Bhagavad Gita

VYASA (ATTRIBUTED)

Bhagavad Gita

भगवद्गीता

Translated from the Sanskrit with AI (Claude) and edited



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CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Chapter 1: Arjuna's Despair 1

Chapter 2: Understanding 7

The undying self 8

A warrior's duty 11

The discipline of action 12

The person of steady wisdom 14

Chapter 3: Action 17

Chapter 4: Knowledge and the Renunciation of Action 23

Chapter 5: Renunciation 29

Chapter 6: Self-Mastery 35

Chapter 7: Knowledge and Realization 41

Chapter 8: The Imperishable Brahman 45

Chapter 9: The Royal Knowledge and the Royal Secret 49

Chapter 10: Manifestations 55

Chapter 11: The Vision of the Universal Form 61

The cosmic form 62

"I am Time" 65

Arjuna's hymn of praise 66

The return to human form 68

Chapter 12: Devotion 71
Chapter 13: The Field and the Knower of the Field 75
Chapter 14: The Three Qualities 81
Chapter 15: The Supreme Person 85
Chapter 16: The Divine and the Demonic 89
Chapter 17: The Three Kinds of Faith 93
Chapter 18: Liberation through Renunciation 97
Action and the three qualities 99
Each one's own work 102
The most secret word 105
Sanjaya's closing words 106

INTRODUCTION

The *Bhagavad Gita*, "the song of the Lord," is a poem of 700 verses in eighteen chapters, set in the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*, the great Sanskrit epic traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyasa. It probably reached its present form in the last centuries BC or the first centuries AD, and it has become the most widely read scripture of Hinduism.

On the eve of a great battle, the warrior Arjuna looks across at the opposing army, sees his cousins, teachers and friends, and lays down his bow. His charioteer Krishna — who reveals himself as God — answers him. The dialogue ranges over duty and action, the undying self, discipline and meditation, knowledge and devotion, and the nature of God, and culminates in a terrifying vision of Krishna's universal form. Its most famous teaching is that one should act without attachment to the fruits of action.

The whole poem is framed as a report: the blind king Dhritarashtra asks, and his minister Sanjaya, granted distant sight, tells him what was said on the field.

Chapter 1: Arjuna's Despair

अर्जुनविषादयोगः *(Arjunaviṣādayoga)*

The armies face each other at Kurukshetra; seeing his kinsmen and teachers ranged against him, Arjuna refuses to fight.

DHRITARASHTRA

1.1 On the field of *dharma*, the field of the Kurus, gathered together and eager for battle,
what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do, Sanjaya?[1]

SANJAYA

1.2 Then King Duryodhana, seeing the army of the Pandavas drawn up for battle,
went to his teacher and spoke these words:[2]

1.3 Teacher, look at this great army of the sons of Pandu,
drawn up by the son of Drupada, your own gifted pupil.[3]

1.4 Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna:
Yuyudhana and Virata, and Drupada, the great chariot-warrior;

1.5 Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana, and the valiant king of Kashi;
Purujit and Kuntibhoja, and Shaibya, a bull among men;

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1 *Dharma*: duty, right order, the role proper to each. Kurukṣetra, "field of the Kurus," is the plain north of Delhi where the war is fought; the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the father of the Kauravas, and Pāṇḍu was his brother.
2 Duryodhana, eldest son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, leads the Kaurava side; his teacher is Droṇa, the brahmin master of arms who trained both sides.
3 The son of Drupada is Dhṛṣṭadyumna, commander of the Pandava army.

1.6 bold Yudhamanyu and valiant Uttamaujas;
the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi—all of them great chariot-warriors.[4]

1.7 But hear also who are the most distinguished on our side, best of the twice-born,
the leaders of my army; I name them for you so that you may know them.[5]

1.8 Yourself and Bhishma, and Karna, and Kripa, victor in battles,
Ashvatthaman and Vikarna, and the son of Somadatta as well;[6]

1.9 and many other heroes who are ready to give up their lives for my sake,
armed with many kinds of weapons, all of them skilled in war.

1.10 That force of ours, guarded by Bhishma, is insufficient;
but this force of theirs, guarded by Bhima, is sufficient.

1.11 So all of you, standing firm in every line of advance,
each in his assigned place, guard Bhishma above all.

1.12 Then, to rouse his joy, the aged Kuru, the mighty grandfather,
roared out a lion's roar and blew his conch.

1.13 Then conches and kettledrums, tabors, drums and horns
were sounded all at once, and the noise was tumultuous.

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4 The son of Subhadrā is Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son; the sons of Draupadī are her five sons by the five Pandava brothers.
5 "Twice-born": a member of the three upper classes, "born again" through Vedic initiation; here the brahmin Droṇa.
6 Bhīṣma: great-uncle of both the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the aged commander of the Kaurava army. Karṇa, raised by a charioteer, is Arjuna's great rival.

1.14 Then, standing in their great chariot yoked to white horses,
Madhava and the son of Pandu blew their divine conches.[7]

1.15 Hrishikesha blew Panchajanya, Dhananjaya blew Devadatta,
and Bhima, the Wolf-bellied, of terrible deeds, blew the great conch Paundra.[8]

1.16 King Yudhishthira, son of Kunti, blew Anantavijaya,
and Nakula and Sahadeva blew Sughosha and Manipushpaka.

1.17 And the king of Kashi, supreme archer, and Shikhandin, the great chariot-warrior,
Dhrishtadyumna and Virata, and Satyaki the unconquered,

1.18 Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, lord of the earth,
and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra—each on every side blew his own conch.

1.19 That tumultuous roar tore the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons,
making the sky and the earth resound.

1.20 Then the son of Pandu, whose banner bears the monkey, seeing Dhritarashtra's sons drawn up in their ranks,
as the clash of weapons was about to begin, raised his bow

ARJUNA

1.21 and then, lord of the earth, spoke these words to Hrishikesha:
Achyuta, halt my chariot between the two armies,

1.22 so that I may look at these men who stand here eager for battle,
and see with whom I must fight in this undertaking of war.

7 Mādhava, like Hṛṣīkeśa, Keśava, Govinda, Janārdana, Madhusūdana, Acyuta and Vārṣṇeya below, is an epithet of Krishna; "son of Pandu," "son of Pṛthā" (Kuntī), Dhanañjaya and Guḍākeśa refer to Arjuna.
8 Each warrior's conch has its own name.

1.23 I would see those who are about to fight, who have gathered here
wishing to please in battle the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra.

SANJAYA

1.24 Addressed in this way by Gudakesha, descendant of Bharata, Hrishikesha
halted that finest of chariots between the two armies,

1.25 in front of Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the earth,
and said, "Son of Pritha, look at these Kurus gathered here."

1.26 There the son of Pritha saw them standing: fathers and grandfathers,
teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and friends,

1.27 fathers-in-law and companions, in both armies.
Seeing all these kinsmen arrayed there, the son of Kunti,

ARJUNA

1.28 filled with deep pity, spoke in despair:
Krishna, when I see my own people here, eager to fight, drawn up before me,

1.29 my limbs give way and my mouth goes dry,
my body trembles and my hair stands on end.

1.30 Gandiva slips from my hand and my skin is burning;
I cannot stand still, and my mind seems to reel.[9]

1.31 And I see evil omens, Keshava;
I foresee no good in killing my own people in battle.

1.32 I do not want victory, Krishna, nor kingship, nor pleasures.
What is kingship to us, Govinda, or enjoyment, or even life?

9 Gāṇḍīva: Arjuna's bow, a gift of the gods.

1.33 Those for whose sake we wanted kingship, enjoyment and pleasures
stand here in battle, staking their lives and their wealth:

1.34 teachers, fathers, sons, and grandfathers too,
uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other kin.

1.35 These I do not want to kill, Madhusudana, even if they kill me—
not even for sovereignty over the three worlds, still less for the earth.[10]

1.36 What joy could we have in striking down the sons of Dhritarashtra, Janardana?
Evil alone would cling to us if we killed these aggressors.

1.37 So we must not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our own kinsmen;
for how could we be happy, Madhava, after killing our own people?

1.38 Even if they, their minds overcome by greed, do not see
the wrong in destroying a family, the crime in betraying friends,

1.39 how could we not know enough to turn back from this evil,
we who see clearly the wrong in destroying a family, Janardana?

1.40 When a family is destroyed, its ancient laws of *dharma* perish;
when *dharma* is lost, lawlessness overwhelms the whole family.

10 The three worlds: earth, the middle air, and heaven.

1.41 When lawlessness prevails, Krishna, the women of the family are corrupted;
when the women are corrupted, descendant of Vrishni, the classes are mixed.[11]

1.42 This mixing brings to hell the family and those who destroyed it;
for their ancestors fall, deprived of their offerings of rice-balls and water.[12]

1.43 Through these wrongs of the destroyers of the family, which bring about the mixing of classes,
the laws of caste and the eternal laws of the family are overthrown.

1.44 For people whose family laws have been overthrown, Janardana,
a dwelling in hell without end awaits—so we have heard.

1.45 Alas! We have resolved to commit a great evil,
ready to kill our own people out of greed for the pleasures of kingship.

1.46 If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons in hand, should kill me in battle
unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me.

SANJAYA

1.47 Having spoken in this way on the battlefield, Arjuna sank down on the seat of his chariot,
casting aside his bow and arrows, his mind overwhelmed with grief.

11 The classes (*varṇa*): the four hereditary social orders—priests, warriors, farmers and traders, and laborers.
12 Descendants sustain their dead ancestors with ritual offerings of rice-balls (*piṇḍa*) and water.

Chapter 2: Understanding

साङ्ख्ययोगः *(Sāṅkhyayoga)*

Krishna answers: the self is never born and never dies; act without attachment to results, and be steady in wisdom.

SANJAYA

2.1 To him, so overcome by pity, his eyes troubled and full of tears,
sinking in despair, Madhusudana spoke these words.

KRISHNA

2.2 Where does this weakness come from, in this hour of danger, Arjuna—
unworthy of a noble, closing the way to heaven, bringing disgrace?

2.3 Do not give in to unmanliness, son of Pritha; it does not become you.
Cast off this petty faintness of heart and stand up, scorcher of foes.

ARJUNA

2.4 Madhusudana, how can I fight back with arrows in battle
against Bhishma and Drona, who deserve my reverence, slayer of enemies?

2.5 Better to live even on beggar's food in this world than to kill my teachers, men of great dignity;
for if I killed my elders, however greedy for gain they may be, I would be enjoying pleasures here smeared with blood.

2.6 Nor do we know which is better for us—that we should
conquer them, or that they should conquer us;
there stand the sons of Dhritarashtra, facing us, and if we
killed them we would not wish to live.

2.7 My very nature stricken by faintheartedness, my mind
confused about *dharma*, I ask you:
tell me for certain what is better. I am your student; teach
me, for I have come to you for refuge.

2.8 For I do not see what could drive away this grief that
parches my senses,
even if I won an unrivaled, prosperous kingdom on earth,
or lordship over the gods.

SANJAYA

2.9 Having spoken thus to Hrishikesha, Gudakesha, scorcher of
foes,
said to Govinda, "I will not fight," and fell silent.

2.10 Then, descendant of Bharata, Hrishikesha, as if smiling,
spoke these words to him as he sat despairing between the
two armies.

THE UNDYING SELF

Krishna tells Arjuna not to grieve, since the embodied self is never born and never dies.

KRISHNA

2.11 You grieve for those who should not be grieved for, and yet
you speak words of wisdom.
The wise grieve neither for the dead nor for the living.

2.12 Never was there a time when I was not, nor you, nor these
rulers of men;
nor will any of us ever cease to be hereafter.

2.13 Just as the embodied one passes, in this body, through childhood, youth and old age,
so it passes on to another body; the steadfast are not bewildered by this.

2.14 The touch of the senses on their objects, son of Kunti, brings cold and heat, pleasure and pain;
these come and go and do not last—endure them, Bharata.

2.15 The person these do not trouble, bull among men,
steadfast, the same in pain and pleasure, is fit for immortality.

2.16 What is not can never come to be; what is can never cease to be.
The boundary between these two is seen by those who see the truth.

2.17 Know that to be indestructible by which all this world is pervaded;
no one can bring about the destruction of what is imperishable.

2.18 These bodies of the eternal embodied one are said to come to an end,
but it is indestructible and beyond all measure. Therefore fight, Bharata.

2.19 Whoever thinks it a killer, and whoever thinks it killed—
neither of them understands: it does not kill, and it is not killed.

2.20 It is not born, nor does it ever die; nor, having come to be, will it ever cease to be.
Unborn, eternal, everlasting, primeval, it is not killed when the body is killed.

2.21 Whoever knows it to be indestructible, eternal, unborn and unchanging—
how can that person, son of Pritha, kill anyone, or cause anyone to be killed?

2.22 As a man casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new,
so the embodied one casts off worn-out bodies and enters others that are new.

2.23 Weapons do not cut it, fire does not burn it,
water does not wet it, and wind does not dry it.

2.24 It cannot be cut, it cannot be burned, it cannot be wetted or dried;
it is eternal, all-pervading, stable, unmoving, everlasting.

2.25 It is called unmanifest, unthinkable, unchanging.
So, knowing it to be such, you should not grieve.

2.26 And even if you think of it as constantly being born and constantly dying,
even then, mighty-armed one, you should not grieve.

2.27 For death is certain for whatever is born, and birth is certain for whatever has died;
so you should not grieve over what cannot be avoided.

2.28 Beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their middle, Bharata,
and unmanifest again in their end. What is there to lament?

2.29 One person sees it as a marvel, another speaks of it as a marvel,
another hears of it as a marvel; yet even having heard, no one knows it.

2.30 This embodied one, dwelling in the body of every being, can never be killed, Bharata;
therefore you should not grieve for any creature.

A WARRIOR'S DUTY

Krishna urges Arjuna to fight, since battle is his own duty and retreat would bring disgrace.

KRISHNA

2.31 Look, too, to your own *dharma*, and do not waver;
for a warrior there is nothing better than a battle that *dharma* requires.[1]

2.32 Coming unsought, an open door to heaven—
happy are the warriors, son of Pritha, who meet with such a battle.

2.33 But if you will not fight this rightful battle,
then, abandoning your own *dharma* and your honor, you will incur evil.

2.34 People will speak of your disgrace forever,
and for a man who has been honored, disgrace is worse than death.

2.35 The great chariot-warriors will think you withdrew from battle out of fear;
those who held you in high esteem will think lightly of you.

2.36 Your enemies will say many things that should not be said,
scorning your ability. What could be more painful than that?

2.37 If you are killed, you will attain heaven; if you win, you will enjoy the earth.
So stand up, son of Kunti, resolved to fight.

2.38 Holding pleasure and pain alike, gain and loss, victory and defeat,
then brace yourself for battle; so you will incur no evil.

1 One's own *dharma* (*svadharma*): the duty proper to one's birth and station. Arjuna is a *kṣatriya*, a member of the warrior class.

THE DISCIPLINE OF ACTION

Krishna teaches acting with an even mind, without attachment to the fruits of action.

KRISHNA

2.39 This understanding has been taught to you according to *sāṃkhya*; now hear it according to *yoga*.
Armed with this understanding, son of Pritha, you will throw off the bondage of action.[2]

2.40 On this path no effort is wasted and no setback is found;
even a little of this *dharma* protects one from great fear.

2.41 Here, joy of the Kurus, the understanding whose nature is resolve is single;
but many-branched and endless are the thoughts of the irresolute.

2.42 The flowery speech that the unwise proclaim, son of Pritha,
delighting in the words of the Veda and saying "There is nothing else,"[3]

2.43 full of desires, intent on heaven—speech that offers rebirth as the fruit of action,
crowded with special rites aimed at pleasure and power—

2.44 for those attached to pleasure and power, whose minds are carried away by it,
the understanding whose nature is resolve is not established in concentration.

2 *Sāṃkhya*: the way of analytical knowledge. *Yoga*: discipline; here, the disciplined practice of action.
3 The Veda: the ancient sacred texts of hymns and ritual.

2.45 The Vedas have the three *guṇas* as their sphere; be free of the three *guṇas*, Arjuna,
free of the pairs of opposites, ever grounded in *sattva*, free of getting and keeping, master of yourself.[4]

2.46 As much use as there is in a well when water floods on every side,
so much is there in all the Vedas for a brahmin who truly knows.

2.47 Your right is to action alone, never to its fruits.
Do not let the fruit of action be your motive, and do not cling to inaction.[5]

2.48 Grounded in *yoga*, perform your actions, giving up attachment, Dhananjaya,
the same in success and failure; *yoga* is called evenness of mind.

2.49 Mere action is far inferior to the *yoga* of understanding, Dhananjaya.
Seek refuge in understanding; pitiful are those whose motive is the fruit.

2.50 One armed with understanding leaves behind, here and now, both good deeds and bad.
So yoke yourself to *yoga*; *yoga* is skill in action.

2.51 For the wise, armed with understanding, give up the fruit that action brings;
freed from the bondage of birth, they go to the place beyond all sorrow.

2.52 When your understanding crosses beyond the thicket of delusion,
then you will grow indifferent to what you have heard and what is yet to be heard.

4 The *guṇas*: the three qualities of nature—*sattva* (goodness, clarity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (darkness, inertia).
5 Fruit (*phala*): the result or reward of an action.

2.53 When your understanding, bewildered by what you have heard, stands motionless,
unmoving in concentration, then you will attain *yoga*.

THE PERSON OF STEADY WISDOM

Asked by Arjuna, Krishna describes the sage who has withdrawn his senses and is free of desire.

ARJUNA

2.54 Keshava, how is one whose wisdom is steady to be described, one who is fixed in concentration?
How does one whose mind is steady speak? How does he sit? How does he move?

KRISHNA

2.55 When a man gives up all the desires that enter his mind, son of Pritha,
content in the self through the self alone, then he is called steady in wisdom.

2.56 One whose mind is not shaken by sorrows, who has no craving for pleasures,
free of passion, fear and anger—he is called a sage of steady mind.

2.57 One who is attached to nothing, who, meeting with this or that, good or bad,
neither rejoices nor recoils—his wisdom stands firm.

2.58 When, like a tortoise drawing in its limbs on every side,
he withdraws his senses from the objects of sense, his wisdom stands firm.

2.59 The objects of sense fall away from the embodied one who does not feed on them,
but the taste for them remains; even the taste falls away when he has seen the highest.

2.60 For even when a discerning man strives, son of Kunti,
the turbulent senses violently carry away his mind.

2.61 Restraining them all, let him sit disciplined, intent on me;
for one whose senses are under control—his wisdom stands firm.

2.62 When a man dwells on the objects of sense, attachment to them arises;
from attachment desire is born, and from desire comes anger.

2.63 From anger comes delusion, from delusion the wandering of memory,
from loss of memory the ruin of understanding, and from the ruin of understanding he is lost.

2.64 But one who moves among the objects of sense with senses free of attraction and aversion,
held under the control of the self, master of himself, attains serenity.

2.65 In serenity all his sorrows come to an end;
for when the mind is serene, the understanding soon becomes steady.

2.66 The undisciplined have no understanding, and the undisciplined have no power of contemplation;
without contemplation there is no peace, and without peace, where is happiness?

2.67 For when the mind follows the roaming senses,
it carries away one's wisdom, as the wind carries a ship on the water.

2.68 Therefore, mighty-armed one, when a man's senses are held back
on every side from the objects of sense, his wisdom stands firm.

2.69 What is night for all beings, in that the self-controlled man is awake;
what they are awake to is night for the sage who sees.

2.70 As the waters enter the ocean, which is ever being filled yet stands unmoved,
so the one whom all desires enter attains peace—not the one who desires desires.

2.71 The man who gives up all desires and moves about free of longing,
without "mine," without "I," attains peace.

2.72 This is the state of *brahman*, son of Pritha; attaining it, one is no longer deluded.
Abiding in it even at the hour of death, one reaches the *nirvāṇa* of *brahman*.[6]

6 *Brahman*: the absolute, the ultimate reality. *Nirvāṇa*: literally "blowing out," the extinction of desire and the peace of final release.

Chapter 3: Action

कर्मयोगः *(Karmayoga)*

Why act at all? No one can be free of action; act as a sacrifice, for the welfare of the world, and master desire.

ARJUNA

3.1 If you hold that understanding is better than action,
Janardana,
then why do you urge me to this terrible deed, Keshava?

3.2 With words that seem to point both ways you seem to
confuse my understanding.
Tell me for certain the one thing by which I may reach the
highest good.

KRISHNA

3.3 In this world a twofold way was taught by me long ago,
blameless one:
the *yoga* of knowledge for the followers of *sāṃkhya*, the *yoga*
of action for the *yogins*.[1]

3.4 Not by abstaining from actions does a person reach
freedom from action,
nor by renunciation alone does he attain perfection.

3.5 For no one can remain even for a moment without acting;
everyone is made to act, helplessly, by the *guṇas* born of
prakṛti.[2]

---

1 *Yogin*: one who practices *yoga*.
2 *Prakṛti*: nature, the material world, made up of the three *guṇas*.

3.6 One who restrains his organs of action but sits dwelling in his mind
on the objects of sense, deluded, is called a hypocrite.

3.7 But one who controls his senses with the mind, Arjuna, and, unattached,
takes up the *yoga* of action with his organs of action—he excels.

3.8 Do the action that is required of you, for action is better than inaction;
without action you could not even keep your body going.

3.9 Except for action done for the sake of sacrifice, this world is bound by action.
Do your work for that purpose, son of Kunti, free from attachment.[3]

3.10 Long ago the Lord of Creatures brought forth beings together with sacrifice, and said:
"By this you shall multiply; let this be your cow of plenty, yielding all you desire.[4]

3.11 With it nourish the gods, and let the gods nourish you;
nourishing one another, you will attain the highest good.

3.12 For the gods, nourished by sacrifice, will give you the enjoyments you desire."
Whoever enjoys their gifts without offering to them in return is nothing but a thief.

3.13 The good, who eat what remains of the sacrifice, are released from all their faults;
but the wicked who cook only for themselves eat their own evil.

3 Sacrifice (*yajña*): the Vedic ritual of offerings poured into the sacred fire.
4 The Lord of Creatures (Prajāpati): the creator god. The cow of plenty is the mythical cow that grants every wish.

3.14 Beings come from food, and food comes from rain;
rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice comes from action.

3.15 Know that action arises from *brahman*, and *brahman* arises from the imperishable;
therefore the all-pervading *brahman* is always established in sacrifice.

3.16 One who does not help turn the wheel that has been set in motion here,
living in wickedness, delighting in the senses, lives in vain, son of Pritha.

3.17 But the person who delights in the self alone, who is satisfied in the self,
and content in the self alone—for him there is nothing he must do.

3.18 He has no purpose at all in what is done here, nor in what is left undone,
nor does he depend on any being for any purpose.

3.19 Therefore, without attachment, always do the work that must be done;
for by doing work without attachment a person reaches the highest.

3.20 It was through action alone that Janaka and others attained perfection;
you too should act, looking only to holding the world together.[5]

3.21 Whatever the best person does, other people do too;
whatever standard he sets, the world follows.

3.22 For me, son of Pritha, there is nothing in the three worlds that I must do,
nothing I lack that I need to gain—and yet I go on acting.

5 Janaka: a legendary king of Videha, famed as a sage who lived in the world.

3.23 For if I ever ceased to act, tirelessly,
people everywhere would follow my path, son of Pritha.

3.24 These worlds would fall into ruin if I did not act;
I would be the cause of confusion, and would destroy these creatures.

3.25 As the ignorant act out of attachment to their work, Bharata,
so the wise should act without attachment, seeking to hold the world together.

3.26 The wise should not unsettle the understanding of the ignorant who are attached to action;
disciplined, acting himself, he should lead them to take pleasure in all their work.

3.27 In every case actions are performed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*;
but one deluded by the sense of "I" thinks, "I am the doer."[6]

3.28 But one who knows the truth, mighty-armed one, about how the *guṇas* and their actions are distinct,
thinking, "The *guṇas* act upon the *guṇas*," is not attached.

3.29 Those deluded by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* are attached to the works of the *guṇas*;
one who knows the whole should not unsettle those dull ones who know only in part.

3.30 Surrendering all your actions to me, your mind fixed on the self within,
free of hope and of any thought of "mine," fight, with your fever gone.

3.31 Those who always follow this teaching of mine,
full of faith and without finding fault, are also freed from their actions.

6 The sense of "I" (*ahaṃkāra*, literally "I-making"): where it appears as a fault, it is rendered "ego."

3.32 But those who find fault with it and do not follow my teaching—
know them to be lost, senseless, bewildered in all knowledge.

3.33 Even a wise man behaves in keeping with his own nature;
beings follow their nature—what will restraint achieve?

3.34 Attraction and aversion lie in wait in each sense for its object;
one should not fall under their power, for they are enemies on the road.

3.35 Better one's own *dharma*, though imperfect, than another's *dharma* well performed;
better death in one's own *dharma*—another's *dharma* is full of danger.

ARJUNA

3.36 Then what drives a person to do evil,
even against his will, descendant of Vrishni, as if compelled by force?

KRISHNA

3.37 It is desire, it is anger, born of the *guṇa* of *rajas*,
all-devouring, greatly evil; know that this is the enemy here.

3.38 As fire is covered by smoke and a mirror by dust,
as an embryo is covered by its membrane, so this world is covered by it.

3.39 Knowledge is covered by this constant enemy of the wise, son of Kunti,
which takes the form of desire, a fire that can never be filled.

3.40 The senses, the mind and the understanding are said to be its seat;
through them it covers knowledge and deludes the embodied one.

3.41 So first control your senses, bull of the Bharatas,
and strike down this evil that destroys knowledge and discernment.

3.42 The senses, they say, are high; higher than the senses is the mind;
higher than the mind is understanding; and higher than understanding is he.

3.43 Knowing, then, what is higher than understanding, steadying yourself by the self,
kill the enemy, mighty-armed one, that takes the form of desire and is hard to reach.

Chapter 4: Knowledge and the Renunciation of Action

ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः *(Jñānakarmasaṃnyāsayoga)*

Krishna reveals that he takes birth age after age; seeing inaction in action, and the fire of knowledge.

KRISHNA

4.1 I taught this imperishable *yoga* to Vivasvat;
Vivasvat told it to Manu, and Manu spoke it to Ikshvaku.[1]

4.2 Handed down in this way from one to another, it was known to the royal sages;
but over a long stretch of time, scorcher of foes, this *yoga* was lost to the world.

4.3 This same ancient *yoga* I have taught to you today,
for you are my devotee and my friend; this is the highest secret.

ARJUNA

4.4 Your birth was later, and the birth of Vivasvat earlier;
how am I to understand that you taught it in the beginning?

KRISHNA

4.5 Many births of mine have passed, and of yours too, Arjuna;
I know them all, but you do not know them, scorcher of foes.

1 Vivasvat: the sun god. Manu: his son, father of the human race. Ikṣvāku: Manu's son, first king of the solar dynasty.

4.6 Though I am unborn, and my self is imperishable, though I am Lord of all beings,
governing my own *prakṛti*, I come into being through my own power of illusion.

4.7 Whenever *dharma* declines, Bharata,
and lawlessness rises up, then I send myself forth.

4.8 To protect the good and to destroy those who do evil,
to establish *dharma* firmly, I come into being age after age.

4.9 One who truly knows my divine birth and action in this way
is not born again when he leaves the body; he comes to me, Arjuna.

4.10 Free of passion, fear and anger, absorbed in me, taking refuge in me,
many, purified by the austerity of knowledge, have come to my own state of being.

4.11 In whatever way people come to me, in that way I receive them;
people everywhere follow my path, son of Pritha.

4.12 Wanting success in their works, people here offer sacrifice to the gods;
for in the human world success born of action comes quickly.

4.13 The four classes were created by me according to the division of *guṇas* and actions;
though I am their maker, know me as one who does not act, and is imperishable.

4.14 Actions do not stain me, and I have no desire for the fruit of action;
whoever knows me in this way is not bound by actions.

4.15 Knowing this, even the ancients who sought release did their work;
so you too must act, as the ancients acted long ago.

4.16 "What is action? What is inaction?"—on this even the wise are confused.
I will explain to you what action is; knowing it, you will be freed from evil.

4.17 For one must understand what action is, and understand what wrong action is,
and understand what inaction is: the way of action is hard to fathom.

4.18 One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction
is wise among men; he is disciplined, even while doing all his work.

4.19 One whose every undertaking is free of desire and of selfish purpose,
whose actions are burned away in the fire of knowledge—
the wise call him learned.

4.20 Giving up attachment to the fruit of action, always content, depending on nothing,
even when fully engaged in action, he does nothing at all.

4.21 Without expectations, his mind and self held in check, giving up all possessions,
doing only the work of the body, he incurs no fault.

4.22 Content with whatever comes to him by chance, beyond the pairs of opposites, free of envy,
the same in success and failure, even when he acts he is not bound.

4.23 For one who is free of attachment and released, whose mind is established in knowledge,
who acts for the sake of sacrifice, all action dissolves away.

4.24 *Brahman* is the offering, *brahman* the oblation, poured by *brahman* into the fire that is *brahman*;
brahman will be reached by one who is absorbed in action that is *brahman*.

4.25 Some *yogins* offer sacrifice to the gods alone;
others offer sacrifice by sacrifice itself into the fire of *brahman*.

4.26 Some offer hearing and the other senses into the fires of restraint;
others offer sound and the other objects of sense into the fires of the senses.

4.27 Others offer all the actions of the senses and the actions of the breath
into the fire of the *yoga* of self-restraint, kindled by knowledge.

4.28 Others offer sacrifice of their possessions, sacrifice of austerity, sacrifice of *yoga*;
and ascetics of strict vows offer sacrifice of scriptural study and knowledge.

4.29 Others offer the outgoing breath into the incoming breath, and the incoming into the outgoing,
checking the course of both breaths, intent on the control of breath.

4.30 Others, restricting their food, offer the vital breaths into the vital breaths.
All these know what sacrifice is, and through sacrifice their stains are wiped away.

4.31 Eating the nectar that remains from sacrifice, they go to the eternal *brahman*.
This world is not for one who does not sacrifice—how then the other, best of the Kurus?

4.32 So sacrifices of many kinds are spread out before the mouth of *brahman*;
know that all of them are born of action; knowing this, you will be released.

4.33 Better than sacrifice of material things is the sacrifice of knowledge, scorcher of foes;
all action without exception, son of Pritha, finds its fulfillment in knowledge.

4.34 Learn it by bowing down, by asking questions, by serving;
those who have knowledge, who see the truth, will teach you that knowledge.

4.35 Once you know it, son of Pandu, you will not fall into delusion like this again;
through it you will see all beings, without exception, in yourself, and then in me.

4.36 Even if you were the worst of all evildoers,
you would cross over all wickedness on the raft of knowledge alone.

4.37 As a blazing fire turns its firewood to ashes, Arjuna,
so the fire of knowledge turns all actions to ashes.

4.38 For there is nothing in this world that purifies like knowledge;
one who is perfected in *yoga* finds it in himself in the course of time.

4.39 The one who has faith, intent on it, his senses restrained, gains knowledge;
having gained knowledge, he soon reaches the supreme peace.

4.40 The ignorant man, without faith, whose very self is doubt, perishes;
for the doubter there is neither this world nor the next, nor any happiness.

4.41 One who has renounced actions through *yoga*, whose doubt
is cut away by knowledge,
who is master of himself—actions do not bind him,
Dhananjaya.

4.42 So, with the sword of knowledge, this doubt of yours, born
of ignorance and lodged in your heart—
cut it away; hold fast to *yoga*, and stand up, Bharata.

Chapter 5: Renunciation

कर्मसंन्यासयोगः *(Karmasaṃnyāsayoga)*

Renouncing action and the yoga of action lead to the same goal; the sage who sees the same in all.

ARJUNA

5.1 Krishna, you praise the renunciation of actions, and then again *yoga*.
Tell me for certain which one of the two is better.

KRISHNA

5.2 Renunciation and the *yoga* of action both lead to the highest good;
but of the two, the *yoga* of action is better than the renunciation of action.[1]

5.3 Know him as one who always renounces who neither hates nor desires;
for one who is free of the pairs of opposites, mighty-armed one, is easily released from bondage.

5.4 Children, not the wise, speak of *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* as different;
one who is truly established in even one of them finds the fruit of both.

1 Renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*): giving up action altogether, the way of the wandering ascetic.

5.5 The place that is reached by the followers of *sāṃkhya* is
reached by the followers of *yoga* too;
whoever sees *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* as one truly sees.

5.6 But renunciation, mighty-armed one, is hard to attain
without *yoga*;
the sage who is disciplined in *yoga* soon reaches *brahman*.

5.7 Disciplined in *yoga*, his self purified, his self mastered, his
senses conquered,
his self become the self of all beings—even when he acts, he
is not stained.

5.8 "I do nothing at all," thinks the disciplined one who knows
the truth,
while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking,
sleeping, breathing,

5.9 speaking, letting go, grasping, opening and closing his eyes
—
holding in mind that it is only the senses acting on the
objects of sense.

5.10 One who acts, placing his actions in *brahman* and giving up
attachment,
is not stained by evil, as a lotus leaf is not wetted by water.

5.11 With the body, with the mind, with the understanding,
even with the senses alone,
yogins perform action, giving up attachment, to purify the
self.

5.12 The disciplined one, giving up the fruit of action, attains
lasting peace;
the undisciplined, attached to the fruit and driven by
desire, is bound.

5.13 Renouncing all actions with the mind, the embodied one sits at ease, in control,
in the city of nine gates, neither acting nor causing action.[2]

5.14 The Lord does not create agency or actions for the world,
nor the link between action and its fruit; it is nature that does this.

5.15 The all-pervading one does not take on anyone's evil, nor anyone's good deeds;
knowledge is covered by ignorance, and so creatures are deluded.

5.16 But for those in whom this ignorance is destroyed by knowledge of the self,
that knowledge, like the sun, lights up the highest.

5.17 Their understanding set on that, their self in that, grounded in that, devoted wholly to that,
they go where there is no return, their stains shaken off by knowledge.

5.18 In a brahmin endowed with learning and good conduct, in a cow, in an elephant,
in a dog, and in someone outside caste, the wise see the same.

5.19 Even here, rebirth is conquered by those whose mind is established in sameness;
for *brahman* is flawless and the same in all, and so they are established in *brahman*.

5.20 One should not rejoice at getting what is pleasant, nor be troubled at getting what is unpleasant;
steady in understanding, undeluded, the knower of *brahman* is established in *brahman*.

2 The city of nine gates: the body, with its nine openings.

5.21 One whose self is not attached to outward contacts finds happiness in the self;
his self disciplined in the *yoga* of *brahman*, he enjoys unending happiness.

5.22 For the pleasures born of contact are simply sources of pain;
they have a beginning and an end, son of Kunti, and the wise take no delight in them.

5.23 One who is able, here and now, before he is released from the body,
to withstand the surge that rises from desire and anger—he is disciplined, he is a happy man.

5.24 One whose happiness is within, whose delight is within, and whose light is within—
that *yogin*, become *brahman*, reaches the *nirvāṇa* of *brahman*.

5.25 The seers whose stains are wiped away reach the *nirvāṇa* of *brahman*,
their doubts cut away, their selves restrained, rejoicing in the good of all beings.

5.26 For ascetics who are free of desire and anger, who have restrained their minds,
who know the self, the *nirvāṇa* of *brahman* lies close on every side.

5.27 Shutting out external contacts, fixing the gaze between the eyebrows,
making equal the outgoing and incoming breaths that move within the nostrils,

5.28 the sage who has restrained his senses, mind and understanding, intent on release,
free of longing, fear and anger—he is forever free.[3]

3 Release (*mokṣa*): final liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

5.29 Knowing me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, the
great Lord of all the worlds,
the friend of all beings, he attains peace.

Chapter 6: Self-Mastery

आत्मसंयमयोगः *(Ātmasaṃyamayoga)*

The practice of meditation: the self as its own friend or enemy, the steady mind, and the fate of one who falls short.

KRISHNA

6.1 One who does the work that must be done without depending on the fruit of action
is both a renouncer and a *yogin*—not one who neglects the sacred fire and does nothing.[1]

6.2 Know that what they call renunciation is *yoga*, son of Pandu;
for no one becomes a *yogin* who has not renounced his selfish purpose.

6.3 For the sage who wishes to rise to *yoga*, action is said to be the means;
for the same man, once he has risen to *yoga*, calm is said to be the means.

6.4 When one is attached neither to the objects of sense nor to actions,
and has renounced all selfish purpose, he is said to have risen to *yoga*.

1 The householder keeps the sacred fires; the renouncer gives them up along with all ritual action.

6.5 One should raise the self by the self and not let the self sink down;
for the self alone is the friend of the self, and the self alone is the enemy of the self.

6.6 The self is a friend to the self of one who has conquered himself by himself;
but for one who has not mastered himself, the self turns hostile, like an enemy.

6.7 For one who has conquered himself and is at peace, the highest self is composed
in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, in honor and dishonor alike.

6.8 Content in knowledge and discernment, unwavering, his senses conquered,
the *yogin* is said to be disciplined when a lump of earth, a stone and gold are the same to him.

6.9 Toward friend, ally, enemy, the indifferent, the neutral, the hateful and the kinsman,
toward the good and the wicked alike—one whose understanding is even stands out.

6.10 A *yogin* should constantly discipline himself, staying in a solitary place,
alone, restraining his mind and self, without expectations, without possessions.

6.11 Setting up for himself a firm seat in a clean place,
neither too high nor too low, covered with cloth, a deerskin and *kuśa* grass,[2]

6.12 sitting there on that seat, making his mind one-pointed,
controlling the workings of thought and senses, he should practice *yoga* to purify the self.

2 *Kuśa*: a sacred grass used in ritual.

6.13 Holding body, head and neck in line, motionless and steady,
gazing at the tip of his nose, not looking around in any direction,

6.14 serene, free of fear, keeping the vow of chastity,
restraining his mind, his thought on me, let him sit disciplined, intent on me.

6.15 Always disciplining himself in this way, his mind held in check,
the *yogin* reaches the peace that culminates in *nirvāṇa* and rests in me.

6.16 *Yoga* is not for one who eats too much, nor for one who does not eat at all,
nor for one who sleeps too much, nor for one who stays awake too long, Arjuna.

6.17 For one who is moderate in food and recreation, moderate in effort in his actions,
moderate in sleep and waking, *yoga* becomes the destroyer of sorrow.

6.18 When his thought, held in check, rests in the self alone,
free of longing for all desires, then he is said to be disciplined.

6.19 "As a lamp in a windless place does not flicker"—that is the image recalled
for the *yogin* whose thought is restrained, practicing the *yoga* of the self.

6.20 When thought comes to rest, stilled by the practice of *yoga*,
and when, seeing the self through the self, he is content in the self;

6.21 when he knows that boundless happiness which is grasped by the understanding and lies beyond the senses,
and, established there, never strays from the truth;

6.22 having gained which, he thinks no other gain greater,
and established in which, he is not shaken even by heavy sorrow—

6.23 let him know that this unyoking from union with sorrow is called *yoga*.
This *yoga* is to be practiced with resolve, with a mind that does not lose heart.

6.24 Giving up entirely all the desires that arise from selfish purpose,
reining in with the mind alone the whole host of the senses on every side,

6.25 little by little he should come to rest, with understanding held firm by resolve;
fixing the mind in the self, he should think of nothing at all.

6.26 Wherever the fickle and unsteady mind wanders off,
from there he should rein it in and bring it under the control of the self alone.

6.27 For the highest happiness comes to the *yogin* whose mind is at peace,
whose passion is stilled, who has become *brahman* and is free of stain.

6.28 Always disciplining himself in this way, the *yogin*, free of stain,
easily attains the boundless happiness of contact with *brahman*.

6.29 One whose self is disciplined by *yoga*, who sees the same in everything,
sees the *ātman* dwelling in all beings, and all beings in the *ātman*.[3]

6.30 One who sees me everywhere and sees everything in me—
I am not lost to him, and he is not lost to me.

3 *Ātman*: the self, the true and eternal Self within each being.

6.31 The one who, grounded in oneness, loves me as dwelling in all beings—
that *yogin*, however he may live, lives in me.

6.32 One who, by comparison with himself, sees the same in everything, Arjuna,
whether pleasure or pain—he is held to be the highest *yogin*.

ARJUNA

6.33 This *yoga* that you have taught as evenness, Madhusudana—
I do not see how it can last, because the mind is so restless.

6.34 For the mind is restless, Krishna, turbulent, powerful and stubborn;
I think it as hard to hold back as the wind.

KRISHNA

6.35 No doubt, mighty-armed one, the mind is restless and hard to restrain;
but it can be held, son of Kunti, by practice and by dispassion.

6.36 *Yoga* is hard to attain for one who has not restrained himself—so I hold;
but one who has mastered himself and strives can attain it by the right means.

ARJUNA

6.37 One who has faith but does not strive, whose mind has strayed from *yoga*,
failing to reach perfection in *yoga*—what path does he take, Krishna?

6.38 Fallen from both, does he not perish like a torn cloud,
with no firm ground, mighty-armed one, lost on the path to *brahman*?

6.39 Krishna, you must dispel this doubt of mine completely;
for there is no one but you who can dispel this doubt.

KRISHNA

6.40 Son of Pritha, neither here nor in the world beyond is there any ruin for him;
for no one who does good, my friend, comes to a bad end.

6.41 Reaching the worlds of those who do good and dwelling there for countless years,
one who has fallen from *yoga* is born again in the house of the pure and the prosperous.

6.42 Or else he is born into a family of wise *yogins*;
but a birth like that is harder to obtain in this world.

6.43 There he regains the understanding he had in his former body,
and from there he strives once more toward perfection, joy of the Kurus.

6.44 By that same former practice he is carried on, even against his will;
even one who only wishes to know *yoga* goes beyond the Veda's word of *brahman*.

6.45 But the *yogin* who strives with effort, cleansed of his faults,
perfected through many births, then goes to the highest goal.

6.46 The *yogin* is greater than the ascetics, and held to be greater even than the learned;
the *yogin* is greater than those who perform ritual acts—so be a *yogin*, Arjuna.

6.47 And of all *yogins*, the one who has faith and loves me,
his inmost self absorbed in me—he, I hold, is the most disciplined of all.

Chapter 7: Knowledge and Realization

ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः *(Jñānavijñānayoga)*

Krishna's lower and higher nature, the illusion made of the three qualities, and those who come to him.

KRISHNA

7.1 With your mind attached to me, son of Pritha, practicing *yoga*, taking refuge in me,
hear how you will know me fully and without doubt.

7.2 I will teach you this knowledge in full, together with discernment;
once you know it, nothing more remains here to be known.

7.3 Among thousands of people, perhaps one strives for perfection;
and even among those who strive and are perfected,
perhaps one knows me as I truly am.

7.4 Earth, water, fire, wind, space, mind and understanding,
and the sense of "I"—this is my *prakṛti*, divided eightfold.

7.5 This is my lower nature; but know my other, higher nature,
which has become the life of beings, mighty-armed one,
and by which this world is sustained.

7.6 Understand that all beings have their source in these two;
I am the origin of the whole world, and its dissolution too.

7.7 There is nothing whatever higher than me, Dhananjaya;
all this is strung on me like clusters of pearls on a thread.

7.8 I am the taste in water, son of Kunti, I am the light in the moon and the sun,
the sacred syllable *om* in all the Vedas, the sound in space, the manhood in men.[1]

7.9 I am the pure fragrance in the earth and the brilliance in fire;
I am the life in all beings, and the austerity in ascetics.

7.10 Know me, son of Pritha, as the eternal seed of all beings;
I am the understanding of those who understand, the splendor of the splendid.

7.11 Of the strong I am the strength, free of desire and passion;
in beings I am desire that does not go against *dharma*, bull of the Bharatas.

7.12 And whatever states of being there are, of *sattva*, of *rajas* and of *tamas*,
know that they come from me alone; but I am not in them—they are in me.

7.13 Deluded by these three states made of the *guṇas*, this whole world
does not recognize me, who am beyond them and imperishable.

7.14 For this divine illusion of mine, made of the *guṇas*, is hard to get beyond;
those who take refuge in me alone cross over this illusion.[2]

7.15 Evildoers, the deluded, the lowest of men, do not take refuge in me;
their knowledge stolen away by illusion, they cling to the nature of demons.

1 *Om*: the sacred syllable chanted at the beginning and end of Vedic recitation.
2 Illusion (*māyā*): the divine power by which the world appears and by which it deceives.

7.16 Four kinds of virtuous people worship me, Arjuna:
the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the one who knows, bull of the Bharatas.

7.17 Of these, the one who knows, ever disciplined, devoted to one alone, is the best;
for I am exceedingly dear to the one who knows, and he is dear to me.[3]

7.18 All of these are noble, but the one who knows is my very self—so I hold;
for, his self disciplined, he is fixed on me alone as the highest goal.

7.19 At the end of many births the one who has knowledge takes refuge in me,
knowing "Vasudeva is everything." Such a great soul is very hard to find.[4]

7.20 Those whose knowledge is carried off by this desire or that take refuge in other gods,
following this rule or that, constrained by their own nature.

7.21 Whatever form a devotee wishes to worship with faith,
I make that very faith of his unshakable.

7.22 Endowed with that faith, he seeks to win the favor of that form,
and from it he obtains his desires—though it is I alone who grant them.

7.23 But the fruit that comes to these people of little understanding has an end;
those who sacrifice to the gods go to the gods, but my devotees come to me.

3 Devotion (*bhakti*): loving dedication to God.
4 Vāsudeva: "son of Vasudeva," a name of Krishna.

7.24 Those without understanding think of me, the unmanifest,
as having come into manifest form,
not knowing my higher being, imperishable and
unsurpassed.

7.25 I am not revealed to all, veiled as I am by my power of *yoga*
and illusion;
this deluded world does not recognize me, unborn and
imperishable.

7.26 I know the beings that have passed away, Arjuna, those that
are present,
and those that are yet to be; but no one knows me.

7.27 Through the delusion of the opposites that arises from
desire and hatred, Bharata,
all beings fall into bewilderment at birth, scorcher of foes.

7.28 But those people of good deeds in whom evil has come to an
end,
freed from the delusion of opposites, worship me, firm in
their vows.

7.29 Those who strive for release from old age and death, taking
refuge in me,
know that *brahman* in full, and all that concerns the self,
and action in its entirety.

7.30 Those who know me as what concerns beings, what
concerns the gods and what concerns sacrifice,
know me, their minds disciplined, even at the hour of
death.

Chapter 8: The Imperishable Brahman

अक्षरब्रह्मयोगः *(Akṣarabrahmayoga)*

What to hold in mind at the hour of death; the day and night of Brahmā; the two paths of the departed.

ARJUNA

8.1 What is that *brahman*? What is it that concerns the self?
What is action, Supreme Person?
And what is it that is called what concerns beings? What is said to be what concerns the gods?

8.2 What is it that concerns sacrifice, and how is it here in this body, Madhusudana?
And how are you to be known at the hour of death by those who have mastered themselves?

KRISHNA

8.3 *Brahman* is the imperishable, the highest; its own nature is called what concerns the self;
the creative outpouring that brings beings into existence is called action.

8.4 What concerns beings is perishable existence; *puruṣa* is what concerns the gods;
and what concerns sacrifice is I myself, here in the body, best of the embodied.[1]

1 *Puruṣa*: spirit, the conscious person, as opposed to *prakṛti*, matter.

8.5 And whoever, at the hour of death, leaves the body
remembering me alone
and goes forth, comes to my state of being; of this there is
no doubt.

8.6 Whatever state of being one remembers when at the end
one leaves the body,
to that very state one goes, son of Kunti, always formed by
that state.

8.7 Therefore at all times remember me, and fight;
with mind and understanding fixed on me, you will come to
me without doubt.

8.8 With thought disciplined by the practice of *yoga*, not
straying to anything else,
meditating on the supreme divine *puruṣa*, one goes to him,
son of Pritha.

8.9 One who remembers the ancient seer, the ruler, subtler
than the subtlest,
the upholder of all, whose form is beyond thought, bright
as the sun, beyond darkness,

8.10 at the hour of death, with unmoving mind,
disciplined by devotion and by the strength of *yoga*,
fixing the breath rightly between the eyebrows—
he reaches that supreme divine *puruṣa*.

8.11 That which those who know the Veda call the imperishable,
which ascetics free of passion enter,
desiring which men live a life of chastity—
that state I will explain to you briefly.

8.12 Closing all the doors of the body, holding the mind within
the heart,
placing his breath in the head, established in the
concentration of *yoga*,

8.13 uttering *om*, the single syllable that is *brahman*, and remembering me,
whoever goes forth, leaving the body, goes to the highest goal.

8.14 Whoever always remembers me, constantly, with a mind set on nothing else—
for that ever-disciplined *yogin*, son of Pritha, I am easy to reach.

8.15 Having come to me, the great-souled do not return to birth,
that fleeting home of sorrow; they have reached the highest perfection.

8.16 The worlds up to the realm of Brahma are subject to return, Arjuna;
but for one who has come to me, son of Kunti, there is no rebirth.[2]

8.17 Those who know that a day of Brahma lasts a thousand ages,
and a night ends only after a thousand ages, know what day and night are.[3]

8.18 At the coming of that day, all manifest things arise from the unmanifest;
at the coming of night they dissolve into that same thing called the unmanifest.

8.19 This same host of beings, coming to be again and again, dissolves
helplessly at the coming of night, son of Pritha, and arises at the coming of day.

8.20 But beyond that unmanifest there is another, eternal, unmanifest state of being,
which does not perish when all beings perish.

2 Brahmā: the creator god, not to be confused with *brahman*, the absolute; his world is the highest heaven within the cycle of rebirth.
3 An age (*yuga*): one of the vast periods into which cosmic time is divided.

8.21 It is called the unmanifest, the imperishable; they call it the highest goal;
those who reach it do not return: that is my supreme abode.

8.22 That supreme *puruṣa*, son of Pritha, is to be won by devotion directed to nothing else;
in him all beings dwell, and by him all this is pervaded.

8.23 Now I will tell you, bull of the Bharatas, the times
at which *yogins* who depart go never to return, or to return.

8.24 Fire, light, day, the bright half of the month, the six months of the sun's northern course—
departing then, people who know *brahman* go to *brahman*.[4]

8.25 Smoke, night, the dark half of the month, the six months of the sun's southern course—
departing then, the *yogin* reaches the light of the moon and returns.

8.26 These two paths, the bright and the dark, are held to be the world's eternal ways;
by one a person goes never to return, by the other he returns again.

8.27 No *yogin* who knows these two paths, son of Pritha, is deluded;
therefore at all times be disciplined in *yoga*, Arjuna.

8.28 Whatever fruit of merit is promised
for the Vedas, for sacrifices, for austerities,
and for gifts—the *yogin* who knows this passes beyond it all,
and reaches the supreme and primal place.

4 The bright and dark halves of the lunar month, and the sun's northward and southward courses, mark auspicious and inauspicious times of death.

Chapter 9: The Royal Knowledge and the Royal Secret

राजविद्याराजगुह्ययोगः *(Rājavidyārājaguhyayoga)*

All beings rest in Krishna, but he does not rest in them;
whatever is offered to him with devotion he accepts.

KRISHNA

9.1 But to you, who do not find fault, I will now declare this deepest secret,
knowledge together with discernment, knowing which you will be freed from evil.

9.2 It is the king of sciences, the king of secrets, the supreme purifier,
known by direct experience, in keeping with *dharma*, easy to practice, imperishable.

9.3 People who have no faith in this *dharma*, scorcher of foes,
do not reach me, and return to the path of death and rebirth.[1]

9.4 All this world is pervaded by me in my unmanifest form;
all beings dwell in me, but I do not dwell in them.

9.5 And yet beings do not dwell in me: see my sovereign *yoga*!
My self sustains beings and brings them into being, yet does not dwell in them.

1 *Saṃsāra*: the round of death and rebirth.

9.6 As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, always rests in space,
so, you should understand, all beings rest in me.

9.7 All beings, son of Kunti, pass into my *prakṛti*
at the end of a cosmic cycle; at the beginning of a cycle I send them forth again.[2]

9.8 Taking hold of my own *prakṛti*, I send forth again and again
this whole host of beings, helpless under the power of *prakṛti*.

9.9 And these actions do not bind me, Dhananjaya;
I sit as one indifferent, unattached to these actions.

9.10 With me as overseer, *prakṛti* gives birth to all that moves and does not move;
for this reason, son of Kunti, the world goes round.

9.11 The deluded despise me when I take on a human body,
not knowing my higher being as the great Lord of beings.

9.12 Vain in their hopes, vain in their actions, vain in their knowledge, senseless,
they cling to the deluding nature of fiends and demons.

9.13 But the great-souled, son of Pritha, clinging to the divine nature,
worship me with minds set on nothing else, knowing me as the imperishable origin of beings.

9.14 Always praising me, striving, firm in their vows,
bowing to me in devotion, ever disciplined, they worship me.

9.15 And others, sacrificing with the sacrifice of knowledge, worship me
as one and as many, in many ways, facing in every direction.

2 A cosmic cycle (*kalpa*): the span from one creation of the world to its dissolution.

9.16 I am the rite, I am the sacrifice, I am the offering to the ancestors, I am the healing herb,
I am the sacred formula, I am the clarified butter, I am the fire, I am the oblation.

9.17 I am the father of this world, the mother, the establisher, the grandfather,
the one thing to be known, the purifier, the syllable *om*, the Rig, the Saman and the Yajur Vedas.[3]

9.18 The goal, the sustainer, the lord, the witness, the dwelling, the refuge, the friend,
the origin, the dissolution, the ground, the treasure-house, the imperishable seed.

9.19 I give heat; I hold back the rain and send it forth;
I am immortality and death, what is and what is not, Arjuna.

9.20 Knowers of the three Vedas, drinkers of *soma*, cleansed of evil,
worship me with sacrifices and pray for the way to heaven;
reaching the pure world of the lord of the gods,
they enjoy in heaven the divine pleasures of the gods.[4]

9.21 Having enjoyed that wide world of heaven,
when their merit is exhausted, they enter the world of mortals.
So those who follow the *dharma* of the three Vedas,
desiring desires, obtain only going and coming.

9.22 Those who think of me alone and worship me,
ever disciplined—I bring them what they lack and keep what they have.

3 The Ṛg, Sāman and Yajur Vedas: the three principal collections of Vedic hymns, chants and ritual formulas.
4 *Soma*: the sacred drink pressed and offered in Vedic ritual. The lord of the gods is Indra.

9.23 Even those who are devoted to other gods and sacrifice to them, filled with faith,
are really sacrificing to me alone, son of Kunti, though not according to the rule.

9.24 For I am the enjoyer and the lord of all sacrifices;
but they do not know me as I truly am, and so they fall.

9.25 Those who are devoted to the gods go to the gods; those devoted to the ancestors go to the ancestors;
those who sacrifice to spirits go to the spirits; and those who sacrifice to me come to me.

9.26 Whoever offers me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water—
that offering of devotion I accept from one whose self is pure.

9.27 Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give,
whatever austerity you practice, son of Kunti—do it as an offering to me.

9.28 So you will be freed from the bonds of action, with their good and bad fruits;
your self disciplined by the *yoga* of renunciation, set free, you will come to me.

9.29 I am the same to all beings; no one is hateful to me, and no one dear;
but those who worship me with devotion are in me, and I am in them.

9.30 Even if a man of very evil conduct worships me with undivided devotion,
he is to be counted as good, for he has resolved rightly.

9.31 He quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace.
Son of Kunti, know this for certain: my devotee does not perish.

9.32 For those who take refuge in me, son of Pritha, even those who may be of sinful birth—
women, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras* too—they also reach the highest goal.[5]

9.33 How much more, then, pure brahmins and devoted royal sages!
Having come into this fleeting and joyless world, worship me.

9.34 Keep your mind on me, be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, bow down to me;
disciplining yourself in this way, intent on me, you will come to me.

5 *Vaiśyas* (farmers and traders) and *śūdras* (laborers and servants) are the third and fourth of the four classes.

Chapter 10: Manifestations

विभूतियोगः *(Vibhūtiyoga)*

Krishna names his manifestations: among lights the sun, among rivers the Ganges, among letters the A.

KRISHNA

10.1 Hear once more, mighty-armed one, my highest word,
which I will speak to you, who delight in it, out of my wish for your good.

10.2 Neither the hosts of gods nor the great seers know my origin,
for I am in every way the source of the gods and of the great seers.

10.3 Whoever knows me as unborn and without beginning, the great Lord of the worlds—
he, undeluded among mortals, is set free from all evil.

10.4 Understanding, knowledge, freedom from delusion, patience, truth, self-restraint, calm,
pleasure and pain, being and non-being, fear and fearlessness as well,

10.5 nonviolence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, generosity, fame and disgrace—
these varied states of beings arise from me alone.

10.6 The seven great seers of old, and likewise the four Manus,
were of my nature, born from my mind; from them come
the creatures of this world.[1]

10.7 Whoever truly knows this manifest glory of mine and my
yoga
is joined to me by unwavering *yoga*; of this there is no
doubt.[2]

10.8 I am the source of all; from me everything unfolds.
Knowing this, the wise worship me with all their hearts.

10.9 Their thoughts on me, their lives given to me, enlightening
one another
and always speaking of me, they are content and they
rejoice.

10.10 To those who are ever disciplined and worship me with love
I give the *yoga* of understanding by which they come to me.

10.11 Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their inmost
being,
destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the shining
lamp of knowledge.

ARJUNA

10.12 You are the supreme *brahman*, the supreme abode, the
supreme purifier,
the eternal divine *puruṣa*, the first of the gods, unborn, all-
pervading.[3]

10.13 So all the seers declare you—the divine seer Narada too,
Asita Devala, and Vyasa—and now you tell me so yourself.[4]

1 The seers (*ṛṣis*) and the Manus, the fathers of humankind, are the mythic ancestors of all creatures.
2 Applied to Krishna, *yoga* is also his own power to manifest himself.
3 *Puruṣa* here is a title of the supreme God, the Person.
4 Nārada, Asita Devala and Vyāsa are renowned sages; Vyāsa is the traditional author of the *Mahabharata*.

10.14 All that you tell me, Keshava, I hold to be true;
for neither the gods nor the demons, Lord, know your manifestation.

10.15 You alone know yourself through yourself, Supreme Person,
source of beings, lord of beings, god of gods, master of the world!

10.16 Tell me fully, for they are divine, the manifestations of your self,
those glories by which you pervade these worlds and abide in them.

10.17 How may I know you, master of *yoga*, as I meditate on you always?
In what various forms, Lord, should I think of you?

10.18 Tell me again in detail of your *yoga* and your glory, Janardana,
for I can never have enough of hearing this nectar.

KRISHNA

10.19 Very well, I will tell you of my divine manifestations—
the chief of them, best of the Kurus, for there is no end to my extent.

10.20 I am the Self, Gudakesha, seated in the heart of all beings;
I am the beginning and the middle of beings, and their end as well.

10.21 Of the Adityas I am Vishnu; of lights, the radiant sun;
I am Marichi of the Maruts; among the stars, I am the moon.[5]

5 The Ādityas are a group of sky gods, and the Maruts are storm gods led by Marīci.

10.22 Of the Vedas I am the Sama Veda; of the gods I am Indra;
of the senses I am the mind; in beings I am consciousness.[6]

10.23 Of the Rudras I am Shankara; of yakshas and rakshasas, the lord of wealth;
of the Vasus I am fire; of mountain peaks I am Meru.[7]

10.24 Know me, son of Pritha, as the chief of household priests, Brihaspati;
of generals I am Skanda; of bodies of water I am the ocean.[8]

10.25 Of the great seers I am Bhrigu; of utterances I am the single syllable;
of sacrifices I am the sacrifice of silent repetition; of things unmoving, the Himalaya.[9]

10.26 Among all trees I am the ashvattha; among divine seers, Narada;
of the gandharvas, Chitraratha; of the perfected ones, the sage Kapila.[10]

10.27 Among horses know me as Ucchaihshravas, born of the nectar;
Airavata among lordly elephants; and among men, the king.[11]

6 The Sāma Veda is the Veda of chanted hymns. The Sanskrit calls Indra, king of the gods, by his title Vāsava.
7 Śaṅkara is Shiva, chief of the Rudras; the lord of wealth is Kubera, king of the yakshas (nature spirits) and rakshasas (demons). Meru is the golden mountain at the center of the world.
8 Bṛhaspati is priest to the gods; Skanda, son of Shiva, leads their armies.
9 The single syllable is *om*. Silent repetition (*japa*) is the murmured recitation of a prayer or divine name.
10 The aśvattha is the sacred fig. Gandharvas are celestial musicians; Kapila is the legendary founder of Sāṃkhya philosophy.
11 Uccaiḥśravas and Airāvata, Indra's horse and elephant, rose from the ocean when the gods churned it for the nectar of immortality.

10.28 Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; of cows I am the cow of plenty;
I am Kandarpa, the god of love, who begets; of serpents I am Vasuki.[12]

10.29 Of the nagas I am Ananta; of water creatures I am Varuna;
of the ancestors I am Aryaman; of those who restrain, I am Yama.[13]

10.30 Of the Daityas I am Prahlada; of those who reckon, I am Time;
of beasts I am the king of beasts, and of birds, the son of Vinata.[14]

10.31 Of purifiers I am the wind; of warriors, Rama;
of sea creatures I am the makara; of rivers I am the Ganges.[15]

10.32 Of creations I am the beginning and the end, and the middle too, Arjuna;
of sciences, the science of the Self; of those who debate, I am the argument.

10.33 Of letters I am the letter A; of compounds, the pairing compound;
I alone am unending Time; I am the Creator, facing every way.[16]

10.34 I am all-seizing death, and the source of what is to be;
among feminine things, fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness, patience.

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12 Vāsuki is the serpent king, used as the rope in the churning of the ocean.
13 Ananta is the endless serpent on whom Vishnu rests; Varuṇa is lord of the waters, Aryaman chief of the ancestors, and Yama the god of death.
14 Prahlāda was a devotee of Vishnu born among the Daityas, a race of demons; Vinatā's son is Garuḍa, Vishnu's eagle mount.
15 Rāma is the hero of the *Ramayana*; the makara is a mythical crocodile-like sea monster.
16 The pairing compound (*dvandva*) joins words as equals, as in "mother-and-father."

10.35 Likewise of chants I am the Brihat Saman; of meters, the Gayatri;
of months I am Margashirsha; of seasons, the flowering spring.[17]

10.36 Of cheats I am the gambling; I am the brilliance of the brilliant;
I am victory, I am resolve, I am the goodness of the good.

10.37 Of the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva; of the Pandavas, Dhananjaya;
of sages, too, I am Vyasa; of poets, the poet Ushanas.[18]

10.38 Of those who subdue I am the rod of punishment; of those seeking victory, statecraft;
of secrets I am silence; I am the knowledge of those who know.

10.39 And whatever is the seed of all beings, that I am, Arjuna;
there is no being, moving or unmoving, that could exist without me.

10.40 There is no end to my divine manifestations, scorcher of foes;
what I have told is only a sampling of the extent of my glory.

10.41 Whatever being has glory, splendor or power,
know that it springs from a fragment of my brilliance.

10.42 But what use is all this detailed knowledge to you, Arjuna?
I stand, supporting this whole world with a single fraction of myself.

17 The Bṛhat Sāman is a great chant of the Sāma Veda; the Gāyatrī is the meter of the most revered Vedic verse. Mārgaśīrṣa falls in November–December.
18 Krishna himself is Vāsudeva of the Vṛṣṇi clan; Dhanañjaya is Arjuna. Uśanas is an ancient seer-poet.

Chapter 11: The Vision of the Universal Form

विश्वरूपदर्शनयोगः *(Viśvarūpadarśanayoga)*

Given divine sight, Arjuna sees Krishna's form containing all worlds — "I am Time, destroyer of worlds."

ARJUNA

11.1 Out of kindness to me you have spoken the supreme and secret word
concerning the Self; by it this delusion of mine is gone.

11.2 For I have heard from you in full of the arising and passing away of beings,
lotus-eyed one, and of your imperishable greatness.

11.3 It is just as you have said of yourself, supreme Lord;
yet I wish to see your sovereign form, Supreme Person.

11.4 If you think it possible for me to see it, master,
then, lord of *yoga*, show me your imperishable self.

KRISHNA

11.5 Behold, son of Pritha, my forms by hundreds and by thousands,
various and divine, of many colors and shapes.

11.6 Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashvins and the Maruts;
behold many wonders never seen before, Bharata.[1]

1 Classes of Vedic gods; the Aśvins are twin horsemen, gods of healing.

11.7 Here, today, behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving,
gathered as one in my body, Gudakesha, and whatever else you wish to see.

11.8 But you cannot see me with these eyes of your own;
I give you divine sight: behold my sovereign *yoga*.

THE COSMIC FORM

Krishna reveals his universal form, blazing with the light of a thousand suns.

SANJAYA

11.9 Having said this, King, Hari, the great lord of *yoga*,
then revealed to the son of Pritha his supreme sovereign form.[2]

11.10 With many mouths and eyes, many wondrous sights,
many divine ornaments, many divine weapons raised,

11.11 wearing divine garlands and robes, anointed with divine perfumes,
all-wondrous, the infinite god, facing in every direction.

11.12 If the light of a thousand suns were to rise at once in the sky,
that might resemble the splendor of that great being.

11.13 There the son of Pandu saw the whole universe, in its many divisions,
gathered as one in the body of the god of gods.

11.14 Then Dhananjaya, filled with amazement, his hair standing on end,
bowed his head to the god and, with hands joined in reverence, spoke.

2 Hari is a name of Vishnu, and so of Krishna.

ARJUNA

11.15 I see the gods in your body, god,
and all the hosts of different beings,
Brahma the lord seated on his lotus,
and all the seers and the divine serpents.

11.16 With many arms, bellies, mouths and eyes,
I see you, infinite in form on every side;
no end, no middle, nor again beginning
do I see in you, lord of all, whose form is all.

11.17 Crowned, bearing mace and discus,
a mass of radiance shining everywhere,
I see you, hard to look upon, all around
with the blaze of burning fire and sun, beyond measure.

11.18 You are the imperishable, the highest to be known;
you are the final resting place of this universe;
you are the undying guardian of eternal *dharma*;
you are, I believe, the everlasting *puruṣa*.

11.19 Without beginning, middle or end, of infinite power,
with infinite arms, the moon and sun your eyes,
I see you, your mouth a blazing sacrificial fire,
scorching this universe with your radiance.

11.20 For the space between heaven and earth
and all the directions are pervaded by you alone;
seeing this wondrous, terrible form of yours,
the three worlds tremble, great one.

11.21 These hosts of gods are entering you;
some in fear, with joined hands, call out your praise;
crying “Hail!” the hosts of great seers and perfected ones
praise you with abundant hymns.

11.22 The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus and the Sadhyas,
the All-gods, the Ashvins, the Maruts and the steam-drinkers,
the hosts of gandharvas, yakshas, asuras and perfected ones
all gaze at you in amazement.[3]

11.23 Seeing your great form, with its many mouths and eyes,
mighty-armed one, with many arms, thighs and feet,
many bellies, terrible with many tusks,
the worlds tremble, and so do I.

11.24 Touching the sky, blazing, many-colored,
mouths gaping, with huge fiery eyes—
seeing you so, my inmost self trembles;
I find no steadiness and no peace, Vishnu.

11.25 Seeing your mouths, terrible with tusks,
like the fire at the end of time,
I lose all sense of direction and find no shelter;
have mercy, lord of gods, dwelling of the world![4]

11.26 And all these sons of Dhritarashtra,
together with the hosts of kings,
Bhishma, Drona, and that charioteer's son there,
together with the chief warriors on our side too,[5]

11.27 rush into your mouths,
terrible, dreadful with tusks;
some are seen caught between your teeth,
their heads crushed to powder.

3 The Sādhyas and the All-gods (Viśvedevas) are classes of gods; the steam-drinkers are the ancestors, who partake of hot offerings; the asuras are the gods' demonic rivals.
4 The fire of time consumes the universe at the end of a cosmic age.
5 The charioteer's son is Karṇa.

11.28 As the many rushing torrents of rivers
flow toward the ocean alone,
so these heroes of the world of men
enter your mouths that blaze on every side.

11.29 As moths rush into a blazing flame
to their destruction, at full speed,
so the worlds rush into your mouths
to their destruction, at full speed.

11.30 You lick your lips, devouring on every side
all the worlds with your flaming mouths;
filling the whole universe with brilliance,
your fierce rays scorch it, Vishnu.

11.31 Tell me who you are, in this terrible form!
Homage to you, best of gods—have mercy!
I want to understand you, primal one,
for I do not comprehend what you are doing.

"I AM TIME"

Krishna declares the warriors already slain by him and tells Arjuna to be his instrument.

KRISHNA

11.32 I am Time, destroyer of worlds, grown mighty,
come forth here to gather in the worlds.
Even without you, none of them will live,
these warriors drawn up in the opposing ranks.

11.33 So stand up, win glory!
Conquer your enemies and enjoy a prosperous kingdom.
They have already been slain by me;
be merely the instrument, you who shoot with either hand.

11.34 Drona and Bhishma, Jayadratha,
Karna and the other heroic warriors
are already slain by me—kill them! Do not waver!
Fight! You will conquer your rivals in battle.[6]

ARJUNA'S HYMN OF PRAISE

Trembling, Arjuna praises Krishna, asks forgiveness for past familiarity, and begs to see his familiar form.

SANJAYA

11.35 Hearing these words of Keshava,
the crowned one, trembling, hands joined in reverence,
bowed and spoke again to Krishna,
stammering, terrified, bowing low.[7]

ARJUNA

11.36 It is fitting, Hrishikesha, that the world
rejoices and delights in your praise;
demons flee in terror in every direction,
and all the hosts of the perfected bow to you.

11.37 And why should they not bow to you, great one,
greater even than Brahma, the first creator?
Infinite one, lord of gods, dwelling of the world,
you are the imperishable—being and non-being, and what
is beyond them.

11.38 You are the first god, the ancient *puruṣa*;
you are the final resting place of this universe;
you are the knower and the known, and the highest abode;
by you this universe is spread out, you of infinite form.

6 Jayadratha, king of the Sindhus, fights on the side of Dhritarashtra's sons.
7 The crowned one (Kirīṭin) is Arjuna.

11.39 You are Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, the moon,
Prajapati, and the great-grandfather.
Homage, homage to you a thousand times,
and again and yet again homage, homage to you![8]

11.40 Homage to you in front and behind;
homage to you on every side, you who are all!
Infinite in strength, boundless in might,
you pervade all, and so you are all.

11.41 Whatever I said rashly, thinking of you as a friend—
"Hey, Krishna! Hey, Yadava! Hey, friend!"—
not knowing this greatness of yours,
out of carelessness or even out of affection,

11.42 and whatever disrespect I showed you in jest,
at play, at rest, sitting, or at meals,
alone or in front of others, Achyuta—
for that I ask forgiveness of you, the immeasurable.

11.43 You are father of the world, of all that moves and does not move;
you are its object of worship and its most venerable teacher.
There is none equal to you—how could another surpass you —
in all the three worlds, you of incomparable power?

11.44 So, bowing, prostrating my body,
I ask your grace, Lord worthy of praise:
as a father with a son, as a friend with a friend,
as a lover with the beloved, bear with me, god.

11.45 I am thrilled to have seen what was never seen before,
yet my mind is shaken with fear.
Show me that familiar form of yours, god;
have mercy, lord of gods, dwelling of the world!

8 Vāyu (wind), Yama (death), Agni (fire) and Varuṇa (the waters) are Vedic gods; Brahmā is the "grandfather" of the world, so his source is the great-grandfather.

11.46 Crowned, holding mace and discus in hand—
so I wish to see you, just as before.
Take on that four-armed form,
thousand-armed one, you whose body is the universe!

KRISHNA

11.47 By my grace, Arjuna, through my own *yoga*,
I have shown you this supreme form—
made of splendor, universal, infinite, primal—
which no one but you has seen before.

11.48 Not by the Vedas, by sacrifices or study, not by gifts,
not by rites, not by fierce austerities
can I be seen in such a form in the world of men
by anyone but you, hero of the Kurus.

11.49 Do not tremble, do not be bewildered
at seeing this terrible form of mine;
free from fear, glad at heart,
look once more on that same form of mine.

THE RETURN TO HUMAN FORM

Krishna resumes his gentle form and says only undivided devotion can see him so.

SANJAYA

11.50 Having spoken so to Arjuna, Vasudeva
showed him his own form once more,
and the great one, taking again a gentle shape,
comforted the frightened man.

ARJUNA

11.51 Seeing this gentle human form of yours, Janardana,
I have now come to myself; I am restored to my natural state.

KRISHNA

11.52 This form of mine that you have seen is very hard to see;
even the gods long constantly for the sight of it.

11.53 Not through the Vedas, nor austerity, nor gifts, nor sacrifice
can I be seen in the way that you have seen me.

11.54 But by undivided devotion, Arjuna, I can in this way
be known and seen in truth, and entered into, scorcher of foes.

11.55 Whoever does my work, holds me as highest, is devoted to me, free of attachment,
without enmity toward any being—he comes to me, son of Pandu.

Chapter 12: Devotion

भक्तियोगः *(Bhaktiyoga)*

Worship of the personal God and of the unmanifest; the devotee who is dear to Krishna.

ARJUNA

12.1 Of the devotees who, ever disciplined, worship you in this way,
and those who worship the imperishable, the unmanifest—
which know *yoga* best?

KRISHNA

12.2 Those who fix their minds on me and worship me, ever disciplined,
endowed with supreme faith—I consider them the most disciplined.

12.3 But those who worship the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest,
all-pervading and unthinkable, unchanging, immovable, constant,

12.4 restraining all their senses, even-minded everywhere,
delighting in the good of all beings—they too reach me.

12.5 Greater is the toil of those whose minds are set on the unmanifest,
for the unmanifest goal is hard for embodied beings to reach.

12.6 But those who, intent on me, surrender all their actions to me
and worship me, meditating on me with single-minded *yoga* —

12.7 for them, whose thoughts have entered into me, I soon become
the deliverer from the ocean of death and rebirth, son of Pritha.

12.8 Fix your mind on me alone; let your understanding enter into me;
then you will dwell in me hereafter—of that there is no doubt.

12.9 But if you cannot hold your thought steady on me,
then seek to reach me by the *yoga* of practice, Dhananjaya.

12.10 If you are unable even to practice, make my work your highest aim;
by doing actions for my sake, you will also reach perfection.

12.11 If you cannot do even this, then, relying on my *yoga*,
relinquish the fruit of all actions, with your self restrained.

12.12 Knowledge is better than practice; meditation surpasses knowledge;
relinquishing the fruit of action surpasses meditation—and peace follows at once on relinquishment.

12.13 One who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate,
free of "mine" and of ego, even in pain and pleasure, patient,

12.14 always content, a disciplined *yogin*, self-controlled, firm in resolve,
with mind and understanding offered to me—that devotee of mine is dear to me.

12.15 One from whom the world does not shrink, and who does not shrink from the world,
free from elation, anger, fear and agitation—that one is dear to me.

12.16 One who expects nothing, pure, capable, impartial, untroubled,
who has given up all undertakings—that devotee of mine is dear to me.

12.17 One who neither rejoices nor hates, neither grieves nor desires,
who has given up good and bad alike, full of devotion—that one is dear to me.

12.18 The same to enemy and friend, the same in honor and dishonor,
the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, free of attachment,

12.19 equal in blame and praise, silent, content with whatever comes,
homeless, steady in mind, full of devotion—that person is dear to me.

12.20 But those who follow this nectar of *dharma* as I have spoken it,
with faith, holding me as highest—those devotees are exceedingly dear to me.

Chapter 13: The Field and the Knower of the Field

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञविभागयोगः *(Kṣetrakṣetrajñavibhāgayoga)*

The body as the field, the self as its knower; nature and spirit.

KRISHNA

13.1 This body, son of Kunti, is called the field;
one who knows it is called the knower of the field by those who know them.

13.2 Know me also as the knower of the field in all fields, Bharata;
knowledge of the field and its knower—that I hold to be knowledge.

13.3 What that field is, what it is like, what its changes are, and what comes from what;
and who he is, and what his powers are—hear this from me in brief.

13.4 It has been sung by the seers in many ways, separately in various hymns,
and in the reasoned, conclusive words of the aphorisms on *brahman*.[1]

1 Possibly the *Brahma Sūtras*; the phrase may also mean simply "words about *brahman*."

13.5 The great elements, the sense of "I," understanding, and the unmanifest,
the ten senses and the one, and the five realms of the senses,[2]

13.6 desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the bodily aggregate, consciousness, resolve—
this, in brief, is the field with its changes.

13.7 Humility, sincerity, nonviolence, patience, uprightness,
service of the teacher, purity, steadiness, self-restraint,

13.8 detachment from the objects of the senses, and absence of ego,
keeping in view the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain,

13.9 non-attachment, not clinging to son, wife, home and the like,
constant evenness of mind in welcome and unwelcome events,

13.10 unswerving devotion to me through undivided *yoga*,
resort to solitary places, no taste for the crowd,

13.11 constancy in knowledge of the Self, insight into the purpose of knowing the truth—
this is called knowledge; whatever differs from it is ignorance.

13.12 I will tell you what is to be known, knowing which one attains immortality:
the beginningless, supreme *brahman*, which is said to be neither being nor non-being.

13.13 Its hands and feet are everywhere, its eyes, heads and mouths everywhere,
its ears everywhere in the world; it stands enveloping all.

2 A list from Sāṃkhya philosophy: the five elements, the sense of "I", the ten organs of sense and action plus the mind, and the five kinds of sense object.

13.14 Shining with the qualities of all the senses, yet free of all the senses,
unattached, yet sustaining all; free of the *guṇas*, yet experiencing the *guṇas*.

13.15 Outside and inside beings, unmoving and moving,
too subtle to be known, it is far away and near.

13.16 Undivided, it seems to stand divided among beings;
it is to be known as the sustainer of beings, their devourer and their creator.

13.17 It is the light of lights, said to be beyond darkness;
knowledge, the object of knowledge, the goal of knowledge, it is seated in the heart of all.

13.18 Thus the field, knowledge and the object of knowledge have been told in brief;
my devotee, understanding this, comes to my state of being.

13.19 Know that *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are both without beginning;
and know that the changes and the *guṇas* arise from *prakṛti*.

13.20 *Prakṛti* is said to be the cause in the making of effects and instruments;
puruṣa is said to be the cause in the experiencing of pleasure and pain.

13.21 For *puruṣa*, dwelling in *prakṛti*, experiences the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*;
attachment to the *guṇas* is the cause of its births in good and evil wombs.

13.22 Witness and consenter, sustainer, experiencer, the great Lord,
also called the supreme Self—such is the highest *puruṣa* in this body.

13.23 Whoever knows *puruṣa*, and *prakṛti* with its *guṇas*, in this way,
whatever his mode of life, is not born again.

13.24 Some see the Self in the self by the self through meditation,
others by the *yoga* of *sāṃkhya*, and others by the *yoga* of action.

13.25 Others, not knowing this, hear it from others and worship;
they too, devoted to what they have heard, cross beyond death.

13.26 Whatever being is born, unmoving or moving,
know that it comes from the union of the field and the knower of the field, bull of the Bharatas.

13.27 The one who sees the supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings,
undying amid the dying—that one truly sees.

13.28 For seeing the Lord present equally everywhere,
he does not harm the self by the self, and so reaches the highest goal.

13.29 One who sees that all actions are done by *prakṛti* alone,
and that the self is not the doer—that one truly sees.

13.30 When he sees the separate existence of beings as resting in the One,
and their spreading out from that alone, then he attains *brahman*.

13.31 Because it is beginningless and free of the *guṇas*, this supreme Self, imperishable,
though dwelling in the body, son of Kunti, neither acts nor is stained.

13.32 As all-pervading space, because of its subtlety, is not stained,
so the Self, present everywhere in the body, is not stained.

13.33 As the one sun lights up this whole world,
so the lord of the field lights up the whole field, Bharata.

13.34 Those who, with the eye of knowledge, know the difference
between field and knower of the field,
and the release of beings from *prakṛti*, go to the highest.

Chapter 14: The Three Qualities

गुणत्रयविभागयोगः *(Guṇatrayavibhāgayoga)*
Goodness, passion and darkness, how they bind, and the one who goes beyond them.

KRISHNA

14.1 Again I will tell you the highest knowledge, the best of all knowledge,
knowing which all the sages have passed from here to supreme perfection.

14.2 Relying on this knowledge, they have come to share my nature;
they are not born even at the creation, nor troubled at the dissolution.[1]

14.3 Great *brahman* is my womb; in it I place the seed;
from that comes the birth of all beings, Bharata.

14.4 Whatever forms are born in any womb, son of Kunti,
great *brahman* is their womb, and I am the seed-giving father.

14.5 *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—goodness, passion and darkness—these *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*
bind the imperishable embodied one in the body, mighty-armed one.

1 In Indian cosmology the universe is created and dissolved again in endless cycles.

14.6 Of these, *sattva*, being stainless, is luminous and free of affliction;
it binds through attachment to happiness and attachment to knowledge, blameless one.

14.7 Know that *rajas* is of the nature of passion, arising from thirst and attachment;
it binds the embodied one, son of Kunti, through attachment to action.

14.8 But know that *tamas* is born of ignorance, deluding all embodied beings;
it binds, Bharata, through negligence, sloth and sleep.

14.9 *Sattva* attaches one to happiness, *rajas* to action, Bharata;
but *tamas*, veiling knowledge, attaches one to negligence.

14.10 *Sattva* prevails by overpowering *rajas* and *tamas*, Bharata;
so too *rajas* prevails over *sattva* and *tamas*, and *tamas* over *sattva* and *rajas*.

14.11 When light, which is knowledge, arises at all the gates of this body,
then one may know that *sattva* has grown strong.

14.12 Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, restlessness, craving—
these arise, bull of the Bharatas, when *rajas* has grown strong.

14.13 Darkness, inactivity, negligence and delusion—
these arise, joy of the Kurus, when *tamas* has grown strong.

14.14 If the embodied one meets dissolution when *sattva* is dominant,
he reaches the stainless worlds of those who know the highest.

14.15 Meeting dissolution in *rajas*, he is born among those attached to action;
dissolved in *tamas*, he is born in the wombs of the deluded.

14.16 The fruit of good action, they say, is pure and of *sattva*;
but the fruit of *rajas* is pain, and the fruit of *tamas* is ignorance.

14.17 From *sattva* arises knowledge, and from *rajas* greed;
negligence and delusion arise from *tamas*, and ignorance too.

14.18 Those who abide in *sattva* go upward; those of *rajas* remain in the middle;
those of *tamas*, abiding in the workings of the lowest *guṇa*, go downward.

14.19 When the seer beholds no agent other than the *guṇas*,
and knows what is beyond the *guṇas*, he attains my state of being.

14.20 Passing beyond these three *guṇas*, from which the body arises,
the embodied one, freed from birth, death, old age and pain, attains immortality.

ARJUNA

14.21 By what marks, master, is one known who has passed beyond these three *guṇas*?
How does he conduct himself, and how does he pass beyond the three *guṇas*?

KRISHNA

14.22 He does not hate light, activity and delusion, son of Pandu,
when they arise, nor long for them when they cease;

14.23 he who, seated as if indifferent, is not disturbed by the *guṇas*,
who stands firm, thinking only "The *guṇas* are at work," and does not waver;

14.24 the same in pain and pleasure, self-possessed, to whom a clod, a stone and gold are equal,
the same toward the dear and the not dear, steadfast, the same in blame and praise of himself;

14.25 the same in honor and dishonor, the same toward friend and foe,
having given up all undertakings—he is said to have passed beyond the *guṇas*.

14.26 And one who serves me with the unwavering *yoga* of devotion,
passing beyond these *guṇas*, is fit to become *brahman*.

14.27 For I am the foundation of *brahman*, of the immortal and imperishable,
of eternal *dharma*, and of absolute happiness.

Chapter 15: The Supreme Person

पुरुषोत्तमयोगः *(Puruṣottamayoga)*

The eternal fig tree with roots above, and the supreme person beyond the perishable and the imperishable.

KRISHNA

15.1 They speak of an imperishable ashvattha tree with roots above and branches below,
whose leaves are the Vedic hymns; whoever knows it knows the Veda.[1]

15.2 Its branches spread below and above,
nourished by the *guṇas*, with the objects of the senses as their shoots;
and below, its roots stretch on and on,
binding through *karma* in the world of men.[2]

15.3 Its form is not perceived here as such,
nor its end, nor its beginning, nor its foundation.
Cutting down this firmly rooted ashvattha
with the strong axe of non-attachment,

15.4 one must then seek that place
to which those who go do not return again:
"I take refuge in that primal *puruṣa*
from whom the ancient stream of activity flowed forth."

1 An inverted world tree also appears in the Upanishads.
2 *Karma*: action and its binding consequences, which lead to further births.

15.5 Free of pride and delusion, having conquered the fault of attachment,
ever intent on the Self, their desires turned away,
freed from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain,
the undeluded go to that imperishable place.

15.6 Neither sun nor moon nor fire lights it;
going there, they do not return: that is my supreme abode.

15.7 A fragment of me, eternal, becomes a living soul in the world of the living;
it draws to itself the senses, with the mind as the sixth, that rest in *prakṛti*.

15.8 When the lord takes a body and when he departs from it,
he takes these with him and goes, as the wind carries scents from their source.[3]

15.9 Hearing, sight and touch, taste and smell,
and the mind—presiding over these, he enjoys the objects of the senses.

15.10 Whether departing, staying, or enjoying, joined with the *guṇas*,
the deluded do not see him; those with the eye of knowledge see.

15.11 Striving *yogins* see him dwelling in themselves;
but the unformed and thoughtless, even though they strive, do not see him.

15.12 The brilliance in the sun that lights the whole world,
that in the moon and that in fire—know that brilliance to be mine.

3 The lord here is the embodied soul, master of the body.

15.13 Entering the earth, I sustain beings with my vigor;
and becoming Soma, the essence of sap, I nourish all plants.[4]

15.14 Becoming Vaishvanara, I dwell in the bodies of living beings,
and, joined with the in-breath and the out-breath, I digest the four kinds of food.[5]

15.15 And I have entered into the heart of all;
from me come memory, knowledge, and their loss.
I alone am what is to be known through all the Vedas;
I am the maker of the Vedanta, and the knower of the Veda.[6]

15.16 There are two *puruṣas* in the world, the perishable and the imperishable;
the perishable is all beings; the unchanging is called the imperishable.

15.17 But the highest *puruṣa* is another, called the supreme Self,
who enters the three worlds and sustains them, the imperishable Lord.

15.18 Since I am beyond the perishable and higher even than the imperishable,
I am known in the world and in the Veda as the supreme *puruṣa*.

15.19 Whoever, undeluded, knows me thus as the supreme *puruṣa*
knows all, and worships me with his whole being, Bharata.

15.20 Thus I have told you this most secret teaching, blameless one;
understanding it, one becomes wise and has done all there is to do, Bharata.

4 Soma is identified with the moon, which was thought to nourish plants.
5 Vaiśvānara, the fire "common to all people," is here the digestive fire.
6 Vedānta, "the end of the Veda," refers to the Upanishads.

Chapter 16: The Divine and the Demonic

दैवासुरसम्पद्विभागयोगः *(Daivāsurasampadvibhāgayoga)*
The qualities of those born to a divine and to a demonic destiny; desire, anger and greed, the three gates of hell.

KRISHNA

16.1 Fearlessness, purity of being, steadfastness in the *yoga* of knowledge,
generosity, self-restraint, sacrifice, study of scripture, austerity, uprightness,

16.2 nonviolence, truth, freedom from anger, relinquishment, peace, freedom from slander,
compassion for beings, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty, steadiness,

16.3 vigor, patience, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and from excessive pride—
these belong to one born to the divine endowment, Bharata.

16.4 Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness,
and ignorance belong to one born to the demonic endowment, son of Pritha.[1]

16.5 The divine endowment is held to lead to freedom, the demonic to bondage.
Do not grieve: you are born to the divine endowment, son of Pandu.

1 "Demonic" translates *āsura*, "of the asuras."

16.6 There are two kinds of beings created in this world, the divine and the demonic;
the divine has been described at length; hear from me of the demonic, son of Pritha.

16.7 Demonic people do not know when to act and when to refrain;
neither purity nor good conduct nor truth is found in them.

16.8 They say the world is without truth, without foundation, without a Lord,
brought about by mere coupling—what else?—with desire as its cause.

16.9 Holding this view, these lost souls of little understanding,
doers of cruel deeds, come forth as enemies for the destruction of the world.

16.10 Given over to insatiable desire, full of hypocrisy, pride and intoxication,
seizing false notions through delusion, they act with impure vows.

16.11 Beset by boundless cares that end only at death,
taking the enjoyment of desires as the highest aim, convinced that this is all,

16.12 bound by a hundred snares of hope, given over to desire and anger,
they strive by unjust means to amass wealth for the enjoyment of their desires.

16.13 "This I have gained today; this wish I shall fulfill;
this wealth is mine, and this too shall be mine."

16.14 "That enemy I have slain, and I shall slay others too;
I am the lord, I am the enjoyer, I am successful, strong and happy."

16.15 "I am rich and well born; who else is like me?
I shall sacrifice, I shall give, I shall rejoice"—so they say,
deluded by ignorance.

16.16 Led astray by many thoughts, caught in a net of delusion,
addicted to the enjoyment of desires, they fall into a foul
hell.

16.17 Self-important, stubborn, filled with the pride and
intoxication of wealth,
they offer sacrifices in name only, with hypocrisy,
disregarding the rules.

16.18 Given over to ego, force, arrogance, desire and anger,
these envious people hate me in their own bodies and in
the bodies of others.

16.19 Those cruel haters, the lowest of men, I cast into the rounds
of rebirth
again and again, those vile ones, into demonic wombs.

16.20 Entering demonic wombs, deluded birth after birth,
never reaching me, son of Kunti, they go to the lowest state.

16.21 Threefold is this gate of hell, destructive of the self:
desire, anger and greed. Therefore one should abandon
these three.

16.22 A person released from these three gates of darkness, son of
Kunti,
does what is good for himself, and so goes to the highest
goal.

16.23 One who casts aside the ordinances of scripture and acts on
the impulse of desire
attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest
goal.

16.24 Therefore let scripture be your authority in deciding what
should and should not be done;
knowing what the ordinances of scripture declare, you
should do your work here.

Chapter 17: The Three Kinds of Faith

श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः *(Śraddhātrayavibhāgayoga)*
Faith, food, sacrifice, austerity and giving according to the three qualities; the words "oṃ tat sat."

ARJUNA

17.1 Those who cast aside the ordinances of scripture yet sacrifice with faith—
what is their standing, Krishna? Is it *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*?

KRISHNA

17.2 The faith of embodied beings is of three kinds, born of their nature:
of *sattva*, of *rajas*, and of *tamas*. Hear about it.

17.3 Everyone's faith conforms to his inner being, Bharata.
A person is made of faith: as one's faith is, so is one.

17.4 People of *sattva* worship the gods; those of *rajas*, yakshas and rakshasas;
the others, people of *tamas*, worship ghosts and hosts of spirits.

17.5 People who practice terrible austerities not enjoined by scripture,
given to hypocrisy and ego, driven by the force of desire and passion,

17.6 senseless, tormenting the elements that make up the body,
and me as well, who dwell within the body—know them to be demonic in their resolve.

17.7 The food that each person likes is also of three kinds,
as are sacrifice, austerity and giving. Hear this distinction among them.

17.8 Foods that increase life, vitality, strength, health, happiness and satisfaction,
that are savory, rich, substantial and pleasing, are dear to people of *sattva*.

17.9 Foods that are pungent, sour, salty, very hot, sharp, harsh and burning
are liked by the person of *rajas*; they cause pain, grief and sickness.

17.10 Food that is stale, tasteless, putrid and left overnight,
leftovers and what is unfit for offering—this is dear to the person of *tamas*.

17.11 Sacrifice offered as the rules prescribe by those who do not crave its fruit,
with the mind fixed on the thought "This ought to be offered"—that is of *sattva*.

17.12 But sacrifice offered with an eye to its fruit, or for show,
know that sacrifice, best of the Bharatas, to be of *rajas*.

17.13 Sacrifice without rules, without distribution of food, without sacred formulas, without the priests' fee,
devoid of faith—they call that of *tamas*.

17.14 Worship of gods, the twice-born, teachers and the wise, purity, uprightness,
chastity and nonviolence are called austerity of the body.

17.15 Speech that causes no distress, that is true, pleasant and beneficial,
and the practice of reciting scripture, are called austerity of speech.

17.16 Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint,
purity of heart—this is called austerity of the mind.

17.17 This threefold austerity, practiced with supreme faith
by disciplined people who do not crave its fruit, they call of *sattva*.

17.18 Austerity practiced to gain respect, honor and reverence, or out of hypocrisy,
is said here to be of *rajas*, unstable and fleeting.

17.19 Austerity practiced from foolish obstinacy, with self-torment,
or to ruin another, is declared to be of *tamas*.

17.20 A gift given because it ought to be given, to one who can do nothing in return,
in the right place and time and to a worthy person—that gift is held to be of *sattva*.

17.21 But a gift given to get something in return, or with an eye to its fruit,
or given grudgingly—that gift is held to be of *rajas*.

17.22 A gift given at the wrong place and time, to unworthy people,
without respect or with contempt, is declared to be of *tamas*.

17.23 "*Om tat sat*" is held to be the threefold designation of *brahman*;
by it the brahmins, the Vedas and the sacrifices were ordained of old.[1]

17.24 Therefore, with the utterance "*om*," acts of sacrifice, giving and austerity
are always begun, as the rules prescribe, by those who expound *brahman*.

1 *Tat* means "that" and *sat* "being" or "the real."

17.25 With "*Tat*," and without aiming at the fruit, acts of sacrifice and austerity
and the various acts of giving are performed by those who seek release.

17.26 "*Sat*" is used for what is real and what is good;
and the word "*sat*" is likewise used for a praiseworthy act, son of Pritha.

17.27 Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and giving is also called "*sat*,"
and any action for that purpose is called "*sat*" as well.

17.28 Whatever is offered, given, or done as austerity without faith
is called "*asat*," unreal, son of Pritha; it counts for nothing, hereafter or here.

Chapter 18: Liberation through Renunciation

मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः *(Mokṣasaṃnyāsayoga)*

True renunciation, action according to one's own duty, and the final teaching: take refuge in me alone.

ARJUNA

18.1 Mighty-armed one, I wish to know the truth of renunciation,
and of relinquishment, Hrishikesha, each distinctly, slayer of Keshin.[1]

KRISHNA

18.2 The poets understand renunciation as the laying aside of actions done from desire;
the discerning call relinquishing the fruit of all action relinquishment.

18.3 Some thinkers say action should be relinquished as a fault;
others, that acts of sacrifice, giving and austerity should not be relinquished.

18.4 Hear my conclusion on relinquishment, best of the Bharatas:
relinquishment, tiger among men, is declared to be of three kinds.

1 Keśin was a horse-demon slain by Krishna.

18.5 Acts of sacrifice, giving and austerity should not be relinquished; they should be performed.
Sacrifice, giving and austerity purify the wise.

18.6 But even these actions should be performed giving up attachment and fruits;
this, son of Pritha, is my firm and final view.

18.7 Renunciation of prescribed action is not proper;
relinquishing it out of delusion is declared to be of *tamas*.

18.8 One who relinquishes an action because it is painful, from fear of bodily strain,
performs a relinquishment of *rajas* and does not gain the fruit of relinquishment.

18.9 When prescribed action is done, Arjuna, simply because it ought to be done,
giving up attachment and fruit, that relinquishment is held to be of *sattva*.

18.10 He does not hate unpleasant work, nor cling to pleasant work—
the relinquisher filled with *sattva*, wise, his doubts cut away.

18.11 For an embodied being cannot relinquish actions entirely;
but one who relinquishes the fruit of action is called a relinquisher.

18.12 The fruit of action—unwanted, wanted and mixed—is threefold;
it comes after death to those who have not relinquished, but never to renouncers.

ACTION AND THE THREE QUALITIES

Krishna names the causes of action and sorts knowledge, action, agents, understanding, resolve and happiness by the three qualities.

KRISHNA

18.13 Learn from me, mighty-armed one, these five factors
declared in the *sāṃkhya* teaching for the accomplishment of all actions.

18.14 The seat of action, the agent, the various instruments,
the many different kinds of effort, and fate as the fifth.

18.15 Whatever action a person undertakes with body, speech or mind,
right or wrong, these five are its causes.

18.16 This being so, whoever sees himself as the sole agent,
through untrained understanding—that fool does not see.

18.17 One who is free of the sense of "I am the doer," whose understanding is unstained—
even if he kills these people, he does not kill, and he is not bound.

18.18 Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower are the threefold impulse to action;
the instrument, the action and the agent are the threefold basis of action.

18.19 Knowledge, action and agent are also said to be of three kinds, by difference of *guṇa*,
in the doctrine of the *guṇas*; hear about them too, as they are.

18.20 The knowledge by which one sees in all beings one imperishable being,
undivided in the divided—know that knowledge to be of *sattva*.

18.21 But the knowledge that, by separating, perceives various beings of different kinds
in all creatures—know that knowledge to be of *rajas*.

18.22 But that which clings to a single object as if it were the whole, without reason,
without grasp of the truth, and petty—that is declared to be of *tamas*.

18.23 Prescribed action, done without attachment, without desire or hatred,
by one who does not crave its fruit—that is called of *sattva*.

18.24 But action done by one who craves desires, or with ego,
and with great strain—that is declared to be of *rajas*.

18.25 Without regard to consequences, loss, harm, or one's own capacity,
action undertaken out of delusion is called of *tamas*.

18.26 Free of attachment, not given to talk of "I," full of resolve and energy,
unchanged in success and failure—such an agent is called of *sattva*.

18.27 Passionate, craving the fruit of action, greedy, violent by nature, impure,
subject to joy and grief—such an agent is declared to be of *rajas*.

18.28 Undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, dishonest, lazy,
despondent and procrastinating—such an agent is called of *tamas*.

18.29 Hear now the threefold division of understanding and of resolve according to the *guṇas*,
set out fully and separately, Dhananjaya.

18.30 The understanding that knows action and withdrawal, what should and should not be done, fear and fearlessness,
bondage and release—that understanding, son of Pritha, is of *sattva*.

18.31 The understanding by which *dharma* and what is against *dharma*, what should and should not be done,
are known wrongly—that understanding, son of Pritha, is of *rajas*.

18.32 The understanding that, wrapped in darkness, takes what is against *dharma* for *dharma*,
and sees all things reversed—that understanding, son of Pritha, is of *tamas*.

18.33 The resolve by which one holds together the workings of mind, breath and senses
through unwavering *yoga*—that resolve, son of Pritha, is of *sattva*.

18.34 But the resolve by which one holds fast to *dharma*, pleasure and wealth, Arjuna,
craving their fruit as occasion arises—that resolve, son of Pritha, is of *rajas*.[2]

18.35 That by which a fool does not let go of sleep, fear, grief,
despondency and arrogance—that resolve, son of Pritha, is of *tamas*.

18.36 And now hear from me, bull of the Bharatas, of the three kinds of happiness:
that in which one delights through practice and comes to the end of pain,

18.37 that which is like poison at first but like nectar in the end,
born of the clarity of one's own understanding—that happiness is declared to be of *sattva*.

2 *Dharma*, pleasure (*kāma*) and wealth (*artha*) are the three traditional aims of life.

18.38 That which comes from the contact of the senses with their objects, like nectar at first
but like poison in the end—that happiness is held to be of *rajas*.

18.39 The happiness that deludes the self both at first and in its outcome,
arising from sleep, sloth and negligence—that is declared to be of *tamas*.

18.40 There is no being, on earth or in heaven among the gods,
that is free of these three *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*.

EACH ONE'S OWN WORK

Krishna assigns duties to the four classes and teaches that perfection comes through one's own work.

KRISHNA

18.41 The actions of brahmins, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, and of *śūdras*, scorcher of foes,
are divided according to the *guṇas* that arise from their own nature.

18.42 Calm, self-restraint, austerity, purity, patience and uprightness,
knowledge, discernment and piety are the work of brahmins, born of their nature.

18.43 Heroism, vigor, fortitude, skill, not fleeing in battle,
generosity and leadership are the work of *kṣatriyas*, born of their nature.

18.44 Farming, cattle-herding and trade are the work of *vaiśyas*, born of their nature;
work that consists of service is likewise the work of *śūdras*, born of their nature.

18.45 Devoted each to his own work, a person attains perfection;
hear how one devoted to his own work finds perfection.

18.46 By worshiping through his own work the one from whom beings arise,
by whom all this is pervaded, a person finds perfection.

18.47 Better one's own *dharma*, though imperfect, than another's *dharma* well performed;
doing the work set by one's own nature, one incurs no fault.

18.48 One should not abandon the work one is born to, son of Kunti, even if it is flawed;
for all undertakings are clouded by fault, as fire by smoke.

18.49 With understanding unattached everywhere, self-conquered, free of longing,
through renunciation one attains the supreme perfection of freedom from action.

18.50 How one who has attained perfection attains *brahman*, learn from me
in brief, son of Kunti—that highest culmination of knowledge.

18.51 Disciplined by a purified understanding, controlling the self with resolve,
giving up sound and the other objects of the senses, casting off desire and hatred,

18.52 living in solitude, eating lightly, restraining speech, body and mind,
ever intent on the *yoga* of meditation, taking refuge in dispassion,

18.53 releasing ego, force, arrogance, desire, anger and possessions,
free of "mine," at peace—one is fit to become *brahman*.

18.54 Having become *brahman*, serene in self, he neither grieves nor desires;
the same toward all beings, he attains supreme devotion to me.

18.55 Through devotion he knows me, how great I am and who I am in truth;
then, having known me in truth, he enters into me at once.

18.56 Though always performing all actions, taking refuge in me,
by my grace he attains the eternal, imperishable state.

18.57 Renouncing all actions to me in your thought, intent on me,
relying on the *yoga* of understanding, keep your thought always on me.

18.58 With your thought on me, by my grace you will cross over every difficulty;
but if out of ego you will not listen, you will perish.

18.59 If, relying on ego, you think, "I will not fight,"
your resolve is in vain: your nature, *prakṛti*, will compel you.

18.60 Bound by your own work, son of Kunti, born of your nature,
what out of delusion you do not wish to do, you will do even against your will.

18.61 The Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, Arjuna,
making all beings revolve by his power of illusion, as if mounted on a machine.

18.62 Take refuge in him alone with your whole being, Bharata;
by his grace you will attain supreme peace and the eternal abode.

18.63 Thus I have declared to you knowledge more secret than all secrets;
reflect on it fully, then do as you wish.

THE MOST SECRET WORD

Krishna tells Arjuna to take refuge in him alone; Arjuna declares his doubts gone.

KRISHNA

18.64 Hear again my supreme word, the most secret of all:
you are dearly loved by me, so I will tell you what is for your good.

18.65 Fix your mind on me, be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, bow down to me;
you will come to me alone—I promise you truly, for you are dear to me.

18.66 Abandon all *dharmas* and take refuge in me alone;
I will set you free from all evils—do not grieve.

18.67 Never speak this to one without austerity or without devotion,
nor to one who will not listen, nor to one who speaks ill of me.

18.68 Whoever teaches this supreme secret to my devotees,
showing the highest devotion to me, will come to me alone, without doubt.

18.69 No one among men does more dear service to me than he,
nor will anyone on earth be dearer to me than he.

18.70 And whoever studies this dialogue of ours on *dharma*,
by him I will have been worshiped with the sacrifice of knowledge—so I hold.

18.71 And the person who simply listens with faith and without malice,
he too, set free, will reach the happy worlds of those whose deeds are good.

18.72 Have you heard this, son of Pritha, with a single-pointed mind?
Has your confusion born of ignorance been destroyed, Dhananjaya?

ARJUNA

18.73 My delusion is destroyed; by your grace my memory has returned, Achyuta.
I stand firm, my doubts gone; I will do as you say.

SANJAYA'S CLOSING WORDS

Sanjaya tells the king of his wonder at the dialogue he has witnessed.

SANJAYA

18.74 So I heard this wondrous dialogue
between Vasudeva and the great-souled son of Pritha, which makes the hair stand on end.

18.75 By the grace of Vyasa I heard this supreme secret,
this *yoga*, from Krishna, the lord of *yoga*, declaring it himself before my eyes.[3]

18.76 King, as I recall again and again
this wondrous and holy dialogue of Keshava and Arjuna, I rejoice over and over.

18.77 And as I recall again and again that most wondrous form of Hari,
great is my amazement, King, and I rejoice again and again.

18.78 Wherever there is Krishna, lord of *yoga*, and wherever the son of Pritha, the archer,
there, I believe, are fortune, victory, prosperity and sound policy, secure.

3 Vyāsa had granted Sanjaya divine sight, so that he could see and hear the battle from afar.