*sudurdarśamidaṃ rūpaṃ dr̥ṣṭavānāsi yanmama
devā apyasya rūpasya nityaṃ darśanakāṅkṣiṇaḥ*

The Almighty Lord said:
It is difficult to see this aspect of Mine
which you have just seen.
Even the gods constantly long to see it.

53 nāhaṃ vedairna tapasā na dānena na cejyayā

śakya evaṃvidho draṣṭuṃ dr̥ṣṭavānāsi mām yathā

Not by Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by mercy,
nor sacrifice, can I be seen in this form,
in which you have just seen Me.

54 bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya ahamevaṃvidho`rjuna

jñātum draṣṭuṃ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṃ ca parantapa

But with undivided devotion
I can be, in this aspect, indeed known,
seen and entered, o Mighty-armed.

55 matkarmakṛṇmatparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ

nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava

He who acts for Me, who sees Me as the Highest,
who is devoted to Me, who is unattached,
who is free from hatred of any being,
he comes to Me, o son of Pāṇḍu.

Chapter Twelve

- 1 *arjuna uvāca*
evam satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvām paryupāsate
ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktaṃ teṣām ke yogavittamāḥ

Arjuna said:

Who is more perfect in yoga,
those who contemplate You in devotion, or those
who contemplate the unmanifested and transcendental?

- 2 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ

The Almighty Lord said:

Those, who meditate on Me,
who contemplate Me, always in devotion,
rich with highest faith,
I consider to be the perfect yogīs.

- 3 *ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktaṃ paryupāsate*
sarvatragamacintyañca kūṭasthamacalandhruvam

But they, who contemplate the unpassing,
incomprehensible, unmanifested, omnipresent,
unimaginable, changeless, lasting, eternal,

- 4 *sanniyamyendriyagrāmam sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ*
te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ

with all senses under control, always focused,
wishing well to everyone, they also come to Me.

- 5 *kleśo'dhikatarasteṣānavyaktāsaktacetāsām*
avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham dehavadbhiravāpyate

A more difficult task lies before them,
who direct their look at the Unmanifested.

For the Unmanifested, as a goal,
is very difficult to achieve
during life in the body.

6 *ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate*

But they who adore Me,
surrendering all their actions to Me,
who see Me as the Highest,
contemplating Me they achieve yoga.

7 *teṣāmahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṃsārasāgarāt
bhavāmi nacirātṣārtha mayyāveśitacetasām*

To them, whose mind abides in Me, o Pārtha,
I soon become deliverance
from the mortal circle of this world.

8 *mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya
nivasīṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ*

Anchor your mind in Me alone,
unite your reason with Me,
and in Me then shall you live.
That is beyond doubt.

9 *atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram
abhyāsayogena tato māmichhāptum dhanañjaya*

But if you cannot make your mind firmly entrenched in Me,
then find Me in a steady practice of yoga, o Dhanañjaya.

10 *abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava
madarthamaṇi karmāṇi kurvansiddhimavāpsyasi*

If you cannot even practice,
then surrender all your actions to Me.
By acting for Me alone, you shall reach perfection.

11 *athaitadapyasakto'si kartuṃ madhyogamāśritaḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*

If you cannot do even that,
then find refuge in Me by devotion,
abandoning all the fruits of action,
under the guidance of the higher Self.

12 *śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsajjñānāddhyānaṃ viśiṣyate
dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgācchāntiranantaram*

Indeed better than practice is knowledge;
above knowledge there is meditation,
and above meditation there is renunciation
from the fruits of action.
Renunciation is immediately followed by peace.

13 *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī*

He who hates no being, who is kind, compassionate to all,
who is free from attachment and egotism,
who is equal in suffering and joy,

14 *santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ
mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

he who is patient, modest and balanced in mind,
controlled by Self, constant in firmness,
with mind and reason directed at Me,
he who is so devoted to Me, is dear to Me.

15 *yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ
harṣāmarṣabhayodvegairmukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ*

He who touches not the world,
who is untouched by the world,
who is free from joy, envy,
fear and sorrow, is dear to Me.

16 *anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ
sarvārambhaparitāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

He who is modest, pure, smart,
untouched by worries, fearless,
renouncing all endeavors,
who thus surrendered to Me, is dear to Me.

17 *yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati
śubhāśubhaparitāgī bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

He, who feels neither joy nor sorrow,
nor desire, nor yearning,
renouncing both good and evil,
who is filled with devotion, is dear to Me.

18 *samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ*

He who is the same to both friend and enemy,
in glory and shame, in praise and admonishment,

19 *tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit
aniketaḥ sthiramatirbhaktimānme priyo naraḥ*

who is the same in both cold and warm, joy and suffering,
who is free from the bonds, who is silent, always satisfied,
without home, with stable mind, full of devotion,
such a man is dear to Me.

20 *ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṃ yathoktaṃ paryupāsate
śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāste'tīva me priyāḥ*

They, who truly follow the immortal path here described,
who, full of faith and devotion, observe Me as the highest,
they are dear to Me above all.

Chapter Thirteen

1 *arjuna uvāca*
prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ caiva kṣetraṃ kṣetrajñameva ca
etadveditumicchāmi jñānaṃ jñeyam ca keśava

Arjuna said:

What are the field, and the knower of the field?

What is Prakṛti, and what is Puruṣa?

What is knowledge, and what is the object of knowledge?

That, o Keśava, I wish to know.

2 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
idaṃ śarīraṃ kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhīyate
etadyo vetti taṃ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidiḥ

The Almighty Lord said:

This body, o son of Kuntī, is called the field.

He who knows that, is known by the wise

as the knower of the field.

3 *kṣetrajñaṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*
kṣetrakṣetrajñayorjñānaṃ yattajjñānaṃ mataṃ mama

Know Me, also, as the Knower in all bodies, o Bhārata.

Knowledge of the field and of the knower of the field

I consider to be the true knowledge.

4 *tatkṣetraṃ yacca yādṛkca yadvikāri yataśca yat*
sa ca yo yatprabhāvaśca tatsamāsenā me śṛṇu

Hear now what I am about to tell you, in brief,

about the field, its composition and changes, its origin,

and about the knower, his nature and influence.

5 *ṛṣibhirbahudhā gītaṃ chandobhirvividhaiḥ pṛthak*
brahmasūtrapadaīścaiva hetumadbhirviniścitaiḥ

About brahman spoke the ṛṣis in various hymns,
clearly expressing the essence.

6 *mahābhūtānyahaṅkāro buddhiravyaktameva ca
indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ*

The five basic elements, ego, mind
and the Unmanifested (avyakta), ten senses
and reason, as well as the five objects of senses,

7 *icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṅghātaścetanā dhṛtiḥ
etatkṣetram samāsenā savikāramudāhṛtam*

desire, hatred, pleasure, pain,
understanding, mindfulness, will—
that is the brief description of the field
together with its aspects.

8 *amānitvamadamhitvamahiṃsā kṣāntirārjavam
ācāryopāsanam śaucaṁ sthairyamātmaavinigrahaḥ*

Humility, modesty, harmlessness, patience, honesty,
service to the teacher, purity, perseverance, self-control,

9 *indriyārtheṣu vairāgyamanahaṅkāra eva ca
janmamṛtyujarāvyaḍhiduḥkhadoṣānudarśanam*

detachment from the objects of senses,
as well as the absence of egotism.
Observation of the evil that arises from birth,
death, old age, disease and suffering,

10 *asaktiranabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu
nityam ca samacittatvamiṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu*

detachment, absence of desire for a son, wife,
home and the like, persisting indifference
toward perceptions
of the desired and undesirable,

11 *mayi cānanyayogena bhaktiravyabhicāriṇī
viviktadeśasevitvamaratirjanasaṃsadi*

unyielding devotion to Me in the yoga of unity,
retreat into solitude,
dislike of the company of men,

12 *adhyātmajñānanyatvaṃ tattvajñānārthadarśanam
etajjñānamiti proktamajñānaṃ yadato'nyathā*

persistence in the knowledge of Self,
the awareness of the purpose
of the knowledge of reality.
All of that is called knowledge,
and its opposite is ignorance.

13 *jñeyaṃ yattatpravakṣyāmi yajjñātvāmṛtamaśnute
anādi matparaṃ brahma na sattannāsaducyate*

I will describe unto you that,
which needs to be known
and knowledge of which leads to the Immortal.
Without beginning is the highest brahman.
For Him it can be said neither that He is the existence,
nor nonexistence.

14 *sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tatsarvato'kṣīsiromukham
sarvataḥ śrutimalloke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati*

Everywhere are His arms and legs,
everywhere are His eyes, heads and mouths,
everywhere are His ears.
Thus encompassing all, He exists in the world.

15 *sarvendriyaguṇābhāsaṃ sarvendriyavivarjitam
asaktaṃ sarvabhṛccaiva nirguṇaṃ guṇabhokṣ ca*

Shining in the actions of all senses,
and still without the senses.
Unattached, supporting all;
without the guṇas.

16 *bahirantaśca bhūtānāmacaraṃ carameva ca
sūkṣmatvāttadavijñeyaṃ dūrasthaṃ cāntike ca tat*

He is without and within the beings.
 Moving is He and motionless.
 Because of His subtlety, He is incomprehensible.
 At the same time He is both far and near.

17 *avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktamiva ca sthitam
 bhūtabharṭṛ ca tajjñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca*

Undivided is He, but apparently divided in the beings.
 Thus understood, all beings He maintains,
 destroys and again gives them birth.

18 *jyotiṣāmapi tajjyotistamasah paramucyate
 jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam*

He is the light of lights,
 which is said to be beyond darkness.
 As the knowledge, the known and the goal,
 He resides in all hearts.

19 *iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ
 madbhakta etadvijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate*

To you I have briefly described the field,
 as well as the knowledge and the known.
 My bhakta, having understood it,
 becomes worthy of My state.

20 *prakṛtiṃ puruṣam caiva viddhyanādi ubhāvapi
 vikāramśca guṇāmścaiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān*

Know, that Prakṛti and Puruṣa
 are both without beginning.
 Know also that all forms
 and all the guṇas are born from Prakṛti.

21 *kāryakāraṇakarṭṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate
 puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānām bhokṭṛtve heturucyate*

Representing the source of consequences and the means,
Prakṛti is said to be the primordial principle.
Representing the source of experience, pleasure and suffering,
Puruṣa is said to be the primordial principle.

22 *puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhūṅkte prakṛtijāṅguṇān
kāraṇaṃ guṇasaṅgo'sya sadasadyonijanmasu*

When Puruṣa resides in Prakṛti,
He experiences the guṇas created from Prakṛti.
Attachment to the guṇas is the cause
of His birth in good or evil wombs.

23 *upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā mahēśvaraḥ
paramātmēti cāpyukto dehe'sminpuruṣaḥ paraḥ*

In that body there also exists, indeed,
the observer, the approver, the supporter, the enjoyer,
the great Lord and the highest Self,
whom they call the Highest Puruṣa.

24 *ya evaṃ vetti puruṣaṃ prakṛtiṃ ca guṇaiḥ saha
sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate*

He who knows such Puruṣa and Prakṛti,
together with the guṇas,
for him, whatever he does,
there is no rebirth.

25 *dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecidātmānamātmanā
anye sāṅkhyena yogena karmayogena cāpare*

Some, in meditation, know Self in Self by Self,
others with sāṅkhya-yoga,
and some, however, by karma-yoga.

26 *anye tvevamajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate
te'pi cātitarantyeva mṛtyuṃ śrutiparāyaṇāḥ*

Some, not knowing Him, worship Him
according to what they heard from others.
They also go beyond death,
adhering to such instructions.

27 *yāvatsañjāyate kiñcitsattvaṃ sthāvarajaṅgamam
kṣetrakṣetraññasamyogāttadviddhi bharatarṣabha*

Whatever be there born, moving or motionless,
know it to be made, o best of Bharatas,
from a combination of the field
and the knower of the field.

28 *samaṃ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṃ parameśvaram
vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṃ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*

He sees, who sees the highest Lord
as the same in all beings,
the unpassing within the passing.

29 *samaṃ paśyanhi sarvatra samavasthitamīśvaram
na hinastyātmanātmānaṃ tato yāti parāṃ gatim*

For he who sees the one Lord existing in all,
destroys not the Self by the Self,
and therefore attains the highest goal.

30 *prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānamakartāraṃ sa paśyati*

He sees indeed, who sees
that all activity is performed by Nature alone,
and that Self does not act.

31 *yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvamekasthamanupaśyati
tata eva ca vistāraṃ brahma sampadyate tadā*

When a man realizes
that all the different beings reside in One,
and that all evolves from himself,
he then becomes brahman.

32 *anāditvānnirguṇatvātparamātmāyamavyayaḥ
śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate*

Having no beginning, being without the guṇas,
this highest Self, undecaying,
although residing in the body, o son of Kuntī,
neither acts, nor is soiled by actions.

33 *yathā sarvagataṃ saukṣmyādākāśaṃ nopalipyate
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate*

Like the all-pervading space
which is never soiled, because of its subtlety,
so is the Self, omnipresent in the body, never soiled.

34 *yathā prakāśayatyekaḥ kṛtsnaṃ lokamimaṃ raviḥ
kṣetraṃ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṃ prakāśayati bhārata*

As one sun gives light to the whole world,
so does the soul, o Bhārata, enlighten all the fields.

35 *kṣetrakṣetraññayorevamantaraṃ jñānacakṣuṣā
bhūtaprakṛtimokṣaṃ ca ye viduryānti te param*

Discerning thus between the field
and the knower of the field,
liberating themselves
from the bondage of Nature by insight,
they, who see with the eyes of knowledge,
attain the highest goal.

Chapter Fourteen

- 1 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṃ jñānamuttamam
yajñātīvā munayaḥ sarve parāṃ siddhimito gatāḥ

The Almighty Lord said:

I will reveal to you, again, the high knowledge,
 the best of all knowledge, realizing which,
 the wise have reached the final perfection.

- 2 *idaṃ jñānamupāśritya mama sādharmaṃyāgatāḥ*
sarge'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca

Those who sought refuge in this knowledge
 and attained unity with Me, are no longer born
 when the worlds are created.

- 3 *mama yonirmahad brahma tasmīngarbhaṃ dadhāmyaham*
sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ tato bhavati bhārata

My womb is the great brahman.
 Therein I lay the seed.
 Therefrom, o Bhārata,
 all the beings gain birth.

- 4 *sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ*
tāsāṃ brahma mahadyonirahaṃ bījapraḍaḥ pitā

Whatever forms take birth, o son of Kuntī,
 from any womb, the great brahman is their womb,
 and I am the father, who lays the seed.

- 5 *sattvaṃ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ*
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayam

Sattva, rajas and tamas—those guṇas, o Mighty-armed,
 originating from Prakṛti, firmly bind to the body
 him who is embodied, unpassing.

6 *tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvātprakāśakamanāmayam
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasāṅgena cānagha*

Of them, sattva is light and healing,
because of its purity, and forms attachment
to happiness and knowledge, o Sinless one.

7 *rajo rāgātmakaṃ viddhi tṛṣṇāsāṅgasamudbhavam
tannibadhnāti kaunteya karmaśaṅgena dehinam*

Know, that rajas is passion in its nature,
the source of longing and attachment.
It binds, o son of Kuntī, the embodied one
by the attachment to activity.

8 *tamastvajñānaṃ viddhi mohanaṃ sarvadehinām
pramādālasyanidrābhīstannibadhnāti bhārata*

But know, that tamas is born from ignorance,
and deludes all embodied beings.
It firmly binds, o Bhārata, with madness,
laziness and inertia.

9 *sattvaṃ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata
jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta*

Sattva binds to happiness,
rajas to activity, o Bhārata,
while tamas, hiding the knowledge,
binds to madness.

10 *rajastamaścābhibhūya sattvaṃ bhavati bhārata
rajaḥ sattvaṃ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvaṃ rajastathā*

Sattva rises, o Bhārata, over tamas and rajas.
Rajas over sattva and tamas.
So does tamas rise, having overcome sattva and rajas.

11 *sarvadvāreṣu dehe'sminprakāśa upajāyate
jñānaṃ yadā tadā vidyādvivṛddhaṃ sattvamityuta*

When the light of knowledge appears
in all the gates of this body,
then know that sattva prevails.

12 *lobhaḥ pravṛttirārambhaḥ karmaṇāmaśamaḥ spṛhā
rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha*

Greed, activity, endeavor, restlessness and desire
appear when rajas prevails, o best of Bharatas.

13 *aprakāśo'pravṛttiśca pramādo moha eva ca
tamasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana*

Darkness, madness, inertia and delusion are born
when tamas prevails, o descendant of the Kurus.

14 *yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṃ yāti dehabhṛt
tadottamavidāṃ lokānamalānpratipadyate*

When an embodied man dies in the mode of sattva,
he goes to the pure worlds of those who know the Highest.

15 *rajasi pralayaṃ gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate
tathā pralīnastamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate*

The one whom death finds in rajas,
is born among those
who are attached to activity.
And if he dies in tamas,
he falls into a womb of darkness.

16 *karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikam nirmalam phalam
rajasastu phalam duḥkhamajñānam tamasah phalam*

The fruit of virtuous activities
is said to be sattvic and pure;
the fruit of rajas is suffering,
while the fruit of tamas is ignorance.

17 *sattvātsāñjāyate jñānam rajaso lobha eva ca
pramādamohau tamaso bhavato'jñānameva ca*

Knowledge originates from sattva,
greed from rajas.
Madness, delusion and ignorance, however,
originate from tamas.

18 *ūrdhvaṃ gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ
jagbanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ*

Those who follow sattva are elevated,
rajasic ones remain stagnant,
and those, who are of the quality of tamas, fall.

19 *nānyaṃ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṃ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati
guṇebhyaśca paraṃ vetti madbhāvaṃ so'dhigacchati*

When the knower realizes,
that outside the guṇas there is none who acts,
and knows Him, who is above the guṇas,
he then enters My nature.

20 *guṇānetānatīya trīndehī dehasamudbhavān
janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhairvimukto'mṛtamaśnute*

Transcending all three guṇas,
which are the source of this body,
the embodied man enjoys the nectar of liberation
from birth, death, change and suffering.

21 *arjuna uvāca
kairliṅgaistrīnguṇānetānatīto bhavati prabho
kimācāraḥ kathaṃ caitāṃstrīnguṇānavartate*

Arjuna said:
What are the signs, o Lord,
by which we are to recognize him,
who went beyond the three guṇas?
How does he act,
and how does he go beyond the three guṇas?

22 *śrībhagavān uvāca*

*prakāśam ca pravṛttiṃ ca mohameva ca pāṇḍava
na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati*

The Almighty Lord said:

He who despises not the light,
activity and delusion when they are present,
nor desires them when they are not;

23 *udāsīnavadāsīno guṇairyo na vicālyate*

guṇā vartanta ityevam yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate

who is indifferent and undisturbed by the guṇas;
he, who is firm and calm
in knowledge that only the guṇas act;

24 *samaduhkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ*

tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasamstutiḥ

he, who is equal in both pleasure and pain,
who abides in Self,
to whom earth and gold are the same,
who is the same in both the pleasant
and the unpleasant, who has realization,
who cares not for praise or admonishment,

25 *mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ*

sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate

who is the same in both glory and disgrace,
to both friend and foe, who abandoned all longings,
he is said to have gone beyond the guṇas.

26 *mām ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate*

sa guṇānsamatītyaitānbrahmabhūyāya kalpate

He who always serves Me
with yoga of devotion and love,
he is ready, going beyond the guṇas,
to be elevated into the abode of brahman.

27 *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāhamamṛtasyāvyaṃyasya ca
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca*

**For I am the abode of brahman,
the immortal and indestructible,
the eternal dharma and the utmost happiness.**

Chapter Fifteen

- 1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*
ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥśākhamāśvatthaṃ prāhuravyayam
chandāmsi yasya paṇāni yastaṃ veda sa vedavit

The Almighty Lord said:

There is a story about an unpassing banyan tree
 with its roots above and branches below,
 whose leaves are the verses of the Vedas.
 He who knows it, knows the Vedas.

- 2 *adhaścordhvaṃ prasṛtāstasya śākhā*
guṇappravṛddhā viṣayappravālāḥ
adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni
karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke

Downward and upward spread its branches,
 nourished by the guṇas,
 and the tiny branches are the objects of senses.
 And down into the world of men
 reach the roots, ending in activity.

- 3 *na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate*
nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā
aśvatthamenam suvirūḍhamūlam
asaṅgaśastreṇa dr̥dhena chittvā

The world understands not this form,
 its end nor beginning, nor its existence.
 After the firm roots of this tree have been severed,
 with the powerful sword of detachment,

- 4 *tataḥ padaṃ tatparimārgitavyam*
yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ
tameva cādyaṃ puruṣaṃ prapadye
yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purānī

one should seek the goal from which,
for him who reaches it, there is no return.
One is to seek refuge in the First Puruṣa,
from Whom, since origin, the entire world emanates.

5 *nirmānamohā jitasangadoṣā
adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ
dvandvairvimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasaṃjñāir
gacchantyamūḍhāḥ padamavyayaṃ tat*

Devoid of arrogance and delusion,
having overcome the evil of attachment,
always founded in Self, whose desires fell aside,
free from the pairs of opposites,
such as pleasure and suffering, void of delusion,
they reach this eternal goal.

6 *na tadbhāsayate sūryo na śāsāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yadgatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama*

That, which is not illuminated by sun,
nor moon, nor fire: that is My supreme abode.
He who arrives here, does not return.

7 *mamaivāṃśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥśaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati*

My fragment, the eternal being in the world of beings,
attracts the five senses and reason as the sixth,
which are the fruits of Prakṛti.

8 *śarīraṃ yadavāpnoti yaccāpyutkrāmatīśvaraḥ
gṛhitvaitāni saṃyāti vāyurgandhānivāśayāt*

When an embodied person receives the body,
and also when he leaves it, he carries those with him,
like the wind that carries the scent from its origin.

9 *śrotraṃ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṃ ca rasanāṃ ghrāṇameva ca
adhiṣṭhāya manaścāyaṃ viśayānupasevate*

With ear, eye, touch, taste and smell,
with them and also with the reason,
he enjoys the objects of the senses.

10 *utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhuiñjānam vā guṇānvitam
vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ*

Him who leaves, stays and enjoys,
who is connected with the guṇas,
perceive not those who are deluded.
Only they can see Him,
who see with the eye of knowledge.

11 *yatanto yoginaścainam paśyantyātmanyavasthitam
yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainam paśyantyacetasah*

The aspirants, purified by yoga,
see Him in their own self.
The unpurified, who are without knowledge,
fail to perceive Him, in spite of all their efforts.

12 *yadādityagataṁ tejo jagadbhāsayate'khilam
yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tattejo viddhi māmakam*

The light that abides in the sun,
and illuminates the entire world,
the light that is in the moon and in the fire,
know that light to be Mine.

13 *gāmāviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmyahamojāsā
puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ*

Pervading all the worlds
I support all beings with My power.
Becoming the moon,
I bring nourishment to the plants.

14 *aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām dehamāśritah
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmyannaṁ caturvidham*

Inhabiting the bodies of living beings
in the form of their metabolism,
connected with prāṇa and apāna,
I digest all forms of food.

15 *sarvasya cāhaṃ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo
mattaḥ smṛtirjñānamapohanañca
vedaiśca sarvairahameva vedyo
vedāntakṛdvedavideva cāham*

I dwell in the hearts of all.
I grant memory, knowledge, as well as their loss.
I am the goal of the study of the Vedas,
I am the maker of Vedānta,
as well as the knower of the Vedas.

16 *dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraścākṣara eva ca
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate*

There are two forms of life in this world,
the passing and the unpassing.
The passing includes all the creatures,
while the unpassing dwells in persistence.

17 *uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudhāhṛtaḥ
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ*

But different is the Highest Puruṣa
who is also called the highest Self,
the indestructible Lord
who pervades and supports all three worlds.

18 *yasmātkṣaramatīto'hamakṣarādapi cottamaḥ
ato'smi loke vedeca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ*

Since I go beyond the passing
and I am higher even than the unpassing,
in the world and in the Vedas
I am called Puruṣottama.

19 *yo mānevamasammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam
sa sarvavidbhajati māṃ sarvabhāvena bhārata*

He who knows Me, beyond all delusion,
as the highest spirit, knows everything
and he worships Me with his entire being, o Bhārata.

20 *iti gubhyatamaṃ śāstramidamuktaṃ mayānagha
etadbuddhvā buddhimānsyātkṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata*

I have hereby taught you, o Sinless one,
the most secret of knowledge.
Knowing that, a man attains wisdom, o Bhārata,
and all his duties are fulfilled.

Chapter Sixteen

1 *śrībhagavān uvāca*

*abhayaṃ sattvaśuddhirjñānayogavyavasthitih
dānaṃ damaśca yajñāśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavam*

The Almighty Lord said:

Fearlessness, purity of heart,
steadiness in knowledge and yoga;
generosity, self-control, adoration,
study of scriptures, austerity, honesty,

2 *ahiṃsā satyamakrodhastyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam
dayā bhūteṣvaloluptvaṃ mārdaṃ hrīracāpalam*

nonviolence, truthfulness, composure,
renunciation, tranquility, harmlessness,
mercy, generosity, gentleness, humility,
determination,

3 *tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucamadroho nātimānitā
bhavanti sampadam daivīmabhijātasya bhārata*

forcefulness, forgiveness, will, purity,
absence of hatred, absence of pride.
Those are the qualities of a man
whose nature is Divine, o Bhārata.

4 *dambho darpo'bhimānaśca krodhaḥ pāruṣyameva ca
ajñānaṃ cābhijātasya pārtha sampadamāsurīm*

Hypocrisy, haughtiness and arrogance,
anger, as well as roughness and ignorance
are the qualities of a man of demonic nature, o Pārtha.

5 *daiivī sampadvimokṣāya nibandhāyāsuri matā
mā śucaḥ sampadam daivīmabhijāto'si pāṇḍava*

The Divine nature leads to liberation,
while the demonic leads to enslavement.
But fear not, o son of Pāṇḍu,
for your nature is Divine.

- 6 *dvau bhūtasargau loke'smindaiva āsura eva ca
daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu*

In this world, there are two kinds of beings,
the Divine and the demonic.
About the Divine we spoke in length.
Hear therefore, o Pārtha,
from Me now about the demonic.

- 7 *pravṛttiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca janā na vidurāsuraḥ
na śaucaṃ nāpi cācāro na satyaṃ teṣu vidyate*

The demonic people know
neither the activity nor the inactivity.
They are void of purity, virtue and truth.

- 8 *asatyamapraṭiṣṭham te jagadāhuranīśvaram
aparaspārasambhūtam kimanyatkāmahaitukam*

They say:
“The universe is unreal, without foundation, without God,
born from the unity of male and female principle,
created from lust, that is all.”

- 9 *etāṃ dr̥ṣṭimavaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno'lpabuddhayaḥ
prabhavantyuḡrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ*

Advocating such opinions,
those lost souls, of limited mind,
as the enemies of the world perform cruel deeds,
directed at the destruction of all.

- 10 *kāmamāśritya duṣpūram dambhamānamadānvitāḥ
mohādgr̥hītvāsadgrāhānpravartante'sucivratāḥ*

Filled with unquenchable desires,
hypocritical, arrogant and insolent,
out of delusion they defend lies
and act from unclean motives.

11 *cintāmaparimeyāṃ ca pralayāntāmupāśritāḥ
kāmapabhogaparamā etāvaditi niścītāḥ*

Preoccupied with endless worries,
interrupted only by death,
they see the highest goal in enjoyment,
thinking that to be all.

12 *āsāpāśaśatairbaddhāḥ kāmakrodhaparāyanāḥ
ihante kāmabhogārthamanyāyenārthasañcayān*

Bound by hundreds of shackles of hope,
dedicated to lust and anger,
they amass treasure in an impure manner
in order to gain sensual pleasure.

13 *idamadya mayā labdhamimaṃ prāpsyē manoratham
idamastīdamapi me bhaviṣyati punardhanam*

“This I have earned today,
this desire I will fulfill,
this treasure belongs to me,
and that will be mine tomorrow.”

14 *asau mayā hataḥ śatrurhaniṣyē cāparānapi
īśvaro’hamahaṃ bhogī siddho’haṃ balavānsukhī*

“This enemy I have killed,
and others I will kill as well.
I am the master, I enjoy,
I am successful, mighty and happy.”

15 *ādhyo’bhijanavānasmi ko’nyo’sti sadṛśo mayā
yakṣye dāsyāmi modiṣya ityajñānavimohitāḥ*

“I am wealthy and of noble birth.
None is my equal. I will sacrifice,
I will give charity, I will enjoy.”
Thus deluded, because of ignorance,

16 *anekacittavibhrāntā mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narakeśucāu*

seduced by endless imagination,
entangled in a web of illusions,
dependent on the gratification of passions,
they fall into a filthy hell.

17 *ātmasambhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhanamānamadānvitāḥ
yajante nāmayajñāiste dambhenāvidhipūrvakam*

Egotistical, stubborn, vain and intoxicated by treasure,
they perform sacrifice in words alone,
hypocritically, contradicting the scriptures.

18 *ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṃ kāmam krodham ca saṃśritāḥ
māmātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyasūyakāḥ*

Devoted to ego, force, arrogance, lust and anger,
those evil men despise Me in their own
and in the other people's bodies.

19 *tānaḥam dviṣataḥ krurānsaṃsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmyajasramaśubhānāsuriṣveva yoniṣu*

Them, who are full of hatred,
the worst of men, and evil,
I always cast into the wombs of demons.

20 *āsurīm yonimāpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani
māmāprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yāntyadhamam gatim*

Entering the wombs of demons, they, blinded,
from birth to birth never reach Me,
o son of Kuntī, and fall lower still.

21 *trividhaṃ narakasyedaṃ dvāraṃ nāśanamātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhastathā lobhastasmādetattrayaṃ tyajet*

Three are the gates of hell,
leading the soul to ruin:
desire, anger and greed.
Therefore beware of those three.

22 *etaivimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvāraistribhiraḥ
ācaratyātmanaḥ śreyastato yāti parāṃ gatim*

He who is free from them,
the three gates of darkness, o son of Kuntī,
does good to himself,
and reaches the highest goal.

23 *yaḥ śāstravidhimutsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
na sa siddhimavāpnoti na sukhaṃ na parāṃ gatim*

He who ignores the instructions of the holy scriptures,
and acts under the guidance of desires,
he fails to attain either perfection,
or happiness, or the highest purpose of activity.

24 *tasmācchāstraṃ pramāṇaṃ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstravidhānoktaṃ karma kartumihārhasi*

The scriptures are, therefore, the criterion of that
which is to be done, and that which is not to be done.
Know your duty, described in the scriptures,
and act accordingly.

Chapter Seventeen

1 *arjuna uvāca*

*ye śāstravidhimutsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ*

Arjuna said:

The believer who offers sacrifice
but neglects the instructions of the scriptures;
is he in sattva, rajas or tamas, o Kṛṣṇa?
What is his condition?

2 *śrībhagavān uvāca*

*trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṃ sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tāṃ śṛṇu*

The Almighty Lord said:

Three are the forms of religion
of the embodied beings:
sattvic, rajasic and tamasic.
Hear now, what I am about to tell you
about these.

3 *sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata
śraddhāmāyo'yaṃ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*

Everyone's religion is according to his nature, o Bhārata.
Whatever a man's nature, such is also his religion.

4 *yajante sāttvikā devānyakṣarakṣāṃsi rājasāḥ
pretānbhūtagaṇāṃścānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ*

Sattvic people worship gods,
the rajasic worship demons and evil spirits,
while the tamasic worship apparitions and ghosts.

5 *aśāstravīhitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhankārasamyuktāḥ kāmarāgabalanvitāḥ*

They who, devoted to hypocrisy and egotism,
perform terrible austerities, unauthorized by the scriptures,
armed with the strength of greed and passion,

6 *karṣayantaḥ śarīrasthaṃ bhūtagrāmamacetasāḥ
māṃ caivāntaḥśarīrasthaṃ tānviddhyāsuraṇiścayān*

in their madness
they weaken all the elements of the body,
and Me who abide in the body.
Know their intent to be demonic.

7 *āhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ
yajñastapastathā dānaṃ teṣāṃ bhedamimaṃ śṛṇu*

Even the food that is to men's liking,
is of three kinds, as well as worship,
penance and charity.

8 *āyuhṣattvabalārogyasukhaprītivivardhanāḥ
rasyāḥ snigdḥāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ*

The food that affirms life, energy,
strength, health, joy and happiness,
which is tasty and greasy,
strong and appetizing,
is dear to the sattvic ones.

9 *kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇatikṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ
āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkhaśokāmayaḥpradāḥ*

The food that is bitter, sour, salty,
too hot, dry and burning,
which causes pain, suffering and disease,
is to the liking of the rajasic ones.

10 *yātayāmaṃ gatarasaṃ pūti paryuṣitaṃ ca yat
ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyaṃ bhojanaṃ tāmasapriyam*

The food that is stale, tasteless,
tainted or rotten, old or impure,
is dear to the tamasic ones.

11 *aphalānkṣibhīryajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya iyyate
yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikah*

Sattvic sacrifice is performed by people
who follow the words of the scriptures
with firm conviction that they only need to worship,
without expecting the results.

12 *abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ dambhārthamāpi caiva yat
iyyate bharaṭaśreṣṭha taṃ yajñam viddhi rājasam*

The sacrifice offered, o best of Bharatas,
for the sake of the fruits,
or for the sake of boasting,
know to be rajasic.

13 *vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṃ mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam
śraddhāvīrahitaṃ yajñam tāmasaṃ paricakṣate*

Tamasic sacrifice is that
which opposes the scriptures,
in which there are no gifts of food,
which is not accompanied by the mantras and gifts
and which is done without faith.

14 *devadvijaguruṃprājñāpūjanam śaucamārjavam
brahmacaryamahimsā ca śārīram tapa ucyate*

Worship of gods, the twice-born,
the teachers and the wise;
purity, honesty, self-control and nonviolence,
are the austerities of body.

15 *anudvegakaram vākyaṃ satyaṃ priyahitam ca yat
svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vānmayam tapa ucyate*

The speech which causes no disturbance,
which is truthful, pleasant and useful,
as well as the regular study of the holy scriptures,
are the austerities of speech.

16 *manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāvasaṃśuddhirityetattapo mānasamucyate*

Tranquility of spirit, lightheartedness, silence,
self-control, and purity of heart
make the austerities of spirit.

17 *śraddhayā parayā taptaṃ tapastattrividhaṃ naraiḥ
aphalākāṅkṣibhiryuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate*

This triple austerity,
applied by a man of devotion and faith,
without expectation of results,
is considered to be sattvic.

18 *satkāramānapūjārthaṃ tapo dambhena caiva yat
kriyate tadiha proktaṃ rājasam calamadhruvam*

The austerity that is performed hypocritically,
with intent of acquiring respect,
honor and fame, is of this world.
It is said to be rajasic,
and is unsteady and unsafe.

19 *mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yatpīdayā kriyate tapaḥ
parasyotsādanārthaṃ vā tattāmasamudāhṛtam*

The austerity which is done
from a lack of understanding,
with self-torture,
or for the sake of destruction of others,
is said to be tamasic.

20 *dātavyamiti yaddānaṃ dīyate'nupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca taddānaṃ sāttvikam smṛtam*

That which is given out of duty,
to him who does not repay,
in an appropriate place,
in the appropriate time,
and to a proper person,
is called sattvic giving.

21 *yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ taddānaṃ rājasam smṛtam*

The giving, which is done in order to be repaid,
for selfish purposes, or with uneasy heart,
is said to be rajasic.

22 *adeśakāle yaddānamapātrebhyaśca dīyate
asatkṛtamavajñātaṃ tattāmasamudāhṛtam*

Giving at the wrong place or time,
to a person who is not worthy,
without respect or with an insult,
is called tamasic.

23 *omtatsaditi nirdeśo brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ
brāhmaṇāstena vedāśca yajñāśca vihitaḥ purā*

Om Tat Sat—that is the triple sign of brahman.
Therefrom, since the times of old,
originate the brāhmaṇas, the Vedas and yajña.

24 *tasmādomityudāhṛtya yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ
pravartante vidhānoktāḥ satataṃ brahmavādinām*

Therefore those, who study brahman,
instructed by the scriptures,
begin the acts of sacrifice, giving and austerity
with an intonation of Om.

25 *tadityanabhisandhāya phalaṃ yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ*

With Tat, without thinking about the results
seekers of liberation perform the acts of worship,
austerity and various forms of giving.

26 *sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sadyetatprayujyate
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate*

The word Sat means existence and virtue.
Also, o Pārtha, the word Sat
designates favorable activity.

27 *yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ saditi cocyate
karma caiva tadarthīyaṃ sadyevābhidhīyate*

Dedication to sacrifice, austerity and giving
is also called Sat.
Even the deeds of that quality are called Sat.

28 *aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapastaptam kṛtam ca yat
asadyucyate pārtha na ca tatprepya no iha*

That which is offered, given and used
as austerity without faith, is called asat, o Pārtha.
It means nothing, in neither this, nor the other world.

Chapter Eighteen

- 1 *arjuna uvāca*
sannyāsasya mahābāho tattvamicchāmi veditum
tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeśa pṛthakkeśiniṣūdana

Arjuna said:

O Mighty-armed, I wish to know the truth
 about abandoning the world and renunciation,
 respectively, o Hṛṣīkeśa, destroyer of Keśi.

- 2 *śrībhagavānuvāca*
kāmyānāṃ karmaṇāṃ nyāsaṃ sannyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyaḡaṃ prāhustyaḡaṃ vicakṣaṇāḥ

The Almighty Lord said:

Renunciation of the activities based on desires
 the wise call sannyāsa.
 Abandoning the fruits of all deeds,
 the wise call tyāga.

- 3 *tyājyaṃ doṣavadityeke karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ*
yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyamiti cāpare

Some thinkers say that activity, as such,
 needs to be renounced as evil.
 Others say that deeds of sacrifice,
 giving and austerity should not be discarded.

- 4 *nīścayaṃ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama*
tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ

Hear now from Me about renunciation,
 o best of Bharatas.
 Renunciation, o best among men,
 indeed manifests in three ways.

- 5 *yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ kāryameva tat*
yajño dānaṃ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām

The deeds of sacrifice, giving and austerity
should not be discarded; they are necessary.
Sacrifice, giving and austerity
purify even the wise.

6 *etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalāni ca
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṃ matamuttamam*

However, even those deeds should be performed
without attachment, abandoning the fruits.
That, o Pārtha, is My firm and highest attitude.

7 *niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate
mohāttasya parityāgastāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*

Indeed, it is not good to abandon one's duty.
Abandoning duty out of delusion
is considered to be tamasic.

8 *duḥkhamityeva yatkarma kāyakleśabhayāttyajet
sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgaṃ naiva tyāgaphalam labhet*

When someone abandons activities
because they are painful
or out of fear of physical hardship,
he performs rajasic renunciation
which brings him no good.

9 *kāryamityeva yatkarma niyataṃ kriyate'ṛjuna
saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ*

When, o Arjuna, the prescribed actions
are performed just because it is proper,
renouncing both attachments and the fruits,
such renunciation is considered sattvic.

10 *na dveṣṭyakuśalam karma kuśale nānuṣajjate
tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnaśaṃśayaḥ*

He who has renounced,
 does not hate the evil deeds,
 nor is he bound to the good ones.
 Saturated by sattva and knowledge,
 he is free from doubts.

11 *na hi dehabhṛtā śakyam tyaktuṃ karmāṅyaśeṣataḥ
 yastu karmaphalatyāgī sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate*

Indeed, for an embodied being
 it is impossible to completely renounce action.
 He who renounces the fruits of action
 is said to be a true renunciate.

12 *aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśram ca trividham karmanah phalam
 bhavatyatyāginām pretya na tu sannyāsinām kvacit*

The triple fruits of action,
 pleasant, unpleasant and mixed,
 inherits after death he who is attached,
 but not the renunciate.

13 *pañcāitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me
 sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām*

And now hear about the five causes,
 o Mighty-armed, of which speaks sāṅkhya,
 in order to achieve perfection in your activities.

14 *adhiṣṭhānam tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham
 vividhāśca pṛthakceṣṭā daivam caivātra pañcamam*

The place of activity, he who acts,
 the various organs of action,
 the various kinds of activity
 and the Divine as the fifth.

15 *śārīravāṅmanobhīryatkarma prārabhate narah
 nyāyayam vā viparītam vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ*

Every form of activity
performed either by body,
speech or mind, be it right or wrong,
is caused by those five.

16 *tatraivaṃ sati kartāramātmānaṃ kevalaṃ tu yaḥ
paśyatyakṛtabuddhitvānna sa paśyati durmatih*

He, therefore, who
because of poor insight
thinks that it is the Self that acts,
is mindless, and does not see the truth.

17 *yasya nāhankṛto bhāvo buddhīryasya na lipyate
hatvā'pi sa imāllokānna hanti na nibadhyate*

He who is free from egotism,
whose mind is unsoiled,
although killing the beings,
he does not kill; he is not attached.

18 *jñānaṃ jñeyam pariñātā trividhā karmacodanā
karaṇam karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasaṅgrahaḥ*

Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and he who knows
are the triple incitement to action.
The organ of action, the activity, and he who acts
are the triple foundations of activity.

19 *jñānaṃ karma ca kartāca tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ
procyate guṇasaṅkhyāne yathāvachchṛṇu tānyapi*

According to the science of guṇas,
the knowledge, the activity and he who acts
exist in three modes, depending on the division of guṇas.
Hear now, what I am about to tell you about them.

20 *sarvabhūteṣu yenaikam bhāvamavyayamīkṣate
avibhaktaṃ vibhakteṣu tajjñānaṃ viddhi sāttvikam*

The knowledge,
which sees the one indestructible reality
in all beings, the undivided in the divided,
know to be sattvic.

21 *pr̥thaktvena tu yajñānaṃ nānābhāvānpr̥thagvidhān
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu tajñānaṃ viddhi rājasam*

The knowledge that, discerning,
sees in all Creation only the various separate beings,
know to be rajasic.

22 *yattu kṛtsnavadekasminkārye saktamahaitukam
atattvārthavadalpaṃ ca tattāmasamudāhṛtam*

But the knowledge, which without warrant
focuses on one phenomenon alone,
as if it were all, which is without real object, and narrow,
is said to be tamasic.

23 *niyataṃ saṅgarahitamaraḡadveṣataḥ kṛtam
aphalaprepsunā karma yattatsāttvikamucyate*

The actions recommended by the scriptures,
free from attachment, performed without love or hatred
by him who does not desire results:
such actions are said to be sattvic.

24 *yattu kāmeḡsunā karma sāhaṅkāreṇa vā puṇaḥ
kriyate bahulāyāsaṃ tadrājasamudāhṛtam*

But the action performed by him who desires pleasures,
or out of egotism and with grave efforts,
is said to be rajasic.

25 *anubandhaṃ kṣayaṃ hiṃsāmanapekṣya ca pauraṣam
mohādārabhyate karma yattattāmasamucyate*

The deeds performed out of illusion,
regardless of the consequences,
loss, injury or ability, are called tamasic.

26 *muktasaṅgo`nahaṃvādī dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ
siddhyasiddhyornirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate*

The man of action who is free
from egotism and attachment,
armed with firmness and energy,
who is not under the influence
of success and lack thereof,
he is said to be sattvic.

27 *rāgī karmaphalaprepsurlubdho hiṃsātmako`śuciḥ
harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*

The man of action, who yearns passionately
for the fruit of action, greedy, cruel and impure,
subject to joy and sorrow, is said to be rajasic.

28 *ayuktaḥ prakṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko`lasaḥ
viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate*

The man of action who is careless,
vulgar, arrogant, deceitful, evil, lazy,
fainthearted and indecisive,
he is said to be tamasic.

29 *buddherbhedam dhṛteścaiva guṇatastrividham śṛṇu
procyamānamaśeṣeṇa pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya*

Hear now, o Dhanañjaya,
how I will describe to you completely and in detail
the triple division of the mind
and persistence according to the guṇas.

30 *pravṛttiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye
bandham mokṣam ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī*

The mind that knows activity and inactivity
and knows what is, and what is not to be done,
that knows fear and absence of fear,
attachment and freedom, is sattvic, o Pārtha.

31 *yayā dharmamadharmaṃ ca kāryaṃ cākāryameva ca
ayathāvatprajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī*

The mind, which does not understand dharma and adharma,
nor that which is, and which is not to be done,
is rajasic, o Pārtha.

32 *adharmaṃ dharmamiti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā
sarvārthānviparītāṃśca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī*

The mind surrounded by darkness,
in which adharma shows as dharma
and all the things upside down,
is tamasic, o Pārtha.

33 *dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥprāṇendriyakriyāḥ
yogenāvyaḥhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī*

The persistence, which originates from the practice of yoga,
and which controls the activities of thought,
breath and sensory organs,
is said to be sattvic, o Pārtha.

34 *yayā tu dharmakāmārthāndhṛtyā dhārayate'ṛjuna
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī*

But the persistence, which firmly binds one
to dharma, pleasures and fortune,
and according to the situation,
to desires and their fruits,
is called rajasic, o Pārtha.

35 *yayā svaṇṇaṃ bhayaṃ śokaṃ viṣādaṃ madameva ca
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī*

The persistence, because of which
a mindless man cannot abandon sleep,
fear, worries, faint-heartedness and passion,
is said to be tamasic, o Pārtha.

36 *sukhaṃ tvidānīṃ trividhaṃ śṛṇu me bhāratarṣabha
abhyāsādramate yatra duḥkhāntaṃ ca nigacchati*

And now hear, o best of Bharatas,
what I am about to tell you about the triple joy,
which originates from practice
and certainly leads to cessation of suffering.

37 *yattadagre viṣamiva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam
tatsukhaṃ sāttvikam proktamātmabuddhiprasādam*

The joy that is like poison in the beginning,
and turns out to be nectar,
which is born from the clear silence
of one's own mind, is said to be sattvic.

38 *viṣayendriyasamyogādyattadagre'mṛtopamam
pariṇāme viṣamiva tatsukhaṃ rājasam smṛtam*

The joy that originates from the touch
of senses and their objects,
which resembles nectar in the beginning,
and turns out to be poison,
is said to be rajasic.

39 *yadagre cānubandhe ca sukhaṃ mohanamātmanaḥ
nidrālasypamādotthaṃ tattāmasamudāhṛtam*

The joy that initially and constantly deludes the soul,
and comes from sleep, laziness and carelessness
is said to be tamasic.

40 *na tadasti pṛthivyāṃ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ
sattvaṃ prakṛtijairmuktaṃ yadebhiḥ syā'ttribhiraṅgaiḥ*

There is no being on earth,
nor in heaven among the gods,
that would be free from those three guṇas
born from Prakṛti.

41 *brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṃ śūdrāṇāṃ ca parantapa
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavaiguṇaiḥ*

The duties of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras,
o Conqueror of enemies, are divided
according to the qualities of activity
according to the guṇas.

42 *śamo damastapaḥ śaucaṃ kṣāntirāṇjavameva ca
jñānaṃ vijñānamāstikiyaṃ brahmakarma svabhāvajam*

Peace, self-control, austerity, purity, forgiveness,
as well as honor, knowledge, wisdom and faith
are the natural duties of brāhmaṇas.

43 *śauryaṃ tejo dhṛtirdākṣyaṃ yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam
dānamīśvarabhāvaśca kṣātraṃ karma svabhāvajam*

Courage, excellence, firmness, skill,
persistence in battle, generosity and dignity
are the natural duties of kṣatriyas.

44 *kṣīgaurakṣyavāṇijyaṃ viaśyakarma svabhāvajam
paricaryātmakaṃ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam*

Agriculture, cattle breeding and trade
are the natural duties of vaiśyas.
The natural duty of śūdras is service.

45 *sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ
svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṃ yathā vindati tacchṛṇu*

Dedicated to his duty,
each man achieves perfection.
Hear now, how he, dedicated to his duty,
attains perfection.

46 *yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṃ yena sarvamidam tatam
svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavah*

A man attains perfection
when in his duties he celebrates Him
who is the cause of evolution of beings
and who pervades all this.

47 *śreyānsvadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt
svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam*

Better is one's own dharma without merit,
than a great success in another's dharma.
Performing the natural, prescribed duty,
a man makes no mistakes.

48 *sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣamāpi na tyajet
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnirivāvṛtāḥ*

A man should not abandon his duty,
o son of Kuntī, with which he was born,
however flawed it might be.
For all without exception is surrounded by flaw,
like fire with smoke.

49 *asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jītātmā vigataspr̥haḥ
naiṣkarmyasiddhiṁ paramāṁ sannyāsenādhiḡacchati*

He, whose mind is attached to nothing,
whose reason is under control,
whose desires have left him,
attains the highest state of freedom
from activity in renunciation.

50 *siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me
samāsenaiḡa kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā*

Hear now, o son of Kuntī, in brief
from Me about the way in which he,
who attained perfection, reaches brahman,
which is the fullness of knowledge.

51 *buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānaṁ niyamya ca
śabdādīnviṣayāṁstyaktvā rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca*

Armed with a pure mind, controlling himself firmly,
abandoning the sound and other sensory objects,
abandoning love and hate,

52 *viviktasevī laghvāśī yata-vākkāyamānasah
dhyānayogaparo nityaṃ vairāgyaṃ samupāśritaḥ*

abiding in solitude, eating little,
controlling speech, body and mind,
dedicated to meditation and yoga,
equipped with lack of passion,

53 *ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṃ kāmaṃ krodhaṃ pari-gra-ham
vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate*

abandoning egotism, strength,
arrogance, desire, anger, property,
free from the concept of possession, and calm,
he is ready to become brahman.

54 *brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṃ labhate parām*

Having become brahman, with calmed Self,
he neither yearns nor mourns,
he is the same to all beings,
and thus lives the highest devotion to Me.

55 *bhaktiā māmabhijānāti yāvānyaścāsmi tattvataḥ
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram*

With devotion he truly knows Me, as I truly am.
Then, knowing Me truly, he immediately enters Me.

56 *sarvakarmāṇyapi sadā kurvāṇo madvya-pāśrayaḥ
matprasādādavāpnoti śāśvataṃ padamavyayam*

Constantly acting in all kinds of ways,
finding refuge in Me, by My grace
he attains the eternal, unpassing abode.

57 *cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ
buddhiyogamupāśritya maccittaḥ satatam bhava*

Discerning, surrender all actions to Me,
observe Me as the Highest,
dedicate yourself to the yoga of realization,
and focus your heart on Me.

58 *maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasādāttariṣyasi
atha cettvamahaṅkārāṇna śroṣyasi vinaiṅkṣyasi*

Having made your heart firm in Me,
you will, by My grace, overcome all obstacles.
However, if because of egotism
you fail to listen to My word, you are lost.

59 *yadahaṅkāramāśritya na yotsya iti manyase
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste prakṛtistvām niyokṣyati*

If you adhere to egotism and think “I shall not fight,”
futile is your decision; your nature will force you.

60 *svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā
kartuṃ necchasi yanmohātkariṣyasyavaśopi tat*

That which now, o son of Kuntī,
from delusion you wish not to do,
you shall do still, even against your will,
driven by your own nature.

61 *īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ hṛddeśe’rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayaṅsarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

The Lord abides in the hearts of all beings, o Arjuna.
With His māyā, He controls all beings,
like puppets on the strings.

62 *tameva śaraṇam gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata
tatprasādātparaṃ śāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam*

To Him, o Bhārata, surrender your entire being.
With His grace, you shall achieve the highest peace
and the eternal abode.

63 *iti te jñānamākhyātam guhyādgubhyataram mayā
vimṛśyaitadaśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru*

I have hereby revealed to you
the most secret knowledge.
Think about it in detail, and do as you like.

64 *sarvagubhyatamam bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ
iṣṭo'si me dṛḍhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*

Hear again My highest word,
the most secret of secrets.
You are My dearest friend,
and I therefore tell you the highest good.

65 *manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṃ namaskuru
māmevaiśyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo'si me*

Onto Me focus your thoughts, be devoted to Me,
sacrifice to Me and thus shall you reach Me.
That is the truth that I reveal to you,
for you are dear to Me.

66 *sarvadharmānparityajya māmekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja
ahaṃ tvāṃ sarvapāpebhyo mokṣyayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

Abandon the idea of right activity,
and seek Me as your only refuge.
Do not worry, for I will free you from all sin.

67 *idaṃ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyam na ca māṃ yo'bhyasūyati*

You are never to explain this to him
who is not engaged in austere penance,
to him who is not devoted to Me,
to him who does not serve,
nor to him who insults Me.

68 *ya idaṃ paramaṃ guhyaṃ madbhakteṣvabhīdhāsyati
bhaktiṃ mayi parāṃ kṛtvā māmevaiṣyatyasaṃśayaḥ*

He who, entirely devoted to Me,
tells this high secret to My bhaktas,
will undoubtedly come to Me.

69 *na ca tasmānmanuṣyeṣu kaścinme priyakṛttamaḥ
bhavitā na ca me tasmādanyaḥ priyataro bhūvi*

Among the people there is none
who can do Me greater service than him,
nor will there on earth be anyone dearer to Me.

70 *adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṃvādamāvayoḥ
jñānayaājñena tenāhamiṣṭaḥ syāmiti me matiḥ*

With sacrifice of knowledge, I am worshiped by him,
who studies this holy conversation.

71 *śraddhāvānanasūyaśca śṛṇuyādapi yo naraḥ
so'pi muktaḥ śubhāḷlokānprāpnuyātpuṇyakarmaṇām*

Also, a man who listens,
full of faith and without blasphemy,
even he, liberated, shall attain
the happy worlds of the righteous.

72 *kaccidetacchrutam pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā
kaccidajñānasammohaḥ pranaṣṭaste dhanañjaya*

Have you, o Pārtha, heard this with calm spirit?
Is your illusion, conditioned by ignorance,
dispelled, o Dhanañjaya?

73 *arjuna uvāca
naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā tvatprasādānmayācyuta
sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava*

Arjuna said:

Dispelled is my illusion,
and by Your grace, o Acyuta,
I have attained realization.
I am firm, and my doubts have disappeared.
I will act according to Your word.

74 *sañjaya uvāca*

*ityahaṃ vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanah
saṃvādamimamaśrauṣamadbhutaṃ romaharṣaṇam*

Sañjaya said:

I have thus heard this wonderful conversation
of Vāsudeva and the noble son of Pṛthā,
which raises the hair on my head.

75 *vyāsaprasādācchrutavānetadguhyaṃ param
yogaṃ yogeśvarātkṛṣṇātsākṣātkathayataḥ svayam*

By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard Kṛṣṇa,
the Lord of yoga, himself, directly,
revealing this highest and the most secret yoga.

76 *rājansaṃsmṛtya saṃsmṛtya saṃvādamimamadbhutam
keśavarjunayoḥ puṇyaṃ hr̥ṣyāmi ca muhurmuḥuḥ*

O king, whenever I recall this wonderful,
holy conversation between Keśava and Arjuna,
I rejoice, again and again.

77 *tacca saṃsmṛtya saṃsmṛtya rūpamatyadbhutaṃ hareḥ
vismayo me mahān rājanhr̥ṣyāmi ca puṇaḥ puṇaḥ*

And whenever I recall the marvelous form of Hari,
great is my admiration, o king,
and I rejoice again and again.

78 *yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ
tatra śrīvijayo bhūtirdhruvā nīrmatirmama*

Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of yoga,
wherever there is Pārtha, the bearer of the bow,
there, I think, is the abode of happiness,
victory, abundance and order.

Glossary of Terms*

A

adharma – Injustice, disharmony, a spiritual orientation opposite to the natural order. *See also* dharma. **1:40–41, 4:7, 18:31–32**

adhyātma – A being’s personal inner self, often used in the sense of Self-contemplation. **8:3, 11:1**

ahañkāra – Ego, or an attitude “I act.” *See also* mamatā. **2:71–72, 3:27 136, 3:37, 7:4, 13:6**

amṛta – Vedic nectar of immortality, in yogic terminology often synonymous with soma. *See* soma. **4:29, 10:18, 10:22, 10:27**

anāhata – “Invulnerable,” the heart cakras. *See also* cakra. **1:38–39, 2:1, 3:5, 4:13, 1:39**

anitya – The unreal, that which does not exist in reality; an illusion. *See also* nitya. **4:40**

apāna – A downward, eliminating energetic current. *See also* prāṇa; prāṇāpāna. **4:29, 5:27, 15:14**

* This glossary lists the less-known terms used in this book. *See* references point to the synonyms or to the more detailed division of term; *see also* references point to relevant terms. *See* references listed in italic exist only in the glossary of names. The number before the colon is the number of chapter from *Bhagavad-gītā*, and numbers after the colon are verse numbers. Bold references give either a definition or substantial information on a term. References are selective.

apsarasas – Divine beings of a lower order, similar in qualities to fairies. They are most often mentioned together with gandharvas, to whom they are a female counterpart. *See also* gandharvas. *Ādiparvan n. 14*

asat – Unreal, that which possesses no reality, or being (sat). *See also* sat. *17:28*

astral – One of the fundamental levels of reality within the created world; a level of reality which defines the substance of name and form, or limitation. The term is most commonly used to denote the level of thoughts and feelings; in Vedānta, this level is referred to as “sūkṣma,” subtle. *See also* levels of consciousness. *2:1, 2:43, 2:51, 3:5–6, 3:40–42, 4:7, 9:20–21, 15:7, 15:9, 16:11*

asuras – Demonic mythological beings that oppose devas, the highest family of demons. In early Vedic times they were originally another class of gods, not necessarily evil; only later did they attain their more demonic role. *See also* rākṣasas; Dānavas. *Ādiparvan n. 10, 9:12, 10:14, 10:24, 11:22*

avatāra – “He who descends.” God who obtains human form, godman. The term is partially applicable to any appearance of a being of a higher level on a lower level of reality, where such a being represents an uplifting force, but in the narrow meaning, it denotes only the incarnation of Īśvara. *2:55–56, 3:5, 4:6, 8:15, 9:11, 11:3*

avyakta – That which is unmanifested. *2:28, 7:24, 9:4, 12:1–5, 13:6*

Ā

Ādityas – A class of solar deities, sons of Aditi, goddess of endless sky. *See also* Daityas. *10:21, 11:6, 11:22*

ājñā – The brow cakra, cakra of insight. *See also* cakras. *Vanaparvan n. 78, 2:1, 3:5, 4:13, 8:10, 8:12*

ānanda – Bliss; one of the fundamental Divine aspects. *See also* sat-cit-ānanda. *2:43, 5:23, 17:23, 18:37*

āśramas – (1) The periods of life (brahmacarya, gr̥hastha, sannyāsa and vānaprastha). Brahmacarya is a period of discipleship, followed by the duties of a family man (gr̥hastha), completing which a man discards worldly duties and dedicates himself to spirituality (sannyāsa), to leave for a forest retreat (vānaprastha)

in order to leave the body in yogic meditation. (2) A convent where guru and disciples live. **4:13**

āsana – Posture, a steady position of the body in yogic contemplation. One of the eight limbs of yoga. See *padmāsana*; *siddhāsana*. See also eight limbs of yoga. **6:11**

Ātman – Self. The term was initially used to denote “soul,” to obtain a somewhat different meaning in the Upaniṣads, in the light of understanding unity of the personal self and brahman. See also brahman, *jīvātman*. **2:20, 2:24, 2:30, 2:41, 2:55–58, 2:72, 6:3, 6:21, 7:2**

ātmic level (nirvāṇic level) – One of the highest levels of relative existence, or the subtlety of consciousness, a level on which the Divine principle of Puruṣa in its manifestation through Prakṛti divides into male and female, Śiva and Śakti. On this level, the highest aspects of the soul gender are defined, of which the physical gender is but a partial reflection. See also levels of consciousness; Śiva; Śakti. **3:5, 8:22, 14:26**

B

baghi (*vamana dhauti*) – “Tiger,” one of the *ṣaṭkarmas*, a *kriyā* for purifying the body, known in *haṭha-yoga*. Consists of vomiting undigested remainders of food in order to relieve the digestive system. See also *ṣaṭkarmas*. **4:29**

banyan – Indian tree, characterized by its spectacular aerial roots, which grow down from the branches or from prop roots to take root in the soil. Lat. *Ficus benghalensis*. **10:26, 15:1–4**

basic meditation – One of *darśana-yoga* techniques. Basic meditation is described in the book *A Yogi Approach*, as well as on the Internet, on the address <http://www.danijel.org>. See also *darśana-yoga*. **4:29**

basti – One of the *ṣaṭkarmas*, a *kriyā* for purifying the body, known in *haṭha-yoga*. Consists of cleaning the rectum by drawing water in. See also *ṣaṭkarmas*. **4:29**

Bhagavān – See Śrī Bhagavān.

bhakta – He who is founded in *bhakti*. See also *bhakti*. **4:3, 9:1–2, 10:10–11, 13:19**

bhakti – Devotion to God, devoted worship and service; acquiring the qualities of the object of admiration. See also *bhakta*. **4:3**

- brahmacarya** – One of the four periods of life (āśramas), a period of discipleship spent in religious studies. Often synonymous with celibacy. *See* āśramas. **4:13, 6:14**
- Brahmaloka** – A world, or the state of brahman, known in yoga as the nirvikalpa samādhi. *See* nirvikalpa samādhi. *See also* samādhi, loka, Svargaloka. **8:16**
- brahman** – Absolute, the fundamental reality. *See* Brahmā. *See also* Ātman. **2:42–43, 2:46, 2:58, 2:72, 3:5, 3:28, 4:24–25, 5:10, 5:19–24, 6:5, 6:20–21, 6:27–30, 7:3, 7:6, 8:3, 8:20, 9:9, 10:5, 12:1–5, 13:5, 13:13, 13:15–17, 14:27, 17:23–24**
- Brahmā** – Forefather of the universe, the being who created the physical world. *See* brahman; *Viśvakarman*. *See also* Viṣṇu; Śiva. *Ādīparvan n. 12, 3:10 n. 131, 3:15, 8:16*
- brahmā nāḍī** – “The channel of Brahmā,” another name for suṣumnā. *See* suṣumnā. **4:29**
- brahmā-nirvāṇa** – “Extinction in brahman,” cessation of false identification with anything other than the highest reality. *See also* brahman; nirvāṇa. **2:72**
- brāhmaṇas** – Members of the brāhmaṇa caste. *See also* castes. **1:40, 4:13, 10:35, 18:41–42, 18:44**
- buddhi** – The higher mind, above intellect (manas). *See also* manas. **7:4, 13:6**

C

- cakras** – Energetic centers, points of correspondence with the higher levels of reality materialized within the physical or other energetic bodies of a being. Most often mentioned are the mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddha, ājñā and sahasrāra, the cakras associated with the main levels of reality. Beside them, there is a number of smaller, specialized centers in the body, that are sometimes mentioned. *See* mūlādhāra; svādhiṣṭhāna; maṇipūra; anāhata; viśuddha; ājñā; sahasrāra. **1:38–39, 2:1, 2:58, 3:5, 4:13, 6:39, 8:12**
- castes** – Hereditary social classes stratified according to religious purity. *See* śūdras; vaiśyas; kṣatriyas; brāhmaṇas. **1:40–44, 3:35, 4:13, 18:41–44**
- causal** – The level of causality, one of the fundamental levels of reality within the created world. The layers within this level

correspond with viśuddha, ājñā and sahasrāra cakras. *See also* levels of consciousness. 2:1, 2:43, 2:51, 3:5, 8:22

cit – The principle of consciousness, one of the fundamental Divine attributes. 2:43, 5:23, 17:23

citta – A thought-substance, substance of which the mind and thoughts are made. *See also* vṛtti, citta-vṛtti-nirodha. 18:33

citta-vṛtti-nirodha – Cessation of the rotations of mind. *See also* citta; vṛtti; nirodha. 18:33

D

Daityas – Early giants who warred against the gods, descendants of earth-goddess Diti. Titans in Greek mythology. 10:30

darśana – A vision of God, or a direct insight of the Divine. Often used in meaning of sight of a holy person. 2:58, 5:28, 6:14

darśana-yoga – A yogic system which teaches union with God attained through Divine vision, or, in other words, acquiring the Divine qualities through insight. For more information visit <http://www.danijel.org> and <http://www.darsanayoga.hr>. *See also:* basic meditation; resonance; upstream kriyā; inner space technique. 2:58, 4:27, 4:29

Dānavas – Sons of Danu, a class of demons that oppose devas. *See also* asuras; rākṣasas. *Sabhāparvan, Vanaparvan*

devas – Deities, gods, most often of the astral plane. Also the gods of the elements of Nature. Superhuman beings trusted with governing the world in its diverse aspects; they are mostly bearers of the principles of order and harmony. In Vedic mythology often depicted fighting the asuras, the forces of disarray and disharmony. *Ādiparvan n. 15, 1:23, 10:14, 10:22, 10:24, 11:52 n. 167*

dharma – Principle of order, or harmony; righteousness. Dharma is a state in which the will of God is implemented in the world. Also the observation of the implementation of God's will. *See Dharma. See also* adharma. *Ādiparvan n. 7, 1:12, 1:40–41, 2:31–33, 2:50, 3:35, 4:7–8, 4:12, 6:40, 6:42, 11:18, 18:47*

dhāraṇā – Concentration of consciousness on an object, one of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. 9:25

dhyāna – Meditation, a state of pure consciousness. One of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. 9:25

dvāpara-yuga – One of the four ages of the world, in which only one half of dharma is present. *See also* yugas. **8:17**

E

eight limbs of yoga – Discussed in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, they are: yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi. *See* yama; niyama; āsana; prāṇāyāma; pratyāhāra; dhāraṇā; dhyāna; samādhi. **2:16, 4:29, 6:12, 9:25**

G

gandharvas – Heavenly beings associated with musical skills, most often mentioned with their female counterparts, apsarasas. *See also* apsarasas. *Ādīparvan n. 13, 10:26, 11:22*

Gāyatrī – Vedic mantra said to contain the essence of all Vedas. *See also* mantras. **10:35**

gṛhastha – One of the four periods of life (āśramas), a period spent in family duties. *See* āśramas. **4:13**

guṇas – The three fundamental modes of Prakṛti: sattva, rajas and tamas. *See* sattva; rajas; tamas. **2:45, 3:5, 3:7, 3:37, 4:7, 4:29, 13:22, 14:5–25, 18:4, 18:7–9**

guru – Teacher, a person who has attained enlightenment, and has the ability to lead others thereto. **3:6, 4:29**

I

iḍā – “Lunar,” the cool energetic channel. One of three main nāḍīs. *See also* nāḍīs; piṅgalā; suṣumnā. **4:29**

Indra – Vedic king of the devas, also the god of thunder. **10:22**

inner space technique – One of the darśana-yoga techniques. Inner space technique is described in the book *A Yogi Approach*, as well as on the Internet, at <http://www.danijel.org>. *See also* darśana-yoga. **2:16, 3:6, 4:29**

Ī

Īśvara – God, Almighty, literally “Lord.” *See* Puruṣottama. **2:2 n. 112, 3:5, 3:22, 4:14, 7:2, 10:3–6, 12:1–2, 14:26–27**

J

- japa** – Mental, silent or loud repetition of mantra. *10:25*
jīva – A living being. *15:7*
jīvanmukta – He who during life attained liberation (mukti, or mokṣa). *5:28*
jīvanmukti – Liberation attained during life in a body. *5:19*
jīvātman – The self of a living being (jīvan). *See also Ātman. 8:3*
jñāna – Wisdom, or realization. *4:37*

K

- kali-yuga** – One of the four ages of the world, in which virtue is reduced to a quarter. *See also yugas. 8:17*
kalpa – Another name for the day of Brahmā, which lasts thousand mahā-yugas. *See also mahā-yuga; yugas. 8:17, 9:7–8*
kapālabhātī – One of the ṣaṭkarmas of haṭha-yoga, consisting of forceful exhalation and passive inhalation, using only abdominal breathing. Very similar to bhastrika prāṇāyāma. *See also ṣaṭkarmas. 4:29*
karma (karman) – Action, deed. Also attachment to activity, and the fruits thereof. A general name for the sphere of activity. *2:50, 2:72, 4:15, 5:5, 6:6, 6:17, 8:3, 9:2–3, 13:25*
karma-kāṇḍa – “That which deals with sacrifice of activity,” the Vedas. Śruti are called karma-kāṇḍa, while the Upaniṣads are called jñāna-kāṇḍa, “that which deals with sacrifice of knowledge/wisdom.” *See also jñāna. 4:32*
karma-yoga – Yoga of action; implementation of the principles of yoga through activity. *4:15, 5:5, 13:25*
kevala kumbhaka – A form of retention of breath (kumbhaka) which leads to liberation (kaivalya). *See also prāṇāyāma. 4:29*
khecarī mudrā – A state of the energetic system where the tongue spontaneously raises backwards to touch the soft palate, re-directing several major energetic systems in a way that, as one side effect, stops breathing in kevala kumbhaka prāṇāyāma, and also infuses the body with the nectar of higher energy (soma). *See also mudrā, kevala kumbhaka. 4:29*
kriyā – “That which is performed,” practice, exercise. A general word for yogic practice. *See also upstream kriyā. 4:27*

- kṛta-yuga** (satya-yuga) – One of the four ages of the world, in which virtue is present in fullness. *See also* yugas. 8:17
- kṣatriyas** – The class of warriors. *See also* castes. *Ādiparvan n. 8, Virāṭaparvan, 1:12, 1:40, 2:31–32, 3:37, 4:13, 18:41, 18:43–44*
- kumbhaka** – Retention of breath. 4:29
- kuṇḍalinī** – The energy of life, the vital principle of beings. 2:58, 3:6, 10:29
- kuśa grass** – *Poa cynosuroides*, a plant attributed with beneficial qualities; probably possesses some quality of isolation from the earth currents, used for the seats on which the yogīs meditate. 6:11

L

- levels of consciousness** – *See* matter; prāṇa; astral; mental; causal; ātmic level; paranirvāṇic level. 2:1, 3:5, 4:7
- loka** – “Place,” “location,” “world.” *See also* Brahmaloḥka, Svargaloka. 8:16, 9:21

M

- maharṣi** – “A great sage.” 10:6, 10:25, 11:21
- mahā-yuga** – A period of four yugas. *See* yugas; kalpa. 8:17
- mamatā** – A principle of ownership, “I own.” One of the fundamental qualities of ego. *See also* ahaṅkāra. 2:71
- maṇipūra** – “The city of pearls.” The third cakra, of the solar plexus. The cakra of the astral body, of intellect (manas) and the lower ego. *See also* cakras. 2:1, 3:5, 4:13
- manas** – Mind, the discriminative intellect, Lat. *mens*. *See also* buddhi. 7:4, 13:6
- mantras** – Words of power, founded in reality and having the power to influence reality. The mantras can be roughly divided into those that act by sound and those that act by meaning. *See* Om; Gāyatrī; Om Tat Sat. 4:27, 7:8
- Manu** – Forefather of mankind, most often the first of the species, or a lawmaker; Manu is he who breaks the ice, and who is followed by others. 10:6
- maruts** (Rudras) – The stormy gods, sons of Rudra and companions of Indra. *See* Rudras. 10:21, 11:6, 11:22

- matter** – Gross physical matter, substance of the physical universe. *See also* levels of consciousness. **3:5**, **3:28**, **4:7**, **14:3**, **15:8**, **16:11**
- mātra** – Greek: metron, measure. In prāṇāyāmas mātra denotes a unit of time that determines the duration of the exercises. The most frequent mātra is a heartbeat, or a time necessary to say a certain word. *See also* pūraka-kumbhaka-recaka prāṇāyāma. **4:29**, **4:29 n. 146**
- māyā** – A term originally used to denote the creative power of the gods, to later mean the power of illusion, and in the age of Upaniṣads it denotes the illusion of the world, which presents the undivided brahman as the multitude of the manifested world. **2:41**, **11:7**, **18:61**
- māyāvādī** – Advocate of the theory that all is māyā, a pejorative name for the philosophers of advaita. **18:22**
- mental** – A level of reality above astral and below causal. The level of knowledge and love. *See also* levels of consciousness. **3:5**
- mokṣa (mukti)** – Liberation. **4:13**
- mudrā** – A position of hands and fingers, connecting certain energetic points in a way that favors bringing the physical body in correspondence with certain states of consciousness. *See also* khecarī mudrā. **4:29**
- mūlādhāra** – The root cakras. *See* cakras. **2:1**, **3:5**, **4:13**

N

- Nara** – (1) An inactive aspect of Viṣṇu, often identified with Arjuna (as Nārāyaṇa is with Kṛṣṇa). (2) Also the name of a great sage from ancient legends. *See also* Arjuna; Nārāyaṇa. *Ādīparvan, Vanaparvan*
- Naṭarāja** – “The lord of Dance,” a name of Śiva in the aspect of a dancer, dancing a dance of creation and destruction of the world. *See also* Śiva. **3:5**, **15:18**
- naulī** – One of the ṣaṭkarmas of haṭha-yoga, an exercise for the muscles of the abdomen and the nerves of the solar plexus. *See also* ṣaṭkarmas. **4:29**
- nāḍīs** – Energetic channels, conduits. They are located in the prāṇic body and conduct prāṇa to the physical tissues and organs. There is a vast multitude of them, and most often

- mentioned are iḍā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā. *See* iḍā; piṅgalā; suṣumnā. 2:58, 4:27, 4:29, 8:12
- nāgas** – A race of serpent demons; they are supposed to have a human face with serpent-like lower extremities. *See also* *Vāsuki. Ādiparvan n. 53, 10:29*
- Nārāyaṇa** – “The Lord of waters,” “The spirit of God who dwelt upon the face of the waters,” (1) a name of Viṣṇu, often identified with Kṛṣṇa (and mentioned with Nara who is identified with Arjuna). (2) Nārāyaṇas are also the warriors of Kṛṣṇa. *See also* *Kṛṣṇa; Nara. Ādiparvan, 8:17*
- neti** – One of the ṣaṭkarmas of haṭha-yoga, serves the purpose of cleansing the nasal cavity and sinuses. *See also* ṣaṭkarmas. 4:29
- nirodha** – Tranquility. *See also* citta-vṛtti-nirodha. 18:33
- nirvāṇa** – Extinction. *See also* brahma-nirvāṇa. 2:72, 5:24
- nirvāṇic level** – Another name for the ātmic level. *See* ātmic level. *See also* levels of consciousness. 3:5
- nirvikalpa samādhi** – A state of unity between the objective and subjective reality, in which there is only the I Am. *See* Brahmaloaka. *See also* samādhi. 2:72, 8:16
- nitya** – That which is real, which has a foundation in reality. *See also* anitya. 4:40
- niyama** – The principles to be upheld (śauca, saṁtoṣa, tapasya, svādhyāya, Īsvara-praṇidhāna), one of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. 4:29, 6:12

O

- Om** (oṃkāra, praṇava) – “Ommmm...,” the fundamental vibration of the created world. Oṃkāra, or praṇava japa, is pronunciation of the resonant sound of “om.” *See also* mantras. 17:24
- Om Tat Sat** – The mantra that originates from the Absolute consciousness; if we were to translate it, its meaning would be “He, The Almighty, is That Reality.” *See also* mantras. 5:16, 17:23–27

P

- padmāsana** – The lotus posture, one of the main āsanas recommended in yogic practices. *See also* āsana; siddhāsana. 6:13

- paranirvāṇic level** – A level of reality above the ātmic level, in the transition between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. *See also* levels of consciousness. **3:5**
- piṅgalā** (sūrya nāḍī) – The hot, solar nāḍī of the right nostril. *See* sūrya nāḍī. *See also* nāḍīs; idā; suṣumnā. **4:29**
- piśācas** – A class of ogre-demons of yellowish appearance, known for their fondness for flesh. *Ādiparvan n. 53*
- Prakṛti** – Nature, the passive created principle, which contains the answers to “how,” but has no answers to “why.” Puruṣa, however, gives the answers to “why,” but finds out “how” through association with Prakṛti. *See also* Puruṣa. **3:5, 3:24, 3:27–28, 4:7, 7:6, 8:4, 8:8, 9:10, 11:6, 13:20–22, 13:24–25, 14:2–5, 15:2, 15:7, 15:16**
- pralaya** – Great destruction at the end of the world. **3:24, 8:17**
- praṇava** – *See* Om. **7:8, 8:13**
- pratyāhāra** – Abandoning the association between consciousness and objects; one of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. **9:25**
- prāṇa** – Energy, the subtle level of the material world, which is often regarded as a separate level, between matter and astral. *See also* levels of consciousness; prāṇāpāna; apāna. **2:1, 3:5, 3:42, 4:29**
- prāṇāpāna** – A state of unity of ascending and descending energy in the body. *See also* prāṇa; apāna. **4:29**
- prāṇāyāma** – The techniques of breath control, used in order to achieve psychic changes. One of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga, pūraka-kumbhaka-recaka prāṇāyāma. **4:29**
- Puruṣa** – Spiritual aspect of the world, a relative perspective of the Divine. *See also* Prakṛti; Puruṣottama. **2:1, 3:5, 3:27–28, 4:7, 7:6, 8:4, 8:21–22, 10:15, 11:9, 11:38, 13:20–23, 14:2–3, 14:26–27, 15:4, 15:17–18**
- Puruṣottama** – “Highest Puruṣa,” a name of Īśvara. *See* Īśvara. *See also* Puruṣa. **8:2, 8:16, 10:6, 15:18**
- pūraka** – Inhalation. **4:29**
- pūraka-kumbhaka-recaka prāṇāyāma** – Regulated ratio between inhalation, retention of breath and exhalation. **4:29**
- pūrṇāvatāra** – The complete Divine embodiment, an avatāra of Īśvara who bears the fullness of his power and consciousness. **2:55**

R

rajas – Guṇa of passion, also referred to as the rajo-guṇa. *See also* guṇas. 2:45, 3:5, 4:7, 4:13, 4:29, 14:7, 14:9–10, 14:12, 14:15, 14:17–18, 17:4–6, 17:12, 17:18, 17:21, 18:8, 18:21, 18:24, 18:27, 18:31, 18:34, 18:38, 18:43–44

rākṣasas – Demonic beings of a lower order; evil man-eating spirits of the forests. *See also* asuras; Dānavas. *Ādiparvan n. 35, 9:12, 11:36*

recaka – Exhalation. 4:29

resonance – One of the darśana-yoga techniques. Resonance is described in the book *A Yogi Approach*, as well as on the Internet, at <http://www.danijel.org>. *See also* darśana-yoga. 2:16, 4:29, 10:7

Rudra – “Destroyer,” a name of Śiva in His destructive aspect. *See also* Śiva. *Vanaparvan n. 74, Udyogaparvan, 10:23*

Rudras (maruts) – The stormy gods, sons of Rudra and companions of Indra. *See* maruts. 11:6, 11:22

Ṛ

ṛṣi – A wise man. 2:55, 4:13, 10:13

Ś

Śakti – Female Divine principle, the principle of acting energy and power. *See* Pārvatī; Durgā. *See also* Śiva. 3:5, 4:7, 8:22

śaṅkhaṇḍaprakṣāḷana – One of the śaṅkarmas of haṭha-yoga, consisting of drinking mildly salted water and a series of āsanas, in order to cleanse the digestive tract. *See also* śaṅkarmas. 4:29

Śiva (Rudra, Naṭarāja) – “Kind,” “benevolent,” (1) God in the aspect of destruction and detachment from the worldly, gentle to those who approach him with sincerity, but fierce with those who are offensive. (2) Also the male principle of the ātmic level. (3) Also used to denote the principle of consciousness (where Śakti denotes energy). *See* Rudra; Naṭarāja. *See also* Brahmā; Viṣṇu; Śakti; Pārvatī. 2:2 n. 112, 3:5, 15:18

Śiva Naṭarāja – *See* Naṭarāja.

Śrī Bhagavān – “The Lord Almighty.” 2.2 n. 112

śruti – “That which is heard,” the revealed scriptures. The synonym for the four Vedas (Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva). **2:52, 2:52 n. 122**

śūdras – The lowest caste, physical workers. *See also* castes. **1:40, 4:13, 9:32, 18:41, 18:44**

S

sahasrāra – “A thousand-petalled lotus,” the crown cakra. *See also* cakras. **2:1, 3:5**

saṃsāra – A circle of birth and death driven by attachments to the worldly. **12:7**

saṃskāra – Impression, a construct in the astral body, created by past experience. *See also* vāsanā. **2:16, 3:6**

saṃyama – State of immersion of consciousness into the essence of the observed. **9:25**

samādhi – A state of unity of the objective and the subjective world, the supreme state of yoga. One of eight limbs of yoga. *See* savikalpa samādhi, nirvikalpa samādhi, Brahmaloaka. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. **2:16, 2:58, 2:72, 3:5, 8:16, 9:25, 17:23**

Sanat-kumāra – One of the four Kumāras, who is thought to be the Puruṣa of Earth, the being to whom Earth is the physical body. Kumāra (meaning literally “boy”) denotes the four sons of Brahmā: Sanat-kumāra, Sananda-kumāra, Sanaka-kumāra and Sanātana-kumāra. **3:5**

sannyāsa – (1) One of the four āśramas, a state of renunciation of worldly duties in order to dedicate oneself to spiritual practice; (2) also, the state of spontaneous renunciation of the worldly after the attainment of the spiritual. *See also* āśramas. **4:13, 6:1–2, 18:2**

sannyāsī (sannyāsin) – He who has taken sannyāsa. **6:1–2**

ṣaṭkarmas – “The six practices”; the initial step in haṭha-yoga, which deals with purification of the gross physical body in order to prepare it for the higher energetic practices. Haṭha-yoga is usually seen as a form of gymnastics; however, it was originally conceived as a form of powerful energetic yoga, meant to purify the nāḍīs and awaken the kuṇḍalinī. Its lower practices, such as the ṣaṭkarmas, āsanas and lower prāṇāyāmas, are usually commercialized and falsely presented as yoga in the West. The scriptures that define haṭha-yoga are *Gheraṇḍa*

- samhitā* and *Haṭha-yoga pradīpikā*. See *nauli*; *netī*; *kapāla-bhātī*; *baghi*; *basti*; *śāṅkha-prakṣāḥana*. 4:29
- sat** – The reality; the principle of reality. One of the fundamental Divine aspects. See also *asat*. (*sat-cit-ānanda*) 2:43, 5:23; (*Om Tat Sat*) 5:16, 17:23, 17:26–27
- sat-cit-ānanda** – Being-consciousness-bliss, the state of brahman. 2:43, 5:23, 18:37, 17:23
- sattva** – Guṇa of virtue, also referred to as the *sattvo-guṇa*. See also *guṇas*. 2:45, 3:5, 4:7, 4:13, 14:5–6, 14:9–12, 14:14, 14:18, 17:4, 17:8, 17:11, 17:14–17, 17:20, 18:8, 18:20, 18:23, 18:26, 18:30, 18:33, 18:37
- satya** – The truth; that which has foundations in the reality. 17:26
- satya-yuga** – Another name for *kṛta-yuga*. See: *kṛta-yuga*. See also *yugas*. 8:17
- savikalpa samādhi** – A form of *samādhi* where spirit comes in touch with the Divine, but where still exists a difference between the two. See *samādhi*. 2:72
- sādhu** – He who practices *sādhana* (spiritual practice). 6:1
- Sādhyas** – A class of celestial beings, sons of *Sādhyā*. 11:22
- sāṅkhya** – One of the orthodox philosophical disciplines, preoccupied with analyzing the nature of the world. 2:39, 3:5, 5:5, 13:25
- sāṅkhya-yoga** – Analytical yoga; attainment of yoga through analysis. 3:3, 13:25
- siddha** – A *yogī* who has attained the *siddhis*, or yogic powers. See also *siddhis*. 11:21, 11:36
- siddhāsana** – “The posture of perfection”; one of the main yogic āsanas, similar to the lotus posture, meant to awaken the energy and keep the spine erect. See also *āsana*; *padmāsana*. 6:13
- siddhis** – The yogic powers, or manifestations of the reign of spirit over matter. See also *siddha*. 4:29
- sindhu** – “Ocean.” 4:29
- soma** (*soma rasa*) – The intoxicating subtle nectar produced in the body during higher states of consciousness. See *amṛta*. 4:29, 10:18, 10:22, 10:27
- suṣumnā** (*brahmā nāḍī*) – Central channel of the energetic system. See *brahmā nāḍī*. See also *nāḍis*; *iḍā*; *piṅgalā*. 2:58, 2:67, 4:27, 4:29, 5:27, 8:12
- sūrya nāḍī** – “The solar channel,” another name for *piṅgalā*. See *piṅgalā*. 4:29

- Svargaloka** (Svarga) – “Paradise,” the kingdom of Indra. Opposite of Naraka, “hell.” *See also* loka, Brahmaloaka. **9:21**
- svādhiṣṭhāna** – “Self-support,” the sexual cakra, cakra of prāṇa. *See also* cakras. **2:1, 3:5, 4:13**
- svāmi** – A member of the order of svāmis, whose main vow is sannyāsa. The order of svāmis was founded by Śaṅkarācārya. **2:54**

T

- tamas** – The guṇa of inertia, also referred to as the tamo-guṇa. *See* guṇas. **2:45, 3:5, 4:7, 4:13, 4:29, 14:15, 14:8–10, 14:13, 14:18, 17:4, 17:9–10, 17:13, 17:19, 17:22, 18:7, 18:22, 18:25, 18:28, 18:32, 18:35, 18:39, 18:44**
- tretā-yuga** – One of the four ages of the world, in which three quarters of virtue are present. *See also* yuga. **8:17**
- tyāga** – Renunciation of the fruits of activity. **18:2**

U

- upaniṣad** – Supplements of the Vedas that deal with philosophical concepts and yogic practice, created in more recent times, somewhat before Buddhism. **2:42, 6:5, 10:7**
- upādhi** – “Limitation,” a name for the energetic bodies (the physical and the more subtle ones). Limitation in a sense that the bodies are superimposed on Ātman and limit it into the apparently separate “vessels” observed in the relative sphere. *See also* levels of consciousness. **2:41**
- upstream kriyā** – One of the darśana-yoga techniques. Upstream kriyā is described in the book *A Yogi Approach*, as well as on the Internet, at <http://www.danijel.org>. *See also* darśana-yoga. **2:58, 3:4, 3:6, 4:27, 4:29, 4:29 n. 144, 5:27, 10:7**

V

- vaiśyas** – The caste of merchants and craftsmen. *See also* castes. **1:40, 4:13, 9:32, 18:41, 18:44**
- vajra** – Originally denotes the thunderlike weapon of Indra, which he used to fight the demon Vṛtra. Also means “diamond.” Denotes a high energetic substance. **10:28**

- varṇa** – “Color,” the original name for castes. *See also* castes. 3:35, 4:13, 18:41
- vasus** – “Excellent,” generic name for a group of gods, usually eight attendants of Indra. *Ādiparvan n. 61, 10:23, 11:6, 11:22*
- vānaprastha** – The latest period of life (āśrama), where a sannyāsī retreats into the forest in order to dive into meditation and leave the body. *See also* āśramas. 4:13
- vāsanā** – Hidden (subtle) desire, an outward projection of inner unfulfillment. *See also* saṃskāra. 2:16
- Vedas** – The four revealed scriptures: Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva. In a wider sense it means holy scriptures in general. 2:42, 4:32, 9:20–21, 10:22, 10:35, 15:1, 15:15
- Vedānta** – “The end of Vedas,” the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. 15:15
- viśuddha** – “Perfectly pure,” the throat cakra. *See also* cakras. 2:1, 3:5, 4:13, 10:12
- Viśvas** (viśvadevas) – (1) A class of gods, often referred to as the sons of Viśvā. (2) Sometimes a synonym for “all the gods.” *Udyogaparvan n. 100, 11:22*
- Viṣṇu** – A Divine principle of Maintainer, often a synonym for Īśvara. *See also* Brahmā; Śiva; Nara; Nārāyaṇa; Kṛṣṇa; Rāma; Narasiṃha. 2:2 n. 112, 10:21
- viveka** – Ability to discern between the real (nitya) and the unreal (anitya). 4:37, 4:40
- vṛtti** – “Whirlpool,” a whirlpool of thought substance which is observed as thought or feeling. Also denotes fluctuation of thoughts and emotions, their disturbance. *See also* citta; citta-vṛtti-nirodha. 18:33

Y

- yajña** – Vedic sacrificial rite. 3:9, 3:14–15, 4:30–33, 5:7, 9:16
- yakṣas** – A group of semi-divine beings, half gods and half demons. They live under the earth in the Himalayas, guard the wealth of the earth, and are led by Kubera. 10:23, 11:22
- yama** – The five abstentions (ahiṃsā, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha), the first of the eight limbs of yoga. *See also* eight limbs of yoga. 4:29, 6:12
- yoga** – Literally “yoke.” Denotes each technical system designed to lead one to liberation. 2:39–41, 2:48, 2:50, 2:58, 3:6, 4:2,

4:27, 5:5-6, 6:2-4, **6:12-15**, 6:16-17, 6:23, 6:35-36, 6:46, 9:2, **10:7**, 11:9

yoga-māyā – The power of yoga. 7:25

yogī (yogin) – Practitioner of yoga. A female yogī is called yoginī.
2:40, 2:48, 2:56, 2:58, 2:70, 3:4, 4:26-27, 4:29, 5:11, 5:13, 5:24, 5:27-29, 6:1-2, 6:8, 6:23, **6:27-28**, 6:41-42, 6:45-47, 8:22, 8:28, 11:8-9

yugas – Ages of the world (kṛta/satya, tretā, dvāpara and kali).
See kṛta-yuga; tretā-yuga; dvāpara-yuga; kali-yuga; mahā-yuga; kalpa. **8:17**

Glossary of Names*

A

- Abhimanyu** – Son of Arjuna (with Subhadrā), and father of Parīkṣit (last surviving Pāṇḍava after the battle at Kurukṣetra). *10, 27, 46, 60*
- Acyuta** – “Infallible,” a name of Kṛṣṇa. *See Kṛṣṇa. 381, 485*
- Adhiratha** – Charioteer from the sūta caste; together with his wife Rādhā, raised Karṇa. *See also Karṇa. 17*
- Agni** (Pāvaka) – Vedic god of fire; fire. *See Pāvaka. 21, 27–29, 31, 38, 44, 353, 380*
- Airāvata** – Indra’s elephant, considered an archetype of the elephant race. *See also Uccaiḥśravas. 354*
- Amarāvati** – The heavenly city of Indra. *26, 39*
- Ambālikā** – The youngest princess of Kosala and mother of Pāṇḍu. *See also Vyāsa; Kāśī; Śikhaṇḍin. 16*
- Ambikā** – Ambālikā’s sister, daughter of the king of Kāśī and mother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. *See also Vyāsa; Kosala; Śikhaṇḍin. 16*

* This glossary lists all the names of people, places and weapons mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā*. *See* references point to another name of the same person, while *see also* references point to related names. *See* and *see also* references listed in italic exist only in the glossary of terms. The numbers are page numbers. Bold references supply additional information on a person, not given in the glossary itself. References are not selective.

Ananta – A thousand-headed serpent, the Vedic seat of Viṣṇu. 354

Anantavijaya – A name of Yudhiṣṭhira's conch shell. 63

Andhakas – Descendants of Yadu and ancestors of Kuntī and Kṛṣṇa. 27, 35, 51

Arjuna (Bibhatsa, Dhanañjaya, Guḍākeśa, Jiṣṇu, Kiriṭin, Kṛṣṇa, Nara, Pārtha, Phālguna, Savyasācin, Śvetavāhana, Vijaya) – Son of Pāṇḍu's wife Kuntī and Indra; one of the Pāṇḍavas. Husband of Draupadī and Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā. He had a son Śrutakarman with the former and Abhimanyu with the latter. His dialogue with Kṛṣṇa forms the *Bhagavad-gītā*. See Bṛhannaḍa. See also Kuntī; Subhadrā. 1, 4, 8, 10, 20, 23, 24–27, 28–31, 32, 35–39, 40–46, 47–48, 51–53, 59–61, 63–68, 71–74, 76–80, 85, 90, 93, 95–97, 106–107, 117, 122–124, 141–142, 163–164, 175, 177, 181, 188–190, 196, 227–228, 233, 235, 270, 278–279, 281–282, 286–287, 295, 299, 303, 310, 316, 320, 328, 339, 348–349, 351, 355–357, 359, 361–363, 365–366, 369–370, 372–373, 376–384, 387, 399, 420–421, 433, 443, 457, 462, 481, 484–486

Aryaman – One of Ādityas, god of ancestors (pitṛs). 354

Aśvatthāman – Son of Droṇa, one of the few survivors of battle at Kurukṣetra. 10, 22, 23, 38, 42, 60, 476

Aśvins – Twin charioteers which appear in the sky in a golden carriage before dawn, bringing good luck to men and averting misfortune. 21, 51, 364, 375

Asita – “Dark,” “black,” the name of a great sage, so named because of his dark complexion. 348

Ā

Ādityas – A class of solar deities, sons of Aditi, goddess of endless sky. See also Daityas. 51, 352–353, 364, 375

Ādi Śaṅkara – See Śaṅkara.

B

Baladeva – A name of Balarāma. See Balarāma. 25, 51

Balarāma (Baladeva) – Kṛṣṇa's older brother, said to have been produced from a white hair of Viṣṇu. See Kṛṣṇa. 25, 51

Ballava – Name assumed by Bhīma before King Virāṭa. See Bhīma. 40–41

- Bhadrā** – A name of Subhadrā. *See* Subhadrā. 27
- Bharadvāja** – Famous sage, father of Droṇa. *See also* Ghṛtācī. 21–22, 39
- Bhārata** – A member of the Bharata tribe, descendant of Bharata. 64, 79, 84, 89, 93, 95, 166, 192, 233, 300, 364, 400, 410, 414, 416–417, 429–431, 443, 482
- Bharatas** – Name of a tribe, descendants of Bharata. 7, 11, 15, 25, 180, 292, 295, 315, 409, 417, 448, 459, 473
- Bhīma** – Son of Pāṇḍu’s wife Kuntī and wind-god Vāyu, famous for his size, strength and appetite. He slew the gigantic rākṣasa Hiḍimba; Hiḍimba’s sister Hiḍimbā changed herself into a beautiful woman, married Bhīma and gave him a son named Ghaṭotkaca. *See* Ballava. *See also* Kuntī; Pāṇḍavas. 19, 21, 23–24, 33, 40–41, 59–61, 63–64
- Bhīṣma** (Gaṅgādatta, Devavrata) – “Fierce,” eighth and the only surviving son of Śantanu and Gaṅgā. 15, 16, 18–19, 23, 25, 33, 39–41, 43–45, 49–52, 57, 58–62, 64–65, 77, 376, 378
- Bhojas** – The descendants of Mahābhoja. 27, 35
- Bhr̥gu** – Famous ṛṣi, regarded as the ancestor of the Bhr̥gus. *See also* Jamadagni; Paraśurāma. 22, 354
- Bhūmiñjaya** – “Earth-conquering,” other name of Uttara. *See* Uttara. 41
- Bībhatsa** – A name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41
- Brahmā** (Prajāpati) – Forefather of the universe, a being who created the physical world. *See: brahman*, Viśvakarman. *See also* Viṣṇu; Śiva. 12, 28, 39, 51, 157, 160, 218, 310–313, 322, 370, 670
- Bṛhannaḍa** – Name assumed by Arjuna before King Virāṭa. *See* Arjuna. 40–41
- Bṛhaspati** – The priest of the gods. 353
- Buddha** – He who has attained the state of wakefulness. Often used as an attribute of Śākyamuni, the founder of the Buddhist religion. 147

C

- Cedis** – Descendants of Cedi, subdivision of Yādava tribe. 12, 35
- Cekitāna** – Name of the prince allied with the Pāṇḍavas. 60
- Citraratha** – The king of gandharvas. 354

D

- Daityas** – Early giants who warred against the gods, descendants of earth-goddess Diti. Titans in Greek mythology. 30, 354
- Dānavas** – Sons of Danu, a class of demons that oppose devas. *See also asuras; rākṣasas.* 30, 32, 36, 38–39
- Devadatta** – Name of Arjuna’s conch shell. 63
- Devala** – Name of several Vedic ṛṣis; one of them was the author of a code of law and another was an astronomer. 348
- Devavrata** – “Devoted to the gods,” a name of Bhīṣma. *See Bhīṣma.* 15
- Dhanañjaya** – “Conqueror of wealth,” a name of Arjuna. *See Arjuna.* 41, 44, 48, 63, 110–111, 291, 324, 357, 369, 392, 470, 484
- Dharma** – God of law and righteousness; another name of Yama. *See Yama.* 16, 20, 196, 372
- Dhṛṣṭadyumna** (Yājñasena) – Son of King Drupada, born from the sacrificial fire as a means to Droṇa’s doom. *See Yājñasena.* 24, 52, 57, 59, 63
- Dhṛṣṭaketu** (Kaikeya) – King of Cedis and Kaikeyas; father of five Kaikeyas and descendant of Kekaya. Husband of Śūra’s daughter Śrutakīrti. *See also Vasu; Cedis.* 35, 60
- Dhṛtarāṣṭra** – The eldest, blind son of Vyāsa and Vicitravīrya’s widow Ambikā, brother of Pāṇḍu. He had a son Yuyutsu (with maid), and his wife Gāndhārī gave birth to a hundred sons, of which the eldest was Duryodhana. Gāndhārī also gave him one daughter, Duḥśalā. *See also Gāndhārī; Yuyutsu; Duḥśāsana; Vikarṇa.* 8, 16, 19, 21, 23–26, 32–35, 42, 45, 47, 49, 50, 53, 57, 63–64, 67, 71, 78, 376, 485, 671
- Draupadī** (Yājñasenī) – A daughter of King Drupada and wife of five Pāṇḍava princes. 24–25, 26, 33, 35, 40–41, 43, 50, 60, 63, 481
- Droṇa** – Son of Bharadvāja and father of Aśvatthāman. Teacher of Pāṇḍavas in weapons and arts of war. *See also Paraśurāma.* 21–24, 25, 33, 38, 39–43, 45, 51, 52, 58–62, 64, 65, 77, 376, 378, 476
- Drupada** – King of Pañcālas; father of Dhṛṣṭadyumna (killer of Droṇa), Draupadī (bride of the Pāṇḍavas) and Śikhāṇḍinī or Śikhāṇḍin (killer of Bhīṣma). *See also Pṛṣata; Somakas.* 22–25, 34, 49, 58–59, 63, 490
- Duḥśāsana** – One of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and brother of Duryodhana. *See also Gāndhārī; Yuyutsu.* 33

- Durgā** – A female deity, a principle of uncontrolled energy in its aspect of destruction of the disharmonious elements in the world. According to one legend, she materialized as a combined female energy of all gods to defeat the buffalo demon Mahiṣa, who put devas to flight. *See* Pārvatī; Śakti. 64–65
- Durvāsas** – A hermit who taught Kuntī a mantra which enabled her to have a child with any god she chose. Kuntī later gave the mantra to Mādri. *See also* Kuntī; Mādri. 17
- Duryodhana** (Suyodhana) – The eldest son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. 19, 21, 23–26, 32–33, 35, 40, 42–43, 44, 45, 46–52, 58–62, 63, 66, 68, 177, 189, 477
- Dvaipāyana** – “Island-born,” a name of Vyāsa. *See* Vyāsa. 7, 15, 18, 26

G

- Gaṅgā** – A deity of the holy river Gaṅgā or Ganges. 14, 21, 44, 355
- Gaṅgādatta** – “He who is given by Gaṅgā,” a name of Bhīṣma. *See* Bhīṣma. 14, 15
- Gaṇeśa** – God of wisdom and of obstacles. Although he causes obstacles, he also removes them. Said to have written down the Mahābhārata as dictated by Vyāsa. 7
- Garuḍa** (Vainateya) – Eagle, the mount of Viṣṇu. 26, 30, 355
- Gāndhārī** – Princess of the Gāndhāras, wife of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and mother of Duryodhana. Vyāsa blessed her to be able to give birth to a hundred of Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons. She also gave birth to one daughter, Duḥśalā. *See also* Subala; Duḥśāsana; Vi-karṇa. 16, 18–19, 50
- Gāṇḍīva** – Name of Arjuna’s bow. 28, 36, 38, 41–44, 65
- Ghṛtācī** – Apsaras responsible for the birth of Droṇa. *See also*: Bharadvāja. 21
- Girikā** – Wife of King Vasu. *See also* Vasu. 12–13
- Govinda** – “Rescuer of cattle,” a name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 27, 66
- Guḍākeśa** – “Conqueror of sleep,” a name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 64, 78, 352, 364

H

- Hanuman** – A friend and servant of Rāma from Rāmāyaṇa, monkey god. 64

Hari – A name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 366, 485

Hāstinapura – A capital city of the Kurus. 22, 25, 32–33, 35, 49–50, 53, 57–58, 383, 485

Hiraṇyakaśipu – A demonic king slain by Narasiṃha avatāra. *See also* Narasiṃha; Prahlāda. 355

Hṛṣīkeśa – “Lord of the senses,” a name of Kṛṣṇa. 63–64, 78–79, 379, 457

I

Ikṣvāku – According to some sources, son of Manu, who was a son of Vivasvān. *See also* Manu; Vivasvān. 183

Indra (Purandara, Vāsava) – Vedic king of the devas, also the god of thunder. 12, 14, 17, 20, 21, 26–27, 28–31, 32, 37–39, 42, 44, 51, 95, 157, 328–329, 353, 354

Indraprastha – “Indra’s plain,” the capital city of Pāṇḍavas. *See also* Amarāvati. 26, 50

J

Jamadagni – Father of Paraśurāma and descendant of Bhṛgu. *See also* Paraśurāma; Bhṛgu. 14

Janaka – Often mentioned king who attained perfect realization. 163

Janamejaya – Son of King Parikṣit and Arjuna’s great-grandson. 11

Janārdana – A name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 27, 51, 67, 71, 141, 351, 384

Jayadratha – King fighting on the side of Kurus. He married Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s daughter Duḥśalā. 378

Jāmadagnya – Another name of Paraśurāma. *See* Paraśurāma. 22

Jiṣṇu – A name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41

K

Kaikeyas – (1) A tribe of warriors, descendants of Kekaya. (2) Also the famous five Kaikeya brothers, sons of Kaikeya or Dhṛṣṭaketu, king of Kaikeyas. *See also* Dhṛṣṭaketu. 35

Kailāsa – Holy mountain, located in the Himalaya range. 26

Kandarpa – A name of Kāma. *See* Kāma. 354

- Kaṅka** – Name assumed by Yudhiṣṭhira before King Virāṭa. *See* Yudhiṣṭhira. 40–41
- Kapila** – Famous hermit, founder of sāṅkhya, capable of reducing men to ashes with a glance. 354
- Kāma** (Kandarpa) – God of desire, the Vedic equivalent of Cupidon and Eros. 354
- Kāma-dhenu** – The mythical cow that fulfills all desires, the bovine variation on the theme of a wishing-well. *See also* Uccaiḥśravas. 354
- Karṇa** (Vasuṣeṇa) – Son of the god Sūrya and Kuntī before her marriage to Pāṇḍu; afraid of her relatives, Kuntī deserted the child in the river, where it was found and adopted by a charioteer Adhiratha and his wife Rādhā. In spite of Kṛṣṇa’s and Kuntī’s persuasions, even when he found out that he was a son of Kuntī on the eve before the great battle, Karṇa stayed loyal to Duryodhana, although he did make a promise to Kuntī that he would fight only Arjuna and would stay away from the battle with other Pāṇḍavas. *See also* Kuntī. 18, 23, 25–26, 33, 40–43, 45, 49, 60, 376, 378, 476
- Kārtavīrya** – A king known for generosity and self-sacrifice. 20
- Kārttikeya** (Skanda) – Son of Śiva and Pārvatī, the leader of the heavenly army. 353
- Kāśī** (Vārāṇasī, formerly Benares or Banaras) – City in northern India, on the north bank of the river Gaṅgā or Ganges. At times part of the kingdom of Kosala. *See also* Kosala. 60, 63
- Keśava** – “Slayer of the demon Keśi,” a name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 66, 117, 141, 349, 379, 399, 485
- Keśi** – A name of an asura slain by Kṛṣṇa. 457
- Khāṇḍava** – A forest in Kurukṣetra, guarded by Indra and consumed by Agni aided by Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. *See also* Khāṇḍavaprastha. 28–31
- Khāṇḍavaprastha** – A forest and a country on the banks of Yamunā, given to Pāṇḍavas by Dhṛtarāṣṭra when he divided his kingdom. Most of it was wasteland, and the rest was Khāṇḍava forest inhabited by all kinds of evil creatures. *See also* Khāṇḍava. 26
- Kirāta** – A member of the Kirāta tribe, or the tribe of hunters inhabiting woods and mountains. 36–37
- Kirīṭin** – “Diademed One,” a name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41

- Kosala** – Powerful kingdom in northern India, corresponding roughly in area with modern Oudh. *See also* Kāśī. 16
- Kṛpa** – Son of Śaradvat and brother of Kṛpī; teacher of Kurus. 21–23, 42, 45, 60
- Kṛpī** – Daughter of the sage Śaradvat, wife of Droṇa and mother of his son Aśvatthāman. 22–23
- Kṛṣṇa** (Acyuta, Govinda, Hari, Hṛṣīkeśa, Janārdana, Keśava, Mādhava, Madhusūdana, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Yādava) – (1) “Dark,” “black.” Son of Vasudeva and Devakī and incarnation of Viṣṇu. It had been prophesied to Kaṁsa, king of Mathurā and cousin of Devakī, that he would be killed by the son of Devakī; he therefore kept Vasudeva and Devakī in confinement and slew their first six children. The seventh was Balarāma who was saved by being extracted from the womb of Devakī and transferred to that of Rohiṇī, Vasudeva’s other wife. Kṛṣṇa himself was saved by Vasudeva, who managed to escape with the child, and substituted for Kṛṣṇa a newborn daughter of a herdsman named Nanda and his wife Yaśodā. Kṛṣṇa was raised by Nanda and Yaśodā, where he grew up together with Balarāma, and later fulfilled Kaṁsa’s destiny. According to another story, Viṣṇu plucked out two of his own hairs, one white and one black. These two hairs entered the wombs of Devakī and Rohiṇī; the white hair became Balarāma and the black became Kṛṣṇa. (2) Also one of the names of Arjuna and (3) another name of Vyāsa. *See* Viṣṇu; Yaśodā; Arjuna; Vyāsa. 1, 4, 8–10, 16–17, 25–27, 28–31, 32, 35, 47–48, 50, 51–52, 53, 61–66, 70, 76–79, 84–86, 93, 95–98, 107, 115, 118–119, 123, 136, 139, 141–144, 149, 163, 165, 175, 178, 181, 183–184, 188–192, 198, 204, 216, 223–224, 226–227, 233, 235, 267, 279, 281–282, 286, 288–289, 303, 305, 308, 320, 331, 335, 339–340, 349, 351, 357, 362–363, 366, 369, 378–379, 381–383, 422–443, 451–460, 482, 485–486
- Kṛṣṇā** – “Dark,” “black,” a name of Draupadī. *See* Draupadī. 24
- Kṛtavarman** – A warrior who fought on the side of the Kurus.
- Kubera** – The treasurer of gods. *See also* Viśravas. 26, 39, 157, 353
- Kuntibhoja** – A Yādava prince, Śūra’s nephew, who adopted Pṛthā, Śūra’s eldest daughter. 16, 18, 60
- Kuntī** (Pṛthā) – Princess of Vṛṣṇis, daughter of Śūra, adopted by (and named after) Kuntibhoja. Mother of Karṇa (with Sūrya) before marriage and Yudhiṣṭhira (with Dharma), Bhīma (with

Vāyu) and Arjuna (with Indra) after marriage to Pāṇḍu. *See also* Durvāsas; Karṇa; Mādri. 16–18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 32–33, 36, 39, 44, 48, 63, 65, 84, 96, 128, 156, 178, 248, 279, 291, 306, 310, 322, 324, 329, 332, 334, 399, 410, 414–415, 439, 440, 478–479, 481

Kurukṣetra – A plain near Delhi, scene of the great battle between Kurus and Pāṇḍavas. 10, 23, 28, 53, 57, 376

Kurus – Descendants of Kuru. Both Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra belong to the Kuru tribe, although usually only the sons of the latter are regarded as Kurus, the sons and descendants of the former being called Pāṇḍavas. *See also* Dhṛtarāṣṭra; Pāṇḍu. 10, 19, 21–24, 33, 39, 41–42, 44–45, 47, 49–50, 53, 57, 59, 62–64, 100, 177, 225, 284, 352, 383, 418

M

Madhusūdana – “Destroyer of the demon Madhu,” a name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 67, 73, 77, 278, 303

Madra – (1) Name of a country and (2) people northwest of Hindustan. *See also* Mādri. 18

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi – Founder of Transcendental Meditation™. 1, 3

Mahendra – A mountain range in eastern India. 22

Maṇipuṣpaka – Name of Sahadeva’s conch shell. 63

Mandara – Sacred mountain used as a churning-stick by the devas and the asuras to churn an ocean and produce amṛta. *See also* Uccaiḥśravas. 26

Manu – Forefather of mankind, most often the first of the species, or a lawmaker; Manu is he who breaks the ice, and who is followed by others. 183, 342

Marīci – The leader of the maruts. 353

Matsya – “Fish,” (1) name of people, (2) country and (3) their king (Virāṭa); another name of Virāṭa, as he was found in the body of apsaras Adrikā who was turned into a fish. *See also* Matsyā; Virāṭa. 13, 45

Matsyā – Another name of Virāṭa’s sister Satyavatī, “matsyā” also denoting a female fish. *See* Satyavatī. *See also* Matsya.

Maya – A Dānava saved from Kṛṣṇa’s rage by Arjuna in Khāṇḍava forest; he built a palace without comparison for the righteous King Yudhiṣṭhira. *See also* Khāṇḍava. 32

- Mādhava** – A descendant of Madhu (one of the Yādavas); especially Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 29, 63, 67
- Mādrī** – Princess of Madra and Pāṇḍu's second wife. With the help of Kuntī's mantra, conceived with two Aśvins and gave birth to twins Nakula and Sahadeva. *See also*: Kuntī. *See also* Madra. 18, 21
- Mātali** – Indra's charioteer. 39
- Meru** – A mythical mountain, representing the center and the axis of the world. 26, 36, 353
- Milarepa** – A Tibetan yogī, famous for his high spiritual achievements. 276, 284
- Mūka** – Name of a Dānava who confronted Arjuna and was eventually killed by both Arjuna's and Śiva's arrows. 36

N

- Nakula** – One of the Pāṇḍavas, son of Mādrī and the Aśvins and twin-brother of Sahadeva. *See also* Mādrī, Pāṇḍavas. 21, 40–42, 63
- Nandi** (Nandin) – Name of a bull, the mount of Śiva. *See also* Śiva. 26
- Nara** – (1) An inactive aspect of Viṣṇu, often identified with Arjuna (as Nārāyaṇa is with Kṛṣṇa). (2) Also a name of a great sage from ancient legends. *See also* Arjuna, Nārāyaṇa. 30, 39
- Narasimha** – “Man-lion,” a form taken by Viṣṇu in order to slay the demonic King Hiranyakaśipu. *See also* Viṣṇu. 355
- Naṭarāja** – “The lord of Dance,” a name of Śiva in the aspect of a dancer, dancing a dance of creation and destruction of the world. *See* Śiva. 147, 429
- Nāciketa** – Name of a character from the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad*, where Yama himself explained him the secret of eternal life beyond death. 10
- Nārada** – A gandharva who was cursed to incarnate as śūdra, and who attained enlightenment in the moment of death. It is said that he was cursed to never be able to stay in one place, which pleased him greatly, for he was thus freed of the danger of developing attraction to a place or person. Therefore he is forever traveling. He is the one who inspired Vālmīki

to write *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vyāsa to write *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and is also a character in a number of Vedic stories. He is the most famous of all ṛṣis, in many places referred to as God's close friend and companion. *119, 348, 354*

Nārāyaṇa – “The Lord of waters,” “The spirit of God who dwelt upon the face of the waters,” (1) a name of Viṣṇu, often identified with Kṛṣṇa (and mentioned with Nara who is identified with Arjuna). (2) Nārāyaṇas are also the warriors of Kṛṣṇa. *See also Kṛṣṇa; Nara. 12, 30, 48, 312*

P

Pañcāla – A tribe and their country in the north of India. *See also Drupada. 22–24, 35, 47, 49–50, 59*

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952) – A great master of yoga, famous in the West for his *Autobiography of a Yogi* and other works. Taught the technique of Kriya Yoga, from the tradition of Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar. Founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship. *437*

Paraśurāma (Jāmadagnya, Rāma) – “Axe-wielding Rāma,” son of Jamadagni and avatāra of Viṣṇu. Great warrior and master of weapons. *See Viṣṇu, Rāma. See also Jamadagni; Bhṛṅgu. 14*

Parāśara – Famous ṛṣi, son (or, according to some sources, grandson) of Vasiṣṭha and father of the even more famous Vyāsa. *See also Vasiṣṭha; Vyāsa. 13, 15*

Parīkṣit – Son of Abhimanyu and Uttarā, father of Janamejaya. The last of the Kurus, the only one who survived the battle at Kurukṣetra. *10, 11, 46*

Patañjali – Author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, the founder of the philosophical system of yoga. *101, 266*

Paunḍra – Name of Bhīma's conch shell. *63*

Pāñcajanya – Name of Kṛṣṇa's conch shell. *63*

Pāṇḍavas – (1) Descendants of Pāṇḍu; (2) five sons of Pāṇḍu: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Draupadī was the bride of all five of them. *See also Kuntī; Pāṇḍu. 10, 16, 21, 23–26, 32–35, 40–43, 47, 49–53, 57–63, 357*

Pāṇḍu – Son of Vyāsa by Ambālikā (wife of Vicitravīrya), brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura; husband of Kuntī and Mādri and father of five Pāṇḍavas. *See also Ambālikā; Kuntī. 16, 18,*

- 19–21, 23, 25, 29, 32–33, 35, 38, 43, 47, 49–50, 58–59, 63–64, 227, 256, 368, 385, 432
- Pārtha** – “Son of Pṛthā,” a name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 27, 41, 64, 77, 91, 95, 98, 102, 118, 137, 160, 164–165, 198, 226, 282, 287, 292, 307, 309, 316, 326, 353, 364, 366, 392, 432–433, 455, 460, 470–473, 484, 486
- Pārvatī** (Umā) – “Goddess of the mountains,” wife of Śiva; one of the names of Śakti or Durgā. *See* Śakti; Durgā. 36, 353
- Pāśupata** (Pāśupatāstra) – “The weapon of Pāśupata,” “the weapon of the Lord of the beasts”; weapon given to Arjuna by Śiva. 38, 664
- Pāśupatāstra** – *See* Pāśupata. 38
- Pāvaka** – “Purifier,” a name of Agni. *See* Agni. 28–29
- Phālguna** – Name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 37, 41
- Pināka** – A name of Śiva’s bow. 36, 39
- Prabhāsa** – Famous place of pilgrimage on the shores of the western ocean. 27
- Prabhupāda, Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami** (1896–1977) – Founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), commonly known as the Hare Krishna movement. 2–3
- Prahlāda** – Son of the demonic King Hiraṇyakaśipu, whom Viṣṇu delivered by killing his father. *See also* Narasiṃha. 354–355
- Prajāpati** – “Forefather,” a name of Brahmā. *See* Brahmā. 12, 380
- Pratīpa** – Father of Śantanu and grandfather of Bhīṣma. 14
- Pṛṣata** – Father of Drupada. *See also* Somakas. 22
- Pṛthā** – A name of Kuntī. *See* Kuntī. 16, 27, 30, 37, 41–42, 45, 50, 65, 485
- Pṛthivī** – Goddess of earth; the earth element. 157
- Purandara** – Name of Indra. *See* Indra. 31
- Purujit** – “Conquerer of many,” name of a hero fighting on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, brother of Kuntibhoja. *See also* Kuntibhoja. 60

R

- Raivataka** – A mountain located in the modern Gujarat state in western India. 27
- Ramācandra** – The main character of Rāmāyaṇa, avatāra of Viṣṇu. 355

- Rādhā** – Wife of Adhiratha and foster-mother of Karṇa. *See also* Karṇa. 17, 44, 50
- Rāma** – (1) A name of Paraśurāma; (2) also a name of Rāmacandra. Both were the avatāras of Viṣṇu. *See* Paraśurāma; Ramācandra. 14, 22, 331, 355, 664
- Rudra** – “Destroyer,” a name of Śiva in His destructive aspect. *See* Śiva. 37, 51, 353
- Rudras** (maruts) – The stormy gods, sons of Rudra and companions of Indra. *See* maruts. 51, 353, 364, 375

Ś

- Śaibya** – A warrior fighting on the Pāṇḍavas’ side; probably a descendent of Śibi. *See also* Śibi. 60
- Śakti** – Female Divine principle, the principle of acting energy and power. *See* Pārvatī; Durgā. *See also* Śiva. 147, 193, 314, 331
- Śakuni** – King of Gāndhāras, son of Subala, brother of queen Gāndhārī and therefore Duryodhana’s uncle. He often acted as Duryodhana’s counsellor, and is also known for his gambling skills. *See also* Subala. 26, 32–33, 43, 49
- Śaṅkara** – (1) A name of Śiva. (2) Also a name of the great teacher of Vedānta, known as Śaṅkarācārya or Ādi Śaṅkara. 353
- Śaṅkarācārya** (Ādi Śaṅkara, Śaṅkara) – A name of the great teacher of Vedānta. *See also* Śaṅkara. 135, 226
- Śantanu** – Son of Pratīpa and husband of Gaṅgā and Satyavatī. By Gaṅgā he had a son named Bhīṣma, and by Satyavatī two sons, Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. *See also* Gaṅgā; Satyavatī. 14–15, 45
- Śaradvat** – Father of Kṛpī (wife of Droṇa) and Kṛpa, the teacher of Kurus. *See also* Kṛpī. 22
- Śārṅga** – A name of Viṣṇu’s bow. 51
- Śibi** – A king famous for his generosity and selflessness. *See also* Śaibya. 20–21
- Śikhaṇḍin** (Śikhaṇḍinī) – Son of Drupada, born female (Śikhaṇḍinī), but changed into a male by trading her sex with a yakṣa Sthūṇākara in order to kill Bhīṣma in the great war between Kurus and Pāṇḍavas, since Bhīṣma declined to fight a woman. In a previous life he was Ambā, eldest princess of Kosala and

sister of Ambikā and Ambālikā. Eventually all three of them were carried off by Bhīṣma to be brides of Vicitravīrya. Unfortunately, Ambā was already betrothed to another, and Bhīṣma sent her back to him, but her fiancé declined to marry her afterwards because she had been in another man’s house. Therefore she spent ten years in penance, and when Śiva promised her vengeance in another life, she walked into fire and was born again as Śikhaṇḍinī. *See also* Ambikā; Ambālikā; Kosala; Kāśī. 63

Śiva (Rudra, Naṭarāja) – (1) “Kind,” “benevolent,” a god in the aspect of destruction and detachment from the worldly, gentle to those who approach him with sincerity, but fierce with those who are offensive. (2) Also the male principle of the atmic level. (3) Also used to denote the principle of consciousness (where Śakti denotes energy). *See* Rudra; Naṭarāja; Īśvara. *See also* Brahmā; Viṣṇu; Śakti; Pārvatī. 26, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 77, 147, 175–176, 193, 309, 314, 331, 353, 406, 429, 663

Śiva Naṭarāja – *See* Naṭarāja.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1485–1533) – A medieval yogi from Bengal who taught bhakti-yoga based on literal interpretation of Kṛṣṇa’s lilas from *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The favorite and characteristic form of worship in the Caitanya movement was kīrtana or saṅkīrtana, the group singing of simple hymns and repetition of God’s name, accompanied by drums and cymbals and by rhythmic swaying of the body. This continued for several hours and resulted in states of religious exaltation. The movement theology was created by a group of Caitanya’s disciples in Vṛndāvana, known as the six gosvāmins (“lords of cows”). 222

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (1489-1564) – One of the six gosvāmins, followers of Caitanya. *See also*: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. 222

Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda – *See* Prabhupāda.

Śṛṅgin – Son of a hermit from the beginning of the *Mahābhārata*; he cursed King Parīkṣit to be killed by Takṣaka for disgracing his father. 10

Śūra – Member of Yādava tribe, father of Vasudeva (Kṛṣṇa’s father) and Kuntī. *See also*: Yādavas. 16

Śvetavāhana – Name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41

S

- Sahadeva** – One of the Pāṇḍavas, son of Mādrī and the Aśvins and twin-brother of Nakula. *See also* Mādrī; Pāṇḍavas. 21, 40–42, 63
- Sañjaya** – The narrator of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Vyāsa gave him the heavenly vision to observe the events on the battlefield from Hāstinapura and keep King Dhṛtarāṣṭra informed. 8, 34, 50–51, 53, 57–58, 64, 72–73, 78, 365, 379, 384–486
- Sanat-kumāra** – One of the four Kumāras, who is thought to be the Puruṣa of earth, the being to whom earth is the physical body. Kumāra (literally, “boy”) denotes the four sons of Brahmā, Sanat-kumāra, Sananda-kumāra, Sanaka-kumāra and Sanātana-kumāra. 148
- Sarasvatī** – Goddess of eloquence and learning. 157
- Satyavatī** (Matsyā) – Daughter of King Vasu who was adopted by a fisherman, sister of Virāṭa and wife of Śantanu who gave him two sons, Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. Before marriage she gave birth to the famous Vyāsa, son of ṛṣi Parāśara. *See*: Matsyā. *See also* Vyāsa. 13, 15–16
- Savyasācin** – “Left-handed,” a name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41
- Sādhyas** – A class of celestial beings, sons of Sādhyā. 375
- Sātyaki** (Yuyudhāna) – Kṛṣṇa’s charioteer, member of Vṛṣṇi tribe. *See also* Vṛṣṇis. 25, 52, 59, 63
- Soma** – The god of the sacrificial drink, used in the Vedic rituals; also the ruler of all the liquids and plants. *See also* amṛta. 28
- Somadatta** – King of Bāhlika (modern Balkh, town in northern Afghanistan), father of Bhūriśravas who fought on the side of the Kurus. 60
- Somakas** – Descendants of King Somaka, such as Pṛṣata, Drupada and his descendants. 53
- Subala** – The king of Gāndhāra (region in the north-west of ancient India, in present-day Afghanistan). Father of Śakuni and Gāndhārī, Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s wife. 26, 32
- Subhadrā** (Bhadrā) – Younger sister of Kṛṣṇa, wife of Arjuna and mother of Abhimanyu. Her brother Balarāma wanted her to marry Duryodhana, but she was eventually forcibly carried off by Arjuna with Kṛṣṇa’s permission. 27, 60, 63
- Sudarśana cakra** – The name of Kṛṣṇa’s weapon. 28
- Sughoṣa** – Name of Nakula’s conch shell. 63

Suśarman – The king of Trigartas. *See also* Trigartas. 40

Suyodhana – Name of Duryodhana. *See* Duryodhana. 50–51

Sūrya – Sun, the sun god. *See also* Vivasvān; Kārṇa. 17, 183, 670

T

Takṣaka – The king of serpents. *See also* Vāsuki. 10–11, 30

Tārakā – A name of an asura defeated by Kārttikeya. 353

Trigartas – People inhabiting Trigarta (modern Lahore). *See also* Suśarman. 40

U

Uccaiṣravas – Indra’s horse, archetype of all horses. By tradition, it arose from the mythical churning of the ocean by the devas and the asuras in order to recover the lost amṛta. According to the legend, they uprooted Mount Mandara and set it in the ocean, wrapping the serpent Vāsuki about it. The devas pulled on one end of the serpent, and the asuras on the other, churning the ocean; and finally, Dhanvantari, physician of the gods, emerged with a cup of amṛta in his hands. Among other products of the churning, except Uccaiṣravas, were the elephant Airāvata and Kāma-dhenu, the cow of plenty. 354

Umā – Other name of Pārvatī. *See* Pārvatī. 36

Uśanas – The preceptor of asuras. 357

Uttamaujas – One of the warriors fighting on the Pāṇḍavas’ side. 60

Uttara (Bhūmiñjaya) – Son of King Virāṭa. *See* Bhūmiñjaya. 40–43

Uttarā – Daughter of King Virāṭa and wife of Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu. 46

V

Vainateya – A name of Garuḍa. *See* Garuḍa. 355

Vaiśampāyana – Great sage, disciple of Vyāsa, who recited the *Mahābhārata* on the festival organized by King Janameyaja. 11

Varuṇa – God of waters, the water element. 28, 38, 39, 157, 354, 380

- Vasiṣṭha** – Celebrated sage, son of Brahmā and teacher of Bhīṣma. *See also* Parāśara. 14
- Vasu** – King of Cedis, father of Virāṭa and Satyavatī, who were delivered by apsaras in the form of fish. *See also* Dhṛṣṭaketu; Cedis; Satyavatī. 12–13, 39
- Vasudeva** – Father of Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa and Subhadṛā; brother of Kuntī, mother of Pāṇḍavas. 16, 27, 357
- Vasuṣeṇa** – A name of Karṇa. *See* Karṇa. 17–18
- Vāraṇāvata** – A city on the shores of Gaṅgā where Duryodhana tried to kill Pāṇḍavas in a fire. 24
- Vārṣṇeya** – A member of Vṛṣṇi tribe; used to address Kṛṣṇa. *See also* Vṛṣṇis. 70, 177
- Vāsava** – A name of Indra. *See* Indra. 30, 353
- Vāsudeva** – A name of Kṛṣṇa. *See* Kṛṣṇa. 48, 296–297, 384, 485
- Vāsuki** – The hundred-headed serpent-king, one of the three chief kings of the nāgas, along with Takṣaka and the thousand-headed serpent Śeṣa. *See also* Uccaiḥśravas. 354
- Vāyavya** – Vāyu’s, or “of the wind,” the weapon of the air element. 29
- Vāyu** – Wind god, wind. 20, 29, 38, 380
- Vidura** – The younger brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, incarnation of Dharma. All three were sons of Vyāsa, but only the latter two by the widows of Vicitravīrya; terrified by Vyāsa’s appearance, Ambikā sent Vyāsa one of her maids, who thus became the mother of Vidura. 16, 19, 25, 51, 476
- Vijaya** – Name of Arjuna. *See* Arjuna. 41
- Vikarṇa** – One of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and brother of Duryodhana. *See also* Gāndhārī. 23, 60
- Virāṭa** – (1) Name of a king and (2) a country where Pāṇḍavas spent their thirteenth year of exile in disguise. They rendered him great services against his enemies, and he fought on their side in the great war of Kurus and Pāṇḍavas. *See also* Vasu. 39–40, 43, 46, 59, 63, 66
- Viśravas** – Father of Kubera. *See also* Kubera. 26
- Viśvakarman** – “He whose doing is all,” one of the attributes of the Creator, Brahmā. *See* Brahmā. 28, 32, 42
- Viśvas (viśvadevas)** – (1) A class of gods, often referred to as the sons of Viśvā. (2) Sometimes a synonym for “all the gods.” 51, 375

- Viṣṇu** – A Divine principle of Preserver, often a synonym for Īśvara. *See also* Brahmā; Śiva; Nara; Nārāyaṇa; Kṛṣṇa; Rāma; Narasiṃha. 14, 26, 38–39, 77, 352–355, 367, 376–377
- Vivasvān** – Another name of Sūrya, or, more probably, the founder of the solar dynasty of warriors; also regarded as a sort of parent of the human race. *See also* Ikṣvāku. 183, 189
- Vṛṣṇis** – A name of a tribe or family into which Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī were born. *See also* Yādavas. 17, 27, 35, 50–51, 357
- Vyāsa** (Dvaipāyana, Kṛṣṇa) – Great sage and original composer of Vedas, son of ṛṣi Parāśara and Śantanu’s wife and Virāṭa’s sister Satyavatī. When both Kuru princes (Vicitravīrya and Citrāṅgada) died without offspring, he was asked to provide his brother’s widows with children, thus becoming the father of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura. *See also* Satyavatī; Ambikā; Ambālīkā. 7, 9, 11, 13, 15–16, 18, 53, 57, 119, 348, 357, 485

Y

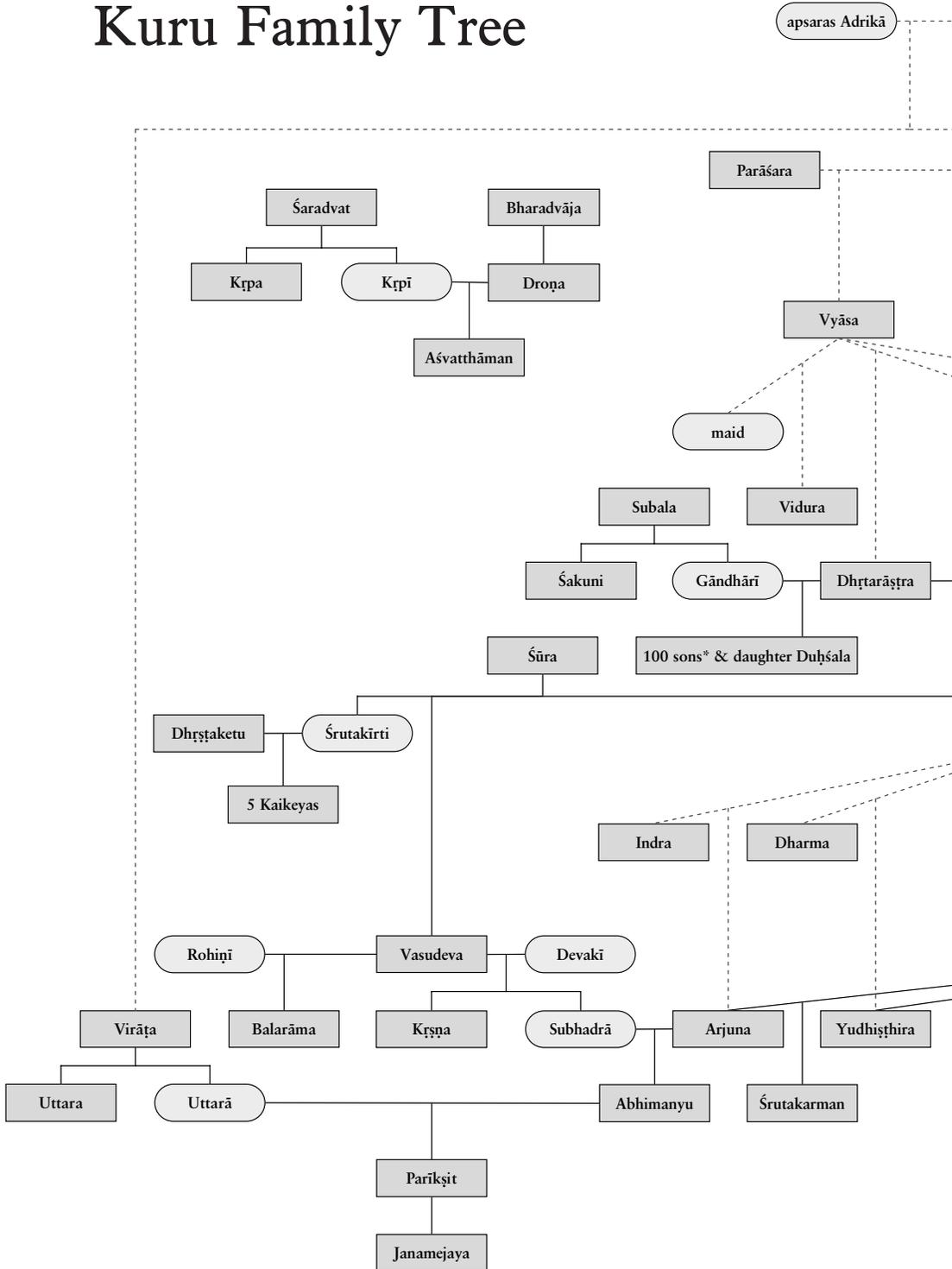
- Yama** – Death god, god of last judgment and righteousness; god Dharma. *See* Dharma. 10, 16, 20, 36, 39, 196, 354, 380
- Yamunā** – A river which rises in the western Himalayas and joins Gaṅgā or Ganges at Allahabad in northern India. 13, 27
- Yaśodā** – Kṛṣṇa’s foster mother, who nursed him immediately after his birth. Wife of the cowherd Nanda who was the ancestor of Durgā. *See also* Kṛṣṇa. 52, 383
- Yādava** – (1) Descendant of Yadu; (2) name of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, Kuntī, Śūra and Kuntibhoja all belong to the Yādava tribe; divisions of Yādavas are Vṛṣṇis, Bhojas and Andhakas. 16, 17, 27, 119, 381
- Yājñasena** – “Born from the sacrificial fire,” name of Dhṛṣṭadyumna. *See* Dhṛṣṭadyumna. 24
- Yājñaseni** – “Born from the sacrificial fire,” name of Draupadī. *See* Draupadī. 24
- Yogananda** – *See* Paramahansa Yogananda. 437
- Yudhāmanyu** – Warrior fighting on the Pāṇḍavas’ side. 60
- Yudhiṣṭhira** – “Firm in battle,” one of the Pāṇḍavas; son of god Dharma and Pāṇḍu’s wife Kuntī. He succeeded Pāṇḍu as king, first reigning over Indraprastha and, later, over Hāstīnapura.

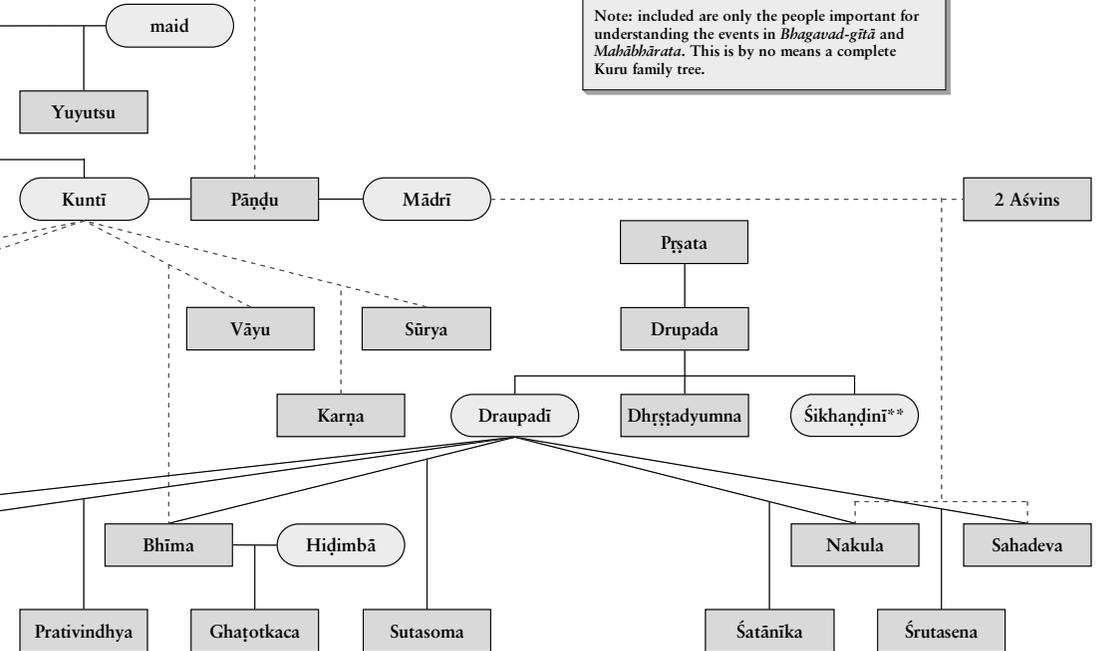
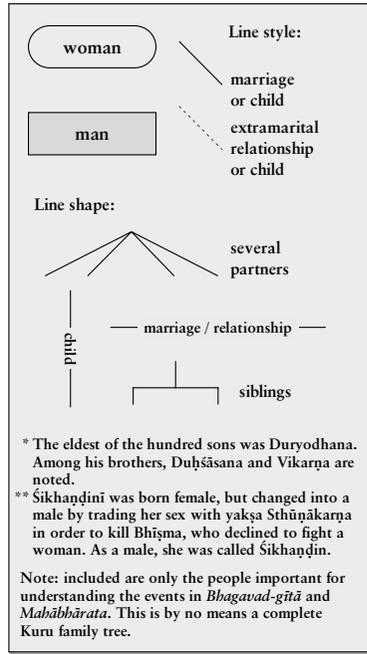
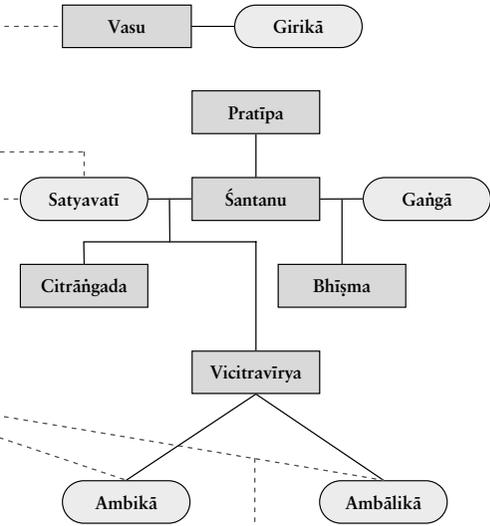
See Kañka. *See also* Kuntī; Pāṇḍavas. **19–20, 24, 26–27, 32–33, 35, 40–41, 47, 50, 58, 62–63, 66**

Yuyudhāna – A name of Sātyaki. *See* Sātyaki. **59**

Yuyutsu – Son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and a woman from the vaiśya caste who served Dhṛtarāṣṭra. On the eve of the great battle he left the side of the Kurus and joined the Pāṇḍavas. When Yudhiṣṭhira retired from the world, he established Yuyutsu in the kingdom of Indraprastha. *See also* Dhṛtarāṣṭra. **19**

Kuru Family Tree





Sanskrit Pronunciation

The Sanskrit alphabet is traditionally written in devanāgarī script. In this book, however, standard Roman transliteration is used. This transliteration system is derived from the 1894 Geneva committee's recommendations, and uses diacritical marks to represent the various phonemes characteristic for Sanskrit. Since each letter in Devanāgarī is always pronounced in the same way in all words (unlike English *a* in *fat* and *fate*), Sanskrit is easy to pronounce once the correct pronunciation of individual letters has been learned.

Sanskrit is spoken by opening the mouth and moving the tongue and lips, while in English we move the whole jaw which requires a lot more effort and blurs the sounds. To speak Sanskrit, it is necessary to break English-speaking habits, open the mouth much wider than while speaking English, and pronounce sounds clearly and distinctly.

The macron (dash) above some vowels indicates a long vowel—twice as long as a normal vowel. Therefore *ā* is two times longer than *a*, and *ī*, *ū* and *ṛ* are two times longer than *i*, *u* and *ṛ*. The vowel *a* is always pronounced as in the word *hut*—not as in *hat*—and *ā* is pronounced as in word *farm*, while *u* is always pronounced as in *put* (not *hut!*), and *ū* as in *rule*. Sanskrit vowel *ṛ* is traditionally pronounced as *r*, but nowadays as short *ri* (similar to *risk*). Correctly pronounced as a vowel, *ṛ* can be prolonged indefinitely

(rrrrrrrr). The vowels *e*, *ai*, *o* and *au* are always pronounced as long (*medical*, *aisle*, *thorn*, *loud*). Rarely seen, Sanskrit vowel *!* should be pronounced as in the word *table*.

The consonants *ṭ*, *ḍ* and *ṇ* are pronounced as normal English *t*, *d* and *n*, with the tip of the tongue curled up and touching the top of the mouth (as in *tip*), while *t*, *d* and *n* are pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the teeth (as in *thin*).

The letter *s* is pronounced as in the English word *six*, while *ś* is pronounced as *sh* in *shield*. A third variant, *ṣ*, should be pronounced as *sh* in *bush*. The letter *n* is pronounced as in *name*, but *ṇ* should be articulated as in *tongue*, and *ṅ* as *ny* in the word *banyan*.

Transliterated letter *ṃ* is usually pronounced the same as the English *m*. The letter *ḥ* is usually placed at the end of word and indicates an unvoiced breath (*aḥ* would be *uh* in *uhh!*), or in some traditions echo of the preceding vowel after the breath (*uhhuh*).

When *v* is written after a consonant in the same syllable, it is pronounced as in *vary*; otherwise, it is pronounced as in *vast*. The consonant *c* is always pronounced as *ch*, as in *chunk*, and *g* is always pronounced as in *get*.

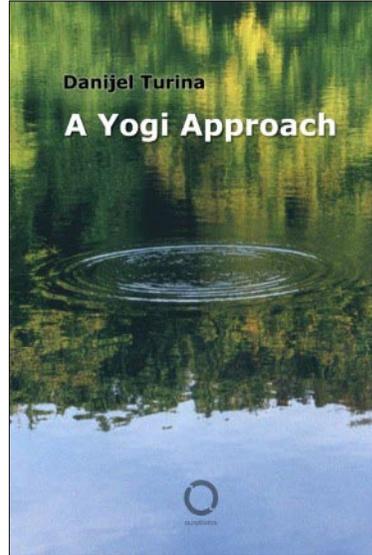
In the letters *bh*, *ch*, *ḍh*, *dh*, *gh*, *jh*, *kh*, *ph*, *th* and *ṭh*, each consonant should be aspirated (as in *abhorrence*, *redhead* or *uphill*—not as in *physic*).

This is just a very basic guide to the pronunciation of Sanskrit; for more detailed and precise pronunciation guidelines, please consult a Sanskrit dictionary or Sanskrit grammar.

Ouroboros Publishing presents

Danijel Turina: A Yogi Approach

This is a book that will change your perspective of the world and spirituality—to people who consider themselves atheists because of a disagreement with the superficial and senseless God concepts, this book could show that they, in fact, do believe in God for the whole time, but not in God presented in the form of the grumpy old grandpa sitting on his cloud and contemplating further restrictions of their sex life, but in God who is the joy in truth and virtue, who is the beauty in the harmony of all things, who is the foundation of all things positive and good, that we can experience in our lives—God who is the true meaning and purpose of our lives, and the hidden object of all our longings.

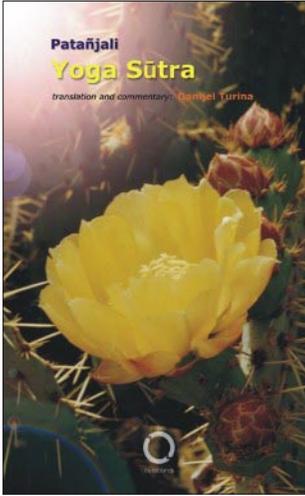


*The world will become perfect when it becomes inhabited by perfect people, and each individual has to work on his own perfection. Let us forget the missionary thing, forget preaching to others. Forget the “joyful news,” these are mere baits that divert us from our real problems. Let us turn to ourselves, and make ourselves into the examples of men, that we would wish to the world. Nothing more is expected from us. Let us attain the enlightenment ourselves, let us not attempt to enlighten the others. If we ourselves are filled with God, others will feel it without us having to tell them, and if they feel the need they will come and learn. The treasury of secrets is before us. All the secrets will be revealed. We will inherit the kingdom of God.
Let us begin.*

(excerpt)

Patañjali: Yoga Sūtra

(translation and commentary by Danijel Turina)



Yoga Sūtra is the basic scripture of yoga, in the sense of a Hindu philosophical view, essential for anyone who wants to gain deeper insight into the spiritual aspects of yoga. In translation and commentary by the founder and teacher of darśana-yoga, this text puts high demands before the reader, revealing the true nature of yoga as the quest for the highest reality through a union of study of the holy scriptures, the techniques of purification, and devotion to God.

Disturbed mind projects desires and their fulfillment into the sphere of the unreal. Within the unreal, there is no possibility of fulfillment, since fulfillment comes only from the real. Spirit turned toward the world therefore experiences suffering. Cessation of suffering is attained through cessation of projections, and by turning the consciousness inwards. Within his own consciousness, one observes reality, which is an aspect of the supreme reality. Calming the mind, and releasing multitudes of disturbances (kleśas) from consciousness, the subtlety of consciousness grows, and with it also the subtlety of the perceived objects. In observation of the object of greatest subtlety its objectivity is lost, or, in other words, there remains no difference between the observed, observation and the observer. Thus I Myself Am. I then perceive to be the sole reality. Left with nothing greater to attain, I stay firm in the highest of accomplishments.

(excerpt from the commentary)

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