

Discourse 11

In this discourse the Lord reveals to Arjuna's vision what Arjuna has heard with his ears—the Universal Form of the Lord. This discourse is a favourite with the Bhaktas. Here there is no argument, there is pure poetry. Its solemn music* reverberates in one's ears and it is not possible to tire of reading it again and again.

**The music, of course, of the original! In translation, 'the glory is gone'. For a very free rendering which brings out some at least of the haunting music of the original the reader must go to Sir Edwin Arnold's flowing stanzas.*

Arjuna Said:

1. Out of Thy grace towards me, thou hast told me the supreme mystery revealing the knowledge of the Supreme; it has banished my delusion.
2. Of the origin and destruction of beings I have heard from Thee in full detail, as also Thy imperishable ajesty [sic], O Kamala-patranksha!
3. Thou art indeed as Thou hast described Thyself, Parameshvara! I do crave to behold, now, that form of Thine as Ishvara.
4. If, Lord, thou thinkest it possible for me to bear the sight, reveal to me, O Yogeshvara, Thy imperishable form.

The Lord Said:

5. Behold, O Partha, my forms divine in their hundreds and thousands, infinitely diverse, infinitely various in color and aspect.
6. Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashwins, the Maruts; behold, O Bharata, numerous marvels never revealed before.
7. Behold today, O Gudakesha, in my body, the whole universe, moving and unmoving, all in one, and whatever else thou cravest to see.
8. But thou canst not see Me with these thine own eyes. I give thee the eye divine; behold My sovereign power!

Sanjaya Said:

9. With these words, O King, the great Lord of Yoga, Hari, then revealed to Partha His supreme form as Ishvara.
10. With many mouths and many eyes, many wondrous aspects, many divine ornaments, and many brandished weapons divine.
11. Wearing divine garlands and vestments, annointed with divine perfumes, it was the form of God, all-marvellous [sic], infinite, seen everywhere.

12. Were the splendour of a thousand suns to shoot forth all at once in the sky that might perchance resemble the splendour of that Mighty One.

13. Then did Pandava see the whole universe in its manifold divisions gathered as one in the body of that God of gods.

14. Then Dhananjaya, wonderstruck and thrilled in every fibre of his being, bowed low his head before the Lord, addressing Him thus with folded hands.

Arjuna Said:

15. With Thy form, O Lord, I see all the gods and the diverse multitudes of beings, the Lord Brahma, on his lotus-throne and all the seers and serpents divine.

16. With many arms and bellies, mouths and eyes, I see Thy infinite form everywhere. Neither Thy end, nor middle, nor beginning, do I see, O Lord of the Universe, Universal-formed!

17. With crown and mace and disc, a mass of effulgence, gleaming everywhere I see Thee, so dazzling to the sight, bright with the splendour of the fiery sun blazing from all sides,—incomprehensible.

18. Thou art the Supreme Imperishable worthy to be known; Thou art the final resting place of this universe; Thou art the changeless guardian of the Eternal Dharma; Thou art, I believe, the Everlasting Being.

19. Thou hast no beginning, middle nor end; infinite is Thy might; arms innumerable; for eyes, the sun and the moon; Thy mouth a blazing fire, overpowering the universe with Thy radiance.

20. By Thee alone are filled the spaces between heaven and earth and all the quarters; at the sight of this Thy wondrous terrible form, the three worlds are sore oppressed, O Mahatman!

21. Here, too, the multitudes of gods are seen to enter Thee; some awe-struck praise Thee with folded arms; the hosts of great seers and siddhas, 'All Hail' on their lips, hymn Thee with songs of praise.

22. The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, all the gods, the twin Ashwins, Maruts, Manes, the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas—all gaze on Thee in wonderment.

23. At the sight of thy mighty form, O Mahabahu, many-mouthed, with eyes, arms, thighs and feet innumerable, with many vast bellies, terrible with many jaws, the worlds feel fearfully oppressed, and so do I.

24. For as I behold Thee touching the sky, glowing, numerous-hued with gaping mouths and wide resplendent eyes, I feel oppressed in my innermost being; no peace nor quiet I find, O Vishnu!

25. As I see Thy mouths with fearful jaws, resembling the Fire of Doom, I lose all sense of direction, and find no relief. Be gracious, O Devesha, O Jagannivasa!

26. All the sons of Dhritarashtra, and with them the crowd of kings, Bhishma, Drona, and that Karna too, as also our chief warriors—

27. Are hastening into the fearful jaws of Thy terrible mouths. Some indeed, caught between Thy teeth, are seen, their heads being crushed to atoms.

28. As rivers, in their numerous torrents, run head-long to the sea, even so the heroes of the world of men rush into Thy flaming mouths.

29. As moths, fast-flying, plunge into blazing fire, straight to their doom, even so these rush headlong into Thy mouths, to their destruction.

30. Devouring all these from all sides, Thou lappest them with Thy flaming tongues; Thy fierce rays blaze forth, filling the whole universe with their lustre.

31. Tell me, Lord, who Thou art so dread of form! Hail to Thee, O Devavara! Be gracious! I desire to know Thee, Primal Lord; for I comprehend not what Thou dost.

The Lord Said:

32. Doom am I, full-ripe, dealing death to the worlds, engaged in devouring mankind. Even without slaying them not one of the warriors, ranged for battle against thee, shall survive.

33. Therefore, do thou arise, and win renown! Defeat thy foes and enjoy a thriving kingdom. By Me have these already been destroyed; be thou no more than an instrument, O Savyasachin!

34. Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha and Karna, as also the other warrior chiefs—already slain by Me—slay thou! Fight! Victory is thine over the foes in the field.

Sanjaya Said:

35. Hearing this word of Keshava, crown-wearer Arjuna folded his hands, and trembling made obeisance. Bowing and all hesitant, in faltering accents, he proceeded to address Krishna once more.

Arjuna Said:

36. Right proper it is, O Hrishikesh, that Thy praise should stir the world to gladness and tender emotion; the Rakshasas in fear fly to every quarter and all the hosts of Siddhas do reverent homage.

37. And why should they not bow down to Thee, O Mahatma? Thou art the First Creator, greater even than Brahma. O Ananta, O Devesha, O Jagannivasa, Thou art the Imperishable, Being, not-Being, and That which transcends even these.

38. Thou art the Primal God, the Ancient Being; Thou art the Final Resting Place of this Universe; Thou art the Knower, the 'to-be-known', the Supreme Abode; by Thee, O Myriad-formed, is the universe pervaded.

39. Thou art Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Shashanka, Prajapati, and Prapitamaha! All Hail to Thee, a thousand times all hail! Again and yet again all hail to Thee!

40. All hail to Thee from before and behind! all hail to Thee from every side, O All; Thy prowess is infinite, Thy might is measureless! Thou holdest all; therefore Thou art all.

41. If ever in carelessness, thinking of Thee as comrade, I addressed Thee saying, 'O Krishna!', 'O Yadava!' not knowing Thy greatness, in negligence or in affection,

42. If ever I have been rude to Thee in jest, whilst at play, at rest-time, or at meals, whilst alone or in company, O Achyuta, forgive Thou my fault—I beg of Thee, O Incomprehensible!

43. Thou art Father of this world, of the moving and the un-moving; thou art its adored, its worthiest, Master; there is none equal to Thee; how then any greater than Thee? Thy power is matchless in the three worlds.

44. Therefore, I prostrate myself before Thee, and beseech Thy grace, O Lord adorable! As father with son, as comrade with comrade, so shouldst Thou bear, beloved Lord, with me, Thy loved one.

45. I am filled with joy to see what never was seen before, and yet my heart is oppressed with fear. Show me that original form of Thine, O Lord! Be gracious, Devesha, O Jagannivasa!

46. I crave to see Thee even as Thou wast, with crown, with mace, and disc in hand; wear Thou, once more, that four-armed form, O thousand-armed Vishvamurti!

The Lord Said:

47. It is to favour thee, O Arjuna, that I have revealed to thee, by My own unique power, this My form Supreme, Resplendent, Universal, Infinite, Primal—which none save thee has ever seen.

48. Not by the study of the Vedas, not by sacrifice, not by the study of other scriptures, not by gifts, nor yet by performance of rites or of fierce austerities can I, in such a form, be seen by any one save thee in the world of men, O Kurupravira!

49. Be thou neither oppressed nor bewildered to look on this awful form of Mine. Banish thy fear, ease thy mind, and lo! behold Me once again as I was.

Sanjaya Said.

50. So said Vasudeva to Arjuna, and revealed to him once more His original form. Wearing again His form benign, the Mahatma consoled him terrified.

Arjuna Said.

51. Beholding again thy benign human form I am come to myself and once more in my normal state.

The Lord Said:

52. Very hard to behold is that form of Mine which thou hast seen; even the gods always yearn to see it.

53. Not by the Vedas, not by penance, nor by gifts, nor yet by sacrifice, can any behold Me in the form that thou hast seen.

54. But by single-minded devotion, O Arjuna, I may in this form be known and seen, and truly entered into, O Parantapa!

55. He alone comes to me, O Pandava, who does My work, who has made Me his goal, who is My devotee, who has renounced attachment, who has ill-will toward none.

Thus ends the eleventh discourse, entitled 'Vishvarupadarshana Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 12

Thus we see that vision of God is possible only through single-minded devotion. Contents of devotion must follow as a matter of course. This twelfth discourse should be learnt by hard even if all discourses are not. It is one of the shortest. The marks of a devotee should be carefully noted.

Arjuna Said:

1. Of the devotees who thus worship Thee, incessantly attached, and those who worship the Imperishable Unmanifest, which are the better yogins?

The Lord Said:

2. Those I regard as the best yogins who, riveting their minds on Me, ever attached, worship Me, with the highest faith.

3. But those who worship the Imperishable, the indefinable, the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Rock-seated, the Immovable, the Unchanging,

4. Keeping the whole host of senses in complete control, looking on all with an impartial eye, engrossed in the welfare of all beings—these come indeed to Me.

5. Greater is the travail of those whose mind is fixed on the Unmanifest; for it is hard for embodied mortals to gain the Unmanifest—Goal.

Mortal man can only imagine the Unmanifest, the Impersonal, and as his language fails him he often negatively describes It as 'Neti', 'Neti' (Not That, Not That). And so even iconoclasts are at bottom no better than idol-worshippers. To worship a book, to go to church, or to pray with one's face in a particular direction—all these are forms of worshipping the Formless in an image or idol. And yet, both the idol-breaker and the idol-worshipper cannot lose sight of the fact that there is something which is beyond all form, Unthinkable, Formless, Impersonal, Changeless. The highest goal of the devotee is to become one with the object of his devotion. The bhakta extinguishes himself and merges into, becomes, Bhagvan. This state can best be reached by devoting oneself to some form, and so it is said that the short cut to the Unmanifest is really the longest and the most difficult.

6. But those who casting all their actions on Me, making Me their all in all, worship Me with the meditation of undivided devotion,

7. Of such, whose thoughts are centered on Me, O Partha, I become ere long the Deliverer from the ocean of this world of death.

8. On Me set thy mind, on Me rest thy conviction; thus without doubt shalt thou remain only in Me hereafter.

9. If thou canst not set thy mind steadily on Me, then by the method of constant practice seek to win Me, O Dhananjaya.

10. If thou art also unequal to this method of constant practice, concentrate on service for Me; even thus serving Me thou shalt attain perfection.

11. If thou art unable even to do this, then dedicating all to Me, with mind controlled, abandon the fruit of action.

12. Better is knowledge than practice, better than knowledge is concentration, better than concentration is renunciation of the fruit of all action, from which directly issues peace.

'Practice' (abhyasa) is the practice of the yoga of meditation and control of psychic processes; 'knowledge' (jnana) is intellectual effort; 'concentration' (dhyana) is devoted worship. If as a result of all this there is no renunciation of the fruit of action, 'practice' is no 'practice', 'knowledge' is no 'knowledge', and 'concentration' is no 'concentration'.

13. Who has ill-will towards none, who is friendly and compassionate, who has shed all thought of 'mine' or 'I', who regards pain and pleasure alike, who is long-suffering;

14. Who is ever content, gifted with yoga, self-restrained, of firm conviction, who has dedicated his mind and reason to Me—that devotee (bhakta) of Mine is dear to Me.

15. Who gives no trouble to the world, to whom the world causes no trouble, who is free from exultation, resentment, fear and vexation,—that man is dear to Me.

16. Who expects naught, who is pure, resourceful, unconcerned, untroubled, who indulges in no undertakings,—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

17. Who rejoices not, neither frets nor grieves, who covets not, who abandons both good and ill—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

18. Who is same to foe and friend, who regards alike respect and disrespect, cold and heat, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment;

19. Who weighs in equal scale blame and praise, who is silent, content with whatever his lot, who owns no home, who is of steady mind,—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

20. They who follow this essence of dharma, as I have told it, with faith, keeping Me as their goal,—those devotees are exceeding dear to Me.

Thus ends the twelfth discourse entitled 'Bhakti Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 13

This discourse treats of the distinction between the body (not-Self) and the Atman (the Self).

The Lord Said:

1. This body, O Kaunteya, is called the Field; he who knows it is called the knower of the Field by those who know.
2. And understand Me to be, O Bharata, the knower of the Field in all the Fields; and the knowledge of the Field and the knower of the Field, I hold, is true knowledge.
3. What the Field is, what its nature, what its modifications, and whence is what, as also who He is, and what His power—hear this briefly from Me.
4. This subject has been sung by seers distinctively and in various ways, in different hymns as also in aphoristic texts about Brahman well reasoned and unequivocal.
5. The great elements, Individuation, Reason, the Unmanifest, the ten senses, and the one (mind), and the five spheres of the senses;
6. Desire, dislike, pleasure, pain, association, consciousness, cohesion—this, in sum, is what is called the Field with its modifications.

The great elements are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. 'Individuation' is the thought of I, or that the body is 'I'; the 'Unmanifest' is prakriti or maya; the ten senses are the five senses of perception—smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing, and the five organs of action, viz.: the hands, the feet, the tongue, and the two organs of excretion. The five spheres or objects of the senses are smell, savour, form, touch, and sound. 'Association' is the property of the different organs to co-operate. Dhriti is not patience or constancy but cohesion, i.e. the property of all the atoms in the body to hold together; from 'individuation' springs this cohesion. Individuation is inherent in the unmanifest prakriti. The undeluded man is he who can cast off the individuation or ego, and having done so the shock of an inevitable thing like death and pairs of opposites caused by sense-contacts fail to affect him. The Field, subject to all its modifications, has to be abandoned in the end by the enlightened and the unenlightened alike.

7. Freedom from pride and pretentiousness, nonviolence, forgiveness, uprightness, service of the Master, purity, steadfastness, self-restraint;
8. Aversion from sense-objects, absence of conceit, realization of the painfulness and evil of birth, death, age and disease;

9. Absence of attachment, refusal to be wrapped up in one's children, wife, home and family, even-mindedness whether good or ill befall;

10. Unwavering and all-exclusive devotion to Me, resort to secluded spots, distaste for the haunts of men;

11. Settled conviction of the nature of the Atman, perception of the goal of the knowledge of Truth,—All this is declared to be Knowledge and the reverse of it is ignorance.

12. I will (now) expound to thee that which is to be known and knowing which one enjoys immortality; it is the supreme Brahman which has no beginning, which is called neither Being nor non-Being.

The Supreme can be described neither as Being nor as non-Being. It is beyond definition or description, above all attributes.

13. Everywhere having hands and feet, everywhere having eyes, heads, mouths, everywhere having ears, It abides embracing everything in the universe.

14. Seeming to possess the functions of the senses, It is devoid of all the senses; It touches naught, upholds all; having no gunas, It experiences the gunas.

15. Without all beings, yet within; immovable yet moving, so subtle that It cannot be perceived; so far and yet so near It is.

He who knows It is within It, close to It; mobility and immobility, peace and restlessness, we owe to It, for It has motion and yet is motionless.

16. Undivided, It seems to subsist divided in all beings; this Brahman—That which is to be known as the Sustainer of all, yet It is their Devourer and Creator.

17. Light of all lights, It is said to be beyond darkness; It is knowledge, the object of knowledge, to be gained only by knowledge; It is seated in the hearts of all.

18. Thus have I expounded in brief the Field, Knowledge and That which is to be known; My devotee, when he knows this, is worthy to become one with Me.

19. Know that Prakriti and Purusha are both without beginning; know that all the modifications and gunas are born of Prakriti.

20. Prakriti is described as the cause in the creation of effects from causes; Purusha is described as the cause of the experiencing of pleasure and pain.

21. For the Purusha, residing in Prakriti, experiences the gunas born in Prakriti; attachment to these gunas is the cause of his birth in good or evil wombs.

Prakriti in common parlance is Maya. Purusha is the Jiva. Jiva acting in accordance with his nature experiences the fruit of actions arising out of the three gunas.

22. What is called in this body the Witness, the Assentor, the Sustainer, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and also the Supreme Atman, is Supreme Being.

23. He who thus knows Purusha and Prakriti with its gunas, is not born again, no matter how he live and move.

Read in the light of discourses II, IX and XII this shloka may not be taken to support any kind of libertinism. It shows the virtue of self-surrender and selfless devotion. All actions bind the self, but if all are dedicated to the Lord they do not bind, rather they release him. He who has thus extinguished the 'self or the thought of 'I' and who acts as ever in the great witness' eye, will never sin nor err. the self-sense is at the root of all error or sin. Where the 'I' has been extinguished, there is no sin. This shloka shows how to steer clear of all sin.

24. Some through meditation hold the Atman by themselves in their own self; others by Sankhya Yoga, and others by Karma Yoga.

25. Yet others, not knowing (Him) thus, worship (Him) having heard from others; they too pass beyond death, because of devoted adherence to what they have heard.

26. Wherever something is born, animate or inanimate, know thou Bharatarshabha, that it issues from the union of the Field and the Knower of the Field.

27. Who sees abiding in all beings the same Parameshvara, imperishable in the perishable, he sees indeed.

28. When he sees the same Ishvara abiding everywhere alike, he does not hurt himself by himself and hence he attains the highest goal.

He who sees the same God everywhere merges in Him and sees naught else; he thus does not yield to passion, does not become his own foe and thus attains Freedom.

29. Who sees that it is Prakriti that performs all actions and thus (knows) that Atman performs them not, he sees indeed.

Just as, in the case of a man who is asleep, his "Self" is not the agent of sleep, but Prakriti, even so the enlightened man will detach his "Self" from all activities. to the pure everything is pure. Prakriti is not unchaste, it is when arrogant man takes her as wife that of these twain passion is born.

30. When he sees the diversity of beings as founded in unity and the whole expanse issuing therefrom, then he attains to Brahman.

To realize that everything rests in Brahman is to attain to the state of Brahman. Then Jiva becomes Shiva.

31. This imperishable Supreme Atman, O Kaunteya, though residing in the body, acts not and is not stained, for he has no beginning and no gunas.

32. As the all-pervading ether, by reason of its subtlety, is not soiled even so Atman pervading every part of the body is not soiled.

33. As the one Sun illumines the whole universe, even so the Master of the Field illumines the whole field, O Bharata!

34. Those who, with the eyes of knowledge, thus perceive the distinction between the Field and the Knower of the Field, and (the secret) of the release of beings from Prakriti, they attain to the Supreme.

Thus ends the thirteenth discourse, entitled 'Kshetra-kshetrajnavibhaga Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 14

The description of Prakriti naturally leads on to that of its constituents, the Gunas, which from the subject of this discourse. And that, in turn, leads to a description of the marks of him who has passed beyond the three gunas. These are practically the same as those of the man of secure understanding (II. 54-72) as also those of the ideal Bhakta (XII. 12-20).

The Lord Said:

1. Yet again I will expound the highest and the best of all knowledge, knowing which all the sages passed hence to the highest perfection.
2. By having recourse to this knowledge they became one with Me. They need not come to birth even at a creation, nor do they suffer at a dissolution.
3. The great prakriti is for me the womb in which I deposit the germ; from it all beings come to birth, O Bharata.
4. Whatever forms take birth in the various species, the great prakriti is their Mother and I the seed-giving Father.
5. Sattva, rajas and tamas are the gunas sprung from prakriti; it is they, O Mahabahu, that keep the imperishable Dweller bound to the body.
6. Of these sattva, being stainless, is light-giving and healing; it binds with the bond of happiness and the bond of knowledge, O sinless one.
7. Rajas, know thou, is of the nature of passion, the source of thirst and attachment; it keeps man bound with the bond of action.
8. Tamas, know thou, born of ignorance, is mortal man's delusion; it keeps him bound with heedlessness, sloth and slumber, O Bharata.
9. Sattva attaches man to happiness, rajas to action, and tamas, shrouding knowledge, attaches him to heedlessness.
10. Sattva prevails, O Bharata, having overcome rajas and tamas; rajas, when it has overpowered sattva and tamas; likewise tamas reigns when sattva and rajas are crushed.
11. When the light—knowledge—shines forth from all the gates of this body, then it may be known that the sattva thrives.
12. Greed, activity, assumption of undertakings, restlessness, craving—these are in evidence when rajas flourishes, O Bharatarshabha.
13. Ignorance, dullness, heedlessness, and delusion—these are in evidence when tamas reigns, O Kurunandana.

14. If the embodied one meets his end whilst sattva prevails, then he attains to the spotless worlds of the knowers of the Highest.

15. If he dies during the reign within him of rajas, he is born among men attached to action; and if he dies in tamas, he is born in species not endowed with reason.

16. The fruit of sattvika action is said to be stainless merit. That of rajas is pain and that of tamas ignorance.

17. Those abiding in sattva rise upwards, those in rajas stay midway, those in tamas sink downwards.

18. when the seer perceives no agent other than the gunas, and knows Him who is above the gunas, he attains to My being.

As soon as a man realizes that he is not the doer, but the gunas are the agent, the 'self' vanishes, and he goes through all his actions spontaneously, just to sustain the body. And as the body is meant to subserve the highest end, all his actions will even reveal detachment and dispassion. Such a seer can easily have a glimpse of the One who is above the gunas and offer his devotion to Him.

19. When the embodied one transcends these three gunas which are born of his contact with the body, he is released from the pain of birth, death and age and attains deathlessness.

Arjuna Said:

20. What, O Lord, are the marks of him who has transcended the three gunas? How does he conduct himself? How does he transcend the three gunas?

The Lord Said:

21. He, O Pandava, who does not disdain light, activity, and delusion when they come into being, nor desires them when they vanish;

22. He, who seated as one indifferent, is not shaken by the gunas, and stays still and moves not, knowing it is gunas playing their parts;

23. He who holds pleasure and pain alike, who is sedate, who regards as same earth, stone and gold, who is wise and weighs in equal scale things pleasant and unpleasant, who is even-minded in praise and blame;

24. Who holds alike respect and disrespect, who is the same to friend and foe, who indulges in no undertakings—That man is called gunatita.

Shls. 21-24 must be read and considered together. Light activity and delusion, as we have seen in the foregoing shlokas, are the products or indications of sattva, rajas and tamas respectively. The inner meaning of these verses is that

he who has transcended the gunas will be unaffected by them. A stone does not desire light, nor does it disdain activity or inertness; it is still, without having the will to be so. If someone puts it into motion, it does not fret; if again, it is allowed to lie still, it does not feel that inertness or delusion has seized it. The difference between a stone and a gunatita is that the latter has full consciousness and with full knowledge he shakes himself free from the bonds that bind an ordinary mortal. He has, as a result of his knowledge, achieved the purpose of a stone. Like the stone he is witness, but not the doer, of the activities of the gunas or prakriti. Of such jnani one may say that he is sitting still, unshaken in the knowledge that it is the gunas playing their parts. We who are every moment of our lives acting as though we are the doers can only imagine the state, we can hardly experience it. But we can hitch our waggon to that star and work our way closer and closer towards it by gradually withdrawing the self from our actions. A gunatita has experience of his own condition but he cannot describe it, for he who can describe it ceases to be one. The moment he proceeds to do so, 'self' peeps in. The peace and light and bustle and inertness of our common experience are illusory. The Gita itself has made it clear in so many words that the sattvika state is the one nearest that of a gunatita. Therefore every one should strive to develop more and more sattva in himself, believing that some day he will reach the goal of the state of gunatita.

25. He who serves me in an unwavering and exclusive bhaktiyoga transcends these gunas and is worthy to become one with Brahman.
26. For I am the very image of Brahman, changeless and deathless, as also of everlasting dharma and perfect bliss.

Thus ends the fourteenth discourse, entitled 'Gunatrayavibhaga Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman, in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 15

This discourse deals with the supreme form of the Lord, transcending Kshara (perishable) and Akshara (imperishable).

The Lord Said:

1. With the root above and branches below, the ashvattha tree, they say, is impossible; it has Vedic hymns for its leaves; he who knows it knows the Vedas.

Shvab means tomorrow, and ashvattha (na shvopi sthata) means that which will not last even until tomorrow, i.e. the world of sense which is every moment in a state of flux. But even though it is perpetually changing, as its root is Brahman or the Supreme, it is imperishable. It has for its protection and support the leaves of the Vedic hymns, i.e. dharma. He who knows the world of sense as such and who knows dharma is the real jnani, that man has really known the Vedas.

2. Above all and below its branches spread, blossoming because of the gunas, having for their shoots the sense-objects; deep down in the world of men are ramified its roots, in the shape of the consequences of action.

This is the description of the tree of the world of sense as the unenlightened see it. They fail to discover its Root above in Brahman and so they are always attached to the objects of sense. They water the tree with the three gunas and remain bound to Karman in the world of men.

3. Its form as such is not here perceived, neither is its end, nor beginning, nor basis. Let man first hew down this deep-rooted Ashvattha with the sure weapon of detachment;

4. Let him pray to win to that haven from which there is no return and seek to find refuge in the primal Being from whom has emanated this ancient world of action.

'Detachment in shl. 3 here means dispassion, aversion to the objects of the senses. Unless man is determined to cut himself off from the temptations of the world of sense he will go deeper into the mire every day. These verses show that one dare not play with the objects of the senses with impunity.

5. To that imperishable haven those enlightened souls go—who are without pride and delusion, who have triumphed over the taints of attachment, who are ever in tune with the Supreme, whose passions have died, who are exempt from the pairs of opposites, such as pleasure and pain.

6. Neither the sun, nor the moon, nor fire illumine it; men who arrive there return not—that is My supreme abode.

7. As part indeed of Myself which has been the eternal Jiva in this world of life, attracts the mind and the five senses from their place in prakriti.

8. When the master (of the body) acquires a body and discards it he carries these with him wherever he goes, even as the wind carries scents from flower beds.

9. Having settled himself in the senses—ear, eye, touch, taste, and smell—as well as the mind, through them he frequents their objects.

These objects are the natural objects of the senses. The frequenting or enjoyment of these would be tainted if there were the sense of 'I' about it; otherwise it is pure, even as a child's enjoyment of these objects is innocent.

10. The deluded perceive Him not as He leaves or settles in (a body) or enjoys (sense objects) in association with the gunas; it is those endowed with the eye of knowledge who alone see Him.

11. Yogins who strive see Him seated in themselves; the witless ones who have not cleansed themselves to see Him not, even though they strive.

This does not conflict with the covenant that God has made even with the sinner in discourse 9. Akritatman (who has not cleansed himself) means one who has no devotion in him, who has not made up his mind to purify himself. The most confirmed sinner, if he has humility enough to seek refuge in surrender to God, purifies himself and succeeds in finding Him. Those who do not care to observe the cardinal and the casual vows and expect to find God through bare intellectual exercise are witless, Godless; they will not find Him.

12. The light in the sun which illumines the whole universe and which is in the moon and in fire—that light, know thou, is Mine;

13. It is I, who penetrating the earth uphold all beings with My strength, and becoming the moon—the essence of all sap—nourish all the herbs;

14. It is I who becoming the Vaishvanara Fire and entering the bodies of all that breathe, assimilate the four kinds of food with the help of the outward and the inward breaths.

15. And I am seated in the hearts of all, from Me proceed memory, knowledge and the dispelling of doubts; it is I who am to be known in all the Vedas, I, the author of Vedanta and the knower of the Vedas.

16. There are two Beings in the world: kshara (perishable) and akshara (imperishable). Kshara embraces all creatures and their permanent basis is akshara.

17. The Supreme Being is surely another—called Paramatman who is the Imperishable Ishvara pervades and supports the three worlds.

18. Because I transcend the kshara and am also higher than the akshara, I am known in the world and in the Vedas as Purushottama (the Highest Being).

19. He who, undeluded, knows Me as Purushottama, knows all, he worships Me with all his heart, O Bharata.

20. Thus I have revealed to thee, sinless one, this most mysterious shastra; he who understands this, O Bharata, is a man of understanding, he has fulfilled his life's mission.

Thus ends the fifteenth discourse, entitled 'purushottama Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 16

This discourse treats of the divine and the devilish heritage.

The Lord Said:

1. Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in jnana and yoga—knowledge and action, beneficence, self-restraint, sacrifice, spiritual study, austerity, and uprightness;
2. Non-violence, truth, slowness to wrath, the spirit of dedication, serenity, aversion to slander, tenderness to all that lives, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty, freedom from levity;
3. Spiritedness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from ill-will and arrogance—these are to be found in one born with the divine heritage, O Bharata.
4. Pretentiousness, arrogance, self-conceit, wrath, coarseness, ignorance—these are to be found in one born with the devilish heritage.
5. The divine heritage makes for Freedom, the devilish for bondage. Grieve not, O Partha; thou art born with a divine heritage.
6. There are two orders of created beings in this world—the divine and the devilish; the divine order has been described in detail, hear from Me now of the devilish, O Partha.
7. Men of the devil do not know what they may do and what they may not do; neither is there any purity, nor right conduct, nor truth to be found in them.
8. ‘Without truth, without basis, without God is the universe,’ they say; ‘born of the union of the sexes, prompted by naught but lust.’
9. Holding this view, these depraved souls, of feeble understanding and of fierce deeds, come forth as enemies of the world to destroy it.
10. Given to insatiable lust, possessed by pretentiousness, arrogance and conceit, they seize wicked purposes in their delusion, and go about pledged to uncleaned deeds.
11. Given to boundless cares that end only with their death, making indulgence or lust their sole goal, convinced that that is all;
12. Caught in a myriad snares of hope, slaves to lust and wrath, they speak unlawfully to amass wealth for the satisfaction of their appetites.
13. ‘This have I gained today; this aspiration shall I now attain; this wealth is mine; this likewise shall be mine hereafter;

14. 'This enemy I have already slain, others also I shall slay; lord of all am I; enjoyment is mine, perfection is mine, strength is mine, happiness is mine;
15. 'Wealthy am I, and high-born. What other is like unto me? I shall perform a sacrifice! I shall give alms! I shall be merry!' Thus think they, by ignorance deluded;
16. And tossed about by diverse fancies, caught in the net of delusion, stuck deep in the indulgence of appetites, into foul hell they fall.
17. Wise in their own conceit, stubborn, full of the intoxication of pelf and pride, they offer nominal sacrifices for show, contrary to the rule.
18. Given to pride, force, arrogance, lust and wrath they are deriders indeed, scorning Me in their own and other' bodies.
19. These cruel scorers, lowest of mankind and vile, I hurl down again and again, into devilish wombs.
20. Doomed to devilish wombs, these deluded ones, far from ever coming to Me, sink lower and lower in birth after birth.
21. Three-fold is the gate of hell, leading man to perdition—Lust, Wrath, and Greed; these three, therefore, should be shunned.
22. The man who escapes these three gates of Darkness, O Kaunteya, works out his welfare and thence reaches the highest state.
23. He who forsakes the rule of shastra and does but the bidding of his selfish desires, gains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest state.
- Shastra does not mean the rites and formulae laid down in the so-called dharmashastra, but the path of self-restraint laid down by the seers and the saints.*
24. Therefore let shastra be thy authority for determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done; ascertain thou the rule of the shastra and do thy task here (accordingly).

Shastra here too has the same meaning as in the preceding shloka. Let no one be a law unto himself, but take as his authority the law laid down by men who have known and lived religion.

Thus ends the sixteenth discourse, entitled 'Daivasurasampadvibhaga Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 17

On being asked to consider shastra (conduct of the worthy) as the authority, Arjuna is faced with a difficulty. What is the position of those who may not be able to accept the authority of Shastra but who may act in faith? An answer to the question is attempted in this discourse. Krishna rests content with pointing out the rocks and shoals on the path of the one who forsakes the beaconlight of Shastra (conduct of the worthy). In doing so he deals with the faith and sacrifice, austerity and charity, performed with faith, and their divisions according to the spirit in which they are performed. He also sings the greatness of the mystic syllables AUM TAT SAT—a formula of dedication of all work to God.

Arjuna Said:

1. What, then, O Krishna, is the position of those who forsake the rule of Shastra and yet worship with faith? Do they act from sattva or rajas or tamas?

The Lord Said:

2. Threefold is the faith of men, an expression of their nature in each case; it is sattvika, rajas or tamasa. Hear thou of it.

3. The faith of every man is in accord with his innate character; man is made up of faith; whatever his object of faith, even so is he.

4. Sattvika persons worship the gods; rajas ones, the Yakshas and Rakshasas; and others—men of tamas—worship manes and spirits.

5. Those men who, wedded to pretentiousness and arrogance, possessed by the violence of lust and passion, practice fierce austerity not ordained by shastra;

6. They, whilst they torture the several elements that make up their bodies, torture Me too dwelling in them; know them to be of unholy resolves.

7. Of three kinds again is the food that is dear to each; so also are sacrifice, austerity, and charity. Hear how they differ.

8. Victuals that add to one's years, vitality, strength, health, happiness and appetite; are savoury, rich, substantial and inviting, are dear to the sattvika.

9. Victuals that are bitter, sour, salty, over-hot, spicy, dry, burning, and causing pain, bitterness and disease, are dear to rajasa.

10. Food which has become cold, insipid, putrid, stale, discarded and unfit for sacrifice, is dear to the tamasa.

11. That sacrifice is sattvika which is willingly offered as a duty without desire for fruit and according to the rule.

12. But when sacrifice is offered with an eye to fruit and for vain glory, know, O Bharatashreshtha, that it is rajasa.
13. Sacrifice which is contrary to the rule, which produces no food, which lacks the sacred text, which involves no giving up, which is devoid of faith is said to be tamasa.
14. Homage to the gods, to Brahmanas, to gurus and to wise men; cleanliness, uprightness, brahmacharya and non-violence—these constitute austerity (tapas) of the body.
15. Words that cause no hurt, that are true loving and helpful, and spiritual study constitute austerity of speech.
16. Serenity, benignity, silence, self-restraint, and purity of the spirit—these constitute austerity of the mind.
17. This threefold austerity practiced in perfect faith by men not desirous of fruit, and disciplined, is said to be sattvika.
18. Austerity which is practiced with an eye to gain praise, honour and homage and for ostentation is said to be rajasa; it is fleeting and unstable.
19. Austerity which is practiced from any foolish obsession, either to torture oneself or to procure another's ruin, is called tamasa.
20. Charity, given as a matter of duty, without expectation of any return, at the right place and time, and to the right person is said to be sattvika.
21. Charity, which is given either in hope of receiving in return, or with a view of winning merit, or grudgingly, is declared to be rajasa.
22. Charity given at the wrong place and time, and to the undeserving recipient disrespectfully and with contempt is declared to be tamasa.
23. AUM TAT SAT has been declared to be the threefold name of Brahman and by that name were created of old the Brahmanas, the Vedas and sacrifices.
24. Therefore, with AUM ever on their lips, are all the rites of sacrifice, charity and austerity, performed always to the rule, by Brahmavadins.
25. With the utterance of TAT and without the desire for fruit are the several rites of sacrifice, austerity and charity performed by those seeking Freedom.
26. SAT is employed in the sense of 'real' and 'good'; O Partha, SAT is also applied to beautiful deeds.
27. Constancy in sacrifice, austerity and charity, is called SAT; and all work for those purposes is also SAT.

The substance of the last four shlokas is that every action should be done in a spirit of complete dedication to God. For AUM alone is the only Reality. That only which is dedicated to It counts.

28. Whatever is done, O Partha, by way of sacrifice, charity or austerity or any other work, is called Asat if done without faith. It counts for naught hereafter as here.

Thus ends the seventeenth discourse, entitled 'Sharaddhatrayavibhaga Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.

Discourse 18

This concluding discourse sums up the teaching of the Gita. It may be said to be summed up in the following: "Abandon all duties and come to Me, the only Refuge" (66). That is true renunciation. But abandonment of all duties does not mean abandonment of actions; it means abandonment of the desire for fruit. Even the highest act of service must be dedicated to Him, without the desire. That is Tyaga (abandonment), that is Sannyasa (renunciation).

Arjuna Said:

1. Mahabahu! I would fain learn severally the secret of sannyasa and of tyaga, O Hrishiksha, O Keshinishudana.

The Lord Said:

2. Renunciation of actions springing from selfish desire is known as sannyasa by the seers; abandonment of the fruit of all action is called tyaga by the wise.

3. Some thoughtful persons say: 'All action should be abandoned as an evil'; others say: 'Action for sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be relinquished'.

4. Hear my decision in this matter of tyaga, O Bharatasattama; for tyaga, too, O mightiest of men, has been described to be of three kinds.

5. Action for sacrifice, charity and austerity may not be abandoned; it must needs be performed. Sacrifice, charity and austerity are purifiers of the wise.

6. But even these actions should be performed abandoning all attachment and fruit; such, O Partha, is my best and considered opinion.

7. It is not right to renounce one's allotted task; its abandonment, from delusion, is said to be tamasa.

8. He who abandons action, deeming it painful and for fear of straining his limbs, he will never gain the fruit of abandonment, for his abandonment is rajasa.

9. But when an allotted task is performed from a sense of duty and with abandonment of attachment and fruit, O Arjuna, that abandonment is deemed to be sattvika.

10. Neither does he disdain unpleasant action, nor does he cling to pleasant action—this wise man full of sattva, who practices abandonment, and who has shaken off all doubts.

11. For the embodied one cannot completely abandon action; but he who abandons the fruit of action is named a tyagi.
12. To those who do not practice abandonment accrues, when they pass away, the fruit of action which is of three kinds: disagreeable, agreeable, mixed; but never to the sannyasins.
13. Learn, from me, O Mahabahu, the five factors mentioned in the Sankhyan doctrine for the accomplishment of all action:
14. The field, the doer, the various means, the several different operations, the fifth and the last, the Unseen.
15. Whatever action, right or wrong, a man undertakes to do with the body, speech or mind, these are the five factors thereof.
16. This being so, he who, by reason of unenlightened intellect, sees the unconditioned Atman as the agent—such a man is dense and unseeing.
17. He who is free from all sense of ‘I’, whose motive is untainted, slays not nor is bound, even though he slay all these worlds.

This shloka though seemingly somewhat baffling is not really so. The Gita on many occasions presents the ideal to attain which the aspirant has to strive but which may not be possible completely to realize in the world. It is like definitions in geometry. A perfect straight line does not exist, but it is necessary to imagine it in order to prove the various propositions. Even so, it is necessary to hold up ideals of this nature as standards for imitation in matters of conduct. This then would seem to be the meaning of this shloka: He who has made ashes of ‘self’, whose motive is untainted, may slay the whole world, if he will. But in reality he who has annihilated ‘self’ has annihilated his flesh too, and he whose motive is untainted sees the past, present and future. Such a being can be one and only one—God. He acts and yet is no doer, slays and yet is no slayer. For mortal man and royal road—the conduct of the worthy—is ever before him, viz. ahimsa—holding all life sacred.

18. Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower compose the threefold urge to action; the means, the action and the doer compose the threefold sum of action.
19. Knowledge, action, and the doer are of three kinds according to their different gunas; hear thou these, just as they have been described in the science of the gunas.

20. Know that knowledge whereby one sees in all beings immutable entity—a unity in diversity—to be sattvika.
21. That knowledge which perceives separately in all beings several entities of diverse kinds, know thou to be rajasa.
22. And knowledge which, without reason, clings to one single thing, as though it were everything, which misses the true essence and is superficial is tamasa.
23. That action is called sattvika which, being one's allotted task, is performed without attachment, without like or dislike, and without a desire for fruit.
24. That action which is prompted by the desire for fruit, or by the thought of 'I', and which involves much dissipation of energy is called rajasa.
25. That action which is blindly undertaken without any regard to capacity and consequences, involving loss and hurt, is called tamasa.
26. That doer is called sattvika who has shed all attachment, all thought of 'I', who is filled with firmness and zeal, and who recks neither success nor failure.
27. That doer is said to be rajasa who is passionate, desirous of the fruit of action, greedy, violent, unclean, and moved by joy and sorrow.
28. That doer is called tamasa who is undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, knavish, spiteful, indolent, woebegone, and dilatory.
29. Hear now, O Dhananjaya, detailed fully and severally, the threefold division of understanding and will, according to their gunas.
30. That understanding, O Partha, is sattvika which knows action from inaction, what ought to be done from what ought not to be done, fear from fearlessness and bondage from release.
31. That understanding, O Partha, is rajasa, which decides erroneously between right and wrong, between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.
32. That understanding, O Partha, is tamasa, which, shrouded in darkness, thinks wrong to be right and mistakes everything for its reverse.
33. That will, O Partha, is sattvika which maintains an unbroken harmony between the activities of the mind, the vital energies and the senses.
34. That will, O Partha, is rajasa which clings, with attachment, to righteousness, desire and wealth, desirous of fruit in each case.

35. That will, O Partha, is tamasa, whereby insensate man does not abandon sleep, fear, grief, despair and self-conceit.
36. Hear now from Me, O Bharatarshabha, the three kinds of pleasure. Pleasure which is enjoyed only by repeated practice, and which puts an end to pain,
37. Which, in its inception, is as poison, but in the end as nectar, born of the serene realization of the true nature of Atman—that pleasure is said to be sattvika.
38. That pleasure is called rajasa which, arising from the contact of the senses with their objects, is at first as nectar but in the end like poison.
39. That pleasure is called tamasa which arising from sleep and sloth and heedlessness, stupefies the soul both at first and in the end.
40. There is no being, either on earth or in heaven among the gods, that can be free from these three gunas born of prakriti.
41. The duties of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, are distributed according to their innate qualifications, O Parantapa.
42. Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, uprightiness, knowledge and discriminative knowledge, faith in God are the Brahmana's natural duties.
43. Valour, spiritedness, constancy, resourcefulness, not fleeing from battle, generosity, and the capacity to rule are the natural duties of a Kshatriya.
44. Tilling the soil, protection of the cow and commerce are the natural functions of a Vaishya, while service is the natural duty of a Shudra.
45. Each man, by complete absorption in the performance of his duty, wins perfection. Hear now how he wins such perfection by devotion to that duty.
46. By offering the worship of his duty to Him who is the moving spirit of all beings, and by whom all this is pervaded, man wins perfection.
47. Better one's own duty, though uninviting, than another's which may be more easily performed; doing duty which accords with one's nature, one incurs no sin.

The central teaching of the Gita is detachment—abandonment of the fruit of action. And there would be no room for this abandonment if one were to prefer another's duty to one's own. Therefore one's own duty is said to be better

than another's. It is the spirit in which duty is done that matters, and its unattached performance is its own reward.

48. One should not abandon, O Kaunteya, that duty to which one is born, imperfect though it be; for all action, in its inception, is enveloped in imperfection, as fire in smoke.

49. He who has weaned himself of all kinds, who is master of himself, who is dead to desire, attains through renunciation the perfection of freedom from action.

50. Learn now from Me, in brief, O Kaunteya, how he who has gained this perfection, attains to Brahman, the supreme consummation of knowledge.

51. Equipped with purified understanding, restraining the self with firm will, abandoning sound and other objects of the senses, putting aside likes and dislikes,

52. Living in solitude, spare in diet, restrained in speech, body and mind, ever absorbed in dhyanyoga, anchored in dispassion,

53. Without pride, violence, arrogance, lust, wrath, possession, having shed all sense of 'mine' and at peace with himself, he is fit to become one with Brahman.

54. One with Brahman and at peace with himself, he grieves not, nor desires; holding all beings alike, he achieves supreme devotion to Me.

55. By devotion, he realizes in truth how great I am, who I am; and having known Me in reality he enters into Me.

56. Even whilst always performing actions, he who makes Me his refuge wins, by My grace, the eternal and imperishable haven.

57. Casting, with thy mind, all actions on Me, make Me thy goal, and resorting to the yoga of even-mindedness fix thy thought ever on Me.

58. Fixing his thy thought on Me, thou shalt surmount all obstacles by My grace; but if possessed by the sense of 'I' thou listen not, thou shalt perish.

59. If obsessed by the sense of 'I', thou thinkest, 'I will not fight', vain is thy obsession; (thy) nature will compel thee.

60. What thou wilt not do, O Kaunteya, because of thy delusion, thou shalt do, even against thy will, bound as thou art by the duty to which thou art born.

61. God, O Arjuna, dwells in the heart of every being and by His delusive mystery whirls them all, (as though) set on a machine.

62. In Him alone seek thy refuge with all thy heart, O Bharata. By His grace shalt thou win to the eternal haven of supreme peace.

63. Thus have I expounded to thee the most mysterious of all knowledge; ponder over it fully, then act as thou wilt.

64. Hear again My supreme word, the most mysterious of all; dearly beloved thou art of Me, hence I desire to declare thy welfare.

65. On Me fix thy mind, to Me bring thy devotion, to Me offer thy sacrifice, to Me make thy obeisance; to Me indeed shalt thou come—solemn is My promise to thee, thou art dear to Me.

66. Abandon all duties and come to Me the only refuge. I will release thee from all sins; grieve not!

67. Utter this never to him who knows no austerity, has no devotion, nor any desire to listen, nor yet to him who scoffs at Me.

68. He who will propound this supreme mystery to My devotees, shall, by that act of highest devotion to Me, surely come to Me.

69. Nor among men is there any who renders dearer service to Me than he; nor shall there be on earth any more beloved by Me than he.

It is only he who has himself gained the knowledge and lived it in his life that can declare it to others. These two shlokas cannot possibly have any reference to him, who no matter how he conducts himself, can give flawless reading and interpretation of the Gita.

70. And the man of faith who, scorning not, will but listen to it,—even he shall be released and will go to the happy worlds of men of virtuous deeds.

71. Hast thou heard this, O Partha, with a concentrated mind? Has thy delusion, born of ignorance, been destroyed, O Dhananjaya?

Arjuna Said:

72. Thanks to Thy grace, O Achyuta, my delusion is destroyed, my understanding has returned. I stand secure, my doubts all dispelled; I will do thy bidding.

Sanjaya Said:

73. Thus did I hear this marvellous and thrilling discourse between Vasudeva and the great-souled Partha.

74. It was by Vyasa's favor that I listened to this supreme and mysterious Yoga as expounded by the lips of the Master of Yoga, Krishna Himself.

75. O King, as often as I recall that marvellous and purifying discourse between Keshava and Arjuna, I am filled with recurring rapture.

76. And as often as I recall that marvellous form of Hari, my wonder knows no bounds and I rejoice again and again.

77. Wheresoever Krishna, the Master of Yoga, is, and wheresoever is Partha the Bowman, there rest assured are Fortune, Victory, Prosperity, and Eternal Right.

Thus ends the eighteenth discourse, entitled 'Sannyasa Yoga' in the converse of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, on the science of Yoga, as part of the knowledge of Brahman in the Upanishad called the Bhagawadgita.