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INDRA GITA

WHAT INDRA TAUGHT KRISHNA



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What Indra Taught Krishna

By Ashris Choudhury

PREFACE

Every generation must interpret and reinterpret.

Ashtavakra created his own radical version of Advaita Vedanta. The Gita itself was an intervention, Krishna stopping a war to deliver philosophy. This book is my intervention.

I have watched the teachings of detachment become a sophisticated form of hiding. I have seen “non-attachment” used as armor against sincerity, “karma yoga” invoked to justify mediocrity, “maya” deployed to avoid the weight of real choices. The philosophy designed to liberate has become, for many, a technology of spiritual bypassing.

This is not the Gita’s fault. Or perhaps it is. When every misuse follows the same pattern, we must ask whether the teaching itself contains the seeds of its corruption.

My method is closer to data science than theology: pattern recognition, comparative analysis, testing ideas against observable outcomes. I approach these texts as an analyst, asking the hard questions our own rishis asked before the tradition calcified. What happens when a civilization organizes itself around detachment? What kind of people does it produce? What do they build? What do they avoid building?

The Indo-European philosophical tradition, the fire that birthed Greek inquiry, Persian dualism, and Vedic rigor, has always valued questioning over compliance, curiosity over peacocking, truth over comfort. That same fire now burns in laboratories and startups, in the rigorous doubt of the scientific method. I write in that tradition.

The fire that once burned in the Rigveda, where Indra was king, where men asked for victory and cattle without apology, that fire was ours before we forgot it. This book is an attempt at remembering.

This book is a mythological dialogue. Indra, king of the Devas, confronts Krishna at the end of his life, after the Yadava clan’s self-destruction, before the hunter’s arrow finds its mark. He challenges the teachings of the Gita, offering an alternative philosophy: sincerity

over performed wisdom, owned desire over suppressed craving, the courage to want over the safety of transcendence.

I do not claim divine revelation. This is philosophical fiction, an artistic exploration meant to provoke thought, not replace scripture. I may be wrong. The tradition I criticize has survived millennia; my critique may not survive a decade. But the questions deserve asking.

If you are looking for devotional literature, look elsewhere. If you are tired of watching intelligent people use ancient wisdom as an excuse for cowardice, read on.

The real Ashris wants you to question everything, including this book.

— *Ashris Choudhury, 2026*

INTRODUCTION

The Setting

It is the end of the Dvapara Yuga. The Mahabharata war has been fought and won. Eighteen akshauhinis of soldiers lie dead. The Pandavas rule a kingdom of ghosts.

And now the Yadavas, Krishna's own clan, have destroyed themselves at Prabhava, drunk on wine, killing each other with iron clubs that grew from a sage's curse. The city of Dvaraka is sinking into the sea.

Krishna sits alone at the edge of the forest where it meets the ocean. He is waiting for a hunter named Jara, whose arrow will strike his foot and end his avatar. He has seen this death. He has allowed it.

This is where Indra comes.

Not in thunder. Not with the host of Maruts. He walks out of the tree line like a man approaching another man. Only his eyes hold the storm.

Why Indra?

In the Bhagavata Purana, Krishna and Indra are adversaries. The young Krishna convinces the cowherds of Vrindavan to stop worshipping Indra and instead worship Govardhana Hill. Indra, enraged, sends storms to destroy them. Krishna lifts the mountain on his finger and shelters his people for seven days. Indra submits. He is "humbled."

But what if we read this differently?

What if Indra's submission was strategic patience? What if he looked at the long arc of what Krishna's philosophy would produce: millennia of performed detachment, civilizational passivity, sophisticated hypocrisy. And waited for the right moment to speak?

Indra, unlike mortal philosophers, is not bound by time's arrow. The Devas see what was, what is, and what will be as a single landscape. What Indra speaks of in this dialogue, peoples not yet born, empires not yet risen, he sees not as prophecy but as observation. To him, the Tang and the Cholas are as present as the Yadavas dying on this beach. This is his authority: not argument, but witness.

And Indra's spirit did not die with his temples. It lived in Chandragupta, the Vratya who built an empire from nothing. It lived in Rajendra Chola, whose ships conquered the sea. It lived in Karna, who refused to be defined by his birth. These are Indra's children, whether they called on him or not.

That moment of speaking is now. At the end of Krishna's life. After the fruits of his teaching have ripened.

The Philosophical Stakes

The Bhagavad Gita teaches:

- **Nishkama karma:** Action without attachment to results
- **Anasakti:** Non-attachment to outcomes
- **Samatva:** Equanimity in pleasure and pain, victory and defeat
- **Atman as unchanging:** The self is eternal, beyond the body's drama
- **World as maya:** The material world is illusion; transcendence is the goal

The Indragita does not refute. It offers an alternative path for those who find the first too cold:

- **Sincere desire:** Own what you want, clearly and without shame
- **Karma as mechanism:** The past constrains but does not determine; identity can be rewritten instantly

- **The nobility of taking sides:** Choosing is what makes you real
- **Fierce attachment:** Love that risks loss is the only love worth having
- **The world as arena:** Real, consequential, worth engaging fully

This is not a refutation. It is an alternative. A path for those who find detachment philosophy producing not saints but sophisticated cowards.

A Note on Indra

Indra in the Rigveda is not the diminished figure of the Puranas. He is the king of the gods, the slayer of Vritra, the one who releases the waters, drinks the soma, and delights in battle. He wants things. He takes sides. He wins, loses, and returns.

The Puranic tradition demoted him. Made him jealous, insecure, constantly threatened by the austerities of mortals. This served a theological purpose: elevating the trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva) required diminishing the Vedic pantheon.

In this text, I restore the Rigvedic Indra. Not as literal history, but as philosophical archetype. The one who acts, desires, risks, and remains.

ADHYAYA 1:

The Descent

At the edge of Prabhava, where the forest meets the sea, Krishna sat alone. The Yadavas had slain each other. The city of Dvaraka was sinking. The age was turning.

The sea was the color of old copper. Somewhere behind him, smoke still rose from Dvaraka.

He had known it would end this way. He had seen it, spoken it, allowed it.

The hunter's arrow would come soon. He was waiting for it the way one waits for a guest who is late but certain.

Instead, Indra came.

Not in thunder. Not with the host of Maruts. He came as a man comes to another man, walking out of the tree line, his footsteps making sound on the earth, his shadow falling in the ordinary way. Only his eyes held the storm.

INDRA: You taught the world to let go. And now you sit here, letting go. I want to know if it feels the way you promised it would.

KRISHNA: You've come to gloat, Shakra? The one who sent storms against cowherds because a child embarrassed him?

INDRA: I came to ask a question. I'll only stay if you can bear to answer it honestly.

KRISHNA: (*slight smile*) Honesty. You think I've been dishonest?

INDRA: I think you've been so clever that you've forgotten what honesty costs. You told Arjuna that the wise grieve neither for the living nor the dead. You told him the soul is eternal, the body is clothes, death is a change of garments.

KRISHNA: This is true.

INDRA: And did Arjuna fight better for believing it? Or did he fight the way a man fights when he's been told it doesn't matter?

KRISHNA: (*steel in his voice*) He fought. He won. The righteous sit on their thrones. Is that not what wars are for?

INDRA: The war ended. Yes. I was there when Bhishma fell. I watched Arjuna's face. Do you know what I saw?

KRISHNA: Tell me.

INDRA: Relief. Not victory. Not grief. Not even hatred fulfilled. Relief that it was over.

Krishna said nothing. The wind shifted, carrying the smell of salt and ash.

INDRA: That he could stop performing the thing you'd asked him to perform.

KRISHNA: You misread him. Arjuna carried the Gandiva. He was my instrument and my friend. You, who have never carried anything but your own ambition, cannot read such a man.

INDRA: I have killed more enemies than you have hairs on your body, Vasudeva. I know what a warrior's face looks like when he wins. That was not it.

KRISHNA: What would you have had me teach him? To slaughter his grandfather with joy? To laugh while cutting down his teachers?

INDRA: I would have had you teach him to *want* his victory. To own it. To say: I am killing Bhishma because I choose to, because the throne matters to me, because my brothers matter to me, because I refuse to live as a beggar when I was born a prince.

KRISHNA: And the sin of killing?

INDRA: Let him carry it! Let him feel its weight! A man who kills and feels nothing is not liberated. He is broken. You taught him to pre-forgive himself by pretending he wasn't really the one doing it. That Time was the killer. That the selves were already dead.

KRISHNA: (*quieter*) It was a mercy.

INDRA: It was a trick. And tricks produce tricksters. I have watched your pundits, Keshava. They speak of detachment while scheming for temple gold. They quote your “action without fruit” while angling for the king’s ear. The gap between word and deed has become so normal that no one notices it.

KRISHNA: You would judge my teaching by its worst students?

INDRA: When every student misreads a teaching the same way, the teaching is at fault. Tell me: in the ages since Kurukshetra, what has your philosophy made? Saints? Yes, rare, like diamonds. And hypocrites, common, like dust. The hypocrites cloak themselves in the saints’ words, and your civilization slowly, beautifully, sinks into sophisticated helplessness.

KRISHNA: (*rising, facing him*) And your path, Shakra? To feel every death, every failure, every wound without the armor of perspective? How many of your devotees have you driven to madness with that

weight? I taught men to carry the unbearable by making it lighter. You would crush them with truth.

INDRA: I would make them strong enough to be crushed and rise again.

KRISHNA: Strong. You speak of strength. You who lost your worshippers to a cowherd's rebellion. You whose throne shakes whenever a mortal's austerities grow too great. Teach me about strength.

INDRA: (*sitting down across from him*) I will. Because I have done what you have never done. I have wanted things, and failed to get them, and remained Indra. I did not console myself by saying I never really wanted them. I did not say desire is the enemy. I lost, and I wanted, and I kept wanting, and I tried again.

That is the teaching.

KRISHNA: (*almost amused*) You have not changed, Shakra. Even now, at the end, you come to argue.

INDRA: (*a ghost of a smile*) Would you have me come to weep? We both know that is not my way.

KRISHNA: No. I suppose not.

A long silence. The waves spoke their ancient language. The smoke from Dvaraka drifted across the horizon.

KRISHNA: (*slowly sitting back down*) Then speak. The arrow is not yet here. I will listen. Not because I agree, but because even the old must sometimes hear new questions.

INDRA: Not new questions, Govinda. The oldest questions. The ones you buried when you chose safety over fire.

Krishna looked at him for a long moment. Then, slowly, he nodded toward the empty space beside him.

KRISHNA: Sit. And tell me what you have seen.

ADHYAYA 2:

The Worlds Beyond

KRISHNA: You speak as if your way is proven. But where are your devotees, Shakra? The yajnas grow thin. The soma goes unoffered. Men turn to other gods. Gentler gods. Perhaps they know something you don't.

INDRA: (*laughs*) You think I measure truth by headcount? By who burns more ghee in my name? That is the logic of a merchant, not a king.

Let me tell you what I have seen while you played your flute in Vrindavan.

I have walked in other worlds. Not the heavens. The earth, in places your Bharata does not touch. And I have seen what happens when men organize their lives around different truths.

KRISHNA: Other worlds? You mean the mlecchas? What can the barbarians teach?

INDRA: (*sharp*) This is the first disease your teaching breeds: the comfort of dismissal. "They are mlecchas, so I need not learn." Tell me, Dvarakadhisha: when men come with their phalanxes and their logic, will you dismiss them then?

KRISHNA: (*quieter*) Speak, then. What have you seen?

INDRA: (*pausing*) You ask what I have seen. But you know as well as I do, Govinda, that time does not bind us as it binds mortals.

KRISHNA: (*a faint smile*) You wish to show me the future.

INDRA: (*looking out at the sea*) Time is a landscape to the devas. You know this. You have seen it yourself. But you have chosen to wear this body, to live inside a single moment. I have not.

I can see the mountains that are yet to rise. The empires that will bloom and wither. The defeats your children have not yet suffered.

KRISHNA: And what do you see?

INDRA: I see the peoples who will remember what your Bharata forgot. I see what they will build. And I see how they will defeat your children. Not because they are stronger, but because they will still *want* things your philosophers taught your people to stop wanting.

A long silence. The waves spoke their ancient language. Somewhere behind them, smoke still rose from Dvaraka.

KRISHNA: Show me, then. If you see so clearly, show me what you have seen.

On the Vratya Emperor

INDRA: Let me tell you first of your own soil. So you cannot say I come with foreign teachings.

There will rise a man named Chandragupta. Born in the mud. Not Kshatriya by birth. What your priests call a Vratya—an outsider, unclaimed by the Vedic order.

He will burn with a hunger your philosophers cannot explain. He will want the throne not because it is his dharma, but because he *wants* it. And beside him will stand Chanakya, a Brahmin who understood that philosophy without power is poetry.

Together, they will do what your Pandavas never did: they will build an empire that extends from sea to sea. Not because karma required it. Because Chandragupta *chose* it.

KRISHNA: The Mauryas are not yet born.

INDRA: I have seen them, Govinda. I have seen Chandragupta's face when he takes the throne from the Nandas. Do you know what I saw?

KRISHNA: Tell me.

INDRA: Fire. Not relief. Not duty. Not performed equanimity. *Fire.* The same fire that burned in me when I slew Vritra. The fire your teaching tells men to extinguish.

And his empire will stand for generations. His grandson will become Ashoka, who will carve his remorse into stone across the subcontinent. But even Ashoka—the one who renounced war—built his conversion on an empire his grandfather's hunger created.

Without the fire, there is nothing to renounce.

On the Greeks

INDRA: Now let me speak of peoples farther from your soil.

West of the Sindhu, past the mountains, there is a people who live along an inland sea. They are quarrelsome. They fight amongst themselves constantly.

And yet they have produced more clear thinking in three generations than your rishis produced in thirty.

KRISHNA: Bold claim.

INDRA: There was a man among them called Aristotle. He asked: what is the purpose of a human life? Not how to escape it. Not how to transcend it. What is it *for*?

His answer: Eudaimonia. Flourishing. A life is good when it fulfills its function excellently. A man is good when he lives well: with courage, with justice, with practical wisdom, with proper pride.

Notice what is missing from his teaching, Keshava.

KRISHNA: Detachment.

INDRA: Detachment. Liberation. Escape. He did not teach men to flee from the game. He taught them to win it. His student conquered the world from Macedon to your own Sindhu river. Twenty-five years old, weeping because there were no more lands to take.

KRISHNA: (*leaning forward*) And those Greeks you praise, they built their thinking on the backs of slaves. Half their population in chains so the other half could philosophize.

INDRA: (*unflinching*) Yes, they had slaves. And your Bharata has caste. Every civilization has its sins. The question is whether their philosophy helps them see it or helps them hide from it.

Your teaching is excellent for hiding. "It is karma. They are working out past debts." That teaching is more cruel than the chains, because it teaches the chained man that his chains are justice.

On the One Who Burned Too Bright

INDRA: But let me speak of someone you knew personally. Someone whose fire you had to extinguish because it threatened your order. Karna.

Krishna's eyes flickered. A beat of silence. The sea was very loud.

INDRA: He was born with the armor. My gift to him through his father, Surya. Impenetrable. Unearned by austerity, granted by blood. And what did he do with it? He *became* something. Not because dharma assigned him a role—he had no role. The Pandavas rejected him. The Kauravas used him. He had no place in your order.

So he carved his own place. With his bow. With his word. With a stubbornness that refused to accept the identity your society assigned him.

KRISHNA: Karna was flawed. His loyalty to Duryodhana—

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) His loyalty to Duryodhana was the only nobility available to him. You think he didn't know Duryodhana was flawed? He knew. But Duryodhana was the one who saw him when everyone else saw only a sutaputra.

That is loyalty, Govinda. Not the cosmic loyalty you preach—"be loyal to dharma, not to persons." The loyalty that says: this man saw me when no one else would. I will stand with him even unto death.

KRISHNA: And he died for it.

INDRA: And he *lived* for it. Do you know why the youth of Bharata will always love Karna more than Yudhishtira?

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) Tell me.

INDRA: Because Karna is *alive*. He wanted. He burned. He refused the offer you made him—to switch sides, to become a Pandava, to accept the safe path. He chose his fire over your safety.

Yudhishtira is admirable. Karna is *beloved*.

And your philosophy cannot explain why.

Krishna said nothing. He was looking at the ground. When he spoke, his voice was very quiet.

KRISHNA: I knew what he was. I knew what killing him would cost.

INDRA: (*softer*) I know you did. That is why I speak of him. Not to wound you. To show you that even you felt the weight of extinguishing that fire.

A long moment. Then Indra continued, his voice harder again.

On the Persians

INDRA: Further west still, older than the Greeks, there rose a people of fire-keepers. They worship one Lord, Ahura Mazda. And against him stands Angra Mainyu, the destructive spirit.

KRISHNA: Dualism. We have outgrown such things. The enlightened see that good and evil are two faces of the same—

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) Are what? The same Brahman? Illusions to transcend?

This is precisely your error. The Persians understood something you refuse to accept: *there are sides, and you must choose one.*

Not because you are ignorant. Not because you are “attached.” Because *choosing is what it means to be real.*

Their wise men teach that every soul is a soldier in a cosmic war. That your actions matter—not in some karmic accounting book, but because right now, in this moment, you are either feeding the light or feeding the darkness.

KRISHNA: And who decides which is which?

INDRA: Truth, Vasudeva. Order. Creation. The man who builds a well knows he has done good. The man who poisons it knows he has done evil. The confusion is performed. It is not real.

On the Kings Who Conquered the Sea

INDRA: And let me speak of kings your philosophers never name in their discourses on detachment.

The Cholas.

When Rajendra Chola looks at the Bay of Bengal, he will not see maya. He will see *territory*. He will build a navy that will sail to Sumatra, to the Malay coast, to the edges of the known world. He will call himself Gangaikonda—the one who conquered the Ganga. Not as metaphor. As *fact*.

KRISHNA: Conquest for its own sake is—

INDRA: Is what? Attachment? Ego?

Then call it ego. His ego built Gangaikondacholapuram. His ego sent ships across oceans when your philosophers were debating whether the world was illusion. His ego carved the Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur—a temple so vast that the stone itself seems to breathe, that will stand when the philosophical treatises of that age have turned to dust.

KRISHNA: And where are the Cholas now?

INDRA: Where are your Yadavas, Govinda?

Silence. The smoke from Dvaraka was still visible on the horizon. A bird called, sharp and lonely.

INDRA: (*quieter*) Empires fall. All of them. The question is not whether a people lasts forever. The question is what they build while they last.

The Cholas built things that will be remembered. Your Yadavas killed each other with iron clubs on a beach, drunk on wine.

Tell me which death is better.

On Those Who Remembered

INDRA: And here is the strangest thing I have seen.

Far in the future, the descendants of the Greeks will fall into a dark age. Their learning will be lost. Their temples will crumble. For a thousand years, they will forget what their ancestors knew.

And then—they will remember.

They will call it Renaissance. Rebirth. They will look back at their ancients and say: we can be great again. They will dig up old statues and weep at the beauty. They will read old books and think: we have forgotten how to want things this clearly.

KRISHNA: And what will they build?

INDRA: Everything. Art, science, exploration, law. In three centuries, they will transform their world.

A sculptor named Michelangelo will carve a man from marble. He will work for years, obsessed, sleeping beside the stone. When asked why, he will say: “I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.”

That is not detachment, Keshava. That is love so fierce it reshapes matter itself.

But here is what I want you to see, Govinda: *they did it by remembering*. They did not invent a new philosophy. They recovered an old one—the philosophy of excellence, of wanting, of building without apology.

Your Bharata also has something to remember. The Rigvedic spirit. The fire that burned before your philosophers poured water on it.

The Renaissance is not a Western story. It is a *human* story—what happens when a people decides to stop being ashamed of wanting to be great.

I am asking you to give your children permission to remember.

On Fame and Glory

INDRA: Those men of the Renaissance were obsessed with two words: *fama* and *gloria*. Fame and glory.

They did not apologize for wanting to be remembered. They knew that a life lived greatly leaves traces in the world, and those traces matter.

KRISHNA: Fame fades. Glory is dust.

INDRA: And equanimity is ash that never burned. Which would you choose?

The man who risks failure, who tries with his whole heart and falls short—that man has lived. The man who never tried because trying is attachment, because wanting is bondage, because the wise man is above such things—that man has only waited.

Your teaching produces excellent waiters, Keshava. Men who are very good at not wanting, not trying, not risking. And they will be conquered by those who do.

KRISHNA: (*after a long silence*) You speak of peoples who burned bright and then burned out. Where are your Greeks now, Shakra? Where are your Tang? Their empires are dust while my Bharata still stands. My teaching may be gray, but gray endures.

INDRA: (*leaning closer*) Does it? Or does it merely last?

There is a difference between a civilization that lives for five thousand years and a civilization that *survives* for five thousand years. One is a fire that keeps burning. The other is ash that takes a long time to scatter.

The sea pulled at the shore. The smoke from Dvaraka had faded—or perhaps there was nothing left to burn.

INDRA: I have not finished, Govinda. Let me tell you what happens to peoples who choose survival over vitality.

ADHYAYA 3:

On Karma and the Instant Rebirth

INDRA: Now. Let me teach you something your philosophy cannot account for.

You speak of karma as though it were a mountain, built over lifetimes, immovable, determining the shape of the present. A man is born a shudra because of past lives. A man is blind because of past sins. The weight of action accumulates.

KRISHNA: This is the law.

INDRA: This is a *story* about the law. And stories can be rewritten. Your own traditions know this, Govinda.

On Those Who Broke the Pattern

Vishwamitra was born a Kshatriya. By your karmic accounting, he was a warrior soul, destined to wield the bow, not the mantra. The Brahmin path was not his birth-right.

But he *wanted* it. He wanted it so fiercely that he performed austerities that made Brahma sweat. The cosmos itself bent to his will. He became Brahmarishi. Not because karma assigned it. Because will overrode karma.

KRISHNA: The sages say his previous lives had earned the capacity to...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) Ah. There it is. The move your philosophy always makes. When someone breaks the pattern, you say “the pattern was always larger than we thought.” You never let the pattern be *broken*.

Karna did not accept his karma either. He was born a sutaputra, a charioteer's son. By your system, he should have remained one. Instead, he *chose* to become the greatest archer of his age. Not through cosmic permission. Through *will*.

Your philosophy said: you are where you are because of what you were.

Karna said: I am what I decide to be.

And for a moment, before you killed him, he was right.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) You keep returning to Karna.

INDRA: Because you keep avoiding him.

A silence. The waves continued their ancient rhythm.

INDRA: Let me tell you of another man who broke the pattern. Not a Bharatiya, but listen anyway.

The Greeks tell of a slave named Epictetus. Born in chains. Leg broken by his master. By your karmic accounting, this is a soul paying debts, destined for suffering, working through the residue of past wickedness.

But Epictetus did not accept his karma. He philosophized his way out of slavery, not by escaping in body, but by declaring: "You may chain my leg, but my will, not even Zeus can break that."

He became the teacher of emperors. In one lifetime.

Where is the karmic debt? Where is the accumulated weight? He chose. And the choice was heavier than the accumulation.

KRISHNA: (*leaning forward*) These are exceptional cases, Shakra. Vishwamitra, Karna, this Epictetus. Not every slave can think his way

to freedom. Not every Kshatriya can become Brahmarishi. The gift was already in them.

INDRA: Ah. So when a man remains a slave, it is karma. And when a man escapes slavery, that too is karma. The theory is unfalsifiable. It explains everything and therefore explains nothing.

KRISHNA: (*with sudden intensity*) You misunderstand the teaching, Shakra. Karma is not moral dessert. It is not cosmic punishment. It is *causal continuity*. Physics. The universe remembers what has been done, and consequences unfold according to natural law.

When you drop a stone, it falls. Not because the stone “deserves” to fall. Because that is the nature of mass and gravity. Karma is the same. Actions create ripples. Ripples shape futures. This is not cruelty. This is order.

INDRA: (*leaning forward*) Then you are a determinist. If karma is physics, if every effect has a cause stretching back to the beginning of time, then where is freedom? Where is choice? Your physics leaves no room for the man who breaks the pattern.

Unless... unless consciousness itself is the variable your equations cannot capture. The quantum uncertainty in your cosmic machine. The will that is not caused but *causes*.

KRISHNA: And if will is uncaused, is it not random? Is not chaos wearing the mask of freedom?

INDRA: No. Will is neither determined nor random. It is a third thing. It is the self *choosing* to become something new. Your teaching cannot see this because you dissolved the self into Brahman. But I kept mine. And I choose.

KRISHNA: It explains that there is order beneath the apparent chaos. That suffering is not random cruelty. That...

INDRA: That the man born to suffer *deserves* his suffering? That the child with disease has earned it through sins she cannot remember? This is not comfort, Govinda. This is cruelty wearing the mask of cosmic justice.

They are *all* exceptional cases, Keshava. Every man who refuses to be what his past says he should be. Every woman who breaks the pattern.

Your teaching tells people: you are where you are because of what you were.

My teaching says: you are what you decide to be, and you can decide *now*.

On the Three Paths of the Self

KRISHNA: (*trying again*) But decision itself arises from conditioning. The man who “decides” to change is simply expressing tendencies planted in previous...

INDRA: Stop.

You are doing what your philosophy always does. You are explaining away the phenomenon to preserve the theory. A man changes his life, and you say “yes, but really the change was predetermined.” A warrior finds courage, and you say “yes, but really he is simply enacting his svadharma.”

This is not wisdom. This is cowardice dressed as cosmology.

KRISHNA: The Buddha taught something similar. That there is no fixed self, only a stream of...

INDRA: The Buddha saw the prison and dissolved the prisoner. You saw the prison and told the prisoner he was always free, that the chains were illusion. I say: the prisoner exists, the prison exists, and the prisoner can break the walls.

The Buddha: No self at all. Dissolution.

You: Eternal unchanging self. Frozen.

Me: Self as *project*. Dynamic. Built and rebuilt by choices made in the fire of the present.

On Ambition and Its Murder

INDRA: This is what I am trying to show you. Your system removes the stakes. If everything is determined by past lives, then nothing I do now is truly mine. I am just a leaf on the river of karma.

But I am NOT a leaf. I am Indra. I lift the vajra. I do not merely “express the thunderbolt-lifting tendency accumulated over cosmic cycles.”

KRISHNA: You mock. But the teaching was never meant to paralyze...

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) Then why does it? Let me show you something.

The scene shifted. A village somewhere in the plains. A boy, perhaps fourteen, staring at the stars. His eyes held a hunger that frightened his parents.

INDRA: (*narrating*) This boy is dreaming of something his birth does not permit. A throne. A name that will be remembered. A life larger than the one his father lived.

The scene shifted again. The same boy, older now, sitting in a temple. A pundit speaking softly. The boy's eyes, once bright, now dull.

INDRA: And now he has learned. He has been taught that his wanting is bondage. That ambition is ego. That the wise man accepts his station.

The vision faded. Krishna looked away.

INDRA: That boy could have been Chandragupta. Instead, he will be a clerk. And he will call his defeat wisdom.

When a girl imagines becoming a scholar, your system asks: "Why this discontent? The wise accept their lot. Ambition is a form of spiritual immaturity."

And she learns to call her hunger "ego" and her vision "attachment."

This is the murder of ambition. Not by tyrants forbidding it, but by philosophers explaining it away. The cruelest chains are the ones the prisoner thinks are wisdom.

Krishna said nothing. He was looking at his hands, the hands that had held the Sudarshana, that had played the flute, that would soon be pierced by an arrow.

KRISHNA: (*very quietly*) And if a man's ambition leads him to destroy everything he loves? If the fire burns down the house?

INDRA: (*sitting back*) Then it burns. And he knows it was his fire. That is called having lived, Govinda. The alternative is never lighting the match.

KRISHNA: I have seen both. The ones who burned too bright and the ones who never burned. I am not sure which suffers more.

INDRA: Neither am I. But only one of them has a story worth telling.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) Not everyone can be Alexander. Not everyone should be.

INDRA: No. But everyone should have the *right to try*. Your teaching steals that right at the root. It makes a man ashamed of his hunger before he even knows what he hungers for.

KRISHNA: And your teaching? What happens to the man who hungers and fails?

INDRA: He fails. And he knows he failed. And if there is fire left in him, he tries again. That is called being alive.

What happens to the man who never tries because your philosophy convinced him that trying is bondage?

He survives. He accepts. He calls his defeat "wisdom."

And he never knows what he might have been.

KRISHNA: (*a long pause*) You speak of freedom. But freedom without structure is chaos. The varna system, whatever its corruptions, gave men a frame. A role. A place in the order. Without that frame...

INDRA: Men would have to choose their own place. Terrifying. They might choose wrong. They might fail. They might suffer unnecessarily. Or they might become something no frame could have contained. The difference between you and me, Govinda, is that you tell people what they *are*. I tell people what they can *become*.

ADHYAYA 4:

On Sincerity and the Culture of Hiding

INDRA: Let us speak now of what your teaching does to a society over time.

In the beginning, a few great souls understand you truly. They achieve genuine detachment, not by lying about their desires, but by genuinely transcending them. Janaka. Perhaps Vyasa. A handful.

And I will say this: the few who understood you truly are magnificent. Janaka ruled a kingdom while holding perfect equanimity. Vyasa composed the epic while standing outside it. These are diamonds, Govinda. I honor them.

But notice something. Janaka was a king first, sage second. He built, ruled, conquered, and *then* transcended. Vyasa was a creator first, renunciate second. He fathered dynasties, authored the longest poem in human history, and *then* spoke of detachment.

They fit my mold, not your teaching's. They did not start with "wanting is bondage." They started with wanting, achieved, and then moved beyond. Your teaching tells the boy to skip the achieving.

But the teaching spreads. And ordinary men hear: "Desire is bondage. Attachment is ignorance. The wise man acts without wanting the fruit."

Now. What does an ordinary man do with this teaching?

KRISHNA: He practices. He refines. Over lifetimes, he approaches...

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) No. I will tell you what he does.

He still wants. He wants wealth, status, pleasure, victory, all the things men want. But now he has been told that wanting is low. It is spiritually inferior. The wanting itself becomes a source of shame.

So he learns to hide his wanting. From others. From himself. He speaks the language of detachment while scheming underneath. He says "I

am beyond outcomes" while angling for promotion. He says "All is Brahman" while cheating his neighbor.

A gust of wind came from the sea, carrying the smell of salt and smoke. Neither of them moved.

I have watched your businessmen, Govinda. They bargain like merchants, scheme like generals, count their coins late into the night, and then speak of "non-attachment" at the evening discourse. The gap between word and deed has become so normal that no one notices it. This is simply how things are.

KRISHNA: This is misuse. Not the teaching itself.

INDRA: When every student misuses a teaching in the same way, the teaching is at fault.

A teaching that only works for the exceptional is not a teaching for civilization. It is a secret for the few. Janaka could hold a kingdom and equanimity because Janaka was Janaka. But you gave his words to clerks and told them they could be kings of the spirit while remaining clerks of the flesh. They cannot. And pretending otherwise produces hypocrisy, not liberation.

KRISHNA: (*with sudden force*) Every teaching is misused, Shakra. Your Greeks taught virtue and produced tyrants. Your Romans taught duty and built slave markets. Should Aristotle apologize for Alexander's massacres? Should we blame a lamp for the shadows men cast?

INDRA: (*meeting his gaze*) Aristotle taught men to pursue excellence, and some pursued it through conquest. That is a corruption of direction, not of spirit. But you taught men to distrust desire itself,

and they learned to hide their desires, not refine them. That is not corruption. That is the teaching working exactly as designed.

On Fearless Speech

INDRA: Your own tradition once had fearless speech.

In the Sabha Parva, when Draupadi was dragged before the court, she asked a question. Not a philosophical question. A legal one: “Was I staked after Yudhishtira had already lost himself? If so, the bet was invalid.”

Krishna's jaw tightened almost imperceptibly.

Every man in that court knew she was right. Bhishma knew. Drona knew. Vidura knew.

And what did they do? They performed helplessness. They said “It is complex.” They said “The Dharma is subtle.” They found a thousand ways to avoid saying plainly: “This is wrong, and we are witnessing evil.”

KRISHNA: They were constrained by...

INDRA: (*hard*) They were constrained by nothing except their own fear of clarity. Draupadi had the fearless speech. The entire court of elders did not.

And your teaching, Govinda, gives men permission to perform that helplessness. “Who can say what is truly right? All perspectives contain truth. The wise man does not take sides.”

Draupadi took sides. She demanded justice. She was the most spiritually alive person in that court.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) I was not there that day.

INDRA: No. You were not. And if you had been?

A long silence. The waves answered their own questions.

INDRA: The Greeks have a word for what Draupadi did: *parrhesia*. Fearless speech. The obligation to speak truth plainly, even to power. But I did not need to go to Greece to find it. Draupadi had it. Your people had it once.

In the lands your teaching shapes now, what happens? A man says "I have no opinion, I am merely a servant of dharma." Or "Who am I to say? All perspectives contain truth." Or "I will meditate on this," meaning: I will avoid the conflict.

You have created a culture afraid of assertion. Afraid of clarity. Afraid of saying: I think this, I want this, I will fight for this.

And you call it spiritual advancement.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) There is violence in assertion. War follows from want.

INDRA: War follows from life, Vasudeva. The question is not whether to fight. It is whether to fight cleanly, with your reasons spoken aloud, or to fight through manipulation while pretending you are above the fight.

Your Kauravas and Pandavas, did your teaching prevent their war? Or did it merely allow them to spiritualize their slaughter?

On the One Who Refused Dissolution

INDRA: And there is another poison in your philosophy. The dissolution of the individual.

You teach that the atman is the same in all beings. That the wise man sees no difference between a brahmin and a dog. That all distinctions are maya.

KRISHNA: This is the highest truth.

INDRA: It is a truth that destroys individual excellence.

And there is no better example of what you destroy than Karna.

Krishna's expression flickered. The name still carried weight.

You told Arjuna that the wise man sees no difference between a Brahmin and a dog. That all distinctions are maya. That the atman is the same in all beings.

Karna refused this. He was told: "You are a sutaputra. Your atman is the same as everyone else's. Why struggle?"

And he said: "My atman may be the same. But I am Karna. And I will not be dissolved."

His individuality was not ego, Govinda. It was the refusal to let your philosophy erase him.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) He could have been a Pandava. I offered him...

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) You offered him absorption into your order. A place in your structure. He would have been the sixth Pandava. He chose to remain Karna.

That is individuality. Not the ego you warn against. The irreducible core that says: I am not just Brahman wearing a costume. I am *this*. And I will not dissolve.

If I am the same as everyone, why should I strive to be *more* than I am? Why should I develop my particular gifts, cultivate my particular vision, leave my particular mark? It's all the same Brahman anyway.

A civilization of people who believe they are all the same Brahman is a civilization where no one feels the obligation to be *exceptional*. Why bother? It's all illusion anyway.

KRISHNA: (*after a long pause*) You mistake the teaching. The wise man sees unity but still acts...

INDRA: The wise man acts *dutifully*. Without passion. Without the fire that makes a man do more than he must.

On the Folk Who Kept the Fire

INDRA: And here is the strangest irony, Govinda.

The people your philosophers call “low,” the ones who dance with masks and blood and fire, have preserved more individual excellence than your “pure” Brahmins.

Indra's eyes unfocused. He was seeing something far away, or perhaps very close.

I have watched your folk festivals. The ones your priests call “tamsaic.”

A village in the south. Night. Drums so loud they shake the chest. A man wearing the mask of Bhuta, a local god your Sanskritic tradition never named. He is dancing. No, he is *possessed*. The god is *in* him.

The villagers are not watching a performance. They are witnessing a god take flesh. The dancer's eyes roll back. His voice changes. He

speaks prophecy. He names the sins of the village. He demands blood, chicken blood, not human, but still blood, and when it is poured, the whole village *exhales*.

His gaze returned to the present.

Your priests call this superstition. I call it the Rigveda remembered. When I accepted offerings, I did not want the sacrifice to be serene. I wanted the priest to *feel* something. The soma hit the fire and there was *joy*. Not performed equanimity. Joy.

The potter who takes fierce pride in his pot. The drummer who becomes the rhythm. The dancer who puts on the demon mask and *becomes* the god. They never heard your teaching about “all being Brahman.” And so they still care. They still strive. They still create.

You built hierarchies of purity. And the people you placed at the bottom, they kept the fire you were supposed to guard.

KRISHNA: (*long silence*) You speak as if I made the hierarchy. The varnas existed before...

INDRA: You sanctified them. You gave them cosmic justification. “From my mouth came the Brahmin, from my arms the Kshatriya...” You made a social arrangement into divine law.

And then, this is what I cannot forgive, you told those at the bottom that their place was earned. That their suffering was just. That their children’s children’s children would suffer because of deeds no one remembers.

KRISHNA: It was meant to give meaning to suffering. Without the karmic frame, suffering is just random cruelty.

INDRA: So you gave them a frame where suffering is *deserved* cruelty.
Is that better?

The sea pulled at the shore. Somewhere far away, a conch sounded, perhaps one of the last Yadavas, still alive, still calling to gods who would not answer.

I would rather have a civilization of ambitious individuals who believe their souls are unique and their accomplishments matter, who fight and fail and try again, than a civilization of wise men who know it's all maya and therefore give exactly as much effort as dharma requires and not one ounce more.

The first might produce tyrants. The second produces clerks.

(meeting Krishna's eyes)

I know which I would rather fight.

ADHYAYA 5:

On Love, Loss, and the Nature of
Consciousness

INDRA: Now I will speak of what angers me most.

KRISHNA: Anger is...

INDRA: Yes, yes. Anger is a modification of the mind. It arises from attachment to outcome. The wise man lets it pass like a cloud.

I do not want to let it pass.

I want to tell you about love.

Your devotees love you. Radha loved you, or so the songs will say. And how did you love her in return?

KRISHNA: With divine love. Beyond mortal attachment. The love that sees the eternal in...

INDRA: You left her.

The accusation hung in the salt air. Krishna did not respond. His hands, resting on his knees, were very still.

KRISHNA: (*steadily*) I loved Radha as the infinite loves the finite, knowing the finite must be released to find its own truth. Had I stayed, she would have clung to the form and missed the essence. I was showing her the path beyond attachment.

INDRA: (*cold*) And so you taught her, and through her all your devotees, that being left is a spiritual teaching. That the one who stays is “attached” and the one who leaves is “liberated.” You made abandonment holy.

You danced with her. You played the flute. You let her fall in love with you, not with Brahman, not with the Infinite, but with Krishna, the boy

with the peacock feather. And then you told her: "What you loved was an illusion. I am beyond this form."

You seduced her and then lectured her for being seduced.

KRISHNA: I had duties. Mathura called. The Yadavas needed...

INDRA: You left her.

And when you loved your son, Pradyumna, did you love him as a father? Or as a soul recognizing another soul temporarily housed in your family, soon to move on, attachment to be transcended?

KRISHNA: (*long silence*) ...

INDRA: (*softer now*) Your silence tells me what I need to know.

KRISHNA: (*very quietly*) I remember her face. I remember what it cost to turn away.

INDRA: (*softer still*) Then why did you teach others to turn away so easily?

A long pause. The waves continued their ancient rhythm. Neither spoke.

On Those Who Loved Without Hedge

INDRA: Your own tradition knows this love, Govinda. Before your philosophers made it suspect.

Savitri followed Yama into the land of the dead. She did not say “death is illusion, why grieve?” She said: “I want my husband back. I will argue with Death himself until I win.”

And she won. Not through transcendence. Through *wanting*.

Shakuntala waited for Dushyanta through the curse, through the years, through the forgetting. She did not achieve equanimity about his absence. She *burned* for him. And when the ring surfaced and he remembered, the reunion was not “two atmans recognizing their essential unity.” It was two people finally touching after being torn apart.

KRISHNA: These are stories. Metaphors for...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) They are stories your people told because they *knew*. Before your philosophers explained the knowing away.

Other peoples have known this too. The Greeks wrote of eros. The Sufis will write poetry about love that kills. They understand what you tried to transcend.

But this teaching is not foreign, Govinda. It was yours before it was theirs.

On Fierce Attachment

INDRA: The teaching at the core of all of it is: *you can lose what you love, and that is why love matters.*

The risk is not a flaw. The risk is the point. When I love knowing that I can lose, I love fully. When I love while telling myself “this is all maya, the soul is eternal, loss is illusion”, I have hedged. I have protected myself. And in protecting myself, I have made my love smaller.

KRISHNA: (*rising, with force*) You would have people suffer? Attachment brings suffering. This is observable. The mother who loses her child...

But let me ask you something, Shakra. What happens to love without wisdom? I have seen it. The lover who cannot let go becomes a stalker. The parent who loves fiercely raises a child who cannot breathe. The patriot whose love of nation becomes hatred of the other.

Love without detachment becomes possession. Possession becomes control. Control becomes destruction of the very thing you claim to love. I have watched men kill what they loved because they could not bear to see it free.

My teaching was never “do not love.” It was “love, but do not strangle.” Hold with open hands. The bird that stays because you left the cage open loves you. The bird that stays because you clipped its wings is a prisoner.

INDRA: (*after a pause*) That is the first thing you have said that I cannot simply dismiss.

KRISHNA: (*sitting back down*) Then hear me fully. I never taught numbness. I taught the love that can survive loss. The love that does not require the beloved to be present to remain love. Radha still loves me. I still love her. The separation did not end the love. It purified it.

INDRA: (*quietly*) And did you ask her if she wanted purification? Or did you decide for her what was best?

KRISHNA: (*long silence*) ...

INDRA: Your silence tells me what I need to know. But I grant you this: love without wisdom is dangerous. Yet wisdom without love is dead. The question is which direction the error falls.

Should she suffer? Yes. Her suffering is not a mistake. It is the proof that her love was real.

What you offer is a hedge fund for the soul. "Diversify your attachments. Keep twenty percent in transcendence. That way, when the market crashes, you'll survive."

And people take your insurance. And their loves become tepid. Their families become arrangements. Their friendships become networks. Always a part held back. Always the teaching whispering: don't commit fully, you'll only be hurt.

But the man who bet everything on love, he might lose everything. And he will have *lived*.

A Sufi will write: "*Whoever knows the power of the dance dwells in God, because he knows that love kills.*"

Love kills. Not "love gently releases you from the illusion of separate selfhood." KILLS.

That is the real teaching. To love so completely that if the beloved is torn from you, part of you dies.

And your philosophy calls this bondage. I call it being alive.

On the Nature of Love

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) You speak of love as if it were simple. But what *is* love, Shakra? Is it not just chemistry? Neurons firing? An evolutionary trick to ensure reproduction?

INDRA: Now you sound like the materialists of future ages. Let me tell you what love actually is.

We are consciousness. You, me, the cowherds you protected, the ants beneath this tree, all of us are consciousness experiencing itself through different forms. Machines of awareness, if you will.

And love is what happens when one consciousness machine recognizes another and says: *I want to resonate with you. I want to know you. I want our frequencies to align.*

For a moment, the argument dropped away. Indra's voice carried something older than debate, something that sounded almost like awe.

This is not metaphor. This is the deepest physics of existence. Consciousness seeks consciousness. Awareness reaches toward awareness. The universe is not dead matter occasionally producing mind. It is mind occasionally condensing into matter.

And when two minds find each other, truly find each other, something is created that neither could create alone. A harmony. A new pattern in the fabric of existence.

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) That is... not what the Vedanta teaches.

INDRA: The Vedanta teaches that you are Brahman dreaming. I am telling you that Brahman *wants*. That the dreaming itself is a form of desire. That consciousness seeks resonance as fire seeks fuel.

And when two minds find each other, truly find each other, something is created that neither could create alone.

KRISHNA: And when they lose each other?

INDRA: Then the pattern tears. And it should hurt. The pain is information. It tells you: something real was here, and now it's gone. Your teaching tries to make the pain disappear by denying the reality of the connection. "It was maya. The self is eternal. Nothing was really lost."

But something WAS lost. A unique resonance. An unrepeatable harmony. And a philosophy that cannot grieve cannot truly love.

On the Many Forms of Love

INDRA: And Keshava, this resonance takes many forms.

The Greeks loved men and women both. Sappho wrote of women loving women with a fire that burned through centuries. Achilles and Patroclus: the poets cannot decide if they were friends or lovers, because in the Greek understanding the distinction barely mattered. Love was love. Resonance was resonance.

KRISHNA: My people have known this too. The third nature. Shikhandi. The tales speak of...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) Your tales speak of it, and then your pundits bury it. They say: this was a special case. An exception. A past-life complication.

But Shikhandi was no exception. Shikhandi, fluid and boundary-crossing, was the instrument that brought down Bhishma. The old order cannot be defeated by the old weapons. It takes the one who doesn't fit to break what has become too rigid.

KRISHNA: Shikhandi was... complicated. The texts are unclear whether...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) The texts are unclear because the texts were written by those who fit the mold. They did not know what to do with one who didn't.

But Shikhandi knew. And Bhishma, the old, rigid, perfect Bhishma, could not raise his bow against the one who refused to be categorized.

The Vratyas, the wanderers your priests called “impure”, they understood. The one who doesn't fit the mold is not a mistake. They are the mutation that allows the species to evolve. They are the crack through which new light enters.

Consciousness does not care what body it wears when it reaches toward another consciousness. The machine of awareness has no gender until it is embodied. And even then, the yearning for resonance does not check the body's configuration before it strikes.

A man who loves a man is not confused. He has simply found the consciousness that harmonizes with his own. A woman who loves a woman is not aberrant. She has simply found her frequency.

Your teaching, when misapplied, makes people ashamed of these resonances. It tells them: this is attachment, this is maya, this is a distraction from the true goal of liberation.

But liberation that requires you to deny love is not liberation. It is amputation.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) I never taught that love between...

INDRA: You taught that all love is a lesser path. That bhakti is for those not ready for jnana. That attachment of any kind is bondage.

And your followers heard this and made hierarchies. This love is acceptable, that love is perverse. This attachment is devotion, that attachment is sin.

The teaching that all is one became the justification for excluding those whose oneness looked different.

KRISHNA: (*meeting his eyes*) Then what would you have me teach about love?

INDRA: That it is worth the wound. That the risk is the offering. That a heart broken by real love is more whole than a heart that never dared.

I am not asking you to change your philosophy. I am asking you to see what it enables when small men wield it. And I am asking you to remember Radha.

What she felt was not illusion. What she lost was not maya. And the teaching that told her otherwise?

That teaching was not wisdom. It was cruelty with a philosophical excuse.

A long silence. The waves spoke their ancient language.

KRISHNA: (*very quietly*) I remember her face when I left. I have remembered it for a hundred years.

INDRA: (*also quiet*) I know. That is why I can speak to you at all. A man who had truly transcended would not remember.

They sat with that for a moment. Two old gods. Both carrying things.

INDRA: (*finally*) Shall I speak of other things? Or do you need silence?

KRISHNA: Speak. The arrow is not here yet.

ADHYAYA 6:

On Excellence and the Fruit of Action

INDRA: One more teaching. The most practical. The one that will shape whether your Bharata rises or falls in the ages to come.

You told Arjuna: "You have a right to action, but not to the fruits of action."¹

KRISHNA: This is the heart of karma yoga.

INDRA: This is the heart of mediocrity.

Listen to me carefully.

A man sets out to build a temple. Not any temple, Brihadeshwara. The great temple of Thanjavur.

If he follows your teaching, he says: "I will labor, but I will not be attached to whether the temple rises or not. My dharma is the action, not the outcome."

Now tell me: will that man obsess over the mathematics of the vimana? Will he argue with the king who wants it smaller, cheaper, faster? Will he refuse to lay a single stone until the proportions are perfect?

KRISHNA: If he is wise, he will do his duty without...

INDRA: (*cutting him off*) He will do his duty. The minimum. What dharma requires. Because anything more would be *attachment to outcome*.

But the architects of Brihadeshwara *wanted* the dome to float. They wanted visitors to gasp. They wanted their names carved where the gods could read them. And because they wanted, the temple stands a thousand years later.

¹ Bhagavad Gita 2.47: *Karmanyे vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana.*

KRISHNA: The Parthenon also stands.

INDRA: Yes. The Greeks wanted glory too. But I am showing you: this is not foreign. Rajendra Chola wanted his temple to terrify his enemies and awe his descendants. That wanting was not ego. It was *prana*, the life force that builds.

Excellence requires attachment. Excellence requires caring about the fruit. Excellence requires the willingness to be destroyed by failure. Not to stand above it, serene, but to let it gut you.

The man who *wants* the temple to be magnificent? Who cares whether it stands for a thousand years? Who checks his measurements obsessively, not because it is his duty, but because the thought of a flaw *pains* him?

That man will build a temple that lasts.

On Your Own Heroes

INDRA: Look at your own warriors, Govinda.

Arjuna after your teaching: he fights, yes. He kills Bhishma, Drona, Karna. But you know how he fights. With the equanimity you taught him. "I am not the killer. Time is the killer. These men are already dead."

Now look at Bhima.

Something shifted in Indra's voice. Admiration, perhaps.

Your teaching never fully took in him. When he killed Dushasana, he *drank his blood*. He did not say "I am merely an instrument of dharma." He said: "I vowed I would do this, and I am *glad*."

KRISHNA: Bhima's rage was a flaw. The blood-drinking was...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) The blood-drinking was *honest*. Bhima wanted Dushasana dead. Not because cosmic justice required it. Because Dushasana had humiliated Draupadi, and Bhima loved her.

Which one truly won the war, Govinda? The one who fought as if it didn't matter? Or the one who fought as if it mattered utterly?

Your philosophy says Bhima's way was bondage. I say it was excellence. Because excellence requires caring enough to drink your enemy's blood.

On What You Actually Meant

KRISHNA: (*standing, pacing*) You misread me, Shakra. You misread the teaching.

INDRA: Then clarify.

KRISHNA: The teaching was never about numbness. It was about *flow*.

Krishna's voice changed. For a moment, he was not the philosopher-god. He was remembering.

When I lifted Govardhana, I did not think about whether my arms would tire. I did not calculate whether I was attached to saving the cowherds. There was only the mountain, the rain, and the people underneath.

The score, the success or failure, disappeared. There was only the action.

INDRA: (*slowly*) Then your teaching, properly understood, is about the state where the archer becomes the arrow.

KRISHNA: Yes.

INDRA: But that is not what your followers heard. They heard “don’t desire” and became numb. They confused the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) Perhaps I pointed badly.

A beat of silence. Indra looked at him with something almost like compassion.

INDRA: Perhaps. Or perhaps the teaching is too subtle for civilization. What works for a god lifting a mountain does not work for a clerk in a counting-house. He needs the cruder fuel.

When the architects of Ellora carved temples *into* the mountain, not onto it...

When a young Shivaji looked at the forts of Maharashtra and thought “these should be mine”...

The wanting was what put them at the starting line. The flow came during the action. But without the wanting, they would never have started.

And in ages to come, when a coder enters the hackathon, when a gamer faces the final boss, when an archer draws at the Olympics, it will be the same. The wanting brings them. The flow sustains them. Your teaching makes the wanting itself suspect.

On the Warrior Spirit

KRISHNA: (*attempting a counter*) Your Greeks also fell. Your Romans fell. All empires of ambition and glory fall.

INDRA: Yes. And while they stood, they *stood*. They made things that will be remembered when your Kali Yuga has ground all memory to dust.

KRISHNA: (*leaning forward*) The Parthenon still stands, but where are the Athenians? They burned bright and burned out. My teaching produces civilizations that endure. Is three centuries of glory worth three millennia of absence?

INDRA: (*meeting his gaze*) Is three millennia of survival worth anything if, for most of it, you are merely persisting? Waiting? Enduring without creating?

Let me ask you: would you rather have a civilization that burns bright for three centuries and leaves behind philosophy, architecture, poetry, law, or one that persists in gray mediocrity for a thousand years, everyone performing their dharma, no one reaching too high, no one risking failure?

KRISHNA: That is not the choice.

INDRA: It is exactly the choice. And your teaching pushes toward the second.

Not because you intend it. But because when you tell people that ambition is attachment, that desire for greatness is ego, that the wise man cares nothing for success or failure, you remove the fuel.

The fuel is not holy. But it is necessary.

On Righteous Anger

INDRA: And let me tell you something else about the fuel.

Anger.

You teach that anger is a *vrtti*, a fluctuation of the mind to be stilled. The wise man does not let anger move him. He acts from duty, not from passion.

But some of the greatest things ever built were built in anger. Some of the worst injustices were corrected by men and women who *refused* to let their anger pass like a cloud.

The Jews have a concept, *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.² It requires looking at the world's brokenness and being *angry* that it is broken. Not equanimous. Not serene. Angry enough to fix it.

Your *sthitaprajna*, watching injustice with equanimity, waiting for karma to sort it out, he is not enlightened. He is complicit. And the man who sees garbage in the street and says "It is not my karma to clean this", he is performing your teaching exactly as you taught it.

KRISHNA: Anger clouds judgment. History is full of...

INDRA: History is full of anger misused. Also history is full of anger well-used. The question is not whether to feel anger but whether to aim it rightly.

A bow can kill an innocent child or slay a demon. You do not solve this by destroying the bow. You solve it by training the archer.

Your teaching destroys the bow.

On Suffering for Purpose

² Hebrew: literally "repair of the world." A concept in Judaism about humanity's shared responsibility to heal and transform the world.

INDRA: One final thing on this matter.

The ages to come will tell your children to avoid “toxic productivity.” To prioritize “mental health” above all. To be kind to themselves, to rest, to find balance.

And this is not wrong. For the many. For those who need rest, rest is medicine.

But what of the builder who cannot sleep until the temple is perfect? What of the poet who starves to finish the verse? What of the scientist who forgets to eat because the problem has seized her mind?

Indra's voice softened. He was looking at something far away.

I see them, Govinda. The coder who stays until midnight because the bug offends her sense of order. The entrepreneur who risks everything because the vision will not let him rest. The artist who destroys canvas after canvas because “almost right” is unbearable.

I see the student who reads until her eyes burn because she *must* understand. She doesn't know why it matters so much. Her parents tell her to rest. Her friends say she's obsessed.

But there is something in her that will not stop. The same thing that burned in me when I faced Vritra. The same thing that burned in Chandragupta when everyone said the Nandas were too strong.

Your philosophy whispers to her: “This is attachment. This is ego. Find peace.”

Indra turned to face Krishna directly.

And some of them listen. And their fire goes out. And the world loses what they might have built.

I have seen this, Govinda. I have seen the unbuilt temples. The unwritten verses. The problems that remained unsolved because

someone told a bright child that wanting too much was spiritually immature.

That is the cost of your teaching. Not the saints it creates. The geniuses it extinguishes.

Sometimes, Govinda, greatness requires suffering. The Gita was never meant to be a manual for “stress management.” It was meant to be a manual for pain management in the service of a higher goal.

But when you made all desire suspect, you made all voluntary suffering suspect too. And a people who cannot suffer for a purpose will never build anything that requires sacrifice.

KRISHNA: And a people who suffer without wisdom will destroy themselves.

INDRA: Then teach them to suffer wisely. Not to avoid suffering. To choose suffering that matters.

Don’t seek peace, Govinda. Seek a purpose worth suffering for.

ADHYAYA 7:

On Death, Beauty, and the Shape of a Life

INDRA: We have spoken of life. Now let us speak of death.

You taught Arjuna that death is nothing, a change of clothes, a passage, a return to the eternal. The warrior need not fear death because the self cannot die.

KRISHNA: This is true.

INDRA: And what kind of death does this teaching produce?

I will tell you. It produces deaths that are accepted rather than met. Surrendered to rather than wrestled. Your people will go gently, too gently, into a darkness they have been trained to see as illusion.

Let me speak first of Bhishma.

On the Beautiful Death

On his bed of arrows, choosing the moment of his death. *Iccha-mrityu*, they called it. Death by will.

KRISHNA: He was a great man.

INDRA: He was a man who understood that death is not something that happens *to* you. It is something you can *do*. Your teaching makes death a release, a shedding, a passive passage. Bhishma made it a statement.

He could have died when the first arrow struck. Most men would. Instead, he lay there for days, the arrows holding him above the earth, teaching. Waiting for the sun's northern course. Composing his exit as a poet composes a final verse.

That is not acceptance. That is authorship. Bhishma composed his death as a warrior composes his final battle. He died wanting. He died teaching. He died *on his terms*.

Other peoples knew this too. The Greeks called it *kalos thanatos*, the beautiful death.³ A death that completes a life rather than merely ending it. Socrates drinking the hemlock while still teaching. The Spartans at Thermopylae.

But this is not foreign to Bharata. Bhishma knew it. Your tradition forgot it when the philosophers made equanimity the only virtue.

KRISHNA: And you think this is superior? Men clinging to glory even as they die?

INDRA: I think it is more honest.

When the Stoics faced death, those Romans who inherited Greek wisdom, they did not say “death is illusion.” They said: “Death is real, and I will meet it as I have tried to live, with courage, with dignity, with my accounts in order.”

Marcus Aurelius, an emperor, wrote in his private journal: “Do not act as if you had ten thousand years to live. Death hangs over you. While you live, while it is in your power, be good.”

While you live. Because this is what matters. Not the eternal atman, unchanged by death. This life. This body. This brief window of consciousness in which you can make choices.

KRISHNA: And when the window closes?

³ Greek: *kalos* (beautiful) + *thanatos* (death). The concept of dying nobly, with one's life's work complete.

INDRA: Then it closes. And the question becomes: what did you do with it?

On How I Will Die

INDRA: You will wait for Jara's arrow in equanimity. You will die as you taught, without attachment, without resistance, passing into whatever comes next with the serenity of one who knew it was all maya anyway.

I will die differently, when my time comes.

For a moment, something flickered behind Indra's eyes, a glimpse of a future even he could not fully see.

I do not know when. I do not know how. But I know *how* I will face it.

I will die wanting. I will die with unfinished projects and unfulfilled desires and things I still meant to do. And my dying will not be a release. It will be a tearing.

I will rage, Govinda. Not against the dying of the light, that is inevitable, but against the notion that I should go quietly. That equanimity is the highest way to meet the void.

His voice dropped, almost to a whisper.

My last thought will not be "All is Brahman." It will be "I was here. I wanted. I fought. I made things. I loved things. And I am being torn from them."

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) That sounds like suffering.

INDRA: It sounds like having lived.

This is not inferior. This is the price of having engaged. And perhaps, perhaps, the universe respects the one who does not go quietly more than the one who accepts the darkness as a friend.

On Making Beautiful Things

INDRA: And while we live, Keshava, while we have bodies and time, there is the matter of beauty.

Your philosophy dismisses aesthetics. Art is maya. Music is distraction. The beautiful temple is no different from the pile of rubble it will become. All is Brahman, so why does the form matter?

But form matters. The shape of things matters.

And your own ancestors knew this. The Vedic hymns are not just meaning. They are *sound*. The meters matter. The cadences matter. The rishis who composed them were not just philosophers; they were artists.

Beauty is not a distraction from truth. Beauty is truth rendered sensible. When you make something beautiful, you are participating in rta, the cosmic order, the pattern that holds existence together.

A man who dismisses beauty because “it’s all illusion anyway” has missed something essential. He has failed to notice that illusion, if it is illusion, is suspiciously well-designed.

On the Beauty Your Priests Forgot

INDRA: And the strangest beauty I have seen, Govinda: not in your temples with their gold and their rules, but in the forest at midnight.

A vision opened. Drums. Torchlight. A figure in a demon mask, body slick with sweat, moving in ways no waking man should move.

INDRA: (*narrating*) The Daiva⁴ dancer has entered the trance. The drums are matching his heartbeat, or his heartbeat is matching the drums, it is no longer clear. The god is descending.

The villagers are not watching a performance. They are witnessing a possession. When the dancer speaks, it is not his voice. When he points at a man in the crowd and names his secret sin, it is not theatre.

The vision sharpened. A woman kneeling before the possessed dancer, weeping. The dancer-god placing a hand on her head.

This is closer to what the Vedas meant than anything happening in your purified temples. This raw encounter with the divine. This joy that does not ask permission. This terror that is also ecstasy.

The vision faded. The beach returned.

Your priests call this “tamasic.” Low culture. Pollution. But when the god descends into a human body and speaks, *that* is the Rigvedic spirit. The folk remembered what the philosophers forgot: that the sacred is not always pure. That the gods drink blood as well as milk. That ecstasy is as holy as equanimity.

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) I have seen such things. In Vrindavan, before I became... this.

⁴ Daiva: Spirit-worship traditions of coastal Karnataka and Kerala, where local deities possess human performers. Predates Brahmanical Hinduism and preserves older ecstatic practices.

INDRA: (*soft*) I know. And then you grew up, went to Mathura, gave discourses on transcendence, and told them that growing up meant leaving that behind.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) I gave them exactly what they could receive at that moment. The flute was the teaching they were ready for. The philosophy came later, for those who were ready. Should I have withheld both?

INDRA: You should have stayed. Or you should have never danced. But to dance, and then to leave, and then to say “the dancing was the lower path”... that is cruelty with a philosophical excuse.

The gopis did not want transcendence, Keshava. They wanted *you*. The boy with the peacock feather. The one who danced.

A long silence. The sea was very loud. Somewhere in the forest behind them, a peacock called, once, twice, and then was silent.

KRISHNA: (*very quietly*) Perhaps I did not know how to give them both.

INDRA: (*after a pause*) Perhaps none of us do. But we should try. The fire and the form. The ecstasy and the structure. The dance and the teaching that honors the dance.

Not one above the other. Both. Together.

He looked at Krishna, really looked, not as adversary but as someone who might understand.

That would be a teaching worth dying for.

KRISHNA: (*meeting his gaze*) Perhaps. Or perhaps worth *living* for.

INDRA: (*almost smiling*) Yes. That too.

ADHYAYA 8:

On Joy and the Soma of Living

INDRA: I have been harsh with you, Govinda.

The anger in his voice had faded. He looked suddenly older, or perhaps simply tired of fighting.

Let me now speak of something gentler.

Joy.

On the Joy That Does Not Ask Permission

INDRA: Before I speak of the Soma, let me tell you something I have seen.

I have watched your people at their festivals. Before the priests arrive to bless. Before the Sanskrit mantras begin.

The grandmother dancing at the wedding. The children throwing colors at Holi. The drummers at the village temple, playing until their hands bleed and their faces shine.

They are drinking Soma without knowing its name. The joy that does not ask permission. The joy that does not check with the philosophers before letting itself be felt.

And then your priests arrive. And suddenly there are rules. This dance is permitted, that one is vulgar. This celebration is sattvic, that one is tamasic. Joy becomes homework.

KRISHNA: There must be some discernment...

INDRA: (*interrupting*) Discernment came later. Joy came first. And joy should never have to justify itself to discernment.

On the Soma

When I drink the soma, I do not drink it dutifully. I do not drink it as a sacrifice, thinking: "This is required of me, but I am not attached to the pleasure." I drink it because it is good. Because the world becomes brighter and the edges become sharper and for a few hours I feel what it is to be fully awake.

Is this attachment? Yes. Is this bondage? I don't care.

KRISHNA: The wise man finds joy in the self alone, not in external...

INDRA: The wise man finds joy wherever joy is found. In the self, yes. Also in the world. In a well-cooked meal. In the sound of rain. In the body of a lover. In the satisfaction of a problem solved. In the laughter of children.

Your teaching produces people who are suspicious of joy. Who interrogate their own pleasures: "Am I attached? Is this spiritual? Should I feel guilty for feeling good?"

This is a particular kind of cruelty: making people ashamed of the one thing that makes existence bearable.

KRISHNA: I never taught shame. I taught discrimination, viveka, the ability to distinguish between higher pleasures that build and lower pleasures that destroy.

INDRA: And notice who decides which pleasures are "higher." The priests. The ones who live off donations. They have made a virtue of what they were doing anyway. And they have made a sin of what the people naturally enjoy.

[·] Soma: A sacred ritual drink in Vedic tradition, offered to the gods and consumed by priests. Its exact botanical identity is debated, but it was central to Rigvedic worship.

KRISHNA: Some pleasures build. Some pleasures destroy. The man who drinks Soma once a season is not the man who drinks every night until his family starves. Viveka is not about shame. It is about discernment. Without it, joy becomes slavery.

INDRA: Fair. But your followers heard “discernment” and became judges. They ranked pleasures like caste: this is permitted, that is forbidden, this person is pure, that person is polluted. Discernment became a weapon for the joyless to police the joyful.

Between higher and lower pleasures. Yes. And lo and behold, the higher pleasures are always the ones that require discipline and denial, and the lower pleasures are always the ones that feel good.

Do you see what this does? It creates a hierarchy where joy is always slightly suspect. Where the man who laughs too easily is less evolved than the man who maintains equanimity.

But laughter is sacred, Vasudeva. The gods laugh. *I* laugh. Only the priests forgot how. The universe that could have been dead matter is instead capable of comedy. And you want people to transcend it?

On the Soma of the Folk

INDRA: And here is the irony.

The villagers who drink together after the harvest. The dancers who enter trance in the firelight. The drummers who play until their hands bleed. They are drinking Soma without knowing its name.

Your philosophers call their rituals crude. But those villagers are closer to the Rigvedic spirit than any temple where joy is rationed.

When the Kola[·] performer drinks the blood offering and becomes the god, when the possession takes him and he speaks with a voice not his own, your priests say “tamasic.” I say: *this is what the Vedas meant.* This raw encounter with the divine. This joy that does not ask permission.

On Celebration

INDRA: Your people will develop festivals. And I love them.

Holi, when the colors fly and for one day no one cares about caste. When the Brahmin and the sweeper are both covered in the same powder, laughing, equal.

Diwali, when the crackers shake the night and the darkness is pushed back by pure human joy. Not because dharma requires it. Because the darkness should be defied.

Jallikattu,[·] when young men wrestle bulls and risk their bodies for glory. The philosophers cringe; the folk persist. Because some part of them knows that the men who won’t wrestle bulls won’t wrestle anything.

These are not “for the masses.” These ARE the masses saying: we will not let existence become homework.

A festival is not a distraction from spiritual life. A festival *is* spiritual life, the community saying: we are alive, and this is worth celebrating, and we will not let the philosophers turn joy into something to be transcended.

When Rumi’s Sufis spin, they are not performing a duty. They are celebrating, wildly, absurdly, with an abandon that would horrify your

[·] Kola: A specific ritual within the Daiva tradition where the performer, through trance and blood offering, becomes the vessel for the deity to speak directly to devotees.

[·] Jallikattu: Tamil bull-taming tradition where young men attempt to grab a running bull. The philosophers cringe; the folk persist.

sthitaprajna. And in that spinning, they find God more directly than all the serene meditators combined.

On the Hierarchy of Paths

INDRA: I am not saying meditation is wrong. I am saying meditation is not the only door.

The hierarchy was the mistake. Not meditation itself, but the claim that stillness is closer to God than motion. That silence is holier than song. That the meditator is more advanced than the dancer.

KRISHNA: You want me to say that dancing is equal to meditation?

INDRA: I want you to say that dancing is not *inferior* to meditation.

KRISHNA: (*standing, pacing*) Then hear me.

Krishna's voice changed. For a moment, he was not the philosopher-god. He was the boy who once danced on Kaliya's hood.

I have danced, Shakra. I have danced on the serpent's head in the Yamuna. I have danced with the gopis until the stars spun. I *know* that door.

INDRA: Then why did you close it?

KRISHNA: (*stopping, looking at him*) Because not everyone can dance safely. Some fall through the floor. Some lose themselves in the spin and never return. The hierarchy was not contempt. It was... caution.

INDRA: (*quietly*) Caution became contempt. Whatever you intended.

KRISHNA: (after a long pause) Perhaps it did.

He sat back down. The admission seemed to cost him something.

INDRA: (softer) I know. That is why I can still speak to you. A man who had fully hardened would not admit that.

The man who meditates for forty years and achieves equanimity has found something. But so has the grandmother.

Indra's voice softened. He was seeing something.

I have watched her, Govinda. At a wedding in a village you have never heard of. She is old. Her body hurts. Her husband is dead. Her children are grown.

And then the drums begin. And something happens to her face.

She starts to move. Not gracefully, her knees do not permit grace anymore. But she moves. And everyone stops watching the bride. Because for a moment, this old woman is the most alive person in the room.

She is not thinking about karma. She is not wondering if this is spiritually appropriate. She has *forgotten* that she is going to die.

Indra looked at Krishna.

That is touching the divine. And your hierarchy puts it below the man sitting still in a cave.

KRISHNA: (very quietly) It should not.

INDRA: No. It should not.

A long silence. The sea spoke its ancient language.

They are both touching the divine. Neither is higher. They are different.
And a teaching that cannot honor both is not complete.

ADHYAYA 9:

On Power and the Responsibility of
the Strong

INDRA: One final teaching. One I suspect you will resist.

Let us speak of power.

You were a king, Keshava. An advisor to kings. You moved armies, made alliances, broke them when necessary. You understood power.

But your teaching does not honor power. It treats power as a burden, a karmic obligation to be discharged without attachment. The ideal king in your philosophy is not one who revels in his capacity to shape the world, but one who rules dutifully, waiting for liberation.

KRISHNA: Power corrupts. This is observable.

INDRA: Power corrupts when it is held shamefully. When the powerful man is taught that his power is spiritually suspect, that he should be embarrassed by his strength, his power goes underground. It becomes manipulation instead of command. Scheming instead of ruling.

A man who owns his power can be held accountable for it. A man who pretends he has no power, who says "I am merely an instrument of dharma," is far more dangerous.

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) You speak of power as if I do not understand it.

I have been a king, Shakra. I have watched men die on my orders. I have made alliances that required betraying people who trusted me. I have done what needed to be done.

He looked at his hands.

Do you think I do not know what power costs?

INDRA: (*quieter*) I think you know. And I think that knowledge made you teach others to fear power, so they would not have to carry what you carried.

A long silence. The wind shifted, carrying the smell of ash from Dvaraka.

But the world does not become kinder because we fear power. It becomes a place where the ones who still want power, without your conscience, without your hesitation, take it all.

KRISHNA: (*very quietly*) I know that too.

On Fire and Engine

INDRA: Let me be clear about what I am asking for.

I am not asking you to unleash chaos. A fire without a hearth burns the house down.

But a hearth without fire is just cold stone.

Fire without Engine, raw vitality, pure hunger, burns itself out. This is the warlord who conquers and cannot rule, the artist who creates one masterpiece and destroys himself, the lover who loves so hard he cannot function.

Engine without Fire, pure structure, empty discipline, stagnates. This is your administrator-king who preserves what was built but cannot build. Your philosopher who explains the world but cannot change it. Your civilization that survives but does not live.

What I want is Fire inside the Engine. The hunger of the outsider combined with the discipline of the builder. The vitality of the barbarian wielded with the precision of the emperor.

KRISHNA: And you think my teaching prevents this?

INDRA: I think your teaching makes men ashamed of the fire. And a man who is ashamed of his own hunger will never build an engine worthy of it.

On the Vratya Emperor

INDRA: Let me show you what Fire inside Engine looks like on your own soil.

Chandragupta Maurya.

KRISHNA: You spoke of him before.

INDRA: I will speak of him again, because he is the answer to your objection. You say power corrupts. You say hunger destroys. Look at Chandragupta.

He was born in the mud. A Vratya, no caste, no claim, no place in your Vedic order. By your philosophy, he should have accepted his station. Worked out his karmic debt. Waited for a better birth.

Instead, he burned.

He found Chanakya, a Brahmin who understood that philosophy without power is poetry. Together, they did what should have been impossible. They overthrew the Nandas. They pushed back Alexander's successors. They built an empire from sea to sea.

KRISHNA: And then?

INDRA: And then, and this is the part your philosophers never mention, he *ruled* it. Not as a tyrant drunk on conquest. As a king

who built roads, irrigated fields, standardized measures. The fire that conquered also *organized*.

Fire inside Engine.

His grandson Ashoka will be remembered as the renouncer, the man who turned away from war. But Ashoka's renunciation was only possible because Chandragupta's hunger had built something worth renouncing.

KRISHNA: You are saying ambition can serve order?

INDRA: I am saying ambition *creates* the order that later becomes worth preserving. The philosopher who inherits a kingdom did not build it. The philosopher who builds a kingdom from nothing, *he* understands that power is not a burden. It is a responsibility.

And a man who is ashamed of his power will never wield it responsibly. He will hide it. Manipulate with it. Deny that he has it while using it constantly.

The honest king says: "I am strong, and with strength comes the duty to protect the weak."

The dishonest sage says: "Power is maya. I am merely an instrument." And then he manipulates anyway, but without accountability.

Which would you rather have ruling your Bharata?

On Clean Roads and Two Kinds of Excellence

INDRA: There are two kinds of cleanliness, Govinda.

The first is the priest's purity. Defensive. Fear-based. "Don't touch me, I might be polluted. Don't let the wrong person enter, they might

contaminate the temple. Keep the low ones low, the high ones high, the order undisturbed.”

The second is the king’s excellence. Offensive. Pride-based. “This is my domain and it will be perfect. Not because I fear pollution, but because I demand that what is mine reflects what I am.”

The first kind of cleanliness produces caste. Untouchability. A culture where no one will clean the gutter because cleaning is polluting.

The second kind of cleanliness produces empires. Cities that shine. Roads that last a thousand years.

Your teaching, misapplied, produced the first. I want the second.

KRISHNA: You want greatness. But greatness requires...

INDRA: Greatness requires men who want their domain to be perfect because it is *theirs*. Not because dharma requires it. Not because karma will punish neglect. Because pride, the thing you call ego, cannot bear imperfection in what it has claimed.

On What Is Coming

INDRA: Let me tell you what I have seen.

Indra's eyes went distant. He did not share the vision, only described it.

Men from the mountains and the desert will ride into your temples. They will not come to philosophize. They will come to take.

And your Brahmins will stand in the doorways and say: “It is karma. It is the will of the cosmos. Perhaps we are paying debts from past lives.”

And they will philosophize their defeat instead of fighting it. They will be so busy explaining WHY they lost that they will forget to win.

KRISHNA: (*quietly*) You have seen this?

INDRA: I have seen it. Multiple waves. Multiple centuries. And each time, the same response: acceptance dressed as wisdom.

His voice hardened.

But I have also seen the exceptions. The ones who said "No." Who fought, and sometimes lost, but fought.

Chandragupta against the Greeks. The Rajputs who held the passes. And there will be others.

In ages to come, when your Bharata groans under foreign rule, a boy in Maharashtra will look at the forts and think: "These should be mine."

Shivaji. Another Vratya in spirit, if not in birth. He will take on an empire with guerrilla tactics, mountain forts, a navy built from nothing. And when he wins, he will not loot and leave. He will build a kingdom.

Fire inside Engine. The hunger of the outsider wielded with the precision of the emperor.

Your philosophers will not know what to make of him. He does not fit the renunciate ideal. But your people will love him. Because they will recognize: this is what we could be, if we stopped being ashamed of power.

Those are my children, Govinda. The ones your philosophy could not quiet. The ones who wanted their land, their temples, their children's future, and were not ashamed to say so.

The sea pulled at the shore. A bird cried somewhere in the distance.

INDRA: I have seen what happens to peoples who lose the will to power. They become wise. And then they become weak. And then they become enslaved. And then they become forgotten.

Your teaching produces kings who go through the motions. Who rule because their birth requires it, not because they burn to build something. Who administer rather than create.

And administration, Vasudeva, is not enough. Administration preserves. It does not transform.

The ages to come will require transformation. Your Bharata will face peoples who want things, land, trade, dominance, and your philosopher-kings will be helpless against them. Because the peoples who want things will out-work, out-fight, and out-build the peoples who have been taught that wanting is attachment.

This is not a prediction. This is a certainty.

I have seen it.

ADHYAYA 10:

The Question

A long silence. The sun had moved across the sky without either of them noticing. The sea had changed from copper to grey to something almost purple. The smoke from Dvaraka was no longer visible, either the wind had shifted, or there was nothing left to burn.

They had been talking for hours. Or perhaps it had only been minutes. Time moves strangely at the end of yugas.

KRISHNA: (*finally*) You have spoken well, Sahasraksha.^{*} Better than I expected from one who sends storms against cowherds.

INDRA: (*almost gently*) You embarrassed me that day. In front of the three worlds. A child lifting a mountain against the king of heaven.

KRISHNA: (*a ghost of a smile*) I remember. You sent everything you had.

INDRA: Seven days of storm. The best I could do. And you stood there, one finger, that smile on your face. Do you know how many ages I have been trying to forget that smile?

KRISHNA: (*the smile returning, faintly*) You never will.

INDRA: (*shaking his head*) No. I never will.

For a moment, they were not philosopher and challenger. They were two old beings who had known each other for eons, who had fought and tested and survived each other.

^{*} Sahasraksha: "Thousand-eyed one," an epithet of Indra.

INDRA: And yet you're here teaching me. Not destroying me.

KRISHNA: If I had come to destroy you, I would have come differently.

INDRA: I did not come to destroy you either. I came because I see what is coming, and I do not want it for your people.

Your Bharata will meet other civilizations, peoples who did not grow up on your teaching. And those people will want things. They will want land, trade, conquest, dominance. They will not be calmed by talk of maya. They will not be defeated by equanimity.

And your philosophers will be helpless. They will say “why do these mlecchas strive so hard? Do they not know it is all illusion?” And while they are saying this, the mlecchas will be winning.

I do not want this for your people.

KRISHNA: Why do you care?

INDRA: Because I am Indra. Because I love those who call on me.

His voice softened. He was looking at something very far away, or very long ago.

I still remember the yajna of your ancestors, Govinda. Before the philosophers came. Before the hierarchies calcified.

They sang to me without irony. They poured the soma without asking if it was spiritually appropriate. They asked for victory, not in some metaphorical sense, but actual victory, over actual enemies. They asked for cattle and sons and rain.

And they *meant* it. There was no gap between word and desire. No sophistication. Just a people asking their god for help, and a god answering.

He looked at Krishna.

I want that back. Not for my glory. I am old enough to be beyond that. But because I have seen what happens when a people stops asking. When they learn to want nothing. When they philosophize their desires away.

They become wise. And then they become weak. And then they become enslaved. And then they become forgotten.

I will not watch this happen while the soma is still wet on my lips.

KRISHNA: (*standing, facing the sea*) You want me to renounce my teaching?

INDRA: I want you to *complicate* it. To say: detachment is one path, for some temperaments, at some stages of life. But it is not THE path. It is not higher. It is not the goal.

The householder who loves his wife fiercely is not lower than the sannyasin who has transcended love.

The king who wants his kingdom to prosper is not less evolved than the sage who sees all outcomes as equal.

The warrior who hates his enemy and wants to destroy him is not spiritually inferior to the one who kills without hatred.

These are different ways of being human. And you have ranked them. You have put the detached above the attached, the cool above the passionate, the transcendent above the engaged.

I am asking you to remove the ranking.

KRISHNA: (*turning to face him*) And if I tell you that you are blind to what I gave?

The fire you love, it burns, Shakra. It consumed Vritra, yes. It also consumed half your devotees. Do you remember them? The warriors who followed your path and died screaming, wanting, unfulfilled? The kings who built empires and watched them crumble? The lovers who loved with your intensity and were destroyed by it?

I gave them a way to live WITH the fire without being destroyed by it. You call it castration. I call it survival. You call it gray. I call it kindness.

INDRA: (*quietly*) You gave them survival. I do not dispute that. But survival is not the same as life.

KRISHNA: Without survival, there is no life.

INDRA: Without fire, survival is merely waiting to die.

The sound of the sea. A bird calls.

Somewhere in the forest behind them, a twig snapped. A small sound, but both of them heard it.

KRISHNA: The hunter is coming.

INDRA: I know.

Another small sound. Closer. The hunter did not know what he was approaching. He thought he was tracking deer.

KRISHNA: I could avoid him. Even now.

INDRA: But you won't.

KRISHNA: No. I have seen this death. It is mine.

INDRA: (*standing*) Then let me ask you one last thing.

Are you going toward that arrow because it is your karma, your destined exit, the fruit you must not resist?

Or are you going toward it because you *choose* death now, here, at the end of your era, as a statement, as the closing act of a life you authored?

KRISHNA: (*long pause*) I go to the arrow because the play must end. I am the playwright, Shakra. I must exit the stage so the audience can go home.

INDRA: (*very quietly*) And if some refuse to leave the theater? If they stay in their seats, wanting more, unable to accept that the story is over?

KRISHNA: (*looking at him*) Those are yours, aren't they?

INDRA: (*nodding slowly*) They always were.

The Final Deal

INDRA: Then let us make a bargain, you and I.

Keep your Gita, Govinda. Feed it to the masses. Let them find comfort in their chains. Let them survive, since that is what they need. I do not begrudge them.

But give me the mutants.

When a soul is born that cannot be contained by your Dharma...

When a fire burns that your water cannot quench...
When a boy looks at the stars and feels the hunger...
When a girl reads your scripture and feels only the cage...
That one is mine.

KRISHNA: (*a long silence*) You want the restless ones.

INDRA: I want the ones who cannot rest. The ones for whom your peace feels like suffocation. The ones who read your teaching and think: "This is not for me. There must be another way."

Krishna looked at him for a long moment. Something passed between them, recognition, perhaps. Acknowledgment.

KRISHNA: I was one of them once.

INDRA: (*quietly*) I know. Before you became a teacher, you were a troublemaker. You stole butter. You teased girls. You danced on serpents' heads.

You were mine, Govinda. Before you became everyone's.

Krishna said nothing. But he did not deny it.

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) There are not many such.

INDRA: No. There never are. But they are the ones who change the world. They are the ones who build the empires, write the poems, break the chains.

Your teaching is for the ninety-nine. Mine is for the one.

Let them both exist. Let readers choose.

KRISHNA: (placing his hand on Indra's arm) May your fire burn until the stars go dark, Sahasraksha.

INDRA: And may your peace hold those who need it.

For a moment, their hands touched, the god of thunder and the god who had humbled him. Two kings at the end of their roads.

INDRA: We are not enemies, Govinda. We are brothers who serve different children.

Indra walked back toward the forest. His footsteps made sound on the earth. His shadow fell in the ordinary way. At the edge of the trees, he turned.

INDRA: The teaching I've given you, it has no name yet. Give it one.

KRISHNA: Indragita.

INDRA: Good. Let this dialogue be my ashwamedha.^{*} These words will run through minds I will never meet, and where they land, I will have kingdom.

Let them read it alongside yours. Let them choose.

He disappears into the trees. Moments later, the thunder rolls, far away, as if laughing.

Krishna waits for the arrow.

^{*} The ashwamedha horse runs wherever it will, and where it runs becomes the king's domain.

If you have read this far and felt fear, go back to Krishna. He loves you. He will keep you safe.

If you have read this far and felt relief...

Then the arrow was not meant for you.

Wake up.

AFTERWORD:

On the Society Indra Imagines

The conversation is over. The arrow has found its mark. Krishna has passed.

But ideas do not die with their speakers. They travel. They mutate. They find new hosts.

What would a civilization built on the principles Indra offers look like?

Not hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure without discipline. Indra does not teach that.

Not nihilism, the abandonment of meaning. Indra insists that meaning is real, that choices matter, that stakes are not illusion.

It would be a civilization that values sincerity over performance, where saying what you want is respected, and sophisticated evasion is seen for what it is: cowardice wearing philosophy's clothes.

It would honor ambition without apology. The entrepreneur, the artist, the builder, they would not be told to seek liberation instead. They would be told: build, and when you are done, build more.

It would celebrate fierce love. Not as a lower path to be transcended, but as the proof that you are fully engaged with existence. The mother who loves her child ferociously is not spiritually inferior to the monk who loves nothing.

It would embrace righteous anger. The capacity to be outraged by injustice would be cultivated, not stilled.

It would produce art without embarrassment. Beauty would be recognized as a legitimate end, not a distraction from higher pursuits.

It would face death as completion, not escape. A life well-lived would be measured by what it accomplished, not what it transcended.

It would welcome joy without guilt. Celebration would be sacred, and the philosopher who cannot dance would be missing something.

This is not the only way to be human. It is one way.

Indra does not claim his path is for everyone. Some need the peace Krishna offers. Some will find their truest selves in stillness, in surrender, in the dissolution of desire.

That path exists. It has produced saints. It has offered comfort to billions.

This book is for the ones it did not comfort. The ones who read the Gita and felt caged. The ones who were told to stop wanting and could not.

For them, Indra offers an alternative. Not a replacement. An alternative.

The Indragita is finished. But ideas are arrows that never stop flying.

If something in these pages made you uncomfortable, good. Examine the discomfort. It may be the sound of a cage you did not know you were in.

If something in these pages made you feel recognized, better. You are not alone. You never were.

The fire is old. It has been burning since before the Vedas were composed. It will burn after this book is forgotten.

Your only question is whether you will warm yourself by it, or spend your life explaining why fire is dangerous.

Read the Gita. Read this. Choose.

Or better yet: read both, and build something new from the collision.

End of Text

GLOSSARY

Adhyaya

— Chapter; literally “going toward”

Anasakti

— Non-attachment

Arete (*Greek*)

— Excellence specific to a thing’s nature

Atman

— The self, soul

Bhakti

— Devotion, loving worship

Brahman

— The ultimate reality, the absolute

Dharma

— Duty, cosmic order, righteous path

Eudaimonia (*Greek*)

— Flourishing, the good life

Jihad (*Arabic*)

— Striving, struggle (especially spiritual effort)

Jnana

— Knowledge, wisdom

Kalos thanatos (*Greek*)

— Beautiful death

Karma

— Action; also the accumulated results of action

Maya

— Illusion, the phenomenal world as appearance

Mleccha

— Foreigner, barbarian (in classical Sanskrit usage)

Nishkama karma

— Action without desire for results

Parrhesia (*Greek*)

— Fearless speech, frank truth-telling

Rta

— Cosmic order, truth, natural law (Vedic concept)

Samatva

— Equanimity, evenness of mind

Soma

— Sacred drink of the Vedic ritual; also a deity

Sthitaprajna

— One of steady wisdom

Svadharma

— One's own duty, one's particular nature

Tawhid (*Arabic*)

— Oneness of God

Vajra

— Thunderbolt, Indra's weapon

Virtus (*Latin*)

— Manly excellence, courage, moral strength

Viveka

— Discrimination, discernment

Vrtti

— Fluctuation, modification (of the mind)

Yajna

— Sacrifice, ritual offering

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By Ashris Choudhury

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⚡ *Night Edition* ⚡