

Chapter 18 (Of Religion by Deliverance and Renunciation)

Chapter 18: Of Religion by Deliverance and Renunciation

Arjuna. Fain would I better know, Thou Glorious One!

The very truth — Heart's Lord! — of Sannyas,

Abstention; and Renunciation, Lord!

Tyaga; and what separates these twain!

Krishna. The poets rightly teach that Sannyas

Is the foregoing of all acts which spring

Out of desire; and their wisest say

Tyaga is renouncing fruit of acts.

There be among the saints some who have held

All action sinful, and to be renounced;

And some who answer, "Nay! the goodly acts—

As worship, penance, alms- must be performed!"

Hear now My sentence, Best of Bharatas!

'Tis well set forth, O Chaser of thy Foes!

Renunciation is of threefold form,

And Worship, Penance, Alms, not to be stayed;

Nay, to be gladly done; for all those three

Are purifying waters for true souls!

Yet must be practised even those high works

In yielding up attachment, and all fruit

Produced by works. This is My judgment, Prince!

This My insuperable and fixed decree!

Abstaining from a work by right prescribed

Never is meet! So to abstain doth spring

From "Darkness," and Delusion teacheth it.

Abstaining from a work grievous to flesh,
When one saith "'Tis unpleasing!" this is null!
Such an one acts from "passion;" nought of gain
Wins his Renunciation! But, Arjun!
Abstaining from attachment to the work,
Abstaining from rewardment in the work,
While yet one doeth it full faithfully,
Saying, "'Tis right to do!" that is "true" act
And abstinence! Who doeth duties so,
Unvexed if his work fail, if it succeed
Unflattered, in his own heart justified,
Quit of debates and doubts, his is "true" act:
For, being in the body, none may stand
Wholly aloof from act; yet, who abstains
From profit of his acts is abstinent.
The fruit of labours, in the fives to come,
Is threefold for all men,— Desirable,
And Undesirable, and mixed of both;
But no fruit is at all where no work was.
Hear from me, Long-armed Lord! the makings five
Which go to every act, in Sankhya taught
As necessary. First the force; and then
The agent; next, the various instruments;
Fourth, the especial effort; fifth, the God.
What work soever any mortal doth
Of body, mind, or speech, evil or good,

By these five doth he that. Which being thus,
Whoso, for lack of knowledge, seeth himself
As the sole actor, knoweth nought at all
And seeth nought. Therefore, I say, if one—
Holding aloof from self- with unstained mind
Should slay all yonder host, being bid to slay,
He doth not slay; he is not bound thereby!
Knowledge, the thing known, and the mind which knows,
These make the threefold starting-ground of act.
The act, the actor, and the instrument,
These make the threefold total of the deed.
But knowledge, agent, act, are differenced
By three dividing qualities. Hear now
Which be the qualities dividing them.
There is "true" Knowledge. Learn thou it is this:
To see one changeless Life in all the Lives,
And in the Separate, One Inseparable.
There is imperfect Knowledge: that which sees
The separate existences apart,
And, being separated, holds them real.
There is false Knowledge: that which blindly clings
To one as if 'twere all, seeking no Cause,
Deprived of light, narrow, and dull, and "dark."
There is "right" Action: that which — being enjoined —
Is wrought without attachment, passionlessly,
For duty, not for love, nor hate, nor gain.
There is "vain" Action: that which men pursue

Aching to satisfy desires, impelled
By sense of self, with all-absorbing stress:
This is of Rajas- passionate and vain.
There is "dark" Action: when one doth a thing
Heedless of issues, heedless of the hurt
Or wrong for others, heedless if he harm
His own soul- 'tis of Tamas, black and bad!
There is the "rightful" doer. He who acts
Free from self-seeking, humble, resolute,
Steadfast, in good or evil hap the same,
Content to do aright — he "truly" acts.
There is th' "impassioned" doer. He that works
From impulse, seeking profit, rude and bold
To overcome, unchastened; slave by turns
Of sorrow and of joy: of Rajas he!
And there be evil doers; loose of heart,
Low-minded, stubborn, fraudulent, remiss,
Dull, slow, despondent- children of the "dark."
Hear, too, of Intellect and Steadfastness
The threefold separation, Conqueror-Prince!
How these are set apart by Qualities.
Good is the Intellect which comprehends
The coming forth and going back of life,
What must be done, and what must not be done,
What should be feared, and what should not be feared,
What binds and what emancipates the soul:

That is of Sattwan, Prince! of "soothfastness."

Marred is the Intellect which, knowing right

And knowing wrong, and what is well to do

And what must not be done, yet understands

Nought with firm mind, nor as the calm truth is:

This is of Rajas, Prince! and "passionate!"

Evil is Intellect which, wrapped in gloom,

Looks upon wrong as right, and sees all things

Contrariwise of Truth. O Pritha's Son!

That is of Tamas, "dark" and desperate!

Good is the steadfastness whereby a man

Masters his beats of heart, his very breath

Of life, the action of his senses; fixed

In never-shaken faith and piety:

That is of Sattwan, Prince! "soothfast" and fair!

Stained is the steadfastness whereby a man

Holds to his duty, purpose, effort, end,

For life's sake, and the love of goods to gain,

Arjuna! 'tis of Rajas, passion-stamped!

Sad is the steadfastness wherewith the fool

Cleaves to his sloth, his sorrow, and his fears,

His folly and despair. This — Pritha's Son! —

Is born of Tamas, "dark" and miserable!

Hear further, Chief of Bharatas! from Me

The threefold kinds of Pleasure which there be.

Good Pleasure is the pleasure that endures,

Banishing pain for aye; bitter at first

As poison to the soul, but afterward
Sweet as the taste of Amrit. Drink of that!
It springeth in the Spirit's deep content.
And painful Pleasure springeth from the bond
Between the senses and the sense-world. Sweet
As Amrit is its first taste, but its last
Bitter as poison. 'Tis of Rajas, Prince!
And foul and "dark" the Pleasure is which springs
From sloth and sin and foolishness; at first
And at the last, and all the way of life
The soul bewildering. 'Tis of Tamas, Prince!
For nothing lives on earth, nor 'midst the gods
In utmost heaven, but hath its being bound
With these three Qualities, by Nature framed.
The work of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas,
And Sudras, O thou Slayer of thy Foes!
Is fixed by reason of the Qualities
Planted in each:
A Brahman's virtues, Prince
Born of his nature, are serenity,
Self-mastery, religion, purity,
Patience, uprightness, learning, and to know
The truth of things which be. A Kshatriya's pride,
Born of his nature, lives in valour, fire,
Constancy, skilfulness, spirit in fight,
And open-handedness and noble mien,

As of a lord of men. A Vaisya's task,
Born with his nature, is to till the ground,
Tend cattle, venture trade. A Sudra's state,
Suiting his nature, is to minister.
Whoso performeth- diligent, content —
The work allotted him, whate'er it be,
Lays hold of perfectness! Hear how a man
Findeth perfection, being so content:
He findeth it through worship — wrought by work —
Of HIM that is the Source of all which lives,
Of HIM by Whom the universe was stretched.
Better thine own work is, though done with fault,
Than doing others' work, ev'n excellently.
He shall not fall in sin who fronts the task
Set him by Nature's hand! Let no man leave
His natural duty, Prince! though it bear blame!
For every work hath blame, as every flame
Is wrapped in smoke! Only that man attains
Perfect surcease of work whose work was wrought
With mind unfettered, soul wholly subdued,
Desires for ever dead, results renounced.
Learn from me, Son of Kunti! also this,
How one, attaining perfect peace, attains
BRAHM, the supreme, the highest height of all!
Devoted- with a heart grown pure, restrained
In lordly self-control, forgoing wiles
Of song and senses, freed from love and hate,

Dwelling 'mid solitudes, in diet spare,
With body, speech, and will tamed to obey,
Ever to holy meditation vowed,
From passions liberate, quit of the Self,
Of arrogance, impatience, anger, pride;
Freed from surroundings, quiet, lacking nought —
Such an one grows to oneness with the BRAHM;
Such an one, growing one with BRAHM, serene,
Sorrows no more, desires no more; his soul,
Equally loving all that lives, loves well
Me, Who have made them, and attains to Me.
By this same love and worship doth he know
Me as I am, how high and wonderful,
And knowing, straightway enters into Me.
And whatsoever deeds he doeth- fixed
In Me, as in his refuge — he hath won
For ever and for ever by My grace
Th' Eternal Rest! So win thou! In thy thoughts
Do all thou dost for Me! Renounce for Me!
Sacrifice heart and mind and will to Me!
Live in the faith of Me! In faith of Me
All dangers thou shalt vanquish, by My grace;
But, trusting to thyself and heeding not,
Thou can'st but perish! If this day thou say'st,
Relying on thyself, "I will not fight!"
Vain will the purpose prove! thy qualities

Would spur thee to the war. What thou dost shun,
Misled by fair illusions, thou wouldst seek
Against thy will, when the task comes to thee
Waking the promptings in thy nature set.
There lives a Master in the hearts of men
Maketh their deeds, by subtle pulling-strings,
Dance to what tune HE will. With all thy soul
Trust Him, and take Him for thy succour, Prince!
So- only so, Arjuna!- shalt thou gain —
By grace of Him — the uttermost repose,
The Eternal Place!
Thus hath been opened thee
This Truth of Truths, the Mystery more hid
Than any secret mystery. Meditate!
And- as thou wilt — then act!
Nay! but once more
Take My last word, My utmost meaning have!
Precious thou art to Me; right well-beloved!
Listen! tell thee for thy comfort this.
Give Me thy heart! adore Me! serve Me! cling
In faith and love and reverence to Me!
So shalt thou come to Me! I promise true,
For thou art sweet to Me!
And let go those —
Rites and writ duties! Fly to Me alone!
Make Me thy single refuge! will free
Thy soul from all its sins! Be of good cheer!

[Hide, the holy Krishna saith,
This from him that hath no faith,
Him that worships not, nor seeks
Wisdom's teaching when she speaks:
Hide it from all men who mock;
But, wherever, 'mid the flock
Of My lovers, one shall teach
This divinest, wisest, speech —
Teaching in the faith to bring
Truth to them, and offering
Of all honour unto Me —
Unto Brahma cometh he!
Nay, and nowhere shall ye find
Any man of all mankind
Doing dearer deed for Me;
Nor shall any dearer be
In My earth. Yea, furthermore,
Whoso reads this converse o'er,
Held by Us upon the plain,
Pondering piously and fain,
He hath paid Me sacrifice!
(Krishna speaketh in this wise!)
Yea, and whoso, full of faith,
Heareth wisely what it saith,
Heareth meekly,- when he dies,
Surely shall his spirit rise

To those regions where the Blest,
Free of flesh, in joyance rest.]
Hath this been heard by thee, O Indian Prince!
With mind intent? hath all the ignorance —
Which bred thy trouble — vanished, My Arjun?
Arjuna. Trouble and ignorance are gone! the Light
Hath come unto me, by Thy favour, Lord!
Now am I fixed! my doubt is fled away!
According to Thy word, so will I do!
Sanjaya. Thus gathered I the gracious speech of Krishna, O my King!
Thus have I told, with heart a-thrill, this wise and wondrous thing
By great Vyasa's learning writ, how Krishna's self made known
The Yoga, being Yoga's Lord. So is the high truth shown!
And aye, when I remember, O Lord my King, again
Arjuna and the God in talk, and all this holy strain,
Great is my gladness: when I muse that splendour, passing speech,
Of Hari, visible and plain, there is no tongue to reach
My marvel and my love and bliss. O Archer-Prince! all hail!
O Krishna, Lord of Yoga! surely there shall not fail
Blessing, and victory, and power, for Thy most mighty sake,
Where this song comes of Arjun, and how with God he spake.
HERE ENDS, WITH CHAPTER XVIII,
Entitled "Mokshasanyasayog,"
Or "The Book of Religion by Deliverance and Renunciation,"
THE BHAGAVAD-GITA.
THE END