

CHAPTER 1

ARJUNA'S DILEMMA

The war of Mahabharata has begun after all negotiations by Lord Krishna and others to avoid it failed. The blind King (Dhritarashtra) was never very sure about the victory of his sons (Kauravas) in spite of their superior army. Sage Vyasa, the author of Mahabharata, wanted to give the blind king the boon of eyesight so that the king could see the horrors of the war for which he was primarily responsible. But the king refused the offer. He did not want to see the horrors of the war; but preferred to get the war report through his charioteer, Sanjaya. Sage Vyasa granted the power of clairvoyance to Sanjaya. With this power Sanjaya could see, hear, and recall the events of the past, present, and the future. He was able to give an instant replay of the eye witness war report to the blind King sitting in the palace.

Bhishma, the mightiest man and the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava's army, is disabled by Arjuna and is lying on deathbed in the battleground on the tenth day of the eighteen day war. Upon hearing this bad news from Sanjaya, the blind King loses all hopes for victory of his sons. Now the King wants to know the details of the war from the beginning, including how the mightiest man, and the commander-in-chief of his superior army —who had a boon of dying at his own will —was defeated in the battlefield. The teaching of the Gita begins with the inquiry of the blind King, after Sanjaya described how Bhishma was defeated, as follows:

The King inquired: Sanjaya, please now tell me, in details, what did my people (the Kauravas) and the Pandavas do in the battlefield before the war started? (1.01)

Sanjaya said: O King, After seeing the battle formation of the Pandava's army, your son approached his guru and spoke these words: (1.02)

O Master, behold this mighty army of the Pandavas, arranged in battle formation by your other talented disciple! There are many great warriors, valiant men, heroes, and mighty archers. (1.03-06)

Introduction Of The Army Commanders

Also there are many heroes on my side who have risked their lives for me. I shall name few distinguished commanders of my army for your information. He named all the officers of his army, and said: They are armed with various weapons, and are skilled in warfare. (1.07-09)

Our army is invincible, while their army is easy to conquer. Therefore all of you, occupying your respective positions, protect our commander-in-chief. (1.10-11)

War Starts With The Blowing Of Conch Shells

The mighty commander-in-chief and the eldest man of the dynasty, roared as a lion and blew his conch loudly, bringing joy to your son. (1.12)

Soon after that; conches, kettledrums, cymbals, drums, and trumpets were sounded together. The commotion was tremendous. (1.13)

After that, Lord Krishna and Arjuna, seated in a grand chariot yoked with white horses, blew their celestial conches. (1.14)

Krishna blew His conch first, and then Arjuna and all other commanders of various divisions of the army of Pandavas blew their respective conches. The tumultuous uproar, resounding through the earth and sky, tore the hearts of your sons. (1.15-19)

Arjuna Wants To Inspect The Army Against Whom He Is About To Fight

Seeing your sons standing, and the war about to begin with the hurling of weapons; Arjuna, whose banner bore the emblem of Lord Hanumana, took up his bow and spoke these words to Lord Krishna: O Lord, please stop my chariot between the two armies until I behold those who stand here eager for the battle and with whom I must engage in this act of war. (1.20-22)

I wish to see those who are willing to serve and appease the evil-minded Kauravas by assembling here to fight the battle. (1.23)

Sanjaya said: O King; Lord Krishna, as requested by Arjuna, placed the best of all the chariots in the midst of the two armies facing Arjuna's grandfather, his guru and all other Kings; and said to Arjuna: Behold these assembled soldiers! (1.24-25)

Arjuna saw his uncles, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and other comrades in the army. (1.26)

ARJUNA'S DILEMMA

After seeing fathers-in-law, companions, and all his kinsmen standing in the ranks of the two armies, Arjuna was overcome with great compassion and sorrowfully spoke these words: O Krishna, seeing my kinsmen standing with a desire to fight, my limbs fail and my mouth becomes dry. My body quivers and my hairs stand on end. (1.27-29)

The bow slips from my hand, and my skin intensely burns. My head turns, I am unable to stand steady, and O Krishna, I see bad omens. I see no use of killing my kinsmen in battle. (1.30-31)

I desire neither victory, nor pleasure nor kingdom, O Krishna. What is the use of the kingdom, or enjoyment, or even life, O Krishna? Because all those — for whom we desire kingdom, enjoyments, and pleasures — are standing here for the battle, giving up their lives. (1.32-33)

I do not wish to kill my teachers, uncles, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other relatives who are about to kill us, even for the sovereignty of the three worlds, let alone for this earthly kingdom, O Krishna. (1.34-35)

O Lord Krishna, what pleasure shall we find in killing our cousin brothers? Upon killing these felons we shall incur sin only. (1.36)

Therefore, we should not kill our cousin brothers. How can we be happy after killing our relatives, O Krishna? (1.37)

Though they are blinded by greed, and do not see evil in the destruction of the family, or sin in being treacherous to friends. Why should not we, who clearly see evil in the destruction of the family, think about turning away from this sin, O Krishna? (1.38-39)

ARJUNA DESCRIBES THE EVILS OF WAR

Eternal family traditions and codes of moral conduct are destroyed with the destruction of the family. And immorality prevails in the family due to the destruction of family traditions. (1.40)

And when immorality prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupted; when women are corrupted, unwanted progeny is born. (1.41)

This brings the family and the slayers of the family to hell, because the spirits of their ancestors are degraded when deprived of ceremonial offerings of love and respect by the unwanted progeny. (1.42)

The everlasting qualities of social order and family traditions of those who destroy their family are ruined by the sinful act of illegitimacy. (1.43)

We have been told, O Krishna, that people whose family traditions are destroyed necessarily dwell in hell for a long time. (1.44)

Alas! We are ready to commit a great sin by striving to slay our relatives because of greed for the pleasures of the kingdom. (1.45)

It would be far better for me if my cousin brothers kill me with their weapons in battle while I am unarmed and unresisting. (1.46)

WHEN GOING GETS TOUGH, EVEN TOUGH ONES CAN GET DELUDED

Sanjaya said: Having said this in the battlefield and casting aside his bow and arrow, Arjuna sat down on the seat of the chariot with his mind overwhelmed with sorrow. (1.47)

CHAPTER 2

TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Sanjaya said: Lord Krishna spoke these words to Arjuna whose eyes were tearful and downcast, and who was overwhelmed with compassion and despair. (2.01)

Lord Krishna said: How has the dejection come to you at this juncture? This is not fit for a person of noble mind and deeds. It is disgraceful, and it does not lead one to heaven, O Arjuna. (2.02)

Do not become a coward, O Arjuna, because it does not befit you. Shake off this trivial weakness of your heart and get up for the battle, O Arjuna. (2.03)

ARJUNA CONTINUES HIS REASONING

AGAINST THE WAR

Arjuna said: How shall I strike my grandfather, my guru, and all other relatives, who are worthy of my respect, with arrows in battle, O Krishna? (2.04)

It would be better, indeed, to live on alms in this world than to slay these noble personalities, because by killing them I would enjoy wealth and pleasures stained with their blood. (2.05)

We do not know which alternative — to fight or to quit — is better for us. Further, we do not know whether we shall conquer them or they will conquer us. We should not even wish to live after killing our cousin brothers, who are standing in front of us. (2.06)

My senses are overcome by the weakness of pity, and my mind is confused about duty (Dharma). Please tell me what is better for me. I am Your disciple, and I take refuge in You. (2.07)

I do not perceive that gaining an unrivaled and prosperous kingdom on this earth, or even lordship over all the celestial controllers will remove the sorrow that is drying up my senses. (2.08)

Sanjaya said: O King, after speaking like this to Lord Krishna, the mighty Arjuna said to Krishna: I shall not fight, and became silent. (2.09)

O King, Lord Krishna, as if smiling, spoke these words to the distressed Arjuna in the midst of the two armies. (2.10)

THE TEACHINGS OF THE GITA BEGIN WITH THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRIT

AND THE PHYSICAL BODY

Lord Krishna said: You grieve for those who are not worthy of grief, and yet speak words of wisdom. The wise grieves neither for the living nor for the dead. (2.11)

There was never a time when these monarchs, you, or I did not exist; nor shall we ever cease to exist in the future. (2.12)

Just as the soul acquires a childhood body, a youth body, and an old age body during this life; similarly, the soul acquires another body after death. This should not delude the wise. (See also 15.08) (2.13)

The contacts of the senses with the sense objects give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, and pain and pleasure. They are transitory and impermanent. Therefore, one should learn to endure them. (2.14)

Because a calm person — who is not afflicted by these sense objects, and is steady in pain and pleasure — becomes fit for salvation. (2.15)

THE SPIRIT IS ETERNAL, BODY IS TRANSITORY

The invisible Spirit (Atma, Atman) is eternal, and the visible physical body, is transitory. The reality of these two is indeed certainly seen by the seers of truth. (2.16)

The Spirit by whom this entire universe is pervaded is indestructible. No one can destroy the imperishable Spirit. (2.17)

The physical bodies of the eternal, immutable, and incomprehensible Spirit are perishable. Therefore fight, O Arjuna. (2.18)

The one who thinks that the Spirit is a slayer, and the one who thinks the Spirit is slain, both are ignorant. Because the Spirit neither slays nor is slain. (2.19)

The Spirit is neither born nor does it die at any time. It does not come into being, or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Spirit is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (2.20)

O Arjuna, how can a person who knows that the Spirit is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and immutable, kill anyone or causes anyone to be killed? (2.21)

DEATH AND TRANSMIGRATION OF SOUL

Just as a person puts on new garments after discarding the old ones; similarly, the living entity or the individual soul acquires new bodies after casting away the old bodies. (2.22)

Weapons do not cut this Spirit, fire does not burn it, water does not make it wet, and the wind does not make it dry. The Spirit cannot be cut, burned, wetted, or dried. It is eternal, all pervading, unchanging, immovable, and primeval. (2.23-24)

The Spirit is said to be unexplainable, incomprehensible, and unchanging. Knowing the Spirit as such you should not grieve. (2.25)

Even if you think that the physical body takes birth and dies perpetually, even then, O Arjuna, you should not grieve like this. Because death is certain for the one who is born, and birth is certain for the one who dies. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable. (2.26-27)

All beings are unmanifest, or invisible to our physical eyes before birth and after death. They manifest between the birth and the death only. What is there to grieve about? (2.28)

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE SPIRIT TRANSCENDS MIND AND SPEECH

Some look upon this Spirit as a wonder, another describes it as wonderful, and others hear of it as a wonder. Even after hearing about it very few people know what the Spirit is. (See also KaU 2.07) (2.29)

O Arjuna, the Spirit that dwells in the body of all beings is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you should not mourn for anybody. (2.30)

LORD KRISHNA REMINDS ARJUNA OF HIS DUTY AS A WARRIOR

Considering also your duty as a warrior you should not waver like this. Because there is nothing more auspicious for a warrior than a righteous war. (2.31)

Only the fortunate warriors, O Arjuna, get such an opportunity for an unsought war that is like an open door to heaven. (2.32)

If you will not fight this righteous war, then you will fail in your duty, lose your reputation, and incur sin. (2.33)

People will talk about your disgrace forever. To the honored, dishonor is worse than death. (2.34)

The great warriors will think that you have retreated from the battle out of fear. Those who have greatly esteemed you will lose respect for you. (2.35)

Your enemies will speak many unmentionable words and scorn your ability. What could be more painful to you than this? (2.36)

You will go to heaven if killed on the line of duty, or you will enjoy the kingdom on the earth if victorious. Therefore, get up with a determination to fight, O Arjuna. (2.37)

Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and victory and defeat alike, engage yourself in your duty. By doing your duty this way you will not incur sin. (2.38)

IMPORTANCE OF KARMA-YOGA, THE SELFLESS SERVICE

The science of transcendental knowledge has been imparted to you, O Arjuna. Now listen to the science of selfless service (Seva), endowed with which you will free yourself from all Karmic bondage, or sin. (2.39)

No effort is ever lost in selfless service, and there is no adverse effect. Even a little practice of the discipline of selfless service protects one from the great fear of repeated birth and death. (2.40)

A selfless worker has resolute determination for God-realization, but the desires of the one who works to enjoy the fruits of work are endless. (2.41)

THE VEDAS DEAL WITH BOTH MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF LIFE

The misguided ones who delight in the melodious chanting of the Veda — without understanding the real purpose of the Vedas — think, O Arjuna, as if there is nothing else in the Vedas except the rituals for the sole purpose of obtaining heavenly enjoyment. (2.42)

They are dominated by material desires, and consider the attainment of heaven as the highest goal of life. They engage in specific rites for the sake of prosperity and enjoyment. Rebirth is the result of their action. (2.43)

The resolute determination of Self-realization is not formed in the minds of those who are attached to pleasure and power, and whose judgment is obscured by ritualistic activities. (2.44)

A portion of the Vedas deals with three modes — goodness, passion, and ignorance — of material Nature. Become free from pairs of opposites, be ever balanced and unconcerned with the thoughts of acquisition and preservation. Rise above these three modes, and be Self-conscious, O Arjuna. (2.45)

To a Self-realized person the Vedas are as useful as a small reservoir of water when the water of a huge lake becomes available. (2.46)

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF KARMA-YOGA

You have control over doing your respective duty only, but no control or claim over the results. The fruits of work should not be your motive, and you should never be inactive. (2.47)

Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning worry and selfish attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. The selfless service is a yogic practice that brings peace and equanimity of mind. (2.48)

Work done with selfish motives is inferior by far to the selfless service. Therefore be a selfless worker, O Arjuna. Those who work only to enjoy the fruits of their labor are verily unhappy, because one has no control over the results. (2.49)

A Karma-yogi or the selfless person becomes free from both vice and virtue in this life itself. Therefore, strive for selfless service. Working to the best of one's abilities without becoming selfishly attached to the fruits of work is called Karma-yoga or Seva. (2.50)

Karma-yogis are freed from the bondage of rebirth due to renouncing the selfish attachment to the fruits of all work, and attain blissful divine state of salvation or Nirvana. (2.51)

When your intellect will completely pierce the veil of confusion, then you will become indifferent to what has been heard and what is to be heard from the scriptures. (2.52)

When your intellect, that is confused by the conflicting opinions and the ritualistic doctrine of the Vedas, shall stay steady and firm on concentration of the Supreme Being, then you shall attain union with the Supreme in trance. (2.53)

Arjuna said: O Krishna, what are the marks of an enlightened person whose intellect is steady? What does a person of steady intellect think and talk about? How does such a person behave with others, and live in this world? (2.54)

MARKS OF A SELF-REALIZED PERSON

Lord Krishna said: When one is completely free from all desires of the mind and is satisfied with the Supreme Being by the joy of Supreme Being, then one is called an enlightened person, O Arjuna. (2.55)

A person whose mind is unperturbed by sorrow, who does not crave pleasures, and who is completely free from attachment, fear, and anger, is called an enlightened sage of steady intellect. (2.56)

The mind and intellect of a person become steady who is not attached to anything, who is neither elated by getting desired results, nor perturbed by undesired results. (2.57)

When one can completely withdraw the senses from the sense objects as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into the shell for protection from calamity, then the intellect of such a person is considered steady. (2.58)

The desire for sensual pleasures fades away if one abstains from sense enjoyment, but the craving for sense enjoyment remains in a very subtle form. This subtle craving also completely disappears from the one who knows the Supreme Being. (2.59)

DANGERS OF UNRESTRAINED SENSES

Restless senses, O Arjuna, forcibly carry away the mind of even a wise person striving for perfection. (2.60)

One should fix one's mind on God with loving contemplation after bringing the senses under control. One's intellect becomes steady when one's senses are under complete control. (2.61)

One develops attachment to sense objects by thinking about sense objects. Desire for sense objects comes from attachment to sense objects, and anger comes from unfulfilled desires. (2.62)

Delusion or wild idea arises from anger. The mind is bewildered by delusion. Reasoning is destroyed when the mind is bewildered. One falls down from the right path when reasoning is destroyed. (2.63)

ATTAINMENT OF PEACE AND HAPPINESS THROUGH SENSE CONTROL AND KNOWLEDGE

A disciplined person, enjoying sense objects with senses that are under control and free from attachments and aversions, attains tranquillity. (2.64)

All sorrows are destroyed upon attainment of tranquillity. The intellect of such a tranquil person soon becomes completely steady and united with the Supreme. (2.65)

There is neither Self-knowledge, nor Self-perception to those who are not united with the Supreme. Without Self-perception there is no peace, and without peace there can be no happiness. (2.66)

Because the mind, when controlled by the roving senses, steals away the intellect as a storm takes away a boat on the sea from its destination — the spiritual shore of peace and happiness. (2.67)

Therefore, O Arjuna, one's intellect becomes steady whose senses are completely withdrawn from the sense objects. (2.68)

A yogi, the person of self-restraint, remains wakeful when it is night for all others. It is night for the yogi who sees when all others are wakeful. (2.69)

One attains peace, within whose mind all desires dissipate without creating any mental disturbance, as river waters enter the full ocean without creating any disturbance. One who desires material objects is never peaceful. (2.70)

One who abandons all desires, and becomes free from longing and the feeling of 'I' and 'my', attains peace. (2.71)

O Arjuna, this is the superconscious state of mind. Attaining this state, one is no longer deluded. Gaining this state, even at the end of one's life, a person becomes one with the Absolute. (2.72).

CHAPTER 3

PATH OF SERVICE

Arjuna asked: If You consider that acquiring transcendental knowledge is better than working, then why do You want me to engage in this horrible war, O Krishna? You seem to confuse my mind by apparently conflicting words. Tell me, decisively, one thing by which I may attain the Supreme. (3.01-02)

Lord Krishna said: In this world I have stated a twofold path of spiritual discipline in the past. The path of Self-knowledge for the contemplative ones, and the path of unselfish work (Seva, Karma-yoga) for all others. (3.03)

One does not attain freedom from the bondage of Karma by merely abstaining from work. No one attains perfection by merely giving up work, because no one can remain actionless even for a moment. Everyone is driven to action — helplessly indeed — by the forces of Nature. (3.04-05)

Anyone, who restrains the senses but mentally dwells upon the sense objects, is called a pretender. (3.06)

WHY ONE SHOULD SERVE OTHERS?

The one who controls the senses by the trained and purified mind and intellect, and engages the organs of action to selfless service is considered superior. (3.07)

Perform your obligatory duty, because working is indeed better than sitting idle. Even the maintenance of your body would not be possible without work. (3.08)

Work other than those done as a selfless service (Seva) binds human beings. Therefore, becoming free from selfish attachment to the fruits of work, do your duty efficiently as a service to Me. (3.09)

TO HELP EACH OTHER IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE CREATOR

In the beginning the creator created human beings together with selfless service (Seva, sacrifice) and said: By serving each other you shall prosper and the sacrificial service shall fulfill all your desires. (3.10)

Nourish the celestial controllers with selfless service, and they will nourish you. Thus nourishing one another you shall attain the Supreme goal. (3.11)

The celestial controllers, served by selfless service, will give you all desired objects. One who enjoys the gift of celestial controllers without sharing with others is, indeed, a thief. (3.12)

The righteous who eat after feeding others are freed from all sins, but the impious who cook food only for themselves — without first offering to God, or sharing with others — verily eat sin. (3.13)

The living beings are born from food grains, grains are produced by sacrificial work or duty performed by farmers and other field workers. Duty is prescribed in the scriptures. Scriptures (such as the Vedas, the Holy Bible, the Holy Koran) come from the Supreme Being. Thus the all-pervading Supreme Being or God is ever present in selfless service. (3.14-15)

The one who does not help to keep the wheel of creation in motion by sacrificial duty (Seva), and rejoices sense pleasures, that sinful person lives in vain. (3.16)

The one who rejoices the Supreme Being, who is delighted with the Supreme Being, and who is content with the Supreme Being alone, for such a Self-realized person there is no duty. Such a person has no interest, whatsoever, in what is done or what is not done. A Self-realized person does not depend on anybody, except God, for anything. (3.17-18)

LEADERS SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE

Always perform your duty efficiently and without any selfish attachment to the results, because by doing work without attachment one attains Supreme. (3.19)

King Janaka and others attained perfection of Self-realization by selfless service (Karma-yoga) alone. You should also perform your duty with a view to guide people, and for the welfare of the society. (3.20)

Because whatever noble persons do, others follow. Whatever standard they set up, the world follows. (3.21)

O Arjuna, there is nothing in the three worlds — heaven, earth, and the lower regions — that should be done by Me, nor there is anything unobtained that I should obtain, yet I engage in action. (3.22)

Because, if I do not engage in action relentlessly, O Arjuna, people would follow My path in everyway. These worlds would perish if I do not work, and I shall be the cause of confusion and destruction of all these people. (3.23-24)

WHAT SHOULD THE WISE DO TO

THE IGNORANT

As the ignorant work with attachment to the fruits of work, so the wise should work without attachment, for the welfare of the society. (3.25)

The wise should not unsettle the mind of the ignorant ones who are attached to the fruits of work, but the enlightened one should inspire others by performing all works efficiently without selfish attachment. (See also 3.29) (3.26)

ALL WORKS ARE THE WORKS OF NATURE

The forces of Nature do all works. But due to delusion of ignorance people assume themselves to be the doer. (See also 5.09, 13.29, and 14.19) (3.27)

The one who knows the truth about the role of the forces of Nature in getting work done does not become attached to the work. Such a person knows that it is the forces of Nature that get their work done by using our organs as their instruments. (3.28)

But those who are deluded by the illusive power (Maya) of Nature become attached to the works done by the forces of Nature. The wise should not disturb the mind of the ignorant whose knowledge is imperfect. (See also 3.26) (3.29)

Do your duty dedicating all works to God in a spiritual frame of mind free from desire, attachment, and mental grief. (3.30)

Those who always practice this teaching of Mine — with faith and are free from cavil — become free from the bondage of Karma. But those who carp at this teaching and do not practice it, consider them ignorant, senseless, and lost. (3.31-32)

All beings follow their nature. Even the wise act according to their own nature. What, then, is the value of sense restraint? (3.33)

TWO MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS ON THE PATH OF PERFECTION

Attachments and aversions for the sense objects remain in the senses. One should not come under the control of these two, because they are two major stumbling blocks, indeed, on one's path of Self-realization. (3.34)

One's inferior natural work is better than superior unnatural work. Death in carrying out one's natural work is useful. Unnatural work produces too much stress. (See also 18.47) (3.35)

LUST IS THE ORIGIN OF SIN

Arjuna said: O Krishna, what impels one to commit sin as if unwillingly and forced against one's will? (3.36)

Lord Krishna said: It is the lust born out of passion that becomes anger when unfulfilled. Lust is insatiable and is a great devil. Know this as the enemy. (3.37)

As the fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror by dust, and as an embryo by the amnion; similarly, Self-knowledge gets covered by different degrees of this insatiable lust, the eternal enemy of the wise. (3.38-39)

The senses, the mind, and the intellect are said to be the abode of lust; with these it deludes a person by veiling the Self-knowledge. (3.40)

Therefore, O Arjuna, by controlling the senses first, kill this devil of material desire that destroys Self-knowledge and Self-realization. (3.41)

HOW TO CONTROL LUST

The senses are said to be superior to the body, the mind is superior to the senses, the intellect is superior to the mind, transcendental knowledge is superior to the intellect, and the Self is superior to transcendental knowledge. (3.42)

Thus, knowing the Self to be superior to the intellect, and controlling the mind by the intellect that is purified by spiritual practices, one must kill this mighty enemy, lust, O Arjuna. (3.43)

CHAPTER 4

PATH OF RENUNCIATION WITH KNOWLEDGE

KARMA-YOGA IS AN ANCIENT FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENT

Lord Krishna said: I taught this Karma-yoga, the eternal science of right action, to King Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught it to Manu. Manu taught it to Ikshvaku. Thus handed down in succession the saintly Kings knew this science of proper action (Karma-yoga). After a long time this science was lost from this earth. Today I have described the same ancient science to you, because you are my sincere devotee and friend. This science is a supreme secret indeed. (4.01-03)

Arjuna said: You were born later, but Vivasvan was born in ancient time. How am I to understand that You taught this science in the beginning of the creation? (4.04)

THE PURPOSE OF INCARNATION OF GOD

Lord Krishna said: Both you and I have taken many births. I remember them all, O Arjuna, but you do not remember. (4.05)

Though I am eternal, immutable, and the Lord of all beings, yet I manifest Myself by controlling the material Nature using My own divine potential energy (Maya). (See also 10.14) (4.06)

Whenever there is a decline of Dharma (Righteousness) and a predominance of Adharma (Unrighteousness), O Arjuna, then I manifest Myself. I appear from time to time for protecting the good, for transforming the wicked, and for establishing world order (Dharma). (4.07-08)

The one who truly understands My transcendental appearance, and activities of creation, maintenance, and dissolution attains My Supreme Abode and is not born again after leaving this body, O Arjuna. (4.09)

Many have become free from attachment, fear, anger, and attained salvation by taking refuge in Me, by becoming fully absorbed in My thoughts, and by getting purified by the fire of Self-knowledge. (4.10)

PATH OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

With whatever motive people worship Me, I fulfill their desires accordingly. People worship Me with different motives. (4.11)

Those who long for success in their work here on the earth worship the celestial controllers. Success in work comes quickly in this human world. (4.12)

DIVISION OF LABOR IS BASED ON THE APTITUDE OF PEOPLE

I created the four divisions of human society based on aptitude and vocation. Though I am the author of this system of the division of labor, one should know that I do nothing directly and I am eternal. (See also 18.41) (4.13)

Works do not bind Me, because I have no desire for the fruits of work. The one who fully understands and practices this truth is also not bound by Karma. (4.14)

The ancient seekers of salvation also performed their duties with this understanding. Therefore, you should do your duty as the ancients did. (4.15)

ATTACHED, DETACHED, AND FORBIDDEN ACTION

Even the wise ones are confused about what is action and what is inaction. Therefore, I shall clearly explain what is action, knowing that one shall be liberated from the evil of birth and death. (4.16)

The true nature of action is very difficult to understand. Therefore, one should know the nature of attached action, the nature of detached action, and also the nature of forbidden action. (4.17)

A KARMA-YOGI IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE KARMIC LAWS

The one who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is a wise person. Such a person is a yogi and has accomplished everything. (See also 3.05, 3.27, 5.08 and 13.29) (4.18)

A person, whose desires have become selfless by being roasted in the fire of Self-knowledge, is called a sage by the wise. (4.19)

The one who has abandoned selfish attachment to the fruits of work, and remains ever content and dependent on no one but God, such a person — though engaged in activity — does nothing at all, and incurs no Karmic reaction. (4.20)

The one who is free from desires, whose mind and senses are under control, and who has renounced all proprietorship, does not incur sin — the Karmic reaction — by doing bodily action. (4.21)

A Karma-yogi — who is content with whatever gain comes naturally by His will, who is unaffected by pairs of opposites, and free from envy, equanimous in success and failure — is not bound by Karma. (4.22)

All Karmic bonds of a Karma-yogi — who is free from attachment, whose mind is fixed in Self-knowledge, and who does work as a service to the Lord — dissolves away (4.23)

The Spirit shall be realized by the one who considers everything as a manifestation, or an act, of the Spirit. (Also see 9.16) (4.24)

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OR SACRIFICES

Some yogis perform the service of worship to celestial controllers, while others study scriptures for Self-knowledge. Some restrain their senses and give up their sensual pleasures. Others perform breathing and other yogic exercises. Some give charity and offer their wealth as a sacrifice. (4.25-28)

Those who are engaged in yogic practices, reach the breathless state of trance by offering inhalation into exhalation and exhalation into inhalation as a sacrifice (by using short breathing Kriya techniques). (4.29)

Others restrict their diet and offer their inhalations as sacrifice into their inhalations. All these people are the knowers of sacrifice, and are purified by their sacrifice. (4.30)

Those who perform selfless service obtain the nectar of Self-knowledge as a result of their sacrifice and attain the Supreme Being. O Arjuna, even this world is not a happy place for the non-sacrificer, how can the other world be? (See also 4.38, and 5.06). (4.31)

Many types of spiritual disciplines are described in the Vedas. Know that all of them are the action of body, mind, and senses prompted by the forces of Nature. Understanding this, one shall attain Nirvana or salvation. (See also 3.14) (4.32)

ACQUIRING TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE IS A SUPERIOR

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Acquiring transcendental knowledge is superior to any material sacrifice — such as giving charity. Because, purification of mind and intellect that eventually leads to the dawn of

transcendental knowledge and Self-realization is the sole purpose of any spiritual action. (4.33)

Acquire this transcendental knowledge from a Self-realized master by humble reverence, by sincere inquiry, and by service. The empowered ones, who have realized the Truth, will teach you. (4.34)

After knowing the transcendental science, O Arjuna, you shall not again become deluded like this. With this knowledge you shall see the entire creation within your own higher Self, and thus within Me. (See also 6.29, 6.30, 11.07, 11.13) (4.35)

Even if one is the most sinful of all sinners, one shall yet cross over the ocean of sin by the raft of Self-knowledge alone. (4.36)

As the blazing fire reduces wood to ashes; similarly, the fire of Self-knowledge reduces all bonds of Karma to ashes, O Arjuna. (4.37)

TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE IS AUTOMATICALLY REVEALED TO

A KARMA-YOGI

Verily, there is no purifier in this world like the true knowledge of the Supreme Being. One discovers this knowledge within, naturally, in course of time when one's mind is cleansed of selfishness by Karma-yoga. (See also 4.31, and 5.06, 18.78). (4.38)

The one who has faith in God, is sincere in yogic practices, and has control over the mind and senses gains this transcendental knowledge. Having gained this knowledge, one quickly attains supreme peace or liberation. (4.39)

The irrational, the faithless, and the disbeliever (atheist) perishes. There is neither this world, nor the world beyond, nor happiness for the disbeliever. (4.40)

BOTH TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND KARMA-YOGA ARE NEEDED

FOR NIRVANA

Work does not bind a person who has renounced work — by renouncing the fruits of work — through Karma-yoga, and whose confusion with regard to body and Spirit is completely destroyed by the application of Self-knowledge, O Arjuna. (4.41)

Therefore, cut the ignorance-born confusion with regard to body and Spirit by the sword of Self-knowledge, resort to Karma-yoga, and get up for the war, O Arjuna. (4.42)

CHAPTER 5

PATH OF RENUNCIATION

Arjuna asked: O Krishna, You praise the path of transcendental knowledge, and also the path of performance of selfless service (Karma-yoga). Tell me, definitely, which one is the better of the two paths. (See also 5.05) (5.01)

Lord Krishna said: The path of Self-knowledge and the path of selfless service both lead to the supreme goal. But, of the two, the path of selfless service is superior to path of Self-knowledge, because it is easier to practice. (5.02)

A person should be considered a true renunciant who has neither attachment nor aversion for anything. One is easily liberated from Karmic bondage by becoming free from attachment and aversion. (5.03)

BOTH PATHS LEAD TO SUPREME

The ignorant — not the wise — consider the path of Self-knowledge and the path of selfless service (Karma-yoga) as different from each other. The person, who has truly mastered one, gets the benefits of both. (5.04)

Whatever goal a renunciant reaches, a Karma-yogi also reaches the same goal. Therefore, the one who sees the path of renunciation and the path of unselfish work as the same really sees. (See also 6.01 and 6.02) (5.05)

But, true renunciation, O Arjuna, is difficult to attain without Karma-yoga. A sage equipped with Karma-yoga quickly attains Nirvana. (See also 4.31, and 4.38) (5.06)

A Karma-yogi, whose mind is pure, whose mind and senses are under control, and who sees one and the same Spirit in all beings, is not bound by Karma though engaged in work. (5.07)

A TRANSCENDENTALIST DOES NOT CONSIDER ONESELF AS THE DOER

The wise who knows the truth thinks: "I do nothing at all." In seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing; and speaking, giving, taking, as well as opening and closing the eyes, the wise believes that only the senses are operating upon their objects. (See also 3.27, 13.29, and 14.19) (5.08-09)

A KARMA-YOGI WORKS FOR GOD

One who does all work as an offering to God — abandoning selfish attachment to results — remains untouched by Karmic reaction or sin as a lotus leaf never gets wet by water. (5.10)

The Karma-yogis perform action — without selfish attachment — with their body, mind, intellect, and senses only for the purification of their mind and intellect. (5.11)

A Karma-yogi attains Supreme Bliss by abandoning attachment to the fruits of work; while others, who are attached to the fruits of work, become bound by selfish work. (5.12)

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

A person, who has completely renounced the fruits of all works, dwells happily in the City of Nine Gates, neither performing nor directing action. (5.13)

The Lord neither creates the urge for action, nor the feeling of doership, nor the attachment to the results of action in people. The powers of material Nature do all these. (5.14)

The Lord does not take the responsibility for the good or evil deeds of anybody. The veil of ignorance covers the Self-knowledge; thereby people become deluded and do evil deeds. (5.15)

Transcendental knowledge destroys the ignorance of the Spirit and reveals the Supreme Being just as the sun reveals the beauty of objects of the world. (5.16)

Persons, whose mind and intellect are totally merged in the Supreme Being, who are firmly devoted to the Supreme, who have God as their supreme goal and sole refuge, and whose impurities are destroyed by the knowledge of the self, do not take birth again. (5.17)

ADDITIONAL MARKS OF AN ENLIGHTENED PERSON

An enlightened person — by perceiving God in all — looks at a learned person, an outcast, even a cow, an elephant, or a dog with an equal eye. (See also 6.29) (5.18)

Everything has been accomplished in this very life by the one whose mind is set in equality. Such a person has realized the Supreme Being, because the Supreme Being is flawless and impartial. (See also 18.55) (5.19)

One who neither rejoices on obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieves on obtaining the unpleasant, who has a steady mind, who is undeluded, and who is a knower of the Supreme Being, such a person eternally abides with the Supreme Being. (5.20)

Such a person who is in union with the Supreme Being becomes unattached to external sensual pleasures by discovering the joy of the Self through contemplation, and enjoys transcendental bliss. (5.21)

Sensual pleasures are verily the source of misery, and have a beginning and an end. Therefore the wise, O Arjuna, does not rejoice in sensual pleasures. (See also 18.38) (5.22)

One who is able to withstand the impulse of lust and anger before death is a yogi, and a happy person. (5.23)

One who finds happiness with the Supreme Being, who rejoices Supreme Being within, and who is illuminated by Self-knowledge; such a yogi attains Nirvana, and goes to the Supreme Being. (5.24)

Seers, whose sins (or imperfections) are destroyed, whose doubts have been dispelled by Self-knowledge, whose minds are disciplined, and who are engaged in the welfare of all beings, attain the Supreme Being. (5.25)

Those who are free from lust and anger, who have subdued the mind and senses, and who have known the Self, easily attain Nirvana. (5.26)

THE THIRD PATH — THE PATH OF DEVOTIONAL MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

A sage is verily liberated by renouncing all sense enjoyments, fixing the eyes and the mind at an imaginary black dot between the eye brows, equalizing the breath moving through the nostrils by using yogic techniques, keeping the senses, mind, and intellect under control, having salvation as the prime goal, and by becoming free from lust, anger, and fear. (5.27-28)

My devotee attains peace by knowing the Supreme Being as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, as the great Lord of the entire universe, and as the friend of all beings. (5.29)

CHAPTER 6

PATH OF MEDITATION

A KARMA-YOGI IS A RENUNCIANT

Lord Krishna said: One who performs the prescribed duty without seeking its fruit for personal enjoyment is a renunciant and a Karma-yogi. One does not become a renunciant merely by not lighting the fire, and one does not become a yogi merely by abstaining from work. (6.01)

O Arjuna, renunciation (Samnyasa) is same as Karma-yoga. Because, no one becomes a Karma-yogi who has not renounced the selfish motive behind an action. (See also 5.01, 5.05, 6.01, and 18.02) (6.02)

A DEFINITION OF YOGA

For the wise, who seeks to attain yoga of meditation, or the equanimity of mind, Karma-yoga is said to be the means. For the one who has attained yoga, the equanimity becomes the means of Self-realization. A person is said to have attained yogic perfection when he or she has no desire for sensual pleasures, or attachment to the fruits of work, and has renounced all personal selfish motives. (6.03-04)

MIND IS THE BEST FRIEND AS WELL AS THE WORST ENEMY

One must elevate — and not degrade — oneself by one's own mind. The mind alone is one's friend as well as one's enemy. The mind is the friend of those who have control over it, and the mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it. (6.05-06)

One who has control over the lower self—the mind and senses—is tranquil in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, and in honor and dishonor, and remains ever steadfast with the supreme Self. (6.07)

A person is called yogi who has both Self-knowledge and Self-realization, who is equanimous, who has control over the mind and senses, and to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are the same. (6.08)

A person is considered superior who is impartial towards companions, friends, enemies, neutrals, arbiters, haters, relatives, saints, and sinners. (6.09)

TECHNIQUES OF MEDITATION

A yogi, seated in solitude and alone, should constantly try to contemplate on a mental picture or just the majesty of the Supreme Being after bringing the mind and senses under control, and becoming free from desires and proprietorship. (6.10)

One should sit on his or her own firm seat that is neither too high nor too low, covered with grass, a deerskin, and a cloth, one over the other, in a clean spot. Sitting there in a comfortable position and concentrating the mind on God, controlling the thoughts and the activities of the senses, one should practice meditation for self-purification. (6.11-12)

One should sit by holding the waist, spine, chest, neck, and head erect, motionless and steady; fix the eyes and the mind steadily on the front of the nose, without looking around; make your mind serene and fearless, practice celibacy; have the mind under control, think of Me, and have Me as the supreme goal. (See also 4.29, 5.27, 8.10, and 8.12) (6.13-14)

Thus, by always practicing to keep the mind fixed on Me, the yogi whose mind is subdued attains peace of Nirvana and comes to Me. (6.15)

This yoga is not possible, O Arjuna, for the one who eats too much, or who does not eat at all; who sleeps too much or too little. (6.16)

The yoga of meditation destroys all sorrow for the one who is moderate in eating, recreation, working, sleeping, and waking. (6.17)

A person is said to have achieved yoga, the union with the Spirit, when the perfectly disciplined mind becomes free from all desires, and gets completely united with the Spirit in trance. (6.18)

A lamp in a spot sheltered by the Spirit from the wind of desires does not flicker. This simile is used for the subdued mind of a yogi practicing meditation on the Spirit. (6.19)

When the mind disciplined by the practice of meditation becomes steady, one becomes content with the Spirit by beholding the Spirit of God with purified intellect. (6.20)

One feels infinite bliss that is perceivable only through the intellect, and is beyond the reach of the senses. After realizing the Absolute Reality, one is never separated from it. (6.21)

After Self-realization (SR), one does not regard any other gain superior to SR. Established in SR, one is not moved even by the greatest calamity. (6.22)

The state of severance of union with sorrow is called yoga. This yoga should be practiced with firm determination, and without any mental reservation. (6.23)

One gradually attains tranquillity of mind by totally abandoning all selfish desires, completely restraining the senses from the sense objects by the intellect, and keeping the mind fully absorbed in the Spirit by means of a well-trained and purified intellect and thinking of nothing else. (6.24-25)

Wheresoever this restless and unsteady mind wanders away, one should (witness it and) bring it under the watchful eye (supervision, control) of the Self. (6.26)

WHO IS A YOGI

Supreme bliss comes to a Self-realized yogi whose mind is tranquil, whose desires are under control, and who is free from faults. (6.27)

Such a sinless yogi, who constantly engages his or her mind and intellect with the Spirit, easily enjoys the infinite bliss of contact with The Spirit. (6.28)

A yogi, who is in union with the Supreme Being, sees every being with an equal eye because of perceiving the omnipresent Spirit abiding in all beings, and all beings abiding in the Supreme Being. (See also 4.35, 5.18) (6.29)

Those who perceive Me in everything, and behold everything in Me, are not separated from Me, and I am not separated from them. (6.30)

The non-dualists, who adore Me as abiding in all beings, abide in Me irrespective of their mode of living. (6.31)

One is considered the best yogi who regards every being like oneself, and who can feel the pain and pleasures of others as one's own, O Arjuna. (6.32)

TWO METHODS TO SUBDUE THE

RESTLESS MIND

Arjuna said: O Krishna, You have said that the yoga of meditation is characterized by the equanimity of mind, but due to restlessness of mind I do not perceive the steady state of mind. Because the mind, indeed, is very unsteady, turbulent, powerful, and obstinate, O Krishna. I think restraining the mind is as difficult as restraining the wind. (6.33-34)

Lord Krishna said: Undoubtedly, O Arjuna, the mind is restless and difficult to restrain, but it is subdued by any constant vigorous spiritual practice — such as meditation — with perseverance, and by detachment, O Arjuna. (6.35)

In My opinion, yoga is difficult for the one whose mind is not subdued. However, yoga is attainable by the person of subdued mind by striving through proper means. (6.36)

DESTINATION OF UNSUCCESSFUL YOGI

Arjuna said: The faithful who deviates from the path of meditation and fails to attain yogic perfection due to unsubdued mind — what is the destination of such a person, O Krishna? (6.37)

Do they not perish like a dispersing cloud, O Krishna, having lost both the heavenly and the worldly pleasures, supportless and bewildered on the path of Self-realization? (6.38)

O Krishna, only You are able to completely dispel this doubt of mine. Because there is none, other than You, who can dispel this doubt. (See also 15.15) (6.39)

Lord Krishna said: There is no destruction, O Arjuna, for a yogi either here or hereafter. A transcendentalist is never put to grief, My dear friend. (6.40)

The less evolved unsuccessful yogi is reborn in the house of the pious and prosperous after attaining heaven and living there for many years. The highly evolved unsuccessful yogi does not go to heaven, but is born in a spiritually advanced family. A birth like this is very difficult, indeed, to obtain in this world. (6.41-42)

There he or she regains the knowledge acquired in the previous life, and strives again to achieve perfection, O Arjuna. (6.43)

The unsuccessful yogi is instinctively carried towards God by virtue of the impressions of yogic practices of previous lives. Even the inquirer of yoga — the union with God — surpasses those who perform Vedic rituals. (6.44)

The yogi, who diligently strives, becomes completely free from all imperfections after gradually perfecting through many incarnations, and reaches the Supreme Abode. (6.45)

WHO IS THE BEST YOGI

The yogi, who is devoted to meditation, is superior to the ascetics. The yogi is superior to the Vedic scholars. The yogi is superior to the ritualists. Therefore, O Arjuna, be a yogi. (6.46)

And I consider the yogi-devotee — who lovingly contemplates on Me with supreme faith, and whose mind is ever absorbed in Me — to be the best of all the yogis. (See also 12.02 and 18.66) (6.47)

CHAPTER 7

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, listen how you shall know Me fully without any doubt, with your mind absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, and performing yogic practices. (7.01)

METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE IS THE ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

I shall impart you Self-knowledge together with enlightenment, after comprehending that nothing more remains to be known in this world. (7.02)

SEEKERS ARE VERY FEW

Scarcely one out of thousands of persons strives for perfection of Self-realization. Scarcely one among those successful strivers truly understands Me. (7.03)

DEFINITIONS OF MATTER, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND SPIRIT

The mind, intellect, ego, ether, air, fire, water, and earth are the eightfold division of My material energy. (See also 13.05) (7.04)

The material Nature or matter is My lower Nature. My other higher Nature is the Spirit by which this entire universe is sustained, O Arjuna. (7.05)

SUPREME SPIRIT IS THE BASIS OF MATTER, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND SPIRIT

Know that all creatures have evolved from this twofold energy; and the Supreme Spirit is the source of origin as well as dissolution of the entire universe. (See also 13.26) (7.06)

There is nothing higher than the Supreme Being, O Arjuna. Everything in the universe is strung on the Supreme Being, like jewels are strung on the thread of a necklace. (7.07)

SUPREME SPIRIT IS THE BASIS

OF EVERYTHING

O Arjuna, I am the sapidity in the water, I am the radiance in the sun and the moon, the sacred syllable OM in all the Vedas, the sound in the ether, and potency in human beings. I am the sweet fragrance in the earth. I am the heat in the fire, the life in all living beings, and the austerity in the ascetics. (7.08-09)

O Arjuna, know Me to be the eternal seed of all creatures. I am the intelligence of the intelligent, and the brilliance of the brilliant. (See also 9.18 and 10.39). I am the strength of the strong who is devoid of selfish attachment. I am the lust in human beings that is devoid of sense gratification, and is in accord with Dharma (for the sacred purpose of procreation after marriage), O Arjuna. (7.10-11)

Know that three modes of material Nature — goodness, passion, and ignorance — also emanate from Me. I am not dependent on, or affected by, the modes of material Nature; but the modes of material Nature are dependent on Me. (See also 9.04 and 9.05) (7.12)

Human beings are deluded by various aspects of these three modes of material Nature; therefore, they do not know Me, who is eternal and above these modes. (7.13)

HOW TO OVERCOME THE DELUSIVE DIVINE POWER (MAYA)

This divine power (Maya) of Mine, consisting of three states of matter or mind, is very difficult to overcome. Only those who surrender unto Me easily cross over this Maya. (See also 14.26, 15.19, and 18.66) (7.14)

WHO SEEKS GOD?

The evil doers, the ignorant, the lowest persons who are attached to demonic nature, and whose power of discrimination has been taken away by divine illusive power (Maya) do not worship or seek Me. (7.15)

Four types of virtuous ones worship or seek Me, O Arjuna. They are: The distressed, the seeker of Self-knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the enlightened one who has experienced the Supreme Being. (7.16)

Among them the enlightened devotee, who is ever united with Me and whose devotion is single-minded, is the best. Because I am very dear to the enlightened, and the enlightened is very dear to Me. (7.17)

All these seekers are indeed noble. But, I regard the enlightened devotee as My very Self, because the one who is steadfast abides in My Supreme Abode. (See also 9.29) (7.18)

After many births the enlightened one resorts to Me by realizing that everything is, indeed, My (or Supreme Being's) manifestation. Such a great soul is very rare. (7.19)

Persons, whose discernment has been carried away by various desires impelled by their Karmic impression, resort to celestial controllers and practice various religious rites. (7.20)

WORSHIP OF DEITY IS ALSO A

WORSHIP OF GOD

Whosoever desires to worship whatever deity — using any name, form, and method — with faith, I make their faith steady in that very deity. Endowed with steady faith they worship that deity, and obtain their wishes through that deity. Those wishes are, indeed, granted only by Me. (7.21-22)

Such material gains of these less intelligent human beings are temporary. The worshipers of celestial controllers go to celestial controllers, but My devotees certainly come to Me. (7.23)

GOD CAN BE SEEN IN AN IMAGE OF ANY DESIRED FORM OF WORSHIP

The ignorant ones — unable to understand My immutable, incomparable, incomprehensible, and transcendental form — assume that I, the Supreme Being, am formless and take forms or incarnate. Concealed by My divine power (Maya), I do not reveal Myself to such ignorants who do not know and understand My unborn, eternal, and transcendental form and personality. (7.24-25)

I know, O Arjuna, the beings of the past, of the present, and those of the future, but no one really knows Me. (7.26)

All beings in this world are in utter ignorance due to delusion of pairs of opposites born of likes and dislikes, O Arjuna. But persons of unselfish deeds, whose Karma or sin has come to an end, become free from the delusion of pairs of opposites and worship Me with firm resolve. (7.27-28)

Those who strive for freedom from the cycles of birth, old age, and death — by taking refuge in God — fully comprehend the true nature and powers of the Supreme. (7.29)

The steadfast persons, who know Me alone as the basis of all — the mortal beings, Temporal Beings, and the Eternal Being — even at the time of death, attain Me. (See also 8.04) (7.30)

CHAPTER 8

THE ETERNAL SPIRIT

Arjuna said: O Krishna, who is the Eternal Being or the Spirit? What is the nature of the Eternal Being? What is Karma? Who are the mortal beings? And who are Temporal Beings? Who is the Supreme Being, and how does He dwell in the body? How can You, the Supreme Being, be remembered at the time of death by those who have control over their minds, O Krishna? (8.01-02)

DEFINITION OF SUPREME SPIRIT, SPIRIT, INDIVIDUAL SOUL, AND KARMA

Lord Krishna said: The eternal and immutable Spirit of the Supreme Being is also called Eternal Being or the Spirit. The inherent power of cognition and desire of Eternal Being (Spirit) is called the nature of Eternal Being. The creative power of Eternal Being (or Spirit) that causes manifestation of the living entity is called Karma. (8.03)

Various expansions of the Supreme Being are also called Temporal Beings or Divine Beings. The Supreme Being also resides inside the physical bodies as the divine Controller. (8.04)

THEORY OF REINCARNATION AND KARMA

The one who remembers the Supreme Being exclusively even while leaving the body at the time of death, attains the Supreme Abode; there is no doubt about it. (8.05)

Remembering whatever object one leaves the body at the end of life, one attains that object. Thought of whatever object prevails during one's lifetime, one remembers only that object at the end of life and achieves it. (8.06)

A SIMPLE METHOD OF GOD-REALIZATION

Therefore, always remember Me and do your duty. You shall certainly attain Me if your mind and intellect are ever focused on Me. (8.07)

By contemplating on Me with an unwavering mind that is disciplined by the practice of meditation, one attains the Supreme Being, O Arjuna. (8.08)

One who meditates on the Supreme Being — as the omniscient, the oldest, the controller, smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest, the sustainer of everything, the inconceivable, the self-luminous like the sun, and transcendental (or beyond the material reality) — at the time of death with steadfast mind and devotion by making the flow of bioimpulses rise up to the middle of the eye brows by the power of yogic practices; one attains the Supreme Being. (See also verses 4.29, 5.27, 6.13) (8.09-10)

Now I shall briefly explain the process to attain the Supreme Abode that the knowers of the Veda call immutable; into which the ascetics, freed from attachment, enter; and desiring which people lead a life of celibacy. (8.11)

ATTAIN SALVATION BY MEDITATING ON GOD AT THE TIME OF DEATH

When one leaves the physical body by controlling all the senses; focusing the mind on God, and the bioimpulses (Pranas) in the cerebrum; engaged in yogic practice; meditating on Me and uttering OM — the sacred monosyllable sound power of Spirit — one attains the Supreme Abode. (8.12-13)

I am easily attainable, O Arjuna, by that ever steadfast devotee who always thinks of Me and whose mind does not go elsewhere. (8.14)

After attaining Me, the great souls do not incur rebirth in this miserable transitory world, because they have attained the highest perfection. (8.15)

The dwellers of all the worlds — up to and including the world of the creator — are subject to the miseries of repeated birth and death. But, after attaining Me, O Arjuna, one does not take birth again. (See also 9.25) (8.16)

EVERYTHING IN THE CREATION IS CYCLIC

Those who know that the duration of creation lasts 4.32 billion years and that the duration of destruction also lasts 4.32 billion years, they are the knowers of the cycles of creation and destruction. (8.17)

All manifestations come out of the primary material Nature during the creative cycle, and they merge into the primary material Nature during the destructive cycle. (8.18)

The same multitude of beings comes into existence again and again at the arrival of the creative cycle; and is annihilated, inevitably, at the arrival of the destructive cycle. (8.19)

There is another eternal transcendental existence — higher than the changeable material Nature — called Eternal Being or Spirit that does not perish when all created beings perish. This is also called the Supreme Abode. Those who attain the Supreme Abode do not take birth again. (8.20-21)

TWO BASIC PATHS OF DEPARTURE

FROM THE WORLD

This Supreme Abode, O Arjuna, is attainable by unswerving devotion to Me within which all beings exist, and by which the entire universe is pervaded. (See also 9.04 and 11.55) (8.22)

O Arjuna, now I shall describe different paths departing by which, during death, the yogis do or do not come back. (8.23)

Fire, light, daytime, the bright lunar fortnight, and the six months of the northern solstice of the sun — departing by the path of these celestial controllers, yogis who know the Spirit attain the Supreme. (8.24)

Smoke, night, the dark lunar fortnight, and the six months of southern solstice of the sun — departing by these paths, the righteous person attains heaven and comes back to earth. (8.25)

The path of light of spiritual practice and Self-knowledge and the path of darkness of materialism and ignorance are thought to be the world's two eternal paths. The former leads to salvation and the latter leads to rebirth as human beings. (8.26)

TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

LEADS TO SALVATION

Knowing these two paths, O Arjuna, a yogi is not bewildered at all. Therefore, one should be resolute in attaining salvation — the goal of human birth — at all times. (8.27)

The one who knows all this knowledge goes beyond getting the benefits of the study of the Vedas, performance of sacrifices, austerities, and charities; and attains salvation. (8.28)

CHAPTER 9

SUPREME KNOWLEDGE AND

THE BIG MYSTERY

Lord Krishna said: I shall reveal to you, who do not disbelieve, the most profound secret transcendental knowledge together with transcendental experience. Having known this you will be freed from the miseries of worldly existence. (9.01)

KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURE OF SUPREME IS THE BIGGEST MYSTERY

This Self-knowledge is the king of all knowledge, is the most secret, is very sacred, it can be perceived by instinct, conforms to righteousness (Dharma), is very easy to practice, and is timeless. (9.02)

O Arjuna, those who have no faith in this knowledge do not attain Me, and follow the cycles of birth and death. (9.03)

This entire universe is an expansion of Mine. All beings depend on Me (like a chain depends on gold, and the milk products depend on milk). I do not depend on — or affected by — them; because I am the highest of all. (See also 7.12) (9.04)

Look at the power of My divine mystery; in reality, I — the sustainer and creator of all beings — do not depend on them, and they also do not depend on Me. (In fact, the gold-chain does not depend on gold; the gold-chain is nothing but gold. Also, matter and energy are different as well as non-different). (9.05)

Perceive that all beings remain in Me — without any contact or without producing any effect — as the mighty wind, moving everywhere, eternally remains in space. (9.06)

THEORY OF EVOLUTION AND INVOLUTION

All beings merge into My primary material Nature at the end of a cycle of just over 311 trillion solar years, O Arjuna, and I create them again at the beginning of the next cycle. (See also 8.17) (9.07)

I create the entire multitude of beings again and again with the help of My material Nature. These beings are under control of the modes of material Nature. (9.08)

These acts of creation do not bind Me, O Arjuna, because I remain indifferent and unattached to those acts. (9.09)

The divine kinetic energy (Maya) — with the help of material Nature — creates all animate and inanimate objects under My supervision, and thus the creation keeps on going, O Arjuna. (See also 14.03) (9.10)

WAYS OF THE WISE, AND OF THE IGNORANT ARE DIFFERENT

The ignorant persons despise Me when I appear in human form, because they do not know My transcendental nature as the great Lord of all beings, and take Me for an ordinary human being. They are unable to recognize Me, because they have false hopes, false actions, and false knowledge; and possess delusive qualities of fiends and demons. (9.11-12)

But great souls, O Arjuna, who possess divine qualities (See 16.01-03) know Me as immutable; as the material and efficient cause of creation, and worship Me single-mindedly with loving devotion. (9.13)

Persons of firm resolve worship Me with ever-steadfast devotion by always singing My glories, striving to attain Me, and prostrating before Me with devotion. (9.14)

Some worship Me by acquiring the knowledge of God. Others worship the infinite as the One in all (or non-dual), as the master of all (or dual), and in various other ways. (9.15)

EVERYTHING IS A MANIFESTATION

OF THE ABSOLUTE

I am the ritual, I am the sacrifice, I am the offering, I am the herb, I am the mantra, I am the clarified butter, I am the fire, and I am the oblation. (See also 4.24). I am the supporter of the universe, the father, the mother, and the grandfather. I am the object of knowledge, the sacred syllable OM, and the Vedas. I am the goal, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the friend, the origin, the dissolution, the foundation, the substratum, and the immutable seed. (See also 7.10 and 10.39) (9.16-18)

I give heat, I send as well as withhold the rain. I am immortality as well as death, I am also both the eternal Absolute and the temporal, O Arjuna. (The Supreme Being has become everything, See also 13.12) (9.19)

ATTAIN SALVATION BY

DEVOTIONAL LOVE

The doers of the rituals prescribed in the Vedas, the drinkers of the nectar of devotion, and whose sins are cleansed, worship Me by doing good deeds for gaining heaven. As a result of their meritorious deeds they go to heaven and enjoy celestial sense pleasures. (9.20)

They return to the mortal world — after enjoying the wide world of heavenly pleasures — upon exhaustion of the fruits of their good Karma. Thus following the injunctions of the Vedas, persons working for the fruit of their actions take repeated birth and death. (See also 8.25) (9.21)

I personally take care of both spiritual and material welfare of those ever-steadfast devotees who always remember and adore Me with single-minded contemplation. (9.22)

O Arjuna, even those devotees who worship the deities with faith, they also worship Me, but in an improper way. (9.23)

Because I, the Supreme Being, alone am the enjoyer of all sacrificial services, and Lord of the universe. But people do not know My true transcendental nature. Therefore, they fall into the repeated cycles of birth and death. (9.24)

Worshippers of the celestial controllers go to the celestial controllers, the worshippers of the ancestors go to the ancestors, and the worshippers of the ghosts go to the ghosts, but My devotees come to Me, and are not born again. (See also 8.16) (9.25)

LORD ACCEPTS AND EATS THE OFFERING OF LOVE AND DEVOTION

Whosoever offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water with devotion; I accept and eat the offering of devotion by the pure-hearted. (9.26)

O Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever charity you give, whatever austerity you perform, do all that as an offering unto Me. (See also 12.10, 18.46) (9.27)

You shall become free from the bondage — good and bad — of Karma and come to Me by this attitude of complete renunciation. (9.28)

The Self is present equally in all beings. There is no one hateful or dear to Me. But, those who worship Me with love and devotion are very close to Me, and I am also very close to them. (See also 7.18) (9.29)

THERE IS NO UNFORGIVABLE SINNER

Even if the most sinful person resolves to worship Me with single-minded loving devotion, such a person must be regarded as a saint because of making the right resolution. (9.30)

Such a person soon becomes righteous and attains everlasting peace. Be aware, O Arjuna, that My devotee shall never perish or fall down. (9.31)

PATH OF DEVOTIONAL LOVE IS EASIER

Anybody can attain the Supreme Abode by just surrendering unto My will with loving devotion, O Arjuna. (See also 18.66) (9.32)

Then, it should be very easy for the wise and devout sages to attain the Supreme Being. Therefore, having obtained this joyless and transitory human life, one should always worship Me with loving devotion. (9.33)

Always think of Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, and bow down to Me. Thus uniting yourself with Me by setting Me as the supreme goal and the sole refuge, you shall certainly come to Me. (9.34)

CHAPTER 10

MANIFESTATION OF THE ABSOLUTE

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, listen once again to My supreme word that I shall speak to you, who is very dear to Me, for your welfare. (10.01)

GOD IS THE ORIGIN OF EVERYTHING

Neither the celestial controllers, nor the great sages know My origin, because I am the origin of celestial controllers and great sages also. (10.02)

One who knows Me as the unborn, the beginningless, and the Supreme Lord of the universe, is considered wise among the mortals, and becomes liberated from the bondage of Karma. (10.03)

Discrimination, Self-knowledge, non-delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control over the mind and senses, tranquillity, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness; nonviolence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame, ill fame — these diverse qualities in human beings arise from Me alone. (10.04-05)

The great saints, sages, and all the creatures of the world were born from My potential energy. (10.06)

One who truly understands My manifestations and yogic powers is united with Me by unswerving devotion. There is no doubt about it. (10.07)

I am the origin of all. Everything emanates from Me. The wise ones who understand this adore Me with love and devotion. (10.08)

My devotees remain ever content and delighted. Their minds remain absorbed in Me, and their lives surrendered unto Me. They always enlighten each other by talking about Me. (10.09)

LORD GIVES KNOWLEDGE TO

HIS DEVOTEES

I give the knowledge and understanding of the metaphysical science — to those who are ever united with Me and lovingly adore Me — by which they come to Me. (10.10)

I, who dwell within their inner psyche as consciousness, destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of transcendental knowledge as an act of compassion for them. (10.11)

Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Being, the Supreme Abode, the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal Being, the primal God, the unborn, and the omnipresent. All saints and sages have thus acclaimed You, and now You Yourself are telling me. (10.12-13)

NOBODY CAN KNOW THE REAL

NATURE OF REALITY

O Krishna, I believe all that You have told me to be true. O Lord, neither the celestial controllers nor the demons fully understand Your real nature. (See also 4.06) (10.14)

O Creator and Lord of all beings, God of all celestial rulers, the Supreme person, and Lord of the universe, You alone know Yourself by Yourself. (10.15)

Therefore, You alone are able to fully describe Your own divine glories — the manifestations — by which You exist pervading all the universes. (10.16)

How may I know You, O Lord, by constant contemplation? In what form of manifestation are You to be thought of by me, O Lord? (10.17)

O Lord, explain to me again in detail, Your yogic power and glory; because I am not satiated by hearing Your nectar-like words. (10.18)

EVERYTHING IS A MANIFESTATION

OF THE ABSOLUTE

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, now I shall explain to you My prominent divine manifestations, because My manifestations are endless. (10.19)

O Arjuna, I am the Supreme Spirit (or Supersoul) abiding in the inner psyche of all beings. I am also the creator, maintainer, and destroyer — or the beginning, the middle, and the end — of all beings. (10.20)

I am the sustainer, I am the radiant sun among the luminaries, I am the controller of wind, I am the moon among the stars. (10.21)

I am the Vedas, I am the celestial rulers, I am the mind among the senses, I am the consciousness in living beings. (10.22)

I am Lord Shiva, I am the god of wealth, I am the fire god, and the mountains. (10.23)

I am the priest, and the army general of the celestial controllers, O Arjuna. I am the ocean among the bodies of water. (10.24)

I am the monosyllable cosmic sound, OM, among the words; I am the chanting of mantra among the spiritual disciplines; and I am the Himalaya among the mountains. (10.25)

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

I am the holy fig tree among the trees, Narada among the sages, and I am all other celestial rulers. (10.26)

Know Me as the celestial animals among the animals, and the King among men. I am thunderbolt among the weapons, and I am the cupid for procreation. (10.27-28)

I am the water-god, and the manes. I am the controller of death. I am the time or death among the healers, lion among the beasts, and the king of birds among birds. (10.29-30)

I am the wind among the purifiers, and Lord Rama among the warriors. I am the crocodile among the fishes, and the holy Ganges river among the rivers. (10.31)

I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all creation, O Arjuna. Among the knowledge I am knowledge of the supreme Self. I am logic of the logician. (10.32)

I am the letter "A" among the alphabets. I am the dual compound among the compound words. I am the endless time. I am the sustainer, and I am omniscient. (10.33)

I am the all devouring death, and also the origin of future beings. I am the seven goddesses or guardian angels presiding over the seven qualities — fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intellect, resolve, and forgiveness. (10.34)

I am the Vedic and other hymns. I am the mantras, I am November-December among the months, I am the spring among the seasons. (10.35)

I am gambling of the cheats; splendor of the splendid; victory of the victorious; resolution of the resolute; and goodness of the good. (10.36)

I am Krishna, Vyasa, Arjuna, and the power of rulers, the statesmanship of the seekers of victory. I am silence among the secrets, and the Self-knowledge of the knowledgeable. (10.37-38)

I am the origin of all beings, O Arjuna. There is nothing, animate or inanimate, that can exist without Me. (See also 7.10 and 9.18) (10.39)

MANIFEST CREATION IS A VERY SMALL FRACTION OF THE ABSOLUTE

There is no end of My divine manifestations, O Arjuna. This is only a brief description by Me of the extent of My divine manifestations. (10.40)

Whatever is endowed with glory, brilliance, and power; know that to be a manifestation of a very small fraction of My splendor. (10.41)

What is the need for this detailed knowledge, O Arjuna? I continually support the entire universe by a very small fraction of My divine power. (10.42)

CHAPTER 11

VISION OF THE COSMIC FORM

Arjuna said: My illusion is dispelled by the profound words of wisdom You spoke — out of compassion towards me — about the supreme secret of Spirit. (11.01)

O Krishna, I have heard from You in detail about the origin and dissolution of beings, and Your immutable glory. (11.02)

VISION OF GOD IS THE ULTIMATE

AIM OF A SEEKER

O Lord, You are as You have said; yet I wish to see Your divine cosmic form, O Supreme Being. (11.03)

O Lord, if You think it is possible for me to see Your universal form, then, O Lord of the yogis, show me Your transcendental form. (11.04)

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, behold My hundreds and thousands of multifarious divine forms of different colors and shapes. Behold all the celestial beings, and many wonders never seen before. Also behold the entire creation — animate, inanimate, and whatever else you like to see — all at one place in My body. (11.05-07)

But, you are not able to see Me with your physical eye; therefore, I give you the divine eye to see My majestic power and glory. (11.08)

LORD SHOWS HIS COSMIC

FORM TO ARJUNA

Sanjaya said: O King, having said this; Lord Krishna, the great Lord of the mystic power of yoga, revealed His supreme majestic form to Arjuna. (11.09)

Arjuna saw the Universal Form of the Lord with many mouths and eyes, and many visions of marvel, with numerous divine ornaments, and holding many divine weapons. Wearing divine garlands and apparel, anointed with celestial perfumes and ointments, full of all wonders, the limitless God with faces on all sides. (11.10-11)

If the splendor of thousands of suns were to blaze forth all at once in the sky, even that would not resemble the splendor of that exalted being. (11.12)

Arjuna saw the entire universe, divided in many ways, but standing as all in One, and One in all in the transcendental body of Krishna, the Lord of celestial rulers. (See also 13.16, and 18.20) (11.13)

ONE MAY NOT BE PREPARED, OR QUALIFIED, TO SEE THE LORD

Having seen the cosmic form of the Lord, Arjuna was filled with wonder; and his hairs standing on end, bowed his head to the Lord and prayed with folded hands. (11.14)

Arjuna said: O Lord, I see in Your body all supernatural controllers, and multitude of beings, sages, and celestials. (11.15)

O Lord of the universe, I see You everywhere with infinite form, with many arms, stomachs, faces, and eyes. O Universal Form, I see neither your beginning nor the middle nor the end. (11.16)

I see You with Your crown, club, discus; and a mass of radiance, difficult to behold, shining all around like the immeasurable brilliance of the sun and the blazing fire. (11.17)

I believe You are the Supreme Being to be realized. You are the ultimate resort of the universe. You are the Spirit, and protector of the eternal order (Dharma). (11.18)

I see You with infinite power, without beginning, middle, or end; with many arms, with the sun and the moon as Your eyes, with Your mouth as a blazing fire scorching all the universe with Your radiance. (11.19)

O Lord, You pervade the entire space between heaven and earth in all directions. Seeing Your marvelous and terrible form, the three worlds are trembling with fear. (11.20)

Hosts of supernatural rulers enter into You. Some with folded hands sing Your names and glories in fear. A multitude of perfected beings hail and adores You with abundant praises. (11.21)

All the celestial beings amazingly gaze at You. Seeing your infinite form with many mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, stomachs, and many fearful tusks; the worlds are trembling with fear and so do I, O mighty Lord. (11.22-23)

ARJUNA IS FRIGHTENED TO

SEE THE COSMIC FORM

I am frightened and find neither peace nor courage, O Krishna, after seeing Your effulgent and colorful form touching the sky, and Your wide open mouth with large shining eyes. (11.24)

I lose my sense of direction and find no comfort after seeing Your mouths with fearful tusks glowing like the fires of cosmic dissolution. Have mercy on me! O Lord of celestial rulers, and refuge of the universe. (11.25)

All my cousin brothers, along with the hosts of other kings and warriors of the other side, together with chief warriors on our side, are also quickly entering into Your fearful mouths with terrible tusks. Some are seen caught in between the tusks with their heads crushed. (11.26-27)

These warriors of the mortal world are entering Your blazing mouths as many torrents of the rivers enter into the ocean. (11.28)

All these people are rapidly rushing into Your mouths for destruction as moths rush with great speed into the blazing flame for destruction. (11.29)

You are licking up all the worlds with Your flaming mouths, swallowing them from all sides. Your powerful radiance is filling the entire universe with effulgence and burning it, O Krishna. (11.30)

Tell me, who are You in such a fierce form? My salutations to You, O best of all celestial rulers, be merciful! I wish to understand You, O primal Being, because I do not know Your mission. (11.31)

LORD DESCRIBES HIS POWERS

Lord Krishna said: I am death, the mighty destroyer of the world. I have come here to destroy all these people. Even without your participation in the war, all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to exist. (11.32)

Therefore, you get up and attain glory. Conquer your enemies, and enjoy a prosperous kingdom. I have already destroyed all these warriors. You are only an instrument, O Arjuna. (11.33)

Kill all these great warriors who are already killed by Me. Do not fear. You will certainly conquer the enemies in the battle; therefore, fight! (11.34)

ARJUNA'S PRAYERS TO THE COSMIC FORM

Sanjaya said: Having heard these words of Krishna; the crowned Arjuna, trembling with folded hands, prostrated with fear and spoke to Krishna in a choked voice. (11.35)

Arjuna said: Rightly, O Krishna, the world delights and rejoices in glorifying You. Terrified demons flee in all directions. The hosts of sages bow to You in adoration. (11.36)

Why should they not — O great soul — bow to You, the original creator who is even greater than the creator of material worlds? O infinite Lord, O God of all celestial rulers, O abode of the universe, You are both Eternal and Temporal, and the Supreme Being that is beyond Eternal and Temporal. (See also 9.19, and 13.12 for a commentary) (11.37)

You are the primal God, the most ancient Person. You are the ultimate resort of the entire universe. You are the knower, the object of knowledge, and the Supreme Abode. You, O Lord of the infinite form, pervade the entire universe. (11.38)

You are the controller of death, the fire, the wind, the water god, the moon god, and the creator, as well as the father of the creator. Salutations to You a thousand times, and again and again salutations to You. (11.39)

My salutations to You from front, and from behind. O Lord, my obeisance to You from all sides. You are infinite valor and the boundless might. You pervade everything, and therefore You are everywhere and in everything. (11.40)

Considering You merely as a friend, and not knowing Your greatness, I have inadvertently addressed You as O Krishna, O Yadava, and O friend merely out of affection or carelessness. (11.41)

In whatever way I may have insulted You in jokes; while playing, reposing in bed, sitting, or at meals; when alone, or in front of others; O Krishna, the immeasurable One, I implore You for forgiveness. (11.42)

You are the father of this animate and inanimate world, and the greatest guru to be worshipped. No one is even equal to You in the three worlds; how can there be one greater than You? O Being of incomparable glory. (11.43)

Therefore, O adorable Lord, I seek Your mercy by bowing down and prostrating my body before You. Bear with me as a father to his son, as a friend to a friend, and as a husband to his wife, O Lord. (11.44)

Beholding that which has never been seen before delights me, and yet my mind is tormented with fear. Therefore, O God of celestial rulers, the refuge of the universe, have mercy on me; and show me your four-armed form. (11.45)

ONE MAY SEE GOD IN ANY FORM

OF ONE'S CHOICE

I wish to see You with a crown, holding mace and discus in Your hand. Therefore, O Lord with thousand arms and universal form, please appear in the four-armed form. (11.46)

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, being pleased with you I have shown you, through My own yogic powers, this particular supreme, shining, universal, infinite, and primal form of Mine that has never been seen before by anyone other than you. (11.47)

O Arjuna, neither by study of the Vedas, nor by sacrifice, nor by charity, nor by rituals, nor by severe austerities, can I be seen in this cosmic form by any one other than you in this human world. (11.48)

LORD SHOWS ARJUNA HIS FOUR-ARMED AND THE HUMAN FORM

Do not be perturbed and confused by seeing such a terrible form of Mine as this. With fearless and cheerful mind, now behold My four-armed form. (11.49)

Sanjaya said: After speaking like this to Arjuna, Krishna revealed His four-armed form. And then assuming His pleasant human form, Lord Krishna, the Great One, consoled Arjuna who was terrified. (11.50)

Arjuna said: O Krishna, seeing this lovely human form of Yours, I have now become tranquil and I am normal again. (11.51)

LORD CAN BE SEEN BY DEVOTIONAL LOVE

Lord Krishna said: This four-armed form of Mine that you have seen is very difficult, indeed, to see. Even celestial controllers are ever longing to see this form. (11.52)

This four-armed form of Mine that you have just seen cannot be seen even by study of the Vedas, or by austerity, or by acts of charity, or by the performance of rituals. (11.53)

However, through single-minded devotion alone, I can be seen in this form, can be known in essence, and also can be reached, O Arjuna. (11.54)

The one who does all works for Me, and to whom I am the supreme goal; who is my devotee, who has no attachment, and is free from enmity towards any being; attains Me, O Arjuna. (See also 8.22) (11.55)

CHAPTER 12

PATH OF DEVOTION

SHOULD ONE WORSHIP A PERSONAL

OR AN IMPERSONAL GOD?

Arjuna asked: Those ever steadfast devotees who worship the personal aspect of God with form(s), and others who worship the impersonal aspect, or the formless Absolute; which of these has the best knowledge of yoga? (12.01)

Lord Krishna said: Those ever steadfast devotees who worship with supreme faith by fixing their mind on a personal form of God, I consider them to be the best yogis. (See also 6.47) (12.02)

But those who worship the unchangeable, the inexplicable, the invisible, the omnipresent, the inconceivable, the unchanging, the immovable, and the formless impersonal aspect of God;

restraining all the senses, even-minded under all circumstances, engaged in the welfare of all creatures, also attain God. (12.03-04)

REASONS FOR WORSHIPPING A

PERSONAL FORM OF GOD

Self-realization is more difficult for those who fix their mind on the impersonal, unmanifest, and formless Absolute; because, comprehension of the unmanifest by embodied beings is attained with difficulty. (12.05)

For those who worship the Supreme with unswerving devotion as a personal deity of their choice, offer all actions to Me, intent on Me as the Supreme, and meditate on Me; I swiftly become their savior — from the world that is the ocean of death and transmigration — whose thoughts are set on My personal form, O Arjuna. (12.06-07)

FOUR PATHS TO GOD

Therefore, focus your mind on Me, and let your intellect dwell upon Me alone through meditation and contemplation. Thereafter you shall certainly attain Me. (12.08)

If you are unable to focus your mind steadily on Me, then long to attain Me by practice of any other spiritual discipline; such as a ritual, or deity worship that suits you. (12.09)

If you are unable even to do any spiritual discipline, then be intent on performing your duty just for Me. You shall attain perfection by doing your prescribed duty for Me — without any selfish motive — just as an instrument to serve and please Me. (12.10)

If you are unable to do your duty for Me, then just surrender unto My will, and renounce the attachment to, and the anxiety for, the fruits of all work — by learning to accept all results as God's grace — with equanimity. (12.11)

KARMA-YOGA IS THE BEST WAY

TO START WITH

The transcendental knowledge of scriptures is better than mere ritualistic practice; meditation is better than scriptural knowledge; renunciation of selfish attachment to the fruits of work (Karma-yoga) is better than meditation; peace immediately follows renunciation of selfish motives. (See more on renunciation in 18.02, 18.09) (12.12)

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A DEVOTEE

One who does not hate any creature, who is friendly and compassionate, free from the notion of "I" and "my", even-minded in pain and pleasure, forgiving; and who is ever content, who has

subdued the mind, whose resolve is firm, whose mind and intellect are engaged in dwelling upon Me, who is devoted to Me, is dear to Me. (12.13-14)

The one by whom others are not agitated and who is not agitated by others, who is free from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety, is also dear to Me. (12.15)

One who is desireless, pure, wise, impartial, and free from anxiety; who has renounced the doership in all undertakings; such a devotee is dear to Me. (12.16)

One who neither rejoices nor grieves, neither likes nor dislikes, who has renounced both the good and the evil, and is full of devotion; is dear to Me. (12.17)

The one who remains the same towards friend or foe, in honor or disgrace, in heat or cold, in pleasure or pain; who is free from attachment; who is indifferent to censure or praise; who is quiet, and content with whatever he or she has; unattached to a place, a country, or a house; equanimous, and full of devotion — that person is dear to Me. (12.18-19)

ONE SHOULD SINCERELY TRY TO

DEVELOP DIVINE QUALITIES

But those faithful devotees, who set Me as their supreme goal and follow — or just sincerely try to develop — the above mentioned nectar of moral values are very dear to Me. (12.20)

CHAPTER 13

CREATION AND THE CREATOR

THEORY OF CREATION

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, this physical body, the miniature universe, may be called the field or creation. One who knows the creation is called the creator (or Spirit) by the seers of truth. (13.01)

O Arjuna, know Me to be the creator of all the creation. The true understanding of both the creator and the creation is considered by Me to be the transcendental knowledge. (13.02)

What the creation is, what it is like, what its transformations are, where its source is, who that creator is, and what His powers are, hear all these from Me in brief. (13.03)

The seers have separately described the creation and the creator in different ways in the Vedic hymns, and also in the conclusive and convincing verses of other scriptures. (13.04)

The primary material Nature, the cosmic intellect, "I" consciousness or ego, five basic elements, ten organs, mind, five sense objects; and desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the physical body,

consciousness, and resolve — thus the entire field has been briefly described with its transformations. (See also 7.04) (13.05-06)

THE FOURFOLD NOBLE TRUTH

AS MEANS OF NIRVANA

Humility, modesty, nonviolence, forgiveness, honesty, service to guru, purity of thought, word, and deed, steadfastness, self-control; and aversion towards sense objects, absence of ego, constant reflection on pain and suffering inherent in birth, old age, disease, and death; (13.07-08)

Detachment, non-fondness with son, wife, and home; unflinching equanimity upon attainment of the desirable and the undesirable; and unswerving devotion to Me through single-minded contemplation, taste for solitude, distaste for social gatherings and gossips; steadfastness in acquiring the knowledge of Spirit, and seeing the omnipresent Supreme Being everywhere — this is said to be knowledge. That which is contrary to this is ignorance. (13.09-11)

GOD CAN BE DESCRIBED BY PARABLES, AND NOT IN ANY OTHER WAY

I shall fully describe the object of knowledge. By knowing this one attains immortality. The beginningless Supreme Being is said to be neither eternal, nor temporal. (See also 9.19, 11.37, and 15.18) (13.12)

The Spirit has His hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth, and ears everywhere, because He is all-pervading and omnipresent. (13.13)

He is the perceiver of all sense objects without the physical sense organs; unattached, and yet the sustainer of all; devoid of the three modes of material Nature, and yet the enjoyer of the modes of material Nature by becoming a living entity. (13.14)

He is inside as well as outside all beings, animate and inanimate. He is incomprehensible because of His subtlety. And because of His omnipresence, He is very near — residing in one's inner psyche; as well as far away — in the Supreme Abode. (13.15)

He is undivided, and yet appears to exist as if divided in beings. He is the object of knowledge, and appears as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of all beings. (See also 11.13, and 18.20) (13.16)

The Supreme Being is the source of all lights. He is said to be beyond darkness of ignorance. He is the Self-knowledge, the object of Self-knowledge, and seated in the inner psyche as consciousness (See verse 18.61) of all beings, He is to be realized by Self-knowledge. (13.17)

Thus the creation as well as the knowledge and the object of knowledge have been briefly described by Me. Having understood this, My devotee attains My Supreme Abode. (13.18)

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT, SPIRIT, MATERIAL NATURE, AND THE INDIVIDUAL SOULS

Know that both the material Nature and the Spiritual Being are beginningless. All manifestations and three dispositions of mind and matter, called modes, are born of material Nature. Material Nature is said to be the cause of production of physical body and organs of perception and action. Spirit (or Consciousness) is said to be the cause of experiencing pleasures and pains. (13.19-20)

Spiritual Being enjoys three modes of material Nature by associating with the material Nature. Attachment to the three modes of material Nature due to ignorance caused by previous Karma is the cause of birth of living entity in good and evil wombs. (13.21)

The Spirit in the body is the witness, the guide, the supporter, the enjoyer, and the controller. (13.22)

They who truly understand Spirit and the material Nature with its three modes are not born again regardless of their way of life. (13.23)

Some perceive the Supersoul in their inner psyche through mind and intellect that have been purified either by meditation, or by metaphysical knowledge, or by selfless service. (13.24)

FAITH ALONE CAN LEAD TO NIRVANA

Others, however, do not know the yogas of meditation, knowledge, devotion, and work; but they perform deity worship with faith as mentioned in the scriptures by the saints and sages. They also transcend death by virtue of their firm faith to what they have heard. (13.25)

Whatever is born — animate or inanimate — know them to be born from the union of Spirit and matter, O Arjuna. (See also 7.06) (13.26)

The one who sees the same eternal Supreme Lord dwelling as Spirit equally within all mortal beings truly sees. (13.27)

When one beholds one and the same Lord existing equally in everybeing, one does not injure anybody; because one considers everything as one's own self. And thereupon attains the Supreme Abode. (13.28)

The one who perceives that all works are done by the powers of material Nature truly understands, and thus does not consider oneself as the doer. (See also 3.27, 5.09, and 14.19) (13.29)

The moment one discovers diverse variety of beings and their different ideas abiding in One, and coming out from 'That' alone, one attains the Supreme Being. (13.30)

ATTRIBUTES OF THE SPIRIT (BRAHM)

Because of being beginningless and unaffected by three modes of material Nature, the eternal Supersoul — even though dwelling in the body as a living entity — neither does anything nor becomes tainted, O Arjuna. (13.31)

Just as the all-pervading space is not tainted because of its subtlety; similarly, the Spirit abiding in all bodies is not tainted. (13.32)

Just as one sun illuminates the entire world; similarly, Spirit gives life to the entire creation, O Arjuna. (13.33)

They who perceive — with the eye of Self-knowledge — the difference between the creation (or the body) and the creator (or the Spirit) as well as know the technique of liberation of the living entity from the trap of divine illusory energy (Maya), attain the Supreme. (13.34)

CHAPTER 14

THREE MODES OF MATERIAL NATURE

Lord Krishna said: I shall further explain to you that supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledge, knowing that all the sages have attained supreme perfection after this life. (14.01)

They who have taken refuge in this transcendental knowledge attain unity with Me; and are neither born at the time of creation, nor afflicted at the time of dissolution. (14.02)

ALL BEINGS ARE BORN FROM THE UNION OF SPIRIT AND MATTER

My material Nature is the womb of creation wherein I place the seed of Consciousness from which all beings are born, O Arjuna. (See also 9.10) (14.03)

Whatever forms are produced in all different wombs, O Arjuna, the material Nature is their body-giving mother; and the Spirit or Consciousness is the life-giving father. (14.04)

HOW THREE MODES OF MATERIAL NATURE BIND THE SPIRIT SOUL TO THE BODY

Goodness, activity, and inertia — these three modes or ropes material Nature fetter the eternal individual soul to the body, O Arjuna. (14.05)

Of these, the mode of goodness is illuminating and good, because it is pure. The mode of goodness fetters the living entity by attachment to happiness and knowledge, O sinless Arjuna. (14.06)

Arjuna, know that the mode of passion is characterized by intense craving for sense gratification, and is the source of material desire and attachment. The mode of passion binds the living entity by attachment to the fruits of work. (14.07)

Know, O Arjuna, that the mode of ignorance — the deluder of living entity — is born of inertia. The mode of ignorance binds living entity by carelessness, laziness, and excessive sleep. (14.08)

O Arjuna, the mode of goodness attaches one to happiness of learning and knowing the Spirit, the mode of passion attaches to action, and the mode of ignorance attaches to negligence by covering the Self-knowledge. (14.09)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THREE

MODES OF NATURE

Goodness prevails by suppressing passion and ignorance; passion prevails by suppressing goodness and ignorance; and ignorance prevails by suppressing goodness and passion, O Arjuna. (14.10)

When the light of Self-knowledge glitters all the senses in the body, then it should be known that goodness is predominant. (14.11)

O Arjuna, when passion is predominant; greed, activity, undertaking of selfish works, restlessness, and excitement arise. (14.12)

O Arjuna, when inertia is predominant; ignorance, inactivity, carelessness, and delusion arise. (14.13)

THREE MODES ARE ALSO THE VEHICLES OF TRANSMIGRATION FOR THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL

One who dies during the dominance of goodness goes to heaven — the pure world of knowers of the Supreme. (14.14)

When one dies during the dominance of passion, one is reborn as attached to action (or the utilitarian type); and dying in ignorance, one is reborn as lower creatures. (14.15)

The fruit of good action is said to be beneficial and pure, the fruit of passionate action is pain, and the fruit of ignorant action is laziness. (14.16)

Self-knowledge arises from mode of goodness; greed arises from mode of passion; and negligence, delusion, and slowness of mind arise from the mode of ignorance. (14.17)

They who are established in goodness go to heaven; passionate persons are reborn in the mortal world; and the insipid ones, abiding in the mode of ignorance, go to lower planets of hell, or take birth as lower creatures depending on the degree of their ignorance. (14.18)

ATTAIN NIRVANA AFTER TRANSCENDING THREE MODES OF MATERIAL NATURE

When visionaries perceive no doer other than the powers of the Supreme Being — the modes of material Nature; and know That which is above and beyond these modes; then they attain Nirvana or salvation. (See also 3.27, 5.09, and 13.29) (14.19)

When one rises above the three modes of material Nature that originate in the body, one attains immortality or salvation, and is freed from the pains of birth, old age, and death. (14.20)

THE PROCESS OF RISING ABOVE

THE THREE MODES

Arjuna said: What are the marks of those who have transcended the three modes of material Nature, and what is their conduct? How does one transcend these three modes of material Nature, O Lord Krishna? (14.21)

Lord Krishna said: One who neither hates the presence of enlightenment, activity, and delusion; nor desires for them when they are absent; who remains like a witness without being affected by the modes of material Nature; and stays firmly attached to the Lord without wavering — thinking that the modes of material Nature only are operating. (14.22-23)

The one who depends on the Lord and is indifferent to pain and pleasure; to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are alike; to whom the dear and the unfriendly are alike; who is of firm mind, who is calm in censure and in praise, and the one who is indifferent to honor and disgrace, who is impartial to friend and foe, and who has renounced the sense of doership — is said to have transcended the modes of material Nature. (14.24-25)

BONDS OF THREE MODES CAN BE

CUT BY DEVOTIONAL LOVE

The one who offers service to Me with love and unswerving devotion transcends three modes of material Nature, and becomes fit for Nirvana, or salvation. (See also 7.14 and 15.19) (14.26)

Because, I am the basis (or source) of the immortal Spirit, of everlasting cosmic order (Dharma), and of the absolute bliss. (14.27)

CHAPTER 15

THE SUPREME BEING

CREATION IS LIKE A TREE CREATED BY THE POWERS OF MAYA

Lord Krishna said: The universe (or human body) may be compared to an eternal tree that has its origin (or root) in the Supreme Being and its branches below in the cosmos. The Vedic hymns are the leaves of this tree. One who understands this tree is a knower of the Vedas. (15.01)

The branches of this eternal tree are spread all over the cosmos. The tree is nourished by the energy of material Nature; sense pleasures are its sprouts; and its roots of ego and desires stretch below in the human world causing Karmic bondage. (15.02)

HOW TO CUT THE TREE OF ATTACHMENT AND ATTAIN SALVATION BY TAKING REFUGE IN GOD

The beginning, the end, or the real form of this tree is not perceptible on the earth. Having cut the firm roots — the desires — of this tree by the mighty ax of Self-knowledge and detachment, one should seek that Supreme Abode reaching where one does not come back to the mortal world again. One should be always thinking: "In that very primal person I take refuge from which this primal manifestation comes forth." (15.03-04)

Those who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, who are constantly dwelling in the Supreme Being with all lust completely stilled, who are free from dualities of pleasure and pain; such wise ones reach My Supreme Abode. (15.05)

The sun does not illumine My Supreme Abode, nor the moon, nor the fire. Having reached there people attain permanent liberation (Mukti), and do not come back to this temporal world. (15.06)

THE EMBODIED SOUL IS THE ENJOYER

The individual soul (Jiva, Jivatma) in the body of living beings is the integral part of the universal Spirit, or consciousness. The individual soul associates with the six sensory faculties — including the mind — of perception and activates them. (15.07)

Just as the air takes aroma away from the flower; similarly, the individual soul takes the six sensory faculties from the physical body it casts off during death to the new physical body it acquires in reincarnation. (See also 2.13) (15.08)

The living entity enjoys sense pleasures using six sensory faculties of hearing, touch, sight, taste, smell, and mind. The ignorant cannot perceive living entity departing from the body, or staying in the body and enjoying sense pleasures by associating with the material body. But those who have the eye of Self-knowledge can see it. (15.09-10)

The yogis, striving for perfection, behold the living entity abiding in their inner psyche as consciousness; but the ignorant whose inner psyche is not pure, cannot perceive Him even though striving. (15.11)

SPIRIT IS THE ESSENCE OF EVERYTHING

The light energy that coming from the sun illumines the whole world; and that in the moon, and in the fire; know that light to be Mine. (See also 13.17 and 15.06) (15.12).

Entering the earth, I support all beings with My energy; becoming the sap-giving moon, I nourish all the plants. (15.13)

Becoming the digestive fire, I remain in the body of all living beings; uniting with vital breaths or bioimpulses, I digest all types of food; and (15.14)

I am seated in the inner psyche of all beings. The memory, Self-knowledge, and the removal of doubts and wrong notions about God come from Me. I am verily that which is to be known by the study of all the Vedas. I am, indeed, the author as well as the student of the Vedas. (See also 6.39) (15.15)

WHAT ARE THE SUPREME SPIRIT, SPIRIT

AND THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL?

There are two entities in the cosmos: The changeable Temporal Beings, and the unchangeable Eternal Being (Spirit). All created beings are subject to change, but the Spirit does not change. (15.16)

The Supreme Being is beyond both — the Temporal Beings and the Eternal Being. He is also called the Absolute Reality that sustains both the Temporal and the Eternal by pervading everything. (15.17)

Because the Supreme Being is beyond both Temporal and Eternal; therefore, He is known in this world and in the scriptures as the Supreme Being (Absolute Reality, Truth, Supersoul) (15.18)

The wise one who truly understands the Supreme Being, knows everything and worships Him wholeheartedly. (See also 7.14, 14.26, and 18.66) (15.19)

Thus this most secret transcendental science of the Absolute has been explained by Me. Having understood this, one becomes enlightened, and one's all duties are accomplished, O Arjuna. (15.20)

CHAPTER 16

DIVINE AND THE DEMONIC QUALITIES

A LIST OF MAJOR DIVINE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD BE CULTIVATED FOR SALVATION

Lord Krishna said: Fearlessness, purity of inner psyche, perseverance in the yoga of Self-knowledge, charity, sense restraint, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, honesty;

nonviolence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, equanimity, abstaining from malicious talk, compassion for all creatures, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, splendor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, absence of malice, and absence of pride — these are some of the qualities of those endowed with divine virtues, O Arjuna. (16.01-03)

A LIST OF DEMONIC QUALITIES THAT SHOULD BE GIVEN UP BEFORE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY CAN BEGIN

O Arjuna, the marks of those who are born with demonic qualities are: Hypocrisy, arrogance, pride, anger, harshness, and ignorance. (16.04)

Divine qualities lead to salvation, the demonic qualities are said to be for bondage. Do not grieve, O Arjuna, you are born with divine qualities. (16.05)

THERE ARE ONLY TWO TYPES OF HUMAN BEINGS —THE WISE AND THE IGNORANT

There are only two types (or castes) of human beings in this world: The divine, or the wise; and the demonic, or the ignorant. The divine has been described at length, now hear from Me about the demonic, O Arjuna. (16.06)

Persons of demonic nature do not know what to do and what not to do. They neither have purity nor good conduct nor truthfulness. (16.07)

They say: The world is unreal, without a substratum, without a God, and without an order. Sexual union of man and woman alone and nothing else causes the world. (16.08)

Adhering to this wrong atheist view, these degraded souls — with small intellect and cruel deeds — are born as enemies for the destruction of the world. (16.09)

Filled with insatiable desires, hypocrisy, pride, and arrogance; holding wrong views due to delusion; they act with impure motives. (16.10)

Obsessed with endless anxiety lasting until death, considering sense gratification their highest aim, convinced that sense pleasure is everything; (16.11)

Bound by hundreds of ties of desire and enslaved by lust and anger; they strive to obtain wealth by unlawful means for the fulfillment of sensual pleasures. They think: (16.12)

This has been gained by me today, I shall fulfill this desire, I have this much wealth, and will have more wealth in the future; (16.13)

That enemy has been slain by me, and I shall slay others also. I am the Lord. I am the enjoyer. I am successful, powerful, and happy; (16.14)

I am rich and born in a noble family. Who is equal to me? I shall perform sacrifice, I shall give charity, and I shall rejoice. Thus deluded by ignorance; (16.15)

Bewildered by many fancies; entangled in the net of delusion; addicted to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures; they fall into a foul hell. (16.16)

Self-conceited, stubborn, filled with pride and intoxication of wealth; they perform service only in name, for show, and not according to scriptural injunction. (16.17)

These malicious people cling to egoism, power, arrogance, lust, and anger; and hate Me who dwells in their own bodies and those of others. (16.18)

SUFFERING IS THE DESTINY OF THE IGNORANT

I hurl these haters, cruel, sinful, and mean people into the cycles of rebirth in the womb of demons again and again. (16.19)

O Arjuna, entering the wombs of demons birth after birth, the deluded ones sink to the lowest hell without ever attaining Me (until their minds change for the better by the causeless mercy of the Lord). (16.20)

LUST, ANGER, AND GREED ARE THE THREE GATES TO HELL

Lust, anger, and greed are the three gates of hell leading to the downfall (or bondage) of the individual. Therefore, one must learn to give up these three. (16.21)

One who is liberated from these three gates of hell, O Arjuna, does what is best for him or her, and consequently attains the Supreme Abode. (16.22)

ONE MUST FOLLOW THE SCRIPTURAL INJUNCTIONS

One, who acts under the influence of his or her desires, disobeying scriptural injunctions, neither attains perfection nor happiness, nor the Supreme Abode. (16.23)

Therefore, let the scripture be your authority in determining what should be done and what should not be done. You should perform your duty following the scriptural injunction. (16.24)

CHAPTER 17

THREEFOLD FAITH

Arjuna said: What is the mode of devotion of those who perform spiritual practices with faith but without following the scriptural injunctions, O Krishna? Is it in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance? (17.01)

THREE TYPES OF FAITH

Lord Krishna said: The natural faith of embodied beings is of three kinds: Goodness, passion, and ignorance. Now hear about these from Me. (17.02)

O Arjuna, the faith of each is in accordance with one's own natural disposition that is governed by Karmic impressions. A person is known by the faith. One can become whatever one wants to be, if one constantly contemplates on the object of desire with faith. (17.03)

Persons in the mode of goodness worship celestial controllers; those in the mode of passion worship supernatural rulers and demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits. (17.04)

They who practice severe austerities without following the prescription of the scriptures; who are full of hypocrisy and egotism; who are impelled by the force of desire and attachment; who senselessly torture the elements in their body and also Me who dwells within the body, know these ignorant persons to be of demonic nature. (17.05-06)

THREE TYPES OF FOOD

The food preferred by all of us is also of three types. So are the sacrifice, austerity, and charity. Now hear the distinction between them. (17.07)

The foods that promote longevity, virtue, strength, health, happiness, and joy are juicy, smooth, substantial, and nutritious. Persons in the mode of goodness like such foods. (17.08)

Foods that are very bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry, and burning; and cause pain, grief, and disease; are liked by persons in the mode of passion. (17.09)

The foods liked by people in the mode of ignorance are stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, refuses, and impure (such as meat and alcohol). (17.10)

THREE TYPES OF SACRIFICES

Selfless service enjoined by the scriptures, and performed without the desire for the fruit, with a firm belief and conviction that it is a duty, is in the mode of goodness. (17.11)

Selfless service that is performed only for show, and aiming for fruit, know that to be in the mode of passion, O Arjuna. (17.12)

Selfless service that is performed without following the scripture, in which no food is distributed, which is devoid of mantra, faith, and gift, is said to be in the mode of ignorance. (17.13)

AUSTERITY OF THOUGHT,

WORD, AND DEED

The worship of celestial controllers, the priest, guru, and the wise; purity, honesty, celibacy, and nonviolence; these are said to be the austerity of deed. (17.14)

Speech that is non-offensive, truthful, pleasant, beneficial, and is used for the regular study of scriptures is called the austerity of word. (17.15)

The serenity of mind, gentleness, equanimity, self-control, and the purity of thought — these are called the austerity of thought. (17.16)

THREE TYPES OF AUSTERITY

The above mentioned threefold austerity (of thought, word, and deed) practiced by yogis with supreme faith, without a desire for the fruit, is said to be in the mode of goodness. (17.17)

Austerity that is performed for gaining respect, honor, reverence, and for the sake of show that yields an uncertain and temporary result is said to be in the mode of passion. (17.18)

Austerity performed with foolish stubbornness, or with self-torture, or for harming others, is declared to be in the mode of ignorance. (17.19)

THREE TYPES OF CHARITY

Charity that is given as a matter of duty, to a deserving candidate who does nothing in return, at the right place and time, is considered to be charity in the mode of goodness. (17.20)

Charity that is given unwillingly, or to get something in return, or looking for some fruit, is said to be in the mode of passion. (17.21)

Charity that is given at a wrong place and time, and to unworthy persons; or without paying respect to the receiver or with ridicule, is said to be in the mode of ignorance. (17.22)

THREEFOLD NAME OF GOD

The Spirit is all pervading. The persons with divine qualities, the Vedas, and the selfless service were created by and from the Spirit. (17.23)

Therefore, acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity prescribed in the scriptures are always commenced by uttering any one of the many names of God such as OM, Amen, or Allah by the knowers of the Supreme. (17.24)

The seekers of salvation perform various types of sacrifice, charity, and austerity by uttering "He is all" without seeking a reward. (17.25)

The word "Truth" is used in the sense of Reality and goodness. The word Truth is also used for an auspicious act, O Arjuna. (17.26)

Faith in sacrifice, charity, and austerity is also called Truth. The selfless service for the sake of the Supreme is verily termed as Truth. (17.27)

Whatever is done without faith — whether it is sacrifice, charity, austerity, or any other act — is useless. It has no value here or hereafter, O Arjuna. (17.28)

CHAPTER 18

SALVATION THROUGH RENUNCIATION

Arjuna said: I wish to know the nature of renunciation and sacrifice, and the difference between the two, O Lord Krishna. (18.01)

DEFINITION OF RENUNCIATION

AND SACRIFICE

Lord Krishna said: The sages define renunciation as abstaining from all work for personal profit. The wise define sacrifice as the sacrifice of, and the freedom from, the selfish attachment to the fruits of all work. (See also 5.01, 5.05, and 6.01) (18.02)

Some philosophers say that all work is full of faults and should be given up, while others say that acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity should not be abandoned. (18.03)

O Arjuna, listen to My conclusion about sacrifice. Sacrifice is said to be of three types. (18.04)

Acts of service, charity, and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed, because service, charity, and austerity are the purifiers of the wise. (18.05)

Even these obligatory works should be performed without attachment to the fruits. This is My definite supreme advice, O Arjuna. (18.06)

THREE TYPES OF SACRIFICE

Giving up one's duty is not proper. The abandonment of obligatory work is due to delusion, and is declared to be in the mode of ignorance. (18.07)

One who abandons duty merely because it is difficult, or because of fear of bodily trouble, does not get the benefits of sacrifice by performing such a sacrifice in the mode of passion. (18.08)

Obligatory work performed as duty, renouncing selfish attachment to the fruit, is alone regarded to be sacrifice in the mode of goodness, O Arjuna. (18.09)

The one who neither hates a disagreeable work, nor is attached to an agreeable work, is considered a renunciant (Tyagi), imbued with the mode of goodness, intelligent, and free from all doubts about the Supreme Being. (18.10)

Human beings cannot completely abstain from work. Therefore, the one who completely renounces the selfish attachment to the fruits of all works is considered a renunciant. (18.11)

The threefold fruit of works — desirable, undesirable, and mixed — accrues after death to the one who is not a renunciant (Tyagi), but never to a Tyagi. (18.12)

FIVE CAUSES OF ANY ACTION

Learn from Me, O Arjuna, the five causes, as described in the Sankhya doctrine, for the accomplishment of all actions. They are: The physical body, the seat of Karma; the modes of material Nature, the doer; the eleven organs of perception and action, the instruments; various bioimpulses; and the fifth is the presiding deities of the eleven organs. (18.13-14)

Whatever action, whether right or wrong, one performs by thought, word, and deed; these are its five causes. (18.15)

Therefore, the ignorant one who considers one's body or the soul as the sole agent due to imperfect knowledge does not understand. (18.16)

The one who is free from the notion of doership, and whose intellect is not polluted by the desire to reap the fruit; even after slaying these people, he or she neither slays nor is bound by the act of killing. (18.17)

The subject, the object, and the knowledge of the object are the threefold driving force to an action. The eleven organs; the act, and the agent or the modes of material Nature are the three components of action. (18.18)

THREE TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Self-knowledge, action), and agent are said to be of three types according to Sankhya doctrine. Hear duly about these also. (18.19)

The knowledge by which one sees a single immutable Reality in all beings as undivided in the divided; such knowledge is in the mode of goodness. (See also 11.13, and 13.16) (18.20)

The knowledge by which one sees different realities of various types among all beings as separate from one another; consider that knowledge to be in the mode of passion. (18.21)

The irrational, baseless, and worthless knowledge by which one clings to one single effect (such as the body) as if it is everything; such knowledge is declared to be in the mode of darkness of ignorance (18.22)

THREE TYPES OF ACTION

The obligatory duty performed without likes and dislikes, and without selfish motives and attachment to enjoy the fruit, is said to be in the mode of goodness. (18.23)

Action performed with ego, with selfish motives, and with too much effort; is declared to be in the mode of passion. (18.24)

Action that is undertaken because of delusion; disregarding consequences, loss, injury to others, as well as one's own ability is said to be in the mode of ignorance. (18.25)

THREE TYPES OF AGENT

The agent who is free from attachment, is non-egotistic, endowed with resolve and enthusiasm, and unperturbed in success or failure is called good. (18.26)

The agent who is impassioned, attached to the fruits of their work, greedy, violent, impure, and is affected by joy and sorrow is called passionate. (18.27)

The undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, wicked, malicious, lazy, depressed, and procrastinating agent is called ignorant. (18.28)

THREE TYPES OF INTELLECT

Now hear the threefold division of intellect and resolve, based on modes of material Nature, as explained by Me fully and separately, O Arjuna. (18.29)

O Arjuna, the intellect by which one understands the path of work and the path of renunciation, right and wrong action, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation, that intellect is in the mode of goodness. (18.30)

The intellect by which one cannot distinguish between righteousness (Dharma) and unrighteousness (Adharma), and right and wrong action; that intellect is in the mode of passion, O Arjuna. (18.31)

The intellect — when covered by ignorance — accepts unrighteousness (Adharma) as righteousness (Dharma), and thinks everything to be that which it is not, is in the mode of ignorance, O Arjuna. (18.32)

THREE TYPES OF RESOLVE, AND THE FOUR GOALS OF HUMAN LIFE

The resolve by which one manipulates the functions of the mind, Prana (bioimpulses), and senses for God-realization only; that resolve is in the mode of goodness, O Arjuna. (18.33)

The resolve by which a person, craving for the fruits of work, clings to duty, accumulating wealth, and enjoyment with great attachment; that resolve, O Arjuna, is in the mode of passion. (18.34)

The resolve by which a dull person does not give up sleep, fear, grief, despair, and carelessness; that resolve is in the mode of ignorance, O Arjuna. (18.35)

THREE TYPES OF PLEASURE

And now hear from Me, O Arjuna, about the threefold pleasure. The pleasure one enjoys from spiritual practice results in cessation of all sorrows. (18.36)

The pleasure that appears as poison in the beginning, but is like nectar in the end, comes by the grace of Self-knowledge, and is in the mode of goodness. (18.37)

Sensual pleasures appear as nectar in the beginning, but become poison in the end; such pleasures are in the mode of passion. (See also 5.22) (18.38)

Pleasure that confuses a person in the beginning and in the end; which comes from sleep, laziness, and carelessness; such pleasure is said to be in the mode of ignorance. (18.39)

There is no being, either on the earth or among the celestial controllers in the heaven, who can remain free from these three modes of material Nature. (18.40)

DIVISION OF LABOR IS BASED

ON ONE'S ABILITY

The division of human labor is also based on the qualities inherent in peoples' nature or their make up. (See also 4.13) (18.41)

Those who have serenity, self control, austerity, purity, patience, honesty, transcendental knowledge, transcendental experience, and belief in God are labeled as intellectuals (Brahmans). (18.42)

Those having the qualities of heroism, vigor, firmness, dexterity, not fleeing from battle, charity, and administrative skills are called leaders or protectors (Kshatriyas). (18.43)

Those who are good in cultivation, cattle rearing, business, trade, finance, and industry are known as business men (Vaishyas). Those who are very good in service and labor type work only are classed as workers (Shudras). (18.44)

ATTAINMENT OF SALVATION THROUGH DUTY, DISCIPLINE, AND DEVOTION

One can attain the highest perfection by devotion to one's natural work. Listen to Me how one attains perfection while engaged in one's natural work. (18.45)

One attains perfection by worshipping the Supreme Being — from whom all beings originate, and by whom all this universe is pervaded — through performance of one's natural duty for Him. (See also 9.27, 12.10) (18.46)

One's inferior natural work is better than superior unnatural work even though well performed. One who does the work ordained by one's inherent nature, without any selfish motive, incurs no sin (or Karmic reaction). (See also 3.35) (18.47)

One's natural work, even though defective, should not be abandoned; because all undertakings are enveloped by defects as fire is covered by smoke, O Arjuna. (18.48)

The person whose mind is always free from selfish attachment, who has subdued the mind and senses, and who is free from desires attains the supreme perfection of freedom from the bondage of Karma by renouncing selfish attachment to the fruits of work. (18.49)

Learn from Me briefly, O Arjuna, how one who has attained such perfection, or the freedom from the bondage of Karma, attains Supreme Being, the goal of transcendental knowledge. (18.50)

Endowed with purified intellect, subduing the mind with firm resolve, turning away from sound and other objects of the senses, giving up likes and dislikes; living in solitude, eating lightly, controlling the mind, speech, and organs of action, ever absorbed in yoga of meditation, taking refuge in detachment; and after relinquishing egotism, violence, pride, lust, anger, and proprietorship; one becomes peaceful, free from the notion of "I, me, and my", and fit for attaining oneness with the Supreme Being. (18.51-53)

Absorbed in the Supreme Being, the serene one neither grieves nor desires; becoming impartial to all beings, one obtains the highest devotional love for God. (18.54)

By devotion one truly understands what and who I am in essence. Having known Me in essence, one immediately merges with Me. (See also 5.19) (18.55)

A Karma-yogi devotee attains the eternal immutable abode by My grace — even while doing all duties — just by taking refuge in Me (by surrendering all action to Me with loving devotion). (18.56)

Sincerely offer all actions to Me, set Me as your supreme goal, and completely depend on Me. Always fix your mind on Me, and resort to Karma-yoga. (18.57)

You shall overcome all difficulties by My grace when your mind becomes fixed on Me. But, if you do not listen to Me due to ego, you shall perish. (18.58)

THE KARMIC BONDAGE

If due to ego you think: I shall not fight; this resolve of yours is vain. Because your own nature will compel you to fight. (18.59)

O Arjuna, you are controlled by your own nature-born Karmic impressions. Therefore, you shall do — even against your will — what you do not wish to do out of delusion. (18.60)

***WE BECOME THE PUPPETS OF
OUR OWN FREEWILL***

The Supreme Lord — as the controller abiding in the inner psyche of all beings — causes them to work out their Karma like a puppet (of Karma created by the free will) mounted on a machine. (18.61)

Seek refuge in the Supreme Lord alone with loving devotion, O Arjuna. By His grace you shall attain supreme peace and the Eternal Abode. (18.62)

Thus the knowledge that is more secret than the secret has been explained to you by Me. After fully reflecting on this, do as you wish. (18.63)

***PATH OF SURRENDER IS THE
ULTIMATE PATH TO GOD***

Hear once again My most secret, supreme word. You are very dear to Me, therefore, I shall tell this for your benefit. (18.64)

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, offer service to Me, bow down to Me, and you shall certainly reach Me. I promise you because you are My very dear friend. (18.65)

Set aside all meritorious deeds and religious rituals, and just surrender completely to My will with firm faith and loving devotion. I shall liberate you from all sins, the bonds of Karma. Do not grieve. (18.66)

This knowledge should never be spoken by you to one who is devoid of austerity, who is without devotion, who does not desire to listen, or who speaks ill of Me. (18.67)

***THE HIGHEST SERVICE TO GOD,
AND THE BEST CHARITY***

The one who shall propagate this supreme secret philosophy — the transcendental knowledge of the Gita — amongst My devotees, shall be performing the highest devotional service to Me, and shall certainly come to Me. No other person shall do a more pleasing service to Me, and no one on the earth shall be more dear to Me. (18.68-69)

GRACE OF THE GITA

I promise the study of this sacred dialogue of ours will be equivalent to worshipping Me with knowledge-sacrifice. (18.70)

Whoever hears this sacred dialogue with faith and without cavil becomes free from sin, and attains heaven — the higher worlds of those whose actions are pure and virtuous. (18.71)

O Arjuna, did you listen to this with single-minded attention? Has your delusion born of ignorance been completely destroyed? (18.72)

Arjuna said: By Your grace my delusion is destroyed, I have gained Self-knowledge, my confusion with regard to body and Spirit is dispelled and I shall obey Your command. (18.73)

Sanjaya said: Thus I heard this wonderful dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, causing my hair to stand on end. (18.74)

By the grace of sage Vyasa, I heard this most secret and supreme yoga directly from Krishna, the Lord of yoga, Himself speaking to Arjuna before my very eyes of clairvoyance granted by sage Vyasa. (18.75)

O King, by repeated remembrance of this marvelous and sacred dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, I am thrilled at every moment; and (18.76)

Recollecting again and again, O King, that marvelous form of Krishna I am greatly amazed and I rejoice over and over again. (18.77)

BOTH TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION ARE NEEDED FOR A BALANCED LIVING

Wherever there will be both Krishna, the Lord of yoga, or Dharma in the form of the scriptures, and Arjuna with the weapons of duty and protection; there will be everlasting prosperity, victory, happiness, and morality. This is my conviction. (18.78)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

of

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