

Srimad Bhagavad Gita

The Definitive Translation by Bart Marshall

Chapter 1: The Despair of Arjuna

1.1

King Dhritarashtra said:

Tell me, O Sanjaya, what happened when the sons of my people and the sons of Pandu assembled on Kurukshetra, the holy field of righteousness, arrayed for battle?

1.2

Sanjaya the Poet said:

Upon looking out upon the army of the Pandavas in attack formation, Prince Duryodhana addressed his great spiritual teacher, Drona, and spoke these words:

1.3

“Behold, O Revered Teacher, this powerful army of the Pandavas, expertly arrayed for battle by your gifted disciple, the son of King Drupada.

1.4

Among them are great archers, equal in prowess to their leaders, Bhima and Arjuna, and great fighters like Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada.

1.5

In their army are famous heroes like Dhrishtaketu, Purujit, Kuntibhoj, Shaibya, and Chekitan, the gallant king of Kashi — all of them the best among men.

1.6

Among their ranks are the courageous Yuyudhamanyu, the gallant Uttamauja son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi — all great warrior chiefs, and expert charioteers.

1.7

Now hear also, O Noblest Among the Reborn, the names of the distinguished captains who lead my army, so that you may locate them during battle and remember them after the war.

1.8

First of all there is you, great teacher, then Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, Ashwaththama, Vikarna, and the son of Somadhatta — all of whom are ever victorious in battle.

1.9

And thousands of other heroic soldiers, equipped with many weapons and skilled in the art of war, who are prepared to lay down their lives for my sake.

1.10

Yet our forces, commanded by Bhishma, seem the weaker, while their forces, commanded by Bhima, seem stronger.

1.11

Therefore, I call upon you, my captains, and all those you command, to defend and protect general Bhishma, even as you perform your other battle assignments.”

1.12

Hearing this, the valiant Bhishma, great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, grandfather of the soldiers arrayed before him, roared like a lion to give joy and confidence to Prince Duryodhana, then blew his conch shell with great power.

1.13

Immediately thereafter, the army’s entire array of conchs, horns, bugles, and kettledrums erupted with tumultuous, deafening intensity.

1.14

Then from the other side, amidst the Pandava army, standing in a glorious chariot drawn by white stallions, Lord Krishna and Arjuna blew their conch shells, and their sound echoed with the transcendent timbre of the Divine.

1.15

Lord Krishna blew his conch shell called “Panchajanya.” Arjuna blew his conch shell called “Devadatta,” and Bhima, the voracious eater and performer of herculean deeds, blew his conch shell called “Paundra.”

1.16

King Yudhisthira, son of Kunte, blew his conch shell Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew their shells Sughosa and Manipuspaka.

1.17 / 1.18

And the king of Kashi, a great archer, and Shikhandi, a great soldier, and Dhrishtayumna, and Virata, and Satyaki the Invincible, and Drupad, and the five sons of Draupadi, and the mighty-armed Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra, all blew their conch shells, O Ruler of the Earth.

1.19

And the thunderous sound of these powerful conchs echoed across the earth and sky and weakened the hearts of your sons, O Dhritarashtra.

1.20

Then, O Lord of the Earth, seeing Dhritarashtra’s army at the ready and the arrows about to fly, Arjuna, son of Pandu, whose chariot flew the flag of Hanuman the Monkey God, took up his bow and addressed his charioteer, Lord Krishna.

1.21 / 1.22

“O Infallible One, draw up our chariot between these two great armies so that I can see both those who fight with me, and those who fight against me in this great trial of combat.

1.23

Let me see those who have come to fight for the sinful son of Dhritarashtra so that they might please him.”

1.24

Sanjaya said:

Then, O Dhritarashtra, upon hearing Arjuna’s request, Lord Krishna drove their luminous chariot to the exact middle of the battlefield.

1.25

There he pointed to Bhishma, Drona and all the other kings and princes and said: “Behold, Arjuna, the Kuru dynasty has gathered.”

1.26

As Arjuna looked out upon the armies, he saw his father, grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, cousins, sons, nephews, grand-nephews, father-in-law, and friends and well-wishers on both sides.

1.27

And seeing all his relatives arrayed for battle against each other, Arjuna was overwhelmed with sadness and compassion.

1.28 / 1.29

He turned to Lord Krishna in despair, saying, “O Lord, as I gaze upon all my kinsmen assembled here, so eager to do battle with each other, my limbs quiver and my mouth has dried up. My whole body trembles and the hairs on my neck stand on end.

1.30

Gandiva, my bow, slips from my hand, and my skin burns all over. My mind is reeling, and my knees will not hold me up.

1.31

I see only bad omens, O Krishna. What good can come of killing my kinsmen?

1.32 / 1.33

I do not desire victory, kingdom, nor any pleasures that may come with it. What good is kingdom, pleasure, or even life itself, when the very ones with whom we desire to experience these things stand against us ready to kill or be killed?

1.34

Teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, fathers-in-law, uncles, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and many other relatives are gathered for battle against us, prepared to lose their wealth and lives.

1.35

I do not want to kill them, even if it means I will be killed. I do not want to kill them even for the three worlds, let alone for any earthly powers or pleasures.

1.36

What pleasure can there be in killing the sons of Dhritarashtra? By slaying these desperate men we only create sin for ourselves.

1.37

Are we not more noble than to kill our kinsmen? How can killing our own bring happiness?

1.38 / 1.39

Even though the sons of Dhritarashtra, their minds poisoned with greed, see no sin in killing family, should not we who see the wrong in this refrain from taking part?

1.40

When a dynasty is vanquished, the traditions of its lineage, both ancestral and spiritual, are lost. The entire family descends into disorder and impiety.

1.41

When virtue is lost, the women of the family become unchaste, resulting in unwanted children and intermingling of casts.

1.42

An increase in unwanted children leads to a hellish life for the family, and for the destroyers of the family as well. The souls of the ancestors of these families also languish, being now deprived of ceremonial offerings of rice and water.

1.43

By the misdeeds of those who destroy families and cause the mixing of blood, the virtue of the family and the dharma of the entire community is devastated.

1.44

O Krishna, is it not said by the wise that those who destroy the spiritual traditions of families shall live in hell for an indefinite period of time?

1.45

Alas, how strange that, knowing all this, we are still prepared to commit such great sin. Driven by the desire for royal pleasures, we stand ready to slay our kinsmen.

1.46

Much better for my eternal welfare if I be killed, unarmed and unresisting, by the weapons of the sons of Dhritarashtra.”

1.47

Sanjaya said:

Having thus spoken these words in the middle of the battlefield, Arjuna dropped his bow and sank down on the seat of his chariot, his mind in despair.

Chapter 2: The Yoga of Action

2.1

Sanjaya said:

Seeing Arjuna thus overwhelmed with grief, his eyes full of tears and his mind stricken with confusion, the Charioteer spoke to him.

2.2

Lord Krishna said:

Dear Arjuna, from where do these impurities of mind arise at such a critical juncture? Such despondency is unworthy of an Aryan who claims to know the higher values of life. It does not lead to greater realms, but to infamy and disgrace.

2.3

Do not indulge in unmanly impotence. It does not befit you. Confront the cowardice in your heart and stand up! You are the terror of your enemies! Act as such!

2.4

Arjuna said, "O Krishna, how can I shoot arrows into Bhishma and Drona, men who are worthy of my worship?"

2.5

Better to live in this world as a beggar than to enjoy royal life by killing these noble teachers. Though they yet lust after worldly things, they are my superiors. If I kill them, all future pleasures will be tainted with their blood.

2.6

I do not even know which outcome is better — to conquer them or be conquered by them. If I kill the sons of Dhritarashtra I would not wish to live, yet it is they who stand facing me, eager for battle.

2.7

My mind is conflicted about duty, and weakness has claimed my composure. In this miserable condition I beg you, O Lord, please tell me for certain what is best for my spirit. I am your disciple and I am surrendered to you. Please instruct me.

2.8

For even if I should attain an unrivaled kingdom on earth, or more so, become a sovereign divinity in heaven, it would not dispel the sorrow that now paralyzes my senses."

2.9

Sanjaya said:

Having spoke thus to Krishna, Lord of the Senses, Arjuna, conqueror of sleep and destroyer of foes, said, "I shall not fight," then fell silent.

2.10

O Dhritarashtra, it was then that Lord Krishna, with a gentle smile, spoke these words to the despondent Arjuna as they stood poised between two armies of kinsmen.

2.11

Lord Krishna said:

You speak learned words, Arjuna, but you grieve for that which warrants no grief. The wise grieve neither for the living nor the dead.

2.12

There is no past in which I did not exist — nor you, nor any of these soldiers and kings — and there is no future in which we will cease to be.

2.13

Just as the Soul experiences infancy, youth, and old age in one body, so does it pass into another body when one dies. One who realizes he is the Soul, not the body, is undaunted by this.

2.14

Experiences of pain and happiness, hot and cold, are fleeting. They come and go like winter and summer. Accept them with courage, Son of Kunte, knowing they shall pass.

2.15

O Noblest of Men, that hero who remains steadfast and undisturbed by both joy and sorrow, he is one who can realize Liberation.

2.16

That which is unreal is ever changing and does not endure. That which is real neither changes nor ever is not. To those who perceive Truth, this is self-evident.

2.17

That which pervades All is indestructible. Nothing can destroy That Which Is.

2.18

It is the physical body only that perishes, not the eternal Soul that is You. Therefore, fight!

2.19

That which you truly are neither kills nor can it be killed. To believe otherwise is ignorance.

2.20

That which you truly are was never born, nor can it ever not be. You are eternal, immortal, primeval, everlasting. When the body dies, You are untouched, unmoved, unconcerned.

2.21

How can one who knows the Soul to be imperishable, eternal, immutable, unborn, believe that man has the power to kill or cause others to kill?

2.22

Just as a person discards old clothes and puts on new clothes, so does the Soul-Self leave spent bodies and enter fresh ones.

2.23

The Self cannot be pierced by weapons, burnt by fire, made wet by water, nor dried out by wind.

2.24

Self is unbreakable, incombustible, insoluble, all-pervading, timeless, ancient, immovable, eternal.

2.25

Self is unmanifest, unchanging, formless, imperishable. Knowing this about Self, why grieve for the body?

2.26

Even if you believe that Supreme Self is subject to birth and death, still there is no reason to grieve.

2.27

That which is born is certain to die, and that which has died will manifest as new life. Why lament the inevitable?

2.28

All beings arise from the unmanifested void, and for a short time they appear as manifested forms. Then they die and become again unmanifested. Where in this cycle is cause for grief?

2.29

Upon being instructed about Self, one person in three will be amazed, one will pretend to understand, and one will not even comprehend the teacher's words. Rare is the one who has realized Self in his body. He knows It cannot be known.

2.30

The Soul that indwells all bodies is eternally indestructible. There is no reason to grieve the death of any earthly creature.

2.31

Besides, you are a warrior. It is your dharma. There is no higher calling for warriors than to fight a righteous war. To waver in the face of duty is unworthy, Arjuna.

2.32

Blessed are the warriors who are given such an opportunity! It is an open invitation to heaven!

2.33

If you refuse to fight, if you disregard your dharma and abandon your duty, you will bring upon yourself dishonor and great sin. You will be called a traitor, your reputation as a warrior will dissolve into infamy.

2.34

Your people will tell stories to generations of children about the cowardice and disgrace of Arjuna. And to the once-honored, dishonor is worse than death.

2.35

The great generals who now hold you in such high esteem, will think you deserted the battle in fear, and will lose all respect and regard for you.

2.36

Your enemies will scorn your abilities, mock your cowardice, and in every way defame you. To a warrior, what could be worse than that?

2.37

If you are killed in this battle you will enter the kingdom of heaven. If you are victorious, you will enjoy a kingdom on earth. Arise and fight, Son of Kunte! You cannot lose!

2.38

Fight for the pure sake of fighting, without any regard for right or wrong, good or bad, loss or gain, victory or defeat. Do this and you will incur no sin!

2.39

Up until now I have been speaking to you with the yoga of knowledge. Listen then as I describe the yoga of action, through which you can break the bondage of action, and transcend karma.

2.40

On this path, effort is never wasted, lost or diminished, and adverse results are not possible. Even very little practice of this yoga releases the hold of fear and protects you from danger.

2.41

Those who walk this path are one-pointed in focus and resolute in purpose. The minds of the masses are irresolute, and stray onto many forking paths.

2.42

Men of small minds and superficial knowledge delight in using oratory to revere the scriptures, saying, "There is nothing higher than this!"

2.43

Guided by their own selfish desires, they glorify the portions of the scriptures that please them and construct their own heaven, then perform pompous rituals for attaining wealth, power, sensual pleasure, and elevation to heavenly realms. For such as these, rebirth is the only remedy.

2.44

With their minds ever bewildered by desire for pleasure and power, they have no capacity for the one-pointed determination necessary for Samadhi.

2.45

The Vedic scriptures deal mainly with the three forces of the material world. Go beyond these three gunas. Transcend the duality of opposites. Become free of fear, established in Truth and centered in Self.

2.46

A skilled theologian can twist any scripture to serve his narrow purpose. To one who has realized Brahman, the scriptures are like a pond in a flood.

2.47

You have the duty to work, Arjuna, but not the claim to any fruits that may result. Understand that your actions do not cause the results, but do not let this lead to inaction.

2.48

Perform your duties with grace and equanimity, without any attachment to success or aversion to failure. Such equipoise is the yoga of action.

2.49

Action performed with attachment is far inferior to action performed with equanimity of mind. Only petty misers work for reward.

2.50

One who routinely practices the yoga of work without attachment frees himself from karmic consequences in this life. Dedicate yourself to yoga, Arjuna. Yoga is the art of action!

2.51

Sages who engage in this practice, who release attachment to the fruits of action, become liberated from the cycle of birth and death, and transcend the bonds of illusion.

2.52

When consciousness becomes un-entangled from illusion, you become indifferent to all the philosophies you've heard, and un-curious about those you have not heard.

2.53

When consciousness, un-bewildered by scriptures, stands still in tune with the Infinite, this is Samadhi.

2.54

Arjuna said, "O Lord, how do we recognize a sage in this state? How does he look? How does he act? How does he sit and walk?"

2.55

Lord Krishna said:

When a man has surrendered all the desires of his heart and is established in Self alone, he is in the highest state.

2.56

One who is undisturbed by adversity, indifferent to happiness, unattached to outcomes, free of fear and anger — such a one is a sage of stable vision.

2.57

He who is not attached to any person or place, who is not delighted by good fortune nor dejected by tribulation, who does not praise good nor despise evil, he is surely immersed in the Infinite.

2.58

The sage who can withdraw his senses from the world of sense-objects as a tortoise withdraws his limbs into his shell, is surely deeply rooted in consciousness.

2.59

Sense-objects may fall away from the life of one who practices restraint and abstinence, but the taste for them remains until Truth is realized.

2.60

Indeed, Arjuna, the senses are so strong and impetuous they will forcibly carry away the mind of even the most dedicated practitioner of discrimination and restraint.

2.61

Yet one who is steadfast in practice, who takes control of his senses and meditates on Me, the Supreme — such a one shall come to realize the perfect state.

2.62

He who does not control his senses develops attachments to sense-objects. Attachment causes desire, and unfulfilled desire causes anger.

2.63

Anger distorts perception. False perception feeds delusion. Delusion causes loss of discernment and confusion of memory. When reason and intelligence flounder, one becomes lost again in the material quagmire, and falls inevitably into ruin.

2.64

But one who is self-controlled — who can move among sense-objects without attachment or aversion — is freed from anger and desire, and walks in divine tranquility.

2.65

For one who lives in divine consciousness, the threefold miseries of material existence no longer hold sway. In this happy state, true Intelligence is firmly established.

2.66

One who has not realized the divine Self has no connection to Intelligence. Peace and happiness are not possible.

2.67

For one whose thoughts follow in the wake of his senses, the mind is carried off like a rudderless boat in high wind.

2.68

Therefore, one whose senses have no attachment whatever to sense-objects, is surely a sage who sees clearly.

2.69

What others call the light, he sees to be dark ignorance. In the darkness others fear, he awakens to the Light.

2.70

Rivers flow endlessly into oceans, but the ocean, always full, barely notices. Desires, like rivers, flow endlessly into consciousness, but for one who pays them no mind, peace is undisturbed.

2.71

Truly, he who moves through the world without desire or ambition, who is free of pride and claims nothing as his own, he alone will find peace.

2.72

This is Self-Realization. One who realizes Truth never again falls into delusion. Even if Realization occurs at the last moment of life, that soul is taken into the arms of God.

Chapter 3: The Act of Sacrifice

3.1

Arjuna said, "O Lord, you say that wisdom and restraint are superior to blind action, yet you encourage me to engage in terrible acts of war."

3.2

I am confused by your conflicting statements. Please tell me clearly what is best for my spiritual welfare."

3.3

Lord Krishna said:

O Innocent One, there are indeed two paths to enlightenment — the path of knowledge, for those inclined to solitude and meditation, and the path of action for those who move about in the world.

3.4

One does not become free of karma by refusing to act. Neither does renouncing activity alone lead to Samadhi.

3.5

Indeed, it is not possible for anyone to be truly inactive even for a moment. The three gunas, and the qualities of one's nature, compel a person helplessly to action whether he intends it or not.

3.6

One who remains motionless, refusing to act while still desiring sense-objects, is a hypocrite, a self-deluded pretender.

3.7

The earnest yogi, whose mind controls his senses, who dedicates his capacity for action to selfless service and sincere devotion, is far superior.

3.8

Perform your duty and excel at your prescribed work. Action is necessary, and superior to inaction. You cannot even maintain your physical body without work.

3.9

Yet know that work binds one to the material world unless performed as a sacrifice. Whatever work you do, do it for God, and you will not be bound to the world.

3.10

In the beginning, the Lord of Creation brought forth generations of men and demigods, and bestowed upon men the capacity for sacrifice. And he said to them, "Be thankful for your ability to make sacrifices. Through sacrifice you shall prosper and attain all that you desire.

3.11

“The demigods, being nourished by your sacrifices, will nourish you in return. When gods and men cooperate, prosperity reigns for all.”

3.12

Indeed, the gods of the natural world are the keepers of all luxuries and necessities of life. These they freely give to those who offer their works to them as sacrifice. Men who work only for themselves and accept the gifts of the gods without sacrifice are nothing but thieves.

3.13

The practitioner who consumes what food remains after offering it in sacrifice, gathers no karma. But he who prepares food for himself alone and consumes it for his own sense pleasure, eats only sin.

3.14

All beings need food to live. Food comes from rain. Rain comes through sacrifice. Sacrifice is the selfless performance of duty.

3.15

Know that all action arises from the God of Creation, who in turn arises from the Supreme Self. Therefore all acts of sacrifice are performed by God in service of Self, which are not two.

3.16

He who does not pass on what he is given through the revolving wheel of sacrifice — who gathers only unto himself the pleasures of the world — truly lives in vain.

3.17

Yet for one who has realized Self, who abides illumined in Self, who is content in Self alone, for him there are no duties or sacrifices.

3.18

One who has realized Self has nothing to gain or lose by doing or not-doing. He has no obligations or purpose, and depends on no one.

3.19

Therefore, do what needs to be done without regard for reward. Make offerings without expectation of blessings. The Supreme Self will make itself known.

3.20

King Janaka lived a life of action and duty, and he became enlightened. Many spiritual aspirants have profited by his example. Therefore, even if only for the benefit of others, do your duty and act!

3.21

For whatever a great man does, others will emulate. The path his actions prescribe, others will walk.

3.22

O Arjuna, in all the Universe there is nothing I want, nothing I have to gain by any action. There are no obligations before me, no greater purpose beckoning, no reason even to move. Still, I do my work.

3.23

For if I did not, others would point to my example and feel justified in not doing their work.

3.24

If I did not, the three worlds would fall into chaos and disorder. The population would swell with unrighteous beings and societies would crumble. Peace would be destroyed.

3.25

The ignorant perform their actions with attachment to results and hope for personal reward. The sage acts selflessly, hoping only that others might somehow benefit. His example lights the path of righteousness.

3.26

The sage does not disturb the sleeping minds of those attached to the rewards of their actions. Rather, he merely performs his own actions with unattached equanimity, and lets them draw what conclusions they will.

3.27

The sage knows that it is the forces of nature, the three gunas, that cause all action, and that it is only the bewildered mind of man that thinks, "I am doing this!"

3.28

The sage sees that these three forces both stimulate the senses and activate the sensory world, thus he avoids entanglement.

3.29

The sage sees that the ignorant masses are transfixed by the interplay of these forces, and compelled by desire for reward, but he does not interfere.

3.30

Fix your mind on the Supreme, Arjuna, and surrender your actions to Me. Without attachment or expectation, without ownership or self-interest, without desire or fear, fight!

3.31

Those who earnestly follow My teachings with faith and surrender, become liberated from the bondage of karma.

3.32

But those who hear these teachings I speak, yet ridicule and decry them and do not put them into practice — who choose instead delusion and bondage — such as these bring about their own ruin.

3.33

Everyone acts in accordance with his own nature, even a man of knowledge. There is no point trying to change this.

3.34

The senses dictate whether one is attracted to, or repulsed by, a sense object. Do not let this control you. The senses are an obstacle to Self-Realization.

3.35

It is far better to perform your own duties, though they seem modest, than to covet another's duties that seem grand. Better to die performing that which is given to you. It is dangerous to live another's life.

3.36

Arjuna said, "O Krishna, what compels a man to sin against his own will, as if under the control of some unseen force?"

3.37

Lord Krishna said:

That force is desire, Arjuna, which gives rise to aversion, envy, anger and lust. Desire is man's greatest enemy.

3.38

As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror is obscured by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the womb, so is the mind of man enshrouded by desire.

3.39

All of consciousness is infused with this enemy, which countermands reason and burns like fire.

3.40

Its seats of power are the senses, mind, and ego, through which it veils timeless wisdom, creates its own illusion, and bewilders the soul.

3.41

Therefore, before all else, control the senses and slay the enemy of desire — which destroys equanimity and prevents Self-Realization.

3.42

Superior to the body are senses. Superior to the senses is mind. Superior to mind is Intelligence. Superior to Intelligence is Self.

3.43

Knowing Oneself to be superior to intelligence, mind, body and senses, use your spiritual power to subdue this enemy called desire.

Chapter 4: The Realization of Truth

4.1

Lord Krishna said:

I taught this science of yoga to the sun god Vivasvan, who then taught it to Manu, the father of mankind, who in turn taught it to King Ikshvaku.

4.2

Thus the divine science was handed down to successions of royal sages, who knew the truth of it, for it had become their tradition. But over the long passage of time, this tradition was lost to the world.

4.3

It is this same yoga that I impart to you today, Arjuna, because you have declared yourself to be my disciple as well as my friend, and I believe that you will understand this transcendental science — the supreme secret.

4.4

Arjuna said, “You were born long after Vivasvan’s death. How could you have instructed him in this science?”

4.5

Lord Krishna said:

I have lived many lives, Arjuna. So have you. I am aware of all of mine, but you remember none of yours.

4.6

I am the unborn Lord of All That Is, and That Which I Am never perishes. Yet I choose to appear mortal from time to time, and self-manifest into a world of my own creation.

4.7

Whenever and wherever spirituality decays and materialism reigns, I Will myself into form.

4.8

To protect the righteous, destroy the wicked, and reestablish the principles of divine science, I incarnate in every age.

4.9

Those who grasp the secret of my transcendental nature and manifest appearances, need never take another birth, but will become as Me.

4.10

Freeing themselves of desire, fear and anger, taking refuge in Me, being fully absorbed in Me, many souls have become as I Am.

4.11

In whatever way men seek me, I will meet them there. Any path they take in worship, is My path back to them. Whatever road they travel, leads to Me at last.

4.12

Those desiring worldly success through their actions do well to make sacrifices to the demigods and align with the forces of nature. In this way, material rewards manifest quickly.

4.13

In accordance with the three gunas of nature and the karma of birth, I have described the four categories of worldly activity — spiritual teacher, soldier, merchant, and servant. Though I am the author of these divisions, I myself do nothing and am eternally changeless.

4.14

My actions happen without doing and I am untouched by them. I desire nothing and am unattached to outcomes. One who divines the Truth of Me, does not become entangled in the web of action and reward.

4.15

In ancient times, seekers of salvation understood this, and following my example realized Liberation. Therefore, perform your actions with the same knowledge as the ancient sages.

4.16

What is action and what is non-action? Even the wise are unsure. But I will now explain it to you, and understanding the nature of action and non-action, you can free yourself from the evil of bondage.

4.17

Indeed, the law of action is mysterious. You must understand first that there are three kinds of action: right action, vain action, and the action of non-action. Though he engages in activities, he is not involved.

4.18

One who sees the action in non-action, and the not-doing of action, is among the wisest of men.

4.19

One whose every undertaking is free of the desire for reward, whose actions are purified by the fire of wisdom, is rightly called a sage.

4.20

Having relinquished desire for the fruits of action, the sage depends on nothing and is always content. Though he may be engaged in great activity, he does not do a thing.

4.21

Acting without desire or expectation, claiming no possessions, the sage enjoys the necessities of life without incurring sin.

4.22

Exerting no effort, the sage is content with whatever comes or does not come to him of its own. He does not covet what others have or envy their achievements. He is equally unmoved by success and failure, and in every way is free of the delusion of opposites. Though he performs actions, he claims no ownership of the results.

4.23

One who is unattached to outcomes moves freely about the world, his mind transcendent and at peace. Performing his work as an offering only, his actions leave no trace.

4.24

The act of sacrifice is God. The sacrificial offering is God. The sacrificial fire is God. The one who makes the sacrifice is God. He who sees everything is God, cannot miss Him.

4.25

Some yogis offer sacrifices to the demigods, seeking their blessings. Others, in perfect worship, offer themselves to the fire of Truth.

4.26

Some offer the enjoyment of sense-objects, such as music and sound, to the sacrificial fire of restraint. Others offer the senses themselves, such as hearing, to the fire.

4.27

Those who are interested in Self-Realization, offer not only the senses, but the mind and the breath of life to the fire.

4.28

Sacrifice for some means surrendering wealth and possessions. For others it means performing austerities or practicing the eightfold path of yoga. Others take strict vows and endlessly study scriptures.

4.29

There are even those who offer the movement of breath as a sacrifice, stopping between an outgoing breath and an incoming breath and remaining in a breathless trance. Still others curtail eating and offer the process of food becoming life-energy as a sacrifice.

4.30

All these practitioners, though different in approach, are acting in understanding of the principle of sacrifice, and are thus cleansing themselves of that which keeps them from God-ness.

4.31

Those who know the secret of sacrifice — and perform it — feast on the nectar of its remnants and realize the Eternal State. Those who refuse to make offerings are not fit even for this world, let alone the next.

4.32

All these various forms of sacrifice are described in the Vedas, and they all arise from different types of karma. Understanding the whole of this leads to Liberation.

4.33

Understand, Arjuna, that sacrifices made with full knowledge are far superior to mechanical sacrifices rooted only in belief. All actions become perfect when performed by the wise.

4.34

To realize Truth, find a spiritual master. Question him respectfully and render him service. A Self-Realized soul can guide you to Truth because he embodies Truth.

4.35

When Truth makes itself known, Arjuna, you will never again descend into ignorance. You will see for yourself that every living being — and the whole of creation — is but an illusion swirling in Yourself, in Me, in the Supreme.

4.36

Even the greatest of sinners can be carried across the ocean of ignorance on the divine ferryboat of Truth.

4.37

Just as fire turns wood into ashes, so does Truth turn sin into vapor.

4.38

Nothing in this universe purifies like Truth. One who has been purified by Truth sees that Truth is Himself.

4.39

A sincere aspirant who is in control of his senses, whose mind is fixed on the Divine, is ripe for a direct experience of Truth. The experience of Truth brings great peace.

4.40

But the ignorant and faithless, whose doubt prevents effort, shall not know God Consciousness. Those who ignore the whisperings of Truth find no happiness, in this world or beyond.

4.41

One who knows the fruits of effort are not his, whose doubts take him deeper into the yoga of knowledge, whose actions are born of meditation — such a one no longer creates karma.

4.42

Therefore, Arjuna, slash with the sword of knowledge the doubts in your heart engendered by your own ignorance. Armed with the yoga of knowledge and action, stand up and fight!

Chapter 5: The Path to Liberation

5.1

Arjuna said, "Lord Krishna, on the one hand you praise the renunciation of action, and on the other you commend the yoga of action. Please tell me definitely which of the two is better for my spiritual welfare."

5.2

Lord Krishna said:

Both the renunciation of action and the yoga of action can lead to Liberation, but of the two, the yoga of action is superior.

5.3

He who neither desires nor renounces the things of the world, who has truly transcended the pairs of opposites, easily breaks free of bondage.

5.4

It is wrong to think of the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of action as being different. Those who apply themselves earnestly to either path will discover the same Truth.

5.5

He who sees these two yogas as aspects of one yoga, sees things as they are.

5.6

Mere renunciation without engaging in devotional service brings only sorrow. He who earnestly practices both, attains the Absolute.

5.7

A yogi who is pure in heart, who is master of his mind and senses, sees the Soul of all souls in every living being. He is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him.

5.8

One who abides in divine consciousness — though engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, sleeping, breathing, and moving about — never thinks, "It is I who am doing this."

5.9

Because even while speaking, holding, letting go, excreting, and opening or closing his eyes, he sees clearly that it is merely the senses moving about on their own among the sense-objects of the world.

5.10

He who performs his duty, whatever it may be, while offering the results to God, cannot be tainted by sin, just as the lotus leaf cannot be wetted by water.

5.11

Dedicated karma yogis perform all actions of the body, mind, senses and intellect without attachment, and for the sole purpose of self-purification.

5.12

One who offers the results of his actions to God, lives unencumbered in freedom and peace. One who acts only to enjoy the fruits of his work, becomes hopelessly entangled in the world.

5.13

When a man takes control of his nature and renounces claim to his actions, he resides happily in his body — the city of nine gates — neither doing nor causing anything to be done.

5.14

The Lord of Creation does not prescribe actions, nor does He induce people to act, nor does He manifest the fruits of action. All this is the domain of the forces of nature, the three gunas.

5.15

The Lord of Creation does not take note of the actions of anyone, be they good or bad. The mass of men think otherwise because their innate knowledge is enveloped in darkness by ignorance.

5.16

But for those whose ignorance is destroyed by the realization of Self, everything is revealed, just as the sun lights up the world in daytime.

5.17

One who has realized Self, whose faith is in Self, whose mind and intellect have taken refuge in Self, is poised for Liberation with no desire to return.

5.18

The enlightened sage gazes with equal eye upon a king, a cow, a priest, an elephant, and an untouchable eating a dog.

5.19

Even while in this world, the enlightened sage moves beyond birth and death. He is flawless, like God. He is God.

5.20

Established in God, freed from illusion, he neither delights in the pleasant nor complains about the unpleasant.

5.21

He has no interest in the pleasures of the senses, for he is focused on the Supreme within, and has found unending contentment.

5.22

The pleasures that arise from the contact of senses with sense-objects are transient, having a beginning and end, and therefore are equally sources of pain. The wise do not seek them out or rejoice in them.

5.23

He who succeeds in controlling the rushing forces of desire and anger before transcending the body, is a saint and a happy man.

5.24

One whose happiness comes from within, who is illumined from within, who delights in God within, such a one will be taken up by the Lord and liberated from birth and death.

5.25

He whose sins are burned out, whose mind is uncorrupted by dualities, whose doubts have disappeared in light, who has relinquished self-interest for the welfare of all — he shall be liberated into the Supreme.

5.26

Those who have released themselves from anger and material desires, who are self-governed, self-disciplined, and constantly seeking perfection — these are practitioners well-positioned for Liberation.

5.27 / 5.28

Shutting out all external distractions, fixing his gaze on the point between his eyebrows, equalizing the incoming and outgoing breaths moving within his nostrils — thus controlling the mind, senses and intellect — the sage is released from desire, fear, and anger, and lives in freedom until Liberation.

5.29

Coming to know Me, the receiver of all offerings and austerities, the supreme Lord of all worlds and gods, the benefactor and selfless friend of all living things, the sage attains eternal Peace.

Chapter 6: The Practice of Meditation

6.1

Lord Krishna said:

The true renunciant in the world is he who performs his given duties without self-interest or desire for the fruits. He is one deserving to be called a mystic, not one who does nothing and has no fire.

6.2

True renunciation is the same as yoga. One cannot be called a yogi who has not renounced self-interest and desire.

6.3

When one begins the eightfold path of yoga, work and effort is the way. When one becomes firmly established in yoga, not-doing is the way.

6.4

A practitioner becomes established in yoga when his actions are no longer performed for self-interest or sense gratification, and he stakes no claim to the fruits of his actions.

6.5

A man must lift himself up by himself. In no way weaken or degrade the mind that must do the lifting. Though that mind is your enemy, it is also your only friend.

6.6

The mind becomes your servant when it is conquered. When allowed to run wild, it leads you astray.

6.7

To one who has conquered the mind, opposites like heat and cold, joy and sorrow, honor and dishonor, are not different. He lives in tranquility.

6.8

The true mystic is master of his senses and lord of his mind. His heart brims with wisdom. He has realized Self. To him, dirt, pebbles and gold are equally precious.

6.9

He looks upon friends, enemies, relatives, strangers, sinners, saints, kings, and outcasts with equal impartiality.

6.10

A yogi should live alone in seclusion. He should have few possessions and desire nothing more. He should spend his days in meditation and communion with Self.

6.11

To practice meditation, go to a quiet, peaceful place. Arrange a bed of long grass on the ground and cover it with deerskin and a soft blanket. The seat should neither be too high nor too low.

6.12

Sit straight and solid on that seat. Observe the workings of the mind and bring it gently into one-pointed focus on the breath, or a simple thought-sound. Thus disengaged, the mind will purify itself.

6.13

Hold your body, head and neck erect and still. Let your gaze come to rest in front of your nose. Do not look around.

6.14

With a serene and fearless heart, rejecting sexual reverie and ignoring useless thoughts, allow the mind to relax into communion with Self, with God.

6.15

With practice, the mind becomes absorbed in Self, and you will live in the Peace of God that leads to Liberation.

6.16

Do not eat too much or too little. Do not indulge in excessive sleep or deprive yourself of needed rest. Extremes are not conducive to meditation.

6.17

One who lives with moderation, who is balanced in the activities of eating, sleeping, working and playing, will find meditation to be the destroyer of all discontent.

6.18

When a practitioner, through meditation, transcends cravings and mental distractions, he is said to be established in yoga.

6.19

The mind of a yogi in meditation, like a flame sheltered from wind, does not move or flicker.

6.20

Thus stilled, the mind is positioned to see Self as Itself, and rejoice beyond all imagining.

6.21

When Self is realized, the yogi experiences the highest bliss accessible to consciousness. Truth becomes his only reality.

6.22

He cannot conceive of anything greater than This, and he becomes unshakable, even in the face of the heaviest sorrows.

6.23

To be thus rescued from the delusions and sufferings of life is the aim of yoga. It must be practiced with perseverance and unwavering conviction.

6.24

Through meditation, relinquish all desires and bring thoughts and senses under control.

6.25

With patient determination, let the mind gradually become more and more fixed upon God, until at last it can think of nothing else.

6.26

When the mind flits and wanders, as is its nature, gently bring it back to one-pointed stillness, where God resides.

6.27

The lot of the sage is contentment. Mind stilled, passions calmed, he abides in Self and acts without error.

6.28

Abiding in Self, he is untouched by good and evil, and walks in the light of the Absolute.

6.29

He sees Self in all beings, and all beings in Self.

6.30

Everywhere he looks he sees Me. He is never lost or separated from Me, nor am I ever separate from Him.

6.31

He lives in Me, and I live in Him. We are One.

6.32

He is a perfect saint. He has discovered his divinity as Self, and simultaneously seen all else to be Self. He regards the joys and sorrows of all beings as his own.

6.33

Arjuna said, "O Lord, I do not understand how this yoga you teach could work for me. I find no firm ground in myself and my mind is constantly restless."

6.34

My mind is fickle, obstinate, chaotic — as difficult to control as high wind."

6.35

Lord Krishna said:

The restless mind is indeed difficult to control, but with meditation and sincere practice it can be done.

6.36

An undisciplined mind is incapable of the determination and focus necessary for yoga, but for one who succeeds in taming the mind, success is assured.

6.37

Arjuna said, "Lord Krishna, what is the fate of the unrealized soul who has not been able to control his mind and fails to achieve success in yoga?"

6.38

Does he perish like a riven cloud, bereft of both earthly and spiritual reward?

6.39

Please dispel these doubts of mine, O Lord. None but you can do this."

6.40

Lord Krishna said:

Dear friend, no one who has strived for goodness in himself ever comes to harm, in this world or the next. There is no punishment after death for failure, nor in this life will he fall back into grief and sinful ways.

6.41

After death, the yogi who falls short of the goal lives for an age in the realm of pure souls. Then he is born again on earth into a pure and prosperous family.

6.42

In rare instances, he may be born into a family endowed with divine wisdom, but such a birth is difficult to come by.

6.43

The experience of his former life will silently inform his new life, and without knowing why, he will be compelled to pursue a spiritual path, picking up more or less where he left off. No effort in the direction of righteousness is ever wasted.

6.44

The momentum of his previous life will inevitably draw him to the principles of yoga, even though he may not be seeking them, for his transcendental nature leapfrogs scriptural patterns.

6.45

Once he steps foot on the path, the earnest yogi is assured of realizing Self, though it take one or many lifetimes.

6.46

A yogi is superior to an ascetic, superior to a Vedic scholar, superior to performers of religious rituals. Therefore, Arjuna, become a yogi!

6.47

There are many types of yogis, but one whose thoughts are of Me, who renders loving service to Me, who is intimately united with Me — he is the most likely to succeed. That is my opinion.

Chapter 7: The Nature of Creation

7.1

Lord Krishna said:

Listen, Arjuna, and I will tell you how practicing yoga in full consciousness of Me, and taking refuge in Me, you can come to know Me completely, without any doubts.

7.2

I shall now reveal to you fully, knowledge of the world as it is, as opposed to the world as it appears. Once you realize this knowledge in yourself, nothing further needs to be known.

7.3

Perhaps one in ten thousand strive for perfection in yoga, and of those who do strive, few come to know Me.

7.4

My manifested aspect consists of eight material energies: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect, and ego.

7.5

That is my lower nature. My higher nature is the life force that infuses all things and sustains the Universe.

7.6

My two-fold nature is the womb of all beings and things. I am the source of all Creation, and into me it dissolves.

7.7

There is nothing higher than Me. All That Is hangs upon Me like pearls threaded on string.

7.8

I am the fluidity in water, the light of the sun, the reflection of the moon. I am the mystic sound of AUM and the emptiness of space, I am the virility of men and the fertility of women.

7.9

I am the heat in fire and the clean scent of earth. I am the austerity of ascetics and the life of all beings.

7.10

I am the intelligence of the intellect, the power of the powerful, the brilliance of the resplendent. I am the primal seed of eternal existence.

7.11

I am the strength of the strong devoid of desire and attachment. I am the ecstasy of lovers in harmony with dharma.

7.12

The gunas, the three aspects of My creative energy — goodness, passion and ignorance — originate from Me alone. They are in Me, but I am not subject to them.

7.13

People have become hypnotized by the illusory world woven by My gunas, and do not know Me — That which is beyond Maya, yet contains it.

7.14

Indeed, it is difficult to see through the complex illusion created by My gunas. But those who shift their focus from the world to Me — however dimly perceived at first — will come at last to know Me in full.

7.15

Those who do evil, however, and those who through laziness live mean and lowly lives, and those who delight in the trinkets of Maya, and those who partake of the darkness of demons — these will never sacrifice their ignorance for the Truth of Me.

7.16

Those who implore Me fall into four categories: Those in great distress, those who seek wealth, those who seek knowledge, and those who are innately wise.

7.17

Of these, the man of wisdom is especially dear to Me. He asks for nothing but my love and regards Me above all else. I am dear to him, and he is dear to Me.

7.18

All who implore me are noble souls, but the man of wisdom I regard as Myself. He seeks only to serve Me, and shall come to know that he and I are One.

7.19

After many lives of devotion to Me, the man of wisdom surrenders to the Truth that All is Self, and becomes Me. Such great souls are very rare.

7.20

Those whose limited minds are entranced by the material world worship lesser gods, and in accordance with their own nature, perform religious rites to attract the objects of their desires.

7.21

These seekers, too, I support, for I am the Soul in everyone's heart. If one worships a demigod in faith. I am there to strengthen his devotion.

7.22

Indeed, the fruit men desire through the worship of demigods will come to them — not from the demigods, but from Me.

7.23

But the fruit they thus gain is finite and fleeting, and over time their taste for it wanes. Those who worship a demigod are consigned to the planes of the demigods. Those who surrender to Me, attain the realm of the Supreme.

7.24

The foolish regard My manifest form as that which I am. Ignorance clouds their vision. Did it not, they would know Me as the unmanifested Source of All That Is.

7.25

The Truth of Me is never revealed to the foolish and small-minded. They perceive only the veil of My Creation, woven by the gunas. Behind that veil, and containing it, is My True Nature — the Absolute.

7.26

I contain the past, present and future — Here, Now. I know all beings who have ever lived or ever will live, yet none but the rarest of rare know Me.

7.27

Delusion is the nature of birth. Man lives in a fairytale world of opposites, arising out of the dual powers of aversion and desire.

7.28

But in any age and time, any man or woman who turns away from aversion and desire, who serves Me in righteousness, can come to know Me as Self.

7.29

He who takes refuge in Me and truly seeks liberation from birth and death, will discover True Nature, and know with self-evident certainty the workings of the Universe.

7.30

He who comes to know Me as the Source of all manifestations, the God of all demigods and the receiver of all sacrifices, shall remain steadfast in his knowing throughout his life, and pass through death in the arms of Grace.

Chapter 8: The Cycle of Birth and Death

8.1

Arjuna said, “O Lord, what is Brahman? What is Self? What is karma? What is this material manifestation? What are the demigods?”

8.2

Who is the Lord of Sacrifice and how does he live in a body? How can those engaged in spiritual practice know you at the time of death? Please explain these things to me.”

8.3

Lord Krishna said:

The immutable emptiness of the Absolute is called Brahman. The arising of Brahman as life is called Self. The momentum of Creation is called karma.

8.4

Creation is the manifestation of seemingly material appearances, which in actuality have no substance and are forever changing. I am the Universal God and contain all the demigods, like those of the sun and moon. I dwell in the heart of every living being, and thus am Lord of their sacrifices.

8.5

Whoever thinks of Me at the time of death will come to Me when he leaves the body. Of this there is no doubt.

8.6

For whatever a man thinketh of at the moment of death, that he will become after passing.

8.7

Therefore, think of Me — God in the form of Krishna — as you carry out your given duty, which for you, Arjuna, is to fight. Surrender your mind to Me. Dedicate your actions to Me. In this way you will surely come to Me.

8.8

Practice the yoga of meditating on Me. With one-pointed resolve, focus your thoughts on God. When the mind wanders, bring it back. Do this without ceasing and God Consciousness will happen.

8.9

Meditate on God as the Source of Creation. Timelessly ancient, smaller than the nucleus of an atom — He is the sustainer of all beings and forms. Self-luminous like the sun — He is beyond both darkness and light.

8.10

One who, at the time of death, with a stilled mind gained from the practice of yoga, fixes his attention on the point between his eyebrows, and in full devotion remembers the Divine Lord, certainly shall be gathered in by Him.

8.11

There are those who dedicate themselves wholly to renunciation and the study of the Vedas, and who live celibate lives free of passion in order to attain Brahman.

8.12

Closing the lower gates of the body moves one's mind and thoughts from the body to the heart, and allows one's life energy to flow upwards to the top of the head. This accelerates one's yoga practice.

8.13

One who leaves his body while meditating on God and intoning the sacred AUM — whether in sound or thought — will instantly attain the Supreme.

8.14

O Arjuna, to the faithful practitioner who remembers Me without ceasing, I am easily realized.

8.15

Great souls who realize God are no longer subject to the worldly miseries of life and death. They live in perfection.

8.16

From the lowest levels of the material world to the highest celestial planes, all are realms of birth, tribulation and death. But once God Consciousness is realized, one need never again be born on any material plane.

8.17

One day of God is equal to a thousand eons of human time. Similarly, his nights are one thousand eons. One who knows this in himself, knows the truth of night and day.

8.18

At the dawning of God's day, all beings emanate from the unmanifested Source. At the fall of God's night, all beings dissolve into the unmanifested Void.

8.19

Over and over this same multitude of beings is manifested at the dawn of God's day, and again and again helplessly dissolved into nothingness at the fall of God's night.

8.20

Yet beyond this endless cycle of manifesting and un-manifesting of Creation in time, is the timeless, unchanging solidity of the Eternal Unmanifest. When the Universe of comings and goings is destroyed, the Eternal Unmanifest is untouched.

8.21

The Eternal Unmanifest is my Home. Those who come to Me there, never return to the realm of manifestation.

8.22

This Consciousness of the Most High is only attainable by one-pointed devotion to Me, to Him for whom This is Home.

[The following six verses were probably not part of the original text. They are out of tune with the rest of the Gita, and it is speculated they were added at the end of this chapter by someone with an ulterior purpose. Indeed, this chapter ends more naturally after verse 8.22.]

8.23

O Arjuna, I will now explain to you the times when a mystic departs never to return, and when he again returns to earth.

8.24

Those who pass into death in fire, light, daytime, during the waxing of the moon, or during the six months when the sun travels in the north, attain the Absolute right away.

8.25

Those who pass into death in smoke, darkness, nighttime, during the waning of the moon, or during the six months when the sun travels in the south, attain lunar light and will be reborn.

8.26

According to the Vedas, there are two ways of passing from this world, one in light and one in darkness. When one passes in light, he does not come back. When one passes in darkness, he returns.

8.27

The yogi who knows these two paths is not deluded. Therefore, Arjuna, be steadfast in yoga.

8.28

The yogi who knows this gains merit beyond that received for the study of the Vedas, austerities, charitable works, and performances of sacrifices, and he reaches the Supreme Abode.

Chapter 9: The Way of Worship

9.1

Lord Krishna said:

Dear Arjuna, because you do not carp and cavil at what I teach, I shall now impart to you the secret wisdom that, when realized in yourself, will free you from the miseries of material existence.

9.2

This wisdom is the king of sciences, the most sovereign of mysteries. It brings about direct realization of the Self, and thus is the perfection of all religion. It is easy to practice, and everlasting in effect.

9.3

Those who do not practice faithfully, however, will not realize Self, and will remain lashed to the wheel of birth and death.

9.4

The entire Universe of Creation consists of nothing but Me in My unmanifested nature. All beings consist entirely of Me, but I do not dwell in them.

9.5

Nor can it be said that beings dwell in Me. Though I am the unmanifest substance of all Creation, that is not where you will find Me.

9.6

As the wind moves everywhere yet always exists in the sky, so do all beings and things exist in Me.

9.7

At the end of every cosmic cycle, all beings return to Me. In every new beginning, I send them forth again.

9.8

In My aspect as Nature I pour forth, again and again, the whole multitude of beings solely by My Will. They have no say in this. And when I will it, they are gathered back.

9.9

I have no attachment whatever to these works. I am disinterested, indifferent.

9.10

My Will powers Nature to manifest all things, moving and unmoving, and to destroy and create them again and again.

9.11

When I assume human form, the foolish deride and disregard Me. They cannot perceive Me as Lord God of All.

9.12

The bewildered are attracted by godless and demonic views. In such a deluded state, there is no hope for Liberation. Their actions are all in vain and their knowledge is worthless.

9.13

Those who are not deluded, the great sages, know Me as I am — the Source of Creation. They seek only to serve Me, and are protected by Divine Nature.

9.14

Some sing My praises and bow down to Me in worship. Some simply worship Me with love.

9.15

Others see Me as undifferentiated Oneness, not different from themselves. Others worship Me as a separate Being. Still others worship Me in the infinite variations of my cosmic form.

9.16

I am the rituals and ceremonies in all of this, I am the offerings and I am the sacrifice, I am the food, the herbs, the butter. I am the act of surrendering, and I am the fire.

9.17

I am the Father and Mother of the Universe, I am the Grandsire and sole Sustainer of All That Is. I am the Purifier, the sacred AUM, the holy scriptures and the only true Knowing.

9.18

I am the Lord, the witness, the refuge and the abode. I am the goal, the map, and the dear companion, I am the origin, the destruction, the place of rest, and the imperishable seed.

9.19

I am the sun and its heat. I withhold and send forth rain. I am immortality and death, being and non-being, reality and the unreal.

9.20

Those who seek heaven by studying the Vedas, performing rituals and drinking soma, worship me indirectly. Purified of sins, they earn birth in the realm of the demigods, and feast on celestial pleasures.

9.21

They enjoy the glories of Paradise until their store of merit is exhausted. Then they are born again into the world of mortals. They have followed the letter of the scriptures, but because they desire only the joys of heaven, they come and go again and again.

9.22

But for those who think of Me always, for no other reason but love and devotion, I take it upon myself to provide all that they need, and to preserve what they already have.

9.23

Those who worship other gods sincerely and faithfully, they, too, are worshipping Me, though with veiled understanding.

9.24

I am the enjoyer of all sacrifices, no matter who they are intended for. But those who do not come to know Me as such, fall again and again into mortal births.

9.25

Those who worship demigods, take birth among the demigods. Those who worship ancestors, join them when they die. Those who worship spirits, take birth among such beings. Those who worship Me, will come to live as God.

9.26

Whatever small thing you offer Me in devotion — a leaf, a flower, a fruit, some water — I will accept in love.

9.27

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you give away, whatever austerities you perform — do it as an offering to Me.

9.28

In this way you will be released from the karma of action — which brings both good and bad results. By surrendering your actions to Me, you shall come to Me in Liberation.

9.29

I am equal towards all beings. I favor none and despise none. But whoever is devoted to Me in service, I am a friend to him. He is in Me and I am in him, in love.

9.30

Even the vilest sinner, if he worships Me wholeheartedly in devotion, shall be counted as virtuous because he has resolved to tread the right path.

9.31

Such a one soon becomes a righteous soul and finds lasting peace. Know thou for certain, Arjuna, he who loves Me shall never perish.

9.32

Anyone who takes refuge in Me, whatever their birth, race, sex or caste — even those called untouchables — can attain the Supreme.

9.33

How much easier then for the sages and saints of meritorious deeds and fortunate birth who, having found themselves born into this transient, joyless world, devote themselves to Me.

9.34

Fill your mind with thoughts of Me. Become devoted to Me. Make offerings to Me. Bow to Me in humility. Repeat My name over and again in your heart and become absorbed in Me. In this way you will become One with Me, and discover I am your very Self.

Chapter 10: The Divine Manifestations

10.1

Lord Krishna said:

Arjuna, My dear friend, listen to Me. I am imparting to you these divine teachings because I want the best for you.

10.2

Even the demigods and saints do not know My origin. I am the Source of their very existence, but they do not know My Original Cause.

10.3

Know Me as the Unborn, the One Without Beginning, the Supreme Progenitor of All That Is, and you will be a man free of delusion. Your actions will cause no karma.

10.4 / 10.5

From Me arises wisdom, intelligence, forgiveness, calmness, happiness, joy, sorrow, pleasure, truth, delusion, non-delusion, restraint, pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, violence, non-violence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame, infamy — and all other attributes of the life of beings. These are created by Me alone.

10.6

The four Manus — the progenitors of mankind — were born of My Mind, as were the seven Saints who followed the Manus. And from them all the creatures of the world descend.

10.7

Those who realize the truth of My divine power become One with Me. This is for certain.

10.8

I am the Father of all spiritual and material worlds. From Me, All That Is manifests. Those who know this in themselves, worship Me with all their heart.

10.9

With their minds established in Me, with their lives surrendered to Me, they delight in talking about Me and enlightening each other about Me. They are content and happy in their lives.

10.10

To those who worship Me with love and devotion, I give the key to the door that leads to Me.

10.11

I live in their hearts and grant them special mercies. I destroy their ignorance with the radiance of Truth.

10.12

Arjuna said, “O Lord, you are indeed unborn and omnipresent, the Supreme Brahmin, the Great Purifier, the Divine Self, the Eternal Home.

10.13

The great sages Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa have declared you thus, and now you Yourself are declaring it to me!

10.14

I completely accept all that you have told me. Neither demigods nor demons know the Essence of your divine manifestation.

10.15

Indeed, you alone, by your own powers, know Yourself— the Supreme Personality, the God of gods, the Source and Lord of all beings, the Master of the Universe.

10.16

Please tell me in detail about the divine manifestations with which you pervade all the Universe.

10.17

O Supreme Lord, how shall I think of you? In what forms in creation can I recognize you? In meditation, how should I imagine you?

10.18

Please tell me again of your divine glories and appearances. Your words are like nectar to me.”

10.19

Lord Krishna said:

Of course, I will now speak about my forms and manifestations, but only the most obvious, for my divine glories are endless.

10.20

I am the Self in the heart of all creatures. I am the birth, the life, and the death of all beings.

10.21

Of the powers of creation, I am Vishnu. Among the luminous, I am the Sun. Of the winds I am the Whirlwind. Among the spheres, I am the Moon.

10.22

Of the Vedas, I am the Hymns. Of the demigods I am Indra. Of the senses, I am Mind. Of the attributes of beings, I am Consciousness.

10.23

Among the forces of life I am Shiva. Among spirits and demons I am Wealth. Of the elements of nature I am Fire. Of the mountains I am Meru.

10.24

Among priests I am Chief. Among warriors I am Commander. Of waters, I am Ocean.

10.25

Of sages I am Bhrgu. Of sounds I am AUM. Of offerings, I am Prayer. Of things unmovable, I am the Himalayas.

10.26

Of trees, I am the Sacred Fig. Among saints, I am Narada. Among divine singers, I am the Leader. Among perfected beings, I am Kapila.

10.27

Among horses, I am the Celestial Stallion that arose from the churning of nectar. Among elephants, I am the Elephant of Clouds. Among men, I am Ruler and King.

10.28

Of weapons, I am the Thunderbolt of Indra. Among serpents, I am Visuki on the neck of Shiva. Of cows, I am Surabhi, giver of abundant milk. Among causes of procreation, I am the God of Love.

10.29

Among the cobra gods, I am Ananta. Among the water gods, I am Varuna. Among departed ancestors, I am Aryama. Among dispensers of the law, I am the Lord of Death.

10.30

Of demons, I am Prahlada. Of reckonings, I am Time. Of animals, I am the Lion. Of birds, I am Garuda.

10.31

Of purifiers, I am the Wind. Of warriors, I am Rama. Of fish, I am the Shark. Of rivers, I am the Ganges.

10.32

I am the beginning and end of all creations, and also the middle. Of the sciences, I am the science of Self. Among debaters of logic, I am conclusive Truth.

10.33

Of the alphabet, I am the letter "A." I am the copulative in compound words. I am the infinity in time. I am Brahma, the Creator.

10.34

I am all-devouring death and the progenitor of that which has yet to be. Of the qualities of the feminine, I am fame, prosperity, beauty, inspiration, memory, intelligence, eloquence, wit, courage, forbearance and forgiveness.

10.35

Of hymns, I am the Brihatsama. Of mantras, I am the Gayatri. Of months, I am November. Of seasons, I am Spring.

10.36

I am the gamble of the gambler, the radiance of the radiant, the power of the powerful. I am the victory of the victorious, the resolve of the resolute, the virtue of the virtuous.

10.37

Among the Vrishni clan, I am Krishna. Among the Pandeva clan, I am Arjuna. Among sages, I am Vyasa. Among poets, I am Ushana.

10.38

I am punishment for the lawless, and statesmanship for those who seek power. I am the silence in mystery, and the wisdom of the wise.

10.39

I am the seed of All That Is. No being or thing, moving or unmoving, can exist without Me.

10.40

O Arjuna, the list of my divine manifestations is limitless. I have told you but a few by way of illustration.

10.41

Everything beautiful, glorious, and mighty, is but a trifling spark of my splendor.

10.42

But what use are all these details, Arjuna? Simply know that with the most infinitesimal spec of Myself, I pervade and sustain the whole Universe.

Chapter 11: The Faces of God

11.1

Arjuna said, "O Lord, having heard the secret knowledge You have given me out of compassion, my delusion is now dispelled.

11.2

You have spoken to me in detail about the origin and dissolution of beings, and about Your inexhaustible glories.

11.3

I have no doubt that You are as you declare Yourself to be, but I greatly desire to see You for myself in Your Divine Nature.

11.4

If you think I am strong enough to behold You, O Lord, please reveal Yourself."

11.5

Lord Krishna said:

Behold, Arjuna, My celestial forms of all colors and shapes by the hundreds of thousands!

11.6

Behold the sun gods, the gods of nature, the god of storms, the twin gods of healing and the gods of roaring winds — wonders never before seen, Arjuna!

11.7

Behold the entire Universe, that which moves and that which does not, revealed within Me. Whatever else you desire to see, it is here for you to see!

11.8

But you cannot see Me with your present eyes. I give you, therefore, divine sight. Now, behold My opulent majesty!

11.9

Sanjaya said:

Having said this, O King, the Supreme Lord Krishna infused Arjuna with His Divine Being.

11.10

Arjuna then saw within himself, countless eyes and mouths, and numberless mystic forms adorned with celestial ornaments and brandishing divine weapons.

11.11

Incredible were the many forms of God, arrayed in garments and garlands, anointed with unguents and perfumes, resplendent, boundless, with infinite faces on all sides.

11.12

If a thousand suns blazed forth all at once, their radiance would be but a faint glimmer of the effulgence of the Supreme Lord.

11.13

There in the body of God, Arjuna witnessed the Totality of the Universe as One manifesting as many.

11.14

Then, awestruck and astonished, his hair standing on end, Arjuna bowed his head and spoke with folded hands.

11.15

He said, "O Lord, I see within You all the demigods and all the earthly beings. I see Brahma the Creator on the lotus flower. I see Lord Shiva, the celestial sages, and the divine serpents.

11.16

In Your infinity I see countless arms, bellies, mouths and eyes. In You I see no end, no beginning, no between.

11.17

Your form, ablaze with radiance like the immeasurable fire of the sun, is difficult to gaze upon directly, but I perceive Your diadem, discus and scepter.

11.18

You are the supreme objective of all knowing, yet You are beyond my thinking. You are the imperishable foundation of the universe, the primordial progenitor of dharma, the guardian of eternal life.

11.19

You are One without other, the timeless Origin, without beginning, middle or end. You have arms and hands without number and the suns and moons of the universe are Your eyes. Your mouth is sacrificial fire, and Your effulgence floods all creation with heat and light.

11.20

You alone pervade heaven and earth and all space between, in every direction, forever. Seeing Your wondrous and terrifying form, the three worlds tremble and shake.

11.21

I see all the demigods and celestial beings surrendering unto You with bowed heads and hands folded in prayer. Some are afraid, and extol You with profusive chants and prayers, saying, "Peace, O Lord," and "May all be well."

11.22

The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Vishvadevas, Ashwinis, Kumars, Maruts, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras, Siddhas, and the entire pantheon of demons, ancestors, and perfected souls, stand gazing upon You in wonder. And they are astonished.

11.23

O Lord, seeing your unimaginable might, Your many faces, eyes, arms, bellies, legs and feet, and staring into the teeth of Your terrifying jaws, all the beings of all the worlds tremble in fear, and so do I.

11.24

I can no longer hold my balance, O Lord. Seeing the infinite colors of Your effulgence reach beyond the heavens, looking transfixed into Your gaping mouths and enormous blazing eyes, my body shakes, my heart loses courage, and peace deserts my mind.

11.25

The terrifying flames of Your face, with its sharp tusks and hideous teeth, is like the fire of death standing before me, and I can find no place to hide. In every way I am lost, fearful, and bewildered. O Lord of lords, please have mercy on me.

11.26 / 11.27

I see all the sons of Dhritarashtra, with their allied kings, Bhishma, Drona and Karna, and also the generals from our side, rushing headlong into Your fearsome mouths, where their heads are crushed to dust by Your dreadful teeth.

11.28

As great rivers torrent towards the sea to be swallowed up, so do these great warriors race to oblivion in the inferno of Your flaming mouths.

11.29

I see beings from everywhere fly into You like moths, full speed into the flame of Your destruction.

11.30

I see you, Vishnu, lapping up beings from all quarters with Your fiery tongues, licking Your lips and feeding Your effulgence.

11.31

O Supreme God, Your present form is terrifying to me. I bow to You in quaking reverence. Please tell me who You are in such fierce adornment. I want to know You and Your origin, but I fear You, and do not know Your purpose."

11.32

Lord Krishna said:

I reveal Myself to you as Time, the destroyer of beings and worlds. No matter what your intentions, Arjuna, none of the warriors on either side of this battle shall escape death today. Only you, the Pandavas, will continue to live.

11.33

Therefore stand up. Fight for honor and glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy an unrivalled kingdom. These men have already been doomed by Me. You are just the outer appearance of them being slain by your hand.

11.34

Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna, and the other great warriors assembled here have already been slain by Me. You do not kill. I kill. Forget your concerns. Simply fight and your enemies will be vanquished.

11.35

Sanjaya said:

Upon hearing these words of Lord Krishna, Arjuna bowed before him, and with trembling folded hands, addressed him in a voice choked with fear.

11.36

Arjuna said, "O Lord, it is fitting and proper that the world rejoices at the sound of Your name, and that all beings react to Your greatness. The saints and sages bow down to You in homage, and the demons scatter fearfully in all directions.

11.37

How could they do otherwise? You are the primal Source of all Creation, superior even to Brahma. You are the infinite God of all gods, the boundless abode of all worlds, the imperishable Reality beyond being and non-being.

11.38

You are the timeless Ancient One, the sole refuge of all that exists. You are the knower, the known, and the unknowable. You pervade the whole Universe, which consists solely of your limitless forms.

11.39

You are Brahma, the Creator. You are Vayu, god of Wind, Yama, god of Death, Agni, god of Fire, and Varun, god of Water. You are the Grandsire of all the gods and all things that live. I revere You and submit to You, O Lord. I praise You, I praise You, A thousand times I praise You!

11.40

I offer my obeisance before You, and salute You from all sides. You are all power, and You encompass All — for You are All!

11.41

In the past, without knowing Your true greatness, I have presumptuously addressed You as “Krishna,” “Yadava,” or “My Friend,” out of affection and thoughtless familiarity.

11.42

Many times I have shown you disrespect, either in jest or inadvertence while playing, resting, walking and eating, both when we’re alone and with other friends. For this, I humbly beg your forgiveness, O Great Lord.

11.43

You are the Father of the Universe, of all that moves and all that does not. You are the ultimate object of worship, the sole spiritual master, the supreme personality of God. You have no equal in the three worlds and beyond. What could possibly be greater than You and Your glorious power?

11.44

You are the Lord Supreme, to be worshipped by every living being. I prostrate myself before you in loving adoration and beseech your blessing. As a father forgives his wayward son, as a friend forgives his stumbling friend, as a lover forgives the frailties of his lover, please forgive me my many offenses.

11.45

Never before have I beheld Your fierce glory, and now having seen it, I am overjoyed. Yet at the same time my mind and body tremble in fear. Please have mercy and reveal Yourself as the Supreme Personality of God, as Lord and Home of the Universe.

11.46

I long to see You again in Your four-armed form, with diadem and scepter and discus, holding a lotus flower in your palm.”

11.47

Lord Krishna said:

I am well-pleased with you, Arjuna, and through Union I revealed to you, in all its resplendence, my supreme form in the material world. No one but you has ever seen this.

11.48

For neither by the study of scriptures, nor the performance of sacrifices, nor by rituals, charities or austerities, can my form be seen by men. I have granted it only to you, O Great Warrior.

11.49

Now that you have seen Me in fierce form, you need not fear Me again. But enough. Behold, my friend, I am again your charioteer. Be cheerful and release your anxiety.

11.50

Sanjaya said:

Having thus spoken, Lord Krishna passed first Through his mighty four-armed form then gradually assumed his human form and gently encouraged his frightened friend.

11.51

Arjuna said, "Seeing you again in your gracious human form has calmed me, O Lord. I have regained my composure and my mind is restored."

11.52

Lord Krishna said:

The form in which you have seen Me is extremely difficult to behold. Even the demigods ever long to behold it.

11.53

The form in which you have beheld Me with the transcendental eyes of Union, cannot be seen by studying the Vedas, or by performing austerities, charities or sacrifices. It is not that easy.

11.54

But through intense one-pointed devotion, it is possible to not only see My True Nature, but to come into It. In Love I can be Known.

11.55

Truly, one who is free of attachment to the world, who is a friend to all creatures, who works only for Me, who is devoted only to Me, who has Me as his only goal — such a one will indeed become Me.

Chapter 12: The Life of Devotion

12.1

Arjuna said, “Which devotees practice the more perfect yoga, those who worship you as a personal God, or those who seek to know your unmanifested nature?”

12.2

Lord Krishna said:

Those whose mind is fixed on My Divine Form, who worship Me always with sincerity and faith, are more successful in yoga.

12.3 / 12.4

But those who earnestly seek to know the Unmanifested that lies beyond the senses, the imperishable, indefinable, all-pervading, unthinkable, unchanging, immovable Absolute Truth, by restraining the senses, by viewing all things with an equal eye, and by finding joy in the happiness of others — these too will find Me.

12.5

However, for those whose minds are fixed on the unmanifested, impersonal aspect of the Supreme, the path to Self-Realization is more troublesome. It is difficult for embodied souls to envision and devote themselves to that which has no image.

12.6 / 12.7

But for those who worship Me, who surrender all actions to Me, who are devoted to Me without wavering, who meditate upon Me with one-pointed focus, who regard Me as the supreme goal — these souls I shall swiftly rescue from the turbulent ocean of mortal life and death.

12.8

Fix your mind upon Me alone. Surrender your thoughts to Me, and there is no doubt you will come to live in Me.

12.9

If you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then faithfully practice bhakti yoga — the yoga of devotion. In this way you will develop the desire to come to Me.

12.10

If you are unable to follow the practices of bhakti yoga, then dedicate all your actions to Me. Let this be your devotional method and you shall attain spiritual perfection.

12.11

If you are not capable of working for Me in devotion, then at least try to be self-controlled and give up the fruits of your actions.

12.12

With renunciation of the fruits of action comes peace of mind. If your practice is only mechanical, however, it is better to seek knowledge. Better yet, focus on meditation.

12.13 / 12.14

Indeed, one who is a friend to all beings, who hates no one, who claims nothing as his, who is free of false ego, who is forgiving, who remains equally poised in both pleasure and pain, who is resolute, content, self-controlled, steady in meditation, and whose mind and intellect are fixed firmly on Me — such a one is a devotee, and is dear to Me.

12.15

He who neither disturbs the world nor is disturbed by it — who is free of envy, fear, anxiety and elation — he is dear to Me.

12.16

He who is self-sufficient, who expects nothing, who is pure, skillful, indifferent, untroubled, and free of self-interest in all undertakings — he is dear to Me.

12.17

He who neither rejoices nor grieves, nor despairs nor desires, who is equally unmoved by both auspicious and inauspicious fortunes, is dear to Me.

12.18 / 12.19

One who is compassionate to friend and foe, who is equally poised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, who is unattached to the things of the world, who enjoys silence, who when being praised or censured remains the same, who is content with anything or nothing, who is at home wherever he is, who has a steady mind filled with devotion — such a one is very dear to Me.

12.20

Truly, those who follow righteously the immortal dharma of devotion, who are imbued with earnestness and faith, who focus with one-pointed intent on Me as the supreme goal, such as these are very, very dear to Me.

Chapter 13: The Knower of the Field

13.1

Arjuna said, “O Lord, I wish to know about the creative energy of nature and the pure consciousness of the soul. I wish to know about the divine field, and the knower of the divine field.”

13.2

Lord Krishna said:

This body of matter and energy is called the field. The Knower of the field is pure consciousness.

13.3

I am the Knower of all fields, and I am the fields. This creates knowledge.

13.4

Listen now and I will explain to you in brief the nature and properties of the field, how change takes place within it, and from whence it came. I will also tell you who the Knower of the field is, and what His powers are.

13.5

This knowledge has been described in many songs and writings, and is revealed with especially sound logic and evidence in the Brahma Sutra.

13.6

The field of activities is composed of the five great elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether — and also the ego, the mind, the unmanifested, and the ten sense organs — ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin, mouth, feet, hands, rectum and genitals.

13.7

Desire, aversion, happiness, sorrow, life signs, vitality, sympathy, will, fortitude, and the persistent clinging to life, are also encompassed by the field.

13.8 / 13.9 / 13.10 / 13.11 / 13.12

Humility, sincerity, unpretentiousness, nonviolence, forbearance, tolerance, simplicity, devotion to a true spiritual teacher, purity, steadiness, self-control, non-attachment to sense-objects, indifference, absence of egoism, constant awareness of the problem of birth, disease, old age and death, non-identification with wife, family, and home, equipoise in both desired and undesired conditions, unswerving devotion to Me alone, a preference for solitude, philosophical pursuit of Absolute Truth, an aversion to mundane society, consistent longing for Self-Realization — these I call wisdom and knowledge. All else is ignorance.

13.13

I will now tell you what it is that must be known, and by its knowing, brings immortality: It is Brahman. He is without beginning. He is neither being nor non-being. He neither exists nor does not exist. He is beyond all that, and He is subject to Me.

13.14

His arms and legs, hands and feet are everywhere. Everywhere are his heads, with mouths that speak, and eyes that see, and ears that hear everything. He pervades and commands All.

13.15

He is the source of all senses but possesses none. He sustains all life but is attached to nothing. He is master of the gunas, yet transcends nature.

13.16

He is the inside and outside of all beings and things, moving and non-moving. He is subtle, incomprehensible, infinitely vast yet intimately close.

13.17

Although He appears as the multitude of separate forms, he is ever undivided, forever One. He is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of all beings.

13.18

He is the source of light in all that is luminous. He is the darkness beyond darkness. He is knowledge. He is the goal of knowledge. He lives in the heart of everyone.

13.19

I have just described to you the nature of the field, the definition of knowledge, and the goal of knowledge. One who realizes this in himself, becomes as I Am.

13.20

Know that neither creative energy nor pure consciousness ever began. Know also that everything that changes is the product of the forces of nature.

13.21

Nature is responsible for cause and effect in the world. The soul is responsible for its sufferings and enjoyments.

13.22

The individual soul, embodied in energy-matter, lives a life created by the three gunas — the forces of nature. The degree of the soul's attachment to them dictates the quality of its next birth.

13.23

Yet there is another enjoying life through the body. It is called Witness, Lord, Observer, Supersoul, Supreme, Self.

13.24

He who comes to realize in himself the One living through him, will not take birth again, regardless of his position in life.

13.25

Some realize Self through meditation, others through the yoga of knowledge, others by indifference to the fruits of their actions.

13.26

Others, not knowing the ways of spiritual practice, begin to worship the Supreme Lord upon hearing about Him from saints, and believing deeply in their authority. By such devotion to the words of great teachers, these souls also can gradually transcend the ocean of birth and death.

13.27

Whatever takes birth, moving or non-moving — even the most minute particle — is the union of energy-matter and consciousness.

13.28

He who sees Self in all beings — the deathless in the dying — knows that both the soul and the Supersoul are imperishable.

13.29

He who sees the Supersoul equally in all beings, does not allow his mind to degrade the vision. Thus he approaches the transcendental state.

13.30

He who sees that all actions of the body are performed by the forces of nature, and that the Self does nothing, truly sees.

13.31

He who no longer sees separate identities in material bodies, but perceives all beings as One, becomes Brahman.

13.32

The Supreme Soul has no origin. It never began and has no end. Though working through the body, it does not act or becomes entangled.

13.33

Just as space, due to its subtle nature, is not affected by objects, so the Self is not touched by the attributes of the body.

13.34

Just as the sun illuminates the earth with light, so does the Self illuminate the body with consciousness.

13.35

Those who perceive with the eyes of knowledge the difference between the body and the knower of the body, can also perceive the process of liberation from the bonds of material nature. In this way they shall attain the Supreme.

Chapter 14: The Forces of Nature

14.1

Lord Krishna said:

I shall again reveal to you the wisdom that is beyond knowledge. With this wisdom, the great saints have realized Perfection.

14.2

By living this wisdom, one can transcend the material world and become One with Me. He will not be born into the next cycle of Creation, nor will he be around to perish in its dissolution.

14.3

The womb of Creation is Brahman. In Brahman I sow my seed. From Brahman are born all beings and things.

14.4

Understand that for all species of life, no matter what earthly womb they emerge from, their Mother is Brahman, and I am their Father.

14.5

Beings are born into the material energy of nature, the three gunas — goodness, passion and ignorance. These forces bind the immortal soul to a perishable body.

14.6

Of these forces, goodness is the most pure. It illuminates one's life and gathers no evil. It binds the immortal soul through attachment to happiness and knowledge.

14.7

The force of passion activates an insatiable desire for the pleasures and rewards of earthly life. It binds the immortal soul through attachment to activity.

14.8

The force of ignorance fosters darkness and delusion in the lives of beings. It binds the immortal soul to recklessness, indolence, and walking sleep.

14.9

The force of goodness binds one to happiness and contentment. The force of passion binds one to desire and activity. The force of ignorance obscures knowledge, and binds one to illusion.

14.10

Sometimes the force of goodness is predominant, suppressing for a time passion and ignorance. Sometimes the force of passion overpowers goodness and suspends ignorance. Sometimes ignorance pervades, obscuring goodness and passion.

14.11

When the light of knowledge shines forth from every sense-gate of the body, goodness is in control.

14.12

When greed, unrest, longing, and a flurry of activity are present, passion is predominant.

14.13

When darkness, dullness, inertia, negligence and delusion pervade, it is ignorance that rules.

14.14

If goodness is predominant at the moment of death, the soul passes on to realms of higher knowledge.

14.15

If passion prevails when the soul passes, it takes birth among those who are driven by work. If ignorance pervades at death, the soul is reborn as an animal, or as the lowest of persons.

14.16

Actions born of goodness produce pure and joyous fruit. Acting out of passion brings sorrow and disappointment. The fruit of ignorance is to wander in darkness.

14.17

Goodness garners wisdom. Passion fosters greed. Ignorance leads to confusion, madness, and slavery to an imaginary world.

14.18

Those who abide in goodness take life on higher planes. Those who embody passion remain in the realm of earth. Those who live in ignorance, descend to the lower worlds.

14.19

When a man perceives that he is not the doer of actions, as he previously thought, but that all actions are the movement of the gunas alone, he will also see that the Supreme is beyond all that, and he will come to Me.

14.20

When a man transcends the influence of the gunas, he pulls free of birth, pain, decay and death, and he attains immortality. He can also truly enjoy the nectar of his remaining life!

14.21

Arjuna said, "O Lord, how can one recognize a person who has gone beyond the reach of the gunas? How does he act? How has he freed himself from these forces?"

14.22

Lord Krishna said:

Arjuna, such a person does not object to the presence of goodness, passion, or even ignorance in his own mind, nor does he miss them when they are not there.

14.23

He sits as one unconcerned, indifferent to the activities of nature, aloof from the movement of gunas. He is ever centered in Self.

14.24

He is unmoved by both pleasure and pain. He views a stone, a piece of clay and an ornament of gold with equal eye. He is steady in the face of the desirable and the unwanted, and unruffled by blame or praise.

14.25

He receives honor and dishonor with equanimity. He is compassionate to friend and foe alike. He exerts no effort for the purpose of reward. Such a person has transcended the gunas.

14.26

He who serves Me alone with unswerving devotion shall rise above the forces of nature and become Brahman.

14.27

For I am the immutable Home of immortal Brahman, the eternal dharma, the ultimate bliss, the divine Absolute.

Chapter 15: The Embodied Soul

15.1

Lord Krishna said:

The ancients speak of the immortal Asvattha tree, whose roots reach up to the sky and whose branches reach down to earth. Its leaves are the songs of the scriptures. He who grasps the significance of this tree, knows the Vedas.

15.2

Its downward-extending branches also curve upward, nourished by the gunas. Sense-objects are the tender buds of twigs. The upward-reaching roots cascade downwards, driving man to act for his own benefit.

15.3

The form of this tree cannot be found in this world. No one knows when it arose, where it can be found, or even if it exists. But one must determine to find this tree, and cut it down with the sword of detachment.

15.4

From then on he must search in earnest for that place from which, having entered, one never returns, and there surrender to the Supreme Being, from whom all things eternally arise.

15.5

One who is free of pride and delusion, who has conquered the evil of attachment, who abides always in Self, who has had enough of desires and sense-objects, who is not subject to the tyranny of opposites, like pleasure and pain — such a liberated person will attain the Eternal Kingdom.

15.6

In this Place the sun does not shine, nor does the moon glow, Neither is this Place illumined by fire. One who attains it, does not again return to the material world. This Place is My Home.

15.7

The embodied souls of the world are fragments of Me, bound by nature, struggling with the senses and the mind.

15.8

When a soul leaves a body and enters a new one, the mind and senses go with it, just as air carries the fragrance of flowers.

15.9

The soul then continues to enjoy a certain type of hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell, experienced through those senses and perceived through that mind.

15.10

The ignorant cannot feel the soul as it rests in the body, nor as it moves under the spell of the gunas, nor when it departs the body. But those with the eyes of wisdom behold it all.

15.11

The practicing yogi who is established in self-knowledge sees all this clearly. But the ignorant man with clouded mind cannot see what's going on, no matter how hard he may try.

15.12

The brilliance of the sun that illumines the world, and the light of the moon, and the light from fire — that light is Me.

15.13

I permeate the earth and sustain all beings with my vitality. As the moon, I nourish all plants with the nectar of life.

15.14

I am the fire of digestion in all bodies. I am the incoming and outgoing breath. With fire and air I digest the four foods.

15.15

I abide in the heart of everyone. From Me comes knowledge, memory, and forgetfulness. I am That which the Vedas seek to make known. I am the author of Vedanta. I am the Knower of the meaning of the Vedas.

15.16

There are two kinds of life in Me — the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are perishable. Self is imperishable.

15.17

I am above it all. I am the Supreme Lord of All That Is And Is Not. I pervade the three worlds and sustain them.

15.18

I am beyond the concept of perishable and imperishable. I am the primal Source and Cause celebrated in the Vedas.

15.19

He who knows Me without doubt as the Lord Absolute, wisely engages himself in full devotional service to Me.

15.20

Thus, Arjuna, I have revealed to you the most secret science. Knowing this, one achieves wisdom, and his actions are perfect.

Chapter 16: The Demons of Earth

16.1

Lord Krishna said:

O Arjuna, listen as I relate to you the virtues of one endowed with divine nature. He is compassionate, fearless, vigorous, forgiving, bold, straightforward, resolute. He is gentle, modest, truthful, generous, honest and intelligent. He is free of anger, violence, vanity, malice, cruelty, greed, hatred and pride. He does not covet or envy. He does not criticize or judge.

16.2

He spends his time in spiritual effort — practicing yoga, studying scriptures, pursuing knowledge and wisdom. He is in control of his senses, is unattached to the fruits of his actions, and lives in a spirit of sacrifice. He is self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-possessed. He is a man of his word.

16.3

He values simplicity, austerity, charity, renunciation. He lives a clean life, and is pure in heart and mind. He is ever content and enjoys a life of tranquility.

16.4

Those who are possessed of a demonic nature display the following characteristics: pomposity, pride, anger, rudeness, arrogance, conceit, harshness, ostentation, hypocrisy, dishonesty, haughtiness, irascibility, coarseness, insolence, self-importance, cruelty, and above all, ignorance.

16.5

The divine virtues lead one to Liberation. The demonic qualities condemn one to a destiny of bondage. Do not worry, Arjuna, you were born with divine virtues.

16.6

These then are the two types of beings in the world, the divine and the demonic. I have explained to you at great length about divine nature. Now let me tell you about the demonic.

16.7

Persons of demonic nature do not know what should be done, or what should not be done. They live unclean lives of falseness, and no truth can be found in them.

16.8

They say the universe is an accident with no divine foundation or higher power in control. They believe that beings come to be through sex alone, and they glorify desire and lust.

16.9

Holding fast to this belief, these lost souls of small minds and cruel intentions, become enemies of the world, and by their deeds threaten to destroy it.

16.10

Driven by insatiable desire and lust, filled with arrogance and conceit, possessed of insane purpose, puffed with pride and false prestige, reeking of lies and hypocrisy, they worship the impermanent and are compelled to unclean works.

16.11

They believe that sense gratification and the accumulation of wealth are the highest purposes of life. There is no end to their anxiety, and it plagues them unto death.

16.12

Caught in a web of a thousand desires, slaves to anger and lust, they strive for wealth by any means necessary, and hoard it for sensual pleasure.

16.13

The demonic person thinks, “I have gained much wealth today, and tomorrow my schemes will gain me more. It is all mine and it will stay all mine in the future — as I gain even more! All my desires shall be fulfilled!

16.14

“I have killed one enemy today and I will kill the others, too. I am like a god. I am powerful, successful, triumphant!

16.15

“I am wealthy beyond measure. I have relatives in high places. Where is my equal? Today I shall perform a few sacrifices, and perhaps give a small amount to charity. I will rejoice and be exalted!” Thinking like this, the demonic mire themselves ever deeper into darkness and delusion.

16.16

Possessed by these thoughts, ensnared in a network of illusions, they become addicted to lust and fall into a foul hell.

16.17

Conceited, haughty, filled with the pride and intoxication of wealth, they perform token sacrifices without regard to ritual or the spirit of the scriptures.

16.18

Bloated by ego, drunk on power, prisoners of pride, anger and lust, they denigrate Me in their bodies, and in their treatment of the bodies of others.

16.19

These cruel and hateful demons, these vilest of men, I cast again and again into inauspicious lower wombs.

16.20

After repeated births into demonic lives, men such as these fall below My reach and can never approach Me. They sink lower and lower into unimaginable abomination.

16.21

There are three gates to Hell, named Lust, Anger and Greed. A sane man banishes these qualities from his life. They lead to damnation of the soul.

16.22

O Son of Kunte, the man who frees himself from these three gates to darkness is moving in the direction of Self-Realization, and with persistence, he will attain it.

16.23

But the man who disregards spiritual wisdom and lives a life of impulse and desire, will obtain neither perfection nor happiness in life, and he will not reach the Supreme.

16.24

Therefore let timeless wisdom be your authority when deciding what to do and what not to do. First understand the ancient spiritual teachings, then let your actions proceed from there.

Chapter 17: The Performing of Austerities

17.1

Arjuna said, “O Krishna, what about one who does not follow the precepts of the scriptures, but faithfully follows a spiritual path according to his own vision? Is he driven by the energy of goodness, passion or ignorance?”

17.2

Lord Krishna said:

Each embodied soul has an inherent faith in one of the gunas — goodness, passion, or ignorance. I will now speak about this.

17.3

All living beings have faith. An individual’s faith corresponds to his essence. Whatever he has faith in, that is what he is.

17.4

Those upheld by goodness worship God and demigods. Those enthralled by passion worship demons. The ignorant worship ghosts and spirits of nature.

17.5

Those who perform severe austerities and penances not prescribed by the scriptures do it out of pride, conceit, egoism, and attachment. This certainly arises from the demonic.

17.6

By subjecting the body to senseless torture, they torture also the elements within, including Me, who indwells all bodies.

17.7

Even the food each person prefers is determined by the guna he associates with, as are the kinds of sacrifices, austerities and charities he is inclined to.

17.8

People who have faith in goodness prefer food that is pure, healthy, vital, and soothing. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and full of natural flavor. These foods promote longevity, strength, and happiness.

17.9

Those in whom passion is dominant are inclined to foods that are too bitter, salty, sour, hot, pungent, dry, or spicy. These foods cause distress, misery, and disease.

17.10

The ignorant devour food that is overcooked, old, rancid, unclean, stale, putrid, and left over from others.

17.11

Sacrifice performed in accordance with the scriptures, without expectation of reward, and with a firm faith in duty, is of the nature of goodness.

17.12

But sacrifice performed ostentatiously, or for material return, is hypocritical, and is of the nature of passion.

17.13

Any sacrifice that contradicts spiritual scripture, that gives no food to the hungry, in which no prayers are chanted, in which no gifts are offered, is a sacrifice born of ignorance.

17.14

Austerity of the body consists of worshipping the Supreme Lord, a spiritual master, or one's superiors, like mother and father. Cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy, and non-violence are also austerities of the body.

17.15

Austerity of speech consists of speaking words that are truthful, agreeable, and for the benefit of others. Also, reciting the Vedas.

17.16

Austerity of mind consists of silence, simplicity, kindness, self-control, and purity of thought.

17.17

This three-fold austerity, performed in faith without thought of reward, is of the nature of goodness.

17.18

Ostentatious austerities performed in pride for the sake of honor and respect are hypocritical, and of the nature of passion. They are unstable and transitory.

17.19

Austerities performed out of foolish notions, like harming others and self-torture, are certainly born of ignorance.

17.20

A gift given to a worthy person, at the proper time and place, with no thought of reward or reciprocity, is a charity performed out of goodness.

17.21

Charities performed with reluctance, or with expectation of return, are charities with roots in passion.

17.22

A gift given to an unworthy person, with disrespect or disregard, at the wrong time, in the wrong place, is a gift of ignorance.

17.23

From the time of the ancients, the three sounds AUM TAT SAT, have pointed to Absolute Truth. They harken to the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of That which is True Reality. These sounds are chanted and intoned during sacrifices.

17.24

Followers of Brahman always begin their austerities, offerings, and sacrifices by uttering AUM, in accordance with the scriptures.

17.25

When those seeking Liberation offer sacrifices and acts of self-restraint, they are performed while intoning TAT.

17.26

SAT indicates Truth, as well as a follower of Truth, and also work in pursuit of Truth. Truth is the objective of all sacrifice.

17.27

Being established in sacrifice, austerity, and charity is also described as SAT, as is auspicious and righteous action.

17.28

But whatever sacrifice or austerity is performed without faith, is called ASAT. It is false, worthless and for naught, here and hereafter.

Chapter 18: The Road of Renunciation

18.1

Arjuna said, "O Lord, I wish to understand the renunciation of action and the renunciation of the fruits of action. How are these different?"

18.2

Lord Krishna said:

Renunciation of action is the way of the renunciant. Renunciation of the fruits of action is sacrifice.

18.3

Some philosophers declare that all action is evil and must be relinquished. Others maintain that acts of charity, sacrifice, and penance should never be abandoned.

18.4

Listen, Arjuna, as I now relate to you the whole truth about renunciation. First, know that there are three kinds.

18.5

Acts of sacrifice, charity, and penance should not be given up, but should be performed in faith. Indeed, these acts purify even the great souls.

18.6

These acts should be performed with detachment, and without thought of return or reward.

18.7

One's prescribed duties should not be renounced. If one abandons his prescribed duties due to delusion, it is an act of ignorance.

18.8

If one abandons his prescribed duties because they are troublesome or painful, it is a renunciation of passion. Such acts are never beneficial or elevating.

18.9

But if one performs his duty only because it must be done, and renounces all claim to the fruits of his actions, this is renunciation arising from goodness.

18.10

The renunciant who neither shuns unpleasant work nor seeks pleasant work, abides in goodness.

18.11

It is impossible for an embodied being to give up all activity. He who renounces the fruits of his actions is the true renunciant.

18.12

There are three kinds of fruits that result from actions — desirable, undesirable, and mixed. For those attached to the fruits of action, these results carry over after death. For those who renounce the fruits of action, there are no such results, here or hereafter.

18.13

Hear now, Arjuna, the five factors involved in the successful performance of all actions.

18.14

They are the physical body, the indwelling performer, the senses, the endeavor undertaken, and ultimately, the Self.

18.15

Whatever right or wrong action a man performs by body, mind or speech, is controlled and determined by these five factors.

18.16

Therefore, one who believes himself to be the sole doer of an action, without acknowledging these five factors, is neither thinking nor seeing clearly.

18.17

But one who has abandoned such ego-centric thinking, whose intellect is not entangled in concepts of good and evil, though he may kill beings in the world, he is not the killer, and his actions do not bind him.

18.18

The three factors that cause action are perception, the object perceived, and the perceiver. These constitute knowledge. The three components of action are the impulse to act, the act itself, and the performer of the action.

18.19

In accordance with the gunas, there are also three types of knowledge, three types of action, and three types of performer. I will tell you about these now.

18.20

Knowledge that perceives all living things to be composed of one eternally insubstantial substance, undivided though seeming separate, is knowledge in the mode of goodness, and can be said to be Pure Knowledge.

18.21

Knowledge that perceives each living thing to be a wholly separate entity, distinct and unconnected from all other entities, is knowledge of untruth, and is in the mode of passion.

18.22

Knowledge that is confined to one narrow belief, one kind of work, one meager fragment of life — and treats it like the whole — is knowledge as darkness, and is in the mode of ignorance.

18.23

An ordained action, performed without love or malice, with no regard for the fruits, is action in the mode of goodness.

18.24

But willful action performed with stressful effort by one seeking only to satisfy his desires, is action based in egoistic pride, and is in the mode of passion.

18.25

Action performed in delusion, with no regard for spiritual consequences, material loss, injury to others, or the limits of one's ability, is action in the mode of ignorance.

18.26

The performer who acts out his given duties with resolve and enthusiasm, without ego or any thought concerning failure or success, is performing in the mode of goodness.

18.27

The performer who acts to enjoy the fruits, who is greedy, envious, impure, and easily moved to joy and sorrow, is performing in the mode of passion.

18.28

The performer whose acts are crude, inappropriate, deceitful, arrogant, or malicious, who is lazy, morose and always procrastinating, is performing in the mode of ignorance.

18.29

Listen now, Arjuna, as I describe the three kinds of intellect and the three kinds of determination, in accordance with the gunas.

18.30

The intellect that discerns between proper action and improper action, between duty and whim, between what should be feared and what need not be feared, between what is liberating and what is binding — that intellect is functioning in the mode of goodness.

18.31

The intellect that cannot distinguish between a righteous and an unrighteous action, that is confused about the difference between right and wrong, is functioning in the mode of passion.

18.32

The intellect that thinks right is wrong and wrong is right, that thinks goodness is for the weak and prefers evil, is imbued with darkness, and functions in the mode of ignorance.

18.33

The determination that is unshakable, that has been developed through yoga to regulate the mind, control the senses and maintain vitality, is determination in the mode of goodness.

18.34

The determination that develops out of an intense desire for sense pleasures and wealth, that seeks to profit from every undertaking, is determination in the mode of passion.

18.35

The determination that cannot move beyond dreaming, that cannot overcome conceit, lamentation, despondency, and fearfulness, is the determination of ignorance.

18.36

Now hear from Me, Arjuna, about the three kinds of happiness the embodied soul can learn to embrace, and by which, it might bring about the end of suffering.

18.37

That happiness which seems like poison at first but in the end becomes nectar and leads one ultimately to Self-Realization, is happiness in the mode of goodness.

18.38

That happiness which seems like nectar at first but turns to poison in the end, leaving one in misery and regret, is happiness attached to sense-objects, and is in the mode of passion.

18.39

That happiness which is oblivious to self-knowledge, which is darkened by illusion from end-to-end, which arises from attachment to indolence, lethargy, and sleep, is happiness in the mode of ignorance.

18.40

No being or entity on earth, nor on the celestial planes of the demigods, is free of the influence of these forces of nature.

18.41

The respective duties of spiritual teachers, soldiers, merchants, and servants are determined by the gunas — by the dominant force in their nature.

18.42

Equanimity, austerity, purity, forgiveness, honesty, wisdom, self-knowledge, tolerance, clarity, serenity, forbearance, uprightness, restraint, integrity, simplicity, compassion, and Self-Realization are the duties of a spiritual teacher.

18.43

The duties of a soldier are courage, vigor, firmness, generosity, resourcefulness, leadership, determination, heroism, boldness, fortitude, dexterity, grace under fire, strength, grandeur, agility, skill in weaponry, not retreating from the battlefield, and ability to rule as a sovereign.

18.44

Cultivating crops, raising cattle, and commerce are the duties of a merchant. The duty of a servant is to serve his employer. This is in accordance with his nature.

18.45

Anyone can reach the highest perfection by diligent performance of his ordained duty. Listen, while I tell you how this is done.

18.46

It is done by performing one's duties as a means of worship and sacrifice to the Lord, the Supreme Source from whom all beings and things arise.

18.47

Performing one's own prescribed duties, though imperfectly, is better than performing another's duties with perfection. Performing the duties ordained to you, you will incur no sin.

18.48

O Arjuna, never turn your back on the duties you were born to, even if you perceive some wrong in them. All endeavors are tainted by some degree of evil, just as flame is veiled by smoke.

18.49

He whose intellect is disinterested, self-controlled, unattached to material pleasures, can obtain the highest state of freedom through the practice of renunciation.

18.50

Learn from Me now, Arjuna, as I briefly explain how one who has attained this state of perfection, can become Brahman.

18.51

One can become Brahman by living a life that purifies intelligence, increases determination, and self-control, casts aside attraction and aversion, and relinquishes sense gratification.

18.52

Such a person cherishes solitude, eats lightly, engages in meditation and contemplation, restrains himself in speech, action, and thought, and is possessed of dispassion.

18.53

Free of egotism, violence, arrogance, desire, possessiveness, envy, selfishness, pride, anger, greed, and lust, he lives in tranquility, unfettered by material trappings, and is imbued with peace.

18.54

On becoming Brahman, he never thinks nor desires nor laments. He lives in a state of bliss and contentment, and is equally disposed to all beings. Attaining this state is the supreme service to Me.

18.55

Through such devotion and service he merges with Me. He knows Me in Truth. He and I are One.

18.56

Though he still performs his duties in the world, by My Grace he enters Eternal Life.

18.57

Therefore, renounce your actions and dedicate them to Me. Focus all your thoughts on Me. Accept Me as Yourself. Come under My protection.

18.58

Fix your mind on Me and follow My Word. By My Grace you shall overcome all obstacles to Liberation. If however, due to pride and false ego, you do not focus on Me and do not heed My Word, you will perish in the realm of the lost.

18.59

If you do not follow my urging, and say again, “I shall not fight,” your resolve will be in vain anyway. Your ordained nature as a soldier will compel you to fight regardless of your intention!

18.60

You are helpless, Son of Kunte! The forces of nature bind you to your duties. That which, out of illusion, you resolve not to do, is the very thing you shall witness yourself doing!

18.61

The Supreme Lord lives in everyone’s heart. By the power of His Will and the workings of Maya, He moves all beings as if they were mounted on machines.

18.62

Surrender to him utterly, Arjuna, and by His Grace you shall be overcome by Peace, and welcomed into your Eternal Home.

18.63

Thus I have revealed to you the secret Truth, Arjuna, the Mystery of mysteries. Consider it very carefully, then do what you will.

18.64

Only listen once more to these most profound of teachings — My highest and innermost Word. You are dear to me, Arjuna, and I want all good things for you.

18.65

Fix your mind on Me and become my devotee. Worship Me and pay homage to Me. Do this and you shall certainly come to Me. This is My pledge to you, for you are very dear to Me.

18.66

Abandon all forms of religion and just surrender to Me alone. Have no fear. I will deliver you from all sin.

18.67

This confidential knowledge is not to be revealed to those who are not sincere, not devoted to spiritual practice, who do not want to serve God — and especially not to those who are jealous of Me.

18.68

But he who, out of devotion to Me, teaches this supreme doctrine to those who are worthy of it, performs the greatest act of love for Me, and without doubt, he will come to Me.

18.69

No one on earth does Me greater service, and no one on earth is more dear to Me.

18.70

Anyone who faithfully studies this sacred conversation of ours, worships Me with his intelligence.

18.71

Even those who only listen to this knowledge, with faith and without doubt, will be liberated from sin and attain the realm of the righteous.

18.72

Have you heard My words with your innermost mind? Has your ignorance been dispelled? Has your delusion been seen through?

18.73

Arjuna said, "O Great Lord, by Your Grace my illusion is destroyed and I have remembered Truth! My mind is stilled and my doubts have fled. O Infallible One, I shall act according to your instructions!"

18.74

Sanjaya said:

*Thus was the great dialogue I heard between Lord Krishna and the noble soul, Arjuna.
So exhilarating is the message that my hair stood on end!*

18.75

*By the grace of the sage, Vyasa, I heard this sacred yoga from Lord Krishna himself,
Lord of Yoga, as he spoke it to Arjuna.*

18.76

*O King, as I remember over and over this thrilling conversation, I rejoice again and
again!*

18.77

*And as I recall in my mind the glorious form of Lord Krishna, I am overwhelmed with
unspeakable joy!*

18.78

*Wherever there is Krishna, Lord of Yoga, Master of Mystics, and wherever there is
Arjuna, noble master of the bow, there will also be victory, opulence, morality, and
extraordinary power. That is my firm conviction.*