

"The Bhagavad-Gita is one of the most clear and comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever revealed..."

—ALDOUS HUXLEY, philosopher, author

# KRISHNA'S BHAGAVAD GITA

TRANSLATION BY  
DAYANANDA



COMPILED BY BADARAYANA VEDAVYAS

Krishna's  
Bhagavad  
Gita

Translated by  
Dayananda



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Badarayana Vedavyas is the traditional compiler of the Bhagavad Gita, which appears in the great epic, Mahabharata

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Readers are invited to write the author at [dayananda@msn.com](mailto:dayananda@msn.com).

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For A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad





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In addition, I offer appreciation to my dear friend Rupa Vilas for his critique and wise guidance.

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## Preface

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*Bhagavad Gita* forms the philosophical basis of the Bhagavat culture (see below, page vii). Krishna speaks the *Gita* to His disciple Arjuna, and since ancient times He's been accepted as an appearance of God on earth.

In the few pages that follow I present summaries of important persons and terms. Then I offer Krishna's *Gita*, His song, and each chapter is preceded by a one-page summary.

There are many translations of the *Gita*. Mine is distinct in a few ways. The text, while faithful to the original song, is in flowing prose, and it doesn't obscure a modern understanding by being overly literal. The original (Sanskrit) terms are minimized. And phonetic spellings for names are employed, instead of the IAST system used by scholars.

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## Krishna and Arjuna

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In India and many places around the world, Krishna is the Supreme Lord. He's God. However, He shouldn't be understood in the way people conceive of the God of Abraham.

Some describe Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The reason for this complex term is to emphasize two things: Krishna is a person; He has personality. And He's the ultimate source of all forms of the Supreme. He's the God of gods.

Krishna speaks the *Gita* to Arjuna, who is a prince, a great archer, and one of five brothers who are the sons of Pandu. They are on the battlefield in preparation for war with their cousins.

Arjuna's friend, Krishna, has taken the role of charioteer. When Arjuna sees his relatives and friends arrayed before him in the fratricidal war, he becomes despondent and turns to his friend for counsel.

The advice Krishna gives is simultaneously applicable to Arjuna the warrior and to all humanity.



Krishna and Arjuna

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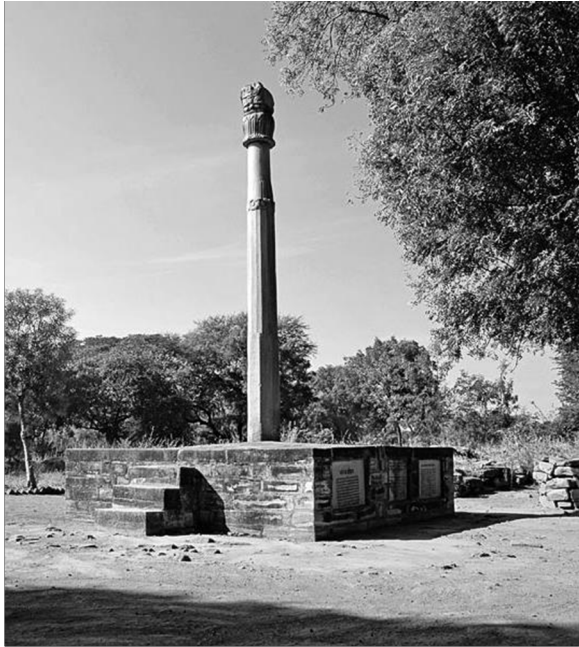
## Bhagavat Culture

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Bhagavat, often pronounced Bahg-what, refers to a culture that is centered on the Supreme Lord, Bhagavat Krishna. There are various forms of the word Bhagavat, depending on how it's used in a sentence. However, "Bhagavat" is the root of all these forms.

*Bhagavad Gita* (Song of the Lord) is the philosophical core of the culture. Roughly three-quarters of a billion people around the world, mainly in India, follow various forms of it, making it the world's third largest religious culture.

According to tradition, it began 5000 years ago when Krishna and other sages reformed the much older Vedic or Indo-European religion.



Inscription on the Heliodorus Pillar (110 BCE): “This pillar of Bhagavat Krishna, the God of gods, was constructed here by Heliodora, Greek ambassador to northeast India.”

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## Dharma & Bhakti

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**Dharma** means duty or responsibility. It's sometimes awkwardly translated as religion. More accurate would be a body of principles that govern the duties of individuals, families, and society.

**Bhakti** means attachment, love, or devotion. To most followers of the Bhagavat culture it means service to Krishna with loving devotion. Pure bhakti means complete absorption in love for Krishna, untainted or undistracted by worldly attachments.



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## Karma

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Literally, **karma** means work. In the modern vernacular, karma means the good or bad reactions to one's acts. However, this isn't an adequate understanding.

As work, karma produces results like money or an agricultural harvest. Along with those results it also causes good or bad reactions.

For example, one may work earnestly as a farmer, tilling the fields and slaughtering animals for the benefit of one's family and community. However, one may then suffer bad reactions from killing insects in the fields and animals for consumption.

Broadly speaking, karma means action, which implies all of one's actions in life. However, rather than just good or bad actions committed in social interactions, in the *Gita*, karma principally applies to one's occupation.

The *Gita* discusses karma, the results of karma (money or produce), and liberation from the bad reactions, or suffering, that one's karma produces.

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## Samkhya

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The word “Samkhya” means rational or mathematical analysis. However, its meaning within the context of the ancient culture corresponds roughly to the modern meaning of the word “science.”

Sometimes, Samkhya is called a philosophical system. However, it is in fact a system of science that’s more or less as complete as modern science with its own perspective on cosmology, creation, the elements of Nature, evolution, sociology, psychology, epistemology, law, ecology, morality, and much more.

Thus, the Samkhya perspectives were a vast and important part of ancient Indo-European or Vedic culture.

The topics below entitled “Soul,” “Creation” “Senses & Mind,” and “Discernment” summarize parts of Samkhya doctrine.

Here in the *Gita*, many of the ideas that Krishna discusses with Arjuna are framed within Samkhya concepts.

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## Soul

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Krishna reiterates the primeval teaching that all living beings are souls. The eternal soul is distinct from the temporary body and mind. And the constitution of the soul is to connect with the Supreme. That connection is the function of yoga.

The soul's misidentification with the body-mind is often called false ego. This mistaken identity, thinking oneself to be man, woman, black, white, is the primary cause of bondage to the world. It's the source of suffering.

The identity of the soul is lover of Krishna, which implies that one serves Krishna. In this case, service means the active exchange of love. As a lover serves the beloved with various gifts and attentions or as people express love for their families by maintaining and nurturing them, so Krishna's followers practice active love for Him through service. And that is called bhakti.

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## Creation

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Krishna's Creation, or His Nature, in its original form is one of His energies. Prior to the creative act it contains all the raw elements. These elements unfurl from subtle to gross. In other words, elements like false identity, intelligence, and mind come first and later come fire, water, and earth. This process, which is part of the Samkhya doctrine, is explained more elaborately in the *Bhagavat Purana*.

As creation unfolds, the myriad forms and indeed the panorama of color, shape, emotion, behavior, universal realms, gods, and everything else are influenced by Creation's attributes of **goodness**, **passion**, and **ignorance**. These three interact something like the three primary colors—yellow, red, and blue—to create unlimited variety.

Krishna refers to these three attributes throughout and discusses their influence on humans in chapters 14, 17, and 18.

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## Senses & Mind

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Compared to common modern usage, some terms have slightly different meanings in Samkhya.

**Senses:** Krishna often refers to the senses. There are ten: The knowledge senses are hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell. The action senses, or organs of action, are the tongue, hands, legs, excretory organs, and sexual organs.

**Sense Objects:** The objects of the knowledge senses are five: sound, tactile feeling, form or color, taste, and odor. Throughout the early part of the *Gita*, Krishna discusses the attraction that the senses have for their corresponding objects and how that creates a bondage to this ephemeral world.

**Mind:** In the *Gita*, mind is defined differently than the modern mind. Here the mind's primary function is mechanical—that is, facilitating the senses, particularly in connecting with pleasurable objects and rejecting undesirable ones.

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## Discernment

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Sometimes called intelligence or a component of intelligence, one's ability to discern can control the mind, which in turn gains control of the senses.

Krishna teaches that yoga practice strengthens the power to discern.

Through yoga one learns to discern spirit from matter, reality from illusion. As one learns through practice, one gains knowledge of the soul and the Supreme Soul. That knowledge guides one's discernment and enables it to control the mind, directing it away from the sense objects and toward the Supreme.

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## Brahman and Brahmaa

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**Brahman** is the impersonal aspect of Bhagavat Krishna. It's everything in Creation, including the collection of all souls and the energies that comprise the physical and subtle aspects of Creation.

An analogy is given of the sun and its rays: Bhagavat is the sun, and the rays are Brahman. In one sense, the energy, or the light and heat of the sun rays, are not much different from the source, but in reality, there is a difference between the energetic source and the energy.

Mentioned in the *Bhagavat Purana* are three aspects of God: Bhagavat is the highest. He's the Supreme Person. The next is his personal presence as the Supreme Soul, sometimes called Supersoul, in the hearts of all. The third aspect is Brahman, the supreme collection of all things, spiritual and material.

In the text, Krishna refers to Brahman several times, and in the eighth chapter He covers it more thoroughly.

**Brahmaa** is distinct from Brahman. The Supreme creates Brahmaa, who is the first being in Creation and the ultimate engineer. Using the creative elements, he assembles Creation by meditating on Krishna. A detailed description of this is given in the *Bhagavat Purana*.

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## Bhagavad Gita Overview

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*Bhagavad Gita* (Song of Bhagavat) is part of the great epic *Maha-bharata*, which culminates in a battle that lasts 18 days.

The sage Sanjay narrates, or rather sings, the divine song to his king, Dhrita-rashtra.

In the first chapter, among the warriors on the battlefield are Arjuna, a prince and renowned archer, and Krishna, the driver of his chariot. Arjuna expresses to Krishna his extraordinary grief at the prospect of participating in the war.

Although playing the role of charioteer, Krishna is Bhagavat, God. He's the Supreme Person, beyond any other concept or representation of God.

From the second chapter until the end, Krishna explains His teachings to His friend and disciple Arjuna. Most of what He imparts is based on the knowledge contained in the ancient *Upanisads*, yoga doctrine, and Samkhya.

The *Gita* contains 700 verses in 18 chapters, each of which is entitled with a type of yoga, which means to connect with the Supreme.

Practicing Krishna's instructions liberates one from illusion, characterized by the suffering of the world, and connects one to reality, the Supreme, at which point one experiences the highest enjoyment and divine love.



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## Chapter One

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### Yoga of Despair

#### Summary

The dramatic scene is being set. We're on the battlefield. First, we witness Arjuna's evil opponent, Dur-yodhan, going to his guru to ensure the battle preparations are in order.

We're introduced to the principal warriors and exposed to the pre-battle tumult.

The focus shifts to Arjuna, who asks Krishna, his driver, to put his chariot between the two armies. Seeing his relatives arrayed there, Arjuna loses all motivation to fight.

He argues that it would be against dharma to kill his friends and relatives. His point about dharma is significant, and Krishna refers to it many times in the chapters that follow.

## Text

Dhrita-rashtra said: Sanjay, what did my sons and Pandu's sons do after assembling with their armies at the place of dharma, Kuru-kshetra?

Sanjay said: After observing the army of Pandu's sons arranged in military formation, your son King Dur-yodhan went to his military professor and said:

“Master, see the great army of the sons of Pandu, so capably arranged by the son of Drupad, who became expert under your tutelage. In their army are many heroic bowmen equal to Bhima and Arjuna—great fighters like Yuyudhan, Virat and Drupad. There are also the great chariot fighters Dhrishta-ketu, Cekitana, Kasi-raj, Puru-jit, Kunti-bhoj, Saibya, mighty Yudha-manyu, valiant Uttamauij, the son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi.

“But Professor Drona, take note of our own distinguished men. I call to your attention the commanders of my army: Your Lordship, Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, Asva-tthama, Vikarna, who's always victorious, and the son of Soma-datta. And many other heroes are prepared to give up their lives for my sake. They have various missiles and handheld weapons, and are all experienced in military science.

“Our forces are unlimited, being protected by Grandfather Bhishma, whereas theirs, guarded by Bhima, are limited. Now all of you respected leaders!”

He called out to his captains and generals: “Give protection to Grandfather Bhishma according to your stations at the strategic points of the phalanx.”

At that point Grandfather Bhishma, the wise elder of the Kurus, blew his conch shell powerfully, making a sound like the roar of a lion and giving Dur-yodhan joy. Thereupon, conchs, timpani, cymbals, drums, and horns all suddenly sounded, and the combined noise was tumultuous.

Then, standing on a grand chariot yoked with white horses, Krishna and Arjuna sounded their divine conch shells. Hrishi-kesh [Krishna] blew His conch shell called Pancha-janya; Arjuna blew his, the Deva-datta; and wolf-bellied Bhima, performer of herculean tasks, blew his grand conch named Paundra.

King Yudhi-shthir, who was the son of Kunti, blew his conch, Ananta-vijay; Nakula and Saha-dev blew Sughosh and Mani-pushpak. The exceptional archer, King of Kasi, the great chariot fighter Sikhandi, Dhrishta-dyumna, Virat, the invincible Satyaki, Drupad, the sons of Draupadi, and the powerful son of Subhadra—together, all blew their respective conch shells.

The sound shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhrita-rashtra, and the tumult caused the sky and the earth to reverberate.

Pandu’s son, Arjuna, whose chariot bore a flag with the symbol of Hanuman, looked out at the arrayed

armies of Dhritarashtra's sons, raised his bow, and prepared to shoot. He said: "Krishna, put my chariot between the two armies so that I can see all those who are lusty for battle, and whom I must encounter in this great conflict. I want to see those who have come here to fight, eager to please the evil-minded Duryodhan."

Krishna placed that superlative chariot in the middle of the two armies. Facing Bhishma, Drona, and all the other rulers of the world, He said, "Arjuna, look at all the Kurus assembled here."

There in the middle of the two armies Arjuna saw fathers, grandfathers, gurus, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law, and intimate companions. While contemplating all these relatives, he became overwhelmed with deep compassion and grief.

He said, "Krishna, seeing my own people gathered and eager to fight, my limbs are numb and my mouth is dry. My body's trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow Gandiva is falling from my hand, and my skin is burning. I can't stand here; my mind is reeling. I see bad omens, Krishna, and terrible results.

"I don't see any benefit in slaying my own kinsmen in this battle, Krishna. I don't want victory, kingdom, or happiness.

"Govinda, we desire kingdom and happiness to share them with family and friends. Now those people are arrayed here on the battlefield ready to give up their

lives and wealth. So, what use is that kingdom and happiness? Or even life itself? My gurus, fathers, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other relatives are here. I don't want to kill them, even though they want to kill me. I'm not prepared to fight with them, even for dominion over all three levels of Creation, let alone the earth. What joy would we derive from killing the sons of Dhrita-rashtra?

“Sin would befall us if we kill the aggressors. We're not justified slaying Dhrita-rashtra's sons and our other relatives. Indeed, if we were to kill our family, how could we ever be happy, Krishna? Although these men, whose thinking has been clouded by greed, see no wrong in wiping out a dynasty or harming friends, how can we, who see the crime in destroying a family, participate in this sin?

“With the dissolution of a dynasty, the eternal family dharma is lost, and any family survivors are left unprincipled and overcome with chaos. With the loss of principles, the women of the family become irresponsible. Krishna, when women are undiscerning, their children become no better than degenerates.

“Such offspring guide everything to hell. And then not only is the dynasty destroyed, but those who have caused its annihilation are also ruined. Being unprincipled and irresponsible, the degenerates cease

offering rice and water to the venerable ancestors, thus causing harm to the ancients.

“Because of the evil of those who have destroyed the dynasty and the subsequent rise of irresponsible degenerates, the smooth functioning of society is ruined, and the natural human occupations are in disarray. Responsible occupations depend on principled families, Krishna. Thus, when the family dharma has been lost, people are living in hell. All of this is according to the ancient wisdom.

“Ah! We’re intent on committing a great sin. Driven by greed for royal pleasure, we’re prepared to destroy our own dynasty. Better for me if Dhritarashtra’s sons, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield.”

Sanjay said: Arjuna then cast aside his bow and arrows, and sank down on the chariot seat, his mind overwhelmed with grief.

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## Chapter Two

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### Yoga of Analysis

#### Summary

Krishna chastises His warrior friend for his weakness. Arjuna admits that he's confused about dharma, so he asks to be Krishna's disciple. The rest of the Gita is Krishna's teaching to him.

This long chapter is divided into two topics: Samkhya and buddhi yoga.

In the Samkhya part, Krishna establishes that all beings are soul, not the body. He says that the soul doesn't die. Thus, He urges Arjuna to fight, because he will not actually kill anyone. And He tells Arjuna that his nature as a soldier will compel him to fight. This concept that all humans have an occupation according to their psycho-physical nature is also part of Samkhya.

In the buddhi yoga section, Krishna explains that, as soul, one must detach the senses from their attraction to the sense objects. He indicates that this is done by working without attachment to the results of the work. Offering those results in sacrifice to the Supreme and directing the mind toward the soul are the ways to turn the mind away from the intense magnetism of the sense objects.

## Text

Sanjay said: Krishna addressed tearful Arjuna who was overcome by compassion and grief:

Bhagavat Krishna said: Where did this weakness come from at a time of such conflict? It's not befitting an honorable man, nor does it lead to celestial realms. You'll be disgraced, Arjuna. Don't be a coward; it's inappropriate for you. You're a tormentor of your enemies. Stand up, cousin! And give up this faintheartedness!

Arjuna said: How am I to fight against Bhishma, my venerable grandfather, and Drona, my respected guru? Rather than killing such revered souls, it would be better for me to give up everything and just become a beggar. By slaying them, although they've become greedy, their blood would taint any pleasure I might enjoy. I don't know which is better, vanquishing them or being vanquished. If I kill them, along with the sons of Dhrita-rashtra, I wouldn't want to live.

I'm overcome with weakness and depression, and I'm confused about my dharma. Krishna, I'm your disciple. Tell me what to do. I offer myself to You. I can't see anything that might dispel this grief that's drying up my senses—not even if I were to have an unchallenged kingdom on earth or dominion over the celestial beings.



Sanjay said to his king: Arjuna told Govinda, “I won’t fight!” And he fell silent. Krishna smiled and in the middle of the two armies spoke to the depressed Arjuna.

Bhagavat Krishna said: You’re grieving for something not worthy of grief, but you speak words of wisdom about dharma. Those who are truly learned lament for neither the living nor the dead. Arjuna, never have I not existed. And it’s the same with you and all these kings. We’re all eternal souls, and we’ll never cease to be. As the soul passes through childhood, youth, and old age, so does that same conscious being, same soul, pass into another body. This doesn’t bewilder the wise, discerning person.

Arjuna, when the senses have contact with external stimuli, you experience cold, heat, happiness, and suffering. But all these come and go. They’re impermanent, and you must tolerate them. Indeed, the discerning person who’s unaffected by the contact of the senses with the world and is steady in the face of suffering and happiness is effectively liberated.

That which is impermanent, like sense contact, isn’t real; the permanent, the soul, is real. These two concepts have been realized by the seers of the truth. Know that the consciousness that pervades the body is indestructible. No one can destroy the soul. The immortal soul, which is imperishable and

immeasurable, inhabits a temporary, mortal body. Therefore fight, Arjuna!

One who considers the soul to be a slayer or one who thinks it's slain fails to understand. It doesn't kill, and it never dies. The soul is unborn, eternal, everlasting, and primeval. Thus, it's not slain when the body is slain. How can someone kill, if he or she knows that the soul is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and ever present? Whom does that person kill, Arjuna?

After discarding worn-out clothes, a person acquires new ones. Like this the soul abandons one body in exchange for a new one. Weapons don't pierce the soul. Fire doesn't burn it. Water doesn't moisten it. And the wind doesn't dry it up. This individual soul can't be pierced, burned, wetted, or withered. It's everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable, and primeval. The soul is invisible, inconceivable, and immutable. Knowing this, your grief isn't worthwhile.

But even if you think of the self as taking birth and dying, you shouldn't grieve for it. For one who's taken birth, death is certain, and for one who's died, rebirth is certain. Therefore, since this process is inevitable, you shouldn't grieve. In the beginning, living beings aren't yet manifest, and then in the interim they are. Finally, at the end they're again unmanifested. So, what's lamentable about that?

Some see the self as something wonderful; others declare it to be so, and yet others hear of its wonder. But even having heard of it, no one truly knows it. An eternally indestructible soul dwells within the body of all, Arjuna. Therefore, you shouldn't grieve for any living being.

Moreover, regarding your dharma, your responsibility, you shouldn't waver. For a warrior, nothing is superior to a battle fought according to the principles of dharma. When a warrior encounters such a fight, he's happy that the doors of the celestial realm have opened for him. Now, if you don't undertake this battle, which is in accordance with dharma, you'll incur sin.

Also, people will speak of your infamy, and for one who's been honored, that's worse than death. The great chariot warriors will think that you've retreated from battle out of fear. And your stature will diminish in the eyes of those who previously held you in high esteem. Your enemies will use vile language to describe you. What could be greater misery than that?

Consider this, Arjuna: Either you'll die and thus reach the celestial realm, or you'll conquer and enjoy the earth. So, rise up and act with firm resolve. Fight! Fight for the sake of fighting without considering happiness, suffering, gain, loss, victory, or defeat. Doing that, you'll not incur sin.

What I've explained thus far has been according to the philosophy of analysis, Samkhya. Now I'll present the yoga of discernment, buddhi yoga, through which you'll become free from the bondage of karma. By just a small undertaking of this teaching, this dharma, you'll not lose anything, and you'll be protected from great danger.

Those who are determined fix their power of discernment in a single direction, Arjuna. But the discernment of the irresolute is many-branched and endlessly out of control.

The ignorant are enchanted by flowery language. They're stuck in traditional science [the *Vedas*] and declare that there's nothing else. They carry out formulas to gain power, enjoyment, and a higher birth. Thus, distracted by a myriad of worldly goals, their minds are carried away such that their discernment can't become steadfast.

The *Vedas* are concerned with material attributes. But you should be free from them, Arjuna, beyond duality, fixed in the truth, beyond acquisition and protection, and focused on the self. A great reservoir serves the purposes of a small well. In the same way, one who knows the Supreme grasps the essence of the *Vedas* [science].

Regarding karma, you have a right to work. But you have no rights to results of that work. And you aren't the cause of the results. So, you shouldn't be attached

to them. But don't resort to inaction. So, work while being fixed in yoga, unattached, and unchanged in success or failure. Such indifference is yoga.

Ordinary work is far inferior to the yoga of discernment, Arjuna. Seek shelter in discernment, because those who are attached to the results of their work are misers. One who practices the yoga of discernment is above good and bad acts. So, practice yoga; it's the excellence within work.

Indeed, the wise, practicing the yoga of discernment and offering the results of their work in sacrifice, thus become free from the bonds of birth and death, and go to a place beyond suffering.

When one's power of discernment pierces the chaos of delusion, then one becomes indifferent to the *Vedas*—that is, the science and wisdom of the world. When you're unaffected by the onslaught of materialistic science and religion and your discernment is perfect, you've attained yoga.

Arjuna said: How would You describe the person whose mind is steady, and has achieved perfect discernment, Krishna? What are his or her characteristics: how might he or she speak, sit, and move?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, one's discernment is steady when one gives up desires arising from the impulsive mind and turns the mind inward to the self. One is considered wise and steady in discernment

when unaffected by misery, free from the desire for pleasure, and devoid of passion, fear, and anger.

One is steadfast in one's discernment when one is devoid of myriad desires and neither loves good fortune nor hates misfortune. And when one withdraws the senses from their objects like a turtle draws in its limbs, one's discernment is fixed.

Note that a person may abstain from the sense objects while still desiring contact, but one who connects with the Supreme, experiencing a higher taste, can give up that desire. Indeed, the senses are so turbulent that they can forcibly distract the mind of even a wise person, although he or she may be attempting to control them. So, while restraining them, situate yourself in yoga that's fixed on Me. Controlling them in that way, your discernment becomes fixed.

When a person dwells on the sense objects, he or she develops an attachment for them. From attachment lust develops; from lust anger. And with anger comes loss of clarity; from that, loss of good sense; from that, one's power of discernment is ruined, and with no discernment, no power to control the mind and senses, one is destroyed.

However, one may indeed contact the sense objects and yet remain free from lust and anger by bringing the mind under the control of the self. Such a person achieves clarity. Through such clarity and peace, one's

suffering ceases. And with a satisfied mind one's discernment quickly becomes steady.

But there's no power of discernment for one who isn't practicing buddhi yoga, which controls the mind; without a controlled mind, there's no peace. And how can there be happiness without peace? When the wandering senses guide the mind, it in turn steals away discernment like the wind overcomes a sailing ship and carries it away on the waters.

Thus, Arjuna, one who restrains the senses from their objects has fixed discernment.

What's night for most beings is the time of awakening for the person of restraint, and when the others are awake it's night for that wise seer.

A person achieves peace through being undisturbed by the incessant flow of desires that enter like rivers rushing into an ocean that's unmoved by them. But one who's driven to satisfy those desires has no respite. A person achieves peace by giving up all desire for sense indulgence, living without longing, and being free from proprietorship and false identification with the body.

All this describes one situated in the divine state. After attaining it one is no longer deluded. And fixed in this state at the time of death, he or she reaches Brahman nirvana, or supreme liberation.

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## Chapter Three

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### Yoga of Work

#### Summary

Here, Krishna connects the yoga of work (karma yoga) with the buddhi yoga of the previous chapter.

He asserts that everyone must work. He says that one should offer the results of that work in sacrifice to Vishnu. Indeed, He explains that sacrifice is part of a natural cycle: A person works. Results come from the work. Those results are offered to the gods. Then, when one again works, abundant results come. The cycle continues.

So, one who works without attachment to the results and offers them to the Supreme turns the mind away from the attachment to sense objects and directs it toward the Supreme. That's karma yoga, which acts in concert with buddhi yoga, wherein the power of discernment is used to direct the mind toward the soul and away from the worldly objects.

Thus, work and discernment, or intelligence, act together.



## Text

If You think that using one's discernment is better than working or acting, Krishna, then why are You pushing me toward this atrocious act? Your very words are confusing my attempts to discern. Tell me decisively which will be most beneficial for me.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, I explained previously that there are two parts to being fixed in discernment: the yoga of knowledge of the soul according to Samkhya and the yoga of work (karma yoga) for the buddhi yogis. By avoiding work, a person doesn't gain freedom from the suffering caused by work. And by rejecting contact with the sense objects one doesn't achieve perfect discernment.

Everyone is forced to act, sometimes even unwillingly according to the attributes he or she has acquired from Nature; thus, no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.

One who controls the working senses while still thinking about the sense objects is self-deluded and acts in vain. But a detached person who undertakes to use the mind to control all the senses and engages the working senses in karma yoga is superior.

Do your duty. Work is certainly better than doing nothing. You can't even maintain your body without doing something. Work should be done for sacrifice to Vishnu. Otherwise, work causes bondage to good and

bad reactions. Therefore, Arjuna, do your work to perform sacrifice, and keep free from attachment.

Long ago Brahmaa created all beings along with sacrifice and said: “You will flourish through sacrifice, which is the wish-fulfilling cow that creates prosperity. The gods of universal affairs, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you, and thus, by cooperation between humans and gods, prosperity will reign for all. Indeed, the gods, being satisfied by sacrifice, will give you all the necessities of life. But one who enjoys these gifts without offering them to the gods in return is a thief.”

The virtuous are free from wrong-doing, because they enjoy the remainder of that which is first offered in sacrifice. But the malevolent ingest suffering when they consume for their own pleasure.

All living beings subsist on food, which is produced from rain. The rains come about through performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice takes place after doing work. Work is prescribed by the *Vedas*, and the *Vedas* arise from Brahman. Thus, the all-pervading, imperishable Brahman is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice.

Arjuna, one who doesn't participate in this cycle of sacrifice presented here lives an irresponsible, decadent life of sense indulgence, a life in vain.

But one who takes pleasure in the soul, whose life is one of self-realization, and who's satisfied in the soul has no particular need to work. Such a person has no

selfish motive, and he or she isn't dependent on any other living being. But at the same time, he or she doesn't have any reason not to work.

Therefore, without being attached to the results, one should work as a matter of duty, for by doing so one attains the Supreme. Kings like Janak attained perfection through work. So, you should act out of consideration for the welfare of others.

Whatever work a great person does, common people follow. And whatever standards one sets by exemplary acts, the world pursues. Arjuna, there's no duty prescribed for Me anywhere in the three realms of Creation, and I have no need to work to obtain anything. Nevertheless, I work. Indeed, if I were reluctant to work, Arjuna, people would all follow My lead. All these realms of Creation would fall into ruin if I didn't. I would thus be the cause of a dissolute population, which would destroy all creatures.

As the ignorant work with attachment to the results, the learned also work, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path. A wise person shouldn't upset the ignorant whose lack of discernment causes them to be attached the results of their work. He or she should set an example by practicing karma yoga and encourage them to enjoy their work.

The soul is confused by the influence of false ego, which thinks, "I'm the doer," when in fact all work is

carried out by the interaction of the forces of Nature. So, one who knows the truth about work and Nature, Arjuna, thinks of all work as just the interaction of those forces. Thus, he or she isn't attached to the results of work.

Those of little knowledge are bewildered by the forces of Nature and are transfixed by their interplay and the work produced. But the wise shouldn't unsettle such foolish people.

So, handing over all your work to Me, with your power of discernment fixed on the soul, being free from proprietorship and worldly desire, give up your lethargy and fight!

People who faithfully and without envy do their duties according to My teachings become free from bondage caused by the reactions to work. But understand that the envious, who disregard these teachings, are deluded by their so-called knowledge. They lack discernment, and they're lost in the world of suffering.

Everyone acts according to his or her own nature, even one who's learned. Since all things are under the control of Nature, what does repression accomplish? One shouldn't come under the control of attachment and aversion, which are embedded in each interaction between a sense and its object. They're stumbling blocks on the path of yoga.

It's better to act according to one's personal dharma even if imperfectly done, rather than another's dharma followed perfectly. Better is death in pursuit of one's own dharma, because another's dharma brings even greater danger.

Arjuna said: Krishna, what impels one to malevolent acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?

Bhagavat Krishna said: It's lust, born of contact with Nature's attribute of passion and then transformed into anger. Understand that lust is the all-devouring malevolent enemy of this world.

As fire is covered by smoke, a mirror by dust, and an embryo by the womb, one's ability to discern is covered by various degrees of lust. Thus, even the knowledge of the wise becomes covered with that eternal enemy, the insatiable fire of lust.

Lust infects the senses, mind, and ability to discern. It's through these that it bewilders the embodied soul, covering his or her knowledge. Therefore, Arjuna, by controlling the senses, slay this malevolence, this destroyer of knowledge and discernment.

The senses are superior to matter; mind is higher than the senses; the ability to discern is higher still than the mind; and the soul is even higher than discernment. Thus, knowing that the soul is even beyond the faculty of discernment, fix the mind on the soul using the will

power—that is, the power of discernment, and conquer that indomitable enemy lust.

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## Chapter Four

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### Yoga of Knowledge

#### Summary

Krishna discusses knowledge and sacrifice, or karma yoga. Knowledge guides one's ability to discern between matter and spirit, reality and illusion. And knowledge of Krishna is the highest. The goal is to direct one's discernment toward Him—that is, to choose Krishna over *maya* or illusion.

Sacrifice, or giving up the attachment to the results of work, is the means whereby one practices karma yoga. And by so practicing, one not only enjoys liberation from suffering, but also one acquires practical knowledge.

The two, knowledge and yoga, acting together, cut through ignorance and bring one to supreme peace. Thus, Krishna urges Arjuna to fight—that is, to act according to his nature—and so perform karma yoga while being guided by knowledge.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: I instructed this imperishable yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and he taught it to Manu, the father of humankind, and Manu in turn imparted it to King Ikshvaku. This yoga science was thus received and transmitted through succession, and the saintly kings of past ages understood it in that way. But over time the succession was broken, and it has been lost. Because you're my friend and devotee, I'm teaching you the same ancient yoga science, the ultimate secret.

Arjuna said: But the sun-god, Vivasvan, was born before You were. How am I to understand that in the beginning You instructed it to him as you say?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Through many births both you and I have passed. I can remember them, but you can't, Arjuna. Although I'm unborn, imperishable, and the Lord of all beings, I appear in the world in My spiritual form, unaffected by the illusion that emanates from Me. Any time there's a decline in dharma, Arjuna, and a predominant rise of adharma—at that time I descend. To deliver the righteous and annihilate the evil doers, as well as to reestablish dharma, I appear in each epoch.

One who knows the true nature of My divine appearance and work doesn't, upon leaving the body, take birth again, but he or she comes to Me, Arjuna.



Having become freed from lust, fear, and anger, being absorbed in Me, and relying on Me, many have become purified by the practice of acquiring knowledge, and have thus attained love for Me. In whatever way people turn to Me, I reciprocate with them accordingly. Everyone follows My path, Arjuna.

People sacrifice to the gods when they desire worldly success in their work. In this way, they quickly achieve it. I created four divisions of society according to the three attributes of Creation and the work associated with those attributes. And although I made this system, know also that, being eternal and above it, I don't make it directly.

There's no work that affects Me, and I don't aspire for the results of work. One who understands this truth about Me doesn't become bound by the good and bad reactions to work. The liberated souls in ancient times worked according to my example. Therefore, following in their footsteps, work.

Even the wise are confused about determining what is work and non-work. Now I'll explain to you what work is, knowing which you'll be liberated from misfortune. The intricacies of work are hard to understand. Thus, one should learn to distinguish between work, forbidden work, and non-work. One who sees non-work in work and work in non-work is intelligent and possesses true discernment. He's a yogi, although doing work.

A wise, discerning person puts aside lust as a motive for all his or her endeavors, and thus the reactions to work are burned up in the fire of knowledge. When one gives up attachment to the results of work, being satisfied and independent, he or she doesn't do anything, although working. And one has no bad reaction when he or she works to maintain only the necessities of life, being without lust for the result, controlling the mind and discernment, and giving up the sense of proprietorship over his or her possessions.

Although working, a person isn't bound by reactions to work when he or she is satisfied with the consequences, non-envious, free from duality, and steady in success and failure. The reactions to work dissolve completely when one works solely for sacrifice, being detached from the sense objects and having the power to discern that's reinforced by knowledge. One who's completely immersed in work as a sacrifice to Brahman goes to Brahman, because the act of sacrificing is Brahman. The offering is Brahman. And it's Brahman who sacrifices into the fire of Brahman.

Some yogis offer sacrifice to the gods, and some sacrifice into the fire of the Supreme. Some offer the senses, hearing, and so forth, into the fire of self-restraint. And some sacrifice the sense objects, like sound and so on, into the fire of the senses. Some offer the workings of all the senses and the bodily airs into

the fire of the yoga of mind control, which is kindled by knowledge.

Some ascetics with strict vows sacrifice by offering possessions, austerity, mystic yoga, or study of the *Vedas*. Some, having controlled eating, and while being absorbed in breath control, offer inhalation into exhalation, exhalation into inhalation, and in trance stop the two.

All those who are learned in sacrifice, whose bad reactions have been destroyed through sacrifice, enjoy the ambrosia of the results of their sacrifice and go to the eternal Supreme. Arjuna, this world and its enjoyments aren't meant for those who don't sacrifice, and what to speak of the next world.

All these sacrifices are the pinnacle of the *Vedas*. Know that they're born of work, and thus knowing you'll become liberated. Arjuna, the sacrifice performed in knowledge is better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. All work culminates in knowledge.

With reverence serve the wise, who have realized this knowledge. Inquire from them, and they'll teach you. After obtaining such practical knowledge, you'll never again fall into illusion, Arjuna. For by this knowledge you'll see all beings within Me, the Supreme Soul.

Even if you're the greatest miscreant of all, you'll cross over a sea of vice with the boat of this knowledge.

As a blazing fire turns wood to ashes, Arjuna, the fire of knowledge burns to ashes the reactions to work. There's nothing as great a purifier as this knowledge. In time, one who's accomplished in yoga enjoys this knowledge within him or herself.

The faithful person, being dedicated to the practice of karma yoga and controlling the senses, acquires knowledge. By thus achieving realized knowledge, he or she quickly attains supreme peace.

But the ignorant and faithless person who doubts these teachings is lost. For the doubting soul, there's happiness neither in this world nor in the next.

Work doesn't bind one who practices karma yoga, whose doubts have been severed by the sword of knowledge, and who is self-situated, Arjuna. Therefore, with the sword of knowledge cut the doubts born of ignorance out of your heart. Armed with yoga, stand and fight!

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## Chapter Five

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### Yoga of Detachment

#### Summary

Samkhya involves the pursuit of knowledge that discerns between the sense objects and the Supreme. One who forcefully renounces the sense objects in pursuit of that knowledge is on the path of Samkhya.

Karma yoga is the sacrifice of the results of work to the Supreme. One who renounces those results through the process of karma yoga acquires practical knowledge that discerns between the sense objects and the Supreme.

Thus, the two have the same goal. Yet Samkhya is more difficult in that it requires renunciation of work that connects one to the sense objects, especially renunciation of family life and all attendant duties.

The karma yogi more easily achieves liberation from the bond that the senses have with the sense objects. He or she sees all souls equally and knows Krishna to be the supreme enjoyer, controller, and friend.

## Text

Arjuna said: First You extol the renunciation of work, and then again You praise yoga, Krishna. Kindly tell me for certain which is more beneficial?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Both renunciation and karma yoga lead to liberation. But of the two, karma yoga is better than renunciation of work. A renunciant is easily liberated from worldly bondage when he or she neither hates nor desires and is tolerant of dualities like pain and pleasure.

The foolish, not the wise, speak of karma yoga and Samkhya as different. Rather, a person who practices one of them correctly achieves the results of both. Both Samkhya and yoga take one to the same place. Thus, one who sees them as equal knows things as they are.

Arjuna, trying to renounce without doing yoga is difficult. The wise person who does yoga achieves the Supreme quickly. The pure soul who works in yoga, controls the mind and senses, and is dear to everyone is untainted by his or her work.

The wise yogi contemplates within him or herself that the soul is doing nothing, although the body is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting, acquiring, and opening and closing the eyes. He or she knows that it's merely the senses interacting with their objects.

One who works without attachment and surrenders the results to the Supreme is untainted by bad reactions just as a lotus leaf is untouched by water. Yogis, giving up attachment, work using the body, mind, discernment, and senses just for purification. The yoga practitioner, having given up the results of work, attains the highest peace. One who doesn't practice yoga, being greedy for the results, is bound to the good and bad reactions of work.

When the embodied soul renounces all work with the mind, he or she sits happily as the ruler of a city with nine gates [the body], neither working nor causing work to be done. That ruler doesn't invent work itself and he or she doesn't do the work that the people are doing. Also, he or she doesn't connect the results with the work. Nature enacts all of this. And the detached ruler of the city doesn't receive the good or bad reactions to work. Knowledge is often clouded by ignorance, which bewilders people.

However, one's ignorance of the soul can be destroyed by knowledge, which, like the sun, reveals everything including the Supreme. At that time, when one's discernment, mind, faith, and devotion are immersed in the Supreme, then one's impurities are cleansed, and one isn't again reborn.

The wise by virtue of knowledge see with equal vision a learned and gentle priest, cow, elephant, dog, and dog-eater. Those whose minds are fixed in such

equal vision have conquered birth and death. They're situated in the Supreme, because they, like the Supreme, have equal vision and no impurities.

A person is situated in the Supreme when he or she doesn't rejoice upon achieving something pleasant or grieve at obtaining something unpleasant, has fixed discernment, is undeluded, and knows the soul's relation with the Supreme. Such a person is unattached to sense contacts, but rather, finds happiness within. He or she is absorbed in the Supreme through yoga and thus reaches unlimited pleasure.

An intelligent, discerning person doesn't enjoy the pleasures born of contact with the sense objects, which are the source of suffering and have a beginning and an end. Before death if a yogi manages to tolerate the agitation that arises from lust and anger, he or she is a happy person indeed.

The yogi who finds happiness, enjoyment, and light within, being absorbed in the Supreme, attains supreme liberation. Liberation in the Supreme is achieved by the sages that cut through duality, pursue realization of the soul, delight in the welfare of all beings, and are free from bad reactions.

Those devotees who are free from lust and anger, control the mind, and are knowers of the soul are assured of liberation in the Supreme.

Keeping out external sense contacts, fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, equalizing inhalation and



exhalation in the nose, controlling the senses, mind, and discernment, focusing on liberation, being free from lust, fear and anger—such a wise devotee is definitely liberated.

A person who knows Me to be the recipient of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all Creation, and the intimate friend of all living beings attains peace and relief from suffering.

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## Chapter Six

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### Yoga of Practice

#### Summary

Krishna states that a yogi is detached from the results of work and the desire to connect the senses with their objects. Also, a yogi is equipoised when encountering duality, like heat and cold, happiness, and distress, and he or she sees all souls equally.

Bhagavat describes a strict process of meditation on the Supreme while subduing the mind, the result of which is achieving Krishna and having an equal vision toward all.

Arjuna is concerned that the mind is too restless to control, but Krishna explains that it's possible to subdue it by yoga practice. And even if one doesn't achieve success in this life, one can pursue one's practice in the next.

He says the highest yogi is the one who offers service to Him.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: One who's unattached to the results of work and works out of duty is renounced and a yogi, not one who performs no sacrifice and accepts no responsibility.

Arjuna, know that what's called renunciation is the same as yoga. No one becomes a yogi without renouncing the desire for sense enjoyment. For the sage who desires to advance in yoga, work is the means. And for one who's elevated in yoga, cessation of worldly desire is the means. One is considered elevated in yoga when one is detached from the sense objects, the results of work, and all worldly desires.

One should uplift oneself with the mind, not allowing oneself to become degraded. The mind is one's friend, but it's also one's enemy. For one who's conquered the mind, it's a friend, but the unconquered mind is an enemy. One who conquers the mind is peaceful and focused on the Supreme Soul even while encountering happiness, distress, heat, cold, honor, and dishonor. One whose mind is placated by knowledge and discernment, whose senses are conquered, and who is concentrated on the Supreme is considered a yogi. He or she sees clods of earth, stones, and gold equally.

One is considered further advanced when one can discern equally among intimates, friends, enemies,

neutrals, mediators, the envious, relatives, the virtuous, and wrongdoers.

The yogi, being alone and secluded, should absorb him or herself in yoga, with controlled mind and body, and free from lust and possessions. In a sanctified place, first establishing a stable seat, neither too high nor too low, and then covering it with a cloth, antelope skin, and kusha grass, one should sit down firmly, fix the mind on one point, control the mind and senses, and practice yoga for self-purification. Holding the body, neck, and head erect, motionless, and steady; fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose; being self-satisfied and free from fear; abstaining from sex; controlling the mind; and thinking of Me, the yogi should sit, making Me the goal of life.

The yogi, constantly disciplining him or herself thus, with a subdued mind, attains My abode, the cessation of worldly existence.

Arjuna, a yogi eats neither too much nor too little and sleeps neither excessively nor insufficiently. One who's regulated in the habits of eating, sleeping, recreation, and work mitigates suffering by practicing yoga.

When one is fixed on the soul by controlling the mind and is free from lust and worldly desires, then one is a yoga practitioner. As a lamp in a windless place doesn't flicker, so the yogi with controlled mind remains steady when doing yoga to realize the soul.

When the mind is at rest, restrained by yoga practice, and one perceives the soul by controlling the mind, one is thus satisfied in the soul. That infinite happiness beyond the senses is obtained through the ability to discern. Once thus established, one doesn't deviate from the truth. Upon gaining this one considers that there's no greater acquisition. And so situated, one isn't disturbed by even the greatest suffering. Such disconnection from suffering is called yoga.

One should practice yoga with determination and unswerving faith, giving up without exception all lust born of mental concoction, and use the mind to control all the senses. Little by little in full conviction one should calm the senses by means of discernment, and focusing the mind on the soul, one should think of nothing else.

One must withdraw the flickering and unsteady mind wherever it goes and bring it back under the control of the soul. The yogi whose mind is quieted and whose passions are subdued attains the highest happiness, free from bad reactions and connected with the Supreme.

Thus, the self-controlled yogi, always absorbed in yoga, being free from bad reactions, easily contacts the Supreme, wherein he or she enjoys boundless happiness. The true yogi sees the Supreme Soul in all

beings and sees all beings in the Supreme Soul. One thus immersed in yoga has equal vision toward all.

To one who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me, I'm never lost, nor is he or she ever lost to Me. Such a yogi remains in Me in all circumstances, and with fixed discernment serves Me, situated in all beings.

The highest yogi is one who sees all other beings equal to him or herself whether in happiness or distress, Arjuna.

Arjuna said: Krishna, this yoga that You've characterized as impartiality or evenness appears impractical and unendurable to me, because the mind is restless and unsteady. It's fickle, turbulent, obstinate, and strong, Krishna, and to subdue it, I think, is as difficult as controlling the wind.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, it's undoubtedly difficult to curb the restless mind, but it's possible by practice and detachment. My opinion is that for one whose mind isn't subdued, yoga is difficult work. However, one who practices controlling the mind by appropriate means will be successful.

Arjuna said: Krishna, what happens to the faithful, yet undisciplined, person whose mind takes him or her away from yoga and who thus doesn't achieve success? Doesn't such a person who, with no foundation, being distracted from the path, divorced from both worldly and spiritual pursuits, just evaporate like a small cloud

that has drifted away from the principal cloud formation? This is my doubt, Krishna, and I ask You to dispel it completely. Indeed, no one else can do it.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, in neither this world nor the next is such a person lost. One who does good is never overcome by evil, My friend. The unsuccessful yogi, after seemingly endless years of enjoyment in the higher realms where the virtuous dwell, is born into a righteous or wealthy family.

Or he or she is born in a family of wise yogis, a birth which is rarer still. On taking such a birth he or she regains the ability to discern from the previous life and once again takes up yoga practice to achieve success, Arjuna.

Due to the practice in one's previous life, one is carried forward spontaneously. Being inquisitive about yoga, one surpasses even the *Vedas* [the worldly sciences]. And thus, when the yogi again practices with a controlled mind, cleansed of faults, he or she becomes perfected after many births and attains the supreme goal.

The yogi is superior to the ascetics, the learned, and the *karmis* [those who work for the results]. Therefore, Arjuna, be a yogi. And I consider that of all yogis, the one who surrenders to Me within him or herself, and faithfully offers loving service to Me is the greatest yoga practitioner.

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## Chapter Seven

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### Yoga of Knowledge and Discernment

#### Summary

Knowledge of Krishna guides one's discernment toward Him and away from His lower energy, which is comprised of the elements we see. His higher energy consists of the living beings, souls, which animate Creation.

He's the origin of it all, the creator, sustainer, and destroyer. A sense of His magnificence can be detected in His Creation as the essence in all things.

All states of being proceed from Him, but He isn't influenced by them. He's above them and those who understand that can surpass them.

Some, whom He categorizes in four groups, don't acknowledge Him. Those who seek Him are also of four types, and the one who knows that He is everything is the best.

Those who take shelter of Him, know all about Brahman, karma, the soul, Creation, and the enjoyer of sacrifice. And being immersed in Him, fixing their discernment on Him, they know Him even at death.



## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: Now hear, Arjuna, how with mind attached to Me, practicing yoga while being immersed in Me, you'll know Me completely, without a doubt. I'll now fully explain knowledge and discernment. After learning this, nothing further will remain to be known.

Out of thousands of people, someone may strive for liberation, and of thousands who've achieved liberation hardly one knows Me in truth.

My creative energy has eight components: earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, discernment, and false ego. Know it to be inferior. My other, higher potency is comprised of the living beings, Arjuna, by whom Creation is animated. Understand that these two are the fountainhead of all Creation. I'm the origin and the dissolution of this animated universe.

There's nothing higher than Me, Arjuna. I sustain all of Creation like pearls on a thread. Arjuna, I'm the taste of water, the light of the sun and moon, the mystical *om* in the Vedic mantras, the sound in the air, and virility in man. I'm the pure fragrance in the earth, the radiance in fire, the life of all beings, and the austerity of the ascetics.

Arjuna, know that I'm the primeval seed of all manifestations, the discernment of the intelligent, and the valor of the valiant. Of the strong I'm the strength

that's free from lust and obsession. And I'm sex desire that's in accordance with dharma, Arjuna.

Know that all states of being, whether influenced by goodness, passion, or ignorance, proceed from Me. I'm not in any of those states. They're within Me. Deluded by the states of being that are influenced by the three attributes, no one realizes that I'm eternally above those attributes. My divine potency, *maya*, comprised of the three attributes is difficult to surpass. But those who surrender to Me cross beyond it.

The evildoers who don't surrender to Me are of four types: the deluded, the lowest of humanity, those whose knowledge is stolen by *maya*, and those with an ungodly nature.

Arjuna, there are four categories of virtuous people who serve Me: those who are distressed, desirous of wealth, inquisitive, and wise seekers of liberation. Of these, the wise one who consistently practices bhakti yoga with a singular focus is the best. I'm extremely fond of that devotee and he or she of Me. All these are indeed exalted, but I consider that the one who has knowledge is like Me. Well situated in service to Me, he or she attains Me, the highest destination. After many births and deaths, that wise person surrenders to Me, thinking, "Krishna is everything." Such a great soul is very rare.

One whose knowledge has been carried away by various desires surrenders to a particular god and, impelled by his or her nature, practices the proper

rituals. Regardless of the god a person desires to faithfully worship, I fix his or her determination to do so. Endowed with that strong faith, he or she endeavors to worship the chosen deity and thus obtains a desired result that I indeed ordain. But the results that such a person of limited intelligence acquires are temporary. And those who worship such gods go to them, whereas My devotees come to Me.

The unintelligent, not knowing My higher nature, which is imperishable and unsurpassed, think that I was previously an impersonal, invisible energy from which I've assumed this form. But I don't reveal Myself to the deluded who are enveloped by My *maya*. Thus, they don't know that I am unborn and infallible.

I know the past, present, and future, Arjuna. I know everything about all beings, but no one knows Me. All beings are born into delusion, Arjuna, which arises from desire, hate, and the illusion of duality. But those whose bad reactions have come to an end and whose work is pure have become free from the illusion of duality, and they serve Me with determination.

Those who strive for liberation from old age and death by taking shelter of Me know all about Brahman, the metasoul,\* and work [karma]. Those who are

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\* I translate the Sanskrit prefix *adhi-* as *meta-*, meaning an abstraction like metatheory or metalanguage. Some use the word *principle* as in principle of the soul, creation, sacrifice, and the divine. In any case, Kṛṣṇa defines the *meta* words in chapter 8. They're used in Nirukta and the Upanishads wherein they express philosophical perspectives on the Vedas.

immersed in Me with a steadfast mind and know Me as metacreation, metadivine, and metasacrifice, with fixed discernment, know Me even at the time of death.

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## Chapter Eight

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### Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman

#### Summary

Krishna explains that Brahman is the supreme imperishable and has the same nature as the soul. Karma is the force that precipitates the bodies and minds of all beings in Creation. The Supreme Soul, seated in the heart of all, is the enjoyer of sacrifice.

In whatever manner one is thinking at death, one achieves a corresponding state of being; thus, one should always think of Krishna and work for Him. By practicing yoga, a yogi controls the mind and body, fixes the life air on the Supreme, and goes to Him at death.

All beings in the universe, from the lowest to highest, are subject to birth and death, but those who go to Krishna are never again born in this world. They go to the supreme abode.

Some yogis are elevated to the higher realms and must return to this world, but those who know Brahman are not forced to return. They go to the Supreme.

## Text

Arjuna said: Krishna, what is Brahman, what's metasoul, what comprises work [karma], what's metacreation, and what's meant by metadivine? Please explain this to me. How does metasacrifice reside in the body? And how does one with controlled mind and senses know You at the time of death?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Brahman is the supreme imperishable and metasoul defines the true nature of the living beings. Work [karma] is the force that fashions the worldly nature of each living being as it accepts one body after another. Metacreation refers to the perishable nature of Creation or of the created beings. Metadivine indicates the original Person. And, Arjuna, I am metasacrifice within the body.

One who remembers Me at the time of death, thus leaving the body, achieves My imperishable nature. Of this there's no doubt, Arjuna. In whatever way one is thinking at the time of death, one assumes a corresponding state of being in the next life. Thus, at every moment think of Me and fight. Fixing your mind and discernment on Me, you'll come to Me without a doubt.

Meditating on the beautiful Supreme Person by habitual practice of yoga with an undistracted mind, one goes to Him. One should always think of that ancient, omniscient Supreme Controller, smaller than

the smallest yet the maintainer of everything, inconceivable, luminous like the sun, and beyond the darkness of Creation.

The yogi, remembering Him at the time of death with devotion and an unwavering mind that's achieved through the strength of yoga practice, and fixing the life air between the eyebrows, goes to that beautiful Supreme Person.

I'll briefly explain to you now the goal of the knowers of the *Veda* who chant *Om*—that goal which is achieved by the ascetics who've given up lust, and which is pursued by those who practice celibacy. One achieves that highest goal by remembering Me upon leaving the body, restraining the doors of the senses, turning the mind inward to the heart, fixing the life air on the chakra at the top of the head, absorbing him or herself in yoga, and chanting the syllable *Om*, which is the imperishable Brahman.

Arjuna, I'm easily reached by the yogi who remembers Me constantly without distraction and always yearns to be united in relationship with Me. After attaining Me, the great souls are not again born into this temporary world filled with suffering. They've achieved the highest goal.

Arjuna, all beings, even up to Brahmaa's realm, are subject to birth and death. But after coming to Me, one doesn't take birth again. Those who understand the measurements of time know that Brahmaa's day lasts

one thousand ages, and his night lasts another thousand. At the dawning of his day, Creation evolves from its raw energies, and at his nightfall everything breaks down to its undeveloped state.

Thus, again and again all things are dissolved at night and recomposed in the day in an automatic cycle. However, above the creative energies is another subtle potency which is eternal and not dissolved when everything else is. That potency, which is invisible and imperishable, is understood to be the highest goal, attaining which, one does not return. That goal is My supreme abode.

That Supreme Person, within whom all things exist and by whom Creation is pervaded, is attained by pure, unwavering bhakti, Arjuna.

I'll now describe the times when the yogis, upon death, either return or don't. Upon leaving the body, one who knows Brahman proceeds on a path presided over by the gods of fire, illumination, the day, the two weeks of the waxing moon, and the northern phase of the sun. Ultimately, he or she reaches Brahman.

The yogi with worldly desires departs via a path governed by the gods of smoke, night, the waning moon, and the southern phase of the sun, and he or she attains the celestial realm, but must again return.

These two paths of light and dark are permanent aspects of the world. A person returns by one of them,



but not by the other. The yogi who knows these two paths is not at all confused. Thus, always practice yoga.

Knowing all this, the yogi surpasses the virtuous results achieved from study of the *Vedas* [worldly science], practice of austerity, sacrifice, and giving charity. He or she attains the supreme abode.

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## Chapter Nine

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### Yoga of Majestic and Mystic Knowledge

#### Summary

This knowledge is the highest, it's dharmic, it's joyfully practiced, and it offers direct perception of the Supreme and freedom from suffering.

Krishna is all-pervasive, sustaining everything. At the time of dissolution all things are absorbed into His potencies, and at creation He again unfurls them, but He remains neutral and unaffected.

Those who disregard Him are deluded. Their nature is ungodly and violent. The godly serve Him and venerate Him through bhakti.

There are various ways to perceive and worship Him, but those who approach Him with bhakti are best. He accepts even leaves, fruit, water, and flowers offered to Him with bhakti.

Anyone, regardless of circumstance, may approach Him with bhakti. So, He advises His devotee to focus the mind on Him, sacrifice to Him, and become immersed in Him. Such a person will go to His supreme abode.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: I'll now disclose to you, as you're without envy, the most secret knowledge and realization of Me, knowing which you'll become free from suffering. It's the king of knowledge, the highest mysticism, most purifying, and it gives direct perception of the Supreme. It's dharmic, and it's practiced joyfully. Arjuna, those persons without faith in this dharma don't attain Me, and they continue in the cycle of birth and death.

I pervade this entire universe with My imperceptible form. All beings are in Me, but I'm not in them. And yet all beings are not in Me. Just understand My inconceivable potency. I sustain Creation, but I'm not a part of it. My Self is the source of all. As the mighty wind, blowing everywhere, exists in space, so do all beings exist in Me.

Arjuna, at the time of universal dissolution, all beings are absorbed into My creative potency. And again, upon creation, I unfurl everything. Using My own creative potency, again and again I send forth the multitude of beings, who are under the control of Nature. Arjuna, all this work doesn't bind Me. I'm neutrally situated and unattached to the work. Under My supervision, the creative potency produces all things animate and inanimate. And I cause the universe to revolve in cycles.

The deluded disregard Me in this human form, not understanding My supreme nature as the controller of all beings. Their hopes, work, and knowledge are in vain, and lacking good sense, they're subjected to natures that are ungodly, violent, and delusional.

But, Arjuna, the great souls who assume a godly nature serve Me without distraction, knowing that I'm the imperishable origin of Creation. They perpetually glorify Me, and endeavoring with great austerity, they continually honor and serve Me through their bhakti.

Others worship Me through the sacrifice of knowledge, seeing Me as the supreme oneness, as diversity, or as the Universal Form.

I'm the ritual, the sacrifice, the offering to the ancestors, and the medicinal herb. I'm the mantra, the ghee, the fire, and the act of offering. I'm the father, mother, maintainer, and grandfather of the universe. I'm the object of knowledge, the purifier, and the syllable *Om*. And I'm the three *Vedas*—Rig, Saama, and Yajur.

I'm the goal, sustainer, master, witness, abode, refuge, and the intimate friend. I'm the creation, destruction, foundation, repository, and eternal seed. I supply heat. I send forth the rains and withhold them. I'm immortality and death. I'm matter and spirit, Arjuna.

Those who know the three *Vedas* worship Me through sacrifices. They drink the soma liquor, become

purified of bad reactions, and pray to go to the celestial realm. Thus, by their virtuous acts they attain Indra's domain and enjoy celestial pleasures among the gods. After enjoying the vast pleasures of the gods and exhausting their pious merits, they return to the mortal realm. Thus, those who seek to satisfy their worldly desires follow the dharma of the three *Vedas* and achieve only repeated birth and death.

But for those who serve Me constantly and with full absorption I supply what they lack and preserve what they have. Even those who sacrifice to other gods with faith and devotion actually sacrifice to Me, but in an unauthorized manner, Arjuna. I'm the enjoyer and master of all sacrifices. Those who don't know Me as such continue in the cycle of death and rebirth.

Those who serve the gods go to them; those who serve the forefathers go to them; and those who serve the ungodly go to them. But those who sacrifice to Me come to Me.

I enjoy offerings given to Me by the pure-hearted—even leaves, flowers, fruit, or water—that are given with bhakti.

Whatever work you do, food you eat, sacrifice you perform, charity you give, or austerity you endure—do it as an offering to Me, Arjuna. You'll thus be liberated from the good and bad reactions to work, which bind one to the world. And by the practice of detachment

through absorbing the mind in yoga, you'll come to Me.

I'm equally disposed to all beings. I don't get angry at anyone, nor do I favor anyone. But those who serve Me with bhakti abide in Me, and I in them. Even if a person habituated to bad behavior serves Me with no other desire than to please Me, I consider him or her to be a devotee, as he or she has resolved that former behavior. He or she quickly becomes a responsible person of dharma and attains lasting peace and freedom from his or her wretchedness. Arjuna, know for certain that My devotee is never lost.

Those who turn to Me, even those born into ungodly circumstances or those considered unqualified by social convention, attain Me, the supreme destination. What to speak of devotees who are already influenced by goodness or are responsible leaders and warriors. So, Arjuna, now that you've come into this impermanent and unhappy world, serve Me!

Absorb your mind in Me; become My devotee; sacrifice to Me; and bow to Me. Practicing yoga to become completely immersed in Me, you'll come to Me.

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## Chapter Ten

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### Yoga of the Magnificence of the Absolute

#### Summary

Knowledge of Krishna guides one's ability to discern or choose Him instead of His deluding energy, *maya*. Here, He describes His glorious qualities. He is the origin of humanity and one may connect with Him through bhakti.

Those who practice bhakti dedicate their lives to Him. They enjoy singing and narrating about His magnificence. And He extinguishes the darkness of their ignorance with the lamp of knowledge.

One can meditate on Him when contemplating the most beautiful, majestic, splendid, and supreme things in Creation. But these things are just a spark of His magnificence. With just a minute fragment of Himself He pervades and sustains Creation.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, again listen to My supreme teachings that I'm giving for your benefit and because you delight in them. Neither the gods nor the ancient sages know about My origin. In truth, I'm their source.

The person who is undeluded among mortals and who knows Me as the unborn, beginningless Lord of Creation is liberated from all bad reactions to work. The various characteristics of the living beings—like discernment, knowledge, freedom from illusion, tolerance, truthfulness, sense and mind control, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, nonviolence, impartiality, satisfaction, austerity, charitableness, fame, and infamy—all proceed from Me.

The seven great sages, the four sons of Brahmaa, and the original progenitors of humanity arose from My mind, and all beings have subsequently descended from them. One who knows in truth My magnificence and how to connect with Me through yoga becomes immersed in unwavering bhakti. Of this there's no doubt.

I'm the source of everything, and I set it all into motion. Knowing this, wise, discerning persons serve Me with love and devotion. Their minds are absorbed in Me, and their lives are dedicated to Me. And they



continuously experience satisfaction and enjoyment enlightening one another as well as singing and narrating about My magnificence.

To those who serve Me with love and constantly strive to connect with Me, I direct their discernment toward Me, so that they can come to Me. Out of compassion for them, from within their hearts I extinguish the darkness born of ignorance with the shining lamp of knowledge.

Arjuna said: All the celestial sages like Narad, Asit, Deval, and Vyas declare You to be the Supreme Brahman, the highest abode, the supreme purifier, the eternal divine Person, the primal God, unborn, mighty, and omnipresent. And You're now personally declaring this to me. I accept everything You've said as factual, Krishna. But Bhagavat, neither the gods nor their enemies understand how You appear before us.

Indeed, You alone know Yourself, O Supreme Person, Origin of Everything, Lord of all beings, God of the gods, and Master of Creation. Please tell me in detail about Your divine magnificence with which You pervade all of Creation. While I'm always thinking of You, how should I contemplate You, Bhagavat? On what characteristics should I meditate? Krishna, kindly describe to me again Your majesty and mystic power. Hearing all of this is like ambrosia, and I'm never satiated.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Yes Arjuna, I'll tell you about My divine magnificence, but in summary. The extent of My splendor is without end. Arjuna, I'm the soul of Creation, seated in the hearts of all beings. I'm the beginning, middle, and end of everything.

Of the sons of the divine Aditi, I'm Vishnu. Of lights, I'm the radiant sun. Of the winds, I'm the primal Marichi who precedes the others. And among the nocturnal luminaries, I'm the moon. Of the *Vedas*, I'm the *Saama*, composed of mystical song and philosophy. Of the gods, I'm Indra, their king. Of the senses, I'm the mind. Of living beings, I'm consciousness.

Of the raging storm gods, I'm Shiva. Of the mischievous nature spirits and superhuman cannibals, I'm Kuver, god of wealth. Of the gods of Nature, I'm Agni, the god of fire. Of mountains, I'm sacred Meru at the center of Creation. Of priests, I'm Brhas-pati, guru of the gods. Of military leaders, I'm Skanda, god of war and commander of the armies of the gods. Of bodies of water, I'm the ocean.

Of sages, I'm the powerful Bhrigu. Of utterances, I'm the imperishable syllable *Om*. Of sacrifices, I'm *japa*, the chanting of the names of the Supreme. Of immovable objects, I'm the Himalayan Mountains. Of trees, I'm the bodhi tree, the holy fig. Of sages of the gods, I'm Narad. Of the celestial musicians, I'm Chitra-ratha. Of perfected beings, I'm the philosopher-incarnation Kapila.

Of men, I'm the king. Of horses, I'm Uchai-srava, and of elephants, I'm Airavat, both of whom arose when the gods and demons churned the celestial ocean for ambrosia. Of weapons, I'm the thunderbolt. Of cows, I'm the cow of plenty that satisfies all desires. I'm the urge that produces offspring. Of snakes, I'm Vasuki, the celestial king of snakes.

Of divine serpents, I'm Ananta, the bed of Vishnu. Of aquatics, I'm Varun, god of the waters. Of the ancestors, I'm Aryaman, chief of the venerable departed souls. Of dispensers of justice, I'm Yama, god of death. Among the gods' enemies I'm their king, Prahlad, the great devotee of Vishnu. In physics, I'm time. Of animals, I'm the lion. Of birds, I'm Garuda, the divine carrier of Vishnu.

Of purifiers, I'm the wind. Of wielders of missiles, I'm Parasu-ram, incarnation of Krishna, who possesses weapons of mass destruction. Of fish, I'm the sea monster that swallows whales. Of rivers, I'm the Ganges. Of created things, I'm their beginning, middle, and end, Arjuna. Of sciences, I'm the science of the soul. Of types of debate, I'm the open-minded search for the truth.

Of letters, I'm *A*. In grammar, I'm the compound word. I'm indestructible time. Of creators, I'm Brahmaa. I'm all-devouring death. Of things yet to come, I'm birth. Of the feminine qualities, I'm Fame,

Fortune, Beauty, Refined speech, Memory, Intelligence, Fortitude, and Tolerance.

Of the mystical songs of the *Vedas*, I'm the great song that praises Indra. Of hymns, I'm Gayatri, the mystical mantra chanted to the sun. Of months, I'm November-December. Of seasons, I'm flower-bearing spring. I'm gambling of the deceitful. I'm splendor of the splendid. I'm victory. I'm determination. I'm the strength of the strong.

In the Vrishni dynasty, I'm Vaasu-dev. Of Pandu's sons, I'm Arjuna. Of ascetic scholars, I'm Vyas, compiler of the *Vedas*. Of the wise poets, I'm Ushanaa, guru of the demons. Of the various means of subduing, I'm punishment. Among those who desire success, I'm good counsel. Of secrets, I'm silence. Among the learned, I'm knowledge.

I'm the generating seed of all beings. Nothing moving or unmoving can exist without Me. Arjuna, there's no end to My divine magnificence. I've given you only a sample of My vast splendor. Know that all magnificence in existence, whether beautiful, majestic, or whatever, has arisen from just a spark of My splendor.

But what use is this knowledge to you, Arjuna? With just a minute fragment of Myself I pervade and sustain Creation.

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## Chapter Eleven

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### Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form

#### Summary

After hearing of Krishna's magnificence, Arjuna wants to have a vision of it, so Krishna shows him His Universal Form with countless shapes, colors, faces, eyes, ornaments, weapons, and much more. Contained within this form are all the celestial beings.

Arjuna is awestruck. He sees many great beings offering their homage to the form. Its fiery mouths have terrible fangs, and they're devouring all the warriors arrayed there.

Krishna explains that He is time, and He has already killed Arjuna's enemies. He tells Arjuna to be His instrument in the fight.

Arjuna is distressed at seeing this overwhelming Universal Form and requests Krishna to return to His pleasing aspect, which He does.

And Bhagavat says that it's difficult to see and connect with Him, but it's possible through bhakti.

## Text

Arjuna said: Thank You. The supremely mystical knowledge of Your splendor that You've kindly given me has dispelled my ignorance. O lotus-eyed Krishna, I've heard from You in some detail about the creation and dissolution of all beings as well as Your unlimited magnificence. Bhagavat, I'd now like to see Your majestic form as You've just described it to me. So, master, if You think I'm able to see it, please show me Your imperishable self, O Lord of Yoga.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, see hundreds and thousands of My divine forms of various types, colors, and shapes. Behold the 12 sons of Aditi, the sun gods; the eight Vasus, the Nature gods; the 11 fearful Rudras, the gods of the bodily energies; the two Asvins, the physicians to the gods; and the 49 Maruts, the wind gods. And now look at the many wonders that have never been seen. Behold, Arjuna, within just one part of My body lies the entire Creation with everything moving and unmoving along with whatever else you wish to see.

But you're unable to see with your own eyes, so I'll give you divine sight. Now see My inconceivable mystic power.

Sanjay said: Your majesty, at this, Krishna, the great Lord of mystic power, revealed that supreme form to Arjuna. It had unlimited faces, eyes, and wonders to

behold as well as dazzling celestial ornaments and gleaming weapons. The Universal Form was decorated with heavenly flower garlands, wearing divine apparel, and exquisitely scented with perfumes. It was amazing, resplendent, unlimited, and all-expanding.

If thousands of suns were to rise into the sky at the same time, their light might resemble some of the radiance of that great form. There in the body of the God of gods, Arjuna saw the entire Creation comprised of its multitude of components.

At that, Arjuna was overwhelmed with amazement, and all the hair on his body was erect. He bowed his head to the Lord, and with hands folded in prayer, he spoke.

Arjuna said: My Lord, I see in Your body all the gods as well as the multitude of created beings. I see Vishnu, Brahmaa seated on a lotus, Shiva, the celestial sages, and the serpents from the lower realms. I see You everywhere—an unlimited form with a multitude of arms, stomachs, faces, and eyes. O Lord of all, O Universal Form, I can't see a beginning, middle, or end to You.

I can discern a crown, club, and discus through the overwhelming glaring mass, which is difficult to behold, and fiery and radiant like seeing the sun up close. You're the supreme immutable reality. You contain all of Creation. You're the imperishable

protector of eternal dharma. You're the immortal, original Person.

I see that You're without beginning, middle, or end and possessed of infinite strength. You have countless arms. The sun and moon are Your eyes. Blazing fires emanating from Your mouths are scorching the entire Creation as if it were the time of annihilation. You alone pervade the space between heaven and earth, and indeed all directions. Seeing this awesome and terrible form, those residing in all three realms of Creation are trembling.

All the gods are entering You. Some, in fear, are glorifying You with palms together. Assemblies of great sages and perfected beings are shouting, "May all be well," and they're offering You many elaborate praises. The gods of bodily energies, gods of the sun's 12 phases, Nature gods, the gods called Sadhyas, gods called Visvas, physicians to the gods, wind gods, ancestors, celestial musicians, Nature spirits, enemies of the gods, and the perfected beings all look at You in wonder.

Bhagavat, seeing this great form with innumerable mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, stomachs, and horrible fangs, the beings in all realms are filled with terror, and so am I. Bhagavat Vishnu, my mind is extremely agitated as I see You touch the ends of Creation. You're shining with limitless colors; Your mouths are



cavernous; and Your enormous eyes are blazing. I'm unable to be courageous or even compose myself.

The vision of Your sharp-fanged mouths burning like the fires of cosmic destruction causes me to lose my sense of direction, and I feel great discomfort. Have mercy, Lord of the gods, abode of Creation! Dhritarashtra's sons, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, throngs of kings, and our prominent warriors are all swiftly entering Your mouths, which show terrible fangs. Some of the men have crushed heads, and their bodies are sticking between Your teeth.

As the many currents of water flow into the sea, so do all these great heroes helplessly enter Your flaming mouths. As moths hastily fly into a blazing fire to meet their destruction, so do all people rush into Your mouths. You're lapping up and swallowing people everywhere with Your fiery tongue. Bhagavat Vishnu, You fill Creation with heat and consume everything with Your fierce radiation.

O Lord of lords, so fierce of form, please tell me who You are. I offer You my deepest veneration. Kindly be gracious to me. I want to know about You. I don't understand Your mission here.

Bhagavat Krishna said: I'm time, destroyer of the worlds. My mission is to annihilate all people. Other than you, all the soldiers arrayed here will die. Therefore, arise and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy your prosperous kingdom. I've already killed

them. Arjuna, just be My instrument in the fight! I've already annihilated Drona, Bhishma, Jaya-drath, Karna, and the other great warriors. Kill them! Don't be disturbed! Fight! You'll vanquish them all.

Sanjay said: Upon hearing Krishna's words, Arjuna, who was trembling, put his palms together and prostrated before Him. He spoke haltingly, fearfully while bowing.

Arjuna said: Hrishikesh, rightly does the world become joyful on hearing of Your magnificence, and they become devoted to You. Out of fear, the demons flee in all directions. And throngs of perfected beings venerate You and bow to You. And why shouldn't they offer homage to You, great one? You're the original creator, greater even than Brahmaa. Limitless one, God of the gods, shelter of the universe, You're imperishable. You're cause and effect, and yet You're beyond them both.

You're the original God, the oldest person, and the supreme resting place of Creation. You're the knower and the object of knowledge. You're the supreme abode. With Your limitless form You pervade all of Creation. You're the gods of wind, death and justice, fire, water, and the moon. Indeed, You're all the gods. You're Brahmaa. You're the father of Brahmaa. I bow to You a thousand times and again thousands of times.

I bow to Your front, back, and all sides. You're everything to me! You're infinite valor and boundless

might. You pervade all, and thus You are all. I ask Your forgiveness, Infallible One, for when I've impetuously said, "Hey Krishna, hey Yadava, or hey friend," which was done through negligence or affection and in ignorance of Your supremacy. I treated You disrespectfully while joking, having fun, lying around, sitting together, and eating, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of others. Forgive me for offending You.

You're the father of Creation. You're the most deserving of worship, the greatest venerable guru. Nothing in the three realms is like You. How could there be anyone greater than You? Your magnificence is incomparable! Therefore, bowing down, prostrating my body, I beg Your pardon. You should be worshiped, Lord. So, like friend to friend, father to son, or lover to beloved, O God, kindly be merciful to me!

After seeing what's never been seen before, I'm delighted, but I'm also overcome with fear. O God, be gracious and show me a more pleasant form, O Lord of lords and abode of the universe! I long to see You wearing a bejeweled crown and holding club, discus, lotus, and conch. O thousand-armed one, Universal Form, please revert to Your four-armed shape.

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, I'm pleased to show you this supreme form using My divine potency. No one else has ever seen My radiant, unlimited, original Universal Form. One can't see this form by recitation

of the *Vedas*, sacrificing, giving charity, doing virtuous acts, or practicing severe austerities. In this world of humans, only you can see it, Arjuna.

Don't be disturbed or bewildered by this terrifying vision. Now be free from fear and look with pleasure at the shape you've requested to see.

Sanjay said: After pacifying Arjuna, He displayed His four-armed form. And then to fully relieve his fear, Bhagavat Krishna regained His sublimely attractive two-armed body.

Arjuna said: Now that I see Your attractive human-like form, Lord, I feel much better. My mind is back to normal.

Bhagavat Krishna said: This form you've seen is difficult to behold. Even the gods long to see it. It can't be perceived by reciting the *Vedas*, practicing austerities, giving charity, or sacrificing. Only by undistracted bhakti is it possible to truly know, see, and become connected with Me, Arjuna.

One who works for Me, considers Me to be the Supreme, becomes devoted to Me, is unattached to the sense objects, and is a friend to all attains Me, Arjuna.

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## Chapter Twelve

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### Bhakti Yoga

#### Summary

Krishna makes it clear that the devotee who serves Him in bhakti is better than the yogi who tries to unite with Brahman, which is difficult to do.

Best is to become totally immersed in Krishna. If that's not possible one should practice bhakti yoga. Or, if not, karma yoga. And if that's not possible, one can give up the results of one's work for a higher cause.

Giving up the results is better even than knowledge and meditation.

The yogi who practices bhakti remains equipoised when faced with the dualities of life. He or she is clean, tolerant, detached from the world, and equal to all. Such a yogi who serves Krishna according to His teachings is most dear to Him.

## Text

Arjuna said: Who are the best yogis, those who always serve You in bhakti yoga, or those who desire to unite with the imperishable, impersonal collective soul, Brahman?

Bhagavat Krishna said: I consider the best to be those who immerse themselves in Me and always serve Me with great faith. But they also attain Me—those who, by controlling the senses, looking on all beings equally, and being intent on the welfare of all, connect with the imperishable, undefinable, unseen, omnipresent, inconceivable, immutable, and everlasting.

However, the endeavor is much greater for those attached to this invisible aspect of the Supreme. For one who is an embodied, limited person, it's difficult to focus on the unembodied, unlimited, impersonal spirit.

But Arjuna, I'm the swift deliverer from the ocean of repeated birth and death for those who give the results of all their work to Me, become immersed in Me, think of Me, serve Me with undistracted bhakti yoga, and direct their power to discern toward Me. So, absorb your mind in Me and attach your discernment to Me. In that way, without a doubt you'll live in Me.

Or if you're not able to concentrate your mind on Me steadily, Arjuna, then try to attain Me through

bhakti yoga practice. If you're unable to do this, then become immersed in service to Me through the process of karma yoga. Working for My pleasure, you'll achieve perfection. If you're unable to practice karma yoga, then at least give up the results of your work and control the mind.

If one can't practice, then one can pursue knowledge of the soul. This leads to contemplation, which is better than knowledge. And beyond contemplation is giving up the results of work. By offering the results, one achieves the peace of being detached from the world.

That yogi who feels no enmity toward any person, is friendly and compassionate to all, is free from possessiveness, doesn't think he or she causes the results of work, is indifferent to pain and pleasure, is tolerant, is always satisfied, practices bhakti with determination, and fixes the mind and discernment on Me is dear to Me and becomes My devotee.

He or she who doesn't disturb others and in turn isn't agitated by them, is equipoised in happiness and distress, and is unaffected by fear and anxiety is dear to Me. My devotee who is uninterested in the world, clean, expert, impartial, free from distress, and has given up endeavors not related to Me is dear to Me. The devotee who neither rejoices nor grieves, laments nor craves, and who is aloof from both good and bad fortune is dear to Me.

The yogi who is equal toward friend and enemy, honor and dishonor, cold and heat, happiness and distress, blame and praise, and who avoids bad company, controls speech, is satisfied with whatever comes, isn't attached to his or her residence, is fixed in knowledge, and is engaged in bhakti is dear to Me.

Those devotees who serve Me according to this imperishable dharma that I've taught and who faithfully consider Me to be the supreme goal are most dear to Me.



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## Chapter Thirteen

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### Yoga of Discernment between the Field and Knower of the Field

#### Summary

The body is a field, and one who knows or is conscious of that field is the soul.

Some of the qualities of knowledge are nonviolence, tolerance, honesty, service to the guru, purity, detachment from the sense objects, and practicing bhakti yoga.

Brahman and the Supreme Soul comprise the object of knowledge. Brahman is beyond this world, and yet pervades everything. The Supreme Soul, who is seated in the hearts of all, is the supreme enjoyer.

Creation has three attributes, and because of attachment to and misidentification with their interactions, the soul suffers and enjoys.

One who knows that the soul is aloof from these interactions and that it's of a different nature, and who knows about the Supreme Soul is liberated and attains the supreme destination.

## Text

Arjuna said: Krishna, I'd like to know about Creation, the original Person, the field, and the knower of the field, as well as knowledge and the object of knowledge.

Bhagavat Krishna said: The body is called the "field." And the learned say that one who knows the body is called the "knower of the field." And, Arjuna, I am the knower of all fields. In My opinion, to understand the field and its knower is knowledge.

Now hear from Me briefly about what the field is—its nature, transformations, origin, and original form—plus, who the knower is and what are its powers. Sages have sung of this knowledge in many ways in the sacred hymns of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and especially in the *Vedanta* where definitive arguments are presented.

The field and its transformations are, in summary, the five elements [earth, fire, water, air, and space], false identification with the body, the invisible raw ingredients of Nature, discernment, the ten senses [five working and five knowledge acquiring], mind, five sense objects [smell, taste, touch, sound, and form and color], desire, enmity, happiness, distress, the entire organism, awareness, and conviction.

The following constitute knowledge: absence of false pride; sincerity; nonviolence; tolerance; honesty; service to the guru; purity; stability; self-control;

detachment from enjoyment of the sense objects; nonidentification with the body; the understanding that the bad reactions to work cause the suffering of birth, death, disease, and old age; detachment from worldly people; being not excessively captivated with children, spouse, home, and so on; being regulated; equanimity in the face of pleasant and unpleasant events; practicing pure, unswerving bhakti yoga to Me; resorting to solitary places away from crowds; consistently pursuing knowledge of the soul; and keeping in mind the goal of knowledge, the Absolute Truth. All else is ignorance.

I'll now explain the object of knowledge, knowing which one attains immortality. It's the beginningless Brahman, the Supreme, which is beyond the cause and effect of this world. Everywhere are His hands, feet, eyes, heads, faces, and ears. Thus, He's present within Creation, pervading everything.

The Supreme Soul is the source of the senses, yet He's without senses. He's unattached, although maintaining all. He's above the attributes of Creation [goodness, passion, and ignorance], yet He enjoys them. He's outside and inside of all animate and inanimate beings. He is far away, yet near. Because of His subtlety, He can't be comprehended. He's undivided although appearing to be divided among all beings. He's the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of all. He's the source of light of all luminous objects.

He's beyond the darkness of ignorance. He's knowledge, the goal of knowledge, and through knowledge He's attained. He's seated in the hearts of all.

Thus, I've briefly described the field, knowledge, and the object of knowledge. By understanding this through practice, My devotee attains My nature.

Know that both the creative elements and the living souls are beginningless. The act of creation produces their transformations and the three attributes of Creation. Cause and effect spring from Creation, and the soul experiences suffering and enjoyment. The soul, because of living within Creation, enjoys and suffers the interactions of its attributes. This is due to attachment for those attributes. Thus, he or she takes birth in various good and bad circumstances.

Yet within the body is a witness, approver, supporter, and true enjoyer. He's the Supreme Soul, the Supreme Person, who resides alongside the soul.

One who understands what I've described about soul, the Supreme Soul, and the interactions of the attributes of Creation is not born again, regardless of his or her present situation. Some perceive the soul and the Supreme within themselves by meditation, others through Samkhya yoga, and others by karma yoga.

Yet there are some, who, not knowing any of this, hear from others and participate in service to the

Supreme Soul. They also surpass birth and death due to their devotion to hearing.

Know, Arjuna, that whatever comes into being within this created existence, animate or inanimate, is from the association of the field with the knower of the field. Yet, one who can see the imperishable soul and Supreme Soul within all perishable beings truly perceives. One who sees the Supreme Soul present equally in all beings doesn't allow the mind to defile the soul. Thus, he or she attains the supreme destination.

One who can see that all work is done by the interaction of the attributes of Creation and that it's not done by the soul actually sees. A person who perceives that the vast panorama of beings in their various states originally resided in the One and that they have now expanded everywhere arrives at the realization of Brahman.

Although situated in the body, Arjuna, the eternal soul is beginningless and unaffected by the attributes of Creation. The soul neither acts nor is defiled. As all-pervading space, due to its subtlety, doesn't actually mix with anything, so the souls within bodies everywhere are uncontaminated by them. Arjuna, as the sun illuminates the universe, so does the soul illuminate the field.

Those who see with the eyes of knowledge, discerning the difference between the field and the knower of the field, and understanding the process of

liberation from the bondage of Nature, attain the supreme destination.

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## Chapter Fourteen

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### Yoga of the Three Attributes of Creation

#### Summary

Krishna is the seed-giving father of Creation, and His creative energy has three attributes: goodness, passion, and ignorance.

Goodness is illuminating and satisfying. Work under its influence is pure. Those in goodness go to the celestial realms.

Passion is characterized by greed and attachment to the results of work; work in this attribute causes suffering. Those influenced by it remain in the human realms.

Ignorance is darkness, identification with the body, delusion, madness, and lack of discernment. Work in this attribute is irresponsible and without good sense. Those in ignorance go to the hellish regions.

One who has transcended these three attributes sees them acting but is unaffected. He or she is situated in the nature of the soul, sees all souls equally, serves Krishna in bhakti yoga, and comes to the level of Brahman, for Krishna is the basis of Brahman.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: Now I'll explain more about the greatest knowledge, by which all the sages attained the highest success. By following this knowledge, one attains My nature and thus is not born at the time of creation or die at the time of dissolution.

The raw ingredients of Creation are Brahman, which is My womb into which I place the seed of life. All beings are born from that act, Arjuna. Indeed, Brahman is the source of all forms. And I'm their seed-giving father.

The attributes that arise from the raw ingredients of Creation are goodness, passion, and ignorance, Arjuna. They bind the imperishable soul to the body.

Of these, goodness, being purer than the others, has the effect of being illuminating, and it provides freedom from suffering. However, it subtly binds the soul through attachment to worldly happiness and knowledge. Passion is characterized by intense desire that arises from yearning and obsession. This binds the soul by attachment to the results of work. Arjuna, the attribute of ignorance is darkness and a lack of knowledge. It bewilders all souls into thinking they're the body. It binds the soul to irresponsibility, indolence, and sleep.

Goodness influences one toward satisfaction, passion toward working for results, and ignorance,



which obscures knowledge, toward irresponsibility. Sometimes goodness becomes prominent, prevailing over passion and ignorance. At other times, passion or ignorance may have dominance over the other two.

When goodness is prominent, the gates of the body are illuminated with knowledge. When passion arises, its symptoms are greed, great endeavor for results, impatience, and longing for sense objects. When ignorance dominates, one finds lack of discernment, laziness, irresponsibility, and delusion.

When the embodied soul influenced by goodness dies, he or she attains the pure realms of those who have the highest knowledge. One who dies while governed by passion is born among those who are attached to the results of their work. And one influenced by ignorance is cast into the womb of an animal.

The result of virtuous work in goodness is pure; work in passion causes suffering; work in ignorance veils knowledge and good sense. From goodness, knowledge develops; from passion, greed; and from ignorance, irresponsibility and lack of good sense.

Those established in goodness go to the higher realms. Those in passion remain in the human realms. Those in ignorance are born as animals, plants, or creatures who reside in hellish domains.

When one properly sees that in all work there is no other performer than the three attributes and knows

that the soul and the Supreme are above them, he or she attains My spiritual nature. When the embodied soul transcends the three attributes that give rise to the body, he or she attains immortality and freedom from birth, death, old age, and suffering.

Arjuna said: What symptoms does a person have who has transcended the three attributes, Bhagavat? How does he or she get beyond them? And what is his or her behavior?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Those who have transcended the three attributes of Nature are neither desirous of nor averse to illumination, work, or delusion. They remain aloof and undisturbed by the attributes of Nature. They consider that the attributes are just doing their work, and thus they stand firm. They're situated in the soul's nature; are equal in happiness or distress; see equally a clod of earth, stone, and gold; have the same regard for the desirable and the undesirable; are steadfast; and take praise and blame alike. They receive honor and disrespect equally, are impartial toward friend and foe, and reject all worldly undertakings.

And those who serve Me by unswerving, unadulterated bhakti yoga surpass the three attributes and come to the level of Brahman, for I am the basis of Brahman, which is eternal dharma, impersonal, immortal, and the one and only means of lasting happiness.

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## Chapter Fifteen

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### Yoga of the Supreme Person

#### Summary

Creation is like an inverted tree, having its branches down and root upward. One should cut the root of this tree with the ax of detachment and seek the supreme abode.

The soul carries its subtle senses and mind along to its next body like the air carries aromas. And those senses and mind, with which the soul struggles, adopt new bodily organs accordingly. The yogis understand, but the ignorant don't see this.

There are two conscious beings—one perishable, one imperishable. The soul is imperishable, and above the soul is the Supreme Person.

One who is undeluded knows Krishna to be that Supreme Person and serves Him. And such knowledge guides the power of discernment.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: It's understood that there is an imperishable bodhi tree with its roots pointing up and its branches down. Its leaves are the Vedic hymns, and one who knows this tree knows the *Vedas*. Its branches extend up and down, nourished by the three attributes of Nature. Its twigs are the sense objects. This tree also has secondary roots reaching downward into the world of humankind. These attach themselves to the results of work.

Its shape can't be understood in this world—not its beginning, middle, or end. But with determination one should cut down this bodhi tree with its well-established root by using the ax of detachment. Thereafter, one should seek the abode from which, having gone, one doesn't return and there take refuge in the Supreme Person from whom Creation emanated long ago.

Those who attain that imperishable abode are free from false pride, delusion, and attachment; always absorbed in knowledge of Brahman; devoid of lust; liberated from duality like happiness and distress; and endowed with clarity. My supreme abode is not illuminated by the sun, moon, or fire. And those who reach it never return.

The eternal living soul is a small part of Me. It struggles with the senses and mind that are just

components of Nature. And when the soul acquires or leaves a body, it brings them along in subtle form like the air carries aromas. In its new body, it adopts the organs of hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching, and mental activity. Thus, it enjoys the sense objects through them.

The ignorant don't see how the soul carries with it the attributes of Nature, or how it resides in the body, enjoys through it, and then leaves. Yet those with the eyes of knowledge see all this. The yoga practitioner sees the soul in the body. But those who lack discernment and self-control, although striving, don't see it.

Know that the brilliance of the sun that illuminates the world and that of the moon and fire are My splendor. I enter the earth and support all beings by My energy. Becoming the ambrosial moon, I enrich the plants. I inhabit all beings as the digestive fire and with the incoming and outgoing airs digest the four categories of food. I'm seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. I know the *Vedas*. I'm the goal of the *Vedas*. And I'm the author of *Vedanta*.

There are two types of conscious beings: the perishable and imperishable. All created beings are perishable. The unchanging soul is imperishable. But there is another, a supreme person, called the Supreme Soul, who has entered the three realms and is

maintaining them. He's the eternal controller. Because I'm superior to both the perishable Creation and imperishable souls, I'm thus celebrated in the *Vedas* and among the people as the Supreme Person.

One who's undeluded knows Me as that Supreme Person. Understanding all I've taught, he or she serves Me entirely, Arjuna. Thus, I've given you the most secret teaching. One who understands it will have the power of discernment, and his or her application of this knowledge will be successful.

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## Chapter Sixteen

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### Yoga of the Godly and Ungodly

#### Summary

There are two types of created beings: godly, whose traits lead to liberation, and ungodly, whose qualities lead to bondage.

The godly have good attributes like honesty, purity of heart, sacrifice, nonviolence, gentleness, and freedom from false pride. The ungodly are the opposite.

The ungodly are irresponsible; they don't have good behavior; and they wreak havoc in the world.

They only think about money, competing with others, and enjoying. Their character and pursuits, plus their rejection of Krishna, lead them to be born again into wombs of the ungodly. They abandon the sacred teachings and sink to the vilest places, the gates to which are lust, anger, and greed.

But the godly act responsibly according to the sacred writings. They avoid the three gates and go to the supreme destination.

## Text

Bhagavat Krishna said: Arjuna, the following are godly traits: fearlessness, purity of heart, charity, self-control, sacrifice, practice of the yoga of knowledge, study of the sacred texts, austerity, honesty, nonviolence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, serenity, aversion to faultfinding, compassion for all beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, determination, vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, being unenvious, and freedom from false pride.

The qualities of the ungodly are hypocrisy, arrogance, false pride, anger, harshness, and ignorance, Arjuna.

The godly traits lead to liberation and the ungodly qualities to bondage. But don't worry, Arjuna. You've been born with the godly traits.

There are two types of created beings. One is called godly and the other ungodly. I've already described the godly at length. Now Arjuna, hear from Me about the ungodly. They don't know proper or improper action according to the principles of dharma. They don't have good behavior, and they're neither clean nor truthful.

They say that the world is false, without a supreme cause, with no foundation and no God, and that the only reason for evolution is the lust to propagate the species. Following such conclusions, these people with



no concept of soul and little discernment engage in unbeneficial, horrible works that wreak havoc in the world. Taking shelter of insatiable lust for sense objects, full of hypocrisy, arrogance, and false importance, and being deluded by false notions, they contaminate the environment.

Convinced that the primary goal of life is worldly enjoyment, they suffer immeasurable stress and anxiety throughout their lives. Wrapped up in their myriad plans and schemes, immersed in lust and anger, they seek money by violating others to satisfy their greed.

Ungodly people think, "Today I've earned money. It's mine now, and I'll get more and more according to my plans. I've overcome the opposition, and I'll continue to do so. I'm in control. I'm the enjoyer. I'm successful, powerful, and happy. I have great resources. My family is the best. Who's equal to me? I'll sacrifice, be philanthropic, and celebrate." Thus, they're deluded by ignorance.

Misled by such thoughts and enveloped in a web of self-delusion, being overly attached to worldly enjoyment, they fall into a foul hell. Self-centered, stubborn, deluded by wealth, pride, and arrogance, they sacrifice only for show and not in a responsible manner. Addicted to strength, self-importance, greed, anger, and a false conception of self, those envious people despise Me, even though I'm present within their own bodies and those of all beings.

I cast those hateful, cruel, vicious, wretched men and women into the wombs of the ungodly to continue in the cycle of birth and death. Thus, being born in those circumstances, deluded birth after birth, and not attaining Me, Arjuna, from there they sink to the vilest places.

The three gates to those places are lust, anger, and greed. They lead to degradation of the soul. One should give them up. The person who stays away from these gates that lead to darkness acts in the best interest of the soul. He or she goes to the supreme destination.

One who abandons the sacred writings and acts according to whim doesn't attain success, happiness, or the supreme destination. The sacred writings provide the standards for determining what one should and shouldn't do. One ought to study them and work responsibly according to their guidance.

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## Chapter Seventeen

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### Yoga of the Three Types of Faith

#### Summary

Faith, food, sacrifice, austerity, and charity are each approached differently, depending on the influence of goodness, passion, or ignorance.

That which characterizes goodness is elevation, nourishment, selflessness, and responsibility; passion is selfishness, uncertainty, stressfulness, obsession, and short-sightedness; and ignorance is darkness, degradation, filth, irresponsibility, lawlessness, harmfulness, and disrespectfulness.

When performing sacrifice, austerity, and charity, devotees of the Supreme invoke *om*, *tat*, and *sat* to connect the act with Brahman.

But without faith in the Supreme, sacrifice, austerity, and charity are *asat*—impermanent and useless.

## Text

Arjuna said: Krishna, what's the situation of those who don't follow the sacred writings, but in faith, sacrifice to someone or something? Are they conditioned by goodness, passion, or ignorance?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Based on work done in previous lives, when the embodied soul is born, he or she is already under the influence of goodness, passion, or ignorance. Thus, his or her faith is governed accordingly. In other words, one's convictions are rooted in one's internal makeup, which is under the control of the attributes of Nature, Arjuna.

Those influenced by goodness serve the gods; by passion, the Nature spirits and the ungodly; and by ignorance, the ghosts and dark forces.

The ungodly practice terrible austerities not enjoined in the sacred writings, undertaking them with false pride, egoism, lust, and attachment. They foolishly torture the body, being ignorant of the fact that I reside within it.

Also, the food that each person prefers, as well as the sacrifice, austerity, and charity that one does are of three types. I'll explain this now.

Food dear to those influenced by goodness prolongs life; enriches the thoughts and emotions; and provides strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. It's also tasty, mild, wholesome, and beneficial to the

stomach. Those controlled by passion consume food that leads to distress, misery, and sickness. It's too bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry, or burning. Food preferred by those in ignorance is stale, tasteless, foul smelling, rotten, leftover from others, or impure.

Sacrifice is influenced by goodness when it's performed according to the sacred writings, without desire for reward, and as a matter of duty. The sacrifice offered with a view to the results, Arjuna, and which is done for show, is in passion. The sacrifice devoid of faith, contrary to the sacred injunctions, with no food given in charity, without mantras, and omitting gifts for the priests is in ignorance.

Austerity of the body consists of purity, honesty, celibacy, and nonviolence as well as honoring the gods, priests, teachers, parents, and the wise. Austerity of speech is that which doesn't cause distress and is truthful, agreeable, and beneficial; it's also the practice of reciting the sacred texts. Austerity of the mind is satisfaction, gentleness, gravity, self-restraint, and purity of the heart.

These three categories of austerities practiced in full faith, with devotion to the Supreme, and without desire for the results are said to be in goodness.

Austerity undertaken for show, honor, respect, and reverence is in passion. It's neither stable nor permanent. Austerity done with no discernment, using self-torture, or done to harm others is in ignorance.

Charity offered out of a sense of duty to a worthy person without expectation of return, and at the proper time and place is considered in goodness. Charity given with the desire for reciprocation, for some ultimate gain, or grudgingly is in passion. And charity done at the wrong time and place, given to an underserving person, and without respect or with contempt is conditioned by ignorance.

The three words *om tat sat* indicate the Supreme Brahman. With those sounds, at creation, the devotees, *Vedas*, and sacrifices were established.

Thus, devotees of the Supreme chant *om*, as prescribed in the *Vedas*, when commencing sacrifice, austerity, or charity.

Those who desire liberation utter the word *tat* when doing sacrifice, austerity, and charity. This they do without desire for the results.

And, Arjuna, the word *sat* indicates the eternal nature of the Supreme and His devotees. It's used to inaugurate work that devotees do for Him. *Sat* refers to the Supreme within acts of sacrifice, austerity, and charity. So, work done to please Him is called *sat*.

However, Arjuna, sacrifice, austerity, charity, or any other act done without faith in the Supreme is impermanent. It's called *asat*, and it's useless in both this life and the next.

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## Chapter Eighteen

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### Yoga of Renunciation

#### Summary

Goodness, passion, and ignorance influence knowledge, work, the doer of work, discernment, determination, happiness, and renunciation. Sacrifice, austerity, and charity should never be renounced.

The three attributes also influence one's occupation. To be successful, one should adhere to one's natural work, and not seek to do another's.

While doing such work and controlling the mind and senses, one achieves freedom from its reactions. From that point, one may pursue Brahman, the highest knowledge, by self-control, yoga, renunciation, identification with the soul, and freedom from lust, anger, and possessiveness.

Such a Brahman-realized person attains bhakti to Krishna and reunites with Him. Thus, always work on His behalf, think of Him, become His devotee, serve Him, and bow to Him. Then you'll go to Him. Give up all dharmas and surrender to Him. Don't worry about any reaction.

## Text

Arjuna said: Krishna, You've previously used the terms "abstaining from" and "renouncing." What is the difference, or are they the same?

Bhagavat Krishna said: Learned people say that abstaining means to avoid actions that are prompted by worldly desire. And renunciation denotes giving up the results of work. Some say that all work causes bad reactions and should be given up. But others say that one should never abstain from acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity.

Arjuna, now listen to My judgement regarding renunciation. It's referred to in the sacred writings as being of three types. Acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity should not be given up. They must be done. They purify even the great souls. However, one should take them on as a matter of responsibility and renounce attachment to their results. That's My final opinion.

One shouldn't abstain from one's responsibilities. One who does so out of delusion is governed by ignorance. One who gives up responsibilities because they're difficult or out of concern that they may cause physical or mental stress is controlled by passion. He or she won't achieve liberation by such avoidance. Arjuna, when one works as a matter of responsibility and is unattached to the result, that is renunciation guided by goodness.



The wise renunciant influenced by goodness doesn't dislike disagreeable work, nor is he or she attached to agreeable work. He or she has no doubts about work. Indeed, embodied beings can't entirely give up work. But one who gives up the results of work is a renunciant.

At death, those who don't renounce obtain three kinds of reactions from their work: desirable, undesirable, and mixed. But for the renunciants there are no such reactions.

Arjuna, now I'll explain the five factors that according to Samkhya are necessary for success in all work.

These factors are the body, the doer, the senses, the life airs, and the Supreme Soul. These five are the factors in whatever work, responsible or not, one undertakes with body, mind, or speech. Thus, the fool who sees him or herself as the only factor has an imperfect understanding.

One who doesn't think of oneself as the doer, whose intelligence is uncontaminated, although slaying these warriors, doesn't kill. Nor is one bound by the killing. Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower are the three factors that motivate work. The senses, the work itself, and the doer are the three components of work.

According to the Samkhya doctrine, knowledge, work, and the doer are each influenced by the three attributes of Creation. I'll explain.

Knowledge in goodness is that by which a person sees one imperishable, undivided spiritual nature in all beings, which are divided into separate forms. Knowledge in passion is that by which one sees that in each of the great variety of forms there is a different being. Knowledge in ignorance limits one's work to the most basic pursuits, enacted as if they were everything, but devoid of higher purpose.

Work in goodness is that which is regulated by dharma and is done without attachment, free from aversion and demands, and devoid of the desire to enjoy the results. Work in passion is impelled by lust, enacted with the attitude that one is the doer and characterized by extreme exertion. Work in ignorance is undertaken in delusion, is irresponsible, and is without concern for violence, distress, or consequences.

The doer is in goodness when he or she is free from attachment to the results, devoid of false identity as the only doer, determined, enthusiastic, and unperturbed in success and failure. He or she is influenced by passion when motivated by worldly life, desirous of obtaining the results of work, greedy, cruel, impure, and overly affected by joy and sorrow. The doer is in ignorance when he or she acts contrary to dharma and

is vulgar, obstinate, offensive, deceitful, lazy, despondent, and procrastinating.

Now I'll explain the three kinds of discernment and determination, Arjuna:

One whose discernment is in goodness refers to dharma when choosing when to act or not and what to do or not. Moreover, he or she knows what is or isn't to be feared and what's binding and liberating. Arjuna, one influenced by passion has trouble discerning what's dharma and what's not, as well as what should or shouldn't be done. One whose discernment is in ignorance considers adharmas to be dharmas, and he or she, being enveloped in darkness, undertakes all things in a perverted manner.

Determination in goodness, Arjuna, is that by which one immerses one's senses, mind, and life in yoga. Determination in passion is that by which one works in accordance with dharma, but only for wealth and enjoyment, being propelled by desire for the results. Determination in ignorance is that by which a dull-witted person can't go beyond dreaming, fear, grief, dejection, and intoxication, Arjuna.

Now I'll describe the three types of happiness in which one habitually enjoys, and through which one finds temporary relief from suffering. Happiness in goodness is that which seems like poison in the beginning but ends up like ambrosia. It arises from the satisfaction of connecting with the soul. Happiness

under the control of passion derives from contact of the senses with their objects, and it appears at first like ambrosia but later turns to poison. And happiness in ignorance is that which frustrates contact with the soul from beginning to end and which arises from dreaming, laziness, and irresponsibility.

No one here on earth or even in the celestial realms is free from the influence of these three attributes of Creation.

Arjuna, the three attributes influence the talents, behaviors, and inclinations of people in the four social classes—priests, teachers, and intellectuals; politicians and soldiers; agriculturalists, bankers, and business people; and artisans, various professionals, and laborers. Thus, people's natures correspond with their professions.

The natural work for priests, teachers, and intellectuals involves tranquility, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, discernment, and piety. By their nature, politicians and soldiers work with valor, strength, determination, cleverness, courage in battle, generosity, and leadership. For agriculturalists, bankers, and business people, the natural work involves farming, cow protection, and commerce. For artisans and the skilled and unskilled professions, service and labor characterize their work.

By being devoted to one's natural work, a person achieves success. Now I'll explain how this can be

done. A person becomes successful by using his or her work to serve and praise the origin of all beings, the one who is omnipresent. It's better to act according to one's own dharma although done poorly rather than another's done well. Work done according to one's nature incurs no bad reaction. Arjuna, a person shouldn't give up the work born of his or her nature although deficient. Every endeavor has faults, like fire has smoke.

When one controls the mind, uses the power of discernment to detach oneself from the sense objects, and gives up desire for worldly enjoyment, then he or she, through such abstinence, achieves the greatest success, which is freedom from reactions to work.

I'll now explain in brief, Arjuna, how one who has achieved this success might also attain Brahman, which is the highest stage of knowledge.

One is eligible to realize Brahman by directing one's power of discernment; controlling the mind with determination; abstaining from the sense objects; becoming free from attachment and aversion; living in solitude; eating minimally; controlling body, mind, and speech; focusing one's life on yoga; being renounced; being free from arrogance, false pride, lust, anger, possessiveness, and false identification with the body; being devoid of covetousness; and attaining peace in connection with the soul.

The self-satisfied soul, being absorbed in the nature of Brahman, neither grieves at losses nor desires to accumulate more. He or she is equally disposed to all beings. In that state, he or she attains pure bhakti to Me. Only through bhakti does one come to know Me as I am. And thus, knowing Me in truth, he or she reunites with Me.

Although doing all types of work, the devotee who takes refuge in Me receives My mercy and thus reaches the eternal, imperishable abode. Giving all work over to Me, being devoted to Me, taking refuge in buddhi yoga, think of Me constantly. Fixing your mind and thoughts on Me, you'll pass over all difficulties by My mercy. But if out of pride and false identification with the body, you don't listen to Me, you'll be vanquished.

If you refuse to fight because of self-delusion, your resolve will be in vain, Arjuna. You're conditioned to act according to your nature. Now you're refusing to fight because you're confused, but, Arjuna, your nature will force you to fight.

The Supreme Soul resides in the hearts of all beings, Arjuna, and uses illusion to direct their wanderings as they ride around in their machines called bodies. Arjuna, surrender to Him with your entire being. By His grace you'll reach supreme peace, the eternal abode.

Thus, I've given you knowledge that's more mystical and profound than any other. Reflect on it

carefully, and then do as you wish. Because I love you dearly, listen again to My supreme teaching, the greatest secret of all. I'll explain it for your benefit.

Always think of Me, become My devotee, serve Me, and bow to Me. Thus, you'll come to Me without fail. I promise, Arjuna, for you're My dear friend. Abandoning all dharmas, surrender to Me alone. I'll liberate you from all bad reactions. Don't worry.

I don't want you to teach this to anyone who's not disciplined, devoted, receptive, or speaks ill of Me. But one who teaches this supreme mystery to My devotees is guaranteed pure bhakti, and he or she will come to Me. No one renders a service more pleasing to Me. And nobody on earth will be dearer to Me. I declare that one who studies this dharmic conversation of ours worships Me with his or her intelligence and power of discernment. The person who listens to this teaching with faith and without envy will be liberated from bad reactions and attain the higher realms of good fortune where the virtuous dwell.

Arjuna, have you heard all this with close attention? Have your ignorance and confusion been dispelled?

Arjuna said: Yes Krishna, You're infallible. My confusion is gone. By Your mercy, I've regained my memory. I stand under Your command. My doubts have been dispelled, and I'm prepared to act according to Your instructions.

Sanjay said: Thus, I've heard the conversation between Krishna and the great-souled Arjuna. And it's so wonderful that the hairs on my body are standing on end. By the grace of Vyas, I've heard this supreme and secret yoga from Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, who personally spoke it.

My king, contemplating over and over this extraordinary and sacred conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, I'm thrilled at every moment. And as Krishna's breathtaking form repeatedly appears in my mind's eye, my king, I'm overwhelmed with amazement, and my ecstasy increases each time I see Him.

Wherever there is Krishna, Lord of Yoga, and wherever there is Arjuna, the great archer, there will surely be splendor, victory, prosperity, and righteousness. That is my conviction.



## Dayananda

In 1967, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupad, the founder of the worldwide Hare Krishna movement, accepted Dayananda as his disciple.

Since that time, he has endeavored to practice karma and bhakti yoga. He served as a leader and administrator in Prabhupad's organization for nearly 40 years.

He has studied Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Farsi, and Spanish as well as the history and philosophy of Vaishnavism.

In addition to his volunteer services in Prabhupad's organization, he worked for 25 years as a professional in the field of information technology.

Now he spends most of his time writing books, traveling, and lecturing.

Visit [SaveEarthNow.info](http://SaveEarthNow.info) to learn about a two-day, classroom course on the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Other books by Dayananda

