

Chapter 6 (Of Religion of Self-Restraint)

Chapter 6: Of Religion of Self-Restraint

Krishna. Therefore, who doeth work rightful to do,

Not seeking gain from work, that man, O Prince!

Is Sanyasi and Yogi — both in one

And he is neither who lights not the flame

Of sacrifice, nor setteth hand to task.

Regard as true Renouncer him that makes

Worship by work, for who renounceth not

Works not as Yogin. So is that well said:

"By works the votary doth rise to faith,

And saintship is the ceasing from all works;

Because the perfect Yogin acts — but acts

Unmoved by passions and unbound by deeds,

Setting result aside.

Let each man raise

The Self by Soul, not trample down his Self,

Since Soul that is Self's friend may grow Self's foe.

Soul is Self's friend when Self doth rule o'er Self,

But Self turns enemy if Soul's own self

Hates Self as not itself.

The sovereign soul

Of him who lives self-governed and at peace

Is centred in itself, taking alike

Pleasure and pain; heat, cold; glory and shame.

He is the Yogi, he is Yukta, glad

With joy of light and truth; dwelling apart

Upon a peak, with senses subjugate
Where to the clod, the rock, the glistening gold
Show all as one. By this sign is he known
Being of equal grace to comrades, friends,
Chance-comers, strangers, lovers, enemies,
Aliens and kinsmen; loving all alike,
Evil or good.
Sequestered should he sit,
Steadfastly meditating, solitary,
His thoughts controlled, his passions laid away,
Quit of belongings. In a fair, still spot
Having his fixed abode, — not too much raised,
Nor yet too low, — let him abide, his goods
A cloth, a deerskin, and the Kusa-grass.
There, setting hard his mind upon The One,
Restraining heart and senses, silent, calm,
Let him accomplish Yoga, and achieve
Pureness of soul, holding immovable
Body and neck and head, his gaze absorbed
Upon his nose-end, rapt from all around,
Tranquil in spirit, free of fear, intent
Upon his Brahmacharya vow, devout,
Musing on Me, lost in the thought of Me.
That Yogin, so devoted, so controlled,
Comes to the peace beyond, — My peace, the peace
Of high Nirvana!

But for earthly needs
Religion is not his who too much fasts
Or too much feasts, nor his who sleeps away
An idle mind; nor his who wears to waste
His strength in vigils. Nay, Arjuna! I call
That the true piety which most removes
Earth-aches and ills, where one is moderate
In eating and in resting, and in sport;
Measured in wish and act; sleeping betimes,
Waking betimes for duty.
When the man,
So living, centres on his soul the thought
Straitly restrained — untouched internally
By stress of sense — then is he Yukta. See!
Steadfast a lamp burns sheltered from the wind;
Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind
Shut from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven.
When mind broods placid, soothed with holy wont;
When Self contemplates self, and in itself
Hath comfort; when it knows the nameless joy
Beyond all scope of sense, revealed to soul —
Only to soul! and, knowing, wavers not,
True to the farther Truth; when, holding this,
It deems no other treasure comparable,
But, harboured there, cannot be stirred or shook
By any gravest grief, call that state "peace,"
That happy severance Yoga; call that man

The perfect Yogin!
Steadfastly the will
Must toil thereto, till efforts end in ease,
And thought has passed from thinking. Shaking off
All longings bred by dreams of fame and gain,
Shutting the doorways of the senses close
With watchful ward; so, step by step, it comes
To gift of peace assured and heart assuaged,
When the mind dwells self-wrapped, and the soul broods
Cumberless. But, as often as the heart
Breaks — wild and wavering — from control, so oft
Let him re-curb it, let him rein it back
To the soul's governance; for perfect bliss
Grows only in the bosom tranquillised,
The spirit passionless, purged from offence,
Vowed to the Infinite. He who thus vows
His soul to the Supreme Soul, quitting sin,
Passes unhindered to the endless bliss
Of unity with Brahma. He so vowed,
So blended, sees the Life-Soul resident
In all things living, and all living things
In that Life-Soul contained. And whoso thus
Discerneth Me in all, and all in Me,
I never let him go; nor looseneth he
Hold upon Me; but, dwell he where he may,
Whate'er his life, in Me he dwells and lives,

Because he knows and worships Me, Who dwell
In all which lives, and cleaves to Me in all.
Arjuna! if a man sees everywhere —
Taught by his own similitude — one Life,
One Essence in the Evil and the Good,
Hold him a Yogi, yea! well perfected!
Arjuna. Slayer of Madhu! yet again, this Yog,
This Peace, derived from equanimity,
Made known by thee — I see no fixity
Therein, no rest, because the heart of men
Is unfixed, Krishna! rash, tumultuous,
Wilful and strong. It were all one, I think,
To hold the wayward wind, as tame man's heart.
Krishna. Hero long-armed! beyond denial, hard
Man's heart is to restrain, and wavering;
Yet may it grow restrained by habit, Prince!
By wont of self-command. This Yog, I say,
Cometh not lightly to th' ungoverned ones;
But he who will be master of himself
Shall win it, if he stoutly strive thereto.
Arjuna. And what road goeth he who, having faith,
Fails, Krishna! in the striving; falling back
From holiness, missing the perfect rule?
Is he not lost, straying from Brahma's light,
Like the vain cloud, which floats 'twixt earth and heaven
When lightning splits it, and it vanisheth?
Fain would I hear thee answer me herein,

Since, Krishna! none save thou can clear the doubt.

Krishna. He is not lost, thou Son of Pritha! No!

Nor earth, nor heaven is forfeit, even for him,

Because no heart that holds one right desire

Treadeth the road of loss! He who should fail,

Desiring righteousness, cometh at death

Unto the Region of the Just; dwells there

Measureless years, and being born anew,

Beginneth life again in some fair home

Amid the mild and happy. It may chance

He doth descend into a Yogin house

On Virtue's breast; but that is rare! Such birth

Is hard to be obtained on this earth, Chief!

So hath he back again what heights of heart

He did achieve, and so he strives anew

To perfectness, with better hope, dear Prince!

For by the old desire he is drawn on

Unwittingly; and only to desire

The purity of Yog is to pass

Beyond the Sabdabrahm, the spoken Ved.

But, being Yogi, striving strong and long,

Purged from transgressions, perfected by births

Following on births, he plants his feet at last

Upon the farther path. Such as one ranks

Above ascetics, higher than the wise,

Beyond achievers of vast deeds! Be thou

Yogi Arjuna! And of such believe,
Truest and best is he who worships Me
With inmost soul, stayed on My Mystery!
HERE ENDETH CHAPTER VI OF THE
BHAGAVAD-GITA,
Entitled "Atmasanyamayog,"
Or "The Book of Religion of Self-Restraint."