

IX

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Has brought me wisdom's sacrifice:
I speak with certainty. (xviii. 70)

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BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
June, 1929

ARTHUR W. RYDER

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

CANTO 1

NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION: ARJUNA HESITATES
TO KILL HIS KINSMEN IN BATTLE VERSES
1-47

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KRISHNA'S REPLY: BE BRAVE (NO REASONS
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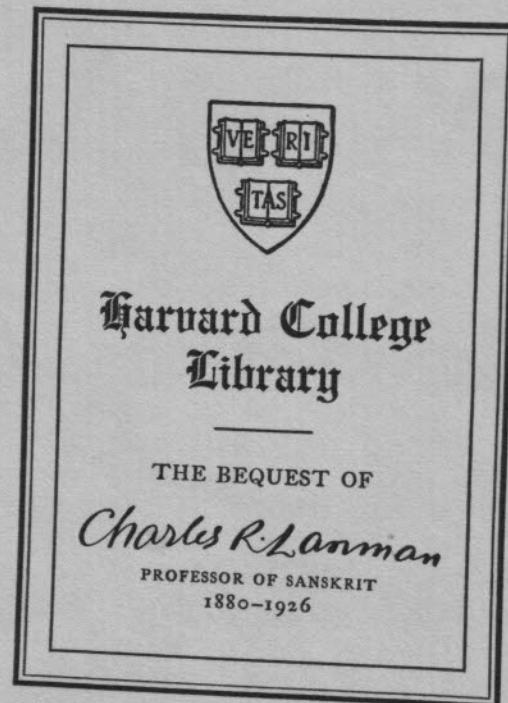
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THE
BHAGAVAD-GITA
RIDER

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Charles R. Lanman

With sincerest regards from

Arthur W. Ryder

Berkeley - California

September, 1929

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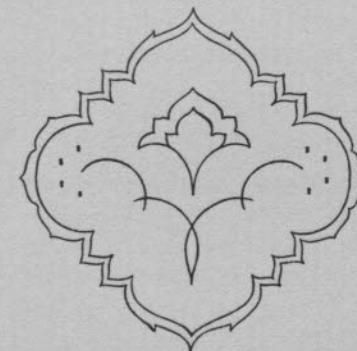


THE BHAGAVAD-GITA



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THE BHAGAVAD-GITA



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CHARLES LOCKWELL LANMAN
MARCH 15, 1941

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To my dear sister

WINIFRED

*This version of a most noble poem is
Appropriately dedicated*





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TRANSLATOR'S LIBRARY INTRODUCTION

I

The world forever imitates
The action of its best;
Whatever law of life he sets,
Is followed by the rest. (iii. 21)

Among the many sacred books of India, the Bhagavad-gita—the Song of the Blessed One—is the most influential, and probably the greatest. Among that people whose long history shows it the most deeply and the most creatively religious of peoples, the Song has won preëminence as a sacred text. Uncounted millions have drawn from it comfort and joy. In it they have found an end to perplexity, a clear, if difficult, road to salvation. Nor is it a mere document of completed history; its influence does not wane. Even in the West, in the face of prejudice and powerful organization, the Song gains an increasing respect, admiration, and devotion. It wins its way with no violence, through sheer profundity and nobility.

Thus the Bhagavad-gita deserves attentive study: first, as a scripture with a long history of power;

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secondly, as a force that shapes today the life of a great people; most of all, as a living light to all who,
 from pride released,
 Contemning neither creed nor priest,
 will receive illumination from its wisdom and beauty.

II

Although they kill me, Krishna, I
 Have no desire to slay;
 The earth would not reward me, nor
 The universe repay. (i. 35)

The date and authorship of the Song cannot be determined; it is probably two thousand years old, or more. It comes to us as an episode in the sixth book of the vast epic called the Maha-bharata; but that great work is itself the growth of centuries, and cannot be exactly dated in any part.

The great epic relates the events of a mighty struggle between two families of princely cousins, reared and educated together. In manhood they quarrel over the royal inheritance, and their difference is sternly solved by war. Both sides have an arguable case, while heroism and honor are not lacking to either.

At the opening of the sixth book, the two armies are opposed on Kuru field. As the first missiles fly, Prince Arjuna, gazing at the enemy line, perceives his kinsmen and others to whom honor is due; sinks on his

Translator's Introduction

chariot floor; and refuses to fight. His argument against domestic strife is answered by Krishna, his charioteer, who is gradually revealed as an incarnation of Almighty God. The setting of the Song in the great epic is most powerful; for if it can be shown why a warrior must, on fit occasion, kill his own kinsmen, all lesser and easier cases of duty are obviously included.

Thus the Bhagavad-gita is, first and foremost, a discussion of duty; not a mere eloquent exhortation (such are common enough) but a true answer, satisfying the reflective mind, to the insistent question *why* formal duties must be performed, even when they appear stupid or cruel.

This answer is given in the second canto. But Prince Arjuna is not content. In meeting his natural doubts, Krishna is led to discuss the nature of the physical universe, and the relation of man's soul thereto; so that what began as the consideration of an ethical problem, becomes a complete scripture.

III

All duties that the dullards do
 In selfish, greedy mood,
 The wise should also do, detached,
 For universal good. (iii. 25)

Krishna's secret is non-attachment, or disciplined activity. The ascetic solution is no solution, for man

is driven to work, whether he will or no. If, however, he permits himself to believe that his soul is concerned with work, he becomes a materialist. Work well done not only does not bring salvation, it has no tendency to bring salvation; yet salvation is impossible without it. Its value is great, but negative. It is a condition necessary, but not sufficient. It is important because it is unimportant. What wise man permits the unimportant to block salvation?

In simple cases the truth of this doctrine is obvious. Suppose I plan a long walk, and find a pebble in my shoe. Its removal is a necessary condition of success in my plan, yet of itself does not further that plan; hinders it indeed, if I imagine this action to be of itself meritorious, and become attached thereto. The same reasoning applies to the acquisition of the grammar of a language by one whose object is the enjoyment of poetry written in that language.

This truth has a corollary. Work is well done only by those who perceive its unimportance.

The guided mind can leave behind
On earth, both good and ill;
So search out discipline, whereby
Is added meaner skill. (ii. 50)

An apt illustration may be found in games of physical skill, in which success begins at the point where strain ceases.

The principle of non-attachment is extended by

Krishna to cover all labor. Here is the solution of the often-fumbled problem of the relation between faith and works. The more this principle is pondered, the more fruitful it appears, the more true.

IV

He sees himself in every life,
Sees every life that lives
Within himself; and so to all
A like emotion gives.

(vi. 29)

As Krishna's discourse develops, aiming to explain the constitution of the physical universe and the relation of man's soul thereto, it draws ideas from three schools of thought, known in their codified form as the Vedanta philosophy, the Sankhya, and the Yoga.

The Vedanta is monistic. It teaches that there is but one reality, and this spiritual, the "self"; consequently, that all material manifestations are illusory. For the Hindus, early dissatisfied with their inherited polytheism, discovered the Absolute. Then, since the reality of the perceiving mind cannot be denied, there is no escape from the conclusion that the self is the Absolute. The three stages of thought may be labelled with the tags "They are," "It is," "I am It." Such infinite expansion of the self until fear and desire vanish, offers a vision of extraordinary emotional power; it is what we should all believe if we could. And even those not mystically gifted have occasional

glimpses, in aesthetic joy and other strong, pure experiences, of what the levelling of all barriers might mean.

The great achievement of the Vedanta is not logical, but emotional: a vision of what salvation, if attained, would be. The achievement is very great; for it was necessary to reconcile security with activity, and also the elevation of the plane of life with a conceivable prolongation of the present life. The achievement is best appreciated by considering how other religions have evaded the question, or have boggled it.

V

Now goodness, passion, darkness roam
As elements in matter's home;
In bodies, hero, their control
Forever fetters changeless soul. (xiv. 5)

The Sankhya system is pluralistic. It postulates the reality and conservation of matter; also, the existence of an indefinite number of individual souls. Its greatness is logical and scientific, not emotional. To the splendid lift and sweep of the Vedanta, it opposes "the still, small voice, whispering 'bosh!'"

Matter consists of three elements, bearing the names goodness, passion, and darkness. It is not here necessary to enlarge upon these three elements, since their nature and operation are clearly presented in cantos fourteen, seventeen, and eighteen of the Song.

Matter is eternal and indestructible; but before creation, the three elements are in equilibrium. A disturbance of this equilibrium produces individuals, or in common phrase, causes the creation of the world. Each individual behaves in accordance with his physical constitution, being good, passionate, or dark in proportion to the mixture in him of the three elements.

To man, the most important part of the physical universe is his own inner organs. These are three: the intellect, the I-maker, and the brain. The intellect is the organ of determination; the I-maker is the organ which introduces into matter the concepts "I," "me," "mine"; the brain is the central office of the five senses and the five functions. All thought, all psychic affections take place in matter.

Yet the system is not materialistic; the operation of the soul, though reduced to a single function, is essential. The soul "illuminates" matter, brings it into consciousness. All human pain results from the soul's false identification of itself with what is in truth material. Salvation is release from this false identification; the soul then becomes like a light illuminating nothing, a mirror reflecting nothing, a clear crystal untinged by the red flower of passion.

It is not here possible to do justice to the wisdom and penetration of the Sankhya system. To the present writer it appears a nearer approximation to the

truth concerning the soul's relation to the physical universe than does any Occidental philosophy.

VI

Who does my work with utter love,
From all attachments free
And free from hate of any life,
Brave soldier, comes to Me. (xi. 55)

The Yoga system has much in common with the Sankhya. But it adds rules for spiritual self-discipline, and it introduces a personal God. The latter feature is, in strict logic, indefensible, since in such a system neither the power nor the mercy of God has any opportunity for action. The God of the Yoga is one more concession to man's insistent craving to conceive the superhuman in terms of personality.

From these three sources—the Vedanta, the Sankhya, and the Yoga—the Song draws conceptions monistic, pluralistic, and monotheistic. That such conceptions cannot be perfectly fused, is, from rationalism's standpoint, obvious; and the lack of complete logical coherence is sometimes made a reproach to the Bhagavad-gita. In a certain sense, the reproach is not unjustified; yet here, too, a foolish consistency would seem the hobgoblin of little minds, if the emotional reconciliation is perfect.

VII

Some find the self within the self
Through self-communion still;

·[xiv].

A second group, through intellect;
And others through the will;
While some, through discipline of works,
The needful task fulfil. (xiii. 24)

A most remarkable feature of the Song is its generosity, its recognition of the irreducible diversity of human nature. Other religions, zealous for a partial truth, harshly excommunicate those incapable of following a certain narrow path; their motto appears to be: He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. And when the cruelty of deep conviction is overcome, they tend to a flabby broad-mindedness, effacing distinctions between superior and lower, hard and easy, right and wrong.

But the Song (most clearly in xii. 8-11) provides various roads to salvation: the way of intuition, the way of concentrated study, the way of disciplined activity, the way of renunciation. All are hard, but for each man one or another is possible, so that none need despair. In its combination of sternness with tolerance, the Song is unique. Strangely noble also is its generous assurance that even a partial acceptance of its doctrine has saving power.

No effort so inspired is lost;
No backward slip is here:
The tiniest fragment of this law
Redeems from monstrous fear. (ii. 40)

Two difficulties in the doctrine present themselves

·[xv].

to Occidentals. The first concerns caste, which is assumed without argument, so that a possible perplexity concerning the content of duty never arises. This difficulty is perhaps superficial, since all organized society has caste, with regulations more or less flexible; and it is probable that few men are seriously bewildered as to what duty is. Without discussion of the practical working of Indian caste, it may be permitted here to praise the theoretic beauty of a rigid caste-system, under which (since duty is prescribed from birth) labor is seen to be of only negative importance, and the soul is freed from the fetters of work.

The second, and more profound, difficulty concerns the belief in the transmigration of souls. It is true that this doctrine satisfies the logical sense; it alone introduces order and justice into the otherwise inexplicable sadness of human fate; and there is a little, a very little, objective evidence of its truth. Yet it is hard to accept with a genuine faith.

VIII

From native nature every life
Its special faith receives;
For man is fashioned from his faith,
And is what he believes. (xvii. 3)

The Bhagavad-gita makes some appeal to the reflective mind, dependent and guided by the spectacle of life. Such a mind at first experience of

the meanness of power, the imperfections of institutions, the sadness of knowledge, inevitably raises the questions: Why do one's duty, in such a world as the present? How is it possible, in such a world, to see any profit or joy in duty done? Partial answers may be found in Homer, Ecclesiastes, Lucretius, the New Testament, and elsewhere; the full answer, satisfying both intellect and spirit, is given in the Song of the Blessed One.

Though such a procedure is somewhat mechanical, it may be well to enumerate certain fundamental thoughts of the Song, foundation-stones upon which is reared its structure of peace and joy:

- 1) The job of living must be accepted, with all its specific limitations, such as sex, race, and social status.
- 2) The job must be done without attachment or desire of reward (as in Jesus' beautiful parable of the sower).
- 3) Salvation is difficult, but open to all. Since there are paths adapted to diverse capacities, none need despair.
- 4) Intelligent thought is necessary, not shuffling of responsibility upon any other, whether man or god. And beyond intelligent thought, there is need of faith,

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NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION: ARJUNA HESITATES
 TO KILL HIS KINSMEN IN BATTLE . . .

VERSES
 1-47

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KRISHNA'S REPLY: BE BRAVE (No Reasons
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3-7
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NECESSITY OF SACRIFICE

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GANTO I

*Narrative introduction: Arjuna hesitates
to kill his kinsmen in battle*

DHRITARASHTRA SAID:

My men and Pandu's hostile host
Who met on Kuru plain—
Their manhood's field—were keen for fight:
But what did each attain?

SANJAYA SAID:

Your kingly son—when he beheld
The hostile army, led
By Pandu foemen—drawing near
His aged teacher, said:

My teacher, see! Before us stands
A mighty, marshalled throng;
A subtle pupil of your own
Deploys that army strong:

Heroic archers, fierce in fight
As Pandu's offspring are;

A king I see, a second king,
A third with lordly car;

A fourth, a fifth; the manly lord
Of Kashi's realm; and then
Comes Kunti's king; his brother; and
Bold Shaivya, bull of men;

(5)

There stands another pair of kings
Whose valor reaches far;
And sons of two most lovely queens—
Each with his lordly car.

But now, O best of Brahman men,
Pay heed while I proclaim
My army's stoutest captains whom
I mention, name by name:

Yourself; and Bhishma; Kripa next
By whom great fights were won;
Your child; Vikarna; Karna, too;
And Somadatta's son;

And many other heroes who
Have staked their lives for me,
With varied arms to cut and thrust,
All skilled in strategy.

Our army, led by Bhishma, seems
Unequal to its task;

•[2]•

The marshalled foemen have the strength
That circumstances ask. (10)

But close your ranks, brave gentlemen!
Whatever fate befall,
To battle's end our chief defend:
Guard Bhishma, one and all!

And valiant Bhishma, grandsire of
The noble Kuru clan,
Bred joyous lust of battle in
His king. The grand old man
Sounded his conch-shell. Round the ranks
His lion war-cry ran.

Then drums that boomed or shrilled or
squeaked
Were beaten. Trumpets blew
And conch-shells. In one moment raised,
The screaming fury flew.

White horses drew a splendid car,
And in it Krishna stood
With Arjuna. They blew their shells
Divine in fighting mood.

For Krishna blew his Demon-spoil;
Arjun, his Heaven-sent;
While fierce wolf-bellied Bhima's breath
To his great conch was lent;

(15)

•[3]•

The Bhagavad-Gita

The Pandus' royal leader drew
From Conquest notes of power;
The princely twins, his brothers, blew
On Sweet and Jewel-flower.

The mighty archer of Kashi;
He of the stately car;
Three other kings of lofty name,
Invincible in war;

King Drupad, and his daughter's sons
Blew each his several shell;
The stout-armed child of Arjuna
Blew valiantly, as well.

A din arose, the hearts of foes
To pierce and terrify;
Arose a din, to echo in
The earth and in the sky.

Then monkey-bannered Arjuna
Beheld the ordered foe;
Though missiles had begun to fly,
He lifted up his bow

(20)

And spoke to Krishna, having need
His purpose to explain.

ARJUNA SAID:

Unshaken warrior, halt the car
Between the armies twain

[4].

The First Canto

While I inspect the men who stand
Against us, battle-keen.
Who are to fight with me, before
The struggle's end is seen?

I would regard the soldiers who
Make up that hostile line,
Who fight to win a triumph in
Their leader's dark design.

SANJAYA SAID:

So Krishna halted once again
The car between the armies twain.

In face of Bhishma, Drona, and
Of many a mighty king
"Behold, brave Arjuna," he said,
"The Kurus' gathering."

(25)

And Arjuna saw standing there
The kin of many mothers,
Saw teachers, grandsons, grandsires, sires,
Children, companions, brothers,

Fathers of wives, and comrades dear
Within the armies twain.
When he beheld so many kin
Upon the battle-plain,
Profoundest pity entered him;
His spirit sank; he said.

[5].

ARJUNA SAID:

When, Krishna, I behold my kin
To battle's fury led,

I feel my mouth go dry; I feel
My fainting members fail;
My hair stand up in horror; and
My trembling body quail.

The bow Gandiva drops from out
My hand; my skin is burning;
I can no longer keep my feet;
My maddened brain is turning;

(30)

And evil omens threaten me;
Krishna, it is not right
To look for any blessing, if
I kill my kin in fight.

I do not wish for victory,
A kingdom, or its joys:
The kingdom, its delights, and life
Would then be foolish toys.

A kingdom, its delights, its joys
I only need for those
Who, venturing their lives and wealth,
Stand yonder as our foes:

Our teachers, grandsires, sires, the sires
And brothers of our wives,

Our uncles, grandsons, sons, the kin
Dear as our very lives.

Although they kill me, Krishna, I
Have no desire to slay;
The earth would not reward me, nor
The universe repay.

(35)

When Dhritarashtra's sons are slain,
Where is our pleasure then?
Mere sin would fasten on us, if
We killed these desperate men.

Ah, no! It is not right
To kill our kin in fight.
Where, having killed our kin,
Would happiness begin?

For though they bear a mind
That greed has stricken blind,
So do not see
Betrayal as a sin,
Nor ruin struggling in
One family,

Shall we not find a mind
To leave such wrong behind
Because we see,
Bold soldier, what a sin
Is ruin struggling in
One family?

Soon family observances
Would lose all power to bless;
The family entire is then
Assailed by lawlessness.

(40)

Through such assault of lawlessness
The women grow impure;
When women falter, mingling of
An alien blood is sure;

And this means hell, not only for
The sinners, but for all;
No longer honored fathers from
Their seats in heaven fall.

Such fatal peccancies, whereby
Pure blood and custom flee,
Subvert the immemorial laws
Of caste and family.

And men subverting family law
(Our old traditions tell)
Will find a certain dwelling-place
Appointed them in hell.

A curse upon such awful deeds!
We planned a monstrous sin
When, greedy for a kingdom's joys,
We thought to kill our kin.

(45)

If I oppose no weapon to
Their weapons, if they slay
My unresisting body, I
Have found the better way.

SANJAYA SAID:

So Arjun in the battle spoke,
Sank on his chariot's floor,
Let fall his arrows and his bow,
With sorrow smitten sore.

The Second Canto

GANTO II

Krishna's reply: Be brave (no reasons given)

SANJAYA SAID:

To him, desponding thus, his heart
With inner pity stirred,
His tear-filled eyes bewildered, then
Krishna pronounced this word.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Whence, Arjun, in your hour of trial
Comes this ignoble shame,
Unfit for heaven, repugnant to
An honorable name?

Yield not to impotence, for you
An unbefitting pose!
Shun paltry feeble-heartedness!
Arise! Distress your foes!

Arjuna's doubts are not resolved

ARJUNA SAID:

Your foes are devils. How shall I
With arrows struggle to

[10]

Fight Bhishma down, and Drona? For
Great honor is their due.

Far better eat a beggar's bread
On earth, not having slain
These honored ones, than strike them down
(Although they lust for gain)
And taste earth's richest banquets, all
Smeared with a bloody stain. (5)

Defeat or conquest? Which would seem
More grievous, is unclear;
For Dhritarashtra's warlike sons,
Before us marshalled here,
Stand forth our kinsmen; slaying whom,
Not even life were dear.

A sinful pity clouds my soul;
I know not wrong nor right:
Reveal my duty certainly
Unto my clearer sight;
Give sure instruction: for I come
A pupil, seeking light.

For I perceive no instrument
To mitigate the woe
That then would desiccate my powers,
Though rivals failed, and though
I were the king of gods above
And this rich earth below.

[11]

SANJAYA SAID:

So spoke heroic Arjuna
To Krishna, then released
His final purpose in the word
"I will not fight," and ceased.

*Krishna continues: Do not grieve over
what is imperishable*

With gentle smiles, between the hosts
Of foeman and ally,
Unto despondent Arjuna
Thus Krishna made reply. (10)

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

You a philosopher! On them
Who need it not, you shed
Your pity. Wise men pity not
The living or the dead.

There is no past when I was not,
Nor you, nor these; and we
Shall—none and never—cease to live
Throughout the long to-be.

As this embodied soul endures
His childhood, youth, and age,
So surely waits a future form—
No doubts perplex the sage.

But matter's impacts—cold and heat,
Pleasure and pain—are sure
To shock and pass, impermanent;
Endure, brave prince, endure.

For any man, O bull of men,
Unvexed thereby, firm, free
From pain and pleasure, fits himself
For immortality. (15)

Since naught unreal can come to birth,
No real thing cease to be,
The limits of the twain are plain
To them who truly see.

Eternal, then, is that by which
Creation's web was spun;
Destruction of eternal life
Is possible to none.

These bodies pass; but he within,
With life immortal dight,
Is neither limited nor lost:
Therefore, brave hero, fight!

If the red slayer think he slays,
The slain think he be slain,
They err: the slayer vainly kills;
The victim dies in vain.

The Bhagavad-Gita

He is not born, he does not die
 Forever and forever;
The body may be slain, but he
 Can pass and perish never,
Unborn, inveterate, antique
 In ceaseless new endeavor. (20)

How then, or whom, can he who know

What passes not away,
Eternal, changeless, uncreate,
Slay that, or cause to slay?

Even as a man will cast aside
His tattered garments, taking
New vesture, so the body's lord,
Old, tattered forms forsaking,
Endues himself with fresh attire
In forms of newer making.

No weapon's edge can cut him; nor
Can water saturate;
No fire can burn him; him no wind
That blows, can desiccate.

Immune to cutting and to fire,
To dry and wet, is he;
Undying, boundless, mountain-firm
Throughout eternity;

Beyond the range of form or thought
Or variation's whim:

The Second Canto

Therefore (this nature recognized)
How can you pity him? (25)

Nor over what is perishable

Or if you think him subject to
Each oft-recurrent whim
Of birth and death—still, mighty lord,
How can you pity him?

For all, once born, will surely die;
What dies, will come to birth;
In matters ineluctable
What is your pity worth?

All life's beginnings are obscure,
But clear the middle plan;
Obscure again the latter end—
Why should it grieve a man?

One sees the soul as wonder,
A something unexplained;
One speaks of him, one hears him
While wonder still remained:
For even through hearing is no
Full understanding gained.

The body's lord who dwells within
Each form, is never slain:
That pity, therefore, is misplaced
Toward any life, is plain.

The Bhagavad-Gita

*Appeal to duty as discerned by
instinct and training*

Besides, to tremble at the view
 Of duty, is not right,
Since warriors have no duty more
 Ennobling than fair fight,

Which freely offers open gates,
 O prince, to heaven's bliss;
And happy warriors run with joy
 To meet a fight like this.

With shirking of this righteous fight
 Your infamies begin:
Your virtue and your name are lost,
 And you are sunk in sin.

All living things will gossip of
 Your everlasting shame;
And to a man once honored, death
 Is less than evil fame.

To simple soldiers such a flight
 Must craven shirking seem,
While you exchange their reverence
 For sudden disesteem.

(35)

And many insults will be spread
 By them who cherish hate,

•[16]•

The Second Canto

Naming you something less than man:
 Is there a sadder fate?

Be slain and thus attain
 The sky most high;
Or win, and revel in
 Earth's show below—
Rise! Find a ready mind
 For rightful fight.

Make level conquest and defeat;
 Pain, pleasure; loss and gain:
Then gird yourself to fight; for thus
 No tainting sins remain.

*Thus far goes Sankhya rationalism;
but Yoga intuition has more to say*

Now add the wisdom of the will
 To wisdom of the mind;
For thus, O prince, the broken bond
 Of works is left behind.

No effort so inspired is lost;
 No backward slip is here:
The tiniest fragment of this law
 Redeems from monstrous fear.

(40)

True thought is simple, and its heart
 Is resolute, unbending;

•[17]•

The Bhagavad-Gita

Irresolution ramifies
In whims without an ending.

Screed against scholars

But undiscerning men who deck
Their speech with verbal flowers,
With scripture phrases, who proclaim:
"The total truth is ours!"

Who hug desires, who aim at heaven,
New births, rewards, the swarm
Of lordly luxuries that flow
From duties multiform,

Who love their lordly luxuries
With passion overwrought—
These have no wisdom resolute;
They know no centred thought.

For scripture deals with objects. Be
Superior to this!
Pure goodness be, not glad nor grieved,
Calm, free from avarice! (45)

For scripture, to the Brahman who
Discerns and understands,
Has just such value as a well
In overflowed lands.

The Second Canto

*Labor, but care nothing for the
fruits of labor*

With labor let your business be,
Not with rewards of work;
Be not impelled by work's rewards,
Yet do not think to shirk.

Labor without attachment, firm
In discipline of will:
Make level gain and failure; thus
True discipline fulfil.

For worth of works lies far beneath
True discipline of mind;
Seek refuge there, and leave rewards
Unto the sordid kind.

The guided mind can leave behind
On earth, both good and ill;
So search out discipline, whereby
Is added meaner skill. (50)

For sages of the guided mind
Abandon labor's gain;
So freed from bonds of birth, they find
A place that knows no pain.

And when your mind shall leave behind
Confused delusions vain,

Then scriptures—present and to-be—
Will fill you with disdain.

When once your mind, to scriptures blind,
Stands firm and fixed within
Pure concentration, you attain
The perfect discipline.

Indifference is peace

ARJUNA SAID:

But, Krishna, how describe the man
Concentred, firm of wit?
How would one fixed of mind proceed
To speak? or walk? or sit?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

When all desires are spurned, that mean
The brain's bewilderment,
Then, Arjun, is he firm of wit,
With self, in self, content. (55)

By pain untroubled, unallured
By pleasure, is the sage
Whose concentration puts to flight
All passion, fear, and rage.

Whoever scorns self-interest,
To gloom and glory blind,

Without desire or loathing, he
Has an established mind.

He, when he draws his senses from
All objects of their kind,
As a turtle draws within his shell,
Has an established mind.

To them who fast, the objects fade
While still the hunger stays:
Even hunger vanishes for them
Who on the highest gaze.

For, Arjun, though a man may strive
With more than common sense,
His churning instincts drag astray
The mind with violence. (60)

Subdue them all; be disciplined;
Leave all but Me behind:
Since he who masters every sense,
Has an established mind.

When man reflects on things of sense,
Attachments to them move
His spirit; love thus comes to birth;
And wrath is born of love;

Of wrath, delusion; and thereof
A roving memory tossed;

The Bhagavad-Gita

With memory fails intelligence;
And so the man is lost.

But, meeting things with senses from
Desire and hatred free,
Subdued to his self-mastered soul,
He wins serenity.

And when serenity is won,
All griefs are overpast;
Since straightway in the mind serene
Intelligence stands fast. (65)

The unsteadied lack intelligence,
Lack thought of things divine;
The unthinking lack perfected peace,
So in discomfort pine.

For when the mind of man becomes
His gadding senses' slave,
It buffets wisdom, as the wind
A ship upon the wave.

He then whose senses are no more
With things of sense entwined,
But wholly free, brave hero, he
Has an established mind.

When other creatures sink in night,
The seer, self-mastered, wakes;

The Second Canto

'Tis night to him, when on the world
Its hour of dawning breaks.

As entering rivers seek to fill
But do not fill the sea,
So all desires may enter him,
Yet perfect peace shall he
Hold safe. To him who seeks desires,
Such peace shall never be. (70)

So, dropping all desires, the man
Who walks in full release
From every lust of 'I' and 'mine,'
Attains his perfect peace.

This, hero, is a resting-place
Of Brahma's high design;
Perplexities are banished hence;
And man, within this shrine
Abiding at his final hour,
Attains to peace divine.

The Third Canto

CANTO III

Why then work at all?

ARJUNA SAID:

If wisdom seem the greater thing
To you, and work the less,
Why, O my master, drive me to
This work of frightfulness?

With seeming ambiguities
You rob my mind of rest:
Determine one clear course for me
That I may seek the best.

*Because life is work; but indifference
to results is needful*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Still, blameless hero, as of old
My twofold prescript lives:
The discipline of intellect;
And that which action gives.

[24].

Inert refusal cannot save
From work, by mere negation;
Nor can perfection be attained
By bald renunciation.

None for a single moment can
Abide work-free and still;
Since, driven by matter's elements,
Man works despite his will. (5)

The self-deceiver who would curb
His active powers, to sit
Reflecting on the things of sense,
Is dubbed a hypocrite.

While he who can—his senses curbed—
With active powers proceed
To work without attachment, may
Be termed a man indeed.

Necessity of sacrifice

Perform the task appointed you;
Far better work than shirking:
For even your body's life could not
Continue but for working.

Save for the works of sacrifice,
All labors cling and bind;
With sacrificial purpose work,
Attachment left behind.

[25].

The Bhagavad-Gita

The Lord, creating sacrifice
With man, proclaimed of old:
Through this be multiplied; may this
Yield wishes manifold. (10)

Through this pay honor to the gods;
And may they honor you:
High bliss shall be attained through gifts
Of mutual honor due.

Gods, paid by sacrifice, will grant
The banquets that you crave;
Who eats their gifts without return,
Is but a thievish knave.

The good who pay the gods, then eat,
Are freed from guilt within,
While rogues who cook for selfish ends,
Are truly eating sin.

All living things proceed from food;
And food is born of rain;
Rain follows on the sacrifice;
Whose source is work again;

Work springs from spirit; this from the
Imperishable springs:
Thus sacrifice the spirit holds
Of all eternal things. (15)

[26].

The Third Canto

So rolls the wheel; and he on earth
Who does not help it roll,
Lives an unserviceable life,
A sensual, sinful soul;

But be satisfied with the self

While he who finds within the self
An all-sufficient beauty,
Pure joy, contentment absolute,
Is freed from sense of duty.

To him no action done, nor left
Undone, has any worth;
He craves no necessary boon
From anyone on earth.

Without attachment, therefore, pay
Each day's appointed toll;
Since only he who works detached,
May win the highest goal.

Set an example to weaker brethren

Through labor was perfection won
By Janak and his brood
Of heroes. You should labor thus
For universal good. (20)

The world forever imitates
The action of its best;

[27].

The Bhagavad-Gita

Whatever law of life he sets,
Is followed by the rest.

The triple world contains no task
Demanding *my* endeavor,
Naught unattained to be attained;
Yet I work on forever.

If I should slacken for a time
In my unwearied work,
All men, brave Arjun, everywhere
Would imitate, and shirk.

If I should cease to labor, then
These worlds would sink away;
I should confound all ordered life,
And these my children slay.

All duties that the dullards do
In selfish, greedy mood,
The wise should also do, detached,
For universal good.

(25)

Be wise; confuse no cherished faith
Dull, selfish brains within;
Approve all works. But work yourself
With stern self-discipline.

From matter's mechanism all
Earth's restless works proceed,
While some deluded egoist
Assumes: "I did the deed."

[28].

The Third Canto

But he who knows as strange to him
Work's mechanistic goal,
Sees matter act in matter, and
Dissociates his soul.

When matter's action stirs the greed
Of sad materialists,
The enlightened should not jar these dull,
Imperfect scientists.

Work at your own task; constrain not nature

Pledge all your works to Me. Seek in
The Oversoul for light;
So, free from selfishness, and hope
And fevered anguish, fight! (30)

The man of faith, from malice free,
Who this my doctrine heeds
And ever practices, may win
Salvation even by deeds.

While he whom malice leads to scorn
This doctrine's high command,
Is quite deluded, and is lost:
He does not understand.

The wise man also must obey
His nature without fail.
Life ever follows nature. What
Will violence avail?

[29].

The objects of each several sense
Are bait about the den
Of Passion and of Hatred. Shun
These ambushed highwaymen!

Far better botch your job than gain
Perfection in your neighbor's:
Die if you must, but do not run
The risk of alien labors. (35)

The enemy is Desire and Wrath

ARJUNA SAID:

But, Krishna, who or what compels
A man to practice sin
Against his will, as though some force
Pulled him and pushed him in?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Desire and wrath! Desire and wrath!
The gluttonous monster! He
That springs from man's self-interest!
Behold the enemy!

Like smoke engulfing parent fire,
Or rust the mirror's face,
Or womb the unborn child, he hugs
The world in his embrace.

The wise man's wisdom, Arjun, is
Engulfed by draped Desire,
The eternal enemy, the hard
To be extinguished fire.

In senses, brain, and intellect
He dwells; confounds the whole
Of human wisdom by their means;
And thus deludes the soul. (40)

Therefore constrain your senses first,
Brave soldier, and destroy
This monstrous foe of conscious truth
And wisdom's inner joy.

High are the senses; higher yet
The brain in nature's plan;
Yet higher is the intellect;
Highest of all is Man.

Oh, let the self find strength within
The self. Gaze ever higher
To what beyond the intellect
Is given to admire.
So, sturdy warrior, smite the foe,
The bitter foe, Desire.

CANTO IV

*Even Krishna must do works,
but he seeks no reward*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

I to Vivasvat once proclaimed
This law that never dies;
And he to Manu, who therewith
Rendered Ikshvaku wise.

By this succession it was known
To many royal sages;
But, hero, it was lost on earth
As ages followed ages.

This ancient mystery supreme,
This doctrine true for aye,
To you, my devotee and friend,
I re-proclaim today.

ARJUNA SAID:

Vivasvat's birth was earlier far
Than yours. Since this is so,

How am I to interpret your
Proclaiming long ago?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

My former lives are many, as
Are yours. And I recall
These lives, heroic Arjuna,
While you forget them all. (5)

For I, undying, uncreate,
Lord of all life on earth,
In mystic manner (following
My nature) come to birth.

Whenever vice grows prosperous
And virtue fades in pain,
O prince of Bharat's breeding, I
Create myself again.

To save the saintly, and to curb
The evil-doers' rage,
To establish virtue, I am born
In each succeeding age.

If any truly knows my birth
And work celestial, he
Escapes rebirth when life is done:
He, Arjun, comes to Me.

Yes, many, filled with utter trust,
From fear, wrath, passion free,

The Bhagavad-Gita

By bleak self-knowledge purified,
Have entered into Me. (10)

In ways diverse do they approach,
And diverse welcome win;
For all men, Arjun, everywhere
Must tread my path within.

Some sacrifice to earthy gods
That works' rewards be gained;
For in the human world, success
In works is soon attained.

Four castes I made for tasks diverse
And matter's varied range;
I made them, yet myself remain
Beyond all tasks, all change.

My works contaminate me not,
I yearn for no reward;
Nor is he bound by works, who thus
Beholds in me his Lord.

So minded, worked the men of old
Who hungered for salvation;
Let ancient work of ancient men
In you meet no frustration. (15)

Working is not work; not-working is work
To work? or not to work? Such are
The questions that perplex

[34]

The Fourth Canto

Even the poets. Therefore I
Will solve the doubts that vex,
Imparting knowledge apt to save
Your soul from sinful flecks.

True work, perverted work, non-work
Must all be understood:
For this mysterious path of work
Winds through a tangled wood.

Who sees non-working lurk in work,
Working in non-work lurk,
Is wise, is disciplined, a man
Successful in all work.

When all initiatives are
Desire- and fancy-free,
When work is burned in wisdom's fire,
Wise men a wise man see.

Detached from fruits of labor in
Contented self-reliance,
A man may plunge in works, and yet
Bid work a calm defiance. (20)

At nothing grasping, hoping naught,
Mind, soul in strict restraint,
Doing his body's work alone,
He shuns all sinful taint.

[35]

The Bhagavad-Gita

Past opposites, from envy free,
Content with what is found,
Unmoved in failure and success,
He works, yet is not bound.

*The work of sacrifice is needful, but may
be made mystical and symbolic*

Set free, his thoughts in wisdom based,
Scorning attachment's price,
He sees all labor melt and pass,
His work a sacrifice.

His gift is Spirit. Spirit is
Actor, and act, and flame.
His goal is Spirit. For he works
Rapt, in the Spirit's name.

Some ministrants make sacrifice
To mere gods. Some progress
To sacrifice self-sacrifice
In flames of holiness. (25)

Some burn in fires of self-control
Their organs of desire,
While some consume the objects in
Those selfsame organs' fire.

All acts that in the senses root,
All those that breath begins,

[36].

The Fourth Canto

Some burn in wisdom-kindled flames
Of stern self-disciplines.

Some saints severe make sacrifice
Of wealth, or bleak denial,
Of learning, or of wisdom, or
Deep contemplation's trial.

One sacrifices outward breath,
And inward breath, another;
Thus checking each by each, they strive
Excessive breath to smother.

Yet others, fasting, offer up
Their life in living breath.
All these are deft. Through sacrifice
They do their sins to death. (30)

The nectar-food of sacrifice
Leads to eternal bliss:
Could any other world be won
By means that forfeit this?

So diverse sacrifices, spread
Before the Spirit's face,
Spring all from work. This knowing, you
Shall win salvation's grace.

For work is made perfect in wisdom

Rather to wisdom's sacrifice
Than money's, be directed:

[37].

The Bhagavad-Gita

All work whatever, valiant knight,
In wisdom is perfected.

Wisdom burns the after-effects of work

This wisdom, then, with modesty,
Zeal, deference, beseech;
For wise men who discern the truth,
Their truth will gladly teach.

So never shall you come again
Vainly perplexed to be,
Because you will behold all life
First in yourself, then Me. (35)

Yes, even although you be the chief
Of sinners, none the less
Shall wisdom's raft convey you safe
Through seas of wickedness.

As fuel upon the kindled fire
To ashes straightway turns,
Just so, brave Arjun, wisdom's flame
All work to ashes burns.

For naught on earth can purify
Like wisdom. Self-control
Discovers it to man at last
Native, within his soul.

[38].

The Fourth Canto

For wisdom faith is necessary

Through faith alone is wisdom won.
By one intent, restrained;
But soon, on winning wisdom, is
His perfect peace attained.

The doubter, lacking faith, is lost;
His folly has no measure.
He loses earth, he loses heaven,
He loses simple pleasure. (40)

When wisdom severs doubt, when works
Are discipline alone,
Man's works no longer fetter him:
He calls his soul his own.

Unwisdom is the source of doubt
That in your bosom lies.
A sword of wisdom you must now,
To sever it, devise
By trust in labor's discipline.
Arise, brave prince! Arise!

[39].

CANTO V

*The Sankhya way and the Yoga way are at
bottom the same; but the Yoga way is
the more natural to follow*

ARJUNA SAID:

Renouncing works, performing works
In turn you seem to praise.
Oh, tell me, Krishna, certainly
The better of these ways.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Renouncing and performing works
Both lead to sure salvation.
Yet of the two, performance still
Excels renunciation.

Man perfectly renounces, when
Desire and hate have died.
When opposites are overcome,
His fetters fall aside.

The wise man knows. But children may
Proclaim as diverse still

[40]

The Fifth Canto

The self-denying disciplines
Of intellect or will.
The fruit of both is given him
Who either can fulfil.

Those trained in intellect or will
To one abode proceed:
Whoever sees the double road
As single, sees indeed. (5)

Yet is renunciation hard
With untrained will to gain;
The will-trained sage in briefer time
The Spirit may attain.

Activity is present only in matter

So disciplined, so self-subdued,
So able to restrain
Sense-powers, so purified, his soul
Expanding to contain
All souls that live, he labors, yet
Escapes from labor's stain.

"Nothing is done by me," he thinks
(And simple truth he keeps)
While touching, while he sees, or hears,
Smells, eats, walks, breathes, or sleeps,
Discourses, opens, shuts his eyes,
Appropriates, resigns.

[41]

CANTO V

The Sankhya way and the Yoga way are at bottom the same; but the Yoga way is the more natural to follow

ARJUNA SAID:

Renouncing works, performing works
In turn you seem to praise.
Oh, tell me, Krishna, certainly
The better of these ways.

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Discourses, opens, shuts his eyes,
Appropriates, resigns.

The Bhagavad-Gita

"It is but senses acting on
Sense-objects," he opines.

When he, detached, lays all his works
Before his Spirit chief,
Sin stains him not, as water-drops
Stain not the lotus-leaf. (10)

If body, brain, and intellect,
And sensive powers are free,
He works detached, and for his soul
Finds perfect purity.

When fruits of work are firmly scorned,
Essential peace is found;
While wantons, grasping labor's fruit,
Are by that effort bound.

In thought rejecting every work,
The lordly soul may dwell
At ease within the body (that
Nine-gated citadel)
All need of work or causing work
Ingenious to expel.

This lord creates no agency,
No worldly work's display,
Nor fits the work to apt reward;
But nature goes its way.

·[42]·

The Fifth Canto

This master takes upon himself
No guilt nor good from any:
Unwisdom, clouding wisdom here,
Bewilders very many. (15)

*Hence one should be indifferent
to outer objects*

But when, by knowledge of the self,
Unwisdom is undone,
The goal supreme most clear will seem
Through wisdom's heavenly sun.

With That in purpose, mind, and soul,
With thoughts thereto that soar,
Those saved by wisdom from their sins,
Departing, come no more.

They look alike on some good priest
Matured in learning's vow,
An eater of dogs' flesh, a dog,
An elephant, a cow.

They conquer nature here on earth
When differences cease.
They rest at peace in Spirit, which
Is flawless and at peace.

The Spirit-conscious, firm of mind,
Find nothing to perplex

·[43]·

The Bhagavad-Gita

Their peace, when pleasures cease to please,
Vexations cease to vex. (20)

When life to Spirit is attuned,
Man finds within his soul
The joyfulness that never comes
While senses claim their toll.
So disciplined, he finds the joys
That ever new unroll.

But all delights of contact, which
Begin and have an end,
Are truly wombs of pain. To such
The wise will not attend.

He who can conquer here on earth
(Before his body's rest)
The rush of anger and desire,
Is disciplined, is blest.

For peace is from within

With inner comfort, inner light,
And inner rapture blest,
He turns pure Spirit, penetrates
The Spirit's final rest.

That final rest the sages win
Who cut the knot of strife,
Controlled and stainless, taking joy
In every happy life. (25)

The Fifth Canto

That final rest enfolds the seer
Whose thoughts are in control,
Who leaves desire and wrath behind,
Who understands his soul.

He holds the outer world at bay;
His glances never rove;
His outward breath and inward breath
In even measure move;

Salvation is his only aim;
Desire, fear, anger flee;
His senses, brain, and intellect
Are curbed. The saint is free.

If he but knows that it is I
Who finally must test
Each sacrifice, each bleak denial,
The world's high lord and best,
The friend of every life that lives,
He reaches final rest.

GANTO VI

*Peace is a reward rather
than an instrument*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

That man renounces and performs
Who scorns his labor's price
Yet does his work, not he who shuns
Fit work and sacrifice.

Renunciation, discipline
As one we must admire:
No man is disciplined without
Renouncing heart's desire.

The sage who strains for discipline,
Finds work his instrument;
When discipline is conquered, then
A new tool—peace—is sent.

And discipline is conquered when
His thought from work retires,
From works and things of sense, and flings
Away all heart's desires.

Oh, let the self exalt itself,
Not sink itself below:
Self is the only friend of self,
And self self's only foe.

(5)

For self, when it subdues itself,
Befriends itself. And so
When it eludes self-conquest, is
Its own and only foe.

So calm, so self-subdued, the self
Has an unshaken base
Through pain and pleasure, cold and heat,
Through honor and disgrace.

In truth and sapience sedate,
Joy's peak a man may hold
With senses disciplined, and rate
Alike clod, stone, and gold.

Who rates alike friend, lover, foe,
Neutral, indifferent,
Kinsman, the hateful, sinner, saint,
Is deemed preëminent.

*Eternal vigilance over body and mind is
necessary, but the reward is infinite*

Alone, withdrawn, and vigilant,
He must forever cope

The Bhagavad-Gita

With thought and self, and must renounce
All heritage and hope. (10)

A settled seat he must erect
Some holy spot within,
Neither too high nor low, and spread
With cloth, or grass, or skin.

There sitting, let him concentrate
His focussed thought, constrain
His senses' action and his mind's,
Soul-purity to gain.

His body, head, and neck held firm
And quiet, let his keen
Glance center on his nose-tip, not
Survey the distant scene.

There let him vigilantly sit,
Calm, chaste, from fear set free,
His brain in train, with every thought
And purpose turned to Me.

With unrelaxed self-discipline,
With thoughts in stern control,
He wins tranquillity in Me,
Wins peace, the final goal. (15)

But discipline is not for him
Who no due measure keeps

The Sixth Canto

In eating or in fasting, or
Too much or little sleeps.

Due measure kept in food and sport
And needful works, due measure
In sleep and waking, Arjun, sets
An end to all displeasure.

When fancy is subdued, and rests
Entire the soul within,
When no desires awake desire—
This is true discipline.

"The lamp that flickers not, being set
Where no wind stirs," shall be
For a saint whose fancy yields to soul,
The good old simile.

When training fetters fancy till
Its vanishment,
When man through self beholds the self,
With self content, (20)

When he experiences bliss
That has no end,
That only intellect—not sense—
May apprehend,
That makes, while he abides therein,
The truth his friend,

On gaining which, he feels no need
 Of other gain,
 Which holds him safe against the shock
 Of fiercest pain—

This is the one true discipline
 (True men agree)
 This breaks the yoke of sorrow. This
 Should practiced be
 With resolution and without
 Despondency.

Let him forget desires that spring
 From fancy, one and all,
 And dominate those village-folk
 That men the senses call,
 So sink to rest, his intellect
 In steadfast tension held,
 His brain subdued to soul, until
 All thought can be expelled.

(25)

Let every door attempted by
 The restless, darting brain,
 Be locked, and soul be lord within,
 All-powerful to constrain.

He turns pure Spirit. Utter joy
 Creeps on to tranquillize
 His mind who seeks such discipline,
 While sin with passion dies.

[50]

Sin vanishes for him who clings
 To training such as this;
 At one with Spirit, he attains
 With ease an endless bliss.

He sees himself in every life,
 Sees every life that lives
 Within himself; and so to all
 A like emotion gives.

Who sees me everywhere, and sees
 In me all lives that be,
 I never can be lost to him,
 Nor he be lost to me.

(30)

So loving me (since life is one)
 In all the lives that be,
 A saint, wherever he abides,
 Will still abide in me.

Feeling the pain of all the world
 And all its joy within
 Himself, as if his own, he wins
 The perfect discipline.

*Control of the brain is difficult, but
 possible and necessary*

ARJUNA SAID:

You bid me, Krishna, gaze on all
 The world with level eye.

[51]

But brain is fickle. What device
Can steady, fortify?

Yes, Krishna, brain is fickle, strong,
And turbulent and bold;
I find it hard to curb as were
The wind to catch and hold.

THE BLESSÈD ONE SAID:

No doubt, brave soldier, it is hard
To curb the wayward brain;
Yet practice and ascetic life
Are powerful to constrain. (35)

I know that it is hard for him
Who misses self-control;
Yet are there means for one who strives
And subjugates his soul.

*Defeat is temporary; one genuinely
started on the way will at last attain*

ARJUNA SAID:

But, Krishna, though a man have faith,
His faltering thought may stray
Before perfected discipline—
What way is his? What way?

Oh, does he not, like rifted cloud,
Lose heaven and earth? and stray

Without support, bewildered, lost
Upon the Spirit's way?

Oh, Krishna, cut this doubt of mine,
Cut it completely through;
There is no being fit to cut
This doubt of mine, but you.

THE BLESSÈD ONE SAID:

No; Arjun, he is never lost
In yonder world or here;
No man of honest life can sink
To misery, my dear. (40)

But, lacking discipline, he dwells
In pious worlds; and then,
When long years pass, is born among
Pure, worthy folk again;

Or even among the disciplined
Endowed with wisdom's worth
(Yet such a family as this
Is rarely won on earth)

There once again he enters on
His former life's direction
Toward focussed intellect, and strives
Yet further for perfection.

His former study bears him on
Despite his will; since he

Who yearns for discipline, is borne
Beyond theology.

So struggling onward, cleansed of sin,
His powers in full control,
Perfected after many births,
He wins the highest goal—

(45)

A loftier goal than scholarship
Or bleakest self-constraint
Or works meticulously done—
Brave Arjun, be a saint!

And saintliest among the saints,
Among all saints that be,
Is one who fixes faith and love
And inner soul on Me.

CANTO VII

*Krishna is the material world, but also
the spirit of life in the world*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Be constant. Seek repose in me.
Let thought to me aspire.
So learn, brave soldier, how to know
Me, certain and entire.

This truth, this wisdom I will now
Without reserve make clear;
When this is mastered, there remains
Naught else worth knowing here.

One man in many thousands strives
Perfection's goal to see;
Of those who strive and win, scarce one
In very truth knows me.

Earth, water, ether, fire, and air,
Intellect, ego, brain:
This eightfold subdivision serves
My nature to contain—

The Bhagavad-Gita

My lower nature, but beyond
Is one more high and pure—
The living soul, brave hero, which
Holds all that lives secure.

(5)

Regard my nature as the womb
Of all that here draws breath;
To all the world of life I am
Creation; I am death.

Apart from me, brave Arjun, there
Exists no single thing;
The universe is strung on me
Like pearls upon a string.

I am the taste in water; sound
In ether; none the less
Am I the mystic word that gives
All scriptures power to bless;
I am the light in moon and sun;
In man, the manliness;

I am the fragrance in the earth;
I am the heat in fire;
The life in life; the energy
In men of stern desire;

I am the everlasting seed
All forms of life to save;
I am the wisdom of the wise;
The courage of the brave;

(10)

[56].

The Seventh Canto

I am the strength of those too strong
For lust or passion's toll;
And I am pure, permitted love
Toward every living soul.

States good and passionate and dark
Are mine. Yet none should see
My nature in these states, but should
Discover them in me.

The qualities of matter confuse men

By these three states of matter, all
This world is led astray
And knows me not as That beyond
Which passes not away.

For matter's godlike magic still
Bewilders to his loss
The seeker. They who win to me,
Such seas of magic cross.

The fool, the sinner, and the mean,
Not finding me, turn back;
For magic steals their wisdom, and
They grow demoniac. (15)

True knowledge leads to Krishna

Four kinds of men love me, and bring
Each his own virtue's prize:

[57].

The Bhagavad-Gita

The oppressed; the student; he who knows
His object; and the wise.

The wise with simple faith is best,
If he but constant be;
For I am very dear to him,
And he is dear to me.

All these are noble, but the wise
Seems my own self to me;
To me he clings, the goal than which
There can no higher be.

"Krishna is all" his wise thought runs;
So after many a birth
He wins to me. But it is rare
To find such lofty worth.

*Other enthusiasms are not without value;
"verily, they have their reward"*

By them whose wisdom passion steals,
Some other god is found,
Obeying each his law of life,
Each by his nature bound. (20)

Whatever form divine appeals
To choice and faith and love,
I fix in each a faith therein
That naught can shake or move.

[58].

The Seventh Canto

So filled with faith, he strives by prayer
His reverence to show,
And thence receives his good desires
(Which I in truth bestow).

But finite fruit is all that such
Small-witted creatures see:
God-worshippers attain their gods;
My faithful come to me.

*But only enthusiasm for Krishna
has lasting value*

The witless fail to comprehend;
They think me manifest.
They little know my nature high,
Invariable, best.

For I, in matter's magic hid,
Elude their best endeavor;
This world, bewildered, knows not me
Unborn, unchanging ever. (25)

All creatures present, past, to be,
I know. Not one of them knows me.

Bewildered by the opposites,
By lust and hatred vexed,
These creatures, valiant Arjuna,
All, all are born perplexed.

[59].

Some righteous bid farewell to sin,
Some few. No more perplexed
By opposites, they find their faith
And love for me unvexed.

Some few who seek my aid, from age
And death to win salvation,
Perceive the Spirit, Oversoul,
And work's full implication.

Some few whose thoughts are disciplined,
Who pierce to truth, and deem
Me highest Being, highest God,
And Sacrifice supreme,
These know me even in the hour
Of life's departing dream. (30)

CANTO VIII

The course of creative evolution

ARJUNA SAID:

What is the Oversoul? and work?
Spirit? and God most high?
And what does highest Being, O
Most lofty, signify?

What is the Sacrifice supreme?
How in this body shown?
And how are you, through self-control,
At life's departing known?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Spirit is the unchanging Best;
Its essence, Oversoul;
Work, the creative act whereby
Life's forms and births unroll.

The highest Being, changing life;
The highest God we deem
Man's soul. And I, incarnate, am
The Sacrifice supreme.

The Bhagavad-Gita

*The soul goes to that on which it is set
at the moment of dissolution*

Doubt not that he will come to me
Who holds me in his heart
When life's last hour bids him forsake
This body, and depart.

(5)

To any form which at the last
Man's memory holds warm,
To that, on leaving this, he comes,
Transformed into its form.

Therefore in every hour of life
Remember me, and fight!
So shall you surely come to me
With fixèd purpose right.

Yes, Arjun, he who meditates
With disciplined design
And thought that never wavers, wins
The soul supreme, divine.

If man recalls this lord of all,
This poet, ancient, guide,
Whose form, than atoms subtler, no
Brave thinking has descried,
Who gleams with solar color on
The darkness' further side,
Recalls him at life's parting hour
With stubbornest design,

[62]

The Eighth Canto

With powers that discipline and faith
Unitedly align,
(Breath checked between his brows) he wins
That soul supreme, divine. (10)

The home that sacred students call
Eternal rest, the same
That saints may enter when they have
Extinguished passion's flame,
For love whereof the saints are chaste,
I briefly will proclaim.

Let every door be locked; let brain
Be subjugate to heart;
Let discipline unfaltering be;
Let not the breath depart;

Let *om*, the sacred syllable,
With thoughts of me, be chanted:
To him who leaves the body thus,
The goal supreme is granted.

*Therefore think on Krishna, that
there may be no rebirth*

For him who ever perseveres
In constant discipline,
Relaxing not his thought of me,
I am not hard to win.

Such noble spirits, finding me,
Attain perfection. So

[63]

They save themselves from further birth,
That shifting home of woe. (15)

From Brahma's world and lesser worlds
All souls return to earth;
But none, brave Arjun, finding me,
Shall suffer further birth.

*Evolution and involution in
the mundane periods*

Two thousand ages are a day
For Brahma, and a night.
They grasp the sense of night and day
Who comprehend aright.
From formlessness all forms proceed
At dawning of that day;
And at its dusk, they sink once more
In formlessness away.
This world's uncounted, shifting shapes
Sink helplessly away
At dusk, and come to life again
At dawn of Brahma's day.
But far beyond this seeming world
Of figures manifest
There is another, viewless Life
Eternal. While the rest
Must perish wholly, it abides,
By ruin undistressed. (20)

"Formless," "Eternal" is its name;
This is the goal divine;
They turn not back who have attained
This highest home of mine.

This soul, most high yet human, is
By strict devotion won.
All lives abide therein; thereby
Creation's web was spun.

*The yogis who return, and those
who do not return*

Now at what time departing, saints
Return not, or return,
You shall, O bull of Bharat's breed,
From my instruction learn.

The Spirit-conscious who in light
Or daytime find release,
By fire, or waxing moon or sun,
Attain the Spirit's peace;
While saints who pass through smoke or night,
By moon or sun awane,
Dwell for a time in moonlit halls,
Then come to earth again. (25)

On these two paths, the bright and dark,
Life moves forevermore.
One leads to no returning; one
Turns as it was before.

The Bhagavad-Gita

*The soul goes to that on which it is set
at the moment of dissolution*

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This body, and depart. (5)

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The Bhagavad-Gita

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By fire, or waxing moon or sun,
Attain the Spirit's peace;
While saints who pass through smoke or night,
By moon or sun awane,
Dwell for a time in moonlit halls,
Then come to earth again. (25)

On these two paths, the bright and dark,
Life moves forevermore.
One leads to no returning; one
Turns as it was before.

No saint who knows the double path,
Brave soldier, goes astray;
Therefore to saintly discipline
Give every hour and day.

This truth transports the saint beyond
All scripture, sacrifice,
Denial, gifts—all acts that lead
To virtue's promised price.
This brings him to securest rest
In that high home, primeval, blest.

CANTO IX

Krishna is more than his creation

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

This mystery profound, this truth
And wisdom, I proclaim
To you who do not quibble. Truth
Redeems from woe and shame.

This kingly secret, kingly lore,
Most lofty and most pure,
Is given by intuition, is
Most righteous, pleasant, sure.

Men lacking faith, brave soldier, in
This righteous doctrine's worth,
Not finding me, return to tread
Death's path in further birth.

This web of life was spun by me,
My form unmanifest:
All living creatures rest in me;
In them I do not rest.

The Bhagavad-Gita

Yet see my sovereign magic! They
Do not abide in me;
My soul supports them from without,
And causes them to be. (5)

Imagine that all creatures move
In me, as in the still,
Wide space of ether some great wind
Moves ever as it will.

All lives into my substance sink
At this world's ending. Then,
When fresh creation comes to pass,
I give them form again.

Still constant to my character,
I evermore create
Entire, this driven world of life,
This petty village-state;
Yet while creating, bid the laws
Of nature operate.

Such labors do not fetter me,
On no reward intent;
I work detached, observing all
Like one indifferent.

So, Arjun, moving things and still
Are born by nature's laws;
So rolls the world, my governan
Being the final cause. (10)

The Ninth Canto

*Devotion to Krishna brings its supreme
reward; lesser devotions do not
fail of their lesser reward*

But fools contemn this human shape
Of mine, as something small;
They little know my form supreme
As sovereign lord of all.

Perverted minds! Vain hopes are theirs;
Their works, their science vain;
Such goblin nature, impish thought
Sinks to the mere insane.

But godlike natures, noble minds
Perceive and worship me,
The everlasting source of all,
With plain sincerity.

With praises still renewed, with stern
And still renewed endeavor,
With love and worship they approach,
Intent and constant ever.

Yet others bring the offering
Of truth, so strive to reach
Me as the One, or me Apart,
Or Diverse-faced for each. (15)

I am each varied sacrifice;
Each hymn the Brahmans sing;

The Bhagavad-Gita

Yet see my sovereign magic! They
Do not abide in me;
My soul supports them from without,
And causes them to be. (5)

Imagine that all creatures move
In me, as in the still,
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With praises still renewed, with stern
And still renewed endeavor,
With love and worship they approach,
Intent and constant ever.

Yet others bring the offering
Of truth, so strive to reach
Me as the One, or me Apart,
Or Diverse-faced for each. (15)

I am each varied sacrifice;
Each hymn the Brahmans sing;

The holy herb, oblation, ghee;
The fire, the offering;
I am the father of the world;
Its grandsire, mother, lord;
Truth, purity, and sacred spell;
Hymn, chant, and holy word;
Its way, its witness, master, king;
Its refuge, home, and friend;
Its treasure, base, eternal seed;
Its maker, and its end.

I give and I withhold the rain;
I turn the cold to hot;
Undying life am I, and death;
What is, and what is not.

The worthy scholar-ritualist
Begs trips to Paradise,
And gains that pious world of gods
As fruit of sacrifice,
Enjoys with gods in heaven at least
Some portion of the heavenly feast;

(20)

Then, having tasted luxuries
In heaven, he must go
(His merit waning) back to earth;
So journeys to and fro,
Intent on scripture, nothing higher—
Desires awaken his desire.

But when a man approaches Me
With anxious thought sincere
And unrelaxing discipline,
I guard his welfare here.

They, too, who worship other gods,
With love and faith shot through,
Brave Arjun, worship me, although
They know not what they do.

Since I must test all offerings
And govern all,
These fail to know me as I am;
So, climbing, fall.

For, giving worship to the gods,
To gods they go;
Or, if to dead progenitors,
Are even so;
Those come to ghosts who supplicate
What ghosts there be;
And they who bring me sacrifice,
Come unto me.

(25)

*The lowliest may approach Krishna, and
the meanest offering is acceptable*

If any, moved by utter love,
Is minded me to bring
A leaf, a flower, fruit, water, I
Receive love's offering.

The Bhagavad-Gita

Whatever, prince, you do or eat
Or give in charity,
Endure or sacrifice, let all
Be done as unto me.

So freed from bonds of work, from fruits
Both good and evil free,
Renouncing or performing, you
Shall enter into me.

I look on life with level eye;
I have no foe nor friend;
Yet they are mine, and I in them
Who love me to the end.

Yes, even the most complete of rogues
In whom no passions fight
With love of me, is deemed a saint,
Because his heart is right. (30)

Soon virtue enters into him;
Enduring peace draws nigh;
Oh, never doubt, brave Arjuna,
My faithful do not die.

Yes, hero, if they rest in me,
Those whom we basest deem,
With women, men of business, serfs,
Attain the goal supreme;
Far more, a pious Brahman or
A wise, devoted king.

The Ninth Canto

Doomed to a transient, suffering world,
Bring me love's offering!

Give thought, love, homage, sacrifice
To me, your final goal;
So shall you surely come to me
With fixed and steadfast soul.

CANTO X

*Krishna is the source of all; in
knowing him, one knows all*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Brave soldier, hear my lofty speech;
Let more be understood,
Because it pleases you, and I
Desire to do you good.

The heavenly hosts, the greatest seers
Know not my origin,
Since all the gods and seers proceed
From me, in me begin.

But any mortal, knowing me
Unborn, beginningless,
The world's high master, is made free
Of doubt and sinfulness.

Wit, wisdom, unperplexity,
Compassion, truth, and peace,
Restraint, pain, pleasure, birth, and death,
Dismay, dismay's surcease,

The Tenth Canto

The generous heart, the level eye,
Denial, charity,
Content, fame, infamy—are states
That life derives from me. (5)

The mighty seers, the ancient seven,
And four primeval men
Proceed from mental states of mine
To shape creation then.

Knowing this far-flung power of mine
And magic as it is,
Man wins unwavering discipline—
There is no doubt of this.

That all things find their origin
In me, from me proceed,
The enlightened know; their worship and
Their love attest their creed.

Thoughts, lives are mine; they speak of me
Again and yet again;
So edify each other; so
Are glad and happy men.

In worship, love, and discipline
They evermore agree;
And I bestow intelligence
Whereby they come to me. (10)

Self-centered, yet compassionate,
I finally destroy
Unwisdom's darkness with the lamp
Of wisdom's radiant joy.

*Krishna is the seed and the perfection
of all that is*

ARJUNA SAID:

O Spirit lofty and most pure!
High home of souls forlorn!
Eternal man and primal god!
Celestial king unborn!

The god-seers Narad, Devala,
And Vyasa give to you
Such names, with Asit and the rest;
And you declare them true.

All this, most blessed Krishna, I
Perceive as true indeed;
Ah! Neither gods nor devils know
How forms from you proceed.

Yourself alone can know yourself
As soul most high, as cause
And lord of life, as god of gods,
As source of mundane laws.

(15)

Oh, tell me all—each far-flung power,
Each godlike revelation,

Whereby you evermore uphold
And permeate creation.

Oh, teach me modes of constant thought
To know you, though afar,
The likenesses, most blessed saint,
That hint at what you are.

Yes, tell me all your magic power
That regulates this stuff
Of life. For of your nectar-speech
I cannot hear enough.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Come then! I will proclaim what my
Self-revelations mean—
In chiefest part, brave prince. For else
No ending would be seen.

I am the soul that dwells within,
Life's essence to defend;
I am the origin of life,
Its middle, and its end.

(20)

Vishnu am I; I am the sun
Bright-rayed; the moonlight there
Among the stars; I am the storm
Among the gods of air.

I am the chant among the hymns;
Among the gods, their king;

The Bhagavad-Gita

For nerves, the brain; and consciousness
For every living thing;
Among devourers, Shiva; cash
For trolls' and gnomes' desire;
Mount Meru for the mountain-peaks;
Among the fire-gods, fire.
Of chaplains, I am heaven's priest;
Among the lakes, the sea;
Among all generals, regard
The god of war as me.
Of words, the sacred *om*; of seers,
Great Bhrigu's name I bear;
Himalaya among the hills;
Of sacrifices, prayer.
Of trees, I am the sacred fig;
Narad among the wise;
The chief of music-makers, and
Those who philosophize.
Of steeds, I am the godlike steed
Born of the ambrosial sea;
Behold the king of men, and heaven's
Great elephant in me.
The serpent-king and wonder-cow
Am I, of snakes and kine;
Of missile arms, the thunderbolt;
Creative love divine;

(25)

The Tenth Canto

Of water-powers, the water-king;
 Of them who rest from breath,
Their chief; of snakes, the endless worm;
 Among constrainers, death;

Of demons, wise Prahlada; and
 Of birds, the feathered scion
Of Vinata; of reckoners, time;
 And of all beasts, the lion; (30)

Of cleansers, wind; the crocodile
 Of life that ocean teems;
Among the warriors, Rama; and
 Ganges among the streams.

I am creations' origin,
 Continuance, and goal;
The speaker's speech; of sciences,
 That of the Oversoul.

Of compounds, I the dual am;
 Of letters, I am A;
The all-watchful governor; and time
 That never wastes away.

Imperious death am I, and birth
 Of creatures yet to be;
Among things reckoned feminine,
 You may behold in me
Speech, glory, courage, patience, fame,
 Shrewdness, and memory.

•[79]•

The Bhagavad-Gita

The greatest chant; the metre with
The most melodious swing;
Of months, I am December; and
Of seasons, I am spring.

(35)

Among deceivers, I am dice;
Conquest, and hardihood;
The valor of the valorous;
The goodness of the good.

Krishna am I, and Arjuna,
Each in his princely line;
Of sages, Vyasa; Ushanas
Among the bards divine;

The victors' strategy; the rod
Of them who must chastise;
The secrecy of secrets; and
The wisdom of the wise.

Life's seed am I, brave Arjuna,
Wherever life may be:
Not one, of moving things or still,
Has substance save through me.

And so my far-flung powers divine,
Bold soldier, know no stint;
But such detail as has been heard,
Is offered as a hint.

(40)

Wherever life has vigor, grace,
Or glory's magic flower,

•[80]•

The Tenth Canto

Derive its special splendor from
Some fragment of my power.

Yet why dilate? What needs it thus
At reason's bound to chafe?
One fragment holds this world of life
Entire, unruffled, safe.

•[81]•

The Eleventh Canto

CANTO XI

Krishna's transfiguration

ARJUNA SAID:

Your lofty, secret doctrine which
The Oversoul explains,
Has laid a blessing on me. No
Perplexity remains.

Life's birth and passing I have heard
Detailed, a wondrous story,
O flower-eyed being, and your own
Imperishable glory.

I do not doubt. But oh that I
Your sovereign figure might espy,
Your veritable form descry
As lord supreme, as soul most high!

Reveal, if possible and right—
O magic's master, lord of might!
Your changeless self to human sight.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

By hundreds and by thousands then,
Prince of a warlike line,

[82]

In all their colors, kinds, and shapes,
Behold my forms divine.

(5)

Behold the godlike shapes of sun,
Wind, terror, wealth, and healing,
With many miracles of form
At this their first revealing.

Behold the total world of life,
All moving things and still,
Within my body; and therewith
Whatever else you will.

Yet may you not regard my form
With human vision; so,
As magic's master, I will now
Celestial sight bestow.

SANJAYA SAID:

And having spoken, Krishna, as
Master of magic's dream,
Revealed to wondering Arjuna
His sovereign form supreme
With countless aspects, faces, eyes,
With countless gems divine,
With countless heavenly missiles, high
Uplifted for a sign,

(10)

Divinely perfumed, wreathed, and clad,
All miracles embracing,

[83]

The Bhagavad-Gita

An infinite divinity
Toward every quarter facing.

A thousand simultaneous suns
Arising in the sky
Might equal that great radiance,
With that great glory vie.

Within the god of gods, the prince
Beheld all life unveil,
Beheld this world of life compact
In infinite detail.

Amazement entered him; his hair
Rose up; he bowed his head;
He humbly lifted folded hands,
And worshipped God, and said.

ARJUNA SAID:

Lord God, within you I behold
All gods together driven,
With throngs of diverse shapes to which
The breath of life is given,
Lord Brahma on his lotus-throne,
All seers and snakes of heaven.

(15)

I see a figure infinite
Wherein all figures blend;
To countless bodies, arms, and eyes,
And faces, I attend,

[84].

The Eleventh Canto

But fail, O lord of all, to find
Beginning, middle, end.

The discus, mace, and diadem
I see; see glory massed
In flashing radiance whereby
My sight is overcast;
See flaring fires and flaming suns
Immeasurably vast.

I deem you source and focus of
This universe's plan;
Invariable truth supreme;
The changeless partisan
Of virtue's immemorial laws;
The everlasting man.

Beginning, middle, end are not;
Your jaws are flaming fire;
Your endless power and countless arms
Are given to admire;
Your eyes are moon and sun; you burn
This helpless world entire.

Your form is awful, marvellous,
Coterminous with space;
You clasp the interval from heaven
To earth in one embrace;
Beholding you, the triple world
Is shaken, crown to base.

(20)

[85].

The Bhagavad-Gita

And yonder gods are drawn within
Your person; they adore,
In humble hosts, your majesty,
Though some are frightened sore;
And chants of "Hail! All hail!" swell up
From saints and sages hoar.

The gods of terror, wealth, and sun,
Of healing, and of air,
The All-gods, the perfectibles,
Angels, and ghosts are there,
While crowding trolls and imps and saints
In bland amazement stare.

O master, these your mouths and eyes
All numbering defy;
Your arms, thighs, bellies, feet, and fangs
Most horrid multiply;
The worlds are shaken, viewing this
Dread presence, as am I.

Viewing this particolored form
That streaks the clouds with light,
Its jaws agape, great Vishnu, and
Its great eyes gleaming bright,
The soul within me quakes; my peace
And fortitude take flight.

Beholding these your jaws, fierce-fanged
As flames of judgment day,

The Eleventh Canto

I know not where to turn; all sense
Of safety fades away.
Life's only refuge! Lord of gods!
Be merciful, I pray. (25)

See yonder! Dhritarashtra's sons
With all their hostile throng
Of kings, with Bhishma, Drona, and
With honored Karna strong,
And with the chiefest captains that
In our stout ranks belong,
Are entering with hurried step
Your jaws fierce-fanged and dread,
While here and there between the teeth
I spy a mangled head.

As many rivers' rushing streams
Sink in one sea, so these
Within the jaws that flame and wait—
No human hero flees.

As moths to their destruction in
The kindled taper fly,
So all the world is pressed to plunge
Within your jaws, and die.

The flaming tongues within your mouths
Lick ever and devour
The total world of lesser life,
While gleams that glow and glower,

Great Vishnu, penetrate that world
And burn with awful power. (30)

Oh, tell me to what goal divine
Such fearful visions tend.
O god primeval, god of gods!
Most mercifully send
Enlightenment; for deeds like these
I cannot comprehend.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Death am I, and my present task
Destruction. View in me
The active slayer of these men;
For though you fail and flee,
These captains of the hostile hosts
Shall die, shall cease to be.

Arise, on fame, on victory,
On kingly joys intent!
They are already slain by me;
Be you the instrument.

Yes, Drona, Bhisma, Jayadrath,
Karna, with every foe
Who stands your rival in the field,
Are doomed, and now lie low.
Then banish pain and slay the slain!
To fight and conquest go!

SANJAYA SAID:

Then trembling Arjun clasped his hands
And bowed his crested head,
Paid fearful worship once again,
And stammered as he said. (35)

ARJUNA SAID:

With reason, Krishna, in your praise
Is joy and comfort found,
While frightened goblins seek in flight
The far horizon's bound,
While from all hosts of sainted souls
Your glories still resound.

Why should they not bend lowly down
To Brahma's worthier mate,
Prime mover, boundless, god of gods,
Imperishably great,
Life's home, embracing more than all
Things formed and uncreate?

Eternal man and primal god!
Forms infinite in one!
The truth and knower of the truth
Are you. By you begun,
In you reposes all. Through you
Creation's web was spun.

Wind, water, moon, and fire, and death
Are you; the father hoar

The Bhagavad-Gita

Who rules the world, and Brahma's self.
Let all that lives adore
A thousand times and sing your praise
Again and evermore.

Praise be to you before, behind!
Be praise on every side!
No circumscription of your power
Or prowess is descried.
For you are all, and all is you:
All things in you abide.

(40)

And if in flippant comradeship
I ever cried: "My friend!"
Dear Krishna! Yadu's son!" did not
This glory apprehend,
If I did ever in my love
Or heedlessness offend,
If ever I degraded you
(Alone, or others by)
To make a jest while you relaxed,
Slept, sat, or feasted nigh,
Forgive me, god invincibly,
Immeasurably high!

You are the father of the world
Both still and animate;
Its teacher honored and revered;
Incomparably great.

[90]

The Eleventh Canto

Dare any in the triple world
Lay claim to rival state?
I therefore cast my body down
(Lord God, be glorified!)
And humbly pray for mercy, pray
You feel forbearance wide
As sire to son, as friend to friend,
As lover to his bride.

I thrill with pride at having seen
What none has seen before,
O god of gods, life's only home!
Yet am I shaken sore
With diffidence. Be merciful!
Appear as man once more!

(45)

On discus, mace, and diadem
My gaze was gladly bent;
Though every form be free to you,
A thousand arms be lent,
Appear as in the days of old
With normal complement.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Brave Arjuna, my grace revealed
This vision's magic dream,
Primeval, omnipresent, true
Behind the parts that seem;

[91]

The Bhagavad-Gita

And none but you has e'er beheld
This radiant form supreme.

And none among mankind but you,
Heroic prince, may see
This form, however good his gifts
Or pious acts may be,
His scripture, study, sacrifice,
Or bleak austerity.

Let not this figure great and grim
Perplex or pain you more;
Be fearless, comforted; behold
Me as I was before.

SANJAYA SAID:

Herewith by Krishna once again
His former form was taken;
And kindly great, he comforted
The spirit terror-shaken.

(50)

ARJUNA SAID:

Beholding, Krishna, once again
A human figure kind,
I reassume my mastery
Of character and mind.

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

The form that you have now beheld
Is hardly to be seen;

[92]

The Eleventh Canto

And to perceive it, gods above
Are pierced with longing keen.

The glimpse of me that you have caught
Is purchased for no price
Of scripture, bleak austerities,
Of gifts, or sacrifice.

It is, heroic Arjuna,
Through sincere love alone
That I may penetrated be,
Be seen, and truly known.

Who does my work with utter love,
From all attachments free
And free from hate of any life,
Brave soldier, comes to Me.

(55)

[93]

CANTO XII

*Worship of Krishna is on the whole better
than worship of the Absolute, for it is
more conformable to man's nature*

ARJUNA SAID:

Some bring you love and discipline—
But are they more astute
Than those who bring devotion to
The formless Absolute?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Those who, disclosing utter faith,
Discover mental rest
In me through constant discipline,
Appear to me the best.

While those who serve the Absolute—
Eluding thought, and strange
To rational presentment, fixed,
Formless, beyond the range
Of local limitation, free
From motion or from change—

The Twelfth Canto

These, level-eyed to all the world,
Their senses in control,
Attain to me at last, when they
Wish well to every soul.

Yet greater pain is theirs who fix
The Absolute in mind:
For men with bodies, absolutes
Are hard to track and find. (5)

*Practice devotion to Krishna, either with
intuition, concentration, works, or at
least renunciation*

Whoever pledge all works to me,
Who hold me very dear,
Who bring me meditative love
With discipline sincere,
To them I come with rescue prompt;
I save them from the sea
Of lives that end in death, while they
Fix every thought on me.

Then fix your brain on me alone,
Reflective thought on me;
So shall you dwell in me at last
With no uncertainty.

And if the wavering thought rebels,
Prince of a conquering line,

The Bhagavad-Gita

By concentrated study strive
To sink your life in mine.

If concentration fails, submit
Yourself to works' direction;
Since he who works as unto me,
May also win perfection.

(10)

If even so you fail, if joy
In me be not increased,
Renounce the fruit of every work—
Control your soul at least.

For wisdom ever teaches
What study never can;
And self-communion reaches
Beyond shrewd wisdom's span:
Self-counsel will engender
A spirit free from greed
For fruits of labor, render
The man serene indeed.

The reward is Krishna's love

The man who hates no living thing,
Kind, patient, and humane,
Unselfish, unpretentious, calm
In pleasure as in pain,
Content, controlled, and disciplined,
From wavering fancies free,

·[96].

The Twelfth Canto

Whose brain and intellect and love
Are mine, is dear to me.

Abhorring none, by none abhorred,
Whom fear and fever flee
With triumph and intolerance,
He too is dear to me.

(15)

He who, uncalculating, deft,
Scorning ambition's fee,
Impartial, pure, and unperturbed,
Loves me, is dear to me.

And he who neither grieves nor yearns,
Released from hate and glee,
Devotedly renouncing good
And ill, is dear to me.

Who looks alike on foe and friend,
Pain, pleasure, heat and cold,
Who levels honor and disgrace,
Whom no attachments hold,

With equal thought for praise and blame,
Content with what may be,
Devout, firm, silent, and unhoused—
That man is dear to me.

And they who pay (as here made clear)
Immortal virtue's fee,
Whose love and zeal and faith I feel,
Are wondrous dear to me.

(20)

·[97].

The Thirteenth Canto

CANTO XIII

*The body, called the field; the soul,
called the knower of the field; and
knowledge, which consists in right
discrimination between them*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

This body, Arjuna, is named
“The field” for learnèd ends;
And “knower of the field” is called
The soul that comprehends.

To know the knower and the field,
The one true knowledge yields;
And know me, valiant Arjuna,
As knower of all fields.

Now learn concisely of the field,
Its nature, phases, source;
Learn also what the knower is,
His character and force.

Of this the seers, in divers hymns,
Delighted once to sing;

And well-known philosophic texts
Show cogent reasoning.

The constituents of the field

The unmanifest, the elements,
Intellect, ego, brain,
Five powers of sense, and functions five,
Perception’s fivefold plane, (5)

Pain, pleasure, consciousness, desire,
Hate, unity, and pride—
Subsume the field concisely, both
Intact and modified.

The constituents of wisdom

A spirit modest, just, sincere,
A generous, patient soul,
Respect for teachers, purity,
Steadfastness, self-control,

A mind unpricked by things of sense
And free from vauntings vain,
Clear view of evils found in birth,
Death, age, disease, and pain,

Detachment, independence of
Wife, children, house, and things,
Thought equable in welcome and
Unwelcome happenings,

The Bhagavad-Gita

Unwavering devotion, sure
Of me as highest good,
Distaste for social gatherings,
A love of solitude, (10)

Absorption in the Oversoul,
The simple power to prize
Truth's essence—this is wisdom, and
What differs, is unwise.

The characteristics of living knowledge

I now explain what object is
Worth knowing, being rated
As surety of immortal life—
The Spirit uncreated,
Whereof "It is" and "It is not"
Are both untruly stated.

In hands and feet ubiquitous,
And in unnumbered eyes,
In heads, mouths, ears for all the world,
Its omnipresence lies.

Supporting, without contact, all;
Enjoying things of sense
Without an organ; matter-free,
Yet with experience;

Though moving, still; without, and yet
Within all things that are;

The Thirteenth Canto

Too subtle for perception; near
At hand, yet distant far; (15)

Though undivided, yet it seems
To act through living flesh;
Supporting life, devouring life,
Creating life afresh.

It is the light of lights; the dark
It only can dispel;
'Tis wisdom's self, and wisdom's hope,
And wisdom's goal as well;
And in the heart of everyone
It dearly loves to dwell.

With due concision, such are field,
Wisdom, and wisdom's fee;
My devotee who comprehends
Is fit to enter Me.

The nature of matter and soul

Next, learn of matter and of soul
Which both precede creation;
Discern then matter's elements
And curious mutation.

Production, product, agency
Are matter's set domain;
The soul endures experience
Of pleasure and of pain. (20)

The Bhagavad-Gita

The soul, in matter dwelling, tastes
That elemental food;
Taste so acquired results in births
From evil wombs or good.

Indwelling thus, the lofty soul
Is named the self, or he
Who tastes, supports, rules, witnesses,
Or suffers what may be.

Whatever be his life, the man
Who comprehends the worth
Of matter, elements, and soul,
Endures no further birth.

The different roads to salvation

Some find the self within the self
Through self-communion still;
A second group, through intellect;
And others through the will;
While some, through discipline of works,
The needful task fulfil.

And some, less gifted, worship that
Whereof their ears have heard;
They also vanquish death, who trust
The authoritative Word. (25)

The Thirteenth Canto

*Discrimination between the field and the
knower of the field is salvation*

Whenever moving things or still
Are seen new life to yield,
Perceive a combination of
A knower and his field.

Who sees in all the lord of all,
Sees level life proceed
Immortal in mortality,
That man has sight indeed.

Discovering the Lord supreme
At home in every soul,
The self no longer wrongs the self,
So wins the highest goal.

When man discerns all actions done
Through matter's power alone,
By him the passive spectator—
The soul—is truly known.

He wins his Spirit home, when he
Perceives how difference
Melts into unity, and takes
Diverse appearance thence. (30)

Soul, changeless, passive, and supreme,
Discarnate, uncreated,

The Bhagavad-Gita

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That elemental food;
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•[102].

The Thirteenth Canto

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Through matter's power alone,
By him the passive spectator—
The soul—is truly known.

He wins his Spirit home, when he
Perceives how difference
Melts into unity, and takes
Diverse appearance thence. (30)

Soul, changeless, passive, and supreme,
Discarnate, uncreated,

•[103].

May dwell within the body, yet
Be uncontaminated.

As ether penetrates the whole
Yet subtly shrinks from stain,
So soul is stainless in its wide
Corporeal domain.

The sun is single, yet to him
All darknesses must yield:
And so, brave prince, one knower can
Illuminate his field.

Distinguishing the knower and
The field with wisdom's eye,
And life's release from matter, man
Attains the goal most high.

GANTO XIV

*Krishna is the mystical father
of all beings*

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Once more I tell that wisdom which
Of wisdoms is the best,
Through which all seers have passed beyond
This life to perfect rest.

They gain a likeness to myself,
Such wisdom still amassing:
They are not born when worlds are born,
Nor pained when worlds are passing.

The mighty Spirit is the womb
Wherein I lay the seed:
Such is the origin of life,
O prince of Bharat's breed.

Whatever mothers seem to bear
This world of form entire,
The mighty Spirit is the womb;
And I, the seeding sire.

Goodness, passion, and darkness

Now goodness, passion, darkness roam
As elements in matter's home;
In bodies, hero, their control
Forever fetters changeless soul. (5)

And goodness, bringing light and health,
Is luminously bright;
It fetters by attachment to
High wisdom and delight.

While in ambitious passion, greed
Self-interested lurks;
It fetters soul, brave hero, by
An eagerness for works.

But all-bewildering darkness springs
From folly's deepest deep;
It fetters soul by heedlessness,
By indolence, and sleep.

Thus goodness, passion, darkness dense
Attach by joy, works, negligence.

When goodness conquers passion and
The darkness, it prevails;
So passion, or so darkness rules,
When its twin rival fails. (10)

When wisdom's clarifying lamp
Shines bright at all the gates

With which this body is supplied,
Goodness predominates.

Action, a restless zeal for works,
Strong appetite, and greed
Appear when passion dominates,
O bull of Bharat's breed.

Murkiness, apathy, and sloth,
Bewildered judgments wrong,
Appear, O joy of Kuru's line,
When darkness is too strong.

If goodness dominates a man,
Then, when the body dies,
The soul attains a stainless world
Where all are wondrous wise.

In passion dying, he is born
Where busybodies rule;
And if he dies in darkness, he
Is mothered by a fool. (15)

From goodness issues work well done,
Serenely free from stain;
Stupidity is darkness' fruit;
And passion's fruit is pain.

From goodness, wisdom comes to birth;
From passion issues greed;
From darkness, sloth, perplexity,
Stupidity proceed.

The good rise high; the passionate
 Remain on middle ground;
The dark, in matter's meanest part
 Entangled fast, are downed.

When sages see no actor save
The elements, and see
The soul beyond the elements,
They enter into me.

Transcending these three elements
Within the body, soul
Set free from birth, death, age, and pain,
Wins its immortal goal. (20)

The character of him who is beyond goodness, passion, and darkness

ARJUNA SAID:

How recognize, O Lord, the man
Who is not matter's slave?
Or how does he transcend the three?
And how does he behave?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Light, and activity, brave prince,
And dull perplexity
He does not hate when present, nor
Desire them when they flee.

Like one who sits indifferent by,
From matter's impact safe,
He sees the elements at work,
Is calm, and does not chafe.

Then praise and censure, pleasure, pain
Find him serenely bold;
The glad and sad he rates alike,
A clod, a stone, and gold.

He looks alike on foe and friend,
On honor and offense;
Renounces all ambition; so
Transcends the elements.

(25)

And he who worships Me with strict,
Fond thoughts that never roam,
Transcends these elements, and grows
Fit for his Spirit home.

For I am Spirit's base, without
Mortality's alloy;
The base of endless virtue, of
Invariable joy.

The Fifteenth Canto

CANTO XV

The tree of life

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

With roots in heaven, thence branching down,
The eternal banyan grows,
With hymns as leaves. Who knows that tree,
The heart of scripture knows.

Upward and down stretch branches, fed
By matter's elements;
The lower roots entwine to form
Reticulations dense
That tangle men in labor's net;
The twigs are things of sense.

Not so its form, beginning, end,
And soil on earth are seen.
When those tough roots are severed by
Detachment's sword-blade keen,

Then seek that bourne whence none return
Who win thereto, who can

[110]

Declare: "I take my refuge in
This primal soul of man
From which the flood of ordered life
Flowed forth when time began."

When base attachment, folly, pride,
Desire have run their course,
When opposites of pleasure and
Affliction forfeit force,
Man in the Oversoul is blest:
Clear-eyed, he wins abiding rest. (5)

Manifested life is but a part of life

In that high home, no sun is seen,
No moon has need to shine,
Nor any fire. They turn not back
Who reach that home of mine.

All living souls proceed from me
Immortal. They remain
A space, and draw from matter five
Sense-organs and a brain.

With these the body's lord in time
Departs again to roam
As roams a breeze with perfumes snatched
Each from its native home.

Sight, hearing, touch, and taste, and smell
He dominates; and hence

[111]

The Bhagavad-Gita

Enjoys through them and through the brain
The varied world of sense.

While he enjoys the things of sense,
Or deigns to stay, or fly,
The blinded see him not; but some
Perceive with wisdom's eye. (10)

The saint who strives discovers him
Within the self. But he
Who does not rule his spirit, strives
In vain and foolishly.

Which in its fulness is in Krishna

In glory that is in the sun,
And in the moon, and fire,
Behold my glory, shining on
This world of life entire.

I animate the earth, support
All creatures by my powers;
And, as the virile king of plants,
Give life to all that flowers.

I am the vital fire within
All breathing bodies; blent
With outward breath and inward, I
Digest all nourishment.

Wisdom and memory are mine,
False judgments to dispel;

•[112].

The Fifteenth Canto

I know all scriptures' sense and pith;
Of me all scriptures tell;
And in the heart of everyone
I dearly love to dwell. (15)

Two spirits move this present world:
The first is that which ranges
Through all the forms of finite life;
The second knows no changes.

Beyond them both, another dwells,
Called Soul transcendent, or
The immanent supporter, the
Eternal governor.

Since I transcend the first and rule
The second as his lord,
My name on earth is Man most high,
And in the sacred word.

Who knows me thus as Man most high,
Knows all. And fancy-free,
He brings devotion, noble prince,
Brings all he has to me.

This is the central mystery;
Thereto when man has won,
O blameless soldier, he is wise,
Has done what need be done. (20)

•[113].

The Sixteenth Canto

GANTO XVI

The nature of the godlike

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

A generous spirit, upright, strict;
Pluck; purity within;
Study; self-conquest; sacrifice;
Strong, wise self-discipline;

A truthful spirit, slow to wrath,
Detached, just, peaceful, kind;
Good-will to life; a lack of greed;
A shy, firm, gentle mind;

A radiant spirit, patient, pure;
A loyal valor sage—
Are his, brave prince, succeeding to
The godlike heritage.

Pride, wrath, conceit, hypocrisy,
Harsh thought, and judgment slack
Descend on him whose birth entails
The fate demoniac.

The godlike fate enfranchises,
The impish fetters man.
Grieve not, brave soldier. You were born
To test the godlike plan. (5)

The nature and fate of the demoniac

There are two races in the world,
The impish, the divine;
The godlike having been described,
The imps are to define.

These impish persons cannot act
Nor leave the world alone;
To them no truth, no character,
No purity is known.

They say there is no God, no truth
In life, no basic laws,
No mutual dependence, naught
But greed as final cause.

They obstinately lose their souls
But use their petty wit
In cruel deeds, destroying life
And ever hating it.

They sail the seas of lust, equipped
With passion, pride, deceit:
Perverted are their purposes;
Their actions are not sweet. (10)

Till death cries halt, they lucubrate
Immense ambitions fond.
Desires engulf them; they believe
That nothing lies beyond.

Hope's hundred meshes tangle them;
They sink in wrath and lust;
To satisfy desire, they seek
Great hoards of wealth unjust.

"Here's something that I got today,
And that I'll get tomorrow;
This money's mine, and more will come:
I shall not need to borrow.

"I killed that man I didn't like,
And I will kill the next.
I set a gorgeous table; I
Am perfect, strong, unvexed.

"Does any rival me in birth?
I'll make a sacrifice,
Be very generous, enjoy
Myself. I have the price."
Such inebriety of thought
Inspires their foolish vice. (15)

So fluttering from plan to plan
While greed and passion swell,
Enmeshed, ensnared in folly's web,
They plunge to filthy hell.

Fanatically proud of wealth,
Stiff-necked, and self-esteeming,
They make pretended sacrifice
Deceitful, unbeseeming.

In pride, wrath, passion, violence,
And self-conceit they labor,
Malignant, hating Me within
Themselves and in their neighbor.

These bitter, base, and brutal foes
I evermore send back
(Through life's recurrent round) to birth
In wombs demoniac.

And so, conceived in impishness,
Perplexed from birth to birth,
They do not come to me, but tread
A lower spot than earth— (20)

A hell whose triple gate is named
Passion and Greed and Hate,
Destructive of the soul of man:
Oh, shun that triple gate!

Oh, shun the triple gate of gloom,
Prince of a famous line,
Work out your soul's salvation, and
Attain the goal divine!

But he who scorns the holy law
Through headstrong, fond design,

Will miss perfection, happiness,
And final goal divine.

Then make the Law your guiding law
To fix the wrong and right:
So do your earthly task, your mind
Illumined by that light.

CANTO XVII

*The three kinds of faith, depending on
goodness, passion, and darkness*

ARJUNA SAID:

Some sacrifice without the law,
Yet full of faith. And should
Their state be reckoned, Krishna, as
Dark, passionate, or good?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Three faiths there are, and each is stamped
With nature's living mark:
I now describe them by the names
Good, passionate, and dark.

From native nature every life
Its special faith receives;
For man is fashioned from his faith,
And is what he believes.

The good serve gods; the passionate
Serve troll and goblin hosts;

And some—the dark—bring sacrifice
To dead men and to ghosts.

Some practice grim austerities
That wrench the scripture's sense
With self-conceit, hypocrisy,
Lust, passion, violence. (5)

They torture matter's elements
And me who dwell within
Their bodies, following a mad,
An impish discipline.

The three kinds of food

I now describe the kind of food
That pleases one of three;
Their offerings; austerities;
And threefold charity.

Where vigor, life, power, comfort, health,
Content are strengthened, food
Bland, solid, cordial, savory
Is relished by the good.

Foods bitter, pungent, salt, and hot,
That bite, burn, animate,
That cause discomfort, pain, disease,
Delight the passionate.

The darkness-dominated still
The cravings of the maw

With leavings, things impure or stale,
Decaying, tasteless, raw. (10)

The three kinds of sacrifice

When sacrifice is offered up
In no self-seeking mood
But dutifully, lawfully,
That sacrifice is good.

Where there is selfish tendency
Or ostentatious fashion,
We recognize, most noble prince,
The sacrifice of passion.

Where text and fee and gifts of food
Are lacking, where the mark
Of faith is absent, and of law,
The sacrifice is dark.

The three kinds of penance

Pure manners, upright, harmless, chaste;
Homage to sages wise,
To teachers, Brahmans, gods—that way
The body's penance lies.

Speech pleasant, friendly, true, whereby
Excitement is not stirred,
And constant use of holy texts—
Is penance of the word. (15)

The Bhagavad-Gita

Sedateness, silence, self-control,
Consideration kind,
And inner purity, compose
The penance of the mind.

This triple penance, done by men
With lofty faith endued
And self-forgetful discipline,
Deserves the name of good.

A penance arrogant, or done
For honors, pride, or state,
Unfocussed and impermanent,
Is here dubbed passionate.

When penance is self-torture and
Conceived in folly stark,
Or aimed at ruin of a foe,
It takes the name of dark.

The three kinds of charity

A gift dispensed in duty's name
To one who cannot pay,
Well-placed, well-timed, and well-bestowed,
Is good, the sages say. (20)

When gifts are given in hope of gain
Or for some counter-fee,
Or proffered under self-constraint,
Note passion's charity.

The Seventeenth Canto

Gifts offered with courtesy
Or insolently thrown,
Ill-placed, ill-timed, and ill-bestowed,
As darkness' gifts are known.

The mystical utterance om tat sat

The Spirit's triple symbol is
The mystic "Om, That, True"
And Brahmans, scriptures, sacrifice
Stand from of old therethrough.

Hence, they who speak the Spirit's speech
Begin each sacrifice,
Each lawful gift and self-denial
With "Om" as their device.

Denial, gift, and sacrifice
In varied kinds are brought
With "That" by them who yearn for peace
And spurn self-seeking thought. (25)

"True" designates reality
And also saintliness;
The term defines, most noble prince,
Auspicious work no less.

Now constancy in sacrifice,
Denial, gifts, is "True"
While works directed thither bear
The designation, too.

Where faith is lacking, sacrifice,
Gifts, works, and penance miss—
As being “Untrue”—every aim
In yonder world and this.

GANTO XVIII

Renunciation is to be practiced, not toward work, but toward the fruits of work

ARJUNA SAID:

O great destroyer of your foes,
I seek illumination:
Just what may resignation mean?
And what, renunciation?

THE BLESSED ONE SAID:

Resigning interested tasks
The wise call resignation;
Renouncing every fruit of work
They name renunciation.

Some sages ban all labor, as
Involving certain sin;
Some counsel works of sacrifice,
Gifts, bleak self-discipline.

Give ear, O tiger-man, while I
With certainty define

The Bhagavad-Gita

Renunciation's triple form,
O prince of Bharat's line.

The works of charity, denial,
And sacrifice abide;
Such works must ever be performed,
May not be thrust aside:
By gifts, denial, sacrifice
The wise are purified. (5)

Yet even these works must be performed
With no desire of gain,
With no attachment—learn from me
This truth most high and plain.

Neglect of the appointed task
Is wrong. It bears the mark
Of insufficient sanity,
Deserves its name of dark.

Neglect of work through languid fear
Because the job is hard,
Is passionate, and fails to win
Renouncing's just reward.

But when a man performs his
With one clear thought: "I
Without attachment, Arjuna,
In no self-seeking mood—
Renunciation is his
Is nominate

The Eighteenth Canto

He does not cling to pleasant work,
In painful feels no pain,
When he renounces all reward
And wisdom grows amain;
So goodness enters into him,
And doubt is cut in twain. (10)

For no man with a body can
All toilsome labor shirk;
But he is called renoucer, who
Renounces fruits of work.

Desired, or undesired, or mixed
Is labor's fruit; and when
Death comes, it clings to selfish folk,
Not to renouncing men.

*Work is a function of matter; the
soul should be free*

Next, sturdy soldier, learn from me
The causative conditions
(Five in the Sankhya text) that bring
All works to their fruitions:

The body; sensitive organ; and
The acts appropriate
Thereto; the active agent; while
The fifth of them is fate.

Whatever act a man performs
With body, speech, or wit,

Renunciation's triple form,
O prince of Bharat's line.

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And sacrifice abide;
Such works must ever be performed,
May not be thrust aside:
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The wise are purified. (5)

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With no desire of gain,
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Of insufficient sanity,
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Neglect of work through languid fear
Because the job is hard,
Is passionate, and fails to win
Renouncing's just reward.

But when a man performs his task
With one clear thought: "I should,"
Without attachment, Arjuna,
In no self-seeking mood—
Renunciation such as this
Is nominated good.

He does not cling to pleasant work,
In painful feels no pain,
When he renounces all reward
And wisdom grows amain;
So goodness enters into him,
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Whatever act a man performs
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The Bhagavad-Gita

In virtue or perversity,
These five are cause of it. (15)

If any dream (since this is so)
It be his soul that acts—
His lonely soul—he is unwise,
Misapprehends the facts.

He then whose inner being shuns
The egotistic way,
Whose thought is uncontaminant,
May slay, and slay, and slay:
He kills a world, and yet kills naught,
Unfettered by a selfish thought.

Thing, knower, knowledge are the three
Impelling instruments
Of work; while agent, action, tool
Compose its full contents.

But matter's elements divide
All knowledge into three;
So agents; and activities;
Now learn details from me.

The three kinds of knowledge

One changeless essence permeates
All life and can elude
What seems division; knowing this,
Your knowledge is called good. (20)

[128].

The Eighteenth Canto

While knowledge, viewing as diverse
The lives that animate
This world of seeming-varied forms,
Is labelled passionate.

Ill-grounded knowledge, petty, wrong,
That cramps within the frame
Of one small object all this world—
Is dark, and earns the name.

The three kinds of work

Work done by one without desire
Of gain, because he should,
Without attachment, passion, hate
Receives the name of good.

The work of one who hugs desire
In egotistic fashion,
With bustling effort brought to pass,
Is work inspired by passion.

Insane, inconsequential works,
Not heeding loss or wrong
Or limitation of one's powers,
To darkness' realm belong. (25)

The three kinds of agent
An agent vaunting not himself,
From all attachments freed,

[129].

The Bhagavad-Gita

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These five are cause of it. (15)

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The Eighteenth Canto

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Or limitation of one's powers,
To darkness' realm belong. (25)

The three kinds of agent

An agent vaunting not himself,
From all attachments freed,

The Bhagavad-Gita

Still following where energy
And resolution lead,
Unmoved in failure and success,
Is good—is good indeed.

An agent feeling grief or glee,
Impure and avaricious,
Who seeks rewards for doing work,
A libertine, and vicious
In wronging life, is passionate,
As judged by the judicious.

An agent tricky, indolent,
Unduly obstinate,
Dishonest, and undisciplined,
Even illiterate,
Procrastinating, woebegone—
Is of the dark estate.

The three kinds of intelligence

Now, Arjun, learn the triple form
Of man's intelligence
And fortitude, determined by
The same three elements.

Intelligence of when and what
To do or leave alone;
Of danger, safety; bondage and
Release—as good is known.

(30)

[130]

The Eighteenth Canto

Intelligence that is confused
In judging right and wrong,
Uncertain when to act or stop,
Bears passion's imprint strong.

A darkness-dimmed intelligence
Takes evil as its law;
Or can, from any set of facts,
False inferences draw.

The three kinds of fortitude

When acts of brain and breath and sense
Obey a fortitude
Unwavering through discipline,
Such fortitude is good.

Pursuit of virtue, love, and wealth
In self-promoting mood,
Yet earnestly, brave Arjuna,
Is passion's fortitude.

But fortitude that clings to sleep,
Fear, sorrow, folly stark,
Discouragement—is witless and
Deserves its name of dark.

(35)

The three kinds of happiness

Learn next, O bull of Bharat's breed,
Three kinds of happiness.

[131]

The Bhagavad-Gita

That which, to custom grown, attains
The end of all distress,

Which is as poison first, and at
The last as nectar seen,
Is good. Such happiness is born
In intellects serene.

That which the senses' union with
Their objects can create
(A nectar that to poison turns)
Is known as passionate.

That which at first and to the last
Bewilders soul and sense,
Is known as dark. It comes to birth
In sleep, sloth, negligence.

The various duties of the four castes

No life among the gods in heaven,
No life on earth may be
Released from matter's elements,
The often-mentioned three. (40)

Caste-duty hangs from matter; each
Is to one duty born:
The Brahmans, soldiers, middle class,
And even serfs forlorn.

The Brahman's native duty is
Faith, truth, an upright mind,

The Eighteenth Canto

Peace, penance, purity, control,
Wisdom, forbearance kind.

The soldier's native duty is
To stand his ground in fight,
And valiant, brilliant, generous, firm,
Deft exercise of might.

The middle class is duty-bound
To cattle, plough, and trade;
While by the serf his duty is
In menial service paid.

*A man should do his own duty, without
thought of reward*

A man grows perfect when he clings
To his peculiar work:
Learn how he finds perfection when
He toils and does not shirk. (45)

Man finds perfection when his works
As unto Him are done
From whom all life came forth, by whom
Creation's web was spun.

Far better botch your job than gain
Perfection in your neighbor's:
No sin attains the man who works
At his appointed labors.

The Bhagavad-Gita

Let none reject his native work,
Though little to admire;
For blemish clouds adventures, as
The smoke beclouds the fire.

Attachment done, his soul subdued,
His longings vanished, he
Grows perfect through renouncing, and
His labor leaves him free.

Thus he attains the eternal Spirit

Learn briefly now, most noble prince,
How he, grown perfect, wins
The Spirit as his resting-place:
True wisdom here begins. (50)

With intellect grown pure, with soul
Held firmly subjugate,
Abandoning the things of sense,
Of passion void, and hate,
In eating moderate, detached,
Enjoying solitude,
In self-communion constant, with
Speech, body, mind subdued,
When vauntings and possessive whims,
Desire and anger cease,
And when from self-conceit he finds
(And violence) release,

[134]

The Eighteenth Canto

When "mine" is meaningless, he wins
The Spirit, wins to peace.

And is united with Krishna

To Spirit grown, serene of soul,
From grief and longing free,
He, level-eyed to all that lives,
Gives his high love to Me.

Through love he knows me as I am,
And what my reach may be;
So knowing me in very truth,
He enters into me. (55)

Still laboring, yet all to me
Confiding, through my grace
He comes to an immutable,
Eternal resting-place.

Pledge every work to me; to me
Pledge all your heart's endeavor;
With discipline of intellect,
Give thought to me forever.

*Man is free to choose salvation
or perdition*

Give thought to me, and through my grace
Pass perils bristling high;
If, deaf in self-conceit, you fail
To hearken, you shall die.

[135]

The Bhagavad-Gita

In self-conceit you frame the thought
 “I will not fight”—in vain;
Your soldier’s nature, though you strive
 Against it, will constrain.

Your work was born when you were born
 And you are bound to do it;
For though, insane, you would refrain,
 You will be driven to it. (60)

The Lord, brave soldier, has his home
 In every living heart;
His magic mechanism whirls
 Each puppet through his part.

With all your mind, brave Arjun, find
 In him dismay’s surcease:
His sovereign grace will grant a place
 Of high, enduring peace.

So have I spoken, so revealed
 The secret’s final fact:
Consider everything, then choose;
 And having chosen, act!

Yet hear once more my lofty speech,
 My secret’s secret heart:
Peculiar love impels me thus
 My blessing to impart.

Give worship, mind, love, sacrifice
 To me! Oh, come to me!

The Eighteenth Canto

You are beloved; my promises
Are simple verity. (65)

Forget set duties then. Let me
Your total trust receive.
I will deliver you from all
Sin's blemish. Do not grieve.

The reward of following and disseminating the doctrine

With scoffers may you never share
This lofty doctrine's trial,
With them who fail in simple faith,
In love, or self-denial.

He who reveals the secret's heart
To men who worship me,
Shall find in me his love's reward
With no uncertainty.

No man among the men who live
Does dearer work than he;
And none among mankind on earth
Shall be more dear to me.

This virtuous dialogue of ours
If any study, he
Has brought me wisdom's sacrifice:
I speak with certainty.

And men of unmalicious faith
Who hear what others tell

Thereof, shall gain bright worlds of peace
Where righteous beings dwell.

And have you heard the doctrine with
A concentrated mind?
Is all unwise perplexity,
Bold soldier, left behind?

Conclusion

ARJUNA SAID:

Perplexity is done;
True memory rewon;
My doubts are overpast;
My purpose now stands fast;
Your grace, unshaken one,
Prevails. Your will be done.

SANJAYA SAID:

Such dialogue I heard, such words
Of Krishna, spoken to
Brave Arjun. It was marvellous;
It thrilled me through and through.

This high, this secret discipline
I heard through Vyasa's grace;
Heard Krishna, magic's master, speak;
Saw Krishna face to face. (75)

That wondrous, righteous dialogue
Between the noble twain,

O King, is not to be forgot;
I thrill, and thrill again.

Again, O King, I see His form
Surpassing the divine:
A great amazement enters me;
An awful joy is mine.

Where archer Arjun stands, where stands
The Lord most wise, most pure,
There glory, grandeur, victory,
And steadfast law are sure.

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THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

Translated from the Sanskrit by

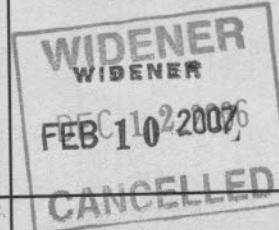
ARTHUR W. RYDER

A BEAUTIFUL translation, done with the wisdom and understanding that made *The Panchatantra* notable, of the finest ethical and religious product of non-Buddhistic Indian religious thought. Following as far as possible the meter and form of the original—written more than two-thousand years ago—the whole poem of eighteen cantos is a magnificent sermon on duty addressed by divine Krishna to Prince Arjuna.^u

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