

The Bhagavad Gita
Literal Translation
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First Discourse

The Hopelessness of Arjuna

Dhrtarastra said:

O Sanjaya, what did the sons of Pandu and mine do when they gathered on the sacred plain of Kuruksetra, eager for battle? (1.01)

Sanjaya said:

Having seen the army of the Pandavas ranged for battle, Prince Duryodhana went up to his acarya (teacher), Drona, and said: (1.02)

Look, O Teacher, at this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, which has been positioned by your talented pupil, the son of Drupada. (1.03)

There are in it heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna: Yuyudhana, Virata, and the great warrior (maharatha) Drupada, (1.04)

Dhrishtaketu, Cekitana, and the valiant king of Kasi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and the prominent man Saibya, (1.05)

The heroic Yudhamanyu, and the valiant Uttamauja; the son of Subhadra and the son of Draupadi, all proficient charioteers. (1.06)

I now mention, O best of the twice-born, who are the most distinguished among us, the commanders of my army, naming to you by way of example. (1.07)

Yourself and Bhishma, Karna, the victorious Krpa, Asvatthama and Vikarna, also Jayadratta, the son of Somadatta; (1.08)

And, many other heroes giving up their lives for me, fighting with various weapons, and all well skilled in the art of warfare. (1.09)

This army of ours, commanded by Bhisma is unbeatable, whereas that army of theirs which is under the protection of Bhima is inadequate. (1.10)

Therefore, now, do all of you, occupying your respective positions in the various divisions of the army, defend Bhisma only. (1.11)

The powerful grandsire Bhisma, the eldest of the Kuru reign, in order to cheer him (Duryodhana), roared as a lion and blew his conch. (1.12)

At this, and all at once, conches, kettledrums, cymbals, drums and horns were heard, and the sound of that was uncontrolled. (1:13)

Then, Madhava (Krsna) and the son of Pandu (Arjuna), who were seated in their grand chariot yoked to white horses, blew their divine conches. (1.14)

Hrsikesa (Krsna) blew the conch Pancajanya; and Dhananjaya (Arjuna, the winner of wealth) blew his conch Devadatta. Bhima, the performer of terrible deeds, blew his great conch Paundra. (1.15)

King Yudhisthira, the son of Kunti (Arjuna), blew his Anantavyaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosa and the Manipuspaka conches. (1.16)

The king of Kasi, an excellent archer; Sikhandi, the great chariot-warrior, Dhrstadyumna, Virata, and the unconquerable Satyaki; (1.17)

Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the Earth, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all individually in one accord blew their respective conches. (1.18)

The tumultuous uproar tore the hearts of the sons (people) of Dhrtarashtra's assembly, filling the earth and sky with sound. (1.19)

Then, looking at the sons of Dhrtarashtra standing ranged for battle, while the discharge of missiles began, Arjuna, the son of Pandu, whose emblem depicts Maruti (a monkey), took up his bow and spoke these words to Hrsikesa (Krsna), O Lord of Earth": (1.20-21)

Arjuna said:

O Acyuta (Immortal, Krsna), position my chariot between the two armies, that I may just see those who stand here desirous to fight, to know with whom I must combat in this act of war. (1.22)

I wish to look upon those who are assembled here, and are about to engage in battle eager to service in conflict the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra, achieving what he regards as best. (1:23)

Sanjaya said:

In response to Gudakesa's (Arjuna) request, O Bharata (Dhrtarashtra), Hrsikesa stationed that finest among chariots between the two armies. (1.24)

Confronting Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of earth, he said: O Partha (Arjuna), look at these assembled Kurus. (1.25)

Then, the son of Partha (Arjuna) saw ranged there in both the armies fathers (paternal uncles), grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and comrades, father-in-laws and friends. (1.26)

When the son of Kunti (Arjuna) saw that all those standing there in the ranks of the two armies were his kinsmen, he was overwhelmed with deepest pity and consequently said in sorrow: (1:27-28a)

Arjuna said:

Seeing these kinsmen, O Krsna, ranged, eager for combat, my limbs fail, and my mouth is dried up, my body quivers and my hair stands on end. (1.28b-29)

The Gandiva (bow) slips from my hand, and my skin is terribly burning. I am not able to stand, and my mind is spiralling as it were. (1.30)

I see opposing omens, O Kesava (Krsna), and do not see any good from killing my kinsmen in battle. (1.31)

I do not wish victory, O Krsna, nor kingdoms or pleasures. What is the use to us in having a kingdom, O Govinda (Krsna), or amusement and even life. (1.32)

Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures stand here for battle, having abandoned life and wealth; (1.33)

Teachers, fathers (paternal uncles), sons and grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and also (other) relatives. (1.34)

These, I do not want to kill, O Slayer of Madhusudana (Krsna), though they want to kill us, even for the sake to obtain the primacy over the three worlds; and much less for the sake of the earth! (1.35)

Killing these sons of Dhrtarashtra, what satisfaction can be ours, O Janardana (Maintainer of the people, Krsna)? On killing these offenders only sin will take hold of us. (1.36)

It is not correct to kill our own kinsmen, the sons of Dhrtarashtra, indeed, by killing our own people, how can we be happy, O Madhava (Krsna)? (1:37)

Although these, their minds overpowered by greediness, perceive no guilt in the extinction of the family and no sin in treachery to friends, yet, O Janardana (Krsna); why should we not learn to retreat from this sin, perceiving the guilt in the destruction of the family? (1.38-39)

In the annihilation of a family, the immemorial family traditions (dharma) are destroyed, and when these disappear, lawlessness overtakes the whole family. (1.40)

When lawlessness prevails, O Krsna, the women of the family become corrupted; and when women grow corrupt, O descendant of Varsneya (Krsna), there will be caste - confusion; (1.41)

And, the confusion of castes leads the family and those who have destroyed the families to hell. Their forefathers fall as well (to hell), deprived of their ritual offerings of rice-balls and water. (1:42)

By these evil deeds of those destroying the family, causing the fusion of castes (varna-samkara), the eternal family traditions are devastated. (1.43)

We have heard, O Janardana (Krsna), that those whose family traditions have been ruined dwell necessarily in hell. (1.44)

Alas! We have determined to commit a great sin, inasmuch as we are attempting to kill our own kinsmen through greediness for the pleasures of supremacy. (1:45)

It would be better for me, if the sons of Dhrtarashtra, weapons in hand, were to slay me in combat, while being unarmed and unable to resist. (1.46)

Having spoken as such, Arjuna sank down on the seat of his chariot, casting away his bow and arrow, his mind distracted with grief. (1.47)

Second Discourse

Sankhya Theory and Yoga Practices

Sanjaya said:

To him who was in this way overwhelmed with compassion and affliction, whose eyes were distraught and filled with tears, Madhava (Krsna, the destroyer of Madhu), spoke these words: (2:01)

The Supreme Lord said:

From where has this dejection come into your mind in this perilous hour? This is unknown to an Aryan, not leading to heaven but causing disgrace, O Arjuna. (2.02)

O Partha (Arjuna), yield not to unmanliness: it does not befit you. Cast off this vile faintheartedness and arise, Parantapa (Arjuna - Conqueror of foes). (2:03)

Arjuna said:

O Madhava (Krsna), how shall I attack with arrows in combat Bhisma and Drona, for they are worthy of respect, O Arisudana (O slayer of foes, Krsna)? (2.04)

For better were it here in this world to eat a beggar's food rather than by killing these teachers of high honour. However, were I to kill them, I should only enjoy wealth and worldly pleasures tainted with blood. (2.05)

We do not know which is the better alternative for us, to conquer them or they conquer us. There facing us stand Dhrtarustra's sons, whom having killed, we should not even care to live. (2:06)

My very being (svathava) is stained by the harmful taint of feeble pity, and my mind confounded about right and wrong (Dharma, Brahman who supports all). I ask you; tell me what is absolutely good. I am Your disciple, having surrounded myself to You, teach me for all my trust is in You. (2.07)

I see no means to dispel the sorrow which parches my senses, even after attaining unrivalled and prosperous kingdom on earth or even lordship over the gods themselves. (2:08)

Sanjaya said:

Having spoken like this to Hrsikesa (Krsna), the powerful Gudakesa, scorcher of the foe (Arjuna), fall silent, saying to Govinda (Krsna): ‘I will not fight’ and he held his peace. (2.09)

To him who was grieving, sitting amidst of the two armies, O Bharata (Arjuna), Hrsikesa (Krsna) smiling as it were, spoke these words: (2.10)

The Supreme Lord said:

You mourn for those who deserve no grief, and yet you speak words of wisdom. For the living or the dead wise men know no grief. (2.11)

Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will there be a time in the future when we shall cease to exist. (2.12)

Just as in this bodily form the Self (Soul) experiences childhood, youth and old age, so does it pass into another body (after death). In this, a thoughtful man has no doubts. (See also 15.08) (2.13)

The sense-contacts, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), which give rise to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, come and go, they are impermanent. Learn to endure them, O Bharata (Arjuna). (2.14)

It is the wise man who is not afflicted by them, who remains undaunted in pain and pleasure, who becomes fit to attain immortality, O chief among men (Arjuna). (2.15)

That which is unreal has no becoming, while the real never ceases to be. Both these have been perceived by the seers of the essence of things (Tattva). (2.16)

But know “That” (Brahman – Tat tvam asi) is indestructible by which the whole (universe) is pervaded. None can bring destruction of That, the Immutable. (2.17)

It is said, that these (our) bodies, indwelt by the Eternal embodied (Soul, the Self) who is eternal, indestructible and unknowable, are finite. Therefore, fight, O Bharata (Arjuna). (2.18)

He who regards that He (the embodied soul) can be a slayer and he who thinks he is slain, both of them are ignorant. He slays not, nor is he slain. (A parallel verse is read in KaU 2.19) (2.19)

He is not born, nor does He ever die. Never did He come to be, nor will he ever come to be again. Unborn, eternal, immutable and primeval, He is not slain when the body is slain. (See also KaU 2.18) (2.20)

The one who knows Him to be indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable, how can that man slay, or cause to be slain, O Partha (Arjuna)? (2.21)

Just as a man casts off his worn-out clothes, and puts on other new ones, so the embodied (Soul, Self) casts off his worn-out bodies and enters others, new ones. (2.22)

He (the embodied soul) cannot be cut by weapons, nor burnt by fire, nor waters wet him, nor the wind dry him up. (2.23)

He is uncleavable, unburnable, unwettable, and undryable. He is everlasting, all-pervading, stable, firm, and everlasting. (2.24)

It is said, that He is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchanging. Therefore, knowing He to be so, put away your useless sadness. (2.25)

Even if you believe He is constantly born and constantly dies, even so, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), you should not mourn. (2.26)

To that which is born, death is certain; and to one that dies, birth is certain. Therefore, this being unavoidable, you have no cause to mourn. (2.27)

O Bharata (Arjuna), unseen are the beginnings of beings, their middle course seen, and their end unseen again. So, what is there to mourn over? (2.28)

As a rare privilege may someone see Him, and also by rare privilege may another speak of Him, and as a rare privilege may still another hear Him. But even after all this, none understands Him at all. (See also KaU 2.07) (2.29)

He, the embodied (Soul, Self) in every one's body can never be slain, O Bharata (Arjuna). Therefore, it is not proper for you to mourn about any creature. (2.30)

Considering your own (caste) duty (dharma), you should not hesitate. For there is nothing more meritorious for a Ksatriya than a dutiful war. (2.31)

Providential for those Ksatriyas, O Partha, becoming involved in a war like this, presented by pure chance, like an open door to heaven. (2.32)

But if you will not fight this righteous battle, then, abandoning your own duty (dharma) and honour, you will incur sin. (2.33)

People also will always relate your dishonour; and, to one who has been highly honoured, dishonour is more than death. (2.34)

The great chariot-warriors will think that fear withdrew you from the battle; and, though greatly honoured by them before, you will incur their contempt. (2.35)

Your enemies, also, scorning your strength, will talk many abusive words. Can there be anything more painful than that? (2.36)

Killed, you will attain heaven; victorious, you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, O son of Kunti (O Kaunteya, Arjuna), arise, determined to fight. (2.37)

Take as equal pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat; prepare yourself for battle (your duty). In so doing you will bring no evil to yourself. (2.38)

This, the wisdom that has been taught to you is Sankhya (knowledge). Now listen to the wisdom of Karma-yoga, which possessing, O Partha (Arjuna), you shall cast off the bondage of action. (2.39)

In this there is no loss of effort, or even harm. Even a little of this discipline (dharma) protects one from great fear. (2.40)

Here, O Son of Kuru (Arjuna), the essence of the soul (buddhi) is will (vyavasaya). Many-branched and endless are the indecisive devoid of will. (2.41)

There are those who have no vision, whose minds are seduced by ornate words, rejoicing in the letter of the Vedas, O Partha (Arjuna), and they say: 'There is nothing but this.' (2.42)

They are wrapped with selfish desires, and regard the attainment of heaven as their highest goal. They hold to specific rites whose fruit is rebirth, and the attainment of pleasure and power. (See also KaU 2.05, IsU 09) (2.43)

For them who are attached to pleasure and power, and whose minds are carried away by such teaching, they have not the determination ever to attain Samadhi (the third state of consciousness in meditation). (2.44)

The Vedas cover the three Gunas of Nature. Be, O Arjuna, above the three Gunas, free from pairs of opposites (dualities), unconcerned with acquisition and preservation, always firm in goodness, and centred in the Self. (2.45)

Just as a reservoir is of little use by the side of an all-spreading flood of water, the same there is in all Vedas for an enlightened Brahmana. (2.46)

Your concern is with the respective action alone; its fruits are never within your control. So, let not the fruit of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be the non-performance of action. (2.47)

O Dhannanjaya (Arjuna), steadfast in devotion perform your action, casting off attachment, remaining the same in success and failure. Equilibrium is called yoga (Karma-yoga). (2.48)

Truly, mere action is far inferior to devotion in wisdom (buddhi-yoga). O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), take refuge in wisdom (buddhi). Piteous are they whose motive is in the fruit (of action). (2.49)

He, who is fixed in wisdom, discards both good and evil works. Therefore, take refuge in yoga (spiritual discipline on the way of oneness with the Supreme Being). Yoga is skill in action. (2.50)

For those wise men united in wisdom, having renounced the fruit of action, liberated from the bonds of birth, they go to that region that knows no ill. (2.51)

When your mind shall pass beyond the veil of delusion, then you will rise to indifference to what has been heard, and what is yet to be heard. (2.52)

When the mind, bewildered by the Scriptures (sruti), stands motionless and still, fixed in contemplation (Samadhi), then you will attain Yoga (union with the divine will). (2.53)

Arjuna said:

O Kesava (Krsna), what is the mark of the man of steady wisdom (knowledge), who is constant in contemplation? How does the man of steady knowledge speak, sit and walk? (2.54)

The Supreme Lord said:

O Partha (Arjuna), when a man has abandoned all the desires of the mind, contented in the Self alone, then is he called a man of steady knowledge. (2.55)

He whose mind is undismayed in calamities, free from longing for pleasures, from whom passion (raga), fear and anger have fled, such a man is called a sage of steady mind. (2.56)

Who has no attachment for any thing, who rejoices not at whatever good is happening to him, nor hates the bad coming his way, such a one is firmly established in knowledge. (2.57)

When a person completely withdraws his senses from the objects of sense, as the tortoise withdraws its limbs from all sides, such a one is firmly established in knowledge. (2.58)

The objects of sense abandon the abstinent man, but not the longing for them. But this relish vanishes at the vision of the Supreme Being. (2.59)

O son of Kunti (Kaunteya, Arjuna), the turbulent senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, seduce forcibly his mind. (2.60)

Having restrained them all, a man should remain steadfast, with intent on Me alone. He whose senses are so controlled is steady in knowledge. (2.61)

When a man thinks of objects of sense develops attachment to them. From attachment arises desire, and desire results in anger. (2.62)

From anger comes bewilderment; from bewilderment confused memory. Confused memory destroys the conscience, and once his conscience is destroyed, he perishes. (2.63)

He attains peace, who, disciplined, approaches objects with the senses devoid of attraction and repulsion, and brought under his self-control. (2.64)

In peace, all misery has come to an end, for of him whose heart is tranquil, the mind soon becomes steady. (2.65)

There is no pure knowledge for the unsteady, nor for the unsteady concentration, and for him without concentration there is no peace, and for the peaceless how can there be happiness? (2.66)

Hither and thither the senses rove, and when the mind is attuned to them, sweeps away his knowledge, just as the wind carries away a ship upon the waters. (2.67)

Therefore, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), he whose senses are restrained from the objects of sense, of him his knowledge is steady. (2.68)

In what for other beings is night, for the disciplined man is the time of waking. When all beings are awake, then it is night for the Sage who sees. (2.69)

He attains peace, into whom all desires flow as waters flow into the ocean, which, filled from all sides, remains unmoving in its depths, but not the desirer of desires. (2.70)

That man attains peace who puts off all desires and goes about without attachment, selfishness and self-importance. (2.71)

O Partha (Arjuna), this is the Brahmik state. Having attained to this, none is bewildered. Remaining in this state even at the time of death, one attains Brahma-nirvana. (2.72)

Third Discourse

Karma Yoga

Arjuna said:

O Janardana (Krsna), if you think that knowledge is superior to action, why then, O Kesava (Krsna), do you command me to carry out a terrible action? (3.01)

With these perplexing words, You confuse as it were my mind. Tell me with certainty the one way by which I may attain bliss. (3.02)

The Supreme Lord said:

O sinless one (Arjuna), as it has been stated by Me before, in this world there is a twofold path, that of knowledge (Jñana-yoga) for those who contemplate and that of action (Karma-yoga) for those who act. (3.03)

Not by leaving action undone does man win freedom from the bond of action, nor by renunciation alone does he attain perfection. (3.04)

Not for a moment can a man remain without acting; for every man is helpless, and forced to work by the impulses born of nature. (3.05)

The deluded who controls his limbs through which he acts, but sits thinking in his mind about sense-objects, is said to be a hypocrite. (3.06)

But he who controls his senses with his mind, O Arjuna, using the organs of action without attachment, is worthily engaged in Karma-yoga. (3.07)

Perform the action that is prescribed for you, for action is superior to inaction. And even the maintenance of the body would not be possible for you by inaction. (3.08)

Except for action performed for the sake of sacrifice (selfless service), all others holds the world action-bound. Therefore, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), perform your action free from attachment. (3.09)

Of old, the Lord of Creation (Prajapati) emanating mankind together with sacrifice (selfless service), said: By this you shall prolong your lineage; let this be to you the cow that gives the milk of all your desires. (3.10)

With this you shall sustain the gods, so that the gods may on their turn sustain you. Thus, sustaining one another, you shall attain the highest good. (3.11)

For, so sustained by sacrifice (selfless service), the gods will grant you your desired enjoyments. Whoso enjoys their gift, without offering to Them in return, is indeed a thief. (3.12)

The righteous who eat of the leavings of the sacrifice, are freed from all sins; but, impious are they, and evil do they eat who cook food for their own (selfish) sakes. (See also RV 10.117.06) (3.13)

From food creatures are born, and food from rain; and rain comes forth from sacrifice (selfless service); and sacrifice is born of action. (3.14)

Know that action comes from Brahman, and Brahman is from the Imperishable. Therefore, Brahman, the all-pervading, is ever present in sacrifice (selfless service). (3.15)

He who on earth does not follow the wheel thus set in motion, who is of sinful life, indulging in the senses, O Partha (Arjuna), he lives in vain. (3.16)

However, the man who rejoices in the Self-alone, who is satisfied with the Self-alone, in the Self-alone content, there is nothing he needs to do. (3.17)

For him, there is here no interest in what is done, or what is not done. Nor does he depend upon any contingent being for attaining any purpose. (3.18)

Therefore, without attachment perform what you have to do, for performing action without attachment, man really reaches the Supreme. (3.19)

It was through action only that Janaka and others tried to attain perfection. Even again for the protection of the world you should perform action. (3.20)

For whatever the noblest does, is also done by others; whatever norm he sets up, the world will follow. (3.21)

O Partha (Arjuna), in the three worlds there is nothing that I must accomplish at all. Nor anything unattained which I have not attained, yet I am engaged in action. (3.22)

For were I not be tirelessly engaged in action, then, would men in all matters follow My path, O Partha (Arjuna). (3.23)

If I were not engaged in action, these worlds would fall to ruin, and I should be the cause of confusion of castes, and destroy these creatures. (3.24)

Therefore, O Bharata (Arjuna), as the ignorant act attached to action, the wise man should perform action unattached, longing the welfare of the world. (3.25)

Let the wise man not perturb the mind of ignorant people attached to action, let him encourage them to do all actions as himself, fulfilling them with devotion (selfless service, in the spirit of yoga). (See also 3.29) (3.26)

All actions are done by the constituents of nature (prakrti). He, whose mind is fooled by the ego, thinks 'I am the doer'. (See also 5.09, 13.29, and 14.19) (3.27)

But he, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), who knows that these constituents and actions are distinct from himself, and that only the Constituents on constituents are acting, is not attached. (3.28)

Those deluded by the constituents of Nature (prakrti, material nature) are attached to the actions of those functions. The wise should not perturb the unwise whose knowledge is imperfect. (see also 3.26) (3.29)

Cast all your actions on Me, with your mind fixed in the Self, freed from hope and selfishness, devoid of mental fever, do fight (engage in battle). (3.30)

Those who constantly practise this teaching of Mine with faith and without cavilling, they too will find release from the bondage of actions. (3.31)

But those who, carping at My teaching, and do not practice it, know them as deluded in all knowledge, mindless and lost. (3.32)

Even the man of knowledge behaves according to his own nature. All beings follow their nature. So, what can repression do? (3.33)

In all the senses love and hate (affection and aversion) are turned to their proper objects; let no one become victim to their power, for they are enemies of the path. (3.34)

Better to perform one's own duty (dharma), though deprived of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better to die in one's own duty, for it is perilous to follow another's duty. (See also 18.47) (3.35)

Arjuna said:

O Varsneya (Krsna), by what provocation does a man commit sin as though he were constrained by force, unwilling though he be? (3.36)

The Supreme Lord said:

It is desire, it is anger, arising from rajas (passion) constituent, all-devouring and all sinful. Know this to be your enemy on earth. (3.37)

Just as fire is surrounded by smoke, a mirror by dust, an embryo enclosed by the womb, so "This" (knowledge, Brahma-jnana) is covered by it (rajas, lust). (3.38)

Covered, O son of Kunti (Arjuna) is knowledge by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is insatiable fire. (3.39)

The senses, the mind and intellect (reason) are said to be its seat. With their support, it fences knowledge in, deluding the embodied Self. (3.40)

Therefore, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna) restrain the senses first, and destroy this evil thing (sin), which is destructive for knowledge and realisation. (3.41)

They say that the senses are superior to the body, higher than the senses is the mind, yet higher than the mind is the intellect, but what is greater than the intellect is "He" (the Supreme). (See also KaU 3.10 and Gita 6.07-08) (3.42)

Know "Him" (Atma, the Self) who is beyond the intellect, subduing the self (one's own mind) by the Self. O mighty-armed (Arjuna), destroy the enemy swift to change in the form of lust, hard to conquer. (3.43)

Fourth Discourse

Jnana-Yoga

The Supreme Lord said:

I taught this changeless way of Yoga to Vivasvan; Vivasvan told it to Manu and Manu to Ikshvaku. (4.01)

So, was the oral tradition from one to another handed on to the Royal Sages who came to know it, O Parantapa (O vanquisher of foes/Arjuna); but, after a considerable time, this teaching of Yoga ceased to be in the world. (4.02)

This same ancient Yoga has been revealed to you today by Me, because you are My devotee and friend, for this is the Supreme Secret. (4.03)

Arjuna said:

Your birth was later, and that of Visvasvan earlier. How should I understand that You taught this Yoga in the beginning? (4.04)

The Supreme Lord said:

Many births have I past through, as well as you have, O Arjuna; all these I know, but you do not know them, O Parantapa (O vanquisher of foes/Arjuna). (4.05)

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all created things, yet by My own nature, I am born through My own Maya (the power of thought that produces form). (4.06)

Whenever there is a decline of Dharma (righteousness) and Adharma (unrighteousness) grows powerfully, then, O Bharata (Arjuna), I manifest Myself. (4.07)

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evildoers, for the establishment of righteousness, I am born from age to age. (See also Tr 1.120.03-04) (4.08)

He, who knows My divine birth and action (Karma), comes not to birth again on leaving the body, he comes to Me, O Arjuna. (4.09)

Freed from passion, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire (tapas) of knowledge, many have entered into My Being. (4.10)

In whatever way men approach Me, in the same way do I return them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Partha (Arjuna). (4.11)

They who desire success in their actions worship here the deities, because the fruit of such action comes quickly in this world of men. (4.12)

The four caste systems were generated by Me in agreement to the division of energies and actions. Know Me to be the doer of them, though the actionless and immutable. (See also 18.41) (4.13)

Actions can never affect Me, nor the yearning for their fruits. The one who knows Me like this is not bound by actions. (4.14)

This knowing, the ancients too performed actions in the hope of liberation. So, also you undertake action as the ancients did in the days of old. (4.15)

What is action? What is inaction? As to this, even the sages are confused. I shall teach you that action, and once you have understood My words, you shall be liberated from evil. (4.16)

One must understand what is meant by action; discriminate unlawful action, and what inaction is. Profound is the way of action. (4.17)

He who can see inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men, integrated (yukta), he is the performer of all action. (See also 3.05; 3.27; 5.08 and 13.29) (4.18)

He whose initiatives are all free from desires and purposes, and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge, the wise calls him a sage. (4.19)

Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of action, ever content, depending on nothing, though always engaged in actions, he is not doing anything. (4.20)

Having given up desire, restraining his mind and senses, becoming free from all possessions, performing action as is needed for the body maintenance, he does not commit sin. (4.21)

Content with what comes of its own accord, surmounting all dualities, knowing no envy, equally in success and failure, though acting he is not bound. (4.22)

Man's attachment gone, is liberation won, whose mind is established in knowledge, and who performs action for the sake of sacrifice (selfless service), his whole action melts away. (4.23)

The offering is Brahman; Brahman is the clarified butter, offered by Brahman in Brahman's fire. He who fixes his mind (samadhi) on Brahman, indwelt by Brahman, to Brahman he must go. (Also see 9.16) (4.24)

Some yogis offer sacrifices to the deities; others sacrifice (selfless service) only by pouring sacrifice into the fire of Brahman. (4.25)

Some others offer the hearing, the senses and the rest in the fires of restraint; others the senses' proper objects as sound and the like in the fires of the senses. (4.26)

Still others offer all the functions of the senses and of the vital forces into the fire of Yoga of mental control, kindled by knowledge. (4.27)

Others offer up their wealth, others through austerity or their practice of Yoga as sacrifice, while ascetics (sages of severe vows) make study and knowledge (of Scripture) their sacrifice. (4.28)

Yet others offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath (Prana) in the incoming breath (Apana), and the incoming breath (Apana) in the outgoing breath (Prana), on breath control intend (pranayama). (4.29)

Others regulate their food, and offer up breaths in breaths (their Prana into Prana). All these are knowers of sacrifice, for by sacrifice they have destroyed their sins. (4.30)

Eating the leavings of the sacrifice, the food of immortality (amrta), attain the eternal Brahman. This world is not from him who performs no sacrifice, how then the other world, O best among the Kurus (Arjuna)? (See also 4.38 and 5.06) (4.31)

So many and various are the sacrifices set forth at the mouth of Brahman. Know that they are all born of action, for when you know this you shall be liberated. (See also 3.14) (4.32)

Superior is the sacrifice of knowledge than the sacrifice of material objects, O Parantapa (O Vanquisher of foes/Arjuna). All action, without exception, O Partha (Arjuna), finds their merging in knowledge. (4.33)

Learn to know this by discipleship (in humble reverence), by questioning, and by service. For the wise ones of Truth who see things as they really are, will teach you wisdom. (4.34)

Once you have known this, you will never more be the subject to such confusion, O Pandava (Arjuna), for by this you will see all beings without exception in yourself (yes, everyone), and then in Me. (See also 6.29, 6.30, 11.07, 11.13) (4.35)

Even if you were the very worst among evil-doers, you will sail across all sin in this boat of knowledge. (4.36)

As a kindled fire reduces firewood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the knowledge fire reduce all actions to ashes. (4.37)

Nothing on earth is as purifying as knowledge. He who is perfected by Yoga finds this in time of his own accord in himself and by himself. (See also 4.31, 5.06, and 18.78) (4.38)

A man of faith, intended on knowledge, his senses subdued, attains it, and having attained it, attains at once the supreme peace. (4.39)

The man, unwise, without faith, of a doubting mind, is ruined. For who doubts, there is neither this world, nor the one after, nor any happiness. (4.40)

O Dhannanjaya (Arjuna), he who has renounced actions by Yoga (spiritual discipline), whose doubts have been destroyed by knowledge, who has realised himself, actions bind him not. (4.41)

And so, with the sword of knowledge (of the Self), cut this doubt of you which through ignorance is still lurking in your heart, take refuge in yoga and stand up, O Bharata (Arjuna). (4.42)

Fifth Discourse

Sannyasa-Yoga

Arjuna said:

You now praise renunciation of actions, O Krsna, and again Yoga. Tell me decisively which of the two is better. (See also 5.05) (5.01)

The Supreme Lord said:

Renunciation of actions and Yoga (selfless action), both lead to the highest bliss; but of the two, Yoga of action is superior to renunciation of action. (5.02)

He should be known as a perpetual ascetic (Sannyasi, one renouncing all), who neither hates nor desires, for surmounting all dualities (free from the pairs of opposites), O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), he gains easily release from bondage. (5.03)

The simple-minded, not the wise, say of Sankhya (theory, knowledge) and Yoga (practise) as different. Applying oneself to one earnestly, obtains the benefits of both. (5.04)

The state which is attained by Sankhyas is also reached by the Yogis. He sees, who sees Sankhya (theory, knowledge) and Yoga (practise) as one. (See also 6.01 and 6.02) (5.05)

Hard to attain is renunciation, O mighty-armed (Arjuna) without the practise of Yoga. A sage well-versed and integrated in Yogic exercise (yoga-yukta) soon reaches Brahman. (See also 4.31, 4.38 and 5.08) (5.06)

He who is equipped with yoga, whose mind is pure and senses subdued, whose Self has become the Self of all beings, is not affected by actions even though he acts. (5.07)

“Look, nothing do I do”, so thinks the integrated (yukta) one (Sannyasi), who knows the essence of things, and not seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, talking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, he believes: “The senses only act among their proper objects.” (See also 3.27, 13.29, and 14.19) (5.08-09)

He who acts, offering all actions to Brahman (the Supreme, the Self-existent), abandoning attachment, is not affected by sin, as a lotus pedal by water. (5.10)

Yogis perform action without attachment, merely using the body, the mind, the intellect, and even the senses, for purification of the self. (5.11)

The integrated one having renounced the fruit of actions attains the abiding peace. The one not integrated, whose actions are prompted by desire, attached to its fruits, is bound. (5.12)

The embodied one who has won full control over the senses, in thought having renounced all action, rests serenely in the nine-gated city (the body), neither acting or causing to act. (5.13)

The Lord of the world does not engender the idea of agency or objects of actions, nor the bond that works to fruit conjoins; it is Nature (svabhava) that performs this. (5.14)

The Lord accepts neither the evil nor even the good deed of anyone at all. Knowledge is enclosed by ignorance; thereby are mortals fooled. (5.15)

But those whose ignorance is destroyed by knowledge of the Self: their knowledge, is like the sun, shedding light on “That” (tat), the Supreme (Brahman). (5.16)

Thinking on That (the Supreme), merged in That, established in That, devoted to That alone, they step to the state from which there is no return, their sins washed away by knowledge. (5.17)

Sages see the selfsame thing (sama) in a Brahmana (priest, intellectual class in India) with learning and humility, as in a cow or elephant, also in a dog, or even an outcast. (See also 6.29) (5.18)

Even here on earth, the created is conquered by them whose mind is stilled in equality. For Brahman is devoid of imperfection and ever the same (sama); therefore, they stand still in Brahman. (See also 18.55 and ChU 2.23.0) (5.19)

He who knows Brahman never rejoices in attaining some pleasant thing, nor grieves when the unpleasant comes his way; steadfast and stilled his mind unconfused, that knower of Brahman (Supreme Being) is established in Brahman. (5.20)

His self detached from contacts with the outside world, finds the joy (sukha) which is in the Self, having the self engaged in the contemplation of Brahman, he attains unending bliss. (5.21)

For the pleasures that are contact-born, assuredly give rise to pain, having a beginning and an end, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), in these a wise man does not rejoice. (See also 18.38) (5.22)

He who can even in this world withstand, before the release from the body, the impulse of desire and anger, he is a yogi, and a happy man. (5.23)

He who is joyful within, who has also found his bliss and light within, such a yogi attains Brahman, draws close to Nirvana that is Brahman too. (5.24)

The seers, their sins destroyed, their doubts dispelled, self-controlled and intent upon the welfare of all beings, attain Nirvana of Brahman (brahanirvanam). (5.25)

Those devotees who are free from desire and anger, who have their mind under control, and who have known the Self (have Self-knowledge), are established in Brahma-nirvana. (5.26)

Having all external contacts excluded and fixing his gaze between the eyebrows, equalising the inward and outward breaths as they pass up and down the nostrils; controlling the senses, mind and intellect, solely pursuing moksa (liberation), the sage, who has forever banished desire, fear and anger, is truly liberated. (5.27-28)

On knowing Me, as the Lord of sacrifices and austerities, the great Ruler of all the worlds, and the friend of all beings, he reaches peace. (5.29)

Sixth Discourse

Dhyana –Yoga

The Supreme Lord said:

He who performs such action as duty, without depending on the fruits of action, he is a sannyasin (ascetic) and a yogi, not he who ceases from sacrificial fire and rites. (6.01)

Know that what is termed renunciation is the practice of Yoga, O Pandava (Arjuna), for without renouncing set purpose (sankalpa), no one can become a yogi. (See also 5.01, 5.05, 6.01, and 18.02) (6.02)

For the sage who desires to attain yoga, action is said to be the means. For the same sage, when he has attained yoga, it is said that serenity (samah) is the means. (6.03)

For the one who knows no attachment to objects of sense and actions, when he has renounced all set purpose, then he is said to have attained yoga. (6.04)

Let him raise the self by the Self, and let him not lower himself; for truly only the Self is the friend of the self, and also the Self the self's enemy. (6.05)

The Self is the friend of the self of him whose self is by the Self conquered; but to the unrestrained self, the Self will definitely act as an enemy. (6.06)

The Supreme Self (higher self) of the self-controlled, who knows tranquillity, is steadfast in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour. (6.07)

The Yogi whose “self” is satisfied in knowledge learnt, who remains rock-seated, with senses subdued, he is said to be an integrated, and for whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are equal. (6.08)

Excellent he whose attitude is the same towards benefactors, friends, companions, enemies, the indifferent, the neutrals, the hateful, relatives, the good and the evil ones. (6.09)

Let the Yogi constantly concentrate his mind on yoga, remaining alone in a solitary place, with mind and body under full control, free from desires and attachment to material possessions. (6.10)

Let him for himself set up a firm seat in a clean place, neither too high nor yet too low, on the sacred kusa grass, covered with a deer-skin and over it a cloth. (6.11)

There let him sit, and making the mind one-pointed, with the motions of thought and senses restrained, fixed on his seat practise yoga for the purification of the Self. (6.12)

Remaining still, holding the body, head and neck erect, let him fix his gaze on the tip of his nose, without looking around. (6.13)

Serene minded, fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy (of the Brahmachari), the mind controlled, thinking on Me in total concentration, let him sit with intent on Me as the supreme goal. (See also 4.29, 5.27, 8.10 and 8.12) (6.14)

So, the Yogi ever integrated in the Self, his mind restrained, attains to the peace which has Nirvana (nirvana...) as its end, and which subsists in Me. (...paramam). (6.15)

However, O Arjuna, yoga is not for him, who eats too much, nor for him who does not eat at all; nor for him who sleeps too much, nor yet for him who stays awake too long. (6.16)

But, yoga is for him who is regulated (yukta) in food and recreation, who is regulated in all his deeds and gestures, who is regulated in sleeping as in walking, achieving a yoga which destroys all pain. (6.17)

When the well-controlled mind is established in the Self alone, free from longing after all desirable things, then it is said, that the one is at peace. (6.18)

As a lamp may stand not flickering in a windless place – this has been likened with the disciplined mind of a Yogi, absorbed in the yoga of the Self. (6.19)

When the mind is at rest, quieted by the practise of yoga; when seeing the Self by the self, he finds fulfilment in his own Self. (6.20)

When he knows that utmost joy which, transcending the senses, can be grasped by the intellect; when standing still (in the Self), he never departs from reality. (See also KaU 3.12) (6.21)

When, having reached it, he thinks that there is no greater acquisition beyond it; therein established, he is not dislodged by any sorrow, even in the greatest suffering: (6.22)

That state is known by the name of yoga (viyogan), the unlinking from the union with pain. This is the yoga which must be brought about with firm resolve and an undismayed mind. (6.23)

Abandoning without remainder all desires which arise from thought, controlling the senses from every side by the mind; (6.24)

His intellect held fast in steadfastness, let he come little by little to rest, having made the mind abide in the Self, thinking of nothing else. (6.25)

By whatever matter the flickering and unsteady mind wanders away, he should hold it back, and subject it to the Self alone. (6.26)

Supreme bliss is for the Yogi whose mind is stilled, whose passion is laid to rest, who is sinless, and of the nature of Brahman. (6.27)

The Yogi, in this way, always integrating the Self, freed from all sins, attains with ease the infinite bliss of Brahman's touch. (6.28)

He, whose self is integrated in yoga, sees the Self abiding in all beings, and all beings in the Self, seeing the same everywhere. (See also 4.35, 5.18) (6.29)

He, who sees Me everywhere, and sees everything in Me, for him I am not lost, nor is he lost for Me. (6.30)

He, who embraces unity, worships Me as abiding in all beings, that Yogi lives in Me, whatever his mode of life. (6.31)

O Arjuna, he who, in comparison with himself, sees the same everywhere in pleasure as in pain, he is considered to be the perfect Yogi. (6.32)

Arjuna said:

O destroyer of Madhu (Madhusudana/Krsna), the yoga of equanimity that you have preached, I see not a firm foundation for it, owing to the wavering of the mind. (6.33)

For the mind, O Krsna, is truly unsteady, turbulent, strong and difficult to curb, I think it as hard to hold as the wind. (6.34)

The Supreme Lord said:

herein, there is no doubt, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), the mind is hard to curb and fickle; but it may be curbed by untiring practice and detachment. (6.35)

I hold that yoga is hard to achieve for someone whose self is unsubdued; but he who strives, self-controlled, it can be won by the appropriate means. (6.36)

Arjuna said:

He who is lacking self-control, even though his faith, his mind wandering away from Yoga, failing to attain perfection in yoga, what is his end, O Krsna? (6.37)

Both objects unachieved, does he not perish like a split cloud, his firm foundation gone, O mighty-armed (Krsna), confused on Brahman's path? (6.38)

Consent, O Krsna, to dispel completely this doubt of mine; for none is to be found except Yourself able to destroy this doubt. (6.39)

The Supreme Lord said:

O Partha (Arjuna), neither in this world nor in the life to come is there destruction for him; for, no doer of righteousness, O beloved, treads the path of grief. (6.40)

Having reached the worlds of the righteous and lived there endless years, he who fell from yoga is reborn in the house of the pious and prosperous. (6.41)

Or, else he may be born in a family of wise yogis only; but the kind of birth is harder to obtain in this world. (6.42)

There he regains the knowledge belonging to his former body, and strives more than before for perfection, O son of the Kurus (Arjuna). (6.43)

By that former practice he is irresistibly motivated in spite of himself. Even he who inquires after the practice of yoga rises beyond the Brahmik word (the Vedas). (6.44)

But the yogi, striving with utmost zeal, cleansed from sin, fully perfected through many births, then reaches the Supreme goal. (6.45)

The yogi is thought superior to the ascetics; he is even considered superior to men of knowledge; he is also superior to men of action, therefore become a yogi, O Arjuna. (6.46)

And, among all yogis, he who full of faith worships Me with his inner Self absorbed in Me, he is thought by Me as the most fully integrated. (6.47)

Seventh Discourse

Vynana –Yoga

The Supreme Lord said:

With the mind attached to Me, O Partha, engaged in yogic practices, taking refuge in Me, hear now how you shall know Me fully and without doubt. (7.01)

I shall completely teach you this knowledge combined with experience, leaving nothing unsaid. This knowing, there remains nothing left to be known. (See also MuU 1.01.03) (7.02)

Among thousands of men, one maybe will strive for perfection; and even among those who strive having won perfection, only one, maybe, know Me as I really am. (7.03)

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect (Buddhi) and ego (Ahamkara, sense of self), these are the eightfold divisions of My nature (Prakriti). (See also 13.05) (7.04)

This is the lower (Prakriti)(Apara-sakti), but know My other nature the higher (Prakriti) (Para-sakti), the life-element, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), by which this universe (jagat) is kept maintained. (7.05)

Know that from these (two Natures) all beings take their birth. Therefore, I am the origin of the whole universe and also its end. (See also 13.26) (7.06)

There is nothing whatsoever higher than I, O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), in Me the universe (sarvan) is strung, like clustered pearls upon a thread. (7.07)

I am the flavour in water, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), I am the radiance in moon and sun; in all the Vedas the OM syllable, sound in ether, and manhood in all men. (7.08)

I am the pure fragrance in the earth, the flame's onset in fire; I am the life in all beings, and I am the fierce austerity in ascetics. (7.09)

O Partha (Arjuna), know Me as the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the intelligent, and the glory of the glorious. (7.10)

And I am the power of the powerful, knowing no passion nor attachment; and in contingent beings I am the desire unopposed to duty (Dharma), O lord of the Bharatas (Arjuna). (7.11)

Know too that all the objects of goodness (Sattva), passion (Rajas), or ignorance (Tamas) proceed from Me, but I am not in them, they are in Me. (See also 9.04 and 9.05) (7.12)

By these three states of being composed of gunas, this entire world is led astray, and do not know that I am far beyond them and immutable. (7.13)

For all this My divine Maya (power), caused by the gunas (the three modes), is hard to transcend. Therefore, whoever shall put his trust in Me alone, pass beyond this uncanny Maya. (See also 14.26, 15.19; and 18.66) (7.14)

The doers of evil, the deluded, the base, put not their trust in Me; their mind seduced by this uncanny Maya (power), they have embraced a devilish form of life (bhava). (7.15)

Fourfold are the virtuous people who worship Me, O Arjuna, the afflicted, the ones who look for knowledge, the ones who strive for gain (self-interested), and the men of knowledge (the learned, the wise), O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna). (See also TR 1.21.03) (7.16)

Of these, is the man of knowledge, ever integrated, worshipping the One, is the best: to such a man I am exceedingly dear, and he is dear to Me. (7.17)

Noble and exalted are all these, but the man of knowledge, do I regard as My very Self; for his self integrated, is fixed on Me, the highest goal. (See also 9.29) (7.18)

At the close of many births, the man of knowledge takes refuge in Me, concluding that Vasudeva's son (Krsna) is all. Such a noble soul (Mahatma) is very rare. (7.19)

Those whose knowledge has been swept away by various desires, resort to other deities (Devas), engaged with various rules and precepts, constrained by their own nature. (7.20)

Whatever form (whatever deity) a devotee with faith desires to worship, that very faith I confirm in him, making it steadfast. (7.21)

Firmly established (yukta) in that faith, he engages in the worship of that form; from which he obtains his desires, though I am the true dispenser. (7.22)

However, finite is the reward of such a man of little intelligence. To the deities go the worshippers of the deities, but My devotees come to Me. (7.23)

The foolish ones think I am the Unmanifested, as having manifestation, knowing not My supreme nature, immutable and superior. (7.24)

I am not revealed to all, because concealed (as I am) by Yoga-Maya (the creative power of yoga, all things being the thought-forms of the One). This deceived world knows Me not, the Unborn and Changeless. (See also 5.16) (7.25)

I know, O Arjuna, all beings past, present and yet to come, but no one knows Me. (7.26)

Due to the delusion of the pairs of opposites (or, the dualities, dvandva), arising from like and dislike (attraction and repulsion), O Bharata (Arjuna), all contingent beings are subject to illusion at birth, O Parantapa (O harasser of foes, Arjuna). (7.27)

But those men of pure deeds whose sins have come to an end, released from the delusive pairs of opposites (the dualities), steadfast in their vows, they worship Me. (7.28)

They who, putting their trust in Me, striving for liberation (Moksa) from decay and death, they realise in full the Brahman, the Self and all action (karma). (7.29)

Those who realise Me in Adhibhuta (physical region), in the Adhidaiva (the spiritual or divine region), and in that of Adhiyajna (region of sacrifice), steadfastly realise Me, even at the time of death. (7.30)

Eighth Discourse

Abhyasa-Yoga

Arjuna said:

What is That (tad) Brahman? What is Adhyatma (spiritual light, self-knowledge), and what is action (Karma), O Purushottama (O Krsna). And, what is Adhibhuta (contingent beings, the physical region)? Also, what is called Adhidaiva (the spiritual or divine region)? (8.01)

What is the meaning of Adhiyajna (the Lord of sacrifice), and who is in this body, O Madhusudana (Krsna)? Also, how at the time of death, are you to be known by the self-controlled? (8.02)

The Supreme Lord said:

The Imperishable (Akshara) is Brahman, the Supreme Being (Cosmic Intelligence); His essential nature (svabhava) is called Adhyatma (Self-knowledge); the creative force (visarga) is known as 'action' (karma); (8.03)

Knowledge of Adhibhuta (of contingent beings) is My perishable existence, and Purusha (god-man, living entity, living soul) is the divine (spiritual) region (Adhidaivata). The Adhiyajna (the Lord of sacrifice, Entity of sacrifice) tells of Me here in this body, O best of the embodied (Arjuna). (8.04)

The one, who, at the time of death, leaving the body goes forth thinking of Me alone, accedes to My divinity (mad-bhava), there is no doubt about this. (See also PrU 3.10) (8.05)

On whatever form (bhava) a man thinks about at the time of passing, that alone does he accede, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), because he has ever been engaged in the thought thereof. (8.06) (See also ChU 3.14.01) (8.06)

Therefore, at all times only remember Me and fight. With mind and intellect fixed on Me, you will without doubt come to Me. (8.07)

Let one's thoughts be integrated in the yoga of constant practice, not going over to anything else; so, by constantly meditating, O Partha (Arjuna) , one reaches the Supreme, Resplendent Purusha (the All-Highest). (8.08)

One who meditates on the Omniscient, the Ancient Seer, the Ruler of all things, smaller than the atom, the Dispenser of all, whose form is inconceivable, who is as radiant as the sun beyond the darkness; (8.09)

And who, at the time of death, with a steady (yukta) mind sustained by devotion, and the power of yoga properly fixing the vital breath (prana) right between the eyebrows, he reaches the Supreme, Resplendent Purusha. (8.10)

The imperishable goal called aksara (Brahman, Aksara Brahman) of which the Vedic scholars declare, into which the controlled and passion-free Sanyasins (ascetics) enter, desiring that which the Brahmacharya (the vow of continence) prescribes, that path will I declare to you in brief. (8.11)

All the gates of the body closed up, the mind confined within the heart, fixing one's life-breath in the head, engaged in firm yogic practices, pronouncing the "OM", the one-syllabled Brahman, thinking on Me, he who goes forth, leaving the body, treads the highest path (goes to the high goal or refuge). (8.12-13)

Who bears Me in mind unceasingly, thinking of nothing else at all, to him I am easily attainable, O Partha (Arjuna), of this ever integrated yogi. (8.14)

Having come to Me, these noble souls are no longer subject to rebirth, that transitory abode of pain, not unending, for they have reached the highest perfection (sansiddhi, the supreme prize). (8.15)

The worlds (spheres), beginning with the world (sphere) of Brahman, dissolve and evolve, but he who comes to Me, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), there is no rebirth. (See also 9.25) (8.16)

Those who know that a thousand yugas (ages) lasts one day of Brahma (the Creator), and for a thousand yugas (ages) one such night. This knowing, they know day and night. (8.17)

From the Unmanifested all things manifest proceed at the coming of the day; and then at the coming of the night they merge again, even in "That" called the Unmanifested. (8.18)

This whole host of beings, coming into being repeatedly, is helplessly dissolved at the coming of the night, O Partha (Arjuna), and at dawn of day, it rises up again. (8.19)

However, beyond this unmanifested there is yet another which is Unmanifested and Eternal, which does not perish when all contingent beings perish. (8.20)

That Unmanifested, said to be “the Indestructible”, “That” (tad), they say is the supreme goal (refuge). They who reach it return not. That is My supreme abode. (8.21)

That Supreme Purusha (highest Spirit), O Partha (Arjuna), within Whom all creation dwell, and by Whom all this universe was spun (pervaded), is attainable by love and worship (bhakti), and nothing else. (See also 9.04 and 11.55) (8.22)

Now, I shall declare, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), the time in which the yogis set forth never to return, and also the time they set forth to return. (8.23)

Fire, light, day, the moon’s light fortnight, the six months of sun’s northern path, then departing, the knowers of Brahman, go the Brahman. (See also ChU 4.1505, 5.10.01, BrU 6.2.15, PrU 1.10, and IsU 18) (8.24)

Smoke, night, the moon’s dark fortnight, the six months of sun’s southern course, the yogi (dying) during these, reaches the light of the moon, and back he comes again (reincarnates). (See also 9.21, ChU 5.10.03-05, BS 3.01.08) (8.25)

These courses of light and dark are thought to be the eternal paths of the world; by the one man goes to no return, and by the other one returns again (rebirth, reincarnation). (8.26)

O Partha (Arjuna), knowing these paths the yogi is not deluded; therefore, at all times be ever in yoga integrated, O Arjuna. (8.27)

Knowing this, the yogi rises above the fruits of meritorious deeds attached to the study of the Vedas, the sacrifices, austerities, and the almsgiving, reaching the Supreme primeval State (sthana). (8.28)

Ninth Discourse

Sovereign Knowledge and Big Secret

The Supreme Lord said:

Since you are not disapproving, I shall now declare to you this greatest mystery of knowledge (jnana) compatible with experience (vynana), and as by knowing it, you will be delivered from evil. (09.01)

This is kingly science, kingly secret, the supreme sanctifier, immediately realisable, unopposed to Dharma (conformed to righteousness), very easy to carry out, and abiding forever. (09.02)

O Parantapa (O vanquisher of foes, Arjuna), men who have no faith in this Dharma (law of righteousness), fail to reach Me, but return to the path of the mortal world. (9.03)

In My Unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded: in Me subsist all beings, but I do not abide in them. (See also 7.12, 15.18) (9.04)

However, contingent beings do not subsist in Me; consider My sovereign yoga (power)! I sustain all beings, though not dwelling in them; My Self is causing them to be. (See also BP 2.09.34-36) (9.05)

As in space (akasa) subsists the mighty wind moving everywhere, so too do all contingent beings subsist in Me. Know this. (9.06)

O son of Kunti (O Kaunteya, Arjuna), all contingent beings enter My lower Nature (prakrti) at the end of a Kalpa (aeon); and, again when another Kalpa starts, I emanate them forth again. (9.07)

Firmly fixed in My material Nature (prakrti), ever again I emanate all this multitude of beings, powerless themselves, under the control of the material Nature (prakrti). (9.08)

O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), these acts of Mine bind Me not, nor limit Me: remaining like one indifferent, unattached to those actions. (9.09)

Because of My Nearness, the material Nature (prakrti) produces all this, the moving and unmoving, because of that, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), the world keeps rotating. (See also 14.03) (9.10)

Fools scorn Me, for having assumed a human form, not knowing My supreme Nature (bhava), the great Lord of contingent beings. (9.11)

Vain their hopes and vain their deeds, empty of knowledge, devoid of discrimination, they embrace a monstrous devilish nature, leading them astray. (See 16.04-18) (9.12)

But the Mahatmas (Mighty Souls), O Partha (Arjuna), taking up their stand in My divine Nature (prakrti) (See 16.01-03), worship with minds intent on naught but Me, as the imperishable source of all beings. (9.13)

Always do they glorify Me, strenuous, firm in vows, bowing down to Me, devoted in their love (bhakti) ever integrated, they worship Me. (9.14)

Others again sacrificing with the sacrifice of knowledge, worship Me as One and yet as Manifold, with face turned in various ways and guise. (9.15)

I am the rite, I am the sacrifice, I am the food offered to ancestors, I am the healing herb, I am the mantra, I am the sacred butter (clarified butter, Ghi), I am the fire, and I the oblation (offered in the fire).(9.16)

I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the Supporter (Creator or Sustainer), the Grandsire, I am the Knowable, I am the Sacred Syllable “OM” (the vessel of purity, omkara), and also the Rg, Sama and Yajur (the three Vedas). (9.17)

I am the Goal, the Sustainer, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Shelter, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Foundation, the Treasure house, and the Imperishable Seed. (See also 7.10 and 10.39) (9.18)

I give heat, I hold back and release the rain, I am immortality as well as death, the existence and the non-existence too, O Arjuna. (See also 13.12) (9.19)

The knowers of the three Vedas, the Soma-drinkers, the purified from sin, worshipping Me with sacrifice, seeking from Me the way of heaven; they, ascending to the holy world of the Lord of the Devas, taste in heaven the god’s celestial joys. (9.20)

They, once having enjoyed the spacious expanse of heaven-world (svarga), their merit (punya) exhausted, come back to the world of the mortals. And so, it is that those adhering to the three Vedas only, desiring (objects of...) desires, they attain that which comes and goes (the transitory). (See also 8.25)(9.21)

To those who meditate on Me alone, thinking of no other, worshipping Me, ever perseveringly, I provide gain and security. (9.22)

Even those who worship other deities full of faith, they also worship Me, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), though contrary to ancient norms (or in ignorance). (9.23)

Because it is I who of all acts of sacrifice am the Beneficiary and Lord, but they do not know Me in Essence, and so they fail. (9.24)

Those who worship the deities go to the deities, to the ancestors their votaries, to the disembodied spirits the worshippers of these, but My worshippers come to Me. (See also 8.16) (9.25)

Whoever with devotion (bhakti) gives Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that do I accept, from the self-conquered, for it was devotion that made the offering. (See also BP 10.81.04) (9.26)

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer up in sacrifice or give away in alms, whatever austerity you may perform, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), do it as an offering to Me. (See also 12.10, 18.46) (9.27)

In this way, you will be free from the bonds of action, whose fruits are good and evil; by this attitude you will be yourself integrated by the yoga of renunciation, and liberated you will draw nigh to Me. (9.28)

The same am I to all contingent beings, none do I hate and none do I fondly love (priya). However, those who worship Me with devotion, abide in Me, and I in them. (See also 7.18) (9.29)

Even if the most sinful worships Me with dedicated loving devotion, he must be regarded as a righteous, for his resolve is right. (9.30)

Quite soon will his self be imbued with Dharma (dharmatma, righteousness), and obtain eternal rest. O son of Kunti (Arjuna), of this be certain: My devotee perishes never. (9.31)

Because those who find refuge in Me, O Partha (Arjuna), base-born though they may be, women, Vaishyas (the merchant caste), even Shudras (the manual labouring class), even they attain the Supreme Goal. (See also 18.66) (9.32)

How much more, then, the Holy Brahmanas, and devoted royal seers! Having come to this fleeting joyless world, do commune with Me in love (bhaj). (9.33)

On Me fix your mind; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate to Me. Having made yourself integrated in Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, you shall certainly come to Me. (9.34)

Tenth Discourse

Divine Manifestations

The Supreme Lord said:

O mighty-armed (Arjuna), once again listen to My supreme word which I will declare to you, for therein is your satisfaction (for you are beloved of Me), , and your welfare is My wish. (10.01)

None knows My origin (prabhava: Great Lordly Power), nor the hosts of Gods, nor the Great Rishis (a rishi is someone who has completed his human evolution, but remaining in the super-physical regions in touch with planet Earth. Also, a name used for great teachers): for I am the off-spring (source) of the Gods themselves and the Great Rishis. (10.02)

He who knows Me as Unborn, and Beginningless, Supreme Lord of the worlds (the universe or cosmos), he, among mortals is not deceived, and freed from all sins. (10.03)

Intellect (buddhi), knowledge, freedom from fallacy, patience, truth, restraint, calmness, pleasure, pain, birth (existence), death (non-existence), fear and fearlessness as well. (10.04)

None-violence, equanimity (samata), content, austerity, almsgiving, fame and infamy, these are the dispositions (bhava) of contingent beings, and from Me they arise in all their diversity. (10.05)

The seven Great Rishis, as well as the ancient Four, and also the Manus (progenitors of mankind) originating in Me were born of My mind; from them arose all living beings in the world. (10.06)

He who knows in truth that sovereignty and yoga of Mine, is endowed with firm yoga. Herein there is no doubt. (10.07)

I am the origin of all; all things evolve from Me: this knowing, the wise commune perseveringly with (bha-j) Me. (See also RV 8.58.02) (10.08)

With their minds fixed on Me, with their life hidden in Me, enlightening one another, ever conversing about Me, they are happy and joyful. (10.09)

And since they are ever integrated and commune with (bhaj-) Me in love (priti), I give them the yoga of discrimination (buddhi-yoga, the discipline of mind), by which they draw near to Me. (10.10)

Out of pure loving concern for them, within their Self, I dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of knowledge. (10.11)

Arjuna said:

You are the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Abode (home, dhama), the Supreme Vessel of Purity, the Permanent, the Divine Being, Primeval among the Gods, the Unborn, the Omnipresent. (10.12)

This is highly praised about You by all the Rishis, as also by the divine Rishi Narada, and by Asita, Devela, Vyasa, and now You Yourself tell it to me. (10.13)

All this I hold as true what you are saying to me, O Kesava (Krsna). Neither the Gods (Devas) nor demons (Davanas, Asuras), O Lord, understand Your origin. (See also 4.06) (10.14)

You, Yourself, know Yourself as Your “Self”, O Supreme Purushottama, Source of contingent beings, Lord of contingent beings, O God of gods, and Lord of the universe (cosmos). (10.15)

Describe to me, I pray, in every single detail of Your divine manifestations by which glory You remain pervading all these worlds (planets, spheres within the Cosmos). (10.16)

How am I to know You, O Supreme Yogi, by constant meditation? And, in what various forms are You, O Supreme Lord, to be thought of by me? (10.17)

Tell me again in detail, Your yogic power (creative power) and Your manifestations, O Janardana (Krsna): For as I listen to Your life-infusing words, I cannot have enough. (10.18)

The Supreme Lord said:

See, I shall now explain to you My divine manifestations in their prominences, O best of the Kurus (Arjuna), for of the reach there is no end. (10.19)

O Gudakesa (Arjuna), I am the Self established in the hearts of all contingent beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all contingent beings too. (10.20)

Among the Adityas I am Vishnu; among the radiances, the resplendent Sun; I am Marichi of the Maruts; the moon among the other stars. (10.21)

Of the Vedas I am the Sama-Veda; I am Vasava among the Gods (Devas); among the senses I am the mind, among contingent beings I am consciousness. (10.22)

I am Siva among the Rudras (Celestial Beings, eleven in number); I am Kubera (the Lord of Wealth) among sprites and monsters; I am fire among the Vasus (Celestial Beings, eight in number); and, I am Meru among the mountains. (10.23)

And of the priesthood (household of priests) observe Me, O Partha (Arjuna), as the chief Brhaspati; among the army generals I am Skanda (God of War); among lakes I am the Ocean. (10.24)

Among the great Rishis I am Bhrgu; of words I am the one syllable 'OM'; of sacrifices I am the offering of silent repetitions (Japa) (the japa-yajña among the yajñas); of the immovables I am the Himalaya. (10.25)

Among all trees (I am) the Asvattha (fig tree); Narada among the divine Rishis; Citraratha among the Gandharvas (celestial singers); among perfected beings Kapila, the silent Muni. (10.26)

Among horses know that I am Uccaihsravas (name of kingly horse), from nectar born (Amrita, the nectar of immortality); among princely elephants Airavata; and, among men I am the Monarch. (10.27)

Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; the Kamadhenu (milk cow of desires) among cows; I am Kandarpa (god of love) for the creators of progeny; among serpents, I am Vasuki (the serpent king). (10.28)

Among the Nagas I am Ananta; Varuna among water-dwellers; of the ancestors I am Aryaman; among those who control I am Yama (the god of death). (10.29)

Among the Diti's (semi-human beings) I am Prahlada; Time among those who calculate it; among beasts I am (the lion), the king of beasts; and, among birds Garuda (Visnu's bird). (10.30)

Among purifiers I am the wind; Rama among those wielding weapons (warriors); I am the crocodile among fishes, and the Jahnavi (Ganges) among rivers. (10.31)

In all creation I am the beginning, the end and the middle too, O Arjuna. Among sciences, I am the science concerning the Self. Of those who debate I am the Speech. (10.32)

I am the first vowel-sound “A” among the alphabet; among the grammatical compounds the duality (dvandva); I am also the imperishable Time (Aksaya Kala), the Creator who faces all directions. (10.33)

I am the all-devouring death, and the origin of all creatures yet to come. Among the feminine (female qualities) I am fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, constancy, and forgiveness. (10.34)

Among the Saman hymns I am the Brihat-Saman; among metres the Gayatri; among months I am Margasirsa (November-December), and among seasons the flower-bearing (spring). (10.35)

I am the gambling of the tricksters; I am the splendour of the splendid; I am victory, I am effort, and the courage of the brave. (10.36)

Among the Vrsnis I am (Krsna), Vasudeva’s son; Dhananjaya (Arjuna) among the Pandavas; among the Sages (Munis) I am Vyasa, and among the poets the poet Usana. (10.37)

Among those who discipline I am the rod of chastisement; among those wishing victory I am statesmanship; the silence of what is secret; and, the knowledge of those who know. (10.38)

What is the seed of all contingent beings, that too I am, O Arjuna. There is no being, whether moving or unmoving, that exist without Me. (See also 7.10 and 9.18) (10.39)

There is no end of My divine manifestations, O Parantapa (O vanquisher of foes, Arjuna). What I have stated is only a brief exposition of the extent of My glories. (10.40)

Whatever being is endowed with glory, prosperity or strength, be certain that it derives from a fragment of My splendour. (10.41)

But what need is there for this detailed knowledge, O Arjuna? I stand supporting the entire universe (cosmos) by a small fragment of Myself. (See also ChU 3.12.06) (10.42)

Eleventh Discourse

Vision of the Cosmic Form

Arjuna said:

Out of compassion, you have taught me the supreme mystery of the Self (Adhyatma, the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, or the Self and the self); by this my delusion has been dispelled. (11.01)

For I have heard of the origin and the dissolution of contingent beings in detail from You, O Lotus-eyed (Krsna), and also Your inexhaustible greatness. (11.02)

O Supreme Lord, as You have declared Yourself to be, so it is. However, I desire to see Your Isvara form (Creator and Ruler of the Cosmos), O Purushottama (Krsna). (11.03)

If, O Lord, You think that It can be seen by me, do You, then, O Lord of Yoga, show me Your imperishable Self. (11.04)

The Supreme Lord said:

See, O Partha (Arjuna), My forms in their hundreds and their thousands; various as they are, divine, numerous in colours and shapes. (11.05)

See the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Asvins twain, and the Maruts too. See, O Bharata (Arjuna), abundant wonders, never seen before. (11.06)

Here, today, see the whole universe centred in One, with all that it contains of moving and unmoving things (seeing it) in My body, O Gudakesa (Arjuna), and whatever else you want to see. (11.07)

However, you are not able to see Me with these eyes of yours, I give you the divine eye to see My Supreme Yoga. (11.08)

Sanjaya said:

So saying, O King, the great Lord of Yoga, Hari (a name of Vishnu-Krsna), revealed to Partha (Arjuna) His supreme Form as Isvara (the Supreme, Sovereign Form). (11.09)

With many mouths and eyes, as well as countless marvellous sights; with many divine ornaments, and many celestial weapons raised on high, (11.10)

Wearing celestial garlands and robes, anointed with divine fragrances, the God all-wonderful, resplendent, boundless, facing on all sides. (11.11)

If the splendour of thousands of suns were to blaze out together in the sky, that would be like the brilliance of that Mahatman (of that God so great of Self). (11.12)

There Pandava (Arjuna) saw the entire universe in One converged, yet divided out in multiplicity, in the body of the God of gods. (See also 13.16, and 18.20) (11.13)

Then he, Dhananjaya (Arjuna), filled with astonishment, his hair on end, bowed down with his head, to the Lord in adoration, speaking with joined palms. (11.14)

Arjuna said:

Within Your Form, O God, I see all the gods, as also the varied multitudes of beings; Brahma, the Lord throned on the lotus-seat, and all the Rishis (Sages), and celestial serpents. (11.15)

With countless arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes, I see You infinite in forms on all sides. End, middle or beginning I cannot see in You, O Lord of the Cosmos, O Cosmic Form. (11.16)

Your crown, mace, discus; a mass of magnificence shining everywhere, I do see, hard to look at, blazing as fire, as sun dazzling the gaze, immeasurably on all sides. (11.17)

You are the Imperishable, the Supreme among what can be known. You are the Ultimate Abode of the Universe, the Changeless, and Guardian of the Eternal Dharma (law of righteousness). In my opinion, You are the immemorial Purusha. (11.18)

I see You as having no beginning, middle or end, infinite in power, of numberless arms, yours eyes the sun and moon; a flaming fire Your mouth, burning up this whole universe with Your self-engendered splendour. (11.19)

O All-highest Self (Mahatman, Krsna), by You alone are filled the earth, the heavens, and all the regions that are stretched between. Gazing on this, Your marvellous and terrible Form, the three worlds (lokas) tremble. (11.20)

See, into You the hosts of Suras (supernatural beings) are entering, some terror-struck with joined palms are invoking You. A multitude of great Rishis and Siddhas cry out, 'All Hail', and praise You with sublime hymns. (11.21)

Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Visvadevas, Asvins, Maruts, Usmapas, Gandharvas, Yaksas, Asuras, and Siddhas, in amazement, are gazing at You. (11.22)

Seeing Your mighty Form, with its countless mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, bellies, and sharp, gruesome tusks, the worlds quake, and I also, O mighty-armed (Krsna). (11.23)

I see You ablaze with many colours touching the sky, your mouths wide open, and large shining eyes, my inmost self is shaken. I find neither peace nor courage, O Vishnu (Krsna). (11.24)

I see Your mouths, terrible with tusks, resembling Time's destroying flames: I cannot find my bearings, I see no shelter. Have mercy, O God of gods, and refuge of the universe. (11.25)

All the sons of Dhrtarastra along with a host of kings, Bhishma, Drona, Suta's royal son (Karna), and all the foremost warriors on our side, (11.26)

Rush into Your frightening mouths with their horrid tusks striking (them) with terror. The heads of some, being caught between your teeth, are being crushed to powder. (11.27)

As many river floods rush headlong towards the sea, so do these heroes of the world of men enter into Your blazing mouths. (11.28)

As moths hurriedly rush into the lighted blaze for their destruction, so do these creatures pour in a bursting, hurtling haste their own undoing into Your mouths. (11.29)

You are licking up, devouring, worlds, universes, everything with Your blazing mouths. The fiery rays of light fill the whole universe with burning radiance, O Vishnu (Krsna). (11.30)

Tell me who You are, so awful in Form. I bow before You, O best of gods, be merciful. I wish to know You as You are, the Original Being, for I do not know Your works (pravrtti). (11.31)

The Supreme Lord said:

Time am I, now engaged in laying desolate the worlds, here ready to consume the people. Even without your involvement, none of all the warriors arrayed there in opposite armies will escape death. (11.32)

Therefore, stand up, be triumphant, conquer your enemies and enjoy a magnificent kingdom! For these are all slain by Me already. Be a mere instrument (nimittamatram), O Savyasacin (Arjuna, able to shoot arrows with the left hand). (11.33)

Bhisma, Drona, Jayadratha, Karna, and all the other brave warriors here, are already slain by Me. Kill them then fearlessly. Fight! You will conquer your rivals in the battle. (11.34)

Sanjaya said:

Having heard these words of Kesava (Krsna), he (Arjuna), wearer of the crown, with joined palms in veneration, trembling, prostrating himself to Krsna, spoke again, with stammering voice, and as terrified he did obeisance. (11.35)

Arjuna said:

O Hrsikesa (Krsna), the world finds its pleasure and its joy in praising You. The Rakshasas, fearing, (monsters, terrifying demons) scatter in all directions, and all the hosts of Siddhas (perfected ones) bow down to You. (11.36)

And why should they not bow down to You, O Noble Soul (Krsna), who are even superior to Brahma (or, 'Brahman'. The whole phrase could mean 'Most reverend creator of Brahma or Brahman), You the First cause, Infinite, God of gods, the world's abiding home, Unperishing Sat (Being), Asat (Non-Being), and that which surpasses both (the Supreme). (11.37)

You are the Primal God, Primeval Person, the Supreme receptacle of all that lives, You the knower and what is to be known, the dwelling place above (home: dhama). This entire universe is encompassed by You, Who are Infinite in Form. (11.38)

You are Vayu (the wind-god) , Yama (the god of death), Agni (the god of fire), the moon, Varuna (water), You are Prajapati (the progenitor of beings), and the primordial Ancestor. All hail, all hail to You, a thousandfold, again and again all hail. (11.39)

All hail to You when I stand before You, and when I stand behind You, all hail to You wherever I may be, O All. How infinite Your strength, how limitless Your competency! You hold everything, and are therefore All in All. (11.40)

How thoughtlessly have I called You friend, for so I thought of You, unmindful of Your majesty, I addressed you as O Krsna, O Yadava, O Friend, carelessly in the fondness of my love. (11.41)

Sometimes joking I showed disrespect to You, when we played, rested, sat in an assembly or at meals, sometimes together (both alone), or at sight of others, O Achyuta (Krsna), the Immeasurable, I beg Your forgiveness. (11.42)

You are the Father of the moving and unmoving world, You are worthy of all honour, the greatest guru of the world. There is none like You, how could there be a greater? Most excellent Your power in the three worlds. (11.43)

Therefore, bowing down to You, prostrating my body, longing grace of You, O Adorable Lord; bear with me, I pray you, as father with son, or friend with friend, or lover with the one he loves. (11.44)

I have seen that which no one has seen before, and ecstatic is my joy; yet my mind is possessed by fear and trembling. Show me, O God, Your other form again, forgive me, O God of gods, Home of the universe! (11.45)

Crowned, with the mace and discus in Your hand, I wish to see You as before; take up again Four-armed form, O Thousand-armed, to whom every form belongs. (11.46)

The Supreme Lord said:

I desired to show you favour, Arjuna, demonstrating to you My Self's mysterious power (atmayoga) in its All-highest Form, glorious, all-embracing, infinite, primeval, which none has seen before except you. (11.47)

Not by the Vedas, not by sacrifice, not by deep study or the giving of alms, not by rituals or sharp austerity, can I be seen in such a form in the world of men: to you alone I have revealed it, O hero of the Kurus (Arjuna). (11.48)

Do not tremble nor be perplexed, because you have seen this awful Form of Mine. Banish all fear, and let your heart rejoice: see again that same familiar form of Mine. (11.49)

Sanjaya said:

Having so spoken, the son of Vasudeva (Krsna) showed Arjuna His own form again; and the Noble Soul (Mahatman, the great-souled one, Krsna) assumed the body of a friend, and consoled him who was terrified. (11.50)

Arjuna said:

Now that I see Your gentle human form again, O Janardana (Krsna), I have returned to my senses, and to my normal state. (11.51)

The Supreme Lord said:

This, My Form which you have seen is very hard to see. Truly, this is the form the gods (devas) themselves are perpetually longing to see. (11.52)

Not by the Vedas or austerity, not by the giving of alms or the performance of rituals can I be seen in the way you just saw Me. (11.53)

But, by devotion to Me alone can I be known and seen in such a Form and as I really am, then so enter into Me, O Parantapa (Arjuna, O vanquisher of foes). (11.54)

Perform actions for Me, and make Me your highest goal, be loyal in love (bhakta) to me, be unattached, have no hatred for any being at all: for all who do so come to Me, O Pandava (Arjuna). (See also 8.22) (11.55)

Twelfth Discourse

Bhakti Yoga

Arjuna said:

Those devotees who are ever integrated, and serve You with unswerving devotion (bhakta), and others who worship the Imperishable Unmanifested, which of them are better knowers of Yoga? (12.01)

The Supreme Lord said:

Those who fix their minds on Me, most integrated, worshipping Me filled with supreme faith (supreme Sraddha, transcendental faith) are, in My opinion, the best among yogis. (See also 6.47) (12.02)

Those who worship the Undefined, the Imperishable Unmanifested, the All-pervading and Unthinkable, the Unchanging, the Permanent and Eternal, (12.03)

Having restrained all the senses, in all things equal-minded, concerned with the welfare of others, they also attain Me. (12.04)

But, greater is the difficulty of those whose minds cling to the Unmanifested; for the goal of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied being to reach. (12.05)

However, those who renounce their every action to Me, solely intent on Me as the Supreme Goal, and worship Me, meditating on Me, with steadfast devotion, (12.06)

These I will soon lift up on high out of the ocean of the mortal samsara (the round of birth, death and rebirth), O Partha (Arjuna), for their minds are fixed on Me. (12.07)

Fix your mind on Me only, and let your intellect dwell within Me; then in very truth (eva) you will abide hereafter in Me alone. (12.08)

But, if you are unable to fix firmly your mind (citta) on Me, then long to reach Me by the practise of Abhyasa-yoga (any other spiritual discipline and exercises for self-realisation, also the act of listening to the teaching of the srutis (sacred knowledge, especially the Upanishads) with a view to obtain knowledge; or, the practise of dhyana with a firm resolve.), O Dhananjaya (Arjuna). (12.09)

If you are incapable even to practise Abhyasa-yoga, then work and act for Me, making this your intent. Even by performing all actions for Me, you will attain perfection. (See also 9.27, 18.46) (12.10)

Then, even if you are unable to do this, then gird up your loins in devotion for Me alone (reading udygam with some MSS for mad-yogam), and self-controlled, renounce the fruits of your actions. (12.11)

For better is knowledge than mere practise, better than knowledge is meditation; and better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruits of actions: renunciation leads immediately to peace. (See more on renunciation in 18.02, and 18.09) (12.12)

Let him feel hatred for no contingent being, but be friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, remaining the same in pleasure as in pain, and forbearing. (12.13)

Ever content and integrated, self-controlled, possessed with solid conviction, with mind and intellect steeped in Me, he, My devotee, is dear to Me. (12.14)

He, by whom the world is not afflicted, and who does not afflict the world, who is free from exaltation, envy, fear and disquiet, he is likewise dear to Me. (12.15)

He who is unconcerned, pure, skilled, indifferent, who is not worrying, renouncing every selfish initiative, he, My devotee, is dear to Me. (12.16)

He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing fortune and misfortune, who is full of devotion (bhaktimat), he is dear to Me. (12.17)

He who is alike to enemies and friends, as well as towards honour and dishonour, alike in cold and heat, in pleasure as in pain, and who is free from attachment, (12.18)

Unmoved by praise and blame, who is silent, homeless, satisfied with whatever comes his way, steady-minded, full of devotion, that man is dear to Me. (12.19)

But, those who partake in this life-giving knowledge (amrita-dharma) as taught above, full of faith, making Me their goal, and devoted, they are especially dear to Me. (12.20)

Thirteenth Discourse

The Field and the Knower (Matter and Spirit)

The Supreme Lord said:

This body, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), is called the 'Field' (ksetra), and he who knows it, is the 'Knower of the Field' (ksetrajna), by the Sages who understand these things. (13.01)

Recognise Me as the Knower of the Field in all Fields (ksetras), O Bharata (Arjuna). Knowledge of the Field and the Knower of the Field is in My opinion true knowledge. (13.02)

What the Field (ksetra) is and what it is like, what its modifications (changes, associations, transformations) are and which derives from which, and who He is (ksetrajna, the Knower of the Field), and what his powers (var: nature) are, hear now briefly from Me. (13.03)

In different ways has it been sung by Rishis, in various distinctive hymns, and in suggestive verses about Brahman (Brahma-sutra short terse sayings concerning the Supreme Being), full of reasoning and persuasiveness. (13.04)

The great elements, the ego (ahamkara), intellect (buddhi), the Unmanifested, the ten senses and the one, and the five sense-objects of the senses (the five organs of knowledge, or senses, the five organs of action, the mind, and the objects cognised by each of the five senses); (13.05)

Desire, hate, pleasure, pain, combination (the body), intelligence, and constancy – these, briefly, are called the 'field' together with its associations (modifications, transformations). (See also 7.04) (13.06)

Humility, modesty, non-violence, forgiveness, uprightness (morality), service of the teacher, purity, resoluteness, self-control, (13.07)

Dispassion towards the things of sense, and also absence of egoism, insight of evil into birth, death, old age, disease and pain; (13.08)

Detachment, absence of identification of self with son, wife, home and such things, and a constant equal-mindedness in whatever happens, pleasing and unpleasing; (13.09)

Unswerving, concentrated, disciplined devotion to Me in yoga of union, dwelling apart in solitary places, taking no pleasure in the company of worldly people; (13.10)

Permanence in the knowledge of the Self (adhyatma; see also 7.29), perception of the goal of true knowledge, all this is declared to be knowledge, all else is ignorance. (13.11)

What is to be known I will describe to you, by knowing which one attains immortality: the beginningless Supreme Being (Para-Brahma), which is neither 'sat' (being) nor 'asat' (non-being) (lies beyond the cause and effect); (See also 9.19, 11.37, and 15.18) (13.12)

With hands and feet on every side, with eyes, heads, mouths and ears on every side, He (That) abides in the world, enveloping all. (See also RV 10.81.03, ShU 3.16) (13.13)

Devoid of all the senses, He, yet, sheds light on all their constituents (Gunas, the three modes of Matter or Nature); unattached, and yet supporting everything; free from constituents (Gunas, the three modes of Matter or Nature), yet, experiencing them. (13.14)

Within all beings, and yet outside them; immovable and also movable; by reason of His subtlety, He (That, tat) is incapable of being known; far away He (That, tat) stands near. (13.15)

Undivided, in beings He (That, tat) abides seeming divided: This is 'That' (tat) which should be known as the One who upholds, devours and generates all beings. (See also 11.13, and 18.20) (13.16)

That (tat), the Light of all lights is said to be 'Beyond darkness'; Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and that which can be known only through knowledge, seated in the hearts of all. (See also 15.06 and 15.12, and MuU 3.01.07, ShU 3.08) (13.17)

So, the 'Field' (ksetra, the body), 'Knowledge' and the 'Object of Knowledge', have been briefly explained. My devotee, knowing this, enters into My Being. (13.18)

Know that Prakriti (matter, nature) and Purusha (Self, Atma, Spirit) are both without commencement; and know also that changes (modifications, associations, transformations) and constituents (Gunas, the three modes of Matter or Nature) arise from Prakriti (matter, nature). (13.19)

Prakriti (matter, nature) is said to be the source cause, of the production of the body and the senses (effect and instruments). Purusha (Self, Atma, Spirit) is said to be the cause, in the experience of pleasures and pains. (13.20)

For this Purusha (Self, Atma, Spirit) is positioned in Prakriti (matter, nature), experiencing its 'constituents' born of Prakriti. Attachment to the constituents (Gunas, the three modes of Matter or Nature) is instrumental in taking birth in good and bad wombs. (13.21)

The Supreme Purusha (Transcendental Enjoyer), here in the body, is also called the Surveyor, the Approver, the Supporter, the One who experiences, the Great Lord and the Supreme Self. (13.22)

He who in this way knows the Purusha (Self, Atma, Spirit) and Prakriti (matter, nature) with its constituents (Gunas, the three modes of Matter or Nature), in whatever condition he may be, does not enter into rebirth. (13.23)

Through meditation some see the Self in the self by the Self; others by Sankhya Yoga (yoga of knowledge), and still others by Karma-Yoga (actions without fruitive desires). (13.24)

In addition, others, not conversant in these (spiritual or yoga of knowledge), worship as they have heard from others; and even them taking their stand on what they have heard (taking their stand on Scriptures), pass also beyond death. (13.25)

Whatever being comes to be, moving or unmoving, O best of the Bharata (Arjuna), know this, derives its being from the union of the 'Field' (ksetra) and the 'Knower of the Field' (ksetrajna). (See also 7.06) (13.26)

He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding ever the same in all contingent beings, immortal in the mortal, he indeed sees. (13.27)

Perceiving, indeed, the same Lord as equally established everywhere, he does not destroy the Self (true Self, Higher Self) by the self (self-sense), and in this way, he treads the highest Path (Goal). (13.28)

He who perceives that Prakriti (matter, nature) performs all actions, and that the Self (Atma) engages not in actions, he sees indeed. (See also 3.27, 5.09 and 14.19) (13.29)

When one perceives that, the diversity of contingent beings abides in One, and from “That” (tat) only they radiate, then he reaches the Brahman. (13.30)

Because this Supreme Self, imperishable, knows no beginning, no constituent of Matter (of Nature; Gunas, the three modes of matter), though seated in the body, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), neither acts, nor is affected in any way. (13.31)

Just as the ether (akasa), pervading everything, knows no defilement on account of its subtlety, so does the Self, though everywhere abiding and embodied, know no defilement. (13.32)

Just as the one Sun lights up this entire universe, so does the ‘Knower of the Field’ (ksetrajna) illumine this entire ‘Field’ (ksetra), O Bharata (Arjuna). (13.33)

They who by the eyes of knowledge discern the difference between the ‘Field’ (ksetra) and the ‘Knower of the Field’ (ksetrajna), and the deliverance of beings from Prakriti (Matter, the material form), they attain the Supreme. (13.34)

Fourteenth Discourse

The Three Gunas of Nature

The Supreme Lord said:

Once again I will proclaim the supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledges (jnana, doctrine, metaphysical or spiritual knowledge), on knowing this, all Sages (Munis) have from this world gone to the supreme Perfection. (14.01)

With this knowledge as their refuge, they reached an order of existence equivalent to (sadharmya) My own nature, and are not reborn at the time of creation, nor do they fail at the time of dissolution. (14.02)

My womb is the Great Brahman (Mahat Brahma), O Bharata (Arjuna), in it I plant the seed: from this derives the origin of all contingent beings. (See also 9.10) (14.03)

In whatever wombs beings take form, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), the Great Brahman (Mahat Brahma) is their womb, and I the Father, giver of the seed (or, life-giving). (14.04)

Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion, activity), Tamas (ignorance, darkness, inertia); these are the 'constituents' (Gunas of Nature) Matter-born (born of Prakriti). They bind the embodied soul, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), though the indestructible sojourner (the soul) in the body. (14.05)

Of these, Sattva (goodness), being stainless, knowing no sickness, dispensing light, O sinless one (Arjuna), binds by attachment to happiness (sukha, joy, bliss) and by attachment to knowledge. (14.06)

Know, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), that Rajas (passion) is instinct with desire, welling up through longing and attachment, binding the embodied soul by the attachment to action. (14.07)

Tamas (ignorance, darkness, inertia) is born of ignorance: know this well. It leads astray all embodied souls, O Bharata (Arjuna), binding fast by heedlessness, indolence, and sleep. (14.08)

Sattva (goodness) causes one to cling to happiness, Rajas (passion) to action, O Bharata (Arjuna), but Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness) stifling knowledge, binds one to heedlessness. (14.09)

Sattva (goodness) prevails, having dominated Rajas (passion) and Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness), O Bharata (Arjuna), and Rajas (passion) over Sattva (goodness) and Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness); and Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness) over Sattva (goodness) and Rajas (passion). (14.10)

When through all the gates (senses) of the body, knowledge's light arises, then you must know that Sattva (goodness) is predominant. (14.11)

When Rajas (passion) is waxing strong, arise greed (avarice), the urge for action, commitment of oneself to action, disquiet and ambition, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna) (14.12)

Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness) constituent is predominant, when darkness, inertia, heedlessness, and delusion arise, O descendent of the Kurus (Arjuna). (14.13)

However, when the embodied soul comes to face the body's dissolution (death), while Sattva (goodness) is predominant, then he reaches the spotless worlds of those who know the Highest. (14.14)

Coming to dissolution (to die) when Rajas (passion) predominates, he will be born among those attached to action; if dissolved (if dying) in Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness), he will be born in the womb of the ignorant species (the senseless, the foolish). (14.15)

It is said that the fruit of good actions is Sattvika (good, beneficial, pious) and spotless; while the fruit of Rajas (passion) is pain; and, foolishness is the fruit of Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness). (14.16)

From Sattva (goodness) comes knowledge, from Rajas (passion) greed; and from Tamas (ignorance, inertia, darkness) error and also ignorance. (14.17)

The higher spheres are for those who abide in Sattva (goodness), in the middle stand the Rajasic (the passionate); stuck in the modes of the lower spheres, the Tamasic (the ignorant). (14.18)

When the seer perceives that there is no agent other than the constituents (Gunas); and knows Him, the Supreme, who is beyond them (the Gunas), he enters into My Nature. (See also 3.27, 5.09, and 13.29) (14.19)

Transcending these three constituents (Gunas), arising from the body's existence; the embodied soul is liberated from birth, death, old age, and pain, and attains immortality. (14.20)

Arjuna said:

What are the marks of him who has transcended the three constituents (Gunas), O Lord? How does he behave? And, how does he step out beyond these three constituents? (14.21)

The Supreme Lord said:

He, O Pandava (Arjuna), who hates not radiance, nor activity, nor even delusion when they arise, nor longs after them when absent; (14.22)

He who sits indifferent, unruffled by the constituents (Gunas); who, thinking that the constituents (Gunas) are busy, is firm-based and unwavering; (14.23)

Balanced in pleasure as in pain, who dwells in the Self, to whom a lump of earth, a stone or gold are alike; the same to loved and unloved ones, constant, the same in blame and in praise; (14.24)

The same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and enemy, relinquishing all initiative for action – he is said to have transcended the constituents (Gunas). (14.25)

And, as to him who do Me honour with unswerving Yoga of devotion, passes beyond the constituents (Gunas), fit for becoming Brahman. (See also 7.14 and 15.19) (14.26)

For I am the final seat of Brahman, the Immortal and the Immutable, the Eternal Dharma (the eternal law of righteousness), and the absolute beatitude (sukha). (14.27)

Fifteenth Discourse

The Yoga of the Supreme Self

The Supreme Lord said:

With roots above and branches beneath, the Asvattha (fig tree, banyan tree) is said to be imperishable; its leaves are the Vedic hymns; he who knows it, knows the Vedas. (See also KaU 6.01, BP 11.12.20-24, and Gita 10.08) (15.01)

Below and above are spread its branches, nourished by the constituents (Gunas of nature, Qualities); sense-objects are its buds, and below its roots proliferate inseparably linked with actions in the world of men. (15.02)

No form of it can here be perceived, nor its end, nor its origin, nor its existence. This strongly-rooted Asvattha (fig tree, banyan tree) having been cut down by an unswerving sword of non-attachment; (15.03)

Then, ‘That’ (tat) Goal should be sought, to which, when having tread on, there is no return (saying): I take refuge in that Primeval Purusha (Person, Man, Principle) from whom flowed forth this ancient cosmic process (pravrtti). (15.04)

Free from pride and ignorance, victorious over the vice of attachment, ever abiding in what concerns the Self, desire suppressed, released from the pairs of opposites (all dualities) made known in pleasure as in pain, they tread, undeluded, that Eternal Goal (place, region). (15.05)

Nor does the sun lights there, nor moon, nor fire. That is My supreme abode (dhama, home) from where, having reached it, no one returns. (See also 13.17 and 15.12, and KaU 5.15, ShU 6.14, MuU 2.02.10) (15.06)

A portion (a minute particle, a ray) of Mine own Self, which becomes life in the living world (the living world of Jivas) into an immortal Jiva (Jivatma, Soul; a life, individualised from the Supreme (Eternal) Being), drawing to itself the senses, with the mind as the sixth, abiding in Prakriti (matter). (15.07)

When the Lord assumes a body, and when He abandons it, He takes them (the senses and the mind), moving on with them, just as the wind wafts away the scents from their sources. (See also 2.13) (15.08)

Through the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste, and the smell, and likewise the mind, He moves among the things of sense. (15.09)

The deluded do not perceive whether he (Jiva) departs (from the body) or remains therein, or whether, through contact with the constituents, he tastes experience. But those who possess the eye of knowledge see. (15.10)

The Yogis also, striving, see Him established in the Self; though striving, the uncontrolled, without knowledge, see Him not. (15.11)

The splendour centred in the sun which enlightens the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire, know that it (all) comes from Me. (See also 13.17 and 15.06) (15.12)

Likewise, I penetrate the earth, and support all beings by My vital energy; becoming the Soma ('having become the sapid (watery) moon' is the accepted translation. Soma is a liquid drawn from the Soma-plant, or the moon-plant in other words), the very sap (of life), I cause all the herbs to grow. (15.13)

I, having become Vaisvanara (the Fire of life), take possession of the bodies of all that breathes, conjoined with the life-breaths (Prana and Apana, the inward and outward breaths), I digest the fourfold food. (15.14)

I make My dwelling in the hearts of all: from Me are memory and knowledge, as well as their non-attendance. It is I who am to be known by means of all the Vedas. I am the maker of the Vedanta, and also the knower of the Vedas. (See also 6.39) (15.15)

There are two Purushas (Energies) in the cosmos, the perishable (ksara) and the Imperishable (aksara): the perishable is all contingent beings, the Imperishable that which stands firm (kutastha). (15.16)

There is another Supreme Purusha (Energy, Person, and Supreme Personality), called the Supreme Self, Indestructible Lord, pervading the three worlds, and sustaining them. (15.17)

Since I go beyond the perishable, and am more exalted than the Imperishable Itself, in the world as well as in the Veda (Vedanta) I am extolled as the Supreme Being (Purushottama, the Highest Purusha). (See also MuU 2.01.02) (15.18)

He who knows Me, free from delusion, as the Supreme Self (Purushottama, the Highest Purusha), he, knowing all, worships Me with all his being (bhava), O Bharata (Arjuna).
(15.19)

And so, this most secret teaching has been revealed by Me, O sinless one. This known, let a man become enlightened, and all his duties are accomplished, O Bharata (Arjuna).
(15.20)

Sixteenth Discourse

The Divine and the Demoniactal Ways

The Supreme Lord said:

Fearlessness and purity of heart, steadfastness in the yoga of knowledge, open-handed and sense-restraint, performing of sacrifice (Yajna), intent on the study of scriptures, austerity and integrity, (16.01)

Non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, averse to calumny, compassion to living beings, freedom from greed, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, (16.02)

Vigour, mercy, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred and arrogance – these are his who is born to the godlike portion, O Bharata (Arjuna). (16.03)

Hypocrisy, arrogance, excessive pride, anger and also cruelty and ignorance are his who is born to the demoniac portion (Asuric; the Asuras were the enemies of the Suras or Deities), O Partha (Arjuna) (16.04)

The godlike portion is deemed for deliverance, and the demoniac for bondage. But grieve not, O Pandava (Arjuna)! You are born to a godlike destiny. (16.05)

Basically, there are two orders of contingent beings in this world, the godly and the demoniac. Of the godly I have discoursed at length, now hear from Me, O Partha (Arjuna), about the demoniac. (16.06)

Those of demoniac nature know not of creative action (pravrtti) or of right abstinence (cessation, nivritti); nor purity, nor good conduct, nor truth are found in them. (16.07)

The world, they say, is without truth, without firm foundation, without a God, not ruled by mutual law, driven only by lust (desire), and nothing else. (16.08)

Holding fast to these views, these lost souls (atman) with small intellects they embark on cruel and violent deeds, come forth as enemies for the destruction of the world. (16.09)

Surrendering themselves in insatiable sensual desire, full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, holding evil thoughts through delusion, they act with impure resolves. (16.10)

Preoccupied with limitless imaginings right up to the time of death, they yield themselves at nothing but to satisfy their lusts, convinced that this is all. (16.11)

Bound by a hundred ties of hope, obsessed by anger and desire, they aspire unjustly to accumulate hoards of wealth, to satisfy their sensual enjoyments. (16.12)

“This I have gained today; this desire I shall gratify; this wealth is mine, and much more too will be mine as time goes on.” (16.13)

“I have killed this enemy and many another too I will kill. I am a lord, I take my pleasure; I am powerful, happy and successful.” (16.14)

“I am rich and of a good family. Who else can equal himself with me? I will sacrifice, I will give alms, I will rejoice.” So speaks the deluded in his ignorance. (16.15)

Bewildered by all kinds of thoughts, caught up in delusion’s web, obsessed in satisfying sensual enjoyment, they fall into the foul hell. (16.16)

Puffed up with self-conceit, stubborn, maddened by their pride of wealth (or, filled with madness and intoxication of wealth), they make a show of performing, lip-sacrifices only for pretension, and not in the prescribed way. (16.17)

Given over to selfishness, force and pride, lust and anger, these malicious ones hate Me who dwell in their bodies as I dwell in all. (16.18)

These barbarous haters, cruel, evil, the vilest among men in the world, I ever cast them down into demoniac wombs. (16.19)

Caught up in demoniac wombs, birth after birth deluded, they never reach Me, O son of Kunti (Kaunteya, Arjuna), and so they tread the lowest path. (16.20)

Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the self: lust, anger, and greed. Therefore, avoid these three. (See also MB 5.33.66) (16.21)

Once a man is freed from these three gates of darkness, O son of Kunti (Kaunteya, Arjuna), then can he work for self’s salvation (sreyas), and thereby treading the Supreme Goal. (16.22)

He, who forsakes the ordinances of scripture, and lives in the promptings of his own desires, attains not perfection, finding no comfort (sukha), nor the Supreme Goal. (16.23)

Therefore, let the scripture be your authority, determining what is right and wrong. Once you know what the ordinance of scripture bids you to do, you should act accordingly in this world. (16.24)

Seventeenth Discourse

The Yoga of the Threefold Faith

Arjuna said:

Those who forsake the ordinances of the Sastras (scriptures), and offer sacrifices full of faith (Sraddha), where do they stand, O Krsna? Is it one of goodness (Sattva, Sattvika), passion (Rajas, Rajasika), ignorance (Tamas, Tamasika, darkness)? (17.01) (The three qualities or attributes, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are used here in their moral correspondences.)

The Supreme Lord said:

Threefold is the faith (Sraddha) of embodied souls, along one's own inner character, either of goodness (Sattvic), of passion (Rajasic), and of ignorance (Tamasic). Hear now to this. (17.02)

The faith (Sraddha) of each is shaped to one's own nature, O Bharata (Arjuna). Man is instinct with faith (Sraddha) (that is, the man's faith shows what his character is): as his faith is, so is he. (17.03)

The Sattvika ones (those of goodness) offer sacrifice (worship) to the Gods; the Rajasika (those of passion) to the gnomes and giants (the Yakshas and the Rakshasas, the minor gods and demons); while the others, the Tamasika ones (the ignorant, or those of darkness) sacrifice to the ghosts (Pretas) and the assembled spirits of the dead (Bhutas). (Pretas, ghosts, are departed beings, while Bhutas, nature-spirits) (17.04)

They who perform fierce austerities without regard to scripture's words, given to hypocrisy and egotism, yielding to the violence of their passion and desire, (17.05)

Foolishly tormenting their bodily organs, and Me also, who dwell within the body, know these to be of demoniac resolve. (17.06)

The food also which is dear to all is threefold, as also Yajna (sacrifice), penance (ascetic practice, austerities) and the gift of alms. Listen to the difference between them. (17.07)

The foods that augment a fuller life, strength, health, vitality (Sattva), pleasure and good feeling, foods that are savoury, mild, strengthening, vigorous, are dear to the Sattvika (those in the mode of goodness). (17.08)

The food that are bitter, sour, salty, over-hot, pungent, dry and burning, are the victuals dear to the Rajasika (those in the mode of passion), and bring pain, sorrow and sickness. (17.09)

Whatever foods are stale and tasteless, rotten and decayed, things that are leavings and unclean are the choice of the Tamasika (those in the mode of ignorance, darkness). (17.10)

The Yajna (sacrifice, service, seva, meritorious deeds, a Vedic rite) approved by holy ordinance, and offered by those who would not taste its fruits, who concentrate their minds on the next alone: the firm belief that Yajna (sacrifice, etc...) is duty, that is Sattvic (in the mode of goodness). (17.11)

The sacrifice that is offered up by those who bear its fruits in mind, and for mere pretension, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), know them to be the Rajasic (in the mode of passion). (17.12)

Yajna (sacrifice, etc...) contrary to proper ritual ordinances, in which no food is distributed (prasadam), no sacred words recited (mantras chanted or recited), no Brahman's fees paid up (covering gifts to the officiating priests), no faith (Sradha) enshrined, is said to be Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance, darkness). (17.13)

Worship given to the Gods, to the twice-born, gurus (spiritual teachers), and the wise (the learned), purity, integrity, continence (celibacy even in marriage, chastity), non-violence (harmlessness), are described as bodily penance. (17.14)

Words that do not cause offence, that are truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and also the practice of sacred recitation, are termed the penance of the tongue (or, the word). (17.15)

Serenity of mind and friendliness, silence and self-control, and purity of feelings (blava), this is called the penance of the mind. (17.16)

These threefold forms of penance, practised by men with utmost faith (Sradha), desiring no fruit, with a mind in total control, are described as Sattvika (in the mode of goodness). (17.17)

These penances which is practised with the view of obtaining respect, honour and reverence, or from sheer hypocrisy, are here said to be Rajasic (in the mode of passion), unstable and transient. (17.18)

These penances performed out of perverted theories, through self-torture, or with the object of hurting others, is declared to be Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance). (17.19)

Alms given to one from whom no favour is expected in return, in the belief that it is one's sacred duty to give, at the right place and time, to a worthy person, is called alms given in a Sattvic way (in the mode of goodness). (17.20)

But alms given in expectation of receiving favours in return, or for the sake of reaping some fruit afterwards, or again reluctantly, that giving is held to be Rajasic (in the mode of passion). (17.21)

Alms given at the wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, without respect or with insult that is declared to be Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance). (17.22)

“Om, Tat, Sat”: This has been considered as a threefold pointer to Brahman (Eternal Being). Through this, were created, in the beginning, the Brahmanas (the knowers of Brahman, or the priests, or intellectual class of India), and Vedas and Yajnas (sacrificial rites) ordained. (17.23)

Therefore, by uttering “Om”, are the acts of sacrifice, the giving of alms and penance accomplished, in conformity to ordinances (Vedic scriptures), ever again enacted by Brahman's devotees. (17.24)

With the utterance of “Tat” (That), do those who seek liberation (Moksa, Nirvana, Mukti), perform the various acts of sacrifice, penance and the gift of alms, having no thought for the fruits they produce. (17.25)

“Sat” (It Is) is used to indicate the Real and the Good; the word “Sat” is likewise used, O Partha (Arjuna), for works that call forth praise. (17.26)

Steadfastness in sacrifice, penance, the giving of alms, is also called “Sat”, and any action for the sake of the Supreme (Tat) is equally known as “Sat”. (17.27)

Whatever is sacrificed, any giving, any penance, or any other deed, practised without faith (Sradha), it is called “Asat”, O Partha (Arjuna); of no benefit in this world and the next (both in this life and the next). (17.28)

Eighteenth Discourse

The Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation

Arjuna said:

O Mighty-armed, O Hrsikesa (Krsna), I desire to know from You the truth concerning renunciation (sannyasa) as well as of abandonment (tyaga), with their difference, O Kesinisudana (O Slayer of Kesin, Krsna). (18.01)

The Supreme Lord said:

To give up works dictated by desire, Sages know this to be renunciation (sannyasa); the abandonment of the fruit of all works, say the learned, is tyaga (renunciation, abandonment). (See also 5.01, 5.05, and 6.01) (18.02)

Some learned men say that actions, tainted with defect, should be given up; but, others say that actions of sacrifice, the gift of alms and deeds of penance should not be abandoned. (18.03)

Hear then My own conclusions as to abandonment (tyaga), O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna). Indeed, O best of men (O tiger of men, Arjuna), abandonment (tyaga) is regarded as being threefold. (The word 'sannyasa' is the way it is pronounced, but written 'samnyasa'. Samnyasa and Tyaga, are synonyms, they both mean abandonment, renunciation, and acts of giving up.) (18.04)

Acts of sacrifice, the gift of alms and deeds of penance are not to be abandoned, but should most certainly be done, because sacrifice, alms-giving and penance (ascetic practise) are purifiers of the intelligent. (18.05)

But even these actions should be done, detachedly and abandoning the fruit, O Partha (Arjuna), this is My certain and supreme belief. (18.06)

For to renounce actions (duties) that are prescribed (by scripture) is inappropriate; delusively to give it up is Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance, darkness). This (also) has been declared. (18.07)

The one who gives up an action simply because it causes pain, or because he shrinks from bodily distress, commits an act of abandonment that accords with Rajasika (in the mode of passion); for sure the person will not reap the fruit of abandonment (tyaga) (18.08)

Whatever obligatory action is achieved, saying, “it should be done”, O Arjuna, abandoning attachment and also the fruit, that abandonment is held to be Sattvika (in the mode of goodness). (18.09)

The renouncer suffused with goodness (sattva), with a calm understanding, free from doubts, hates not his disagreeable work nor cleaves to the agreeable one. (18.10)

For an embodied being it is not possible to abandon actions completely; rather it is he who abandons the fruits of actions who deserves the name of a renouncer. (18.11)

Threefold is the fruit of action, unwanted, wanted and mixed, which the one who has not renounced, experiences after death, but not those who have renounced. (18.12)

Learn from Me, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), these five factors as laid down in the philosophy of the Sankhya, for the accomplishment of all actions: (18.13)

They are: The physical body, the doer, the various kinds of organs, the different impulses, and the fifth, the presiding deities. (18.14)

Whatever action a man may undertake, by his body, speech or mind, no matter whether right or wrong, these are its five causes. (18.15)

That being so, the man who sees himself alone, as the agent, does not see at all. Untrained is his intelligence, and perverted are his thoughts. (18.16)

He whose nature is not egoistic, whose intellect is not stained, even though he slays the whole world, slays nothing, and is not subject to bondage. (18.17)

Knowledge, the knowable, and the knower, these constitute the threefold instrumental cause of action (karma). The instrument (or, organ), the action, and the agent (the doer) form the threefold basis of action. (18.18)

Knowledge, action and agent (the doer), these too are three in kind, distinguished by the three constituents (Gunas), enunciated in the Sankhya philosophy, according to the distinction of the constituents. Listen correctly about these also. (18.19)

That knowledge by which one sees the Imperishable Being changeless, undivided in all contingent beings divided, know that knowledge as Sattvika (in the mode of goodness). (See also 11.13 and 13.16) (18.20)

But the knowledge by which one sees in all contingent beings, manifold entities of different kinds, distinct from one another, know that knowledge to be Rajasic (in the mode of passion). (18.21)

And that knowledge which concentrates on a single effect as if it were the whole, irrational, not grasping the Truth as the object of all-knowledge, trivial and easy, that is declared to be Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance). (18.22)

A prescribed action (Karma), free from all attachment, performed without passion, without hate, by one not desirous of the fruit, that action is called to be Sattvic (in the mode of goodness). (18.23)

But that action which is done by longing for desires, or again with egoism, or in expending much effort, that is declared to be Rajasic (in the mode of passion). (18.24)

The action which is undertaken by a deluded man, who has no thought of consequence, loss and injury to others, or for the human part he plays himself, is called Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance). (18.25)

The agent who is free from attachment, not egoistic, steadfast and resolute, unaffected by success or failure, is said to be Sattvic (good). (18.26)

The agent who is passionate, desiring to pursue the fruits of action, greedy, intent on doing harm, impure, a prey to joy and to sorrow, is widely known to follow the Rajasic way (the passion's way). (18.27)

The agent, unsteady (ayukta), brutish, self-important, malicious, unfair, lazy, who is subject to depression, who procrastinates, is called Tamasic (ignorant, to be of darkness). (18.28)

Listen to the threefold division of the intellect as well as constancy arising out of the constituents, which I will set forth in all its many forms, omitting nothing, O Dhananjaya (O conqueror of wealth, Arjuna). (18.29)

The intellect that distinguishes between action and its cessation, between what should be done and what not, between fear and fearlessness, bondage and release, that intellect is Sattvic (in the mode of goodness), O Partha (Arjuna). (18.30)

The intellect by which Dharma and Adharma (right and wrong in the widest sense; law and lawlessness), and also what should be done and what not, are untruly understood, that intellect, O Partha (Arjuna) is Rajasic (in the mode of passion). (18.31)

The intellect which holds a distorted view, seeing Adharma (unrighteousness) as Dharma (righteousness), and see all things their opposite (all things contrary to truth), that intellect, O Partha (Arjuna), is in the Tamasic way (in the mode of ignorance) (18.32)

The constancy by which one holds fast, in check the functions of the mind, the life-breaths (Prana), and the sense organs, unswerving in Yoga (self-discipline), that constancy, O Partha (Arjuna) , is constancy in the Sattvic way (in the mode of goodness). (18.33)

The constancy by which one holds fast to Dharma (Duty), Kama (pleasure, sense gratification) and Artha (self-interest, riches or economic development), adhering to them, desirous of their fruits, O Partha (Arjuna), is constancy in the Rajasic way (in the mode of passion). (18.34)

That by which a stupid will not let go sleep, fear, grief, depression, and also lust, is constancy in Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance), O Partha (Arjuna). (18.35)

Threefold too is pleasure, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), hear this now from Me. That in which a man enjoys after much effort spent, and wherein suffering comes to an end. (18.36)

Which at first is more like poison, but in time transforms itself in what seems to be nectar (heavenly food, food of the deities, immortality-giving food) – is called pleasure the Sattvic way (in the mode of goodness), for it rises from that serenity which comes from Self-knowledge (atma-buddhi-prasada, translated ‘of one’s intellect (soul)’ or ‘of intellect and self’). (18.37)

That pleasure which at first seems like nectar, arising from the contact of the senses with their objects, but in time transforms itself in what seems to be poison, that pleasure is declared the Rajasic way (in the mode of passion). (See also 5.22)(18.38)

That pleasure which deludes the self both at the beginning and in the end, which derives from sleep, laziness and heedlessness, has been declared to be Tamasic (in the mode of ignorance, darkness). (18.39)

There is no being in heaven or on earth, or even among the deities (Devas, demigods), which is or even could be free from these three constituents of Nature (Prakriti). (18.40)

The duties of the Brahmanas, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, and also the Sudras, O Parantapa (O vanquisher of foes, Arjuna), are variously assigned by these constituents, and they arise from the nature of things as they are (svabhava). (See also 4.13) (18.41)

Serenity, self-control, austerities (penance, ascetic practise), purity, patience and honesty, spiritual knowledge in theory as in practise (knowledge and realisation), belief in a hereafter, these are the duties of Brahmanas, arising from their nature. (18.42)

Heroism, ardour, fortitude, skill, not fleeing from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of the Ksatriyas (protectors), arising from their own nature. (18.43)

To till the fields (agriculture), rearing cattle and trade are the duties of the Vaisyas, arising from their nature; but work which consists in service is the natural work of the Sudras. (18.44)

By devotion each to his own duty (karma), every man attains perfection. Listen how a man perfects himself through devotion to his own duty (karma). (18.45)

He, Who is the source of all beings' activity (pravrtti), and by Whom this whole universe pervades, by worshipping Him in the performance of his duty, man attains perfection. (See also 9.27, 12.10) (18.46)

Better to achieve one's own natural duty (natural duty: that for which he is innate to do), though devoid of merit, than to achieve another's even well performed. He who fulfils the duty (Dharma) imposed by his own nature, he incurs no sin. (See also 3.35, 5.10, 18.07, 18.09, 18.17, 18.23)) (18.47)

Never should one give up the duty to which he is born, though defective it may be, O son of Kunti (Arjuna); for all enterprises are veiled in faults as fire by smoke. (18.48)

The one whose mind is unattached to anything, whose self is subdued, all desires gone, by means of renunciation reaches the supreme state, free from bondage to works (naiskarmya-siddhim: the perfection consisting in freedom from action). (18.49)

Learn from Me, in brief, how the one having attained perfection, reaches Brahman, O son of Kunti (O Kaunteya, Arjuna), that supreme state of knowledge. (18.50)

Absorbed in a purified intellect (buddhi, reason, soul-vision kept pure), self-controlled with constancy, detached from the things of sense, sound and other objects, and discarding attraction and aversion; (18.51)

Let one dwell in solitude, eat lightly, with speech, body and mind controlled, ever absorbed in divine meditation (union through soul-vision in yoga), cultivating dispassion; (18.52)

Giving up egotism, power, pride, desire (lust), anger, possessiveness, free from the 'me and mine' consciousness, serene, he is fit to become one with Brahman. (18.53)

Becoming absorbed in Brahman, serene in the Self, he grieves not nor desires; equal to all contingent beings, he gains supreme devotion towards Me. (18.54)

By supreme devotion (meaning, love and loyalty) he realises Me as I really am, who and what I am. Then, knowing Me in truth, he immediately enters into the Supreme (he enters into 'That').(See also 5.19) (18.55)

Undertaking continually all manner of actions, taking refuge in Me, for by My grace he will attain the eternal, changeless state (pada). (18.56)

Mentally dedicating all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, relying on buddhi-yoga (union through discriminative knowledge, or yoga of understanding), think constantly on Me. (18.57)

Fixing your mind on Me, by My grace you will overcome all dangers, but if through selfishness you will not listen, then you will meet destruction. (18.58)

But if through self-assertion you think, 'I will not fight', vain is your resolution, for Prakriti, your inborn nature will constrain you. (18.59)

O son of Kunti (O Kaunteya, Arjuna), being bound by the karma of your own nature-born action, you will have to do that which is against your will, and through delusion you do not wish to do. (18.60)

The Lord dwells in the region of the heart of all contingent beings, O Arjuna, and by His illusive power (Maya) making them all whirl as if fixed in a machine. (18.61)

O Bharata (Arjuna), in Him alone find refuge with all your being, and all your love (bhava); and by His grace you shall obtain supreme peace, the eternal state. (18.62)

Of all mysteries most mysterious, this knowledge have I declared to you, contemplate on it in all its amplitude, and do whatever you wish to do. (18.63)

Listen once again to My supreme word, of all the most mysterious; because you are My beloved friend, I will, therefore, tell you that which is beneficial for you. (18.64)

Absorb your mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me (resign all things to Me), prostrate yourself before Me: I promise you, in this way you shall come to Me, for in truth you are dear to Me. (18.65)

Forsaking all other dharmas (duties), turn to Me, your only refuge, for I will deliver you of all evils. Do not grieve. (18.66)

Never should you speak about this to anyone, whose life is devoid of asceticism (austerity, penance), who has no devotion (bhakta: love and loyalty), who refuses to obey, or to one who speaks ill of Me. (18.67)

But whoever shall impart to My loving devotees this supreme secret knowledge, showing the highest devotion (bhakti: love and loyalty) to Me, will come and reach Me without doubt. (18.68)

No one among mankind can render Me more pleasing service than someone like this; nor shall any other one on earth be dearer to Me. (18.69)

The one, who studies this sacred dialogue of ours, will be worshipping Me by the sacrifice (Yajna) of knowledge. This is My promise. (18.70)

Even that individual full of faith (shraddha), not cavilling, who merely listens to and heeds this sacred dialogue, will be free from evil, and attain the blessed worlds of those whose works are pure. (18.71)

O Partha (Arjuna), have you listened to this knowledge (to this My word) in singleness of mind (an attentive mind)? O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), has the confusion linked to delusion-born ignorance been thoroughly destroyed? (18.72)

Arjuna said:

Destroyed is the confusion, I have got back my proper way of thinking (smrti) (I have got back my memory) through Your grace, O Achyuta (O unfallen One, O immutable One, Krsna). With doubts dispelled I stand ready to act according to Your word. (18.73)

Sanjaya said:

I did hear this wondrous dialogue of Vasudeva (Vasudeva's son, Krsna) and the high-souled Partha (Arjuna), causing my hair to stand on end. (18.74)

By Vyasa's favour have I heard this supreme secret Yoga from the Lord, Krsna Himself, relating it before me. (18.75)

O King (King Dhrtarastra) recalling over and over again this marvellous and holy dialogue of Kesava (Krsna) and Arjuna, I thrill with joy again and again. (18.76)

And as often as I recall that utterly marvellous form of Hari (Krsna), great is my amazement, O King (King Dhrtarastra), I thrill with joy, and thrill with joy again! (18.77)

Whenever Krsna, the Lord of Yoga is; wherever is Partha (Arjuna) the Archer, there is prosperity, victory, happiness, and firm morality, this is my conviction. (18.78)