



The Upper Triad Material

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The Bhagavad Gita

The Song of God



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The Bhagavad Gita

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Chapter 6.71

The Bhagavad Gita



The Song of God

The *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the principal Hindu scriptures and consists of eighteen chapters, each of which constitutes a system of yoga. The eighteen perspectives are interrelated and divided into three major groups.

The first six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* consider life (power), existence (sat), karma yoga (the path of right activity), the soul and its potential, limitations, and perfection. The second six chapters consider love (consciousness), spiritual happiness (ananda), bhakti yoga (the path of devotion), God, and reality. And the final six chapters consider light, knowledge (cit), understanding, jnana yoga (the path of philosophical discrimination), and the relationship between God and man.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Hindu scriptural trinity consists of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita. The Upanishads are considered to be the cream of the Vedas, as the Vedas are the source of Hindu scripture. The Brahma Sutras are an elucidation of the Vedanta philosophy through maxims, while the Bhagavad Gita contains the essence of the Upanishads and is contained within the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is a great epic of eighteen books and might be considered as a fifth Veda, while the Bhagavad Gita may be considered as the condensation of the Mahabharata into understandable philosophy.

As one of the eighteen books of the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita consists of eighteen chapters, each of which constitutes a system of yoga. The eighteen perspectives are interrelated and divided into three major groups. The first six chapters deal with life (power), existence (sat), karma yoga (the path of right activity), the soul and its potential, limitations, and perfection. The second six chapters deal with love (consciousness), spiritual happiness (ananda), bhakti yoga (the path of devotion), God, and reality. The final six chapters deal with light, knowledge (cit), understanding, jnana yoga (the path of philosophical discrimination), and the relationship between God and man.

The Bhagavad Gita is santana dharma, spiritual laws applied to life and a clarification of principles utilizing a variety of methods. It is the story of yoga and the nature of the soul. It is an allegorical, symbolic treatise dealing with the becoming and being, with the theory and practice of Vedanta. The Bhagavad Gita is an orthodox Hindu scripture as well as a metaphysical discourse. It was written in metaphysical Sanskrit and has been translated into poetic English, ordinary English, and transliterated English. Though the full English translation is helpful, a translation which mixes English and Sanskrit (with English implications) seems most helpful to the Western student. The power of Sanskrit words to enlighten and to penetrate the depths of consciousness is diminished by the use of English partial-equivalents.

The song celestial (Bhagavad Gita) is, in the literal reading, a profound dialogue between the prince Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna, about to enter

the battlefield. A literal reading can be greatly misunderstood, for the essence of the treatise has naught to do with physical human warfare or bloodshed; but rather, has to do with the spiritual struggle of the human soul. The allegorical warfare implies the struggle between right and wrong, between wisdom and ignorance, between the self (soul) and the not-self (personality); the symbolic, inner struggle in consciousness and self-discipline; and the struggle between truth (reality) and the glammers (illusions) of objectivity which must be overcome in the battle for eternal life.

The dialogue of Arjuna and Krishna symbolizes a communion of man (Arjuna) and the God-Christ within man (Krishna). Arjuna is the aspirant seeking to become the disciple. Arjuna represents both the individual and humanity standing at the threshold of the spiritual path. The result of this communion is guidance in dharma (duty), the truth within. The wheels of the chariot are right effort; the driver is truth; and the destination is perfection. The experience urges man to wake up, to achieve awareness, to establish himself in the soul, to recognize the nobility of the soul, and to find the unity and coherence of man and God. The charioteer Krishna is an incarnation of God, and lives in the heart (soul) of man. Through the experience is achieved self-realization and equilibrium. Pleasure is superseded by that which is good. And Arjuna the aspirant becomes the world disciple.



Section 6.711



Karma Yoga

The first six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* are concerned with life (power), existence (sat), karma yoga (the path of right activity), the soul and its potential, limitations, and perfection.

Arjuna Vishada Yoga

The first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Arjuna Vishada Yoga, the despondency (grief) (distress) (gloom) of Arjuna. In the literal reading, Arjuna surveys the battlefield where the two opposing armies prepare to meet in fratricidal war. Arjuna has friends and relatives in both armies, and though he has prepared himself for battle, he finds himself unable to enter the fighting. He resigns himself to confusion, gloom, and distress. He appeals to his charioteer (Krishna) for guidance.

In a symbolic reading, Arjuna is the spiritual aspirant (the personality) who has prepared himself for the spiritual path, but on the threshold of the path he finds himself experiencing the dark night of the soul. The hero Arjuna is the integrated lower mind that balks at the call to battle (the suggestion of the soul for a surrender of the lower self to the higher). The torment of Arjuna is the intense battle between a strong mind and the overshadowing soul. As the focus of the waking-consciousness, Arjuna can see himself on both sides of the struggle, identifying with the good elements as well as the weaker ones (enemies). The mind values its independence, but the spiritual path demands that the proud mind be absorbed by and subjected to the (greater) soul.

Arjuna suffers indecision and weakness, for he is still human and the overwhelming crisis has turned his enthusiasm into distress. This crisis on the battleground of life, leading finally and ultimately to a state of humility, is a preparation for progress on the path. The spiritual path requires a quiet but active humble state, and in the humble state the lower self (the integrated personality) surrenders and turns to the soul (Krishna) for encouragement. Without such courage and without true humility, the student cannot achieve self-acceptance and cannot face the resultant truth (about oneself). Desperate and passive resignation bears no fruit. But sincere positive surrender of self is a stepping-stone to illumination. Time and time again the disciple and the aspirant must return to the humble state for renewal and rededication. Depression must be avoided for it is a negative (emotional) form of humility. What is needed is the positive (mentally polarized) humility where the mind controls the emotions and remains responsive to the soul.

Chapter One is the setting, the prelude, preparation, and invocation for illumination, encouragement, and progress. Throughout the epic poem, each proper name denotes certain qualities (strengths or weaknesses). Arjuna (lower self) and Krishna (higher self) are thus addressed by many different names. For example, in the first chapter Krishna is addressed as Krishikesa (being the master of the lower self or personality) and as Achyuta (one who is indeviated from dharma). The subtleties of proper names in scripture bear study. The student should also discern between the purely social teachings (which are dated or cultural) and the spiritual teachings (which are relatively timeless).

Chapter One also forms the questions: What is this dark night of the soul? Who is the enemy? Why must one fight (the inner battle)? The remaining seventeen chapters provide the answers. The student is led from the yoga of preparation to the yoga of fulfillment. The conscience of the soul is invoked (to rent the hearts); the challenge is faced; and the aspirant becomes the disciple. The proud and independent life of the mind is replaced by the merging of mind and soul. The student is then able to really see all beings in the one self and the self in all beings. Crisis precipitates enlightenment. Santana dharma precipitates spiritual order through the various forms of yoga. And of Arjuna Vishada Yoga, these thoughts are but a few of the many implications.

« Commentary No. 73

Samkhya Yoga

The second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Samkhya Yoga (the inner doctrine) (the yoga of knowledge). The samkhya yoga actually constitutes an introduction to the teachings. Samkhya implies theory (knowledge), while yoga implies the practice of such knowledge. Samkhya yoga is the concentration of attention on the higher knowledge (higher reality) and on the practical application of that knowledge. Only as knowledge (experience) is applied and understood is it transformed into wisdom (the object of experience). The outer teachings are only partially true, as they are incomplete. The inner teachings complement and complete the enlightenment. Samkhya yoga includes as its

higher aspect, buddhi yoga, the yoga of the intuitive and contemplative intellect (a spiritual exercise guided subjectively by the soul).

The dialogue between Krishna (the soul or higher self) and Arjuna (the lower self) (aspirant) continues as Krishna describes the nature of man (the mortal personality and the immortal but entangled soul) and introduces Arjuna to the path of compassion. Krishna begins his teaching. The path requires humility as well as strength. Self-surrender (of the ego to the higher self) is a prerequisite for enlightenment. The strengths (friends) of the personality become weaknesses (enemies) (through selfishness) as the student progresses along the path, until the soul takes control of the willing and responsive personality. The embodied self is immortal but entangled in the objective world. Karma binds a soul to the lower worlds until the progressive cycle of incarnations ends in the completion of the human soul. The existence of karma implies attachment. Karma yoga implies a detached attitude. Self-knowledge (samkhya) leads to right thinking, which in turn leads to positive (constructive) action (karma), which ultimately leads to liberation (wisdom) (perfection). Steadfastness in wisdom leads to immortality (disentanglement); and a man ceases to be (in the lower sense), when karma is fulfilled.

The royal "fight" is the struggle onward and upward (toward perfection). The lower self is not real; neither are the lower worlds (for they are temporal and misleading) (though they do provide a means of experience). The duty of the aspirant is to overcome (absorb) the lower self and the attachments to the senses. The mind must be trained to control the senses, for uncontrolled senses are perfidious. The student who is centered in God is desireless, for he is one, who is firmly placed upon the spiritual path. Such a student needs no rewards; for he is not distracted by the sense-world and the various glammers.

Arjuna is a prince (which means that he has been prepared for the path), but he is still entangled and seeks understanding. He is unable to discern between the real and the unreal. But by placing greater emphasis on the inner doctrine (higher knowledge) and through determination to rise above his weaknesses and limitations, Arjuna is expected to place himself firmly upon the path. Once committed there is no turning back; the pace of progress is quickened; the path narrows; and responsibilities (and opportunities) increase. Therefore, the placing of a student upon the path is a serious matter.

Arjuna must take his dharma (duty) seriously (it is wrong to fail to do what is right). No effort is really wasted, for karma provides guidance towards right effort. But to do what is right with right motive (and with a detached attitude) is the most efficient and effective action. Right action requires knowledgeable understanding. Thus, samkhya yoga (the application of higher knowledge) leads the student into (onto) the battlefield of life (karma yoga) as a preparation for living the life of steady wisdom.

« Commentary No. 78

Karma Yoga

The third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Karma Yoga, the yoga of action (virtue in works) (the secret of activity). Karma is the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction (consequence), of relationships between events. Karma yoga is a way of life, the path of right activity, performed responsibly (in dharma) without attachment to activity or to the fruits of activity, a path which takes into conscious consideration the factor of karma in all lives. On the path of ascent, karma is transformed into karma yoga.

Karma yoga complements the yoga of knowledge, for understanding precipitates right action. The understanding of knowledge carries with it the responsibility for its proper application. A life of constructive activity is a life of example, a life of encouragement to others through the living of a life centered in truth (wisdom). It is a student's dharma (responsibility) to cooperate with the wheel of life through experience and intelligent activity (leading to wisdom). Karma yoga is concerned with individual and group (human) progress. Progress requires effort. Right effort and activity constitute an attitude more than a function. Proper activity builds a constructive momentum. Action is superior to inaction (inertia) (laziness), for action (motion) can be guided and adjusted. Thus, flexibility and adaptability can lead to right action. Inertia is a resistance to progress. Action in accordance with duty (what needs to be done) brings progress, while the seeking of results creates resistance.

The resistance of the lower self (personality) must be overcome in order to build momentum in right activity. Karma yoga and the (endless) path of purification are one and the same. Action on mental and astral (emotional) levels can be applied internally as well as externally (outwardly). The problem of purification is the problem of desire and the distractions of the senses. The renunciation of certain physical activities without removing the desire for them is a deception. The senses must be controlled, not suppressed or inhibited. One should work from the mind to control the emotions, and through the controlled emotions to discipline the physical body. The path of discipline often involves substitution; to busy one's lower self in right action is to transform one's tendency for lesser action (motivated by desire) into greater action (motivated from the higher self). Action is neither good nor evil; it is the motive and purpose for action that determines its value.

The object of karma yoga is the transformation of the life of self-centered activity into the life of wisdom in action. Karma yoga does not involve the elimination of individual karma; it involves becoming free from the karmic attachments which limit or otherwise impede progress. To intelligently sacrifice that which is of lesser value for that which is of greater value and to intelligently serve humanity, is to recognize the continuity of the human lifewave, and the relationship of the human soul to humanity.

It is the nature of the ego (mind) to (falsely) identify the self (soul) with the not-self (the personality). Ego implies bondage. The bondage and power of desire is great. Desire is rooted in the ego, in the mind, and in the senses. Desire inhibits understanding. The distraction of the senses (through desire) leads to illusion. To control the senses is to purify the jiva consciousness (the personality). The little self (ego) dissolves as the greater self (atma bodham) (spiritual consciousness) emerges. The Atman is the highest aspect of the soul, and is reflected in the enlightened self-control of the man of wisdom and compassion. Desire is transformed into desirelessness. Virtue in works leads ever onward into the secrets of the Atman.

Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga

The fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of renunciation of action in knowledge. Therein Krishna discusses the nature of the divine incarnation, knowledge of God, action and inaction, works as sacrifice, and transcendent wisdom. The teaching presents itself on several levels as Krishna represents the life and consciousness of cosmic intelligence as well as that of a soul within a chain of spiritual teachers who share in a common source of consciousness and purpose. Krishna also represents the mature soul of the disciple. The soul or spirit remains unborn (on its level) while the personality or manifestation of the soul (or cosmos) makes its temporal appearance in the objective world.

From time to time throughout the ages of man, highly evolved souls (Sons of God) are made manifest in response to the spiritual needs of humanity (or a segment thereof). Each of these great teachers releases a renewed spiritual impulse of encouragement. Though the outer teaching may vary with the circumstances, the inner teachings of each dispensation resonate with a common source and character. As the spiritual student studies the teachings and begins to participate in the higher consciousness (through meditation), he gradually attains the consciousness of the source. To know God is to share in the divine mode of being. Through such knowledge and participation, the student ultimately becomes the Christ-consciousness, and is no longer required to incarnate, as he is one with the higher (group) life, and is fulfilled (completed) (perfected).

The purpose of the outer teachings of each dispensation is to encourage the spiritual progress of the masses and to hide or veil the inner teachings. The purpose of the inner teachings is to provide the training necessary for aspirants and disciples (spiritual students) to perfect themselves and simultaneously serve humanity. There are so many paths to God, and yet each one has an experience and offering for those who pass that way, and each one ultimately blends with every other in the final stages. The amount of work required for fulfillment is the same on any path, but the intensity of effort and the duration

may vary (inversely). Each path involves action and inaction, and in the mystery thereof is the understanding of wisdom.

Action implies becoming, and pertains primarily to the lower life which is in the process of purification and experience. Inaction implies “being” and pertains to the soul and its greater focal point, the monad. Right action is auspicious work performed in a detached manner, a state of mind in which there exists no bondage of works. Right action places emphasis on how and why rather than what (which presumes some illumination). Discernment is required for an understanding of the relativity of action (mind) and inaction (the Atman), and the implications of reaction. A secret of action is sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice (action) is a holy work of self-mastery and humanitarian service. This secret involves the transformation of identification out of the lower self and into the higher self.

Wisdom is the fulfillment of works, the identification (and manifestation) of eternal being; whereas ignorance is the identification with phenomenal existence. The sacrifice (detached service) is the renunciation of the lower life, replacing it with conformity to the will of God. This (action) breeds enlightenment, destroys doubt, and creates confidence in the inner self. Self-harmony is the key to this truth, as purity in God-consciousness (self-harmony) breeds wisdom transcendent. Thus the warrior (Arjuna) (the aspirant) must arise and meet the challenge of sacrifice in everlasting yoga.

« Commentary No. 88

Sanyasa Yoga

The fifth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of renunciation. The teaching concerning the soul and its potential, its limitations and its perfection, continues as Krishna discusses the renunciation and performance of action, the means of self-purification, the Self and its agent, the light of wisdom, and the (higher) path of renunciation.

The renunciation of action (karma sanyasa) and the performance of action (karma yoga) each lead to freedom, but theory (renunciation) and practice

(action) are not separable, for each includes a measure of the other. There is a time for withdrawal and a time for right activity (holy work). Each path leads to the other, for each is but a perspective (emphasis). The path of renunciation leads to a state of mind in which the lower self identifies with the higher self. The higher self is not involved with action, for it is the lower self which is the agent in the performance of service through action. The path of action is the path of self-purification, the endless path of refinement which leads to freedom from action. The true self is above action; true renunciation is above duality (the realm of the pairs-of-opposites). Thus one can renounce action whilst performing it.

The realm of the pairs-of-opposites is the domain of objective experience, the realm of action and its consequence (karma). The various pairs-of-opposites provide the field of experience, and the unenlightened man is caught between them. As evolution proceeds, the spiritual student (Arjuna) must gradually free himself from their influence and pass on into the higher worlds where the sense of duality is nonexistent. It is through this experience in the lesser worlds and through self-purification (leading to service) that liberation is attained.

Karma is the medium of self-purification. But karma pertains to the phenomenal world (nature) (prakriti) and not to the realm of the true self (soul), which is the domain of noumenon (purusha). It is the "I" that bathes in inaction (the subjective disposition of the soul) while the mind (personality) is the agent. In the metaphysical sense, the "I" denotes identification with the soul, spirit, God, the life that thrills through all of manifestation (wherever the Krishna dialogue becomes personal, it refers to this greater (impersonal) "I" rather than that of the lower, personal self). It is the work (dharma) of the lower self to produce (create) (evolve) quality (consciousness) as a consequence of action, and to allow the Lord (the Christ-self) (the soul) to work through its instrument without impediment. Through such action (self-purification and service) works are transcended. Through such action is found the light of wisdom, the light of the inner self.

The inner light leads to further participation in (realization of) God and the elimination (transformation) of the sense of duality. The integrated man (yukta) is one who realizes the unity of all life, one who sees that from the knowledge (of God) comes same-sightedness, for God lives through all, equally.

There are no real differences, for all is one life. The path of unity is the (higher) path of renunciation. In this sense, renunciation means integration (unification) (absorption in the higher life). Thus, renunciation draws forth (invokes) the quality (consciousness) (joy) of the higher self. The self is known and sins are left behind (transformed into spiritual strengths); the spiritual student is led to no-return (the completion of human experience) (freedom from birth and death) (perfection) (nirvana). Nirvana is the end of phenomenal existence, the blowing out (renunciation) (sublimation) of the lower self in the (abstract) bliss of Brahman (higher existence) (peace).

« Commentary No. 93

Dhyana Yoga

The sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Dhyana Yoga, the yoga of meditation (self-mastery). The teaching of Krishna (the soul) continues with a discussion of the spiritual exercise (meditation) and its relationship to the yogi (spiritual student) (Arjuna). The responsibilities of the karma yogi and the karma sanyasin are similar in the later stages as meditation and its associated activities are common to each path. Even the ascetic (sanyasin) has the responsibility of purification and meditation (holy sacrifice).

Not only must the rules (guidelines) of the path be adhered to (with some understanding), but the student must also put into practice the spirit of the teachings. This requires the surrender of the earthly will (the little wills of the personality) and the establishment of the meditative atmosphere. The head and the heart must share in each commitment (to the path), so that serious meditation can be accomplished. Right meditation then enhances (in quality) all of the (right) activities of the student. The constancy of the yogi implies the (process of) unification of the two selves. The lesser self can be a friend or an enemy to the greater self (soul). Through self-purification and meditation the enemies become friends.

The atmosphere for meditation should be purified (quiet) and the setting should be a place of solitude. Each aspect of the lower self must be stilled, in turn: the body rested, the emotions quieted, and the mind mastered, at rest in God. With practice comes the ability (ease) to achieve the meditative and contemplative

states where the self in all (and all in self) can be directly recognized. The student can then look upon all persons as souls incarnate, regardless of the personalities. This perspective can be readily applied to the daily life of activity, as a realization (vision) of oneness (sameness) and the renunciation of the personality values.

One of the most essential elements in the meditative (spiritual) life is moderation (temperance). Spiritual exercise is a middle path; extremes have no place in the life of the student of wisdom. But what may be moderate for one person may be an extreme for another. The rules (discipline) of the path should not be confused with the standards expected of the worldly persons. The goals of the yogi are quite different (consciously), for the spiritual student seeks to remain steady in the wisdom (unity) of the soul. To achieve the yoga of equanimity, the student must be free from body-consciousness, free from feeling, and with the stilled mind in the contemplation (seedless meditation) of being. Arjuna finds contemplation a difficult task as he (the struggling aspirant) recognizes the character of the mind as restless, strong, and obstinate. Krishna replies that the mind can be controlled with patience, firm resolution, and determination. With effort and discipline (while living a life of harmony) the restive (wandering) mind can be conquered and the silent thoughts (no thoughts) of eternity (truth) can be achieved in contemplation.

Finally, the fate of the imperfect (incomplete) spiritual student is considered. Krishna reaffirms the ancient truth that that which is once gained cannot be truly lost, for each new life is built upon the foundation established in the preceding life. Those who fail (as most do) to reach perfection in the present life find themselves again in incarnation, but with the fruits of earlier existence as conscience, wisdom, and natural talent. After a period of recapitulation, the student again continues upon the path, at approximately the place of earlier achievement. Nothing is lost, for the path of perfection (dhyana yoga) is one with the purpose of evolution, ever onward and upward.

Section 6.712



Bhakti Yoga

The second six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* are concerned with love (consciousness), spiritual happiness (ananda), bhakti yoga (the path of devotion), God, and reality.

Jnana Vijnana Yoga

The seventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Jnana Vijnana Yoga, the yoga of wisdom (knowledge) (jnana) and experience (realization) (vijnana), the yoga of spiritual discernment, which leads from the teaching anent the individual self to the knowledge of God, from psychology to theology. Krishna continues the dialogue with a description of the two natures of God and the passage of the serious student through illusion to reality.

The lower nature (prakriti) of God is form and consciousness, manifestation itself (immanence). The higher nature is spirit or life, the unmanifested, the cause (transcendence), the fountain of life. God is the beginning (origin) and the end (dissolution) of that (universe) which is merely the reflection of true being. Knowledge is concerned with the lower human nature and manifestation, while realization is concerned with the higher human nature (the soul and the monad) and that which lies beyond manifestation. God immanent is the seed of being, God in manifestation, the presence within all things (as all things are within that presence), of which attributes can be given. God is the Sacred Word which creates, sustains, and liberates all that is (all that appears to be).

The universe (illusion) is superimposed upon reality (the essence behind the universe). God is that reality which is hidden in and concealed by nature. Illusion (darkness) (the shadow) (appearance) is separation (from God), attachment to form; reality (beyond the world of shadows) is liberation, realization of life, the source of being. The three constituents of nature (appearance) are goodness (peaceful light) (sattva), passion (restless life) (rajas) (activity), and darkness (tamas) (inertia). These are the three gunas in which the soul (or its reflection) becomes entangled. The relationship of reality and illusion leads to the apparent paradox of a creator (precursor) living through (reflecting itself in) a universe to which it is not attached. God evolves, but does the Absolute evolve? What is the nature of the divine (cosmic) sutratman, the thread or continuity of life that relates all in the manifested universe to that which is beyond?

Manifestation conceals (through a veil of mystery) the unknown God (the Absolute), immutable and changeless, imperishable and supreme.

Manifestation yields a sense of duality, a perspective that deceives and confuses reality (with purpose). The lesser nature (the reflection) can be known, but the greater nature (reality) can only be realized beyond human (personal) (dualistic) (intellectual) (illusionary) levels. Through unification in the higher self, the waking-consciousness can enter into reality and transcend pairs-of-opposites. All of oneself must be given to the one God and to the Path, if the student (Arjuna) is to attain the goal and allow the paramatman (the greater soul) to properly manifest through jivatman (the individual soul). Such nearness to God (in consciousness) then ever reflects the quality of that greater life. The one who has realized the truth is the student of vision, who needs nothing in the identification with God (being integrated in the one self).

To worship Krishna alone means to worship (recognize) the one God, regardless of its various representations as Krishna, Christ, Buddha, etc. The names of God are many. Lesser gods (objects of desire) are likewise many, but worship of such clouds the vision. Desire destroys wisdom. One cannot be absorbed (entangled) (bewildered) in desires (little values) and absorbed in God (through the greater values) simultaneously. Revelation (salvation and freedom) can come only through the highest essence within, as the lesser values are cast aside and the commitment is made to the spiritual path.

« Commentary No. 103

Akshara Brahma Yoga

The eighth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Akshara Brahma Yoga, the yoga of the imperishable Brahman, the nature (mystery) of the eternal omnipresence. The internal (subjective) (symbolic) dialogue continues with Arjuna asking questions. Krishna responds by discussing the nature of Brahman, the nature of the Atman, and the meaning of karma. Also considered is the nature of death, symbolizing the end of the path of incarnations.

Karma is cause and effect, action and consequence, the force of creation, the origin and terminus of the universe. The Atman is the spirit of Brahman, the

highest aspect of the human life; Brahman is the supreme, imperishable. The days and nights of Brahma appear as a vast (cosmic) wheel of time, through which the pulses of manifested life appear and disappear, a thousand ages of becoming. The greater life is as far beyond the wheel of time as the human consciousness is beyond that of the elemental atom. Beyond the unmanifest is another level of being (beyond becoming), one that does not descend into manifestation. The greater unmanifest is not unconsciousness; it is beyond consciousness, beyond relative existence. At the end of each age, the highest elements of manifestation are absorbed or abstracted by that which remains unmanifest and imperishable, while all else is dissolved. So it is also, in the parallel of the cosmos and the human soul, as the end of the (lower) spiritual path is achieved, and the soul returns no more to the lower worlds.

The quality of mind and consciousness at transition (death) bears upon the nature (ease) and extent of the immediate afterlife, but of far greater importance is the totality of consciousness (quality) of the particular incarnation. Particular events and achievements are relatively unimportant. It is the overall quality of manifested consciousness that matters. Quality in consciousness leads inevitably to liberation (completion). As the thoughts of the student are fixed upon God and upon the path, the aspirant becomes the disciple and the eternal path is entered. It is in this respect that the Brahman is the sacred word within which the enlightened find their freedom.

Death (transition) is a bipolar phenomenon. The incarnating soul is born into the kingdom of the earth (matter), the temporal world of darkness, and simultaneously the soul dies with respect to the kingdom of light (spirit), the eternal world. The departing soul similarly dies to the lower world and is reborn into the higher. The departing soul takes one of two paths, depending upon karma and consciousness. As symbolized in the times and the seasons, the paths of darkness and light are the paths of return and no return, respectively. The path of return is the normal, inevitable path for most of humanity; the path of darkness is the path of reincarnation for further (human) experience, at a slightly higher turn of the evolutionary spiral.

One cannot avoid rebirth as long as karma remains unfulfilled or as long as consciousness (and experience) remains incomplete or insufficient. The path of no return is offered to the spiritual student who has passed through the higher

stages of discipleship, who has seen and become the light that leads to perfection and freedom. Such a soul may return or not, according to the needs of humanity and the specific responsibilities of that soul within humanity. The temporal path (darkness) ever leads (slowly) to the path of perfection which in turn leads (more rapidly) to the path of light and cosmic absorption. The soul then becomes the monad and the eternal omnipresence (the world of being) is entered as the world of becoming (consciousness) is left behind. The son returns to the father as the pilgrimage into matter is completed.

« Commentary No. 108

Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga

The ninth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga, the yoga of the sovereign (royal) science (knowledge) and mystery, the royal secret, the yoga of mysticism. Considered is the heart-centered path of aspiration and devotion (bhakti yoga) and the relationship of the heart (the love aspect) to God. The royal (deeper) secrets are available to those who have prepared themselves through the purification of heart and mind. Knowledge blended with love leads to wisdom (realization). But without proper preparation, truth cannot be easily discerned, since the glammers and illusions of the mundane world tend to mask truth so that the secrets of life remain hidden from profane consideration. But the path of devotion leads ultimately to realization and spiritual responsibility. Those who have found themselves (those who have truly found the inner path) (those who truly recognize the love nature and its relationship to God) embark upon the path of becoming themselves (as they become one with God in consciousness).

God-consciousness is akin to self-knowledge, for that which is above (beyond) is reflected into that which is below (within). As the spiritual aspirant comes to know himself in depth, the keys to the various mysteries are found. The macrocosmic God (immanent and transcendent) is the origination (projection), maintenance (sustaining force), and the termination (ultimate manifestation) (synthesis) of the universe, while the microcosm (the life of the human being) is a divine monad, soul (sustaining force), and personality (manifestation). The keys to the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm are found within

(the realization of the nature of) the soul. The soul is the aspect of consciousness, and it is through aspiration that the waking-consciousness is elevated into the soul. Without spiritual aspiration the personality would not be able to harmonize with the soul; such harmony is a prerequisite for the alignment of the lower self with the higher.

One of the keys to the path of love is the passage beyond desire (the achievement of complete and divine attunement). The worship of lesser things leads to greater entanglement and distraction. The worship (recognition) of (identification with) that which is greater (the one God) leads to perfection and freedom. Those who are satisfied with intermediate levels expend their merits and return to the mundane, for they have not found the eternal path. Love and devotion are keys to the purified and integrated self and a total commitment to the spiritual path. The rewards of loving devotion are varied and many, but all are related to the spiritual self. True, impersonal devotion and aspiration lead to purity, sincerity, humility, and honesty. The path of aspiration leads to the path of service and unselfishness.

Deeds (tasks) performed not for the self, but for God (and humanity) are deeds of love, an offering of the all, so that the lesser values fall into minor significance. Tasks performed for oneself and tasks performed in a personal manner lead to a greater absorption in the mundane world (the physical, emotional, and mental (but not spiritual) realms). The goals of the spiritual way are life (spiritual strength), love (spiritual consciousness), and light (spiritual realization and comprehension), and the encouragement and sharing thereof. Neither knowledge nor (temporary) happiness is the goal.

The way of salvation (perfection) is to strive to do one's best, to live up to the truth within, to allow the God within (Christ) (love-nature) to flow and manifest freely. Such is the greatness of the eternal path of aspiration, bhakti yoga; and such is the implication of the sovereign mystery.

Vibhuti Yoga

The tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Vibhuti Yoga, the yoga of the glory (power) of God, the yoga of divine manifestation, the yoga of heavenly (universal) perfection. Considered are the source of manifestation, the nature and role of the path of devotion (bhakti yoga leading to buddhi yoga), and clarification of the presence of God in all things. Krishna represents and personifies God Manifest-unmanifest while Arjuna remains the spiritual aspirant seeking yoga (union) with the Godhead.

The source or origin of all manifestation is a singular life (God), the supreme being; the beginning, the duration, and the end of all. God is manifestation and that which is beyond manifestation. God is timeless, for duration is only a fragment of conscious existence. God is the One which embraces the all (one is an infinite number, viewed as a singular totality). As manifestation proceeds, existence is differentiated, while God remains unborn and timeless. From simplicity comes complexity, yet each remains a valid perspective and complement. Differentiation does not imply fragmentation or separation; it does imply a perspective through which the work of evolution can be fulfilled, an appearance through which lessons are learned and new qualities are evolved. The end of differentiation (manifestation) implies the beginning of integration (though the universal structure or pattern ever remains integrated), especially as far as consciousness is concerned.

The path of yoga is the path of integration of consciousness; as the knowledge of God increases, the integration of the individual is achieved and communion with God becomes possible. The higher the recognition of truth, the greater becomes the freedom from all sins (glamours) (illusions) (independence) (the delusions of phenomenal or separated existence). To know God is to become attuned to greater values and greater purpose, and it is through yoga (the integration of the fragmented personality and the alignment of the integrated personality with the soul) that the divine knowledge comes. Reality can only be experienced through the higher self (the soul) (the true intuition, not astral or sense impression) as a consequence of constant and eternal meditation, a subjective temperament that overshadows all objective activities.

It is said that God dwells in the heart, as the innermost self; thus it is that a man must know himself well before much progress along the path can be made. The path of bhakti yoga embraces the communion of the innermost self through aspiration and devotion. Through intelligent aspiration, the student achieves purification, understanding, and wisdom. Aspiration leads to buddhi yoga, the manifestation of the wisdom of the soul, but much depends upon the quality of the heart and the quality and responsiveness of the mind. One of the keys to the transition between bhakti yoga and buddhi yoga is the recognition of the glory of God; as the presence of God is realized in all things, the inner (and the outer) communion with God (and with nature) is enhanced.

The power (glory) of the Godhead embraces all that is sentient or insentient; through the many and various attributes of God comes elucidation of the essence of God. Dwelling upon the attributes leads to eventual absorption within the divine. The student is encouraged to emphasize the fundamentals and the structure of life (manifestation), rather than the details. For all manifestations (complexities) are limitations; all revelations are partial; and details are unending (infinite). Details alone are of little significance, but in the patterns of life comes comprehension. In simplicity there is beauty; and in beauty there is truth.

« Commentary No. 118

Visvarupa Darsana Yoga

The eleventh chapter of the Song Celestial (the Bhagavad Gita) is entitled Visvarupa Darsana Yoga, the yoga of the vision of the cosmic form, the vision of God, universal manifestation, manifestation of the One and the manifold. It is the story of the mystical experience (temporary) and inner (spiritual) vision (permanent). Arjuna has learned a great deal from his teacher, but to hear or to know is not quite the same as first-hand experience, the seeing of truth. Arjuna is treated to the divine vision, and with words not equal to the task he describes that vision. The God within is transfigured into the brilliance in convergence of the entire physical and superphysical universe. The true nature of spirit and consciousness is revealed.

Through Arjuna's experience in consciousness, his self-conception and his conception of the world have changed. As his outer vision is withdrawn and replaced by inner vision, there comes understanding incomparable to ordinary experience. With mortal vision can be perceived the wonder of the physical universe from the microscopic to the cosmic, but in the immortal vision comes the whole universe centered in the One. All things are then seen at once from an entirely different (subjective) standpoint. Where normal vision is buried in time and space, the vision of God is timeless and without space, for life is seen as all of time and all of space enfolded in itself, as a unitary but infinite brilliance. In the quiet and peaceful awe comes an exhilaration quite unknown to the senses, one that is not distracting or illusionary at all.

The momentary and timeless mystical experience is not, however, the true and permanent divine or spiritual vision. That spiritual vision can be evolved, so that reality can be seen within all things, whenever the inner eye is opened. But it is not an objective vision; it is a subjective vision (though it may act synonymously with the objective). Attachment to the worldly senses prevents the cosmic vision. Sometimes a glimpse of the vision can come, as encouragement, but the true mystical vision is a permanent ability, evolved through spiritual effort. It is insight into the nature of all things; it is a participation in the life and vision of God. And at the same time, it is the ultimate in humility and compassion.

In the grand vision comes the truth about all things, including oneself. Strengths, weaknesses, and limitations are seen and recognized with a realistic humility. The enemies (weaknesses) are revealed that they might be conquered in battle (self-discipline and purification). Limitation is destroyed on the path to perfection. In honesty (seeing the truth about oneself), the battle goes easier, for with understanding and determination come courage and strength equal to the task. The vision brings a change in the life and consciousness of the individual, for the soul is seen to be One in all humanity and in all of creation and beyond.

The form of light is revealed, but the key to that light is love. Only through heart quality can the vision come. Love, aspiration, and devotion are the keys to the vision of God. Objective (physical or mental) consciousness is not enough, for the head is essentially self-centered in perspective. But through the heart

quality comes the rapport with life (God) and the ability (through the abstract mind and the spiritual intuition) to lose oneself in the divine consciousness. It is in losing oneself that the vision is contacted and reality experienced. The hymn of praise is devotion to God, seeking naught for the individual self. Thus is the illusion of the manifold transcended and the yoga (union) of the One achieved.

« Commentary No. 123

Bhakti Yoga

From karma yoga (the first six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita) through bhakti yoga (the second six chapters) is evolved dharma yoga, the yoga of divine responsibility. The path of right activity blends with the path of devotion, to introduce the path of philosophical discrimination (jnana yoga) (the remaining six chapters). From life (karma) follows love (bhakti), and from love follows light (jnana). Without love (consciousness), there would be little meaning in all of manifestation. Thus bhakti yoga from its lower form (emotional sublimation) to its higher (the development of the buddhi yogi), holds the key (linking) to the unfoldment of latent spirituality.

The twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion (love) (aspiration) (idealism) (loyalty), religion by faith. Considered are the personal God and the impersonal absolute, the nature of devotion or worship, and the attributes of the aspirant (devotee). God is considered to be personal (interior) (immanent) as well as impersonal (exterior) (transcendental), with form and formless. But the contemplation of impersonal God (indeterminate, imperishable, and unmanifest) is difficult, and practical only for those who have developed the abstract mind and spiritual intuition (and ability to dwell with equal-mindedness in the contemplative state).

The surest path to God for most aspirants is through devotion and contemplation upon the innermost divinity, the personal God-immanent. In this respect the personal becomes the super-personal, which is the impersonal. God transcendent is reached through the personal, inward path. But the need in devotional yoga for an intermediary is also recognized. For those who cannot

yet conceive of the formless subjective reality, for those who cannot yet recognize the divinity (soul) within themselves, and even for those who can, the externalization of God through an intermediary (such as Krishna, Buddha, or Christ) can be quite meaningful. The divine incarnation and the teachings can be a powerful form of inspiration and guidance. The incarnation of expressed divinity (through example) is a showing of the way. And above all (on every level of approach) the aura of such an incarnation is real, is persistent through time, and can be touched and felt as a reality in consciousness.

The object of devotional yoga is to find the soul, and through that soul to consciously enter into the life of God. The reality of a divine incarnation can be a means of introducing the waking-consciousness to the soul or divinity within. Progressive devotion (meditation upon God) can lead the meditator from study and prayer, through concentration and meditation, to contemplation and illumination (union). Ritual is replaced by knowledge (understanding); knowledge is replaced by meditation; and meditation is replaced by contemplation (renunciation). Great is the power of the inner life.

The attributes to be attained by the student of bhakti yoga (and all disciples) are many and varied. The devotee is to be without hatred; to be friendly and compassionate to all; to be free from self-centeredness; to be free from exaltation, fear, impatience, and expectation; to be even-minded and contented; to be steady in spiritual exercise (meditation); to be self-disciplined and harmless; to be steadfast in the spiritual life; to be desireless, selfless, and devoted to the cause (the path); and to be free from attachment. The list of attributes (building blocks) is almost eternal. It is through the bhakti (personal) yoga that the fires of purification burn away the obstructions of the separated self. And without thought of the outer self, the mind of the devoted student can soar with the energy of love and aspiration.

Section 6.713



Jnana Yoga

The third six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* are concerned with light, knowledge (cit), understanding, jnana yoga (the path of philosophical discrimination), and the relationship between God and man.

Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga

The thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the discrimination of matter and spirit, the knower and the known, the field and its knower. A synthesis of esoteric truth is revealed (and concealed) as the path of philosophical discernment (jnana yoga) is introduced. Considered are the one who knows (the knower) (the onlooker), the field of knowledge (and perception), and knowledge (activity) itself. Kshetra refers to prakriti (nature), the not-self, matter, and phenomena. Kshetrajna refers to purusha, the self, being, spirit, and the noumenon. These two (prakriti and purusha) (and their relationship) constitute everything. The discernment of matter and spirit is the task of consciousness.

From the standpoint of duality, kshetrajna can refer either to the level of spirit (as the monad) or to the level of consciousness (as the soul); likewise kshetra can refer either to the level of consciousness or to the level of matter (as the personality). Thus each is seen to be relative to the other, rather than absolute or arbitrary. Kshetrajna is the spirit or soul, the dweller within, the drummer, the realm of immortality. Kshetra is the field of knowledge (the fertility of experience), the realm of mortality (time) (transience), and that which responds ultimately to the higher rhythm. The body (in one case) refers to the causal body, the relatively immortal light body of the soul. In the other case, the body is the personality or the illusion of separated existence, the shadow of reality.

From another standpoint (perspective) (that of triplicity) there is the more abstract synthesis (and consequent discernment) of the knower, the field of knowledge, and knowledge itself. The knower is the energy (life) of being; the field is the force of consciousness; and knowledge is the material of objective existence. But each of the three elements can refer in many ways to the others, so that discernment becomes the lesson of relative distinction, value, and implication. The outer (secular) knowledge must be discerned from the inner (sacred) knowledge. The known must be discerned from knowledge, and the field of consciousness must be discerned from the knower. And all that is real (light) (immortal) (the self) must be discerned from all that is unreal (illusion) (darkness) (temporary) (the not-self).

The real object of knowledge is self-realization, the reality of the impersonal (super-personal) life, the attainment of (the realization of) immortality, the living (being) through all of creation (and that which remains uncreated), through the inclusive yoga of divine union. The field of change produces the wisdom (love) required for that attainment, through any of the four great paths (and their many variations and stages): karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, and raja yoga. Through each experience are the seeds of mundane life planted in the field of consciousness.

The key to all of this is the breeding (growing) of reality (wisdom) (self-culture) through the cultivation (assimilation) of higher knowledge (quality) (character), regardless of the particular method. Through the spiritual discipline is found reality, and in reality is found the divine self who dwells within the greatest silence of being. The agent of the self (the personality) is thus lost in the (higher) self as diversity is seen in truth to be the unity of that self, and as that unity is perceived through all. The owner of the field then illumines the entire field or domain of consciousness and existence. In the union of the field and its knower is produced all that comes to be, for the divine self is the creator of all.

« Commentary No.135

Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga

The fourteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of division (distinction) of the three gunas (the three constituents of nature) (the three qualities) (the three moods). Therein Krishna discusses the field of nature, which is the field of human evolution, and the path to freedom, in the practical terms of karmic fulfillment and liberation from the three constituents of nature. The three gunas (conditions of nature) provide the framework of (apparent) limitation in the world of form. They are named sattva, rajas, and tamas; and together they constitute nature (prakriti) as a trinity in expression (while remaining one in substance). The three gunas are the agents of nature which bind the forms of the lower worlds of human endeavor. They are inherent in the human personality, but may be viewed in many ways throughout manifestation. One of the three may predominate in a

given situation or perspective (such as to character), while the others may prevail from time to time. Moreover, each is also a field or domain of expression as well as a grade or force.

The first of the gunas is sattva, the highest of the binding forces of nature. Sattva binds unto earthly happiness and to lower knowledge. As light, sattva is intelligence and the light of knowledge, giving birth to wisdom through the paths of ascension. The first guna is related to the fifth ray and the binding force is called illusion, or attachment to knowledge. The sattvika disposition is for those who seek truth, being relatively unbound by the lesser gunas. Sattva is also the realm of natural law (rhythm) and in the higher sense portrays response to divinity.

The second of the gunas is rajas, the middle ground, being fire and the nature of passion, the source of attachment through desire. Rajas is activity (unrest) which binds unto activity. The field of activity and experience is rajasic life, where karma finds its primary expression as action and reaction (consequence). Rajas is the level (gradual or preparatory) path and the realm of natural energy. Rajas is related to the sixth ray and the binding force is called glamour (entanglement in personal energy). The rajasika disposition is for those bound by activity, desire, and attachment, by mobility and change.

The third or lowest of the gunas is tamas, meaning darkness, inertia born of ignorance. Tamas binds through sleep and rest (dullness), maya which overclouds awareness. The attachment is that of matter itself and the inertia implied by every form. Tamas rules the path of descension (involution and devolution) and is related to the seventh ray. The tamasika disposition is for those who sleep while walking through the fields of life on earth. An understanding of tamas yields insight into the dullness (inertia) (resistance) of personality (form) to higher impression, as well as insight into the character of matter. Through tamas are the forms of nature held together or dissolved, as appropriate.

The intention of the path is for all to pass through and beyond the three powers (gunas) of nature: to fulfill the requirements of experience and activity, thereby loosening the ties that bind. The student progresses from the state of absorption by form (tamas), through the state of absorption by kama-manas

(karma) (rajas), to the state of absorption by truth (sattva). The final freedom (transition) comes when one is liberated from all of the binding forces of earthly life, having learned the lessons well and having transformed one's own nature. The one who passes (or can pass) beyond the gunas is one who has neither distaste nor longing, who remains unruffled and detached from petty matters (and petty thoughts), who lives as the inner self, steadfast in wisdom.

« Commentary No. 141

Purushottama Yoga

The fifteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Purushottama Yoga, the yoga of the supreme self, the tree of life, consciousness of the supreme, devotion to the supreme spirit, the attainment of the supreme. Therein Krishna (the logos) discusses the eternal fig-tree, the reincarnating self, the eye of wisdom, the immanence of God, and the attainment of the transcendent (supreme self). The common thread is the spiritual path and its encouragement toward supreme realization (perfection) (completion).

The eternal fig-tree is the tree of life, the entire (transient) universe, which symbolizes the (almost) endless cycle of birth and death. The tree finds its origin in Brahman, but becomes more and more entangled in the material world. So do souls become involved (through the instrument of the personality) in the objective world and temporarily enslaved by the gunas which nourish the tree of life. The cycle (circuit) can be ended, as perfection is achieved and the place is reached from which there is no return. The trimming of the tree suggests the reformation of human character, leading finally to constructive (harmonious) detachment. As the roots and branches of mundane existence are cut free, phenomena vanish in the ascendant light and vision of reality.

Without worldly delusion, the ascension becomes possible. But the soul (as a projection of divine life) reflects itself into the world of matter and is naturally absorbed by that lower realm as it becomes equipped (through its instrument, the personality) with senses and mind. As purpose is fulfilled in the lower worlds, the soul evolves beyond the divine maya (illusion) that hides the timeless peace of reality. The soul is never separated from the greater (common)

life, but its reflection appears as a separation in the objective realm. The one life lives through the many forms, but the individual lives are ever one in that higher reality. As the individual consciousness returns to the soul levels and beyond, the individuality is not lost; it merely finds the reality of itself, as an expression within a sea of higher consciousness.

The participation in the greater life is directly dependent on the control of the senses (the lower life). Those who are deluded by the senses and personal interests (desires) cannot see the reality of the world (inwardly or outwardly). But those who are free from delusion become aware of the self and of reality; the eye of wisdom brings understanding (of pertinent matters) and inner vision. One cannot find or develop the wisdom-eye (of divine immanence) without first reforming and refining the ordinary human nature. The words and perspectives may differ, but the message of the scriptures is ever the same: an encouragement onward and upward for every human being regardless of the stage or particular nature of existence. The path implies continual reformation and progression until the inner life is revealed in all of its (impersonal) glory and the cycle or rebirth is no longer needed.

The immanence and transcendence of the godhead are clarified (through the participation of the individual consciousness within the life divine). The immanence of the logos persists through the various transformations of energy (life). The four kinds of food refer (on one level) to the four elements: earth, fire, air, and water; each of which is an expression of the divine life. Though matter, form, and even lower (human) consciousness are perishable (transient) (mortal), higher consciousness (the soul) belongs to the imperishable (eternal) (relatively immortal). But the transcendent (supreme self) (monad) (purushottama) is beyond even the imperishable. And it is to that transcendent reality that the evolutionary path ultimately proceeds.

Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga

The sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the division (distinction) between the good and evil natures, between heaven and hell. Discussed are the cardinal virtues and the deadly sins, the effects and consequences of the two paths, the triple gate of hell, and liberation from the path of bondage.

Among the cardinal virtues (divine traits) which lead toward God and liberation (deliverance) are: fearlessness, purity, steadfastness in wisdom, generosity (unselfishness), self-control (as to the senses) (self-harmony), austerity, straightforwardness, sacrifice, harmlessness, serenity (truthfulness), compassion, gentleness, modesty (humility), and freedom from pride. Among the deadly sins are ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance. The cultivation of the cardinal virtues is encouraged by karma (natural law); the deadly sins are discouraged by karma. By living in harmony with natural law, the spiritual student progresses in consciousness. Those who live in direct obstruction to the law bring upon themselves the difficult and painful lessons (encouragement) necessary for ultimate progress.

Heaven and hell are considered both as states of mind and as destinies in consciousness. As a state of mind, heaven is living in harmony with self (and therefore with every other life) (God). As a disposition (and state of consciousness), hell is living in conflict with self (in opposition to natural law). As a destiny, heaven (expanded consciousness) (completion) (freedom) is the consequence of the right-hand (spiritual) path. Similarly, hell (self-destruction) is the consequence of the left-hand path (darkness) (bondage). Progressive reincarnation is a manifestation of the law of evolution; all lives (with or without form) must evolve along a progressive spiral. Even those who live in the bondage of material or phenomenal existence are forever urged onward and upward. But for those very, very few who become absolutely obsessed by selfish endeavors, the path of darkness brings about self-destruction. The (pattern of the) personality is destroyed, and the soul must begin the evolutionary cycle anew with a subsequent lifewave.

The law of karma (evolutionary consequence) cannot be compromised. There can be no transmigration (passage of life into a lower kingdom), for that would be contrary to law. The forms may disintegrate and a few lives may be withdrawn from the present cycle, but only that the life might be free to begin again.

The triple gate of hell refers to three serious distractions (the three doors of darkness) which are especially in conflict with progress: lust (desire), anger (wrath) (hatred), and greed. These tendencies are easily acquired through self-indulgence and self-centeredness, but are not easily lost. The karma of such self-indulgence must necessarily be serious (the farther one wanders from the evolutionary path, the more severe are the consequences). But even those who are bound by the worst of ways may reform themselves, as the urging of evolutionary intent finally enters the (unconscious) mind. The path of liberation for them is the path of liberation for humanity. As the consciousness of the group evolves, so are the members of the group drawn onward and upward. Thus it is important for the spiritual student to work primarily with the consciousness of humanity (rather than with isolated individuals). The momentum of the lifewave is considerable, and (for the most part) sufficient to carry with it even those souls which are chained to the earth (through desire). May spiritual impulse increase, that group endeavors might achieve the needed maturity, that all of humanity might contribute consciously to the greater life.

« Commentary No. 153

Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga

The seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the threefold faith. Considered are faith and human nature in relationship to the three gunas; exaggerated asceticism; the three constituents of nature in food, sacrifice, ascetic practice, and in giving; and the application of the sacred words: Om Tat Sat. The underlying theme is the need for purity (sincerity) of motive in all of the activities of life. Motives and faith are related to a person's nature in accordance with sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), or tamas (darkness). In the sattvika disposition (nature), faith (devotion) is to God and to humanity; in the rajasika disposition, faith is to

oneself in relationship with others; and in the tamasika disposition, faith is to oneself entirely.

A man is as his faith is; the quality of consciousness (and disposition) is related to that faith. Actions of the past appear as tendencies (inclinations) and vulnerabilities in subsequent incarnations. Thus a person's nature (faith) is determined by previous experience. The (true) spiritual student (having the sattvika disposition) is characterized by constant faithfulness and pure (selfless) motive (discretion), which have been cultivated. Exaggerated asceticism (and any form of exaggerated or false religious or spiritual activity) (such as psychic demonstration or display) is not a spiritual activity. That which is psychic or superphysical is not (usually) necessarily spiritual. Motive and purpose (and quality of consciousness) determine spirituality; phenomenal powers are (generally) no such indication.

The respective disposition is manifested (and therefore revealed) in various ways. In food (knowledge) (understanding) (the taste and values of a person), the sattvika disposition is indicated by values which are relatively pure and (spiritually) meaningful. The rajasika disposition is indicated by values which are distorted somewhat by desire (emotional or selfish interest). In sacrifice (worship) (service), sattva indicates performance according to duty, while rajas indicates performance for the sake of personal reward (such as recognition or self-glorification). In the ascetic practice (austerity) (continence) of the spiritual student, the sattvika nature is revealed as a threefold harmony: the purity (meaningfulness) (harmlessness) of physical activity, the purity of words (in peacefulness and truth), and the purity of mind and heart.

The sattvika nature is also distinguished in the giving of gifts according to dharma (duty) (appropriateness) (without publicity), rather than the giving according to expectation (in either direction). Any activity performed with the intention of karma indicates (some) selfishness and the rajasika temperament. Spiritual practice (or any practice) in any form loses its value (purity) to the extent that rewards are sought. To perform any task according to dharma (to do what needs to be done because it needs to be done) is an indication of sattva (goodness). Right motives become increasingly important as the student progresses along the path. As the (necessary) qualifications of the path become increasingly refined, motives and methods take precedence over actions.

The sacred words “Om Tat Sat” can be used to qualify intentions and activities. “Om” (purity) can be used as a dedication (a qualified beginning). “Tat” (It) (That) is a word of sincerity. “Sat” (It is) (reality) (goodness) can be used as a consecration (benediction). Together, if used properly and sincerely, these three words can clarify any activity. One of the many objects of the spiritual student is the qualification of all of the life and activity with spiritual purpose.

« Commentary No. 158

Moksha Sanyasa Yoga

The eighteenth and final chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Moksha Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of liberation (freedom) through renunciation. The chapter consists of a comprehensive summary and recapitulation of the preceding seventeen chapters, though in somewhat different terms. Considered is the primary thread of the treatise: renunciation (and self-surrender). Two forms of renunciation are viewed (almost) interchangeably. Sanyasa in its highest (human) form implies the renunciation of (all) personal desires (glamours). Tyaga (in its highest form) implies the abandonment (renunciation) of the fruits of all works. As freedom from mundane absorption is achieved, and as spiritual work is entered (performed) (with proper attitude), then liberation (potency) is attained (almost incidentally).

Renunciation is further clarified by a consideration of the three constituents of nature (with emphasis on sattva) in metaphysical doctrine (knowledge), in works, in the agent, in the intellect, in constancy, and in happiness. In the renunciation (transformation) of (lower) knowledge is found the higher (unified) knowledge (truth), the inner and inclusive realization of the continuity of all life. In works the higher (sattvika) disposition is shown wherever work (action) is performed without attachment to the work or to the fruits of the work. It is important for the spiritual student to (begin to) work from duty and without becoming entangled in the work itself. Such entanglement suggests continued bondage and distraction on personal (personality) levels. The work of the disciple is the work of appropriateness, to do what needs to be done, whether it is mundane and necessary or entirely spiritual, whether the work is associated

(attracted) with karma or dharma (or both). Renunciation is disentanglement (fulfillment), not withdrawal.

In the agent, the sattvika disposition is also free from attachment, as the spiritual student attains a non-egotistical and stoic temperament (indicating freedom). As God is realized, so is the distinction and nature of the agent clarified. The sattvika disposition contributes the quality of discernment to the intellect. As personality values are renounced (transcended), the wisdom of (realization of) discernment (appropriateness) is achieved. In consistency (firmness) the (student having the) sattvika temperament remains ever poised with spiritual fortitude. And in the (quiet) happiness born of self-realization does sattva prove to be quite superior to the senses, as the pleasures of the lower life lose their hold on the spiritual student.

One of the keys to (appropriate) renunciation is the acceptance and performance of dharma (which is complementary to the right attitude toward karma). Liberation is not (cannot be) attained by avoiding karma or by declining to accept responsibility. Liberation is attained through the proper fulfillment of karma. In wisdom is this distinction well-known. Work should not be suspended; work should simply be placed in a more (spiritually) meaningful perspective. The performance of duty without attachment is the needed form of renunciation.

Perfection cannot be attained without practice (effort) and the elimination (renunciation) of self-centeredness. It is this mastery of self that is the object of the synthesis of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga, as set forth in the Bhagavad Gita. Self-surrender is the achievement of selflessness. As the ego (lower self) (personality) is conquered, the will (unity) of the lower self is uplifted and aligned with the (divine) will of the One (soul). Self-surrender is merely completion (ultimate fulfillment).