

## Chapter 2 (Of Doctrines)

### Chapter 2: Of Doctrines

Sanjaya. Him, filled with such compassion and such grief,

With eyes tear-dimmed, despondent, in stern words

The Driver, Madhusudan, thus addressed:

Krishna. How hath this weakness taken thee?

Whence springs

The inglorious trouble, shameful to the brave,

Barring the path of virtue? Nay, Arjun!

Forbid thyself to feebleness! it mars

Thy warrior-name! cast off the coward-fit!

Wake! Be thyself! Arise, Scourge of thy Foes!

Arjuna. How can I, in the battle, shoot with shafts

On Bhishma, or on Drona — O thou Chief! —

Both worshipful, both honourable men?

Better to live on beggar's bread

With those we love alive,

Than taste their blood in rich feasts spread,

And guiltily survive!

Ah! were it worse — who knows? — to be

Victor or vanquished here,

When those confront us angrily

Whose death leaves living drear?

In pity lost, by doubtings tossed,

My thoughts — distracted — turn

To Thee, the Guide I reverence most,

That I may counsel learn:

I know not what would heal the grief  
Burned into soul and sense,  
If I were earth's unchallenged chief —  
A god — and these gone thence!  
Sanjaya. So spake Arjuna to the Lord of Hearts,  
And sighing, "I will not fight!" held silence then.  
To whom, with tender smile, (O Bharata!)  
While the Prince wept despairing 'twixt those hosts,  
Krishna made answer in divinest verse:  
Krishna. Thou grieveest where no grief should be! thou speak'st  
Words lacking wisdom! for the wise in heart  
Mourn not for those that live, nor those that die.  
Nor I, nor thou, nor any one of these,  
Ever was not, nor ever will not be,  
For ever and for ever afterwards.  
All, that doth live, lives always! To man's frame  
As there come infancy and youth and age,  
So come there raisings-up and layings-down  
Of other and of other life-abodes,  
Which the wise know, and fear not. This that irks —  
Thy sense-life, thrilling to the elements —  
Bringing thee heat and cold, sorrows and joys,  
'Tis brief and mutable! Bear with it, Prince!  
As the wise bear. The soul which is not moved,  
The soul that with a strong and constant calm  
Takes sorrow and takes joy indifferently,

Lives in the life undying! That which is  
Can never cease to be; that which is not  
Will not exist. To see this truth of both  
Is theirs who part essence from accident,  
Substance from shadow. Indestructible,  
Learn thou! the Life is, spreading life through all;  
It cannot anywhere, by any means,  
Be anyway diminished, stayed, or changed.  
But for these fleeting frames which it informs  
With spirit deathless, endless, infinite,  
They perish. Let them perish, Prince! and fight!  
He who shall say, "Lo! I have slain a man!"  
He who shall think, "Lo! I am slain!" those both  
Know naught! Life cannot slay. Life is not slain!  
Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;  
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!  
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for  
ever;  
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it  
seems!  
Who knoweth it exhaustless, self-sustained,  
Immortal, indestructible, — shall such  
Say, "I have killed a man, or caused to kill?"  
Nay, but as when one layeth  
His worn-out robes away,  
And, taking new ones, sayeth,  
"These will I wear to-day!"

So putteth by the spirit  
Lightly its garb of flesh,  
And passeth to inherit  
A residence afresh.  
I say to thee weapons reach not the Life;  
Flame burns it not, waters cannot o'erwhelm,  
Nor dry winds wither it. Impenetrable,  
Unentered, unassailed, unharmed, untouched,  
Immortal, all-arriving, stable, sure,  
Invisible, ineffable, by word  
And thought uncompassed, ever all itself,  
Thus is the Soul declared! How wilt thou, then, —  
Knowing it so, — grieve when thou shouldst not grieve?  
How, if thou hearest that the man new-dead  
Is, like the man new-born, still living man —  
One same, existent Spirit — wilt thou weep?  
The end of birth is death; the end of death  
Is birth: this is ordained! and mournest thou,  
Chief of the stalwart arm! for what befalls  
Which could not otherwise befall? The birth  
Of living things comes unperceived; the death  
Comes unperceived; between them, beings perceive:  
What is there sorrowful herein, dear Prince?  
Wonderful, wistful, to contemplate!  
Difficult, doubtful, to speak upon!  
Strange and great for tongue to relate,

Mystical hearing for every one!  
Nor wotteth man this, what a marvel it is,  
When seeing, and saying, and hearing are done!  
This Life within all living things, my Prince!  
Hides beyond harm; scorn thou to suffer, then,  
For that which cannot suffer. Do thy part!  
Be mindful of thy name, and tremble not!  
Nought better can betide a martial soul  
Than lawful war; happy the warrior  
To whom comes joy of battle — comes, as now,  
Glorious and fair, unsought; opening for him  
A gateway unto Heav'n. But, if thou shunn'st  
This honourable field — a Kshattriya —  
If, knowing thy duty and thy task, thou bidd'st  
Duty and task go by — that shall be sin!  
And those to come shall speak thee infamy  
From age to age; but infamy is worse  
For men of noble blood to bear than death!  
The chiefs upon their battle-chariots  
Will deem 'twas fear that drove thee from the fray.  
Of those who held thee mighty-souled the scorn  
Thou must abide, while all thine enemies  
Will scatter bitter speech of thee, to mock  
The valour which thou hadst; what fate could fall  
More grievously than this? Either — being killed —  
Thou wilt win Swarga's safety, or — alive  
And victor — thou wilt reign an earthly king.

Therefore, arise, thou Son of Kunti! brace  
Thine arm for conflict, nerve thy heart to meet —  
As things alike to thee — pleasure or pain,  
Profit or ruin, victory or defeat:  
So minded, gird thee to the fight, for so  
Thou shalt not sin!  
Thus far I speak to thee  
As from the "Sankhya" — unspiritually —  
Hear now the deeper teaching of the Yog,  
Which holding, understanding, thou shalt burst  
Thy Karmabandh, the bondage of wrought deeds.  
Here shall no end be hindered, no hope marred,  
No loss be feared: faith — yea, a little faith —  
Shall save thee from the anguish of thy dread.  
Here, Glory of the Kurus! shines one rule —  
One steadfast rule — while shifting souls have laws  
Many and hard. Specious, but wrongful deem  
The speech of those ill-taught ones who extol  
The letter of their Vedas, saying, "This  
Is all we have, or need;" being weak at heart  
With wants, seekers of Heaven: which comes — they say —  
As "fruit of good deeds done;" promising men  
Much profit in new births for works of faith;  
In various rites abounding; following whereon  
Large merit shall accrue towards wealth and power;  
Albeit, who wealth and power do most desire

Least fixity of soul have such, least hold  
On heavenly meditation. Much these teach,  
From Veds, concerning the "three qualities;"  
But thou, be free of the "three qualities,"  
Free of the "pairs of opposites," and free  
From that sad righteousness which calculates;  
Self-ruled, Arjuna! simple, satisfied.  
Look! like as when a tank pours water forth  
To suit all needs, so do these Brahmans draw  
Text for all wants from tank of Holy Writ.  
But thou, want not! ask not! Find full reward  
Of doing right in right! Let right deeds be  
Thy motive, not the fruit which comes from them.  
And live in action! Labour! Make thine acts  
Thy piety, casting all self aside,  
Contemning gain and merit; equable  
In good or evil: equability  
Is Yog, is piety!  
Yet, the right act  
Is less, far less, than the right-thinking mind.  
Seek refuge in thy soul; have there thy heaven!  
Scorn them that follow virtue for her gifts!  
The mind of pure devotion — even here —  
Casts equally aside good deeds and bad,  
Passing above them. Unto pure devotion  
Devote thyself: with perfect meditation  
Comes perfect act, and the righthearted rise —

More certainly because they seek no gain —  
Forth from the bands of body, step by step,  
To highest seats of bliss. When thy firm soul  
Hath shaken off those tangled oracles  
Which ignorantly guide, then shall it soar  
To high neglect of what's denied or said,  
This way or that way, in doctrinal writ.  
Troubled no longer by the priestly lore,  
Safe shall it live, and sure; steadfastly bent  
On meditation. This is Yog — and Peace!  
Arjuna. What is his mark who hath that steadfast heart,  
Confirmed in holy meditation? How  
Know we his speech, Kesava? Sits he, moves he  
Like other men?  
Krishna. When one, O Pritha's Son! —  
Abandoning desires which shake the mind —  
Finds in his soul full comfort for his soul,  
He hath attained the Yog — that man is such!  
In sorrows not dejected, and in joys  
Not overjoyed; dwelling outside the stress  
Of passion, fear, and anger; fixed in calms  
Of lofty contemplation; — such an one  
Is Muni, is the Sage, the true Recluse!  
He who to none and nowhere overbound  
By ties of flesh, takes evil things and good  
Neither desponding nor exulting, such



Bears wisdom's plainest mark He who shall draw  
As the wise tortoise draws its four feet safe  
Under its shield, his five frail senses back  
Under the spirit's buckler from the world  
Which else assails them, such an one, my Prince!  
Hath wisdom's mark! Things that solicit sense  
Hold off from the self-governed; nay, it comes,  
The appetites of him who lives beyond  
Depart, — aroused no more. Yet may it chance,  
O Son of Kunti that a governed mind  
Shall some time feel the sense-storms sweep, and wrest  
Strong self-control by the roots. Let him regain  
His kingdom! let him conquer this, and sit  
On Me intent. That man alone is wise  
Who keeps the mastery of himself! If one  
Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs  
Attraction; from attraction grows desire,  
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds  
Recklessness; then the memory — all betrayed —  
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,  
Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone.  
But, if one deals with objects of the sense  
Not loving and not hating, making them  
Serve his free soul, which rests serenely lord,  
Lo! such a man comes to tranquillity;  
And out of that tranquillity shall rise  
The end and healing of his earthly pains,

Since the will governed sets the soul at peace.

The soul of the ungoverned is not his,

Nor hath he knowledge of himself; which lacked,

How grows serenity? and, wanting that,

Whence shall he hope for happiness?

The mind

That gives itself to follow shows of sense

Seeth its helm of wisdom rent away,

And, like a ship in waves of whirlwind, drives

To wreck and death. Only with him, great Prince!

Whose senses are not swayed by things of sense —

Only with him who holds his mastery,

Shows wisdom perfect. What is midnight-gloom

To unenlightened souls shines wakeful day

To his clear gaze; what seems as wakeful day

Is known for night, thick night of ignorance,

To his true-seeing eyes. Such is the Saint!

And like the ocean, day by day receiving

Floods from all lands, which never overflows;

Its boundary-line not leaping, and not leaving,

Fed by the rivers, but unswelled by those; —

So is the perfect one! to his soul's ocean

The world of sense pours streams of witchery,

They leave him as they find, without commotion,

Taking their tribute, but remaining sea.

Yea! whoso, shaking off the yoke of flesh

Lives lord, not servant, of his lusts; set free  
From pride, from passion, from the sin of "Self,"  
Toucheth tranquillity! O Pritha's Son!  
That is the state of Brahm! There rests no dread  
When that last step is reached! Live where he will,  
Die when he may, such passeth from all 'plaining,  
To blest Nirvana, with the Gods, attaining.

HERE ENDETH CHAPTER II OF THE

BHAGAVAD-GITA,

Entitled "Sankhya-Yog,"

Or "The Book of Doctrines."