



# भगवद्गीता

## *The Bhagavad Gītā* The Song of the Blessed One

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच ॥

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca ॥  
Dhritarashtra spoke:

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ॥

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ ॥  
on the field of dharma, on the field of the Kurus,  
gathered together, eager for battle

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सँजय ॥१॥

māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya ॥1॥  
mine and the sons of Pandu  
what did they do, O Sañjaya?

*The Bhagavad Gita* is perhaps the most famous text in Indian philosophy. It is part of a much larger text, the *Mahabharata*, the great story of India that is the longest epic poem ever written. The story of the *Mahabharata* recounts a great war between the Kaurava and Pandava princes. *The Bhagavad Gita* tells a small part of this story, but in that story the core teachings of the *Upanishads* are summarized in a most dramatic setting. *The Bhagavad Gita* was composed, at least in part, as a response to the challenges to the philosophy of the *Upanishads* that were raised in Jainism and Buddhism, and is thus very important in the development of the philosophy of Hinduism. The story takes place before a great battle is about to start, and it recounts the exchange between Arjuna, one of the Pandava princes, and his charioteer Krishna. The setting dramatizes the whole problem of Indian philosophy. If it is the consequence of one's actions that leads to the *karma* that binds one to *samsara*, then how can one act at all in the world and still attain the enlightenment that is liberation (*moksha*) from *samsara*? Even good actions, though they would result in better *karma* and thus better rebirth, still lead to further rebirth. The first words of the text make clear the philosophical problem that is the context of the story. The whole story of *The Bhagavad Gita* is narrated by Sanjaya, the charioteer of Dhritarashtra, the blind king of the Kauravas. In the opening lines, the king asks Sanjaya what is happening on the "field of *dharma*" (*Dharmakshetra*) and the "field of the Kurus" (*Kurukshetra*). *Kurukshetra* refers to the particular place, the land where this legendary battle took place. *Dharmakshetra* refers to the philosophical context of the story. It is not insignificant that the first word of *The Bhagavad Gita*, after the introductory words "Dhritarashtra spoke," is *dharma*. A most important word in Indian philosophy, *dharma* in this context might best be translated as 'righteousness' or as 'duty' in the sense of one's moral obligation. All of us are on the 'field of *dharma*' whenever there is a concern for right action, and there probably cannot be a more dramatic setting than a battlefield for focusing on this problem.

In the story Sanjaya relates to his king, Arjuna has directed his charioteer to drive the chariot between the armies so he can better survey the field. As he looks across the field to the opposing army, Arjuna recognizes people he has known all his life, some former teachers, and cousins and uncles of the Kaurava clan. The first chapter tells of the sounding of the horns, the blowing the conchshells, prior to the battle, and then Sanjaya tells of Arjuna's despair. He does not see how it could possibly be right, and thus in accord with *dharma*, to go forward with this battle and kill those whom he does not want to kill. The rest of the story, and thus the main body of *The Bhagavad Gita* is Krishna's response to Arjuna's dilemma. It is

also not insignificant that Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer, for the teaching that Krishna delivers in *The Bhagavad Gita* concerns *yoga*. The word 'yoga' is derived from the same source as the English word 'yoke'. A charioteer was thus literally a 'yogi,' one who yoked horses to the chariot. Thus, the charioteer Krishna is a yogi, a teacher of yoga, and the main teaching of *The Bhagavad Gita* is that Arjuna's dilemma cannot be really be solved unless one has mastered yoga. It turns out that Krishna is also an *avatar*, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, one of the three principal gods of classical Hinduism (along with Brahma and Shiva). In the most dramatic scene of the story the identity of Krishna is revealed to Arjuna. Vishnu is the god who helps human beings in a time of crisis, and in *The Bhagavad Gita* he is incarnated as Krishna in order to help human beings deal with the problem faced on the field of *dharma*.

On one level, some might find *The Bhagavad Gita* to be a disturbing text, for the advice Krishna gives to Arjuna is that he should rise above his despair and fight the battle. Although *The Bhagavad Gita* ends before the battle begins, it is clear from the *Mahabharata* that what follows is a very bloody battle in which many are slain. The second chapter outlines the major themes of Krishna's teaching. At first Krishna tells Arjuna that it is shameful and cowardice not to fight. Arjuna then explains further that his problem is that there are conflicting *dharmas*. In Indian society one's moral obligation or duty (*dharma*) was determined by one's caste. The duty of a prince or warrior (*kshatriya*), for example, would be different from that of a priest (*brahmin*). As Arjuna is a prince it was his duty to fight. On the other hand, however, Arjuna sees that he will have to kill even members of his own extended family and he doesn't see how this could be consistent with another duty to preserve the family. How could the whole order of society be maintained, Arjuna asks, if this sacred *dharma* is violated?

Krishna then lays out four arguments why Arjuna should not despair and thus rise up to fight the battle. In these arguments Krishna is restating the basic teachings of the *Upanishads*. In the first argument (verses 11-25) Krishna restates the fundamental teaching of the *Upanishads* that the true self (*Atman*) never really dies. The true self has always existed and will never cease to exist. Verse 16 expresses clearly the view that reality is unchanging—whatever exists (being) must continue to exist, nothing that does not exist (non-being) can come to exist. Verses 18 and 19 repeat almost word for word the teaching in verses 18 and 19 of the second chapter of the *Katha Upanishad*. The true self does not die when the body perishes; and thus if the slayer thinks that it slays and the one who is slain thinks it is slain, then they do not understand the truth of the nature of the self. Verse 22 is famous for its analogy that reincarnation into new bodies is like discarding worn-out clothes and putting on new ones. In verses 26 and 27 Krishna puts forth a different argument, suggesting that, even if one does not understand that the true self never is slain, Arjuna shouldn't worry for those who die in battle will end up being reborn again. In verses 31-33 Krishna puts forth another argument that Arjuna must follow his caste duty as a *kshatriya* and fight. There is the suggestion, in verse 33 when Krishna refers to a 'war of sacred duty (*dharma*)' that the war is a just war, at least from the side of the Pandavas, and this is what the larger context of the story of the *Mahabharata* suggests. In verses 34-36 Krishna puts forth a final argument that Arjuna will be shamed if he doesn't do his duty and fight the battle.

These arguments, however, are just preliminaries as Krishna's real teaching doesn't begin until verse 39 where he explains that the real solution to the problem of *karma* faced on the field of *dharma* is *yoga*. *The Bhagavad Gita* is famous for its teaching about yoga, and in that teaching Krishna explains three different types of yoga: karma yoga, the yoga of meditation, and the yoga of devotion. Each of these types of yoga is introduced, at least briefly, in the second chapter. In verses 47 and 48

*karma yoga* is introduced. Here Krishna explains that if one acts without being concerned for the fruit of action, then the action will not result in the accumulation of karma binding one to rebirth. In this one can

कर्म योग	
karma yoga	the yoga of action
<i>karma yoga</i>	
राज योग	
rāja yoga	the "royal" yoga; the yoga of knowledge
<i>rāja yoga</i>	yoga of meditation
भक्ति योग	
bhakti yoga	the yoga of devotion
<i>bhakti yoga</i>	

see the response to the teachings of Jainism and Buddhism. The solution to the problem of karma taught in Jainism was basically to try as much as possible to not act at all. Krishna's teaching, developed in the third chapter, suggests that this solution is impractical as it is not really possible to avoid action as long as one is in this world. One cannot avoid acting in the world, Krishna teaches, but if one acts completely unselfishly, without selfish desire, without a concern for a reward for the action, then the action will not result in further karma. This teaching is basically in agreement with the 2nd Noble Truth of Buddhism in emphasizing the surrendering of desire as the key to enlightenment. At the end of chapter two, in verse 71, Krishna even says that if one renounces all desire and craving then one finds the bliss of *nirvana*. Krishna's teaching differs from Buddhism, of course, in putting forth the teachings of the *Upanishads* that Buddhism rejects. In contrast to the Buddhist teaching on interdependent arising and impermanence, Krishna's teaching emphasizes that the true self within (*Atman*) is identical with the great essence of reality (*Brahman*) that never arose in the first place because it always was, and will never pass away because it always will be.

After teaching about karma yoga, Krishna explains, in verse 49 of the second chapter, that this yoga is inferior to the yoga of understanding, and here is where Krishna introduces the royal yoga, the yoga of meditation. One reason why the yoga of meditation is superior to karma yoga is that even to be capable of truly selfish action would require the knowledge of the self that comes through meditation. There are surely many actions one might think are done selflessly that are really motivated by an unconscious selfish desire. Most of the remainder of the second chapter, and then the whole of the sixth chapter, are focused on explaining this yoga and describing the yogi, the one who has mastered this discipline. The sixth chapter might even be read as a basic introduction to the yoga of meditation. Krishna explains how one should sit, how one should focus the attention of one's gaze on the tip of the nose so that the mind does not wander. The aim of meditation is to bring the mind to a point of stillness, suggested in the famous simile of verse 19, where it is suggested the mind in meditation is like a lamp, or candle flame, sheltered from the wind. A flame will flicker in the wind, but when it is sheltered from the wind it will become still. Krishna's

teaching emphasizes that when the mind comes to this calm, stillness, then the true self (*Atman*) that is one with the infinite spirit (*Brahman*) will be known. The highest state of meditation will be this realization in which *Atman* is understood to be one with *Brahman*. This self-realization would complete the goal of yoga to tie or yoke together the self and its true identity. This discipline of the yoga of meditation would be developed at great length in a later text, the famous *Yoga Sutras* written by a master of yoga named Patanjali. Following the example of the Buddha's eightfold path, Patanjali outlines eight steps or limbs of yoga. It is interesting to compare Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga with the eightfold path of Buddhism. Both of them end in meditation. The three last stages of the eight limbs of yoga and the eightfold path are deeper and deeper states of meditation. The highest stage of meditation in both is described as *samadhi*, and yet, obviously, just exactly what is meant by this high level state of concentration would be very different in Hinduism and Buddhism.

While Krishna's teaching in chapter six emphasizes the importance of the yoga of

#### The Eight Limbs of Yoga from the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali

*Sādhanaś* (The Eight Methods or "Limbs" of Yoga)

1. *Yama* (The 5 Restraints: non-violence, non-lying, non-stealing, non-grasping, celibacy)
2. *Niyama* (Observances: cleanliness, contentment, purificatory action, study, devotion)
3. *Āsana* (body postures)
4. *Prāṇāyāma* (skillful breathing exercises)
5. *Pratyāhāra* (control of the senses)
6. *Dhāraṇā* (concentration)
7. *Dhyāna* (meditation, meditative absorption)
8. *Samādhi* (highest state of meditation, concentration, "trance," a state of *enstasis* or *enstasy*)

#### The Eightfold Path from the First Sermon of the Buddha

##### The Eightfold Path (Sanskrit, Pali)

- 1) Right View or Understanding (*dr̥ṣṭi*, *diṭṭhi*)
- 2) Right Resolve or Intention or Thought (*saṅkalpa*, *sankappa*)
- 3) Right Speech (*vāc*, *vācā*)
- 4) Right Action (*karmānta*, *kammanta*)
- 5) Right Livelihood (*ājīva*)
- 6) Right Effort (*vyāyāma*, *vāyāma*)
- 7) Right Mindfulness (*smṛti*, *sati*)
- 8) Right Concentration (*samādhi*)



meditation, *The Bhagavad Gita* is most known for an emphasis on *bhakti yoga*, or the yoga of devotion. The yoga of devotion is introduced, or at least hinted at in verse 61 of the second chapter when Krishna says that the one who is disciplined in yoga "should focus on me." In much of the rest of the book the theme of the yoga of devotion is developed, climaxing in the scene in which Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna in all his terrifying majesty. After hearing about all of Krishna's powers, Arjuna asks to see Krishna's divine form. Krishna then gives Arjuna a supernatural or 'celestial eye' so that Arjuna may see his divine form. The narrative now returns to Sanjaya describing to the blind king the awesome revelation of Krishna's divine form to Arjuna. The entire universe in all its multiplicity is seen as Krishna's body, and all of existence is seen as rushing headlong like a river into Krishna's flaming mouths. Krishna reveals Himself as Time, the destroyer of worlds. Krishna then again exhorts Arjuna to fight, to slay all his enemies. Arjuna can only be the occasion, for they are already slain by Krishna. In terrified ecstasy Arjuna acknowledges Krishna as the God of gods, the Supreme resting place of the world. As Arjuna is no longer able to

behold the tremendous vision, Krishna returns to his previous human form, and ends by telling Arjuna that whoever worships Him, without attachment, and free from enmity toward all creatures, will be united with Him

Whether the yoga of meditation or the yoga of devotion is more important is one of the crucial issues in the debate about the interpretation of *The Bhagavad Gita*. The emphasis on *bhakti yoga* in *The Bhagavad Gita* led to the development of devotional Hinduism in medieval India. *The Bhagavad Gita* is thus the most important text in devotional Hinduism today, which manifests in a number of devotional sects of Hinduism, the most well known being the *Hare Krishna* movement, founded by the Indian guru A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. As suggested by his title, this teacher certainly emphasized the importance of *bhakti yoga*. Whether the yoga of meditation or the yoga of devotion are two different paths that lead to the same goal, or whether both are necessary to reaching this goal are interesting philosophical questions raised by *The Bhagavad Gita*. Is it enough to chant "Hare Krishna" or is it more important to meditate and come to the state of *samadhi*? The same issue comes up in the development of Buddhism. The notion of the celestial Buddhas in Mahayana Buddhism opened up many devotional forms of Mahayana Buddhism that have had a significant impact on East Asian cultures. Some of the forms of Mahayana Buddhism, such as Pure Land Buddhism, emphasize the chanting of the name of Amida Buddha (one of the celestial Buddhas), while others, most notably Zen, emphasize the importance of meditation.

*The Bhagavad Gita* is certainly one of the most important texts in Indian philosophy. It provides a succinct restatement of the fundamental teaching of the Upanishads about *Atman* and *Brahman*, and it develops the teaching of yoga in the *Upanishads*, outlining three different types of yoga. Included below is the introductory chapter explaining Arjuna's dilemma, the second chapter that introduces the main themes of Krishna's response to Arjuna's dilemma, and then the sixth chapter that relates Krishna's teaching concerning the yoga of meditation.



An Illustration of the Kurukshetra War in the Mahabharata

**THE FIRST TEACHING**

*Arjuna's Despair*

*Dhritarashtra*

Sanjaya, tell me what my sons  
and the sons of Pandu did when they met,  
wanting to battle on the field of Kuru,  
on the field of sacred duty? 1

*Sanjaya*

Your son Duryodhana, the king,  
seeing the Pandava forces arrayed,  
approached his teacher Drona  
and spoke in command. 2

"My teacher, see  
the great Pandava army arrayed  
by Drupada's son,  
your pupil; intent on revenge. 3

Here are heroes; mighty archers  
equal to Bhima and Arjuna in warfare,  
Yuyudhana, Virata, and Drupada,  
your sworn foe on his great chariot. 4

Here too are Dhrishtaketu, Cekitaila,  
and the brave king of Benares;  
Purujit, Kuntibhoja,  
and the manly king of the Shibis. 5

Yudhamanyu is bold,  
and Uttamaujas is brave;  
the sons of Subhadra and Draupadi  
all command great chariots. 6

Now, honored priest, mark  
the superb men on our side  
as I tell you the names  
of my army's leaders. 7

They are you and Bhishma,  
Karna and Kripa, a victor in battles,  
your own son Ashvatthama,  
Vikarna, and the son of Somadatta. 8

Many other heroes also risk  
their lives for my sake,  
bearing varied weapons  
and skilled in the ways of war. 9

Guarded by Bhishma, the strength  
of our army is without limit;  
but the strength of their army,  
guarded by Bhima, is limited. 10

In all th movements of battle,  
you and your men,  
stationed according to plan,  
must guard Bhishma well! 11

Bhishma, fiery elder of the Kurus,  
roared his lion's roar  
and blew his conch horn,  
exciting Duryodhana's delight. 12

Conches and kettledrums,  
cymbals, tabors, and trumpets  
were sounded at once  
and the din of tumult arose. 13

Standing on their great chariot  
yoked with white stallions,  
Krishna and Arjuna, Pandu's son,  
sounded their divine conches. 14

Krishna blew Pancajanya, won from a demon;  
Arjuna blew Devadatta, a gift of the gods;  
fierce wolf-bellied Bhima blew Paundra,  
his great conch of the east. 15

Yudhisthira, Kunti's son, the king,  
blew Anantavijaya, conch of boundless victory;  
his twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva  
blew conches resonant and jewel toned. 16

The king of Benares, a superb archer,  
and Shikhandin on his great chariot,  
Drishtadyumna, Virata, and indomitable Satyaki,  
all blew their conches. 17

Drupada, with his five grandsons,  
and Subhadra's strong-armed son,  
each in his turn blew  
their conches, O King. 18

The noise tore the hearts  
of Dhritarashtra's sons,  
and tumult echoed  
through heaven and earth. 19

Arjuna, his war flag a rampant monkey, saw Dhritarashtra's sons assembled as weapons were ready to clash, and he lifted his bow.	20	Krishna, I seek no victory, or kingship or pleasures. What use to us are kingship, delights, or life itself?	32
He told his charioteer: "Krishna, halt my chariot between the armies!	21	We sought kingship, delights and pleasures for the sake of those assembled to abandon their lives and fortunes in battle.	33
Far enough for me to see. these men who lust far war, ready to fight with me in the strain of battle.	22	They are teachers, fathers, sons, and grandfathers, uncles, grandsons, fathers and brothers of wives, and other men of our family.	34
I see men gathered here, eager to fight, bent on serving the folly of Dhritarashtra's son."	23	I do not want to kill them even if I am killed, Krishna; not for kingship of all three worlds, much less for the earth!	35
When Arjuna had spoken, Krishna halted their splendid chariot between the armies.	24	What joy is there for us, Krishna, in killing Dhritarashtra's sons? Evil will haunt us if we kill them, though their bows are drawn to kill.	36
Facing Bhishma and Drona and all the great kings, he said; "Arjuna, see the Kuru men assembled here!"	25	Honor forbids us to kill our cousins, Dhritarashtra's sons; how can we know happiness if we kill our own kinsmen?	37
Arjuna saw them standing there: fathers, grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and friends.	26	The greed that distorts their reason blinds them to the sin they commit in ruining the family, blinds them to the crime of betraying friends.	38
He surveyed his elders and companions in both armies, all his kinsmen assembled together.	27	How can we ignore the wisdom of turning from this evil when we see the sin of family destruction, Krishna?	39
Dejected, filled with strange pity, he said this: Krishna, I see my kinsmen gathered here, wanting war.	28	When the family is ruined, the timeless laws of family duty ( <i>dharma</i> ) perish; and when duty ( <i>dharma</i> ) is lost, chaos overwhelms the family.	40
My limbs sink, my mouth is parched, my body trembles, the hair bristles on my flesh.	29	In overwhelming chaos, Krishna, women of the family are corrupted; and when women are corrupted, disorder is born in society.	41
The magic bow slips from my hand, my skin burns, I cannot stand still, my mind reels.	30	This discord drags the violators and the family itself to hell; for ancestors fall when rites of offering rice and water lapse.	42
I see omens of chaos, Krishna, I see no good in killing my kinsmen in battle.	31	The sins of men who violate the family create disorder in society that undermines the constant laws of caste ( <i>varna</i> ) and family duty ( <i>dharma</i> ).	43

<p>Krishna, we have heard that a place in hell is reserved for men who undermine family duties.</p>	44	<p>The flaw of pity blights my very being; conflicting sacred duties (<i>dharmā</i>) confound my reason. I ask you to tell me decisively—which is better? I am your pupil. Teach me what I seek!</p>	7
<p>I lament the great sin we commit when our greed for kingship and pleasures drives us to kill our kinsmen.</p>	45	<p>I see nothing that could drive away the grief that withers my senses; even if I won the kingdoms of unrivaled wealth on earth and sovereignty over gods.</p>	8
<p>If Dhritarashtra's armed sons kill me in battle when I am unarmed and offer no resistance, it will be my reward."</p>	46	<p><i>Sanjaya</i>  Arjuna told this to Krishna—then saying, "I shall not fight," he fell silent.</p>	9
<p>Saying this in the time of war, Arjuna slumped into the chariot and laid down his bow and arrows, his mind tormented by grief.</p>	47	<p>Mocking him gently, Krishna gave this counsel As Arjuna sat dejected, between the two armies.</p>	10
<p><b>THE SECOND TEACHING</b> <i>Philosophy and Spiritual Discipline (Yoga)</i></p>		<p><i>Lord Krishna</i>  You grieve for those beyond grief, and you speak words of insight; but learned men do not grieve for the dead or the living.</p>	11
<p><i>Sanjaya</i>  Arjuna sat dejected, filled with pity, his sad eyes blurred by tears. Krishna gave him counsel. <i>Lord Krishna</i></p>	1	<p>Never have I not existed, nor you, nor these kings; and never in the future shall we cease to exist.</p>	12
<p>Why this cowardice in time of crisis, Arjuna? The coward is ignoble, shameful, foreign to the ways of heaven.</p>	2	<p>Just as the embodied self enters childhood, youth, and old age, so does it enter another body; this does not confound a steadfast man.</p>	13
<p>Don't yield to impotence! It is unnatural in you! Banish this petty weakness from your heart. Rise to the fight, Arjuna!</p>	3	<p>Contacts with matter make us feel heat and cold, pleasure and pain. Arjuna, you must learn to endure fleeting things as they come and go!</p>	14
<p><i>Arjuna</i>  Krishna, how can I fight against Bhishma and Drona with arrows when they deserve my worship?</p>	4	<p>When these cannot torment a man, when suffering and joy are equal for him and he has courage, he is fit for immortality.</p>	15
<p>It is better in this world to beg for scraps of food than to eat meals smeared with the blood of elders I killed at the height of their power while their goals were still desires.</p>	5	<p>Nothing of nonbeing comes to be, nor does being cease to exist; the boundary between these two is seen by men who see reality.</p>	16
<p>We don't know which weight is worse to bear— our conquering them or their conquering us. We will not want to live if we kill the sons of Dhritarashtra assembled before us.</p>	6	<p>Indestructible is the presence that pervades all this; no one can destroy this unchanging reality.</p>	17

Our bodies are known to end, but the embodied self is enduring, indestructible, and immeasurable; therefore, Arjuna, fight the battle!	18	The self embodied in the body of every being is indestructible; you have no cause to grieve for all these creatures, Arjuna!	30
He who thinks this self a killer and he who thinks it killed, both fail to understand; it does not kill, nor is it killed.	19	Look to your own duty ( <i>dharma</i> ); do not tremble before it; nothing is better for a warrior ( <i>kshatriya</i> ) than a battle of sacred duty ( <i>dharma</i> ).	31
It is not born, it does not die; having been, it will never not be; unborn, enduring, constant and primordial, it is not killed when the body is killed.	20	The doors of heaven open for warriors who rejoice to have a battle like this thrust on them by chance.	32
Arjuna, when a man knows the self to be indestructible, enduring, unborn, unchanging, how does he kill or cause anyone to kill?	21	If you fail to wage this war of sacred duty ( <i>dharma</i> ), you will abandon your own duty and fame only to gain evil.	33
As a man discards worn-out clothes to put on new and different ones, so the embodied self discards its worn-out bodies to take on other new ones.	22	People will tell of your undying shame, and for a man of honor shame is worse than death.	34
Weapons do not cut it, fire does not burn it, waters do not wet it, wind does not wither it.	23	The great chariot warriors will think you deserted in fear of battle; you will be despised by those who held you in esteem.	35
It cannot be cut or burned; it cannot be wet or withered; it is enduring, all-pervasive, fixed, immovable, and timeless.	24	Your enemies will slander you, scorning your skill in so many unspeakable ways— could any suffering be worse?	36
It is called unmanifest, inconceivable, and immutable; since you know that to be so, you should not grieve!	25	If you are killed, you win heaven; if you triumph, you enjoy the earth; therefore, Arjuna, stand up and resolve to fight the battle!	37
If you think of its birth and death as ever-recurring, then too, Great Warrior, you have no cause to grieve!	26	Impartial to joy and suffering, gain and loss, victory and defeat, arm yourself for the battle, lest you fall into evil.	38
Death is certain for anyone born, and birth is certain for the dead; since the cycle is inevitable, you have no cause to grieve.	27	Understanding is defined in terms of philosophy; now hear it in spiritual discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ). Armed with this understanding, Arjuna, you will escape the bondage of action ( <i>karma</i> ).	39
Creatures are unmanifest in origin, manifest in the midst of life, and unmanifest again in the end. Since this is so, why do you lament?	28	No effort in this world is lost or wasted; a fragment of sacred duty ( <i>dharma</i> ) saves you from great fear.	40
Rarely someone sees it, rarely another speaks it, rarely anyone hears it even hearing it, no one really knows it.	29	This understanding is unique in its inner core or resolve; diffuse and pointless are the ways irresolute men understand.	41



Undiscerning men who delight in the tenets of ritual lore utter florid speech, proclaiming, "There is nothing else!"	42	<i>Arjuna</i>  Krishna, what defines a man deep in contemplation whose insight and thought are sure? How would he speak? How would he sit? How would he move?	54
Driven by desire, they strive after heaven and contrive to win powers and delights, but their intricate ritual language bears only the fruit of action ( <i>karma</i> ) in rebirth.	43	<i>Lord Krishna</i>  When he gives up desires in his mind, is content with the self within himself, then he is said to be a man whose insight is sure, Arjuna.	55
Obsessed with powers and delights, their reason lost in words, they do not find in contemplation this understanding of inner resolve.	44	When suffering does not disturb his mind, when his craving for pleasures has vanished, when attraction, fear, and anger are gone, he is called a sage whose thought is sure.	56
Arjuna, the realm of sacred lore is nature beyond its triad of qualities ( <i>gunas</i> ), dualities, and mundane rewards, be forever lucid, alive to your self ( <i>Atman</i> ).	45	When he shows no preference in fortune or misfortune and neither exults nor hates, his insight is sure.	57
For the discerning priest, all of sacred lore has no more value than a well when water flows everywhere.	46	When, like a tortoise retracting its limbs, he withdraws his senses completely from sensuous objects, his insight is sure.	58
Be intent on action ( <i>karma</i> ), not on the fruits of action; avoid attraction to the fruits and attachment to inaction!	47	Sensuous objects fade when the embodied self abstains from food; the taste lingers, but it too fades in the vision of higher truth.	59
Perform actions, firm in discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ), relinquishing attachment; be impartial to failure and success this equanimity is called discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ).	48	Even when a man of wisdom tries to control them, Arjuna, the bewildering senses attack his mind with violence.	60
Arjuna, action ( <i>karma</i> ) is far inferior to the discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) of understanding; so seek refuge in understanding—pitiful are men drawn by the fruit of action ( <i>karma</i> ).	49	Controlling them all, with discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) he should focus on me; when his senses are under control, his insight is sure.	61
Disciplined by understanding, one abandons both good and evil deeds; so arm yourself for discipline ( <i>yoga</i> )— discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) is skill in action.	50	Brooding about sensuous objects makes attachment to them grow; from attachment desire arises, from desire anger is born.	62
Wise men disciplined by understanding relinquish the fruit born of action ( <i>karma</i> ); freed from these bonds of rebirth, they reach a place beyond decay.	51	From anger comes confusion; from confusion memory lapses; from broken memory understanding is lost; from loss of understanding, he is ruined.	63
When your understanding passes beyond the swamp of delusion, you will be indifferent to all that is heard in sacred lore.	52	But a man of inner strength whose senses experience objects without attraction and hatred, in self-control, finds serenity.	64
When your understanding turns from sacred lore to stand fixed, immovable in contemplation, then you will reach discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ).	53		

In serenity, all his sorrows dissolve; his reason becomes serene, his understanding sure.	65	Action ( <i>karma</i> ) is the means for a sage who seeks to mature in discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ); tranquility is the means for one who is mature in discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ).	3
Without discipline, he has no understanding or inner power; without inner power, he has no peace; and without peace where is joy?	66	He is said to be mature in discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) when he has renounced all intention and is detached from sense objects and actions.	4
If his mind submits to the play of the senses, they drive away insight, as wind drives a ship on water.	67	He should elevate himself by the self ( <i>Atman</i> ), not degrade himself; for the self ( <i>Atman</i> ) is its own friend and its own worst foe.	5
So, Great Warrior, when withdrawal of the senses from sense objects is complete, discernment is firm.	68	The self ( <i>Atman</i> ) is the friend of a man who masters himself through the self ( <i>Atman</i> ), but for a man without self-mastery, the self is like an enemy at war.	6
When it is night for all creatures, a master of restraint is awake; when they are awake, it is night for the sage who sees reality.	69	The higher self ( <i>Atman</i> ) of a tranquil man whose self is mastered is perfectly poised in cold or heat, joy or suffering, honor or contempt.	7
As the mountain depths of the ocean are unmoved when waters rush into it, so the man unmoved when desires enter him attains a peace that eludes the man of many desires.	70	Self-contented in knowledge ( <i>jnana</i> ) and judgment, his senses subdued, on the summit of existence, impartial to clay, stone, or gold, the man of discipline ( <i>yogi</i> ) is disciplined.	8
When he renounces all desires and acts without craving, possessiveness, or individuality, he finds peace (the bliss of <i>nirvana</i> ).	71	He is set apart by his disinterest toward comrades, allies, enemies, neutrals, nonpartisans, foes, friends, good and even evil men.	9
This is the place of infinite spirit; achieving it, one is freed from delusion; abiding in it even at the time of death, one finds the pure calm of infinity.	72	A man of discipline ( <i>yogi</i> ) should always discipline himself, remain in seclusion, isolated, his thought and self well controlled, without possessions or hope.	10
		He should fix for himself a firm seat in a pure place, neither too high nor too low, covered in cloth, deerskin, or grass.	11
		He should focus his mind and restrain the activity of his thought and senses; sitting on that seat, he should practice discipline for the purification of the self.	12
		He should keep his body, head and neck aligned, immobile, steady; he should gaze at the tip of the nose and not let his glance wander.	13
		The self tranquil, his fear dispelled, firm in his vow of celibacy, his mind restrained, let him sit with discipline, his thought fixed on me, intent on me.	14

## THE SIXTH TEACHING

### *The Man of Discipline (Yoga)*

*Lord Krishna*

One who does what must be done without concern for the fruits is a man of renunciation ( <i>sannyasin</i> ) and discipline, not one who shuns ritual fire and rites.	1
Know that discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ), Arjuna, is what men call renunciation ( <i>sannyasam</i> ); no man is disciplined without renouncing willful intent.	2

Disciplining himself, his mind controlled, a man of discipline ( <i>yogī</i> ) finds peace, the pure calm that exists in me.	15	When his mind is tranquil, perfect joy comes to the man of discipline ( <i>yogī</i> ); his passion is calmed, he is without sin, being one with the infinite spirit ( <i>Brahman</i> ).	27
Gluttons have no discipline, nor the man who starves himself, nor he who sleeps excessively or suffers wakefulness.	16	Constantly disciplining himself, free from sin, the man of discipline easily achieves perfect joy in harmony with the infinite spirit ( <i>Brahman</i> ).	28
When a man disciplines his diet and diversions, his physical actions, his sleeping and waking, discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) destroys his sorrow.	17	Arming himself with discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ), seeing everything with an equal eye, he sees the self ( <i>Atman</i> ) in all creatures and all creatures in the self ( <i>Atman</i> ).	29
When his controlled thought rests within the self ( <i>Atman</i> ) alone, without craving objects of desire, he is said to be disciplined.	18	He who sees me everywhere and sees everything in me will not be lost to me, and I will not be lost to him.	30
"He does not waver, like a lamp sheltered from the wind" is the simile recalled for a man of discipline ( <i>yogī</i> ), restrained in thought and practicing self-discipline.	19	I exist in all creatures, so the disciplined man ( <i>yogī</i> ) devoted to me grasps the oneness of life; wherever he is, he is in men.	31
When his thought ceases, checked by the exercise of discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ), he is content within the self ( <i>Atman</i> ), seeing the self ( <i>Atman</i> ) through himself.	20	When he sees identity in everything, whether joy or suffering, through analogy with the self ( <i>Atman</i> ), he is deemed a man of pure discipline ( <i>yogī</i> ).	32
Absolute joy beyond the senses can only be grasped by understanding; when one knows it, he abides there and never wanders from this reality.	21	<i>Arjuna</i>  You define this discipline by equanimity, Krishna; but in my faltering condition, I see no ground for it.	33
Obtaining it, he thinks there is no greater gain; abiding there, he is unmoved, even by deep suffering.	22	Krishna, the mind is faltering, violent, strong, and stubborn; I find it as difficult to hold as the wind.	34
Since he knows that discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) means unbinding the bonds of suffering, he should practice discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) resolutely, without despair dulling his reason.	23	<i>Lord Krishna</i>	
He should entirely relinquish desires aroused by willful intent; he should entirely control his senses with his mind.	24	Without doubt, the mind is unsteady and hard to hold, but practice and dispassion can restrain it, Arjuna.	35
He should gradually become tranquil, firmly controlling his understanding; focusing his mind on the self ( <i>Atman</i> ), he should think nothing.	25	In my view, discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) eludes the unrestrained self, but if he strives to master himself, a man has the means to reach it.	36
Wherever his faltering mind unsteadily wanders, he should restrain it and bring it under self-control.	26	<i>Arjuna</i>  When a man has faith, but no acetic will, and his mind deviates from discipline ( <i>yoga</i> ) before its perfection is achieved,	

what way is there for him, Krishna? 37

Doomed by his double failure,  
is he not like a cloud split apart,  
unsettled, deluded on the path  
of the infinite spirit (*Brahman*)? 38

Krishna, only you can dispel  
this doubt of mine completely;  
there is no one but you  
to dispel this doubt. 39

*Lord Krishna*

Arjuna, he does not suffer  
doom in this world or the next;  
any man who acts with honor  
cannot go the wrong way, my friend. 40

Fallen in discipline (*yoga*), he reaches  
worlds made by his virtue, wherein he dwells  
for endless years, until he is reborn  
in a house of upright and noble men. 41

Or he is born in a family  
of disciplined men;  
the kind of birth in the world  
that is very hard to win. 42

There he regains a depth  
of understanding from his former life  
and strives further  
to perfection, Arjuna. 43

Carried by the force of his previous practice,  
a man who seeks to learn discipline (*yoga*)  
passes beyond sacred lore (*Vedic hymns*)  
that expresses the infinite spirit (*Brahman*) in words. 44

The man of discipline (*yogi*), striving  
with effort, purified of his sins,  
perfected through many births.  
finds a higher way. 45

He is deemed superior  
to men of penance,  
men of knowledge, and men of action;  
be a man of discipline, Arjuna! 46

Of all the men of discipline,  
the faithful man devoted to me,  
with his inner self deep in mine,  
I deem most disciplined. 47

## THE FOURTEENTH TEACHING

### *The Triad of Nature's Qualities*

*Lord Krishna*

I shall teach you still more  
of the farthest knowledge one can know;  
knowing it, all the sages  
have reached perfection. 1

Resorting to this knowledge,  
they follow the ways of my sacred duty;  
in creation they are not reborn,  
in dissolution they suffer no sorrow. 2

My womb is the great infinite spirit;  
in it I place the embryo,  
and from this, Arjuna,  
comes the origin of all creatures. 3

The infinite spirit is the great womb  
of all forms that come to be  
in all wombs,  
and I am the seed-giving father. 4

Lucidity (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), dark inertia (*tamas*)<sup>C</sup>  
these qualities (*gunas*) inherent in nature (*prakriti*)  
bind the unchanging  
embodied self in the body. 5

Lucidity (*sattva*), being untainted,  
is luminous and without decay;  
it binds one with attachment  
to joy and knowledge, Arjuna. 6

Know that passion (*rajas*) is emotional,  
born of craving and attachment;  
it binds the embodied self  
with attachment to action (*karma*). 7

Know that dark inertia (*tamas*) born of ignorance  
as the delusion of every embodied self;  
it binds one with negligence,  
indolence, and sleep, Arjuna. 8

Lucidity addicts one to joy,  
and passion to actions,  
but dark inertia obscures knowledge  
and addicts one to negligence. 9

When lucidity dominates  
passion and inertia, it thrives;  
and likewise when passion or inertia  
dominates the other two. 10

When the light of knowledge  
shines in all the body's senses,  
then one knows  
that lucidity prevails. 11

When passion increases, Arjuna, greed and activity, involvement in actions, disquiet, and longing arise.	12	Lord, what signs mark a man who passes beyond the three qualities? What does he do to cross beyond these qualities?	21
When dark inertia increases, obscurity and inactivity, negligence and delusion, arise.	13	<i>Krishna</i>	
When lucidity prevails, the self whose body dies enters the untainted worlds of those who know reality.	14	He does not dislike light or activity or delusion; when they cease to exist he does not desire them.	22
When he dies in passion, he is born among the lovers of action; so when he dies in dark inertia, he is born into wombs of folly.	15	He remains disinterested, unmoved by qualities of nature; he never wavers, knowing that only qualities are in motion.	23
The fruit of good conduct is pure and untainted they say, but suffering is the fruit of passion, ignorance the fruit of dark inertia.	16	Self-reliant, impartial to suffering and joy, to clay, stone, or gold, the resolute man is the same to foe and friends, to blame and praise.	24
From lucidity knowledge is born; from passion comes greed; from dark inertia comes negligence, delusion, and ignorance.	17	The same in honor, and disgrace, to ally and enemy, a man who abandons involvements transcends the qualities of nature.	25
Men who are lucid go upward; men of passion stay in between; men of dark inertia, caught in vile ways, sink low.	18	One who serves me faithfully, with discipline of devotion, transcends the qualities of nature and shares in the infinite spirit ( <i>Brahman</i> ).	26
When a man of vision sees nature's ( <i>prakṛiti</i> ) qualities ( <i>gunas</i> ) as the agent of action and knows what lies beyond, he enters into my being.	19	I am the infinite spirit's foundation, immortal and immutable, the basis of eternal sacred duty ( <i>dharma</i> ) and of perfect joy.	27
Transcending the three qualities ( <i>gunas</i> ) that are the body's source, the self achieves immortality, freed from the sorrows of birth, death, and old age.	20	* * *	

Arjuna

*The Bhagavad Gita*, Barbara Stoler Miller,  
trans. Bantam Dell, 1986.