

From His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The Bhagavad Gita As It Is

Study Guide

Presented by

Disciples and Followers of His Divine Grace

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One cleanses himself daily by taking a bath in water, but one who takes his bath only once in the sacred Ganges water of the *Bhagavad-gita* cleanses away all the dirt of material life. Because *Bhagavad-gita* is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other Vedic literature. One need only attentively and regularly hear and read *Bhagavad-gita*. In the present age, mankind is so absorbed with mundane activities that it is not possible to read all of the Vedic literatures. But this is not necessary. This one book, *Bhagavad-gita*, will suffice because it is the essence of all Vedic literatures and because it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is said that one who drinks the water of the Ganges certainly gets salvation, but what to speak of one who drinks the waters of *Bhagavad-gita*? *Gita* is the very nectar of the *Mahabharata* spoken by Visnu Himself, for Lord Krsna is the original Visnu. It is nectar emanating from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the Ganges is said to be emanating from the lotus feet of the Lord.

Of course there is no difference between the mouth and the feet of the Supreme Lord, but in our position we can appreciate that the *Bhagavad-gita* is even more important than the Ganges.

The *Bhagavad-gita* is just like a cow, and Lord Krsna, who is a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. The milk is the essence of the *Vedas*, and Arjuna is just like a calf. The wise men, the great sages and pure devotees, are to drink the nectarean milk of *Bhagavad-gita*.

In this present day, man is very eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. So let there be one common scripture for the whole world--*Bhagavad-gita*. And let there be one God only for the whole world--Sri Krsna. And one *mantra* only -Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. And let there be one work only - the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Introduction

*om ajnana-timirandhasya jnananjana-salakaya
caksur unmilitam yena tasmai sri-gurave namah*

*sri-caitanya-mano-'bhistam sthapitam yena bhu-tale
svayam rupah kada mahyam dadati sva-padantikam*

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisance's unto him.
When will Srila Rupa Gosvami Prabhupada, who has established within this material world the mission to fulfill the desire of Lord Caitanya, give me shelter under his lotus feet?

*vande 'ham sri-guroh sri-yuta-pada-kamalam sri-gurun vaisnavams ca
sri-rupam sagrajam saha-gana-raghunathanvitam tam sa-jivam
sadvaitam savadhutam parijana-sahitam krsna-caitanya-devam
sri-radha-krsna-padan saha-gana-lalita-sri-visakhanvitams ca*

I offer my respectful obeisance's unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and unto the feet of all Vaisnavas. I offer my respectful obeisance's unto the lotus feet of Srila Rupa Gosvami along with his elder brother Sanatana Gosvami, as well as Raghunatha Dasa and Raghunatha Bhatta, Gopala Bhatta, and Srila Jiva Gosvami. I offer my respectful obeisance's to Lord Krsna Caitanya and Lord Nityananda along with Advaita Acarya, Gadadhara, Srivasa, and other associates. I offer my respectful obeisance's to Srimati Radharani and Sri Krsna along with Their associates, Sri Lalita and Visakha.

*he krsna karuna-sindho dina-bandho jagat-pate
gopesa gopika-kanta radha-kanta namo 'stu te*

O my dear Krsna, You are the friend of the distressed and the source of creation. You are the master of the *gopis* and the lover of Radharani. I offer my respectful obeisance's unto You.

*tapta-kancana-gaurangi radhe vrndavanesvari
vrsabhanu-sute devi pranamami hari-priye*

I offer my respects to Radharani whose bodily complexion is like molten gold and who is the Queen of Vrndavana. You are the daughter of King Vrsabhanu, and You are very dear to Lord Krsna.

*vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubyas eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

I offer my respectful obeisance's unto all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord who can fulfill the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and who are full of compassion for the fallen souls.

*sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda
sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda*

I offer my obeisances to Sri Krsna Caitanya, Prabhu Nityananda, Sri Advaita, Gadadhara, Srivasa and all others in the line of devotion.

*hare krsna hare krsna, krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama, rama rama hare hare.*

Bhagavad-gita is also known as *Gitopanisad*. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important *Upanisads* in Vedic literature. Of course there are many commentaries in English on the *Bhagavad-gita*, and one may question the necessity for another one. This present edition can be explained in the following way. Recently an American lady asked me to recommend an English translation of *Bhagavad-gita*.

Of course in America there are so many editions of *Bhagavad-gita* available in English, but as far as I have seen, not only in America but also in India, none of them can be strictly said to be authoritative because in almost every one of them the commentator has expressed his own opinions without touching the spirit of *Bhagavad-gita* as it is.

The spirit of *Bhagavad-gita* is mentioned in *Bhagavad-gita* itself. It is just like this: If we want to take a particular medicine, then we have to follow the directions written on the label. We cannot take the medicine according to our own whim or the direction of a friend. It must be taken according to the directions on the label or the directions given by a physician.

Similarly, *Bhagavad-gita* should be taken or accepted as it is directed by the speaker Himself. The speaker of *Bhagavad-gita* is Lord Sri Krsna. He is mentioned on every page of *Bhagavad-gita* as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan.

Of course the word *bhagavan* sometimes refers to any powerful person or any powerful demigod, and certainly here *bhagavan* designates Lord Sri Krsna as a great personality, but at the same time we should know that Lord Sri Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as is confirmed by all great *acaryas* (spiritual masters) like Sankaracarya, Ramanujacarya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarka Svami, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and many other authorities of Vedic knowledge in India. The Lord Himself also establishes Himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the *Bhagavad-gita*, and He is accepted as such in the *Brahma-samhita* and all the *Puranas*, especially the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, known as the *Bhagavata Purana* (*krsnas tu bhagavan svayam*). Therefore we should take *Bhagavad-gita* as it is directed by the Personality of Godhead Himself. In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* the Lord says:

(1) *imam vivasvate yogam proktavan aham avyayam
vivasvan manave praha manur iksvakave 'bravit*

(2) *evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh
sa kaleneha mahata yogo nastah parantapa*

(3) *sa evayam maya te 'dya yogah proktah puratanah
bhakto 'si me sakha ceti rahasyam hy etad uttamam*

Here the Lord informs Arjuna that this system of *yoga*, the *Bhagavad-gita*, was first spoken to the sun-god, and the sun-god explained it to Manu, and Manu explained it to Ikshvaku, and in that way, by disciplic succession, one speaker after another, this *yoga* system has been coming down.

But in the course of time it has become lost. Consequently the Lord has to speak it again, this time to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra.

He tells Arjuna that He is relating this supreme secret to him because he is His devotee and His friend. The purport of this is that *Bhagavad-gita* is a treatise which is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord. There are three classes of transcendentalists, namely the *jnani*, the *yogi* and the *bhakta*, or the impersonalist, the meditator and the devotee. Here the Lord clearly tells Arjuna that He is making him the first receiver of a new *parampara* (disciplic succession) because the old succession was broken. It was the Lord's wish, therefore, to establish another *parampara* in the same line of thought that was coming down from the sun-god to others, and it was His wish that His teaching be distributed anew by Arjuna. He wanted Arjuna to become the authority in understanding the *Bhagavad-gita*. So we see that *Bhagavad-gita* is instructed to Arjuna especially because Arjuna was a devotee of the Lord, a direct student of Krsna, and His intimate friend. Therefore *Bhagavad-gita* is best understood by a person who has qualities similar to Arjuna's. That is to say he must be a devotee in a direct relationship with the Lord. That is a very elaborate subject matter, but briefly it can be stated that a devotee is in a relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one of five different ways:

1. One may be a devotee in a passive state;
2. One may be a devotee in an active state;
3. One may be a devotee as a friend;
4. One may be a devotee as a parent;
5. One may be a devotee as a conjugal lover.

Arjuna was in a relationship with the Lord as friend. Of course there is a gulf of difference between this friendship and the friendship found in the material world. This is transcendental friendship which cannot be had by everyone. Of course everyone has a particular relationship

with the Lord, and that relationship is evoked by the perfection of devotional service. But in the present status of our life, we have not only forgotten the Supreme Lord, but we have forgotten our eternal relationship with the Lord.

Every living being, out of many, many billions and trillions of living beings, has a particular relationship with the Lord eternally. That is called *svarupa*. By the process of devotional service, one can revive that *svarupa*, and that stage is called *svarupa-siddhi*--perfection of one's constitutional position. So Arjuna was a devotee, and he was in touch with the Supreme Lord in friendship.

How Arjuna accepted this *Bhagavad-gita* should be noted. His manner of acceptance is given in the Tenth Chapter:

(12) *arjuna uvaca*
param brahma param dhama pavitram paramam bhavan
purusam sasvatam divyam adi-devam ajam vibhum

(13) *ahus tvam rsayah sarve devarsir naradas tatha*
asito devalo vyasah svayam caiva bravisi me

(14) *sarvam etad rtam manye yan mam vadasi kesava*
na hi te bhagavan vyaktim vidur deva na danavah

"Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Brahman, the ultimate, the supreme abode and purifier, the Absolute Truth and the eternal Divine Person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original, and you are the unborn and all-pervading beauty. All the great sages like Narada, Asita, Devala, and Vyasa proclaim this of You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me. O Krsna, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me. Neither the gods nor the demons, O Lord, know Thy personality." (Bg. 10.12-14).

After hearing *Bhagavad-gita* from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Arjuna accepted Krsna as *param brahma*, the Supreme Brahman. Every living being is Brahman, but the supreme living being, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the Supreme Brahman.

Param dhama means that He is the supreme rest or abode of everything, *pavitram* means that He is pure, untainted by material contamination, *purusam* means that He is the supreme enjoyer, *divyam*, transcendental, *adi-devam*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *ajam*, the unborn, and *vibhum*, the greatest, the all-pervading.

Now one may think that because Krsna was the friend of Arjuna, Arjuna was telling Him all this by way of flattery, but Arjuna, just to drive out this kind of doubt from the minds of the readers of *Bhagavad-gita*, substantiates these praises in the next verse when he says that Krsna is accepted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead not only by himself but by authorities like the

sage Narada, Asita, Devala, Vyasadeva and so on. These are great personalities who distribute the Vedic knowledge as it is accepted by all *acaryas*. Therefore Arjuna tells Krsna that he accepts whatever He says to be completely perfect. *Sarvam etad rtam manye*: "I accept everything You say to be true." Arjuna also says that the personality of the Lord is very difficult to understand and that He cannot be known even by the great demigods. This means that the Lord cannot even be known by personalities greater than human beings. So how can a human being understand Sri Krsna without becoming His devotee?

Therefore *Bhagavad-gita* should be taken up in a spirit of devotion. One should not think that he is equal to Krsna, nor should he think that Krsna is an ordinary personality or even a very great personality. Lord Sri Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, at least theoretically, according to the statements of *Bhagavad-gita* or the statements of Arjuna, the person who is trying to understand the *Bhagavad-gita*. We should therefore at least theoretically accept Sri Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and with that submissive spirit we can understand the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Unless one reads the *Bhagavad-gita* in a submissive spirit, it is very difficult to understand *Bhagavad-gita* because it is a great mystery.

Just what is the *Bhagavad-gita*? The purpose of *Bhagavad-gita* is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence.

Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna also was in difficulty in having to fight the Battle of Kuruksetra. Arjuna surrendered unto Sri Krsna, and consequently this *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken. Not only Arjuna, but every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. Our very existence is in the atmosphere of nonexistence. Actually we are not meant to be threatened by nonexistence. Our existence is eternal. But somehow or other we are put into *asat*. *Asat* refers to that which does not exist.

Out of so many human beings who are suffering, there are a few who are actually inquiring about their position, as to what they are, why they are put into this awkward position and so on.

Unless one is awakened to this position of questioning his suffering, unless he realizes that he doesn't want suffering but rather wants to make a solution to all sufferings, then one is not to be considered a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this sort of inquiry is awakened in one's mind.

In the *Brahma-sutra* this inquiry is called "*brahma jijnasa*." Every activity of the human being is to be considered a failure unless he inquires about the nature of the Absolute. Therefore those who begin to question why they are suffering or where they came from and where they shall go after death are proper students for understanding *Bhagavad-gita*. The sincere student should also have a firm respect for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such a student was Arjuna. Lord Krsna descends specifically to reestablish the real purpose of life when man forgets that purpose. Even then, out of many, many human beings who awaken, there may be one who actually enters the spirit of understanding his position, and for him this *Bhagavad-gita* is spoken.

Actually we are all followed by the tiger of nescience, but the Lord is very merciful upon living entities, especially human beings. To this end He spoke the *Bhagavad-gita*, making His friend Arjuna His student.

Being an associate of Lord Krsna, Arjuna was above all ignorance, but Arjuna was put into ignorance on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra just to question Lord Krsna about the problems of life so that the Lord could explain them for the benefit of future generations of human beings and chalk out the plan of life. Then man could act accordingly and perfect the mission of human life. The subject of the *Bhagavad-gita* entails the comprehension of five basic truths. First of all, the science of God is explained and then the constitutional position of the living entities, *jivas*. There is *isvara*, which means controller, and there are *jivas*, the living entities which are controlled. If a living entity says that he is not controlled but that he is free, then he is insane. The living being is controlled in every respect, at least in his conditioned life. So in the *Bhagavad-gita* the subject matter deals with the *isvara*, the supreme controller, and the *jivas*, the controlled living entities. Prakrti (material nature) and time (the duration of existence of the whole universe or the manifestation of material nature) and *karma* (activity) are also discussed. The cosmic manifestation is full of different activities. All living entities are engaged in different activities.

From *Bhagavad-gita* we must learn what God is, what the living entities are, what *prakrti* is, what the cosmic manifestation is, how it is controlled by time, and what the activities of the living entities are.

Out of these five basic subject matters in *Bhagavad-gita* it is established that the Supreme Godhead, or Krsna, or Brahman, or supreme controller, or Paramatma--you may use whatever name you like--is the greatest of all. The living beings are in quality like the supreme controller.

For instance, the Lord has control over the universal affairs, over material nature, etc., as will be explained in the later chapters of *Bhagavad-gita*. Material nature is not independent. She is acting under the directions of the Supreme Lord. As Lord Krsna says, "*Prakrti* is working under My direction." When we see wonderful things happening in the cosmic nature, we should know that behind this cosmic manifestation there is a controller.

Nothing could be manifested without being controlled. It is childish not to consider the controller. For instance, a child may think that an automobile is quite wonderful to be able to run without a horse or other animal pulling it, but a sane man knows the nature of the automobile's engineering arrangement. He always knows that behind the machinery there is a man, a driver. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is a driver under whose direction everything is working. Now the *jivas*, or the living entities, have been accepted by the Lord, as we will note in the later chapters, as His parts and parcels. A particle of gold is also gold, a drop of water from the ocean is also salty, and similarly, we the living entities, being part and parcel of the supreme controller, *isvara*, or Bhagavan, Lord Sri Krsna, have all the qualities of the Supreme Lord in minute quantity because we are minute *isvaras*, subordinate *isvaras*. We are trying to control nature, as presently we are trying to control space or planets, and this tendency to control is there because it is in Krsna. But although we have a tendency to lord it over material nature, we should know that we are not the supreme controller. This is explained in *Bhagavad-gita*.

What is material nature? This is also explained in *Gita* as inferior *prakrti*, inferior nature. The living entity is explained as the superior *prakrti*. *Prakrti* is always under control, whether inferior or superior. *Prakrti* is female, and she is controlled by the Lord just as the activities of a wife are controlled by the husband. *Prakrti* is always subordinate, predominated by the Lord, who is the predominator. The living entities and material nature are both predominated, controlled by the Supreme Lord.

According to the *Gita*, the living entities, although parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, are to be considered *prakṛti*. This is clearly mentioned in the Seventh Chapter, Fifth Verse of *Bhagavad-gīta*: "*Apāreyaṁ itas tv anyam.*" "This *prakṛti* is My lower nature," "*prakṛtim viddhi me param jīva-bhūtaṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dharyate jagat.*" And beyond this there is another *prakṛti*: *jīva-bhūtaṁ*, the living entity.

Prakṛti itself is constituted by three qualities: the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of ignorance. Above these modes there is eternal time, and by a combination of these modes of nature and under the control and purview of eternal time there are activities which are called *karma*.

These activities are being carried out from time immemorial, and we are suffering or enjoying the fruits of our activities. For instance, suppose I am a businessman and have worked very hard with intelligence and have amassed a great bank balance. Then I am an enjoyer. But then say I have lost all my money in business; then I am a sufferer. Similarly, in every field of life we enjoy the results of our work, or we suffer the results. This is called *karma*.

Isvara (the Supreme Lord), *jīva* (the living entity), *prakṛti* (nature), eternal time and *karma* (activity) are all explained in the *Bhagavad-gīta*. Out of these five, the Lord, the living entities, material nature and time are eternal. The manifestation of *prakṛti* may be temporary, but it is not false. Some philosophers say that the manifestation of material nature is false, but according to the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gīta* or according to the philosophy of the Vaisnavas, this is not so. The manifestation of the world is not accepted as false; it is accepted as real, but temporary. It is likened unto a cloud which moves across the sky, or the coming of the rainy season which nourishes grains. As soon as the rainy season is over and as soon as the cloud goes away, all the crops which were nourished by the rain dry up. Similarly, this material manifestation takes place at a certain interval, stays for a while and then disappears. Such are the workings of *prakṛti*. But this cycle is working eternally. Therefore *prakṛti* is eternal; it is not false. The Lord refers to this as "My *prakṛti*." This material nature is the separated energy of the Supreme Lord, and similarly the living entities are also the energy of the Supreme Lord, but they are not separated. They are eternally related. So the Lord, the living entity, material nature and time are all interrelated and are all eternal. However, the other item, *karma*, is not eternal. The effects of *karma* may be very old indeed.

We are suffering or enjoying the results of our activities from time immemorial, but we can change the results of our *karma*, or our activity, and this change depends on the perfection of our knowledge. We are engaged in various activities. Undoubtedly we do not know what sort of activities we should adopt to gain relief from the actions and reactions of all these activities, but this is also explained in the *Bhagavad-gīta*.

The position of *isvara* is that of supreme consciousness. The *jīvas*, or the living entities, being parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, are also conscious. Both the living entity and material nature are explained as *prakṛti*, the energy of the Supreme Lord, but one of the two, the *jīva*, is conscious. The other *prakṛti* is not conscious. That is the difference. Therefore the *jīva-prakṛti* is called superior because the *jīva* has consciousness which is similar to the Lord's. The Lord's is supreme consciousness, however, and one should not claim that the *jīva*, the living entity, is also supremely conscious.

The living being cannot be supremely conscious at any stage of his perfection, and the theory that he can be so is a misleading theory. Conscious he may be, but he is not perfectly or supremely conscious.

The distinction between the *jiva* and the *isvara* will be explained in the Thirteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. The Lord is *ksetra-jna*, conscious, as is the living being, but the living being is conscious of his particular body, whereas the Lord is conscious of all bodies. Because He lives in the heart of every living being, He is conscious of the psychic movements of the particular *jivas*. We should not forget this. It is also explained that the Paramatma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is living in everyone's heart as *isvara*, as the controller, and that He is giving directions for the living entity to act as he desires. The living entity forgets what to do.

First of all he makes a determination to act in a certain way, and then he is entangled in the actions and reactions of his own *karma*. After giving up one type of body, he enters another type of body, as we put on and take off old clothes. As the soul thus migrates, he suffers the actions and reactions of his past activities. These activities can be changed when the living being is in the mode of goodness, in sanity, and understands what sort of activities he should adopt. If he does so, then all the actions and reactions of his past activities can be changed. Consequently, *karma* is not eternal. Therefore we stated that of the five items (*isvara*, *jiva*, *prakrti*, time and *karma*) four are eternal, whereas *karma* is not eternal.

The supreme conscious *isvara* is similar to the living entity in this way: both the consciousness of the Lord and that of the living entity are transcendental. It is not that consciousness is generated by the association of matter. That is a mistaken idea. The theory that consciousness develops under certain circumstances of material combination is not accepted in the *Bhagavad-gita*. Consciousness may be perversely reflected by the covering of material circumstances, just as light reflected through colored glass may appear to be a certain color, but the consciousness of the Lord is not materially affected. Lord Krsna says, "*mayadhyaksena prakrtih*." When He descends into the material universe, His consciousness is not materially affected. If He were so affected, He would be unfit to speak on transcendental matters as He does in the *Bhagavad-gita*. One cannot say anything about the transcendental world without being free from materially contaminated consciousness. So the Lord is not materially contaminated. Our consciousness, at the present moment, however, *is* materially contaminated. The *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that we have to purify this materially contaminated consciousness. In pure consciousness, our actions will be dovetailed to the will of *isvara*, and that will make us happy. It is not that we have to cease all activities.

Rather, our activities are to be purified, and purified activities are called *bhakti*. Activities in *bhakti* appear to be like ordinary activities, but they are not contaminated.

An ignorant person may see that a devotee is acting or working like an ordinary man, but such a person with a poor fund of knowledge does not know that the activities of the devotee or of the Lord are not contaminated by impure consciousness or matter. They are transcendental to the three modes of nature. We should know, however, that at this point our consciousness is contaminated.

When we are materially contaminated, we are called conditioned.

False consciousness is exhibited under the impression that I am a product of material nature. This is called false ego. One who is absorbed in the thought of bodily conceptions cannot understand his situation. *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken to liberate one from the bodily conception of life, and Arjuna put himself in this position in order to receive this information from the Lord. One must become free from the bodily conception of life; that is the preliminary activity for the

transcendentalist. One who wants to become free, who wants to become liberated, must first of all learn that he is not this material body.

Mukti or liberation means freedom from material consciousness. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* also the definition of liberation is given. *Mukti* means liberation from the contaminated consciousness of this material world and situation in pure consciousness. All the instructions of *Bhagavad-gita* are intended to awaken this pure consciousness, and therefore we find at the last stage of the *Gita's* instructions that Krsna is asking Arjuna whether he is now in purified consciousness. Purified consciousness means acting in accordance with the instructions of the Lord. This is the whole sum and substance of purified consciousness. Consciousness is already there because we are part and parcel of the Lord, but for us there is the affinity of being affected by the inferior modes. But the Lord, being the Supreme, is never affected. That is the difference between the Supreme Lord and the conditioned souls.

What is this consciousness? This consciousness is "I am." Then what am I? In contaminated consciousness "I am" means "I am the lord of all I survey. I am the enjoyer." The world revolves because every living being thinks that he is the lord and creator of the material world. Material consciousness has two psychic divisions. One is that I am the creator, and the other is that I am the enjoyer. But actually the Supreme Lord is both the creator and the enjoyer, and the living entity, being part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, is neither the creator nor the enjoyer, but a cooperator. He is the created and the enjoyed.

For instance, a part of a machine cooperates with the whole machine; a part of the body cooperates with the whole body. The hands, feet, eyes, legs and so on are all parts of the body, but they are not actually the enjoyers. The stomach is the enjoyer. The legs move, the hands supply food, the teeth chew and all parts of the body are engaged in satisfying the stomach because the stomach is the principal factor that nourishes the body's organization. Therefore everything is given to the stomach. One nourishes the tree by watering its root, and one nourishes the body by feeding the stomach, for if the body is to be kept in a healthy state, then the parts of the body must cooperate to feed the stomach. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is the enjoyer and the creator, and we, as subordinate living beings, are meant to cooperate to satisfy Him. This cooperation will actually help us, just as food taken by the stomach will help all other parts of the body. If the fingers of the hand think that they should take the food themselves instead of giving it to the stomach, then they will be frustrated.

The central figure of creation and of enjoyment is the Supreme Lord, and the living entities are cooperators. By cooperation they enjoy. The relation is also like that of the master and the servant. If the master is fully satisfied, then the servant is satisfied. Similarly, the Supreme Lord should be satisfied, although the tendency to become the creator and the tendency to enjoy the material world are there also in the living entities because these tendencies are there in the Supreme Lord who has created the manifested cosmic world.

We shall find, therefore, in this *Bhagavad-gita* that the complete whole is comprised of the supreme controller, the controlled living entities, the cosmic manifestation, eternal time, and *karma*, or activities, and all of these are explained in this text. All of these taken completely form the complete whole, and the complete whole is called the Supreme Absolute Truth. The complete whole and the complete Absolute Truth are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. All manifestations are due to His different energies. He *is* the complete whole.

It is also explained in the *Gita* that impersonal Brahman is also subordinate to the complete. Brahman is more explicitly explained in the *Brahma-sutra* to be like the rays of the sunshine. The impersonal Brahman is the shining rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Impersonal Brahman is incomplete realization of the absolute whole, and so also is the conception of Paramatma in the Twelfth Chapter. There it shall be seen that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Purusottama, is above both impersonal Brahman and the partial realization of Paramatma. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*.

The *Brahma-samhita* begins in this way: *isvarah paramah krsnah sac-cid-ananda-vigraha/ anadir adir govindah sarva-karana-karanam*. "Krsna is the cause of all causes. He is the primal cause, and He is the very form of eternal being, knowledge and bliss." Impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His *sat* (being) feature. Paramatma realization is the realization of the *cit* (eternal knowledge) feature. But realization of the Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is realization of all the transcendental features: *sat*, *cit* and *ananda* (being, knowledge, bliss) in complete *vigraha* (form).

People with less intelligence consider the Supreme Truth to be impersonal, but He is a transcendental person, and this is confirmed in all Vedic literatures. *Nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam*.

As we are all individual living beings and have our individuality, the Supreme Absolute Truth is also, in the ultimate issue, a person, and realization of the Personality of Godhead is realization of all of the transcendental features. The complete whole is not formless. If He is formless, or if He is less than any other thing, then He cannot be the complete whole. The complete whole must have everything within our experience and beyond our experience, otherwise it cannot be complete. The complete whole, Personality of Godhead, has immense potencies. How Krsna is acting in different potencies is also explained in *Bhagavad-gita*.

This phenomenal world or material world in which we are placed is also complete in itself because the twenty-four elements of which this material universe is a temporary manifestation, according to Sankhya philosophy, are completely adjusted to produce complete resources which are necessary for the maintenance and subsistence of this universe. There is nothing extraneous; nor is there anything needed. This manifestation has its own time fixed by the energy of the supreme whole, and when its time is complete, these temporary manifestations will be annihilated by the complete arrangement of the complete. There is complete facility for the small complete units, namely the living entities, to realize the complete, and all sorts of incompleteness are experienced due to incomplete knowledge of the complete. So *Bhagavad-gita* contains the complete knowledge of Vedic wisdom.

All Vedic knowledge is infallible, and Hindus accept Vedic knowledge to be complete and infallible. For example, cow dung is the stool of an animal, and according to *smṛti*, or Vedic injunction, if one touches the stool of an animal he has to take a bath to purify himself. But in the Vedic scriptures cow dung is considered to be a purifying agent. One might consider this to be contradictory, but it is accepted because it is Vedic injunction, and indeed by accepting this, one will not commit a mistake; subsequently it has been proved by modern science that cow dung contains all antiseptic properties.

So Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all doubts and mistakes, and *Bhagavad-gita* is the essence of all Vedic knowledge.

Vedic knowledge is not a question of research. Our research work is imperfect because we are

researching things with imperfect senses. We have to accept perfect knowledge which comes down, as is stated in *Bhagavad-gita*, by the *parampara* (disciplic succession).

We have to receive knowledge from the proper source in disciplic succession beginning with the supreme spiritual master, the Lord Himself, and handed down to a succession of spiritual masters.

Arjuna, the student who took lessons from Lord Sri Krsna, accepts everything that He says without contradicting Him. One is not allowed to accept one portion of *Bhagavad-gita* and not another. No. We must accept *Bhagavad-gita* without interpretation, without deletion and without our own whimsical participation in the matter. The *Gita* should be taken as the most perfect presentation of Vedic knowledge. Vedic knowledge is received from transcendental sources, and the first words were spoken by the Lord Himself. The words spoken by the Lord are different from the words spoken by a person of the mundane world who is infected with four defects. A mundaner 1) is sure to commit mistakes, 2) is invariably illusioned, 3) has the tendency to cheat others and 4) is limited by imperfect senses. With these four imperfections, one cannot deliver perfect information of all-pervading knowledge.

Vedic knowledge is not imparted by such defective living entities. It was imparted unto the heart of Brahma, the first created living being, and Brahma in his turn disseminated this knowledge to his sons and disciples, as he originally received it from the Lord. The Lord is *purnam*, all-perfect, and there is no possibility of His becoming subjected to the laws of material nature. One should therefore be intelligent enough to know that the Lord is the only proprietor of everything in the universe and that He is the original creator, the creator of Brahma.

In the Eleventh Chapter the Lord is addressed as *prapitamaha* because Brahma is addressed as *pitamaha*, the grandfather, and He is the creator of the grandfather. So no one should claim to be the proprietor of anything; one should accept only things which are set aside for him by the Lord as his quota for his maintenance.

There are many examples given of how we are to utilize those things which are set aside for us by the Lord. This is also explained in *Bhagavad-gita*. In the beginning, Arjuna decided that he should not fight in the Battle of Kuruksetra. This was his own decision. Arjuna told the Lord that it was not possible for him to enjoy the kingdom after killing his own kinsmen.

This decision was based on the body because he was thinking that the body was himself and that his bodily relations or expansions were his brothers, nephews, brothers-in-law, grandfathers and so on.

He was thinking in this way to satisfy his bodily demands. *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken by the Lord just to change this view, and at the end Arjuna decides to fight under the directions of the Lord when he says, "*karisyevacanam tava.*" "I shall act according to Thy word."

In this world man is not meant to toil like hogs. He must be intelligent to realize the importance of human life and refuse to act like an ordinary animal. A human being should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and the essence is given in *Bhagavad-gita*. Vedic literature is meant for human beings, not for animals. Animals can kill other living animals, and there is no question of sin on their part, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his uncontrolled taste, he must be responsible for breaking the laws of nature. In the *Bhagavad-gita* it is clearly explained that there are three kinds of activities according to the different modes of nature: the activities of goodness, of passion and of ignorance.

Similarly, there are three kinds of eatables also: eatables in goodness, passion and ignorance. All of this is clearly described, and if we properly utilize the instructions of *Bhagavad-gita*, then our whole life will become purified, and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination which is beyond this material sky.

That destination is called the *sanatana* sky, the eternal spiritual sky. In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit or anything. But beyond this temporary world there is another world of which we have information. This world consists of another nature, which is *sanatana*, eternal. *Jiva* is also described as *sanatana*, eternal, and the Lord is also described as *sanatana* in the Eleventh Chapter.

We have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and because we are all qualitatively one--the *sanatana-dhama*, or sky, the *sanatana* Supreme Personality and the *sanatana* living entities--the whole purpose of *Bhagavad-gita* is to revive our *sanatana* occupation, or *sanatana-dharma*, which is the eternal occupation of the living entity. We are temporarily engaged in different activities, but all of these activities can be purified when we give up all these temporary activities and take up the activities which are prescribed by the Supreme Lord. That is called our pure life.

The Supreme Lord and His transcendental abode are both *sanatana*, as are the living entities, and the combined association of the Supreme Lord and the living entities in the *sanatana* abode is the perfection of human life. The Lord is very kind to the living entities because they are His sons. Lord Krsna declares in *Bhagavad-gita*, "*sarva-yonisu...aham bija-pradah pita*." "I am the father of all." Of course there are all types of living entities according to their various *karmas*, but here the Lord claims that He is the father of all of them. Therefore the Lord descends to reclaim all of these fallen, conditioned souls to call them back to the *sanatana* eternal sky so that the *sanatana* living entities may regain their eternal *sanatana* positions in eternal association with the Lord. The Lord comes Himself in different incarnations, or He sends His confidential servants as sons or His associates or *acaryas* to reclaim the conditioned souls.

Therefore, *sanatana-dharma* does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Supreme Lord. *Sanatana-dharma* refers, as stated previously, to the eternal occupation of the living entity. Ramanujacarya has explained the word *sanatana* as "that which has neither beginning nor end," so when we speak of *sanatana-dharma*, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sri Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end.

The English word "religion" is a little different from *sanatana-dharma*. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another, but *sanatana-dharma* refers to that activity which cannot be changed. For instance, liquidity cannot be taken from water, nor can heat be taken from fire. Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity. *Sanatana-dharma* is eternally integral with the living entity. When we speak of *sanatana-dharma*, therefore, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sri Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end. That which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Yet those belonging to some sectarian faith will wrongly consider that *sanatana-dharma* is also sectarian, but if we go deeply into the matter and consider

it in the light of modern science, it is possible for us to see that *sanatana-dharma* is the business of all the people of the world--nay, of all the living entities of the universe.

Non-*sanatana* religious faith may have some beginning in the annals of human history, but there is no beginning to the history of *sanatana-dharma* because it remains eternally with the living entities.

Insofar as the living entities are concerned, the authoritative *sastras* state that the living entity has neither birth nor death. In the *Gita* it is stated that the living entity is never born, and he never dies. He is eternal and indestructible, and he continues to live after the destruction of his temporary material body. In reference to the concept of *sanatana-dharma*, we must try to understand the concept of religion from the Sanskrit root meaning of the word. *Dharma* refers to that which is constantly existing with a particular object. We conclude that there is heat and light along with the fire; without heat and light, there is no meaning to the word fire. Similarly, we must discover the essential part of the living being, that part which is his constant companion. That constant companion is his eternal quality, and that eternal quality is his eternal religion.

When Sanatana Gosvami asked Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu about the *svarupa* of every living being, the Lord replied that the *svarupa* or constitutional position of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in two capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. A serves B master, B serves C master and C serves D master and so on. Under these circumstances, we can see that one friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, the wife serves the husband, the husband serves the wife and so on. If we go on searching in this spirit, it will be seen that there is no exception in the society of living beings to the activity of service. The politician presents his manifesto for the public to convince them of his capacity for service. The voters therefore give the politician their valuable votes, thinking that he will render valuable service to society. The shopkeeper serves the customer, and the artisan serves the capitalist. The capitalist serves the family, and the family serves the state in the terms of the eternal capacity of the eternal living being. In this way we can see that no living being is exempt from rendering service to other living beings, and therefore we can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and that the rendering of service is the eternal religion of the living being.

Yet man professes to belong to a particular type of faith with reference to particular time and circumstance and thus claims to be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or any other sect. Such designations are non-*sanatana-dharma*. A Hindu may change his faith to become a Muslim, or a Muslim may change his faith to become a Hindu, or a Christian may change his faith and so on.

But in all circumstances the change of religious faith does not affect the eternal occupation of rendering service to others. The Hindu, Muslim or Christian in all circumstances is servant of someone.

Thus, to profess a particular type of sect is not to profess one's *sanatana-dharma*. The rendering of service is *sanatana-dharma*.

Factually we are related to the Supreme Lord in service. The Supreme Lord is the supreme enjoyer, and we living entities are His servitors. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we participate in that eternal enjoyment with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we become happy. We cannot become happy otherwise. It is not possible to be happy independently, just as no one part of the body can be happy without cooperating with the stomach. It is not possible for the living entity to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, worship of different demigods or rendering service to them is not approved. It is stated in the Seventh Chapter, twentieth verse:

*kamais tais tair hrta-jnanah prapadyante 'nya-devatah
tam tam niyamam asthaya prakrtya niyatah svaya*

"Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." (Bg. 7.20) Here it is plainly said that those who are directed by lust worship the demigods and not the Supreme Lord Krsna. When we mention the name Krsna, we do not refer to any sectarian name. *Krsna* means the highest pleasure, and it is confirmed that the Supreme Lord is the reservoir or storehouse of all pleasure. We are all hankering after pleasure. *Ananda-mayo 'bhyasat* (Vs. 1.1.12).

The living entities, like the Lord, are full of consciousness, and they are after happiness. The Lord is perpetually happy, and if the living entities associate with the Lord, cooperate with Him and take part in His association, then they also become happy.

The Lord descends to this mortal world to show His pastimes in Vrndavana, which are full of happiness. When Lord Sri Krsna was in Vrndavana, His activities with His cowherd boyfriends, with His damsel friends, with the inhabitants of Vrndavana and with the cows were all full of happiness. The total population of Vrndavana knew nothing but Krsna.

But Lord Krsna even discouraged His father Nanda Maharaja from worshiping the demigod Indra because He wanted to establish the fact that people need not worship any demigod. They need only worship the Supreme Lord because their ultimate goal is to return to His abode. The abode of Lord Sri Krsna is described in the *Bhagavad-gita*, Fifteenth Chapter, sixth verse:

*na tad bhasayate suryo na sasanko na pavakah
yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*

"That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity and anyone who reaches it never comes back to this material world." (Bg. 15.6)

This verse gives a description of that eternal sky. Of course we have a material conception of the sky, and we think of it in relationship to the sun, moon, stars and so on, but in this verse the Lord states that in the eternal sky there is no need for the sun nor for the moon nor fire of any kind because the spiritual sky is already illuminated by the *brahmajyoti*, the rays emanating from the

Supreme Lord. We are trying with difficulty to reach other planets, but it is not difficult to understand the abode of the Supreme Lord. This abode is referred to as Goloka. In the *Brahma-samhita* it is beautifully described: *goloka eva nivasaty akhila-tma-bhuta*. The Lord resides eternally in His abode Goloka, yet He can be approached from this world, and to this end the Lord comes to manifest His real form, *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*. When He manifests this form, there is no need for our imagining what He looks like.

To discourage such imaginative speculation, He descends and exhibits Himself as He is, as Syamasundara. Unfortunately, the less intelligent deride Him because He comes as one of us and plays with us as a human being. But because of this we should not consider that the Lord is one of us. It is by His potency that He presents Himself in His real form before us and displays His pastimes, which are prototypes of those pastimes found in His abode.

In the effulgent rays of the spiritual sky there are innumerable planets floating. The *brahmajyoti* emanates from the supreme abode, Krsnaloka, and the *anandamaya-cinmaya* planets, which are not material, float in those rays. The Lord says, *na tad bhasayate suryo na sasanko na pavakah. yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*. One who can approach that spiritual sky is not required to descend again to the material sky. In the material sky, even if we approach the highest planet (Brahmaloka), what to speak of the moon, we will find the same conditions of life, namely birth, death, disease and old age.

No planet in the material universe is free from these four principles of material existence.

Therefore the Lord says in *Bhagavad-gita*, *abrahma-bhuvanal lokah punar avartino 'rjuna*. The living entities are traveling from one planet to another, not by a mechanical arrangement but by a spiritual process. This is also mentioned: *yanti deva-vrata devan pitrn yanti pitr-vrata*. No mechanical arrangement is necessary if we want interplanetary travel. The *Gita* instructs: *yanti deva-vrata devan*. The moon, the sun and higher planets are called Svargaloka. There are three different statuses of planets: higher, middle and lower planetary systems. The earth belongs to the middle planetary system. *Bhagavad-gita* informs us how to travel to the higher planetary systems (Devaloka) with a very simple formula: *yanti deva-vrata devan*. One need only worship the particular demigod of that particular planet and in that way go to the moon, the sun or any of the higher planetary systems.

Yet *Bhagavad-gita* does not advise us to go to any of the planets in this material world because even if we go to Brahmaloka, the highest planet, through some sort of mechanical contrivance by maybe traveling for forty thousand years (and who would live that long?), we will still find the material inconveniences of birth, death, disease and old age. But one who wants to approach the supreme planet, Krsnaloka, or any of the other planets within the spiritual sky, will not meet with these material inconveniences.

Amongst all of the planets in the spiritual sky there is one supreme planet called Goloka Vrndavana, which is the original planet in the abode of the original Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna. All of this information is given in *Bhagavad-gita*, and we are given through its instruction information how to leave the material world and begin a truly blissful life in the spiritual sky.

In the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, the real picture of the material world is given. It is said there:

*urdhva-mulam adhah-sakham asvattham prahur avyayam
chandamsi yasya parnani yas tam veda sa veda-vit*

"The Supreme Lord said: There is a banyan tree which has its roots upward and its branches down, and the Vedic hymns are its leaves.

One who knows this tree is the knower of the *Vedas*." (Bg 15.1) Here the material world is described as a tree whose roots are upwards and branches are below. We have experience of a tree whose roots are upward: if one stands on the bank of a river or any reservoir of water, he can see that the trees reflected in the water are upside down. The branches go downward and the roots upward. Similarly, this material world is a reflection of the spiritual world. The material world is but a shadow of reality. In the shadow there is no reality or substantiality, but from the shadow we can understand that there is substance and reality.

In the desert there is no water, but the mirage suggests that there is such a thing as water. In the material world there is no water, there is no happiness, but the real water of actual happiness is there in the spiritual world.

The Lord suggests that we attain the spiritual world in the following manner:

*nirmana-moha jita-sanga-dosa
adhyatma-nitya vinivrtta-kamah
dvandvair vimuktah sukha-duhkha-samjnair
gacchanty amudhah padam avyayam tat*

That *padam avyayam* or eternal kingdom can be reached by one who is *nirmana-moha*. What does this mean? We are after designations.

Someone wants to become a son, someone wants to become "lord," someone wants to become the president or a rich man or a king or something else. As long as we are attached to these designations, we are attached to the body because designations belong to the body. But we are not these bodies, and realizing this is the first stage in spiritual realization. We are associated with the three modes of material nature, but we must become detached through devotional service to the Lord. If we are not attached to devotional service to the Lord, then we cannot become detached from the modes of material nature. Designations and attachments are due to our lust and desire, our wanting to lord it over the material nature. As long as we do not give up this propensity of lording it over material nature, there is no possibility of returning to the kingdom of the Supreme, the *sanatana-dhama*. That eternal kingdom, which is never destroyed, can be approached by one who is not bewildered by the attractions of false material enjoyments, who is situated in the service of the Supreme Lord. One so situated can easily approach that supreme abode.

Elsewhere in the *Gita* it is stated:

*avyakto 'ksara ity uktas tam ahuh paramam gatim
yam prapya na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*

Avyakta means unmanifested. Not even all of the material world is manifested before us. Our senses are so imperfect that we cannot even see all of the stars within this material universe. In Vedic literature we can receive much information about all the planets, and we can believe it or not believe it. All of the important planets are described in Vedic literatures, especially *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and the spiritual world, which is beyond this material sky, is described as *avyakta*, unmanifested. One should desire and hanker after that supreme kingdom, for when one attains that kingdom, he does not have to return to this material world.

Next, one may raise the question of how one goes about approaching that abode of the Supreme Lord. Information of this is given in the Eighth Chapter. It is said there:

*anta-kale ca mam eva smaran muktva kalevaram
yah prayati sa mad-bhavam yati nasty atra samsayah*

"Anyone who quits his body, at the end of life, remembering Me, attains immediately to My nature; and there is no doubt of this." (Bg. 8.5) One who thinks of Krsna at the time of his death goes to Krsna. One must remember the form of Krsna; if he quits his body thinking of this form, he approaches the spiritual kingdom. *Mad-bhavam* refers to the supreme nature of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*--eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. Our present body is not *sac-cid-ananda*. It is *asat*, not *sat*. It is not eternal; it is perishable. It is not *cit*, full of knowledge, but it is full of ignorance. We have no knowledge of the spiritual kingdom, nor do we even have perfect knowledge of this material world where there are so many things unknown to us. The body is also *nirananda*; instead of being full of bliss it is full of misery.

All of the miseries we experience in the material world arise from the body, but one who leaves this body thinking of the Supreme Personality of Godhead at once attains a *sac-cid-ananda* body, as is promised in the fifth verse of the Eighth Chapter where Lord Krsna says, "He attains My nature."

The process of quitting this body and getting another body in the material world is also organized. A man dies after it has been decided what form of body he will have in the next life. Higher authorities, not the living entity himself, make this decision. According to our activities in this life, we either rise or sink. This life is a preparation for the next life. If we can prepare, therefore, in this life to get promotion to the kingdom of God, then surely, after quitting this material body, we will attain a spiritual body just like the Lord.

As explained before, there are different kinds of transcendentalists, the *brahmavadi*, *paramatmavadi*, and the devotee, and, as mentioned, in the *brahmajyoti* (spiritual sky) there are innumerable spiritual planets. The number of these planets is far, far greater than all of the

planets of this material world. This material world has been approximated as only one quarter of the creation. In this material segment there are millions and billions of universes with trillions of planets and suns, stars and moons. But this whole material creation is only a fragment of the total creation. Most of the creation is in the spiritual sky.

One who desires to merge into the existence of the Supreme Brahman is at once transferred to the *brahmajyoti* of the Supreme Lord and thus attains the spiritual sky. The devotee, who wants to enjoy the association of the Lord, enters into the Vaikuntha planets, which are innumerable, and the Supreme Lord by His plenary expansions as Narayana with four hands and with different names like Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Govinda, etc., associates with him there. Therefore at the end of life the transcendentalists either think of the *brahmajyoti*, the Paramatma or the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna. In all cases they enter into the spiritual sky, but only the devotee, or he who is in personal touch with the Supreme Lord, enters into the Vaikuntha planets.

The Lord further adds that of this "there is no doubt." This must be believed firmly. We should not reject that which does not tally with our imagination; our attitude should be that of Arjuna: "I believe everything that You have said." Therefore when the Lord says that at the time of death whoever thinks of Him as Brahman or Paramatma or as the Personality of Godhead certainly enters into the spiritual sky, there is no doubt about it. There is no question of disbelieving it. The information on how to think of the Supreme Being at the time of death is also given in the *Gita*:

*yam yam vapi smaran bhavam tyajaty ante kalevaram
tam tam evaiti kaunteya sada tad-bhava-bhavitah*

"In whatever condition one quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state of being without fail." (Bg. 8.6) Material nature is a display of one of the energies of the Supreme Lord. In the *Visnu Purana* the total energies of the Supreme Lord as *Visnu-saktih para prokta*, etc., are delineated. The Supreme Lord has diverse and innumerable energies which are beyond our conception; however, great learned sages or liberated souls have studied these energies and have analyzed them into three parts. All of the energies are of *visnu-sakti*, that is to say they are different potencies of Lord Visnu. That energy is *para*, transcendental. Living entities also belong to the superior energy, as has already been explained. The other energies, or material energies, are in the mode of ignorance.

At the time of death we can either remain in the inferior energy of this material world, or we can transfer to the energy of the spiritual world.

In life we are accustomed to thinking either of the material or the spiritual energy. There are so many literatures which fill our thoughts with the material energy--newspapers, novels, etc. Our thinking, which is now absorbed in these literatures, must be transferred to the Vedic literatures.

The great sages, therefore, have written so many Vedic literatures such as the *Puranas*, etc. The *Puranas* are not imaginative; they are historical records. In the *Caitanya-caritamrta* there is the following verse:

maya-mugdha jivera nahi svatah krsna-jnana

jivere krpaya kaila krsna veda-purana
(Cc. Madhya 20.122)

The forgetful living entities or conditioned souls have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Lord, and they are engrossed in thinking of material activities. Just to transfer their thinking power to the spiritual sky, Krsna has given a great number of Vedic literatures. First he divided the *Vedas* into four, then he explained them in the *Puranas*, and for less capable people he wrote the *Mahabharata*. In the *Mahabharata* there is given the *Bhagavad-gita*. Then all Vedic literature is summarized in the *Vedanta-sutra*, and for future guidance he gave a natural commentation on the *Vedanta-sutra*, called *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. We must always engage our minds in reading these Vedic literatures.

Just as materialists engage their minds in reading newspapers, magazines and so many materialistic literatures, we must transfer our reading to these literatures which are given to us by Vyasadeva; in that way it will be possible for us to remember the Supreme Lord at the time of death. That is the only way suggested by the Lord, and He guarantees the result: "There is no doubt." (Bg. 8.7)

tasmāt sarvesu kalesu mām anusmāra yudhya ca
māyā arpita-mano-buddhir mām evāisyasy asamsayah

"Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me, and at the same time you should continue your prescribed duty and fight.

With your mind and activities always fixed on Me, and everything engaged in Me, you will attain to Me without any doubt."

He does not advise Arjuna to simply remember Him and give up his occupation. No, the Lord never suggests anything impractical. In this material world, in order to maintain the body one has to work. Human society is divided, according to work, into four divisions of social order-- *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*.

The *brahmana* class or intelligent class is working in one way, the *ksatriya* or administrative class is working in another way, and the mercantile class and the laborers are all tending to their specific duties. In the human society, whether one is a laborer, merchant, warrior, administrator, or farmer, or even if one belongs to the highest class and is a literary man, a scientist or a theologian, he has to work in order to maintain his existence. The Lord therefore tells Arjuna that he need not give up his occupation, but while he is engaged in his occupation he should remember Krsna. If he doesn't practice remembering Krsna while he is struggling for existence, then it will not be possible for him to remember Krsna at the time of death. Lord Caitanya also advises this. He says that one should practice remembering the Lord by chanting the names of the Lord always. The names of the Lord and the Lord are non different. So Lord Krsna's instructions to Arjuna to "remember Me" and Lord Caitanya's injunction to always "chant the

names of Lord Kṛṣṇa" are the same instruction. There is no difference, because Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's name are non different. In the absolute status there is no difference between reference and referent. Therefore we have to practice remembering the Lord always, twenty-four hours a day, by chanting His names and molding our life's activities in such a way that we can remember Him always.

How is this possible? The *acaryas* give the following example. If a married woman is attached to another man, or if a man has an attachment for a woman other than his wife, then the attachment is to be considered very strong. One with such an attachment is always thinking of the loved one. The wife who is thinking of her lover is always thinking of meeting him, even while she is carrying out her household chores.

In fact, she carries out her household work even more carefully so her husband will not suspect her attachment.

Similarly, we should always remember the supreme lover, Sri Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time perform our material duties very nicely.

A strong sense of love is required here. If we have a strong sense of love for the Supreme Lord, then we can discharge our duty and at the same time remember Him. But we have to develop that sense of love. Arjuna, for instance, was always thinking of Kṛṣṇa; he was the constant companion of Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time he was a warrior. Kṛṣṇa did not advise him to give up fighting and go to the forest to meditate. When Lord Kṛṣṇa delineates the *yoga* system to Arjuna, Arjuna says that the practice of this system is not possible for him.

arjuna uvaca
yo 'yam yogas tvaya proktah samyena madhusudana
etasyaham na pasyami cancelatvat sthitim sthiram

"Arjuna said, O Madhusudana, the system of *yoga* which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady." (Bg. 6.33)
But the Lord says:

yoginam api sarvesam mad-gatenantaratmana
sraddhavan bhajate yo mam sa me yuktatamo matah

"Of all *yogis*, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in *yoga*, and is the highest of all." (Bg. 6.47) So one who thinks of the Supreme Lord always is the greatest *yogi*, the supermost *jnani*, and the greatest devotee at the same time.

The Lord further tells Arjuna that as a *ksatriya* he cannot give up his fighting, but if Arjuna fights remembering Kṛṣṇa, then he will be able to remember Him at the time of death. But one must be

completely surrendered in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.

We work not with our body, actually, but with our mind and intelligence. So if the intelligence and the mind are always engaged in the thought of the Supreme Lord, then naturally the senses are also engaged in His service.

Superficially, at least, the activities of the senses remain the same, but the consciousness is changed. The *Bhagavad-gita* teaches one how to absorb the mind and intelligence in the thought of the Lord. Such absorption will enable one to transfer himself to the kingdom of the Lord. If the mind is engaged in Krsna's service, then the senses are automatically engaged in His service. This is the art, and this is also the secret of *Bhagavad-gita*: total absorption in the thought of Sri Krsna.

Modern man has struggled very hard to reach the moon, but he has not tried very hard to elevate himself spiritually. If one has fifty years of life ahead of him, he should engage that brief time in cultivating this practice of remembering the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This practice is the devotional process of:

*sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

These nine processes, of which the easiest is *sravanam*, hearing *Bhagavad-gita* from the realized person, will turn one to the thought of the Supreme Being. This will lead to *nisala*, remembering the Supreme Lord, and will enable one, upon leaving the body, to attain a spiritual body which is just fit for association with the Supreme Lord.

The Lord further says:

*abhyasa-yoga-yuktena cetasa nanya-gamina
paramam purusam divyam yati parthanucintayan*

"By practicing this remembering, without being deviated, thinking ever of the Supreme Godhead, one is sure to achieve the planet of the Divine, the Supreme Personality, O son of Kunti." (Bg. 8.8)

This is not a very difficult process. However, one must learn it from an experienced person, from one who is already in the practice. The mind is always flying to this and that, but one must always practice concentrating the mind on the form of the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna or on the sound of His name. The mind is naturally restless, going hither and thither, but it can rest in the sound vibration of Krsna.

One must thus meditate on *paramam purusam*, the Supreme Person, and thus attain Him. The ways and the means for ultimate realization, ultimate attainment, are stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*, and the doors of this knowledge are open for everyone. No one is barred out. All classes of men

can approach the Lord by thinking of Him, for hearing and thinking of Him is possible for everyone.

The Lord further says:

*mam hi partha vyapasritya ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras te 'pi yanti param gatim*

*kim punar brahmanah punya bhakta rajarsayas tatha
anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*

"O son of Prtha, anyone who will take shelter in Me, whether a woman, or a merchant, or one born in a low family, can yet approach the supreme destination.

How much greater then are the *brahmanas*, the righteous, the devotees, and saintly Kings! In this miserable world, these are fixed in devotional service to the Lord." (Bg. 9.32-33)

Human beings even in the lower statuses of life (a merchant, a woman or a laborer) can attain the Supreme. One does not need highly developed intelligence. The point is that anyone who accepts the principle of *bhakti-yoga* and accepts the Supreme Lord as the *summum bonum* of life, as the highest target, the ultimate goal, can approach the Lord in the spiritual sky. If one adopts the principles enunciated in *Bhagavad-gita*, he can make his life perfect and make a perfect solution to all the problems of life which arise out of the transient nature of material existence. This is the sum and substance of the entire *Bhagavad-gita*.

In conclusion, *Bhagavad-gita* is a transcendental literature which one should read very carefully. It is capable of saving one from all fear.

*nehabhikrama-naso 'sti pratyavayo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*

"In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear." (Bg. 2.40) If one reads *Bhagavad-gita* sincerely and seriously, then all of the reactions of his past misdeeds will not react upon him. In the last portion of *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Sri Krsna proclaims:

*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah*

"Give up all varieties of religiousness, and just surrender unto Me; and in return I shall protect you from all sinful reactions. Therefore, you have nothing to fear." (Bg. 18.66)

Thus the Lord takes all responsibility for one who surrenders unto Him, and He indemnifies all the reactions of sin.

One cleanses himself daily by taking a bath in water, but one who takes his bath only once in the sacred Ganges water of the *Bhagavad-gita* cleanses away all the dirt of material life. Because *Bhagavad-gita* is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other Vedic literature. One need only attentively and regularly hear and read *Bhagavad-gita*. In the present age, mankind is so absorbed with mundane activities that it is not possible to read all of the Vedic literatures. But this is not necessary. This one book, *Bhagavad-gita*, will suffice because it is the essence of all Vedic literatures and because it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is said that one who drinks the water of the Ganges certainly gets salvation, but what to speak of one who drinks the waters of *Bhagavad-gita*? *Gita* is the very nectar of the *Mahabharata* spoken by Visnu Himself, for Lord Krsna is the original Visnu. It is nectar emanating from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the Ganges is said to be emanating from the lotus feet of the Lord. Of course there is no difference between the mouth and the feet of the Supreme Lord, but in our position we can appreciate that the *Bhagavad-gita* is even more important than the Ganges.

The *Bhagavad-gita* is just like a cow, and Lord Krsna, who is a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. The milk is the essence of the *Vedas*, and Arjuna is just like a calf. The wise men, the great sages and pure devotees, are to drink the nectarean milk of *Bhagavad-gita*.

In this present day, man is very eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. So let there be one common scripture for the whole world--*Bhagavad-gita*.

And let there be one God only for the whole world--Sri Krsna. And one *mantra* only--Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. And let there be one work only--the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Disciplic Succession

Evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh (Bhagavad-gita, 4.2). This Bhagavad-gita As It Is is received through this disciplic succession:

1) Krsna, 2) Brahma, 3) Narada; 4) Vyasa, 5) Madhva, 6) Padmanabha, 7) Nrhari, 8) Madhava, 9) Aksobhya, 10) Jaya Tirtha, 11) Jnanasindhu, 12) Dayanidhi, 13) Vidyanidhi, 14) Rajendra, 15) Jayadharmā, 16) Purusottama, 17) Brahmanya Tirtha, 18) Vyasa Tirtha, 19) Laksmipati, 20) Madhavendra Puri, 21) Isvara Puri, (Nityananda, Advaita), **22) Lord Caitanya**, 23) Rupa, (Svarupa, Sanatana), 24) Raghunatha, Jiva, 25) Krsnadasa, 26) Narottama, 27) Visvanatha, 28) (Baladeva) Jagannatha, 29) Bhaktivinoda, 30) Gaurakisora, 31) Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, 32) His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Teaching And Study Guide to Bhagavad-Gita As It Is

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Translation and Commentary by His Divine Grace, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Guide prepared by followers of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

STBG 1: GUIDE TO THE GUIDE

This work is intended as a companion guide to the Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, by His Divine Grace, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. The purpose of this guide is to assist the professor in helping the student better understand and appreciate the profound concepts and interlocking structure of Bhagavad-Gita. It is designed as a supplement to the text of the Gita, not as a substitute for it. The philosophical sublimeness and literary eloquence of this jewel of Indian wisdom are apparent to anyone who gives it a careful and sympathetic reading. That sublimeness and that eloquence, needless to say, do not survive in the summaries and comments of this handbook. But by focusing the reader's attention on key verses by diagramming the Gita's natural flow from one idea to the next, and by providing relevant background and historical information, this work may help make the reading of the Gita more gratifying and instructive. Although most teachers will prefer to use the guide themselves as a teaching aid, some may wish to make it directly available to the students as a helpful study guide. The main body of this guide consists of brief but thorough summaries for each of the Gita's eighteen chapters, followed by a section of questions and answers covering the major elements of each chapter. One will find many discussions from the chapter summaries repeated in the "question and answer" section, so that the instructor (or student) who chooses to use only the summaries or only the questions and answers will not miss any of the essential elements of the Gita. In some cases, the "question and answer" section gives somewhat more detail. To get the most from this guide, however, one should use the summaries and questions together. One will find, also, that the tone and approach of the discussions in both sections follow that of the commentary of Srila Prabhupada. For this reason, the teacher or student will find this guide most profitable to use in conjunction with the original BBT edition of Bhagavad-Gita.

Following the "question and answer" section is a suggested syllabus for teaching the Gita. Understanding that certain survey courses (such as courses in world religious or world literature) may spend only a short time on the Gita, whereas more specialized courses (such as courses in Hinduism or Indian philosophy) will spend a longer period, we have provided three separate syllabi, adapted to one, two, and three-week studies of the Gita. In each case, a separate syllabus is given for classes that meet twice and those that meet three times weekly. When the Gita is covered in three weeks, the student reads the whole work. When it is covered in one or two, he reads major selections.

Preceding the chapter summaries, questions and syllabi are some useful introductory materials. "The Significance of Bhagavad-Gita" briefly discusses the Gita in its historical and literary context and sheds light on Krsna, the speaker of the Gita. "Bhagavad-Gita: A Philosophical Synopsis" provides an overview of the Gita's teachings. Finally, "Setting the Scene" recounts the immediate historical situation that leads to Krsna's revealing eternal wisdom to the warrior Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra.

STBG 2: A NOTE ON THE ORIGINAL BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST EDITION OF BHAGAVAD-GITA

Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, is the work of His Divine Grace, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the distinguished scholar and teacher of Vedic religion, philosophy, literature and culture. He is the author of numerous translations, commentaries, summary studies and original works on Vedic literature, including multi-volume translations of and commentaries on the Srimad Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana) and the medieval Bengali religious classic, Sri Caitanya Caritamrita. His books, highly respected by the international academic community for their authoritativeness, depth and clarity, are used as standard text in numerous colleges. There are some familiar difficulties that generally beset translations of Bhagavad-Gita. Often, poetic translations put poetic felicity before fidelity to the original text. At the other extreme, blindly literal prose translations, usually mechanical and stilted, obscure the natural flow of the language of the Gita, making reading difficult. In this edition however, Srila Prabhupada has rendered the Gita in a flowing, modern English prose translation that maintains a harmonious balance between linguistic preciseness, philosophical integrity and readability.

STBG 3: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BHAGAVAD-GITA

Bhagavad-Gita, a philosophical poem comprising seven hundred Sanskrit verses, is one of the most important philosophical and literary works known to man. More commentaries have been written upon the Gita than on any other philosophical or religious text in history. As a classic of timeless wisdom, it is the main literary support for the oldest surviving spiritual culture in the world - that of India's Vedic civilization.

Not only has the Gita directed the religious life of many centuries of Hindus, but, owing to the pervasive influence of religious concepts in Vedic civilization, the Gita has shaped India's social, ethical, cultural and even political life as well. Attesting to India's nearly universal acceptance of the Gita, practically every sectarian cult and school of Hindu thought, representing a vast spectrum of religious and philosophical views, accepts Bhagavad-Gita as the summon bonum guide to spiritual truth. The Gita, therefore, more than any other single historical source, provides penetrating insight into the metaphysical and psychological foundation of India's Vedic culture, both ancient and contemporary.

The influence of Bhagavad-Gita, however, is not limited to India. The Gita has deeply affected the thinking of generations of philosophers, theologians, educators, scientists and authors in the West as well. Henry David Thoreau reveals in his journal, "Every morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita... in comparison with which our modern civilization and literature seem puny and trivial."

The Gita has long been considered the essence of Vedic philosophy and spirituality. As the essence of the 108 Upanisads, it is sometimes referred to as Gitopanisad.

Although widely published and read by itself, Bhagavad-Gita originally appears as an episode of the Mahabharata, a great historical epic, in which it occupies chapters 25 through 42 in the Bhishma Parva. Authorship of the Mahabharata is traditionally attributed to the great sage Vedavyasa (Srila Vyasadeva). It was Vyasa, "the literary incarnation of God," who, according to orthodox Vedic historiography, put the eternal Vedic wisdom into writing at the onset of the Kali-yuga, the current age of spiritual darkness. After compiling the four principal Vedas, the Upanisads, and the Vedanta-sutra, he decided to compile the Puranas and the Mahabharata for the benefit of the common people who could not sufficiently assimilate the lofty philosophical teachings of the earlier works. By exposure to the philosophical conclusions of the Vedas through the medium of ostensibly historical narrations, the common man would more readily understand and benefit from Vedic truth. Thus, Bhagavad-Gita, the essence of Vedic wisdom, was injected into the Mahabharata, an action-packed narrative of an important era in ancient Indian politics.

Bhagavad-Gita comes to us in the form of a battlefield dialogue between Lord Sri Krsna and the warrior Arjuna. The dialogue occurs just before the onset of the first military engagement of the

Kuruksetra War, a great fratricidal war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas to determine India's political destiny.

(Details of the historical background of the war are described in the brief essay, "Setting the Scene," which precedes the chapter summaries.)

Arjuna, forgetful of his prescribed duty as a ksatriya (warrior) whose duty is to fight for a righteous cause in a holy war, decides, for personally motivated reasons, not to fight. Krsna, Who has agreed to act as the driver of Arjuna's chariot, sees His friend and devotee in illusion and perplexity and proceeds to enlighten Arjuna regarding his immediate social duty (varna-dharma) as a warrior and, more important, his eternal duty or nature (sanatana-dharma) as an eternal spiritual entity in relationship with God. Thus the relevance and universality of Krsna's teachings transcend the immediate historical setting of Arjuna's battle field dilemma. Krsna speaks for the benefit of all souls who have forgotten their eternal nature, the ultimate goal of existence, and their eternal relationship with Him.

As we read the Gita, we read a narration by Sanjaya, a disciple of Vyasadeva's, to the blind King Dhatarashtra, the father of the impious Kauravas. Situated far from the battlefield, Sanjaya relates the holy discourse as it is revealed to him by Vyasadeva through supernatural vision.

STBG 3.1: Who Is Krsna?

Who is Krsna?

Gita means "song," and Bhagavad refers to bhagavan, a Sanskrit term meaning "God, the possessor (vat) of all opulence (bhaga)." Bhagavad-Gita, therefore, is the Song of the All-opulent One, or the holy teachings spoken by Krsna, Who is God Himself. In the Gita, Krsna's position is made very clear: "I am the source of everything: From Me the entire creation flows." [BG 10.8] "There is no truth superior to Me." "By all the Vedas I am to be known." [BG 15.15] Arjuna prays, "You are the Supreme Brahman, the ultimate... the Absolute

Truth and the eternal divine person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original,..." [BG 10.12] and "You are the original personality, the Godhead... Knowing everything, You are all that is knowable." [BG 11.38] Throughout the Gita, Krsna is called purusottama, (the Supreme Persona), parabrahman, (the Supreme Brahman), adi-deva (the original Lord), Paramesvara (the supreme controller) and so on. Other Vedic sources similarly define Krsna as the Supreme Absolute Truth, inclusive of all forms and aspects of God, and as the original source of the creation, of the impersonal Brahman, of all living entities, of Visnu, Brahma and Siva (and of all other demigods), of all avatars, and so on.

It is important to note, in this connection, that the humanlike form of Krsna visible to Arjuna on the battle field is not a material, carnal form "assumed" or "manifested" by Krsna for the world of men. According to the text, the form seen by Arjuna is Krsna's own original form, purely spiritual and transcendental. But although Krsna is visible to all those present, only those with eyes "tinged with devotion" can understand that He Himself is the "Supreme Person," the Godhead. The universal form (visva-rupa) revealed by Krsna to Arjuna in the eleventh chapter is not in any sense a higher manifestation of Krsna, but only a temporary display of His controlling power as eternal time (kala) in the cosmic universe.

After revealing His magnificent and panoramic universal form, Krsna manifests His own primordial humanlike form, and Arjuna, who has been terrified by the spectacular vision, becomes pacified.

The Gita tells us that Krsna's abode is in the spiritual world, from which He descends periodically, to reestablish religion: "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise in irreligion - at that time I descend Myself.

To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium." As related in the Mahabharata, Krsna descended to the earth in His selfsame spiritual form, just prior to Kali-yuga, to lighten the military burden created by impious, politically ambitious kings.

By His divine plan, all such demoniac forces were assembled at one place (the Battlefield of Kuruksetra) and annihilated in the colossal and devastating war. Soon after enthroning the Pandavas, who ruled as saintly kings (rajarsis), Krsna returned to His eternal, spiritual abode. While present on the earth, Krsna also performed numerous pastimes as a cowherd boy in the pastoral setting of Vrndavana and as a royal prince in the majestic city of Dvaraka. These are related principally in the Bhagavata and Visnu Puranas, as well as in later famous works such as

Jayadeva Goswami's Gita-Govinda and the works of the Goswamis, the great medieval Vaisnava scholars and disciples of Sri Caitanya. With these understandings of the identity of the speaker of the Gita, the Gita itself becomes more comprehensible.

How to Approach the Gita

The academic study of religion (whether in the philosophical, historical, social or psychological disciplines) has seen a recent trend toward approaching its subjects with some degree of empathy.

Since religion-philosophical concepts are most often experientially based, it is increasingly evident that to gain more than stereotyped or superficial knowledge, the student or researcher must approach the subject not as a hostile critic but as a cautious sympathizer, as unhampered as possible by his own academic or personal prejudices. This is how we should approach the Gita. Especially when dealing with Vedic spiritual philosophy, which is never theoretical but always aimed at practical transformations of consciousness and perception, we should approach with philosophical introspection. Indeed, intellectual astuteness without sincere eagerness to understand truth has always been considered, in Vedic culture, ineffectual in the realm of spiritual knowledge. The mysteries of transcendental wisdom are revealed to one who has firm faith in God and guru: "Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." In the traditional Vedic system of education, the disciple always approaches the guru in an attitude of submission and faith.

After choosing a qualified guru, he submits himself for instruction in a humble, non-arrogant way, as Arjuna does in the Gita itself: "Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." [BG 2.7] Frequently, throughout the text, Krsna reminds Arjuna that He is revealing confidential truths because of Arjuna's faithful, non-envious attitude. At the conclusion of His teachings, He instructs Arjuna further, "This confidential knowledge may not be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me." [BG 18.67]

Although we ourselves may not be approaching the Gita as disciples but as critical students, if we study it in a mood of critical introspection and philosophical inquisitiveness, our experience of the Gita will be more penetrating.

STBG 4: BHAGAVAD-GITA: A PHILOSOPHICAL SYNOPSIS

Throughout Bhagavad-Gita, we are concerned with the existential position of the individual living entity (the self or soul) and his relationship with the phenomenal world and with God. The real self is not the body but the soul, which is spiritual, eternal and unchanging. He is eternally a distinct, individual, conscious being, never losing or "merging" his unique identity into any other being or existence. The individual self (called in Sanskrit, the jiva) is eternally a part of God (insofar as everything is the creation or energy of God), but he is not himself God. He is of the same spiritual nature as God, but whereas God is infinite, he is infinitesimal. God is the Creator, he is created. God is the predominator, he is predominated. God is the maintainer, he is maintained.

In his original pristine state, the soul resides in the eternal spiritual world, where he enjoys an intimate relationship with God.

Just as the intrinsic qualities of fire are heat and light and the intrinsic nature of water is liquidity, the soul's eternal religion or nature (sanatana-dharma) is bhakti - pure devotional love and service to God. As the hand by nature serves the whole body, the jiva, who is constitutionally part of God, serves the complete whole. Sanatana-dharma is dissimilar to the Western concept of "religion," which indicates faith or belief that is potentially subject to change with time and circumstances: Sanatana-indicates the eternal, unchanging function of the eternal jiva in his eternal relationship with God.

Because bhakti (devotional service) cannot be forcibly imposed, but must, rather, be a voluntary and natural expression of the soul, God endows the jiva with free will.

By improper exercise of his minute free will, however, the should may choose to ignore God's predominance. So choosing, he is placed in the service of God's own "inferior" or "external" energy (maya), which illusions the jiva, causing him to forget his eternal, spiritual identity as God's servant.

There are consequently two possible statuses for the soul - the "liberated" state, (free from the influence of maya), and the "conditioned" state, (illusioned by maya). Thus the jiva is the "marginal" energy of God, being subject, potentially, to both of God's energies - matter and spirit.

When illusioned, the jiva descends to the material world. The world of matter is real, yet unreal. It exists, but its existence is temporal, although appearing substantial and permanent. Although the material energy (prakriti) is eternal, it assumes an infinite variety of temporary shapes and forms, which constitute merely a shadow of the reality of the spiritual world.

Entering the material world, the fallen jiva takes birth in a material body, which, under the influence of maya, he things to be his self. Thus embodied, the jiva, forgetful of his higher spiritual identity, indulges his mind and bodily senses in temporary, material phenomenon in an aimless pursuit of pleasure. The material world is a dramatic stage on which the illusioned jiva can act out, under the spell of maya, his artificial role as the purusha (enjoyer or predominator) of prakriti (material nature).

In his original identity, the jiva is to serve and be "enjoyed" by God through the agency of God's "external" energy.

The material nature is divided into three "modes," or gunas (literally, "ropes"); sattva (goodness), rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance). Acting individually or in various combinations, these gunas bind the soul to a particular mentality and course of worldly action. Under the law of

karma, he enjoys or suffers the results of his actions. According to his actions and mental state, the law of karma awards him a new body after he leaves the present one. Although the soul is unborn and undying, upon leaving the body he is said to die, and upon entering a new one he is said to take birth. In this manner, entangled within a complicated network of actions and reactions, he transmigrates from body to body, experiencing the bitter and sweet fruits of his actions in an endless succession of rebirths. Thus imprisoned within samsara, the wheel of repeated birth and death, the jiva perpetually suffers the miseries offered by his foreign, material existence.

After a long evolutionary ascent through the different species of plant and animal life, the soul finally enters a human form. By properly using the higher philosophical intelligence afforded by his human body, the bound jiva can analyze his existential position (as soul distinct from matter). With higher understanding of the self, he can extricate himself by the discipline of yoga from his bondage to the material world. Bhagavad-Gita teaches that to purify the materially contaminated consciousness is the goal of human life. In pure consciousness, the jiva acts in harmony with the will of God and is therefore happy. When, in the illusion of identifying with the material body, one acts in disharmony with the Supreme Will, one suffers the results of his sinful actions. The goal of yoga, therefore, is to liberate the jiva from his mistaken identification with the material body and the material world and to reconnect him to God. (Yoga literally means "link".)

Yoga involves withdrawing the mind and senses from sense objects and, through unattached action, meditation, philosophical speculation or devotion (depending on which system of yoga one employs), gradually detaching oneself from the mundane world and ultimately realizing the self and his relationship with God.

Although there is some mention of Astanga-yoga ("the eightfold path"), the Gita deals primarily with three important systems of yoga; Karma-yoga ("the yoga of action"), jnana yoga ("the yoga of knowledge") and bhakti-yoga ("the yoga of devotion"). In karma-yoga, one acts in selfless duty to the Supreme, sacrificing the fruits of one's work to God. This purifies the actor and releases him from material entanglement. In jnana-yoga, one gradually cultivates spiritual knowledge by philosophical induction, exercising the intellect to differentiate between matter and spirit.

Bhagavad-Gita introduces these yoga systems not exactly as self-sufficient paths, but as a progressive "yoga ladder," the highest rung being bhakti-yoga.

The paths of karma-yoga, jnana yoga, and dhyana-yoga are prescribed as the various preliminary aspects of a single way to approach God; bhakti, selfless devotional love.

In the Gita, God possessed three principal features - Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan.

Brahman, the object of pantheistic philosophies, is the impersonal, all-pervasive aspect of God.

Paramatma ("Supersoul") is the localized form of God situated within the hearts of all embodied jivas, eternally accompanying them as the indwelling maintainer, witness, permitter and guide.

Bhagavan is the complete form of God and is identified in the Gita with Krsna Himself, the speaker of the Gita. As such, Krsna is not the embodiment of any higher, abstract principle of force, but, as He repeatedly informs Arjuna, is Purusottama, the "Supreme Person," the cause of all causes, the creator, maintainer and annihilator of the universe (although transcendental to it), and the supreme object of worship. He descends periodically, in His original spiritual form (or in the form of an avatara, or incarnation), to deliver the pious and to reestablish the principles of religion. The supreme principle of religion for the jiva is to surrender voluntarily unto Him and become His loving devotee.

As the speaker of the Gita, Krsna commands Arjuna at the conclusion of His teachings, to abandon all temporary dharmas (social duties, religious performances and methods of spiritual elevation) and simply surrender, with love, unto Him. Bhakti, there, is the ultimate and highest purpose of the jiva. Even while still materially embodied, the jiva can meditate on Krsna, worship Him, glorify Him, serve Him, and thus attain divine love for Him. When passing from the body, the devotee meditates on Krsna, Who then liberates His faithful devotee from material bondage. The liberated jiva then returns to Krsna's supreme abode in the spiritual world to render eternal loving service to Him.

STBG 5: SETTING THE SCENE

The principal narrative of the Mahabharata concerns the war between the Kauravas, the hundred sons of Dhritarastra, and, on the opposing side, their cousins, the Pandavas or sons of Pandu, led by their eldest brother, Yudhisthira.

Pandu and Dhritarastra were the sons of King Vicitravirya, a descendant of King Bharata, a former ruler of the world, from whom the name Mahabharata is derived. Dhritarastra was the elder, but because he was born blind, the throne that otherwise would have been his, devolved upon his younger brother. Pandu, however, died at an early age, and his five sons - Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva - came under the partial guardianship of Dhritarastra. Dhritarastra had never accepted his brother's pre-eminence, and, wishing his own sons rather than the sons of Pandu to rule the world, he plotted against the lives of the Pandavas and their widowed mother, Pritha (Kunti). The Pandavas, however, repeatedly escaped his atrocities, mainly due to the loving protection of Krsna, who was Kunti's nephew, and thus, also a relative.

Ultimately Duryodhana, a clever politician and the chief son of Dhritarastra, cheated the Pandavas of their kingdom (and their freedom) in a gambling match. After thus being forced to spend thirteen years in exile, the Pandavas returned and requested their kingdom from Duryodhana, who bluntly refused.

The Pandavas, duty-bound as Ksatriyas to engage in some form of political administration, reduced their demands to a mere five villages. When this meager request was refused, Arjuna and his brothers resorted to arms, setting the scene for what would prove to be a devastating global war. Yudhisthira was the eldest of the Pandavas, and it was to place him on the throne - or to oppose him - that great warriors from all corners of the earth assembled.

As a final gesture to avoid war, Yudhisthira sent Krsna to propose a truce, but Krsna found Duryodhana determined to rule the world in his own way.

Whereas the Pandavas, men of the highest religious and moral stature, recognized Krsna as the Supreme God Himself, Dhritarastra's impious sons did not. Yet Krsna offered to participate in the war according to the desire of the antagonists. As God, He would not personally take a hand, but whoever so desired might avail himself of Krsna's army - and the other side could have Krsna Himself, as an advisor and helper. Duryodhana, the political genius, snatched Krsna's armed forces, while Yudhisthira was equally eager to have Krsna Himself.

In this way, Krsna became the charioteer of Arjuna, taking it upon Himself to drive the fabled bowman's chariot. This brings us to the point at which Bhagavad-Gita begins, with the two armies arrayed and ready for combat.

STBG 6.1: BHAGAVAD-GITA: A CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SUMMARY

STBG 6.1: CHAPTER ONE - Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra

CHAPTER ONE

Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra

The first chapter of Bhagavad-Gita is a prelude to the rest of the text. As the narration from the Mahabharata continues, the opposing armies (those led respectively by the Pandavas and the Kauravas) now stand poised for the first battle of the great Kuruksetra War. After the tumultuous blowing of conch shells from both sides, signaling the beginning of the battle, Arjuna requests Krsna, Who has consented to act as Arjuna's chariot driver, to draw his chariot between the two armies. Arjuna then sees, to his horror, his fathers, grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons and friends in the ranks of both armies, prepared for battle.

Overwhelmed with sorrow to see his intimate relatives, teachers and friends assembles in such a militant spirit, Arjuna, feeling compassion, becomes despondent and decides not to fight.

STBG 6.2: CHAPTER TWO - Contents of the Gita Summarized

Contents of the Gita Summarized

The philosophical teachings of Bhagavad-Gita - Krsna's instructions to the warrior Arjuna - begin in this chapter. Bewildered and perplexed as to the proper course of action, Arjuna submits himself as Krsna's disciple and asks for instruction: "Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness.

In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." (7)

Krsna begins His teachings by presenting Sankhya philosophy - the analytical study of matter and spirit (11-30). To alleviate Arjuna's horror at the thought of killing his relatives, Krsna contrasts the eternality of the soul (the real self) with the temporality of the material body (the soul's outer covering). The soul (atma) is eternal. It continues to exist after the death of the material body: "For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. (20) At death, the should transmigrates to a new body: "As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones." (22) The wise man is he who, knowing the self to be the eternal soul, is never disturbed by the change of body ("death") and is unconcerned with the temporary pleasures and pains of the material body. Such a person is eligible for liberation from material embodiment. Since the real self is eternal and never subject to death, Arjuna should not lament his having to kill the temporary, external body in the course of discharging his duty as a ksatriya (soldier). Furthermore, his duty as a ksatriya, is to fight in the battle: "Considering your specific duty as a ksatriya, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting on religious principles; and so there is no need for hesitation." (31)

Krsna then explains the "art of work," karma-yoga. By acting out of selfless duty to the Supreme (without desire for the fruits of action), one attains liberation from material bondage (39-53).

Arjuna then asks Krsna to enumerate the characteristics of one who is self-realized and situated in detached, transcendental consciousness (54). In the remainder of the chapter, Krsna elaborately describes the sthita-prajna, the person fixed in consciousness of the Supreme.

Such a person, fully cognizant of his spiritual identity and separateness from matter, is not interested in material pleasure. Thus he controls his outward senses.

With controlled senses and with mind and intelligence fixed on the Supreme, he is unaffected by material dualities such as happiness and distress, loss and gain. Such a person, at the end of the present body, attains the spiritual world (55-72).

TBG 6.3: CHAPTER THREE - Karma Yoga

Karma-yoga

At the opening of the Third Chapter, Arjuna is confused by Krsna's instructions in the previous chapter. He has misconceived that Krsna's telling him to control his senses and fix his mind and intelligence on the Supreme is incompatible with the performance of action. Therefore he questions why Krsna is requesting him to engage in warfare (1-2).

In response, Krsna explains karma-yoga, the performance of actions free from desire for selfish, fruitive gain and dedicated to the Supreme (Krsna) (3-35).

Karma, or fruitive work, brings both material enjoyment and material suffering. Whether the results of action are pleasant or unpleasant, however, they bind one to the bondage of repeated birth and death in the material world.

Krsna explains further that inaction is insufficient to save one from material reactions (and subsequent bondage to the material world). By nature, everyone is forced to act. Even to maintain the physical body, one must work. Therefore, one should work in a way that will not further entangle one in material bondage, but will lead to ultimate liberation. That art of work is karma-yoga--working and acting under the direction of the Supreme (Visnu or Krsna) for His satisfaction: "Work done as a sacrifice to Visnu has to be performed, otherwise work binds one to this material world.

Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain unattached and free from bondage." (9) As described in later chapters of the Gita, karma-yoga gradually elevates one to bhakti-yoga, or pure devotional service to Krsna. Next follows a discussion of yajna (sacrifice) - duties, prescribed in the Vedas, which gradually purify and elevate the performer from fruitive to spiritual activities (10-16).

One who is fully self-realized no longer needs to perform such duties, for he is already full purified and thus, his duty is self-illuminated by the Lord. He should continue, however, to perform duties non-fruitively, to set a good example for those attached to the fruits of work (17-29). Concluding His instructions on karma-yoga and yajna, Krsna commands Arjuna, "Surrendering all your works unto Me, with mind intent on Me, and without desire for gain and free from egoism and lethargy - fight." Then Krsna sums up why he should (30-35).

In the last section of this chapter, Arjuna asks, "By what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?" (36) Krsna answers that it is lust (material desire) - the "destroyer of knowledge and self-realization" - which incites sinful acts, and He prescribes the method to conquer it; sense regulation inspired by spiritual self-knowledge. The senses (indriyas), mind (manas) and intelligence (buddhi) are the repositories of lust. Knowing the self to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence, "One should control the lower self by the higher self and thus - by spiritual strength - conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust." (37-43).

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STBG 6.5: CHAPTER FIVE

Karma Yoga, Action in Krsna Consciousness

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In the third chapter, Krsna explained that a person in knowledge is absolved of the need to perform prescribed duties. And, in the fourth chapter, He told Arjuna that all sacrificial work culminates in knowledge. At the end of the fourth chapter, however, Krsna advised Arjuna to fight. Now Arjuna, perplexed by Krsna's stressing the importance both of work in devotion and of inaction in knowledge, asks Krsna to state definitively which of the two paths is more beneficial (1). He is confused because, to him, work and renunciation appear incompatible. To clear up Arjuna's confusion, Krsna explains, in the fifth chapter, that devotional work in full knowledge has no material reaction and is therefore the same as renunciation of work. Of the two, however, devotional work is better (2).

Krsna then describes the characteristics of one who works in such an unattached manner, sacrificing the fruits of work to Him (3-17). Such a devotional worker, purified by transcendental knowledge, realizes that he is a spiritual entity.

Since he is transcendental to his body, mind and senses, he does not identify with their actions. Performing actions, yet renouncing their fruits unto the Supreme Lord, he is "not affected by sinful action, as the lotus leaf is untouched by water." (10) Thus he attains peace. Such an unattached actor becomes situated in transcendence, or brahma-nirvana. Such a pandita, or wise person, is fixed in perfect knowledge of the self and the Supreme. He sees all beings with equal vision, and he is cognizant of their spiritual nature beyond the external, material body. He works for their ultimate spiritual welfare and is unattached to the dualities of pleasure and pain. He is not attracted to material sense pleasure, but enjoys the pleasure within, concentrating on the Supreme (18-28).

In conclusion, Krsna states that one who knows Him as the ultimate goal of all sacrifices and austerities, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and as the best friend of all living beings, attains relief from material suffering (29).

STBG 6.6: CHAPTER SIX - Sankhya Yoga

Sankhya Yoga

In chapter six, Krsna outlines the path of dhyana yoga (technically called astanga yoga, "the eightfold path"), a mechanical meditative practice meant to control the mind and senses, and focus one's concentration on Paramatma (Supersoul), the form of Krsna, (Visnu), within the heart. After stating the importance of controlling the mind (5-6), Krsna describes one who has done so - the yogi, or transcendentalist (7-9). Krsna then summarizes the methodology and ultimate goal of the astanga yoga system. Sitting postures, breathing exercises and sense and mind control culminate in samadhi, or consciousness fixed on the Supersoul (10-19). A yoga-yukta, one who has attained perfection in yoga, has a steady mind, fixed on the Supreme. He is liberated. His mind is peaceful. His passions are quieted. He experiences "boundless transcendental happiness," and he is never shaken, even in the midst of the greatest difficulties. Thus he is freed from all miseries resulting from the soul's contact with matter (20-32).

Arjuna complains however, that the system of astanga yoga is too difficult to practice: "For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krsna, and to subdue it is, it seems to me, more difficult than controlling the wind." (33-34) Krsna replies that controlling the mind is indeed difficult, but "it is possible by constant practice and by detachment." (35-36)

Arjuna then inquires about the fate of the yogi who falls from yoga practice before attaining perfection (37-39). Krsna replies that such an unsuccessful yogi, taking a future auspicious birth (in a wealthy, pious or wise family), resumes his practice, and, after many births of such practice, attains perfection (40-45).***

The conclusion of this sixth chapter and of the entire first section of Bhagavad Gita is stated in the two final verses of this chapter: "A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances, be a yogi.

And of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping me in transcendental loving service is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all." (46-47) Yoga, (linking with the Supreme) is thus superior to asceticism (tapasya), fruitive work (karma) and empiricism (jnana). And of all paths of yoga, (karma yoga, jnana yoga, astanga yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, etc.), bhakti yoga (loving devotional service to Krsna) is declared to be the culmination, the highest.

STBG 6.7: CHAPTER SEVEN

Knowledge of the Absolute

In the first six chapters of Bhagavaad Gita, the distinction between spirit (the living entity) and matter has been established.

The living entity (jiva) has been described as a non-material, spiritual soul capable of elevating himself from material self-identification (ahankara) to spiritual self-realization, by different types of yoga (the sankhya, karma, jnana, and astangaa systems). These yoga systems for a gradual progression culminating (at the end of chapter six) in bhakti yoga (devotional service to Krsna).

The middle section of the Gita (chapters seven through twelve) is chiefly concerned with Krsna Himself (Purusottama, "the Supreme Personality of Godhead") and the eternal relationship of the jivas with Him, based upon bhakti yoga.

The seventh chapter is concerned with knowledge of Krsna, the process of attaining that which Krsna says, in essence, "Devotion to Me brings full knowledge of Me. Now I shall give you all material and spiritual knowledge, although knowledge of Me is a rare attainment." Krsna begins by defining His two principal energies; the "inferior" energy (matter, or apara prakriti), consisting of eight material elements, and His "superior" energy (spirit or para prakriti) consisting of the jivas who are now entangled in matter (4-5).

He is the "origin and dissolution" of both energies and is the Supreme Truth (6-7). Krsna then delineates how He is manifest within all phenomena: He is "the taste of water, the light of the sun and moon... the intelligence of the intelligent" and so on (8-12). There are four kinds of atheists who do not surrender unto Him and four kinds of pious men who do (15-18). Those who are wise, knowing Him to be everything and the supreme cause, surrender unto Him (19). The foolish (materialists), on the other hand, surrender to demigods to attain immediate fruitive benefits, which are limited and temporary (20-23). Also unintelligent are those who conceive Krsna's personal form to be material. His personal form, covered by yogamaya, His personal covering potency, is never manifest to them (24-26). In the final four verses, Krsna concludes that those who are pious and intelligent and who aspire for liberation from material bondage seek refuge in Him in devotional service, knowing Him to be the Supreme Lord. Such persons, Krsna says, "can, with steadfast mind, understand and know Me even at the time of death" (and thus attain His transcendental abode in the spiritual world) (27-30).

STBG 6.8: CHAPTER EIGHT

Attaining the Supreme

The eighth chapter of the Gita is almost exclusively concerned with the moment of death - the moment of the jiva's passing from the material body.

At the beginning of the chapter, Arjuna asks Krsna seven questions: Arjuna inquired: O my Lord, O Supreme Person, what is Brahman? What are fruitive activities? What is the material manifestation? And what are the demigods? Please explain this to me. How does this Lord of sacrifice live in the body, and in which part does He live, O Madhusudana? And how can those engaged in devotional service know You at the time of death?" (1-2) Krsna replies to the first seven questions very briefly (3-4), for He has earlier dealt with them at length. But His reply to that last question (concerning remembrance of Krsna at the time of death) continues to the end of the chapter.

Krsna tells Arjuna that whoever leaves the body remembering Him attains His abode (5). The quality of one's consciousness at the time of death determines one's next destination (6). Since the content of one's thoughts and memories at death is influenced, in turn, by one's consciousness and activities during life, Krsna instructs Arjuna to think of Him constantly, even in the course of his prescribed duties (7-8). By such constant meditation, one reaches Krsna after quitting the body. In verse nine, Krsna instructs how one should meditate on Him. In the next four verses (10-13), Krsna describes the arduous astanga yoga method of meditation on Krsna for the attainment of spiritual planets.

Krsna then concludes that He is attained most easily by one who is unflinchingly devoted to Him (14, the bhakti yogi). After reaching Krsna in the spiritual world, the bhakti yogi never returns to the material world, which is full of miseries (15-16).

Beyond the material world, which is perpetually created and destroyed, is the transcendental world, Krsna's eternal and supreme abode, upon attaining which, one never returns to the material world (17-21). One attains this supreme destination, Krsna reiterates, by pure devotion (22). Next, Krsna describes how different kinds of yogis leave their bodies at particular auspicious moments to attain elevation to celestial planets or liberation. The bhakti yogi, however, is indifferent to such processes (23-27). In conclusion, Krsna declares that His devotee, the bhakti yogi, is not bereft of the results of other systems of spiritual advancement. At the time of death, he returns to Krsna in the transcendental world (28).

STBG 6.9: CHAPTER NINE

The Most Confidential Knowledge

Earlier in the Bhagavad-Gita, knowledge concerning the difference between the soul and the body has been described as "confidential."

Now in the ninth chapter, raja-vidya ("the king of knowledge") and raja-guhyam ("the most confidential knowledge") - knowledge concerning the eternal, constitutional function or activity of the soul - is explained. That eternal, constitutional function (sanatana dharma) is described throughout the Gita, and in the ninth chapter in particular, as bhakti, or transcendental devotional service to Krsna, "the Supreme Personality of Godhead: (Purusottama).

In the beginning of the chapter, Krsna says that He will now impart "the most secret wisdom," which will relieve Arjuna (whose firm faith in Krsna qualifies him to receive these teachings) from all miseries (1-3). Krsna then explains that the whole cosmic creation rests within Him. Yet although He is the source, maintainer, and controller of the universe, He remains transcendental and detached from it (4-10). Krsna next describes the fools (mudhas), ignorant of Krsna's transcendental supremacy, who deride His persona humanlike form, and He contrasts them with the great souls (mahatmas), aware of His divinity, who worship Him with devotion (11-14). Krsna then describes different types of worshipers - worshipers of impersonal Brahman, of demigods, and of the universal form - and He describes Himself as the actual and ultimate object of worship (15-21), the protector of His devotees (22), and the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices to the demigods (23-24).

Other worshipers attain the abodes of their objects of worship, but "those who worship Me, will live with Me." (25)

In the final verses of chapter nine, Krsna talks about His devotees. By making Him the object of all actions, offerings and austerities, His devotee is freed from the bondage of karma and attains Him (26-28). Although impartial, Krsna favors those who serve Him in love (29). Even if a devotee does ill, he is still to be considered saintly, for he is "properly situated"; the process of devotional service itself will elevate him to righteousness and ultimate perfection (30-31).

Furthermore, even persons considered to be of lower classes can attain Krsna by seeing shelter in Him, what to speak of those of high birth (32-33). In conclusion, Krsna declares that one who is completely devoted to Him attains Him: "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, engage your body in My service, and surrender unto Me. Completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (34)

STBG 6.10: CHAPTER TEN

The Opulence of the Absolute

Beginning with the seventh chapter of Bhagavad-Gita, Krsna has explained His different energies (matter and spirit). Here, in the tenth chapter, He explains to Arjuna His specific opulence's, manifested in His all-pervasive energies.

Krsna begins by asserting that those who are wise, knowing Him as the Supreme Lord, and the original source of everything, are free from all reactions to sins. They engage themselves in pure, motive-less devotional service to Him (2-8). The sublime characteristics of such pure devotees are then described (9).

Krsna dispels the ignorance of those who are so devoted and leads them to Him (10-11). Verses 8-11, traditionally known as the catur-sloka (the four verses), are considered the essence of the Gita's teachings. Those who know Krsna as the Supreme Lord, and fully surrender unto Him in pure devotion, are directly enlightened by Him and show the way to attain Him.

Arjuna emphatically declares his acceptance of Krsna as the Supreme Absolute Truth, and his total acceptance of all that Krsna has thus far instructed (12-15). Then he requests Krsna to describe in detail His divine opulence's "by which You pervade all these worlds and abide in them." (16-18) Krsna's ensuing description of His principal opulence's continues to the conclusion of the chapter. Of lights He is the radiant sun; of bodies of water, the ocean; of immovable things, the Himalayas. He is the wisdom of the wise, the strength of the strong, the splendor of the splendid.

All wondrous phenomena manifesting great power, beauty, grandeur and sublimeness, in the material or spiritual world, are simply fragmental manifestations of His divine energies and opulence. Krsna, thus being the cause of all causes, is the supreme object of worship for all beings (19-41).

In the final verse of the chapter, Krsna says that more important than knowledge of His separate opulence's is the understanding that these and all things exist due to His entering them as Supersoul (Paramatma), by which He pervades and supports the entire universe (42).

STBG 6.11: CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Universal Form

In this chapter of the Gita, Krsna directly reveals to Arjuna His virat-rupa, or "universal form." By this revelation, Krsna confirms Arjuna's realization that Krsna is the cause of all causes and, specifically, the source of the material universes.

The chapter begins with Arjuna's declaration that after hearing Krsna's confidential instructions (in the previous several chapters), he has now been freed from illusion.

This indicates that he has now fully accepted Krsna as the Absolute Truth, and the source of everything, and not as a mere human being (1). However, although Arjuna accepts Krsna as the Supreme, he fears that others in the future, may not. He therefore request Krsna: "O greatest of all beings, O supreme form, though I see here before me Your actual position, I yet wish to see how You have entered into this cosmic manifestation. I wish to see that form of Yours." (3) To establish Krsna's divinity conclusively, Arjuna thus requests Krsna to reveal His gigantic form of the material universe (2-4). Krsna assents to showing Arjuna His majestic and terrifying universal form, and grants him the divine vision with which to see it (5-8).

Krsna then reveals the spectacular form (9-49) in which Arjuna, stunned and astonished, can see "the unlimited expansions of the universe situated in one place, although divided into many many thousands (13).

Arjuna, his hairs standing on end, describes the vast and effulgent form, and offers prayers of glorification (14-25). He sees also in the universal form the entire opposing army, along with his own soldiers, rushing into Krsna's many mouths, meeting their doom (26-30). Arjuna then urgently implores Krsna to explain the great form (31). In reply, Krsna informs Arjuna that according to His plan, nearly all the soldiers present will be slain in the battle.

Although this plan will ultimately be executed with or without Arjuna's participation, Arjuna should act as Krsna's instrument in the great fight, and thus be assured of victory (32-34).

Arjuna, overwhelmed, glorifies Krsna as the original master, the refuge of the universe, and the cause of all causes (35-40), and he begs Krsna to forgive him for his familiar dealings in the past (41-44).

Disturbed by the vision of Krsna's universal form, Arjuna then entreats Krsna to return to His four-armed (Narayana) form (45-46). After informing Arjuna that he, Arjuna, was the first person ever to have seen this universal form (47-48), Krsna resumes His four-armed form, and then finally His original two-armed form, thus pacifying Arjuna (49-51).

Krsna then explains that His beautiful two-armed form, is inconceivable even to the demigods, and is beyond understanding by Vedic study, penance, charity and worship (52-53). Krsna concludes the chapter by declaring that His transcendental, personal humanlike form can be directly understood only by pure devotional service (bhakti) and that pure bhaktas (devotees), who are "friendly to every living entity," attain His eternal association (54-55).

STBG 6.12: CHAPTER TWELVE - Devotional Service

Devotional Service

In the preceding chapters, Krsna explained the personal, impersonal and universal conceptions of the Supreme, as well as the different yoga systems for approaching the Supreme. In the twelfth chapter, Krsna asserts that bhakti yoga, loving devotional service is the highest and most expedient process of spiritual realization. He also delineates the sublime characteristics of those who follow this supreme path.

This chapter, like others, begins with a question by Arjuna. Although Krsna has previously established worship of His personal form as the supreme mode of worship, and devotion to Him as the highest yoga, Arjuna now wants to make sure he has fully understood. In the first verse, therefore, he asks Krsna to state whom He considers more perfect - those engaged in His devotional service or the worshipers of the unmanifest Brahman, the impersonal, all-pervasive feature of Krsna (1). Krsna replies: "He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me, with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be most perfect." (2) Krsna tells Arjuna that the worshipers of the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth eventually achieve Him, but because this is an indirect process, it is much more difficult (3-5). He assures Arjuna that for those fixed in pure devotion to Him, He is "the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death." (6-7) He instructs Arjuna to fix his mind and intelligence on Him, and, by this simple method, attain Him (8).

For those unable to fix their attention, spontaneously and undeviatingly, upon Him, Krsna explains the indirect process by which they can attain that state by gradual steps, beginning with the cultivation of knowledge (jnana), proceeding to meditation (dhyana), to renunciation of the fruits of action (karma-phala-tyaga), to sacrifice of the fruits of work (karma yoga), and finally to the execution of the regulative, remedial principles of bhakti yoga (sadhana bhakti) (9-12). In the final section of the chapter, Krsna relates the qualities and characteristics of His pure devotee, repeating at the end of each description that such a devotee "is very dear to Me." The devotee is free from material desires, material dualities and false ego. Having made Krsna the supreme goal of life, the devotee engages in His service with determination, his mind and intelligence in complete harmony with Krsna (13-20).

STBG 6.13: CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Nature, the Enjoyer and Consciousness

Nature, the Enjoyer and Consciousness

The thirteenth chapter of Bhagavad-Gita is concerned with the distinction and interrelationship between the body, the soul and the Supersoul (Paramatma). The body is known as ksetra, or the field of activities for the soul, and it consists of twenty-four material elements. The soul residing within the body is known as ksetra-jna, or "the knower of the field of activities." The symptoms of life and ultimately all movement within the material world are due to the interaction of the soul with matter. Beyond the ksetra-jna, the individual knower of the body (the soul), is the supreme ksetra-jna, the Supersoul, who is the supreme knower within all bodies. Although the Supersoul exists as one, He appears separately in all bodies (as the sun simultaneously appears, in reflection, in many different reservoirs of water). He eternally accompanies the individual soul as the indwelling witness, permitter and maintainer. Of these two "knowers of the field" of activities, the jiva (individual infinitesimal soul) is fallible, being subject to the contaminating and illusioning influence of matter, whereas the Supersoul is infallible, being immune to matter's influence. This chapter concludes that one who can analytically understand the entire material manifestation as a combination of the soul with material elements, and who can see, beyond them, the Supreme Soul (Supersoul), becomes eligible for liberation from the material world to the spiritual world.

As the chapter begins, Arjuna inquires about six items: prakrti (material nature), purusa (the enjoyer), ksetra (the field), ksetra-jna (the knower of the field), jnana (knowledge), and jneya (the end of knowledge) (1).

Krsna defines ksetra and ksetra-jna, respectively, as the body and the soul (2). He then states that He is the knower in all bodies, and He defines knowledge as the understanding of these three (the body, the individual soul, and the Supersoul) (3). Next, He lists the twenty-four material elements that constitute the field of activity, represented by the body (4-7). He then enumerates the items that constitute the process of knowledge, this process being non different from the process of spiritual advancement whereby the embodied soul is liberated from the bondage of matter (8-12). Krsna next describes jneya ("the knowable") to be the Supersoul, existing in all moving and non moving things. The Supersoul is one although divided, He is the unattached maintainer of all living beings. He is transcendental to the modes of nature (although He is the master of the modes, and He is beyond the purview of the material senses (13-19). Next, Krsna describes prakrti (material nature, consisting of the three modes) and purusa (the living entity), and He discusses the cause and nature of the jiva's material entanglement (20-24). In the next two verses, He mentions different paths for realization of the Supersoul - dhyana, sankhya, karma yoga, and the path of receiving knowledge from authorities (25-26).

In the final verses of the chapter, Krsna elaborates on the essential theme of the chapter; the interrelationship between matter, soul and Supersoul. All actions, He says, are due to the combination of ksetra and ksetra-jna (body and soul), beyond which is the Supersoul. The soul and Supersoul are both eternal and transcendental to the body (27-34).

In conclusion, Krsna declares that one in knowledge, who sees the distinction between the body and the soul and who understands the process of the soul's liberation from the body, "attains to the supreme goal." (35)

STBG 6.14: CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Three Modes of Material Nature

The Three Modes of Material Nature

As explained in the thirteenth chapter, the jiva is entangled in the material world because of association with the three modes of material nature. In this fourteenth chapter, Krsna explains what the modes of nature are, how they act, how they bind and how one is liberated from their influence. In the beginning of the chapter, Krsna declares to Arjuna that He will now, again reveal "this supreme wisdom, the best of all knowledge," by understanding which one can attain to "the transcendental nature" and be freed from the repetition of birth and death (1-2). Krsna first explains that all living beings take birth within this material world when He injects them into the material nature. He is therefore the "seed-giving father" of all the different species of life in the material world (3-4).

Material nature consists of three modes; sattva (goodness), rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance). Those modes condition the living entity who takes birth in the material world (5). Krsna defines and explains the general characteristics and symptoms of the modes and how they condition and bind the jiva, and He describes the fate of differently conditioned jivas after death (6-18). One can transcend the influence of the three modes and attain Krsna by understanding the working of the modes and understanding that Krsna is transcendental to them (19). When one transcends the modes, he attains freedom from the distresses of birth, old age and death and can "enjoy nectar eve in this life" (20). Arjuna next asks Krsna three questions: "What are the symptoms of one who is transcendental to the modes of nature?" "What is his behavior?," and "How does he transcend the modes?" (21). Krsna answers the first two questions in verses 22 through 25.

In essence, a person who has transcended the modes of nature, having realized his own self to be spiritual and transcendental to matter, is unconcerned with and unaffected by the actions and reactions of the material world. He is freed from all material dualities, such as pleasure and pain, honor and dishonor, and he does not engage in any fruitive actions. In answer to Arjuna's third question, Krsna says that one transcends the modes by performing bhakti yoga (devotional service). And when one transcends the modes, he attains to the level of Brahman, the preliminary spiritual position, characterized by freedom from material contamination (26). In the final verse of the chapter, Krsna declares that He is the basis or source of Brahman (27). Therefore, when one has attained the level of Brahman (i.e. freedom from the contamination of the modes of nature), he becomes qualified to engage in the devotional service of Parabrahman (the Supreme Brahman), Krsna.

STBG 6.15: CHAPTER FIFTEEN

STBG 6.17 CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Divisions Of Faith

The Yoga of the Supreme

In the last several chapters, Krsna has recommended bhakti yoga as the most expedient method by which Arjuna may extricate himself from the entanglement of the material world. The basic principle of bhakti yoga is detachment from material activities and attachment to the transcendental devotional service of Krsna. Now, the fifteenth chapter begins by describing how to break attachment to the material world (and attain the spiritual world), and it ends with Krsna's emphatically declaring that the truth of His being the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Purusottama) is the essence of the Vedic scriptures. One who understands this engages in bhakti yoga (devotional service to Him).

At the very beginning of the chapter, the material world, with its fruitive activity (karma) and entangling results, is compared to a complexly entwined banyan tree.

The various parts of the tree (roots, branches, twigs, leaves, fruits, etc.) are compared to fruitive activity, piety and impiety, the senses, the sense objects, the results of fruitive activities, the Vedic hymns for elevation, the different planetary systems, and so forth.

By performing fruitive activities (based on the desire for sense gratification), the entangled jiva is forced to wander from branch to branch (i.e. from body to body, planet to planet) in this tree of the material world. Krsna then declares that "One who knows this tree is the knower of the Vedas." In other words, the ultimate purpose of Vedic knowledge is to understand this entangling "tree" of the material world and to extricate oneself from it (1-2).

Next, Krsna describes the means of extricating oneself and attaining the spiritual world: "Using the weapon of detachment, one must cut down this banyan tree with determination. Thereafter, one must seek that situation from which, having gone, one never comes back. One must surrender to that Supreme Personality of Godhead from Whom everything has begun and is extending since time immemorial." Krsna then describes the surrendering process and gives a brief description of the spiritual world (3-6).

In the next verses, Krsna describes the conditioned living entities in the material world and how they are transmigrating from one body to the next. Such living entities are Krsna's eternal "fragmental parts." According to his mentality, the bound jiva develops a particular gross material body equipped with a particular set of senses, with which he enjoys a particular set of objects. Krsna asserts that the foolish cannot understand this process of transmigration, but the wise can (7-11).

Throughout the rest of the chapter, Krsna discusses His Own supreme transcendental nature (12-20). He enumerates some of His manifestations in the material world by which He maintains everything and all living beings. He is the source of the sun, moon and fire.. He is the power of the planets to float in orbit. He is the digestive force in every body. He is the Supersoul in the hearts of all living beings, and He is the source and ultimate object of the Vedas (12-15).

Krsna explains that there are two classes of beings; the "fallible" (the conditioned souls in the material world), and the "infallible" (the liberated souls in the spiritual world). Beyond them is He Himself, Who maintains both the material and spiritual worlds (16-17).

Thus He is "celebrated both in the world and in the Vedas as that Supreme Person [Purusottama]." (18) Whoever knows Him as such is "the knower of everything," and thus he engages in undeviating devotional service to Him (19).

Krsna concludes by declaring that knowledge of His paramount stature and the rendering of service to Him is the essence of the Vedic scriptures. Such understanding leads to wisdom and perfection (20).

STBG 6.16: CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Divine and Demoniatic Natures

In this chapter, Krsna describes and compares two kinds of qualities and those who possess them. The divine or transcendental (daivic) qualities, in the mode of goodness, are conducive to spiritual progress; the demoniac (asuric) qualities, in the modes of passion and ignorance, conversely, are detrimental to spiritual progress, and they lead to lower birth and further material bondage. Those who possess divine qualities live regulated lives, abiding by the authority of scripture, and attain perfection, while those possessing demoniac qualities act whimsically (without reference to scripture) and are bound up by material nature.

First, Krsna lists twenty-three transcendental qualities "born of the godly atmosphere" (1-3). These qualities, as previously mentioned, are auspicious for progress on the path of liberation from the material world. Krsna then gives Arjuna a synopsis of the qualities of the demoniac (viz., arrogance, pride, anger, conceit, harshness and ignorance). Krsna states that the transcendental qualities lead to liberation whereas the demoniac qualities lead to bondage.

He assures Arjuna that he need not worry, for he has been "born with transcendental qualities." Krsna thus encourages Arjuna by indicating that Arjuna's involvement in the battle is not demoniac, for he is not acting under the influence of anger, false prestige or harshness.

According to the scriptural injunctions governing his social order, fighting in a religious war is godly activity whereas refraining from such duty would be demoniac, or irreligious (4-5).

Krsna then gives a graphic description of the demoniac. Essentially, the demoniac are atheists and materialist who violate the scriptural injunctions guiding human behavior, both socially and spiritually. Such persons conceive the world to have no foundation or purpose, and thus they tend toward whimsical and destructive activities. For them, the ultimate goal of life is gratification of the senses. They are attracted by impermanent, material things. Bound by multitudinous material desires, they obtain money by any means. They are conceited, lusty, complacent and impudent, and there is no end to their anxiety (6-18). Such demoniac persons take birth in various lower species of life and "sink down to the most abominable position of existence," wherein they can never approach Krsna (19-20). Every sane man, Krsna cautions, should give up lust, anger and greed, the "three gates leading down to hell."

By escaping these, one can elevate oneself to self-realization and "the supreme destination" (21-22).

Krsna concludes by saying that one who lives whimsically, without following the regulations of scripture (meant to elevate a person to spiritual realization), attains neither perfection nor happiness, whereas one who understands Vedic scriptural regulations and guides his life accordingly is gradually elevated (to spiritual perfection) (23-24).

STBG 6.17 CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Divisions Of Faith

In the fourteenth chapter Krsna explained to Arjuna that the way to transcend the three modes of material nature is to perform devotional service (Bhakti yoga) to Him.

Krsna concludes chapter fifteen by declaring that His supreme divinity and worship of Him are the confidential essence of Vedic knowledge. Then, in the sixteenth chapter, He stresses that in order to be elevated spiritually, one should act according to the regulations of Vedic scripture. Now, at the opening of this chapter, Arjuna inquires about the position of one who concocts some method of worship according to his own imagination, ignoring scriptural regulations. Is that kind of faith in goodness, passion or ignorance? (1) In response, Krsna explains that there are three types of faith, corresponding to and evolving from the three modes of nature (2-6). He then describes the characteristics of four items - food, sacrifice (yajna), austerity (tapasya) and charity (dana) - according to each of the three modes. Sacrifice, penance and austerity in the lower modes (ignorance and passion) are performed for selfish, temporary, material benefits, such as the attainment of wealth, honor and power.

The same acts performed in goodness, however, are executed according to duty and scriptural regulations, without fruitive intentions and for the purpose of purification and elevation (7-22). In the final verses, Krsna explains, in essence, that acts of sacrifice, austerity and charity should be performed for His satisfaction only. Referring to the traditional Vedic system of sacrifice, wherein the words Om tat sat (indicating the Supreme Absolute Truth) are uttered by brahmanas to please the Supreme. Krsna explains that sacrifice, penance and charity, when performed for His satisfaction, become a means for spiritual advancement. Acts of faith performed without faith in the Supreme, and in violation of the scriptures (i.e. in passion and ignorance) yield only impermanent, material results and are therefore useless.

Worship or faith in the mode of goodness, however, based on scriptural regulation and performed out of duty, purifies the heart of the performer and leads to pure faith and devotion for Krsna.

That faith (i.e. devotion for Krsna) is nirguna, or transcendental to the modes of nature (23-28).

STBG 6.18 CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Conclusion, The Perfection Of Renunciation

Conclusion, The Perfection Of Renunciation

The eighteenth chapter of Bhagavad Gita is both a synopsis and the conclusion of all the Gita's teachings. Since the Gita stresses renunciation of material activities (and engagement in spiritual elevation), Arjuna asks Krsna to explain definitively the purpose of renunciation (tyaga) and of the renounced order of life (sannyasa) (1). In reply, Krsna reiterates that renunciation does not mean giving up all actions, since this is impossible for the embodied soul. It means, rather, giving up fruitive actions and instead performing prescribed duties without attachment to their results. For those who are not renounced, the fruits of action (desirable, undesirable and mixed) accrue after death, whereas for the renounced, there are no such results to suffer or enjoy. Thus a wise renouncer is liberated from the bondage of karma (2-12).

Krsna then explains how one can act without material reactions. He cites Sankhya philosophy, which delineates five factors that contribute to the accomplishment of all actions, viz. the place of action, the performer, the senses, the endeavor and the Supersoul. One who thinking himself the exclusive factor in actions (not considering the other factors, especially the Supersoul, the final cause), is in ignorance (and becomes entangled by the fruits of his work). But when one acts according to the direction of the Supersoul, without personally motivated desires, his actions do not entail material reactions. Krsna thus indicates to Arjuna that if Arjuna acts according to His directions, Arjuna will not be the actual slayer, nor will he suffer the consequences of killing in the battlefield (13-18).

The three modes of nature predominate in different aspects of human psychology and endeavor. Knowledge, action, workers, intelligence, determination and happiness each have three types, as regulated by the three modes. Krsna systematically analyzes these (19-40).

According to the material modes one has assumed, one conforms to one of the four occupational divisions of human society; brahmanas (teachers and priests), ksatriyas (rulers and warriors), vaisyas (farmers, traders, etc.) and sudras (laborers). Krsna enumerates the respective qualities and duties of each of the four social divisions (varnas) and explains that by adhering to the duties prescribed by one's own occupational division, and by offering the results of one's work to the Lord, one can attain perfection.

By working in accordance with his social duty (which is determined by the modes of nature), the conditioned soul can ultimately transcend the modes. Therefore, it is in Arjuna's best interest to act according to ksatriya principles and fight in the battle, for Krsna's satisfaction (41-48). Krsna concludes that one can attain the highest perfection of renunciation by control of the mind and by complete detachment from material things and material enjoyments (49).

Krsna next explains the stage following renunciation; attainment of Brahman, the preliminary joyfulness resulting from freedom from material desire and duality. "In that state," Krsna says, "one achieves pure devotional service unto Me." (50-54)

Krsna then imparts to Arjuna the decisive conclusion of all His teachings; the ultimate duty of the jiva is to surrender unto Him in pure, transcendental love and devotion. Only by devotion can Krsna - the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead - be understood. By understanding Krsna, one can enter into the kingdom of God (55). Acting always under His supreme protection, always conscious of Him, His devotee transcends all obstacles of conditional life and reaches the spiritual kingdom by His grace (56-58). Krsna warns Arjuna that even if he

neglects His divine instructions, and, under the influence of illusion, avoids his duty, he will still be compelled to fight by his conditioning as a ksatriya (59-60). Realizing Krsna as the Supersoul in the heart, the supreme controller and director of the wanderings of all living entities, Arjuna should fully surrender unto Him and thus transcendental peace and attain the eternal abode (61-62). After instructing Arjuna to deliberate on this very confidential knowledge (i.e. surrender to Krsna's form as Supersoul) (63), Krsna imparts "the most confidential part of knowledge," the supreme instruction, the essence and conclusion of the Gita. One must relinquish all religious processes and duties (viz. karma yoga, jnana yoga, dhyana yoga, the socio-religious duties of the social orders, attainment of Brahman and Paramatma, etc.) and simply surrender unto Krsna as His pure devotee in eternal, transcendental loving service - the eternal and supreme dharma. "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall protect you from all sinful reactions. Therefore you have nothing to fear." (65-66)

In the next verse, Krsna states the qualifications for understanding the Gita: The hearer must be austere, devoted, non-envious and engaged in Krsna's service (67). One who imparts Krsna's teachings is Krsna's most dear servant and attains pure devotion to Him (68-69). One who studies the Tigaa "worships Me by his intelligence," and one who hears its teachings with faith is freed from all sins (70-71).

In the final climax to the narrative of Arjuna's dilemma, Krsna inquires, "Have you heard this with your mind at perfect attention? And are your ignorance and illusion now dispelled?" Arjuna confidently answers, "My dear Krsna, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy, and now I am steady and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions." (72-73)

In a brief epilogue, Sanjaya, who has been narrating the entire conversation to Dhrtarastra, rejoices in ecstasy at having heard the sacred dialogue. His hairs standing on end in joy, he concludes, "Wherever there is Krsna, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion." (74-78)

STBG 7: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(For further explanations, consult the verse(s) - with "purports" cited at the conclusion of each answer.)

STBG 7.1: Chapter One

Q1. Why does Arjuna decide not to fight in the Battle of Kuruksetra?

A.. When Krsna, in response to Arjuna's request, draws Arjuna's chariot between the opposing armies, Arjuna sees his relatives and friends assembled in the ranks of both armies. Seeing their militant spirit, and foreseeing their imminent death, Arjuna is overwhelmed with grief and compassion, and decides not to fight. Not yet understanding the higher purpose of the battle (that Krsna desires the demoniac armies annihilated), Arjuna analyzes the entire situation in terms of his own interests. He thus decides that he is not interested in achieving military victory and winning a kingdom at the expense of the lives of his friends and relatives and the welfare of society. (1.21-46)

STBG 7.2 Chapter Two

Q1. What does Krsna mean when He tells Arjuna, "While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief"?

- A. Krsna is intimating that it is the eternal soul (self), and not the temporary material body, which is ultimately important.
- B. Arjuna's compassion for his relatives was misdirected, being aimed exclusively at their temporary bodily welfare.
- C. Because of identifying the outward material body with the self, Arjuna had forgotten that the actual self, the soul, being spiritual and eternal, cannot be slain. Only the temporary material body is slain. Therefore, Arjuna's lamenting the death of the opposing soldiers was due only to illusion. (2.11)

Q2. What is the nature of the soul as distinct from the body?

A. The soul, or self is beginningless eternal and unchanging. It cannot be destroyed or altered by any means, material or spiritual. Being transcendental and atomic, the soul cannot be perceived, ascertained, measured or apprehended by material senses or instruments. Each soul is eternally a distinct and individual conscious entity. (2.11-30)

Q3. What is transmigration (reincarnation)?

A. "Transmigration" means change of body. When situated within a temporary material body, the eternal, unchanging soul remains constant while the body transforms (ages) from childhood to adulthood to old age. Even during the life cycle of a particular body, therefore in a relative sense

the soul is transmigrating from childhood, adulthood to old age. When the material body, through disease, old age, or other circumstances, becomes inhabitable for the soul, the soul leaves the body ("dies") and enters a new body within the womb of a mother and "takes birth." (The transmigrating soul is awarded a new body by nature in accordance with his karma, or activities.) (2.13, 22)

Q4. How does Krsna describe the person in "transcendental consciousness"?

A. Such a person, fully cognizant of his spiritual identity and separateness from matter, is not interested in material pleasure. Thus he controls his outward senses. With controlled senses and with mind and intelligence fixed on the Supreme, he is unaffected by material dualities such as happiness and distress, loss and gain. Such a person, at the end of the present body, attains the spiritual world. (2.54-72)

STBG 7.3 Chapter Three

Q1. Can one achieve freedom from karmic reactions by abstaining from activity?

A. No. The soul is active by nature: It can never remain inactive. In the conditioned state of material existence, the modes of material nature force the embodied soul to act under their control. One can be released from karmic reactions, however, by engaging in active "works of devotion," or karma yoga. (3.4-8)

Q2. What is karma yoga?

A. In his conditioned state, the jiva performs self-centered activities directed toward bodily gratification. Under the law of karma, he has to suffer or enjoy the reactions to the pious and impious acts he performs in the pursuit of sense gratification. These karmic reactions force him to take repeated births in the material world. Karma yoga, "the art of work," is a means by which he can escape this material entanglement. In karma yoga one performs duties according to the directions of the scriptures (the Vedas). Such activities purify and elevate the performer to the platform of performing activities for the satisfaction of Visnu (Krsna). Selfless activity, performed in the service of the Supreme, yields no material reactions and thus frees one from bondage to matter. (3.1-3, 9-35)

Q3. What does Krsna call "the destroyer of knowledge and self-realization"?

A. Kama, or lust, the desire for material sense gratification, impels the conditioned jiva to try to enjoy and exploit material sense objects. In the pursuit of sense gratification, the bound jiva performs sinful acts, which bind him to repeated birth and death. The more materially absorbed he becomes, the more he forgets his position as a transcendental living entity. Understanding the transcendental nature of the soul, one should conquer lust, Krsna tells Arjuna, by controlling the senses. (3.36-43)

STBG 7.4 Chapter Four

Q1. What is the nature and purpose of Krsna's descending to the material world?

- A. Whereas the ordinary conditioned jiva is forced to assume a material form under the supervision of the law of karma, Krsna descends to the material world in His Own eternal, transcendental form by His independent will.
- B. He appears in the material world in His original form as an incarnation or expansion whenever it is necessary to re-establish the principles of religion (dharma). Krsna states that one who understands the nature of His appearance and activities reaches the spiritual world. (4.4-9)

Q2. How does transcendental knowledge free one from karmic reactions?

A. "Transcendental knowledge," or the understanding that the self is not material, but eternal, and transcendental to matter, frees one from karmic reactions because when situated in that knowledge, one ceases to perform fruitive activities directed toward material sense gratification. One realizes sense gratification to be merely temporary and illusory pleasure. In the absence of fruitive activities to gratify the senses, there are no karmic reactions to bind one. (4-18-24, 36-42)

Q3. Why and how does one approach a spiritual master? What is the criterion of a genuine guru?

A. Since transcendental knowledge is beyond the range of material sense perception and empiric speculation, one has to approach a guru, one who has realized the truth in a line of "disciplic succession" originating with God. The disciple approaches a bona fide guru in a submissive attitude, always prepared to render service and eager to submit humble inquiries regarding spiritual advancement. When the student is thus qualified, the guru imparts transcendental knowledge to him. (4.34)

STBG 7.5 Chapter Fiv

Q1. What are the characteristics of the devotional worker (karma yogi)? What are his realizations, his mode of activity and his ultimate destination?

A. The person acting in karma yoga does not identify with the actions of his body, mind and senses, for he understands his real position as transcendental to the material body. Understanding further that he and everything in his possession belongs to Krsna, he engages his body, senses, mind and intellect in His service. Acting in such an unattached, devotional manner, rather than acting for personal sense gratification, he is unaffected by reactions to work. Thus his work elevates him to the position of full enlightenment regarding his self and the Supreme Self (Krsna), and he proceeds "straight on the path of liberation." (5.7 - 17).

Q2. What are the characteristics of the self-realized person (the "humble sage," "liberated person," "perfect mystic," Brahman-realized or Krsna conscious person)?

- A. The self-realized soul is not illusioned by the false identification of the material body with his true self. He realizes himself to be a fragmental part of God. His mind is steady because he is not disturbed by temporary gains and losses of material things. Fixed in transcendental knowledge, he views all beings with equal vision and works for their ultimate spiritual welfare.
- B. Not attracted by material sense pleasure, he enjoys "the pleasure within," concentrating on the Supreme (5.18-28)

Q3. The self-realized person, Krsna tells Arjuna, is "always busy working for the welfare of all sentient beings." What is the nature of such welfare activity?

- A. In light of the temporality of the material body and the eternality of the real self, the self-realized person views bodily oriented welfare activity as insufficient. Attributing suffering to a lack of consciousness of God (Krsna), he works to instill God consciousness in others. (5.25)
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STBG 7.6 Chapter Six

Q1. In yoga practice, what is the purpose of controlling the mind?

- A. The soul is entrapped by matter because of the conditioned mind's attraction to material nature. The uncontrolled mind intensifies the soul's material bondage. The purpose of yoga is to control the mind (with the intelligence) and to draw it away from attachment to material sense objects. Krsna advises Arjuna (at the end of chapter six and also later in the Gita) to control the mind by concentrating it on Him in devotional service (bhakti yoga). (6.5-7, 26, 36).

Q2. What is dhyana yoga? How is it performed?

- A. Dhyana means "meditation." Dhyana yoga (technically know as astanga yoga, or "the eightfold path"), is a mechanical system for controlling the mind and senses through restraining one's breath, focusing one's mind, and so on. This culminates in samadhi, or mental absorption in the Supreme, specifically in Paramatma, the form of Krsna within the heart, (Visnu).
- B. In a secluded place the dhyana yogi sits on a particular type of seat, assumes the proper meditational posture and stares at the tip of the nose with half-closed eyes. Then, "with an non agitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life," the yogi meditates on Paramatma, making Him the ultimate goal of life." (6.10-19, 31)

Q3. Why does Arjuna reject the mediational system described by Krsna?

A. Arjuna says "The system of yoga which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady." The requirements of dhyana yoga (leaving home, finding a completely secluded place, mechanically controlling the mind, and so on), seem to Arjuna too difficult for him, or for any ordinary man. (6.33-36)

Q4. Which yoga system does Krsna recommend to Arjuna as the foremost, at the conclusion of the chapter? Why?

A. Krsna says, "Of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all." Krsna thus extols bhakti yoga, the devotional path, because bhakti (devotion to Krsna) is, according to the Gita, the sanatan dharma (eternal constitutional position) of the living entity. (6.47)

STBG 7.7 Chapter Seven

Q1. What are Krsna's two basic energies, and what is their interrelationship? What is Krsna's relationship with these two energies?

- A. Krsna's "inferior" energy (matter, or *apara prakriti*) consists of eight gross and subtle material elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether mind, intellect and false ego.
- B. It is the "stuff" of the material world. Krsna's "superior" energy (*para prakriti*) consists of the living entities (*jivas*) who are qualitatively one with Him. Under the influence of material nature, the *jivas* identify with the material energy and try to predominate and enjoy matter. When freed from this influence, the *jiva* attains *mukti*, or liberation. Krsna is the origin and controller of both energies. (7.4-7).

Q2. What are the four kinds of "miscreants" who don't surrender to Krsna?

A. The four classes of miscreants are (1) the *mudhas*; grossly foolish, hard-working fruitive workers, (2) *naradhama*s; those who follow regulative principles of social and political life but do not follow religious principles, (3) *mayayapahrta-jnana*s; those who are highly educated or learned but are illusioned by *maya*, and (4) *asuram bhavam asrita*s; those who are openly atheistic. (7.15)

Q3. What are the four kinds of pious men who do surrender to Krsna?

A. The four classes of pious men who approach the Supreme Lord are those who are (1) distressed, (2) seeking wealth, (3) are inquisitive, or (4) are searching for knowledge of the Absolute Truth. (7.16-18).

Q4. Why does Krsna criticize the worshipers of demigods?

- A. "Those whose minds are distorted by material desires" worship the demigods to win material benedictions.
 - B. Because such worshipers seek material gains, which are limited and temporary, they are "men of small intelligence."
 - C. They do not know, Krsna declares, that He [Krsna] is the source of their faith in the demigods as well as the actual bestower of the demigods' favors. (7.20-23)
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STBG 7.8 Chapter Eight

Q1. What is the significance of the time of death for the embodied jiva?

A. The quality of the jiva's consciousness at death determines his next birth: "In whatever condition one quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state without fail." (8.6)

Q2. What advice does Krsna give Arjuna regarding the time of death? What will be the result of following that advice?

A. Krsna tells Arjuna that one who leaves the body remembering Him attains His abode. Because the quality of one's consciousness at death is influenced by one's consciousness and activities during his life, Krsna instructs Arjuna to practice remembering Him while performing his prescribed duties. But such remembrance, "one is sure to achieve the planet of the divine, the Supreme Personality." (8.5, 7,8)

Q3. According to Krsna, how should Arjuna meditate on Him?

- A. Krsna tells Arjuna, "Think of the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond any material conception,
- B. who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun, beyond this material nature, transcendental. (8.9)

Q4. What is the nature of the spiritual world, and how is it attained?

A. Beyond the material world, which undergoes a perpetual cycle of creation and destruction is the eternal, spiritual world, which is "transcendental to this

manifested and non manifested matter" and is never annihilated. This "highest destination" is attained, Krsna says, by "unalloyed devotion." Once it is attained one never returns to the material world. (8.17-22)

STBG 7.9 Chapter Chapter Nine

Q1. How does Krsna describe His relationship with His creation (the cosmic universe)?

A. Krsna is the source, maintainer and controller of the universe. In a perpetual cycle of creation and destruction, He manifests the material world and, after a long period, absorbs it back into His nature. When manifested, the entire cosmic creation rests within Him, while He simultaneously pervades the universe through His diverse potencies. Although maintaining and pervading the universe through His different potencies and energies, He remains transcendental, separate and independent in His personal form. All material activities (such as the embodiment of living beings) are carried out by the material nature, which acts under His supreme direction. (9.4-10)

Q2. Who are "the foolish," and who are "the great souls"?

A. The foolish are those bewildered persons who, ignorant of Krsna's transcendental nature and supreme dominion, deride His personal humanlike form. Such persons are "attracted by demoniac and atheistic views." That is, they consider Krsna's personal form material and therefore subordinate or inferior to His impersonal feature as the all-pervading Brahman. The "great souls" are those who are fully aware of Krsna as "the Supreme Personality of Godhead" and who worship Him with devotion. (9.11-14)

Q3. How does Krsna advise Arjuna to become free from karmic reaction?

B. Arjuna will be freed from "all reactions to good and evil deeds" by making Krsna the object and beneficiary of all actions offerings and austerities. Although Krsna is neutral, anyone who renders Him such service in devotion "is a friend, is in Me, and I am a friend to him." (9.26-29)

STBG 7.10 Chapter Ten

Q1. Whom does Krsna enlighten?

A. Those who know Krsna as the source of everything surrender unto Him with pure devotion. To those who are so devoted, Krsna tells Arjuna, "I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (10.8-11)

Q2. What is the lesson Arjuna is to learn from Krsna's revelation of His divine opulence's?

A. By giving Arjuna a small indication of His specific opulence's as He manifests them in His all-pervading energies, Krsna demonstrates that all wondrous phenomena manifesting great power, beauty, grandeur and sublimeness, in either the spiritual or material world, are merely fragmental manifestations of His divine energies and opulence's. As the supreme cause of all causes, therefore, Krsna is the supreme object of worship for all beings. (10.19-41)

B. Q3. After Krsna reveals His opulence's, what is His final teaching to Arjuna?

A. Krsna says, "But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself, I pervade and support this entire universe." In other words, more important than knowledge of Krsna's separate opulence's is the understanding that these and all things exist because of Krsna's entering them as Paramatma (Supersoul), by which He pervades and supports the entire universe. (10.42)

STBG 7.11 Chapter Eleven

Q1. What is the universal form (visva-rupa) revealed by Krsna to Arjuna?

A. The universal form is a colossal, terrifying, yet temporary vision of Krsna's power and opulence in His form as the cosmic universe and His destructive form as Time. In this spectacular vision, Arjuna can see "the unlimited expansions of the universe situated in one place, although divided into many, many thousands." (11.9-49)

Q2. Why does Arjuna request Krsna to reveal His universal form?

A. Although he himself fully accepts Krsna as the Absolute Truth and the source of everything, Arjuna fears that in the future others might consider Him and ordinary person. Therefore, to establish Krsna's divinity, he requests Krsna to reveal His universal form to show how He controls the universe although He is apart from it. Arjuna prays, "O greatest of all beings, O supreme form, though I see here before

me You actual position, I yet wish to see how You have entered into this cosmic manifestation: I wish to see that form of Yours." (11.1-3)

Q3. After He returns to His original, two-armed form as Krsna, what qualification does Krsna cite as necessary to see and understand His humanlike form?

A. Krsna states, "My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding." He further states that one thus engaged in pure devotional service "certainly comes to Me." (11.54-55)

STBG 7.12 Chapter Twelve Chapter Twelve

Q1. What does Krsna say in response to Arjuna's inquiry about the relative positions of the devotee engaged in Krsna's service (bhakti) and those who worship Brahman, the impersonal form of Krsna?

- A. Krsna replies to Arjuna, "He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshipping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be most perfect."
- B. But "for those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome."
- C. Although the "impersonalists" eventually achieve Him, their path, being indirect is more difficult. For the devotee who has fixed his mind upon Krsna, however, worshipping Him in devotional love and service, Krsna is "the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death." (12.1-8)

Q2. How does Krsna describe the devotee who is "very dear" to Him?

A. The devotee is free from material desires, material dualities and possessiveness, false ego, anxiety and envy. He is "a kind friend to all creatures," "equal to both friends and enemies," and "equal in both happiness and distress," and he engages in devotional service with determination, with mind and intelligence fixed on Krsna. (12.13-20)

STBG 7.13 Chapter Thirteen Chapter Thirteen

Q1. What are the three subjects discussed in this chapter. What is their relationship?

- A. Chapter thirteen is concerned with the material body, the soul and the Supersoul (Paramatma), and their relationship. (The body is composed of twenty-four gross and subtle material elements. It is the kestra, or "field" of activities, for the soul, who is therefore the ksetra-jna, or "knower of the field." The material body is animate only because of the presence of the living spiritual soul.
- B. Beyond the soul is the Supersoul, an expansion of Krsna who simultaneously appears in all bodies, accompanying the individual soul as the indwelling witness, maintainer and guide. This Supersoul is transcendental to the modes of nature and is the supreme knower in all bodies. (13.1-7, 13-35)

Q2. What is the result of understanding these three items and their relationship?

- A. By analytically understanding the body, the soul and the Supersoul, the embodied jiva can understand (and execute) the process of liberation for the body and return to the spiritual world. (13.24, 35)
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STBG 7.14 Chapter Fourteen Chapter Fourteen

Q1. What are "the modes of material nature"? What are the characteristic effects of each of the three modes on the conditioned jiva?

- A. The living entity is by nature transcendental, but when conditioned by the material world, he acts under the spell of material nature, which is divided into three qualities, or "modes" (gunas)l the mode of goodness (sattva guna), the mode of passion (raja guna), and the mode of ignorance (tamo guna). These three conditioning forces, acting individually or collectively, influence the conditioned jiva's psychophysical condition and his actions. The mode of goodness is illuminating and leads one to self-knowledge and happiness.
- B. Conditioning by the mode of passion is characterized by fruitive activities impelled by intense desire for material enjoyment, the end result being distress.
- C. Those influenced by the mode of ignorance are characterized by ignorance, indolence, sleep and madness. (14.6-18)

Q2. How can the conditioned jiva transcend the influence of the modes?

A. "One who is engaged in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman." Since knowledge (jnana) is a component of devotion (bhakti), devotional service (bhakti yoga) enlightens one with knowledge of the workings of nature's modes, and it enables one to understand his own eternal position as transcendental to the modes. With that realization, one transcends the conditioning influence of the modes. (14.19, 26)

Q3. What is the "Brahmani platform," and what lies beyond it?

A. "Brahman" means "spiritual." The Brahman platform is the preliminary spiritual position reached by the jiva when he has become free from material conditioning by the influence of the modes of nature. A person on the Brahman platform, in full realization of his transcendental position, is unconcerned with and unaffected by material dualities. He does not engage in material activities. Beyond the Brahman platform is Krsna Himself, Who says, "I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman." After attaining the Brahman platform, the liberated jiva becomes qualified to engage in the devotional service of Parabrahman (the Supreme Brahman), Krsna. (14.22-27)

STBG 7.15 Chapter Fifteen Chapter Fifteen

Q1. What does Krsna explain about the dynamics of transmigration?

A. Krsna explains to Arjuna that one's consciousness, particularly one's consciousness at the time of death (which has been fashioned during life), determines the type of material body one will have next. "The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life as the air carries aromas. Thus he takes one kind of body and again quits it to take another." Assuming a new body equipped with a particular set of senses, he proceeds to enjoy a particular set of sense objects. Krsna further explains that the foolish cannot understand the process of transmigration, whereas the wise can. (15.8-11)

B. Q2; What is "the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures"?

A. There are two classes of beings; the "fallible (the conditioned souls in the material world), and the "infallible" (the liberated souls in the spiritual world). Beyond them both, however, is Krsna Himself, Who maintains both the material and spiritual worlds. Thus He is "celebrated both in the world

and in the Vedas as that Supreme Person." Whoever knows Him as such is "the knower of everything." Thus he engages in devotional service to Krsna. This knowledge "is the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures," Krsna says. "Anyone who understands this will become wise, and his endeavors will know perfection." (15.16-20)

STBG 7.16 Chapter Sixteen

Q1. What is the difference between those of "divine" qualities and those of "demoniac" qualities?

A. The godly, or those of divine qualities, are those who live regulated lives, abiding by the authority of scripture. Such persons attain liberation from the material world. On the other hand, those possessing demoniac qualities are those who live unregulated lives acting whimsically for sense gratification, disregarding the injunctions of scripture. Such persons are further bound by material nature. (16.5, 23-24)

Q2, What are the divine (transcendental) qualities?

A. "The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: "Fearlessness, purification of one's existence, cultivation of spiritual knowledge, charity, sense control, performance of sacrifice, study of the Vedas, austerity, simplicity, nonviolence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, peacefulness, aversion to faultfinding, compassion toward every living entity, freedom from greed, gentleness, shyness, determination, vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness and freedom from both envy and the passion for honor - these are the transcendental qualities, born of the godly atmosphere, O son of Bharata." (16.1-3)

Q3. What are the characteristics of those of demoniac qualities? What is their fate?

- A. The demoniac are atheistic and materialistic. Conceiving the world to have no foundation or purpose, they act whimsically and destructively.
 - B. Their ultimate goal of life being gratification of the senses, they are absorbed in impermanent, material things. Bound by multitudinous material desires, they obtain money by any means. The demoniac are conceited, lusty, complacent and impudent. There is no end to their anxiety. Such demoniac persons take birth in various lower species of life and "sink down to the most abominable position of existence." They can never approach Krsna. (16.6-18)
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STBG 7.17 Chapter Seventeen

Q1. What are the three kinds of food, sacrifice, austerity and charity in each of the three modes of material nature (goodness, passion and ignorance)?

A. See chapter seventeen, verses 7 through 22.

Q2. What is the difference between faith in the lower modes of nature (passion and ignorance) and faith in the mode of goodness?

A. When performed in passionate and ignorant faith, activities such as sacrifice, penance and austerity are enacted selfishly for material benefits such as wealth, power and honor. Such acts of faith, performed without faith in the Supreme and in violation of the scriptures, yield only impermanent, material results and are therefore useless. On the other hand, acts of faith performed in the mode of goodness are executed according to duty and scriptural regulations, without selfish, fruitive intentions. Such acts are performed for the satisfaction of the Supreme, and thus they purify and elevate the performer and gradually lead him to the platform of pure faith and devotion to Krsna. Such Krsna bhakti (devotion to Krsna) is transcendental faith, beyond the modes of nature. (17.23-28)

STBG 7.17 Chapter Eighteen

Q1. What are the three kinds of knowledge, action, workers, intelligence, determination, and happiness in each of the three modes of material nature?

A. See chapter eighteen, verses 19 through 40.

Q2. What are the four social orders, and what are the qualities of their respective modes of work? How does a person attain perfection by acting in his particular social order?

A. According to the material modes one has assumed, one naturally conforms to one of four fundamental occupational divisions of human society; brahmanas (teachers and priests), ksatriyas (rulers and warriors), vaisyas (farmers, mercantile, etc.), and sudras (laborers). Krsna enumerates the qualities of these of these orders as follows: "Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness - these are the qualities by which the brahmanas work. Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the qualities of work for the ksatriyas. Farming, cow protection and business are the qualities of work for the vaisyas, and for the sudras there is labor and service to others." By working in accordance with his respective social duty, the conditioned soul can ultimately transcend the modes and attain spiritual perfection by offering the results of his work to God. (18.41-48)

Q3. What does Krsna tell Arjuna is the only way to understand Him? What is the result of such understanding?

A. Krsna says, "One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God." (18.55)

Q4. What is Krsna's final and conclusive instruction to Arjuna?

- A. Krsna says, "Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall protect you from all sinful reactions.
- B. Therefore you have nothing to fear." Krsna thus instructs Arjuna to abandon all religious processes and duties, (vis., karma yoga, jnana yoga, dhyana yoga, the socio-religious duties of the social orders, endeavor for attainment of Brahman and Paramatma, and so forth) and simply surrender unto Him and engage, as His pure devotee, in eternal, transcendental loving service -

the eternal and supreme dharma. Krsna has described the nature of that pure devotion in the previous verse: "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail." (18-65-66)

Q5. At the conclusion of the dialogue, what does Krsna inquire of Arujuna, and how does Arjuna answer?

A. "[Krsna said:] O conqueror of wealth, Arjuna, have you heard this with your mind at perfect attention? And are your ignorance and illusion now dispelled? Arjuna said, "My dear Krsna, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy, and now I am steady and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions." (18.72-73)

**STBG 8: SUGGESTED SYLLABUS FOR TEACHING BHAGAVAD-GITA
AS IT IS**

(Numbers in parentheses refer to verse numbers.
Purports should be read along with the verses.)

NEXT PAGE.

ONE-WEEK SYLLABUS

(Major selections totalling 125 pages)

Two class sessions per week

DISCUSSION		READINGS	QUESTIONS FOR
session 1	Introduction	(all)	
	Chapter 2	(1-30, 54-72)	1-4
	Chapter 3	(1-9, 27-43)	1-3
	Chapter 4	(1-11, 34-42)	1,3
Session 2	Chapter 5	(7-29)	1-3
	Chapter 6	(46-47)	4
	Chapter 7	(1-7)	1
	Chapter 8	(5-9)	1-3
	Chapter 9	(1-14)	1,2
	Chapter 10	(1-15)	1
	Chapter 12	(1-8)	1
	Chapter 13	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 14	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 18	(50-78)	3-6

Three class sessions per week

DISCUSSION		READINGS	QUESTIONS FOR
session 1	Introduction	(all)	
	Chapter 2	(1-30, 54-72)	1-4
	Chapter 3	(1-9, 21-43)	1-3
	Chapter 4	(1-11, 34-32)	1,3
session 2	Chapter 5	(7-29)	1-3
	Chapter 6	(46,47)	4
	Chapter 7	(1-7)	1
	Chapter 8	(5-9)	1-3
	Chapter 9	(1-14)	1,2
	Chapter 10	(1-15)	1
	Chapter 12	(1-8)	1
	Chapter 13	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 14	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 18	(50-78)	3-5

TWO-WEEK SYLLABUS

(Major selections totalling 200 pages)

Two class sessions per week

DISCUSSION READINGS QUESTIONS FOR

1st week:

session 1	Introduction	(all)	
	Chapter 2	(1-30, 54-72)	1-4
	Chapter 3	(all)	1-3
session 2	Chapter 4	(1-24, 34-42)	1,3
	Chapter 5	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 6	(46-47)	4
	Chapter 7	(all)	1-3

2nd week:

session 3	Chapter 8	(5-27)	1-3
	Chapter 9	(1-14)	1,2
	Chapter 10	(1-15)	1
	Chapter 12	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 13	(all)	1,2
session 4	Chapter 14	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 15	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 16	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 18	(19-78)	1-5

Three class sessions per week

DISCUSSION READINGS QUESTIONS FOR

Chapter 7 (all) 1-3

2nd week:

session 4	Chapter 8	(5-27)	1-3
	Chapter 9	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 10	(1-15)	1
session 5	Chapter 12	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 13	(all)	1,2

session 6	Chapter 14	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 15	(all)	1,2
	Chapter 16	(all)	1-3
	Chapter 18	(19-78)	1-5

THREE-WEEK SYLLABUS

(Complete text read)

Two class sessions per week

READINGS QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1st week:

session 1	Introduction	(all)
	Chapter 1	(all)
session 2	Chapter 2	(all)
	Chapter 3, 4	(all)

2nd week:

session 3	Chapter 5-7	(all)
session 4	Chapter 8-11	(all)

3rd week:

session 5	Chapter 12-15	(all)
session 6	Chapter 16-18	(all)

-

Three class sessions per week

DISCUSSION

READINGS

QUESTIONS FOR

1st week:

session 1	Introduction	(all)
	Chapter 1	(all)
session 2	Chapter 2	(all)
session 3	Chapter 3	(all)

2nd week:

session 4	Chapter 4,5	(all)
session 5	Chapter 6,7	(all)
session 6	Chapter 8-10	(all)

3rd week:

session 7	Chapter 11-13	(all)
session 8	Chapter 14-16	(all)
session 9	Chapter 17,18	(all)