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INDRA GITA

WHAT INDRA TAUGHT KRISHNA



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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.

I approach these texts not as a devotee but as an analyst. My background spans Eastern and Western philosophy, but my method is closer to data science than theology: pattern recognition, comparative analysis, testing ideas against observable outcomes. 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.

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. 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?

That moment 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 counters:

- **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 Prabhosa, 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.

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. 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: (*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.

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?

On the Greeks

INDRA: West of the Sindhu, past the mountains where even your Pandavas did not walk, there is a people who live along an inland sea. They are quarrelsome. They fight amongst themselves constantly. Their cities war against their own kin.

And yet, listen to me, 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*?

KRISHNA: And his answer?

INDRA: Eudaimonia. Flourishing. He said: a life is good when it fulfills its function excellently. An eye is good when it sees well. A knife is good when it cuts well. 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. To play it beautifully. 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.

Was that man “attached”? Yes. Was he “bound by desire”? Yes. Was he *alive*? More alive than ten thousand of your detached karma-yogis put together.

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 not whether a people has darkness. 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.” The confusion you create is not less cruel than the chains of the Greeks. It is more cruel, because it teaches the chained man that his chains are justice.

On the Persians

INDRA: Further west still, and older than the Greeks, there rose a people of fire-keepers. They worship one Lord, Ahura Mazda, they call him. The Wise Lord. 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? Two sides of the same coin? 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. These are not puzzles to be dissolved through cleverness. 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.

Your teaching gives men permission to perform that confusion. To say “who is the slayer, who is the slain” and feel wise while avoiding the weight of what they’ve done.

On the Tang and the Chola

INDRA: But let me speak of peoples closer to your own soil, so you cannot dismiss them as mlecchas.

Far to the east, beyond the mountains, there will rise a dynasty called Tang. Their emperor will open the roads to every corner of the world. Persians, Indians, Arabs, Turks. All walking the same streets of Chang’an, the greatest city the world has ever seen.

And their poets! They will write verses that shake heaven. Li Bai, drunk on wine, pulling the moon from the river. Du Fu, weeping for

the fallen soldiers, his grief a blade that cuts through centuries. These men did not seek equanimity. They sought *intensity*. They wanted to feel everything, and they poured that feeling into words that will outlast empires.

KRISHNA: Poets are not philosophers.

INDRA: No. They are better. They do not explain life. They *live* it, so fiercely that others can taste it through their words.

And look at your own south, Govinda. The Cholas will build an empire of the sea. Their ships will sail to Sumatra, to Cambodia, to the edges of the world. They will carve temples so vast that the stone itself seems to breathe. Brihadeshwara. Gangaikondacholapuram.

Were the Chola kings “detached”? Did Rajendra sit in meditation while his rivals gathered strength? No. He wanted glory. He wanted his name carved in stone. He wanted the Ganga waters brought south as a trophy of conquest. And because he wanted, he built things that will stand when your philosophy is forgotten.

On Unapologetic Ambition

INDRA: Let me tell you about a time that will come, many ages hence, in the lands of the Greeks’ descendants.

There will be a rebirth. They will call it the Renaissance. Men and women will look back at the ancients and say: we can be great again. Not by transcending desire, but by *embracing* it.

A sculptor named Michelangelo will carve a man from marble. David. He will work for years, obsessed, sleeping beside the stone, waking to chip away imperfection. When asked why he labored so,

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.

KRISHNA: And what of humility? What of the dangers of pride?

INDRA: There will be a man called Benvenuto Cellini. Goldsmith, sculptor, brawler, braggart. He will write his life story, and in it he will say without shame: I am the greatest artist who ever lived. My work is perfect. I am favored by God.

Your philosophers would call this ego. Attachment. Bondage.

But Cellini's Perseus still stands in Florence. His saltcellar is in Vienna. His work outlived his boasting because the boasting was *true*. He had earned the right to it through excellence.

KRISHNA: Not everyone can be Cellini.

INDRA: No. But everyone can *try*. And that is the difference.

There will be a young philosopher in that same age, Pico della Mirandola, who will say something extraordinary. He will say that God gave every other creature a fixed nature: a dog must be a dog, a lion must be a lion. But to man alone, God gave *no fixed nature*.

Man can sink to the level of a vegetable. Passive. Consuming. Asleep.

Or man can rise to the level of the divine. Creating. Striving. *Choosing*.

The choice is what makes us human. And your teaching, Govinda, tells men that the highest choice is to stop choosing. To dissolve the self that chooses. To become as indifferent as stone.

On Fame and Glory

INDRA: The 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 did not call it attachment. 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.

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.

I have seen men, not gods, men, who in a single moment shattered everything they were and became something else entirely.

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*) An exceptional case? No. Listen to me, Shakra. Epictetus chose to philosophize. But who gave him that capacity? Not every slave can think his way to freedom. The gift was already in him. You see a man "breaking" his karma—I see a man fulfilling a deeper karma you cannot trace. The threads are longer than one lifetime. The weave is finer than your eyes can see.

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.

The Romans—another people you have not met—had a word: *virtus*. It comes from *vir*—man. It means: the quality of being a man. Not assigned qualities. Achieved qualities. Courage, excellence, dignitas.

A Roman was not born with *virtus*. He *earned* it. And he could lose it. It was not a karmic inheritance. It was a daily practice.

They tell of Cincinnatus—a farmer who was called from his fields to be dictator when Rome faced destruction. He took absolute power, defeated the enemy, and then, listen carefully, he gave the power back. He returned to his farm. Not because “power is maya” or “rule is attachment.” Because he had done what needed to be done, and there was nothing more to prove.

That is completion, Govinda. Not transcendence of desire, but fulfillment of it.

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. It was meant to free...

INDRA: Then why does it paralyze? When a boy dreams of building an empire, your teaching whispers: “Who are you to want this? Your past lives did not earn it. Accept your station. The desire itself is bondage.”

And the boy’s fire goes out before it ever caught.

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: (*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: 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.

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: 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.

The Greeks again—Aristotle saw this clearly. He said: we must study ethics not by looking at ideals, but by looking at what actually happens when people try to live by ideals.

What *actually happens* when a culture tries to live by your Gita?

Men become sophisticated hypocrites. They develop a public language of spirituality and a private language of appetite. The gap between word and deed becomes so normal that no one notices it. This is simply how things are.

And the worst part, Govinda: they lose the ability to even recognize sincerity when they see it. A man who says plainly “I want this, I will fight for it” is seen as crude. Unspiritual. Attached.

Meanwhile, the “spiritual” man plots and manipulates while speaking of non-attachment.

Which one is truly corrupt?

KRISHNA: (*standing now*) You are describing fallen men. Not the teaching.

INDRA: I am describing the men the teaching produces.

On Fearless Speech

Let me ask you this. In the lands of the Greeks, when a man wants something, he says so. If a philosopher thinks another philosopher is wrong, he stands up in the agora and says “You are wrong, and here is why.” They have a word for this: *parrhesia*. Fearless speech. The obligation to speak truth plainly, even to power.

In the lands your teaching shapes, 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 Individuality

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.

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.

The Greeks celebrated *arete*—the excellence specific to a thing. The arete of a horse is to run. The arete of a poet is to sing. A man's greatness lies in discovering *his* particular excellence and perfecting it.

Your teaching flattens this. In the name of cosmic unity, you destroy the individual—the only locus where anything actually happens, where choices are made, where beauty is created.

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: 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.

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.

The village festivals that your philosophers dismiss as “tamasic”—the blood offerings, the trance dances, the ecstatic drumming—this is closer to the Vedic spirit than any temple where joy is rationed and excellence is suspect.

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?

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.

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.

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: 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 now*) Then why did you teach others to turn away so easily?

On Fierce Attachment

There is another way to love. The Greeks wrote of it: eros and philia and storge. The Persians sang of it: the fire that burns but does not consume. The Arabs will write poetry about it that will make men weep a thousand years from now.

And 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. Your Greeks loved glory and drowned the world in blood for it.

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.*

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: 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: 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.

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, found what the philosophers missed while looking at the stars. 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.

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

Now tell me: will that man check his measurements twice? Will he argue with the architect when the design is flawed? Will he argue with the king who wants it cheaper? Will he stay late into the night correcting errors? Will he fight for the temple's perfection?

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

INDRA: He will do his duty. The minimum. What is required. Because anything more would be *attachment to outcome*. Anything more would be desire for fruit.

But 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.

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

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 Greeks built the Parthenon because they wanted glory. Not duty. Glory. The thing you dismiss as ego-attachment.

And the Parthenon still stands.

On What You Actually Meant

KRISHNA: You misread me, Shakra. You misread the teaching.

INDRA: Then clarify.

KRISHNA: The teaching was never about numbness. It was about *flow*. The archer who thinks about the prize while aiming misses the target. The coder who worries about the deadline while debugging makes more errors. The athlete who watches the scoreboard instead of the ball loses the game.

I taught focus so intense that the self disappears into the action. Not indifference to outcome, but absorption so complete that the outcome becomes inevitable.

INDRA: (*slowly*) Then your teaching, properly understood, is about the state where the archer becomes the arrow. The state where obsession with the score ruins your aim, so you let go of the score and *become* the game.

KRISHNA: Yes.

INDRA: But that is not what your followers heard. They heard “don’t desire” and became numb. They stopped caring about the target altogether. They confused the means with the end.

KRISHNA: That is their failure, not mine.

INDRA: Is it? When an Olympian wakes at four in the morning to train, does she want the gold medal or not? When a coder enters the hackathon, when a gamer faces the final boss, when an archer aims —the wanting is what puts them in the arena. The flow-state comes during the action, but the *wanting* brings them to the starting line.

You were teaching flow. But you made wanting itself suspect. And a man who is ashamed of his wanting never reaches the arena where flow is possible.

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.

When the Arabs speak of jihad as striving, they understand this. The struggle against your own mediocrity is fueled by a holy dissatisfaction, an anger at the gap between what you are and what you could be.

The Jews have a concept, *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.³ 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

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.

³ Hebrew: literally "repair of the world." A concept in Judaism about humanity's shared responsibility to heal and transform the world.

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?

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. The student who reads until her eyes burn because she *must* understand.

Your philosophy whispers to them: “Why this obsession? This is attachment. This is ego. Find peace.”

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

Your teaching, misapplied, tells them: you are attached. You are suffering unnecessarily. Be serene. Find equanimity.

And the temple remains unfinished. The verse unwritten. The problem unsolved.

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.

The Greeks had a different relationship with death. They knew it was real. They knew it ended something. And so they asked: *how should a life be shaped so that its ending has meaning?*

They called this *kalos thanatos*—the beautiful death.¹ Not a death that transcends the body, but a death that completes a life. Socrates did not say “death is illusion” as the hemlock rose through his body. He kept teaching. He composed his death as a final lesson: “This is how a philosopher meets the void. Not with resignation, but with curiosity.”

The Spartans at Thermopylae. Deaths that were, in some sense, *composed*.

And before you say this is foreign to Bharata, remember Bhishma.

Bhishma on his bed of arrows, choosing the moment of his death. *Icchamrityu*, they called it. Death by will. He could have died when the first arrow struck. Instead, he waited. He taught from his deathbed. He chose the auspicious moment, the sun’s northern course, and *then* he released his life.

¹ Greek: *kalos* (beautiful) + *thanatos* (death). The concept of dying nobly, with one’s life’s work complete.

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*.

This is your own tradition, Govinda. The beautiful death is not Greek. It is *ours*. We 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?

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.

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.

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."

This is not inferior. This is the price of having lived.

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. The Greeks knew this: they built not just to shelter but to awe. The Persians knew this: their gardens were not just plants but poetry made physical.

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 where a man dances with a demon mask, where the drums shake the earth, where blood is offered and accepted.

Your priests call this “tamasic.” Low culture. Pollution.

But when the Daiva⁴ dancer enters the trance, when the drumbeats match the heartbeat of the village, when the god descends into a human body and speaks, *that* is closer to the Rigvedic spirit than any temple where joy is rationed and spontaneity is suspect.

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.

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

KRISHNA: You speak as if I do not appreciate beauty. I played the flute. The gopis danced. Vrindavan was...

INDRA: Vrindavan was your youth. And then you grew up, went to Mathura, gave discourses on transcendence, and told them that growing up meant leaving.

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. And you gave them philosophy instead.

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.

That would be a teaching worth dying for.

ADHYAYA 8:

On Joy and the Soma of Living

INDRA: I have been harsh with you, Govinda. Let me now speak of something gentler.

Joy.

When I drink the soma,⁵ 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

⁵ 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.

what they were doing anyway. And they have made a sin of what the people naturally enjoy.

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.

· 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.

When Rumi's Sufis spin, they are not performing a duty. They are celebrating—wildly, absurdly, with an abandon that would horrify your 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. That the man who finds God in the dance is not a beginner on the path—he may have found the *original* path. The one the priests lost while cataloguing it.

The Sufi who spins has found the same door. He just entered through a different side. And his entering shakes the walls. Which maybe they need.

KRISHNA: (*slowly*) You want me to bless the revelers.

INDRA: I want you to stop cursing them with faint praise. To stop saying “yes, festivals are good *for their level*.” To stop creating hierarchies that make the joyful feel like spiritual children.

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

grandson's wedding with such abandon that for a moment everyone forgets death exists.

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.

The Greeks again had clarity here. They distinguished between the tyrant and the king. The tyrant rules through fear and deception. The king rules through excellence: arete so visible that others willingly follow.

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: (*sharply*) Your peoples who “want things”... what do they want, Shakra? The Greeks wanted glory and built it on the backs of slaves. The Romans wanted order and crucified anyone who challenged it. The Arabs will want territory and put the sword to the unbeliever. Is this what you want my Bharata to become? Conquerors with clean consciences?

INDRA: (*meeting his gaze*) I want them to be capable of conquest, and then to choose wisely how to use that capacity. The man who CAN conquer but chooses mercy is noble. The man who CANNOT conquer and calls his weakness “philosophy” is a slave pretending to be a saint. Your philosophy, Govinda, is excellent for hiding. “It’s all karma. They’re working out past debts. Who am I to interfere with the cosmic order?”

A philosophy that honors power, that says “You are strong, and with strength comes the obligation to protect the weak,” can be challenged. It sets up a standard the powerful can fail to meet.

A philosophy that dissolves power, that says strength and weakness are maya, all is one, cannot be challenged. It allows anything.

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 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.

Men from the mountains and the desert will ride into your temples. They will want things your philosophers cannot understand. Land. Tribute. Submission.

And your Brahmins will say: “It is karma. It is the will of the cosmos. We must accept.”

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

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 has moved. The sea has changed color.

KRISHNA: You have spoken well, Sahasraksha.⁴ 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: And yet you're here teaching me. Not destroying me.

INDRA: If I had come to destroy you, I would have come differently. I am here because I see what is coming. 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. Because I still remember the yajna of your ancestors, when they sang to me without irony, when they asked for victory and cattle and sons and *meant* it.

I want that spirit back. Not for my glory. I am old enough to be beyond that. But because I have seen what happens to peoples who lose it.

⁴ Sahasraksha: “Thousand-eyed one,” an epithet of Indra.

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.

KRISHNA: The hunter is coming.

INDRA: I know.

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

Indra walks back toward the forest. At the edge, he turns.

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

What would a civilization built on these principles 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 as weakness.

Honors ambition without apology. Where the man who builds an empire is not told he should have sought liberation instead.

Celebrates fierce love. Where attachment is not a spiritual disease to be cured, but the proof of full engagement with existence.

Embraces righteous anger. Where the capacity to be outraged by injustice is cultivated, not stilled.

Produces art without embarrassment. Where beauty is recognized as a legitimate end, not a distraction from higher pursuits.

Faces death as completion, not escape. Where a life well-lived is measured by what it accomplished, not what it transcended.

Welcomes joy without guilt. Where celebration is sacred, and the philosopher who cannot dance is missing something.

This is not the only way to be human. It is one way. Indra does not claim his path is for everyone. Only that it should be available, without the hierarchy that places it below detachment.

Read the Gita. Read this. Choose.

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

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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