

## Chapter 4 (Of the Religion of Knowledge)

### Chapter 4: Of the Religion of Knowledge

Krishna. This deathless Yoga, this deep union,

I taught Vivaswata, the Lord of Light;

Vivaswata to Manu gave it; he

To Ikshwaku; so passed it down the line

Of all my royal Rishis. Then, with years,

The truth grew dim and perished, noble Prince!

Now once again to thee it is declared —

This ancient lore, this mystery supreme —

Seeing I find thee votary and friend.

Arjuna. Thy birth, dear Lord, was in these later days

And bright Vivaswata's preceded time!

How shall I comprehend this thing thou sayest,

"From the beginning it was I who taught?"

Krishna. Manifold the renewals of my birth

Have been, Arjuna! and of thy births, too!

But mine I know, and thine thou knowest not,

O Slayer of thy Foes! Albeit I be

Unborn, undying, indestructible,

The Lord of all things living; not the less —

By Maya, by my magic which I stamp

On floating Nature-forms, the primal vast —

I come, and go, and come. When Righteousness

Declines, O Bharata! when Wickedness

Is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take

Visible shape, and move a man with men,

Succouring the good, thrusting the evil back,  
And setting Virtue on her seat again.  
Who knows the truth touching my births on earth  
And my divine work, when he quits the flesh  
Puts on its load no more, falls no more down  
To earthly birth: to Me he comes, dear Prince!  
Many there be who come! from fear set free,  
From anger, from desire; keeping their hearts  
Fixed upon me — my Faithful — purified  
By sacred flame of Knowledge. Such as these  
Mix with my being. Whoso worship me,  
Them I exalt; but all men everywhere  
Shall fall into my path; albeit, those souls  
Which seek reward for works, make sacrifice  
Now, to the lower gods. I say to thee  
Here have they their reward. But I am He  
Made the Four Castes, and portioned them a place  
After their qualities and gifts. Yea, I  
Created, the Reposeful; I that live  
Immortally, made all those mortal births:  
For works soil not my essence, being works  
Wrought uninvolved. Who knows me acting thus  
Unchained by action, action binds not him;  
And, so perceiving, all those saints of old  
Worked, seeking for deliverance. Work thou  
As, in the days gone by, thy fathers did.

Thou sayst, perplexed, It hath been asked before  
By singers and by sages, "What is act,  
And what inaction?" I will teach thee this,  
And, knowing, thou shalt learn which work doth save  
Needs must one rightly meditate those three —  
Doing, — not doing, — and undoing. Here  
Thorny and dark the path is! He who sees  
How action may be rest, rest action — he  
Is wisest 'mid his kind; he hath the truth!  
He doeth well, acting or resting. Freed  
In all his works from prickings of desire,  
Burned clean in act by the white fire of truth,  
The wise call that man wise; and such an one,  
Renouncing fruit of deeds, always content.  
Always self-satisfying, if he works,  
Doth nothing that shall stain his separate soul,  
Which — quit of fear and hope — subduing self —  
Rejecting outward impulse-yielding up  
To body's need nothing save body, dwells  
Sinless amid all sin, with equal calm  
Taking what may befall, by grief unmoved,  
Unmoved by joy, unenvyingly; the same  
In good and evil fortunes; nowise bound  
By bond of deeds. Nay, but of such an one,  
Whose crave is gone, whose soul is liberate,  
Whose heart is set on truth — of such an one  
What work he does is work of sacrifice,

Which passeth purely into ash and smoke  
Consumed upon the altar! All's then God!  
The sacrifice is Brahm, the ghee and grain  
Are Brahm, the fire is Brahm, the flesh it eats  
Is Brahm, and unto Brahm attaineth he  
Who, in such office, meditates on Brahm.  
Some votaries there be who serve the gods  
With flesh and altar-smoke; but other some  
Who, lighting subtler fires, make purer rite  
With will of worship. Of the which be they  
Who, in white flame of continence, consume  
Joys of the sense, delights of eye and ear,  
Foregoing tender speech and sound of song:  
And they who, kindling fires with torch of Truth,  
Burn on a hidden altar-stone the bliss  
Of youth and love, renouncing happiness:  
And they who lay for offering there their wealth,  
Their penance, meditation, piety,  
Their steadfast reading of the scrolls, their lore  
Painfully gained with long austerities:  
And they who, making silent sacrifice,  
Draw in their breath to feed the flame of thought,  
And breathe it forth to waft the heart on high,  
Governing the ventage of each entering air  
Lest one sigh pass which helpeth not the soul:  
And they who, day by day denying needs,

Lay life itself upon the altar-flame,  
Burning the body wan. Lo! all these keep  
The rite of offering, as if they slew  
Victims; and all thereby efface much sin.  
Yea! and who feed on the immortal food  
Left of such sacrifice, to Brahma pass,  
To The Unending. But for him that makes  
No sacrifice, he hath nor part nor lot  
Even in the present world. How should he share  
Another, O thou Glory of thy Line?  
In sight of Brahma all these offerings  
Are spread and are accepted! Comprehend  
That all proceed by act; for knowing this,  
Thou shalt be quit of doubt. The sacrifice  
Which Knowledge pays is better than great gifts  
Offered by wealth, since gifts' worth — O my Prince!  
Lies in the mind which gives, the will that serves:  
And these are gained by reverence, by strong search,  
By humble heed of those who see the Truth  
And teach it. Knowing Truth, thy heart no more  
Will ache with error, for the Truth shall show  
All things subdued to thee, as thou to Me.  
Moreover, Son of Pandu! wert thou worst  
Of all wrong-doers, this fair ship of Truth  
Should bear thee safe and dry across the sea  
Of thy transgressions. As the kindled flame  
Feeds on the fuel till it sinks to ash,

So unto ash, Arjuna! unto nought  
The flame of Knowledge wastes works' dross away!  
There is no purifier like thereto  
In all this world, and he who seeketh it  
Shall find it — being grown perfect — in himself.  
Believing, he receives it when the soul  
Masters itself, and cleaves to Truth, and comes —  
Possessing knowledge — to the higher peace,  
The uttermost repose. But those untaught,  
And those without full faith, and those who fear  
Are shent; no peace is here or other where,  
No hope, nor happiness for whoso doubts.  
He that, being self-contained, hath vanquished doubt,  
Disparting self from service, soul from works,  
Enlightened and emancipate, my Prince!  
Works fetter him no more! Cut then atwain  
With sword of wisdom, Son of Bharata!  
This doubt that binds thy heart-beats! cleave the bond  
Born of thy ignorance! Be bold and wise!  
Give thyself to the field with me! Arise!  
HERE ENDETH CHAPTER IV OF THE  
BHAGAVAD-GITA,  
Entitled "Jnana Yog,"  
Or "The Book of the Religion of Knowledge."