

than well-discharged स्वधर्मे *svadharme* in one's own duty निधनम् *nidhanam* death श्रेयः *sreyah* better परधर्मः *paradharmah* another's duty भयावह *bhayāvahah* fraught with fear

One's own dharma, though imperfect, is better than the dharma of another well discharged. Better death in one's own dharma; the dharma of another is full of fear. 35

Man's nature is to have recourse to what gives pleasure and to recoil from what gives pain. Arjuna's temporary set back illustrates this position. From boyhood onwards he had been trained for the dharma of a ruler and a warrior. He delighted in being trained that way, because it was his own duty, *svadharma*. The impending righteous war demanded his fighting against the revered grandsire, which he did not like; he even hated it. At this juncture he preferred to be a recluse, subsisting on alms. Nothing good accrues to one by changing one's *svadharma*, prompted by fear or hatred. Abandoning one's duty and embracing that of another, enticed by ease and pleasure are equally harmful. Vacillation of the mind is born of weakness; it depraves man more and more. Steadfastness to duty on the other hand, strengthens man and aids the building of character. Constancy is life and vacillation death. Through firm devotion to duty man gains in excellence. Arjuna was about to lose his manliness through a change of dharma. Even if he had lived a hermit's life as best he could, his conscience would have been clouded; and that was worse than death. He would