

CHAPTER ONE
OBSERVING THE ARMIES
ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF KURUKSETRA

Text 1: Dhrtarastra said: O Sanjaya, after my sons and the sons of Pandu assembled in the place of pilgrimage at Kuruksetra, desiring to fight, what did they do?

The Mahabharata describes in great detail the political intrigues that led to the battle of Kuruksetra, about which blind King Dhrtarastra now inquires from his secretary Sanjaya. At this point in the Mahabharata, the sons of Pandu are assembled with their allies to fight the sons of Dhrtarastra and their allies. Literally millions—from powerful generals to common foot soldiers—have gathered along with their weapons, horses, and elephants to fight in one of the biggest battles of all times.

The climax of the entire epoch is fast approaching. Hearers are experiencing great anxiety. Will good triumph over evil? Which valiant soldiers will survive? Which side will win? Certainly no one's mind at this point is wandering. The battle is to begin—the Gita's first twenty-seven *slokas* will introduce us to where and why the *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken—and suddenly, Krsna inserts within our open ears, minds, and hearts philosophy that will make us immortal.

Srila Prabhupada explains Krsna's compassion: "We have taken a very difficult task, to convince people to take to Krsna consciousness. But that is the only benefit, or the supreme goal of life. Krsna personally comes to teach this science. Why Krsna left Bhagavad-gita? Out of His compassion, that "After My disappearance people would take advantage of this Bhagavad-gita. As I instructed My dear friend Arjuna, they will also take advantage and become free from the clutches of death." This is the purpose of Bhagavad-gita."

People often think that Dhrtarastra and Sanjaya were discussing the events on the battlefield from the battlefield itself. Actually, as explained in the Mahabharata, they are speaking in Hastinapura. Sanjaya had been fighting in the battle, but when on the tenth day, Bhismadeva, the Kaurava commander-in-chief, fell, Sanjaya left the battle to inform Dhrtarastra of the event. Dhrtarastra then took the opportunity to ask Sanjaya for details of the war. Sanjaya was an appropriate person to ask because his *guru*, Srila Vyasadeva, had given him the power to see over the entire battlefield at once.

Srila Prabhupada points out in his purport that this first verse reveals Dhrtarastra's inclinations: "Both the Pandavas and the sons of Dhrtarastra belong to the same family, but Dhrtarastra's mind is disclosed herein. He deliberately claimed only his sons as Kurus, and he separated the sons of Pandu from the family heritage."

Dhrtarastra was afraid. Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself was on the battlefield driving Arjuna's chariot. His opponents included warriors like Arjuna and Bhima. In addition, the battle was going to take place in the holy *dhama* of Kuruksetra. The Pandavas were exceedingly pious and Dhrtarastra did not want the favorable influence of the *dhama* to aid the Pandavas or to influence his own sons to compromise. He wanted the battle to begin and the Pandavas dead. If the *dhama* were to act at all, he hoped that the Pandavas would agree to renounce their claim in order to avoid all the bloodshed. Thus Dhrtarastra asked Sanjaya, "What did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?"

Text 2: Sanjaya said: O King, after looking over the army arranged in military formation by the sons of Pandu, King Duryodhana went to his teacher and spoke the following words.

That Duryodhana was also in anxiety is indicated by the words, *raja vacanam abravit*, "the king spoke words." He did not speak meaningfully. It is natural psychology to speak something—anything—to cover up our anxiety. Similarly, Duryodhana tried to cover his own anxiety when he addressed his martial *guru*, Dronacarya, as follows:

Text 3: O my teacher, behold the great army of the sons of Pandu, so expertly arranged by your intelligent disciple the son of Drupada.

Duryodhana was a great politician. He could have mentioned Dhrtadyumna name directly, but instead he purposely called him "the son of Drupada." Drupada and Drona were enemies. To incite Dronacarya's anger, therefore, Duryodhana reminded Dronacarya that it was his enemy's son, Dhrtadyumna, who was arranging the armies. Since Drona was naturally inclined to the Pandavas, especially to Arjuna, his greatest student, Duryodhana needed to use whatever ploys he could to insure that Drona would fight to the best of his ability.

Drupada and Dronacarya had attended the same *gurukula*, even though Drona was the son of a poor *brahmana* and Drupada was a prince. Despite the differences in their backgrounds, the two became intimate friends. In a moment of affection, Drupada had once told his friend that when he inherited the kingdom, he would give half of it to him. Dronacarya took his friend's words to heart.

Long after they had graduated and Drona had entered *grhastha* life, he found his son crying for milk. Drona was so poor that he could not afford to buy milk for his child. Then he remembered Drupada's promise and thought, "Let me go to my dear friend Drupada and beg a cow from him."

When Drona arrived at Drupada's palace, Drupada refused to even recognize him. He said, "I am your friend? Friendship can only be recognized among equals. Get out of here immediately!" Dronacarya vowed revenge. Later, he

trained both the Kuru and Pandava princes in the military arts and then asked for his *guru-daksina*: "Capture Drupada and bring him before me."

The Kauravas offered to try first, but Drupada easily defeated them and sent them back to Drona in embarrassment. Dronacarya was mortified. Arjuna then came forward. The other Pandavas lined up behind him as he attacked Drupada's kingdom, Pancala. Arjuna captured Drupada after a fierce battle and carried him, bound, to Dronacarya's feet. Dronacarya then took half of Drupada's kingdom, making Drupada his enemy.

Drupada then performed a sacrifice and obtained a son who would kill Drona. That son was Dhrstadyumna. Dhrstadyumna later approached Dronacarya to study the military science, and although Dronacarya knew that Dhrstadyumna was specifically empowered to kill him, he did not hesitate to train him. Such is the liberality of a *brahmana's* heart.

The *brahmana's* liberal heart is compared to the sun, who does not withhold its light even from the courtyard of a thief. Similarly, Dronacarya "did not hesitate to impart all his military secrets" to Dhrstadyumna, although he knew fully that it was Dhrstadyumna who was destined to kill him. The liberal *brahmana* unselfishly gives his knowledge to whomever requests it.

Text 4: Here in this army are many heroic bowmen equal in fighting to Bhima and Arjuna: great fighters like Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada.

Again, Drupada was mentioned to incite Drona to anger. Duryodhana also mentioned Bhima and Arjuna. Arjuna was a powerful foe. Not only had he studied under Drona, but he had gone to the heavenly planets, later fought with Lord Siva, and had been given many celestial weapons.

Duryodhana, however, was especially afraid of Bhima's fiery temperament. Therefore, he mentions his name first. Bhima was furious with Dhrtarastra's sons. Before the battle, he took three vows. First, he vowed to kill each of Dhrtarastra's one hundred sons. (During the battle, Arjuna and the other Pandavas had opportunities to kill some of Dhrtarastra's sons, but they refrained from doing so in order to allow Bhima to fulfill his vow. During the actual battle, Bhima's anger was inflamed. He screamed, jumped up and down, and drank the blood of each son of Dhrtarastra that he killed. Even the warriors on the Pandavas' side were afraid of him.)

Second, he vowed to break Duryodhana's thigh. When Draupadi was insulted, Duryodhana had uncovered his thigh and motioned to Draupadi, "Come and sit on my lap! You are fit for my enjoyment!" Bhima burned with anger and hatred. For thirteen years, he had been burning as he waited to destroy the Kauravas.

Third, Bhima vowed to tear open Dusasana's chest, pry out his heart, and drink his blood. Dusasana had touched and opened Draupadi's tied and sanctified hair. For this, Bhima also vowed to rip off his arm. Draupadi had promised to keep her hair untied until she had washed it with Dusasana's blood. Bhima later carried that blood upon his hands to Draupadi.

Duryodhana named all these fighters to convince Dronacarya to free himself from whatever sentiments he felt toward the Pandavas and to kill them in battle. He continued to describe the Pandavas' strength:

Text 5: There are also great heroic, powerful fighters like Dhrstaketu, Cekitana, Kasiraja, Kuntibhoja and Saibya.

Text 6: There are the mighty Yudhamanyu, the very powerful Uttamauja, the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi. All these warriors are great chariot fighters.

Text 7: But for your information, O best of the brahmanas, let me tell you about the captains who are especially qualified to lead my military force.

Duryodhana did not want to discourage those who were listening to his own fears concerning the Pandavas' strength. Therefore, he added, "Let me tell you about the great warriors on my side."

Text 8: There are personalities like you, Bhishma, Karna, Krpa, Asvatthama, Vikarna and the son of Somadatta called Bhuishrava, who are always victorious in battle.

Duryodhana was speaking to the two great warriors, Bhishma and Dronacarya. While the king addressed Dronacarya, all his other fighters gathered to listen. Therefore, Duryodhana, as an expert diplomat, began to describe the Kaurava's strength with the words, *bhavan bhismas ca karnas ca*. Yet as he spoke, he was caught in another dilemma. Facing him were two great warriors. Bhishma was the commander-in-chief of the army and Drona was his military *guru*. Who, then should he mention first?

Duryodhana was clever. He knew that Bhishma was a *ksatriya* and Drona a *brahmana*. If he mentioned Bhishma first, Dronacarya would be insulted. As a *ksatriya*, however, Bhishma would honor the etiquette of giving the *brahmana* more respect. Thus Duryodhana said, *bhavan Bhismas*, "There are personalities like you, Dronacarya."

Then he mentioned Bhishma, then Karna. Bhishma and Karna were enemies. Since Karna thought, "What's the use? I will fight and kill everyone and this aged general will get all the credit," he vowed not to fight until Bhishma was killed.

Duryodhana next mentioned Kṛpacarya, a relative of Drona, then Asvatthama, Drona's son. In these ways, he hoped to inspire Drona.

Surprisingly, Duryodhana next mentioned his brother Vikarna. Vikarna was not of the same caliber as Bhishma or Drona, but since he was the only brother who objected to the Kaurava's insult to Draupadi, Duryodhana assumed that he was sympathetic to the Pandavas and that he could defect from the Kaurava army. Therefore, Duryodhana tried to flatter Vikarna by including his name among the many powerful fighters upon whom he was relying.

Defection was always an important concern for military leaders. Although *ksatriyas* love to fight, they are not always concerned whose side they fight on. This particular battle was the opportunity of a lifetime. No one would miss the action over something so trivial as politics. Therefore, Yudhishthira announced at the beginning of the war that religious principles allow defection before the battle starts, but once it has begun, warriors had to stay with their chosen sides.

Both Kṛsna and Duryodhana were active in recruiting defectors. Both Kṛsna and Kunti-devi approached Karna and invited him to join the Pandavas' side. Kṛsna told Karna that he was actually the eldest Pandava, and they encouraged him to fight with his brothers, especially since he wouldn't be joining the battle until after Bhishma's death. Karna was too honorable, however, to abandon his loyalty to Duryodhana.

On his side, Duryodhana tried to both keep Vikarna and win over the Pandavas' uncle, Salya. Karna needed a fit charioteer. Salya was both an acclaimed charioteer and a *maharatha* warrior. As Salya and his army traveled the long distance to join the Pandavas at the battlefield, Duryodhana arranged pleasant accommodations along the way. His clever ministers encouraged the tired Salya to make full use of the facilities. They took such care of him that Salya said, "Yudhishthira must have arranged these accommodations. Whoever has arranged this for me—I'll do whatever he wants." Duryodhana then appeared and said, "It was I who made these arrangements and I want you to fight on my side." Salya kept his word, fought for Duryodhana, and eventually became the last of the Kaurava's commanders-in-chief.

Text 9: There are many other heroes who are prepared to lay down their lives for my sake. All of them are well equipped with different kinds of weapons, and all are experienced in military science.

Text 10: Our strength is immeasurable, and we are perfectly protected by Grandfather Bhishma, whereas the strength of the Pandavas, carefully protected by Bhishma, is limited.

The first Sanskrit word in text 10, *aparyaptam*, has opposite meanings. It can mean, "Our strength is immeasurable" or "our strength is insufficient." When the first meaning is accepted, then the sentence continues: "We are perfectly protected by Grandfather Bhishma." Bhishma became encouraged when he heard this meaning.

The second meaning, however, was intended to encourage Dronacarya: "Our strength is insufficient because we are protected by Bhishma." Bhishma was a formidable warrior, but because his heart was with the Pandavas, Duryodhana felt that he would not fight to his full capacity. When Dronacarya heard this second meaning, he understood Duryodhana's message: "Our strength is insufficient due to Bhishma's split loyalties. Therefore, Drona, you must fight even harder to make up for Bhishma's weakness." Thus the expert diplomat, Duryodhana, managed to encourage both Bhishma and Drona with this one word.*

Text 11: All of you must now give full support to Grandfather Bhishma, as you stand at your respective strategic points of entrance into the phalanx of the army.

Prabhupada explains in his purport that "Duryodhana, after praising the prowess of Bhishma, further considered that others might think that they had been considered less important, so in his usual diplomatic way, he tried to adjust the situation in the above words. He emphasized that Bhismadeva was undoubtedly the greatest hero, but he was an old man, so everyone must especially think of his protection from all sides."

Text 12: Then Bhishma, the great valiant grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, the grandfather of the fighters, blew his conchshell very loudly, making a sound like the roar of a lion, giving Duryodhana joy.

Bhishma did not answer Duryodhana's words. Instead, he replied by blowing his conchshell, which meant, "Despite your heroic words, victory or defeat lies in the Lord's hands. I will do my duty and lay down my life for your sake, but this will not guarantee your victory." The conchshell, being a symbol of Visnu, indicated that Duryodhana would fall, because Kṛsna, the origin of Visnu, was present on the opposing side.

* For an explanation of apparent contradictions between the *rcrryas*, please refer to the Introduction. [The only problem with this footnote here is that you didn't mention that the rcrryas are the ones who are giving contradictory opinions. You simply mention that the word can be interpreted in two ways. Either you need to add in the mention of the rcrryas in the text, or you should move this footnote to a more appropriate place.]

Text 13: After that, the conchshells, drums, bugles, trumpets and horns were all suddenly sounded, and the combined sound was tumultuous.

Text 14: On the other side, both Lord Krsna and Arjuna, stationed on a great chariot drawn by white horses, sounded their transcendental conchshells.

Text 15: Lord Krsna blew His conchshell, called Pancajanya; Arjuna blew his, the Devadatta; and Bhima, the voracious eater and performer of herculean tasks, blew his terrific conchshell, called Paundra.

Arjuna's position was unique. Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had agreed to become his charioteer. Agni, the fire god, donated his chariot. Citaraatha, the chief of the Gandharvas, had given him his beautiful white horses. Indra, his father, had given him his conchshell and quiver.

Text 16-18: King Yudhisthira, the son of Kunti, blew his conchshell, the Ananta-vijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosa and Manipuspaka. That great archer the King of Kasi, the great fighter Sikhandi, Dhrstadyumna, Virata, the unconquerable Satyaki, Drupada, the sons of Draupadi, and others, O King, such as the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all blew their respective conchshells.

In these verses, only those whose conchshells are named survived the Battle of Kuruksetra. Satyaki, whose conchshell was not named, was the only other warrior to survive. Satyaki, therefore, is described as unconquerable.

Text 19: The blowing of these different conchshells became uproarious. Vibrating both in the sky and on the earth, it shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhrtarastra.

Text 20: At that time Arjuna, the son of Pandu, seated in the chariot bearing the flag marked with Hanuman, took up his bow and prepared to shoot his arrows. O King, after looking at the sons of Dhrtarastra drawn in military array, Arjuna then spoke to Lord Krsna these words.

Now the atmosphere was surcharged. All the world's most powerful *ksatriyas* were gathered to fight and were filled with the spirit of battle. This was different than the situation Srila Prabhupada criticized when in the 1960s, the United States drafted students, not *ksatriyas*, and forced them into battle. These men were fighting men. Fighting was in their blood. Just as devotees come to Vrndavana or Mayapura from all around the world, these *ksatriyas* came from all over the world to fight. They had faith that dying on the battlefield would gain them entrance into the heavenly planets.

The two armies were in formation. Conchshells blew. The warriors' hair was standing on end in anticipation. Arjuna was with Krsna on his chariot. Hanuman, decorating the chariot's flag, was ready to shout his warcries to help Bhima terrifying the enemy.

Earlier, the Mahabharata had described the meeting between Hanuman and Bhima. Once, while Arjuna was seeking celestial weapons, the remaining Pandavas wandered to Badarikasrama high in the Himalayas. Suddenly, the (Dia)Alakananda River carried to Draupadi a beautiful and fragrant thousand-petaled lotus flower. Draupadi was captivated by its beauty and scent. "Bhima, this lotus flower is so beautiful. I should offer it to Yudhisthira Maharaja. Could you get me a few more? We could take some back to our hermitage in (Dia)Kamyaka."

Bhima grabbed his club and charged up the hill where no mortals were permitted. As he ran, he bellowed, frightening elephants and lions, and he uprooted trees as he pushed them aside. Caring not for the ferocious beasts of the jungle, he climbed a steep mountain until his progress was blocked by a huge monkey who was lying across the path, "Why are you making so much noise and scaring all the animals. Just sit down and eat some fruit." "Move aside," ordered Bhima, for etiquette forbade him to step over the monkey. The monkey's reply? "I am too old to move. Jump over me." Bhima, becoming angry, repeated his order. But the monkey, again pleading the weakness of old age, requested Bhima to simply move his tail aside. Unlimitedly powerful Bhima grabbed the tail and tried but failed. Amazed, he respectfully inquired as to the monkey's identity and was overjoyed to learn that he had met his brother Hanuman, for both Bhima and Hanuman were sons of (Dia)Vayu. Hanuman first embraced Bhima and showed him the huge form by which he leaped to (Dia)Lanka. He then offered Bhima the following blessings. "I shall also remain present on the flag of your brother Arjuna. When you roar like a lion on the battlefield, my voice will join with yours to strike terror in the hearts of your enemies. You will be victorious and will regain your kingdom."

Arjuna, on his chariot driven by Krsna which was marked with the flag of Hanuman, picked up his bow. The horses and elephants moved nervously. The opening arrows of the long-awaited battle were now to be released. Now Arjuna, just on the brink of battle, said:

Texts 21-2: O infallible one, please draw my chariot between the two armies so that I may see those present here, who desire to fight, and with whom I must contend in this great trial of arms.

This is Kṛṣṇa's first appearance in the *Bhagavad-gīta*. What is He doing? He is driving Arjuna's chariot and accepting his orders. This is glorious: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Controller, is taking orders from His devotee as if He is a menial servant.

Srīla Prabhupada writes in his purport: "Although Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, out of His causeless mercy He was engaged in the service of His friend. He never fails in His affection for His devotees, and thus He is addressed herein as infallible. . . . The relationship between the Lord and His servitor is very sweet and transcendental. The servitor is always ready to render service to the Lord, and, similarly, the Lord is always seeking an opportunity to render some service to the devotee." Of all Kṛṣṇa's qualities, His *bhakta-vatsala* quality is most endearing.

In text 20, Arjuna has already picked up his bow and is ready to fight. Both armies are waiting. Arjuna has previously vowed to kill anyone who even suggests that he put down his bow. Now, in text 21-2, Arjuna suddenly says: "O infallible one, please draw my chariot between the two armies so that I may see those present here, who desire to fight, and with whom I must contend in this great trial of arms." Arjuna's request hints at the fact that he is already indecisive about participating in the battle.

Text 23: Let me see those who have come here to fight, wishing to please the evil-minded son of Dhṛtarāstra.

Text 24: Sanjaya said: O descendant of Bharata, having thus been addressed by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa drew up the fine chariot in the midst of the armies of both parties.

Text 25: In the presence of Bhīṣma, Drona and all the other chieftains of the world, the Lord said, Just behold, Partha, all the Kurus assembled here.

Literally hundreds of millions of warriors were in the Kuru army, yet Kṛṣṇa drove Arjuna's chariot directly before Bhīṣma and Drona (*bhīṣma-drona-pramukhataḥ*). In this way, Kṛṣṇa forces Arjuna to see that both his grandfather and his *guru* were determined to oppose him in battle and to draw out Arjuna's familial attachment and thus reveal his weakness of heart. Kṛṣṇa does this so that He can speak the *Bhagavad-gīta*. Sanjaya describes this scene to Dhṛtarāstra, and then goes on to name the other family members Arjuna sees before him. [Copy editor: check tense to make sure it is consistent.]

[I like the following two sentences, but I don't see how they fit-BBd]Kṛṣṇa was teasing Arjuna, "It is only Kurus—on both sides—who are assembled. Will you now wish not to fight?" In this way, before Arjuna had said a word, Kṛṣṇa affirmed what was on his mind.

Text 26 : There Arjuna could see, within the midst of the armies of both parties, his fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and also his fathers- in-law and well-wishers.

Srīla Prabhupada provides the names of those whom Arjuna saw: "On the battlefield Arjuna could see all kinds of relatives. He could see persons like Bhūriśrava, who were his father's contemporaries, grandfathers Bhīṣma and Somadatta, teachers like Dronacārya and Kṛpacārya, maternal uncles like Salya and Sakuni, brothers like Duryodhana, sons like Lakṣmaṇa, friends like Asvatthama, well-wishers like Kṛtavarma, etc. He could see also the armies which contained many of his friends."

Text 27: When the son of Kuntī, Arjuna, saw all these different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion and spoke thus.

In Sanskrit, there are two words to denote compassion. One is *daya*, which means compassion for all, and the second is *Kṛpā*, which means compassion for known people. *Kṛpā* is used in this verse.

By Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, Arjuna has come face to face with Bhīṣma and Drona. Thus we can understand that it is by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement that Arjuna, on the verge of fighting with and perhaps even killing his respected grandfather, Bhīṣma, and his military *guru*, Drona, is feeling compassion and reverential affection just prior to the battle of Kurukṣetra.

Beginning with verse 28, Arjuna will describe his reasons not to fight and Kṛṣṇa will reject them all. Arjuna has five reasons not to fight:

1. Compassion: Arjuna has deep compassion for those he is about to kill. He doesn't want to kill his loved ones.
2. Enjoyment: this is a less noble reason. Arjuna knows it will be impossible for him to enjoy the kingdom if it is won at the cost of the lives of his family members.
3. Destruction of family: with the death of so many great *ksatriyas*, irreligion will flourish and the women would be unprotected and corrupted by unscrupulous men. Therefore, society would be overrun by unwanted progeny. The traditional Vedic rituals would no longer be performed because no one would be qualified to perform them and thus hell would await both the family and the destroyer of the family.
4. Fear of sinful reactions: Arjuna thinks that the enjoyment of royal happiness is not worth the suffering he would have to undergo as sinful reaction for destroying the family and killing his superiors.

5. Indecision: Arjuna is not convinced which is better, conquering his enemies or being conquered by them. The kingdom is flourishing under Duryodhana's rule, so why should they fight only to take over the kingdom for themselves? He wonders whether millions of people should die just to enthrone him and his family.

Arjuna is softhearted, compassionate, and logical. He knows *sastra*, is cultured, and intelligent. Because of these qualities, his heart broke when he saw his friends and relatives ready to fight.

Text 28: My dear Krsna, seeing my friends and relatives present before me in such a fighting spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up.

Although Duryodhana was prepared to kill in order to keep the kingdom, should a softhearted, compassionate devotee like Arjuna act so foolishly? Is gaining a kingdom, which is, after all, a temporary gain, worth committing unlimited sin? Srila Prabhupada comments that Arjuna's symptoms "are due to softheartedness resulting from his being a great devotee of the Lord." (Bg. 1.45, purport)

Text 29: My whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow Gandiva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning.

Text 30: I am now unable to stand here any longer. I am forgetting myself, and my mind is reeling. I see only causes of misfortune, O Krsna, killer of the Kesi demon.

The words *nimittani* and *viparitani* are significant. Srila Prabhupada translates *nimittani* as "the causes" and *viparitani* as "just the opposite." Arjuna understands that the exact event he is trying to avoid will nevertheless happen. He cannot see any personal benefit coming from the battle. In his purport to verse 30, Srila Prabhupada summarizes the faults in Arjuna's reasoning as the faults in the reasoning of every conditioned soul:

"Arjuna envisioned only painful reverses in the battlefield—he would not be happy even by gaining victory over the foe. . . . When a man sees only frustration in his expectations, he thinks, 'Why am I here?' Everyone is interested in himself and his own welfare. No one is interested in the Supreme Self. Arjuna is showing ignorance of his real self interest by Krsna's will. One's real self interest lies in Visnu, or Krsna. The conditioned soul forgets this, and therefore suffers material pains. Arjuna thought that his victory in the battle would only be a cause of lamentation for him."

Arjuna is considering only how the battle will effect him and he sees only the opposite of what he desires. In this way, he loses all will to fight.

Arjuna thinks, "I am empowered by Krsna. I will survive and my enemies will die. What irony. Their death will bring them to the heavenly planets, but I will remain on earth and accrue the reactions to unlimited sins for all my killing. What good can come from it? I won't even go to the heavenly planets like those whom I kill!"

One may think that although Arjuna may not go to heaven, at least he will win the kingdom, but Arjuna does not agree that a kingdom is worth the sinful reaction he will acquire. Therefore, he says:

Text 31: I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Krsna, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom, or happiness.

Verses 31-5 describe Arjuna's second reason not to fight. He thinks: "I will win the battle, but I will suffer greatly. Those I kill will be elevated to the sun planet, but I will be left lamenting my participation in the battle."

Arjuna continues to explain how he cannot enjoy this intolerable situation:

Text 32-5: O Govinda, of what avail to us are a kingdom, happiness or even life itself when all those for whom we may desire them are now arrayed on this battlefield? O Madhusudana, when teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives are ready to give up their lives and properties and are standing before me, why should I wish to kill them, even though they might otherwise kill me? O maintainer of all living entities, I am not prepared to fight with them even in exchange for the three worlds, let alone this earth. What pleasure will we derive from killing the sons of Dhrtarastra?

Arjuna calls Krsna Janardana, the maintainer of all living entities. He wonders how Krsna, the maintainer of everyone, could be desiring everyone's death. The word *Janardana* has another meaning. *Jana* means "person" and *ardana* means "killer." Arjuna calls Krsna "Janardana" to suggest that because Krsna plans to kill everyone on the battlefield, and since He is the ultimate killer of everyone, so Krsna should fight in the battle instead of himself. In this way, Arjuna thinks he can become free from sinful reaction.

Arjuna is detached from the material gain he could acquire by fighting. He does not want the kingdom in order to enjoy unlimited power and wealth. Rather, he is interested in religious principles. In effect, he is saying, "O Govinda, I am not prepared to fight, even if these people are warlike. Instead of thinking of wealth and kingdom, let me think of You."

The Pandavas, of course, won the battle and took the throne, yet they remained in power for only thirty-seven years. Arjuna explains that such brief, kingly pleasures would not be worth the reaction of suffering in hell for millions of

years due to killing their *guru*, grandfathers, friends, cousins, and other relatives. Arjuna concludes that planning for enjoyment while overlooking future suffering is foolish. He continues this reasoning in verse 36.

Text 36: Sin will overcome us if we slay such aggressors. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill the sons of Dhrtarastra and our friends. What should we gain, O Krsna, husband of the goddess of fortune. How could we be happy by killing our own kinsmen?"

Arjuna calls Krsna "Madhava," the husband of the goddess of fortune. By obeying Krsna's desire he expects good fortune, but he believes that what Krsna is asking of him will bring only misfortune.

Arjuna says: "Sin will overcome us if we slay such aggressors." Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport that according to Vedic injunction, no sin occurs if one kills an aggressor. He then lists six types of aggressors: 1. a poison giver, 2. an arsonist, 3. one who attacks with deadly weapons, 4. a thief, 5. one who occupies another's land, and 6. one who kidnaps another's wife.

The Pandavas suffered each of these forms of aggression at the hands of the Kauravas. Duryodhana fed Bhima a poison cake. He arranged for a house of *lac* to be built for the Pandavas and conspired to have it set ablaze while they were asleep. Sakuni cheated in the dice game and plundered all their wealth. The Kauravas then occupied the Pandavas' land. Finally, they stole Draupadi by foul means, once during the dice game and once when Jayadratha attempted to kidnap her. *Artha-sastra* allows that such aggressors be killed. Why, then, does Arjuna say, "Sin will overcome us by killing them"?

Arjuna is speaking from the level of *dharma-sastra*, not *artha-sastra*. *Dharma-sastra* propounds a higher principle: killing one's friends and relatives is never permitted.

Text 37-8: O Janardana, although these men, their hearts overtaken by greed, see no fault in killing one's family and quarreling with friends, why should we, who can see the crime in destroying a family, engage in these acts of sin?

Arjuna is saying, "They are greedy. Let them fight, if they want. We know better. We are not interested in such foolishness. We should not fight."

Arjuna then describes the horrors that occur when two powerful dynasties fight and destroy each other. (This is Arjuna's third reason not to fight.)

Srila Prabhupada once explained that only a *maha-bhagavata* could become king of the world. Pandu's sons were so powerful that each of them were capable of ruling the world. Therefore, Krsna often addresses Arjuna as "Partha" or "Kaunteya" to remind him of his great heritage. How could he *not* fight? How could he neglect his duty as a *ksatriya*?

The *ksatriya* spirit engenders family pride and spirit. *Ksatriyas* upheld the pious family traditions and passed them on to future generations. What would happen if the *ksatriyas* were killed and the family traditions destroyed? The entire society, which depended on the authority of Vedic kings, would fall into disarray. No sacrifices would be performed for the forefathers and future generations. Young men would become unrestrained, frivolous, and impure. Vanquishing a powerful royal dynasty would in fact make dim the future of the entire world and bring unlimited misfortune. Arjuna understood all this.

Text 39: With the destruction of dynasty, the eternal family tradition is vanquished, and thus the rest of the family becomes involved in irreligion.

Arjuna fears that if he were to engage in the irreligious killing of his grandfather and *guru*, then the women of the family would think that since the men were irreligious, they could be also.

Text 40: When irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krsna, the women of the family become polluted, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vrsni, comes unwanted progeny.

Krsna called Arjuna "Partha" to remind him of his *ksatriya* heritage. In this verse, Arjuna calls Krsna "Varsneya," descendant of Vrsni, because he wants Krsna to think how He would feel if the Vrsni dynasty was on the verge of destruction.

Text 41: An increase of unwanted population certainly causes hellish life both for the family and for those who destroy the family tradition. The ancestors of such corrupt families fall down, because the performances for offering them food and water are entirely stopped.

One can further support Arjuna's argument by saying, "Even Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu traveled to Gaya to offer the *sraddha* ceremony for His departed father. Are such sacrifices unimportant? Ancestors depend on these ceremonies to free them from suffering. If the offerings to the forefathers are stopped, generations of family members will remain suffering, unable to become free from hell." Again Arjuna was primarily considering his own sinful reaction by becoming party to stopping these offerings.

Srila Prabhupada, in his purport, answers Arjuna's doubt:

[layout: indent this quote]

devarsi-bhutapta-nrnam pitrnam
na kinkaro nayam rni ca rajan
sarvatmana yah saranam saranyam
gato mukundam parihrtya kartam

"Anyone who has taken shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, the giver of liberation, giving up all kinds of obligation, and has taken to the path in all seriousness, owes neither duties nor obligations to the demigods, sages, general living entities, family members, human-kind or forefathers." Such obligations are automatically fulfilled by performance of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Text 42: By the evil deeds of those who destroy the family tradition and thus give rise to unwanted children, all kinds of community projects and family welfare activities are devastated.

Text 43: O Krsna, maintainer of the people, I have heard by disciplic succession that those who destroy the family traditions dwell always in hell.

Text 44: Alas, how strange it is that we are preparing to commit greatly sinful acts. Driven by the desire to enjoy royal happiness, we are intent on killing our own kinsmen.

Aho bata signifies emphasis on the next point to be made. Arjuna finds the situation incredulous. He continues in text 45:

Text 45: Better for me if the sons of Dhrtarastra, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield.

If Arjuna does not fight, he will be bereft of his status in life and left to beg for his sustenance. It is unthinkable, however, for a *ksatriya* to live by begging.

After Bhima had met Hanuman, he continued seeking the fragrant thousand-petaled lotus to present to Daupadi. Finally, he arrived at a lake filled with those lotuses and entered the water. This was Kuvera's lake and Bhima did not have permission to enter. Hundreds of Yaksas and Raksasas appeared and challenged Bhima, "What are you doing here! You are forbidden from entering this lake. Go and ask Kuvera for his permission. If he allows you, you may pick as many flowers as you like. If you try to pick these flowers without his permission, Kuvera's army will destroy you!"

Bhima jumped from the water yelling, "I am a *ksatriya*! *Ksatriyas* don't beg favors from anyone! The Yaksas and Raksasas then attacked Bhima and Bhima destroyed them all. For a *ksatriya*, begging is unthinkable. Both his culture and his psychology do not allow it.

Therefore, Arjuna says that it is better for him to be killed unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield than either to incur unlimited sins by fighting or to be forced to live a beggar's life.

Text 46: Sanjaya said: Arjuna, having thus spoken on the battlefield, cast aside his bow and arrows and sat down on the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with grief.

Arjuna had vowed to kill anyone who even suggested that he put down his bow. An incident later in the battle tested this vow:

Once during the battle, Karna defeated and severely injured Yudhisthira. Karna then taunted Yudhisthira: "You are not even a *ksatriya*! You should learn how to fight! See how easily I have defeated you! I'm not even going to bother to kill you."

When Arjuna heard of Yudhisthira's injury, he immediately left the battlefield and went to Yudhisthira's tent. Upon hearing that Arjuna had left the battlefield, Yudhisthira concluded that Arjuna must have killed Karna for his insult. "Now my honor has been avenged and Arjuna is coming to inform me of this." But it wasn't true. Arjuna had left the battlefield only out of concern for Yudhisthira's injury.

As soon as Yudhisthira saw Arjuna, he asked, "Have you killed Karna and avenged me?"

Arjuna replied, "No, I did not kill Karna. I came only to see how badly you were hurt."

Yudhisthira was furious! He said, "You have left the battlefield without even killing Karna! You fool! How could you have done this? It is better that you give up your Gandiva bow!"

Upon hearing his words, Arjuna was enraged. "How dare Yudhisthira suggest that I give up my Gandiva bow, which is more dear to me than my life. I have vowed to kill anyone . . ." Arjuna drew out his sword to slay his brother. Krsna, who was watching, immediately caught Arjuna's arm, took him aside, and said, "All right, you have to kill Yudhisthira. It is your vow, but kill him by insulting him. For a *ksatriya*, an insult is worse than death."

As Yudhisthira sat there regretting his words to Arjuna, Arjuna angrily approached him and said, "You say I am a coward because I left the battlefield without killing Karna, but look what you have done. You looked on as our wife Draupadi was insulted. I would have alone killed the entire Kaurava army, but you would not allow me. You are not a

man. You are not a king!" Arjuna continued to insult Yudhisthira, but afterwards went to Yudhisthira, touched his feet, and begged forgiveness for his harsh words.

Arjuna did not take this vow in vain; therefore it is significant that he himself cast aside his bow and sat down on the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with grief. Arjuna, the great son of Pandu and Indra—we can only imagine how disturbed such a great soul must have been about the disaster awaiting him and the entire world.

CHAPTER TWO **CONTENTS OF THE GITA SUMMARIZED**

While the first chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* sets the scene, the second chapter provides a table of contents. Therefore, this chapter contains in brief all the topics that will be discussed throughout the *Bhagavad-gita*. Again, this chapter begins with Sanjaya's words.

[There are I believe two places within this chapter where an acarya is quoted extensively enough to warrant his name being mentioned. BJD. A second note. At some point, perhaps in the introduction or preface, we should describe how we expect the reader to read this book. For example, should he have Prabhupada's gita opened in front of him? How about the Sanskrit verses, for instance? BJD]

Text 1: Sanjaya said: Seeing Arjuna full of compassion, his mind depressed, his eyes full of tears, Madhusudana, Krsna, spoke the following words.

By calling Krsna "Madhusudana," Sanjaya informs Dhrtarastra that Arjuna's doubts will now be killed by the killer of the Madhu demon. As Srila Prabhupada explains, "The word Madhusudana is significant in this verse. Lord Krsna killed the demon Madhu and now Arjuna wanted Krsna to kill the demon of misunderstanding that had overtaken him in the discharge of his duty."

Dhrtarastra was happy to hear that Arjuna had dropped his bow and was overcome with grief. Now his sons could be victorious. Sanjaya's words, however, dispel Dhrtarastra's happiness.

Text 2: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life. They lead not to higher planets but to infamy.

Krsna tells Arjuna that his many good arguments are *anarya-justam*, not befitting an Aryan. They are *asvargyam*, not for those desiring to go to Svargaloka, and *akirti-karam*, bringing only infamy. In other words, Arjuna will become infamous in the present and then not be awarded residence in the higher planets at death. Therefore, Krsna does not approve of Arjuna's compassion.

Text 3: O son of Prtha, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O chastiser of the enemy.

Krsna first uses the word *klaibyam*, impotence or that arising out of weakness. *Ksatriyas* are by nature proud and virile. By accusing Arjuna of impotence and weakness, Krsna is slapping him in the face. Simultaneously, Krsna reminds Arjuna of his great heritage by addressing him as "Partha." Arjuna is the son of Lord Indra, a great warrior and the king of the heavenly planets. Krsna wants to know how someone from such a high birth could act more like a *ksatriya-bandhu*, simply a member of a *ksatriya* family, than an actual *ksatriya*. Srila Prabhupada says, "If the son of a *ksatriya* declines to fight, he is a *ksatriya* in name only."

Krsna has not accepted Arjuna's many arguments. *Ksudram* means low-class and petty. Krsna directs this insult at Arjuna to challenge and stir his *ksatriya* blood. Arjuna responds in the next verse and tries to disprove Krsna's analysis.

Text 4: Arjuna said: O killer of enemies, O killer of Madhu, how can I counterattack with arrows in battle men like Bhishma and Drona, who are worthy of my worship?

Arjuna wants Krsna to know that his decision not to fight is due to big-heartedness, not weak-heartedness. As Srila Prabhupada mentions, offering even a verbal argument to one's superiors transgresses Vedic etiquette, what to speak of killing them. By calling Krsna Madhusudana and Arisudana, Arjuna calls attention to the fact that Krsna is the killer of his *enemies*, not of his *guru* and grandfather. Arjuna would prefer to offer flowers at the feet of Drona and Bhishma, not arrows.

Arjuna then answers Krsna's next question: "Even if you do not want the kingdom, how will you live?"

Text 5: It would be better to live in this world by begging than to live at the cost of the lives of great souls who are my teachers. Even though desiring worldly gain, they are superiors. If they are killed, everything we enjoy will be tainted with blood.

Again, *ksatriyas* do not beg, they rule. Without a kingdom, however, Arjuna would have nothing to rule. Arjuna is well aware of this, but he would prefer the embarrassment of begging than the sinful reaction of killing his worshipable

superiors. By this logic, he believes that although his present life will be difficult, his future life will not be stained with the sin of killing his *gurus*.

Arjuna justifies his position strongly, and he continues in the next verse to give his fifth and final reason not to fight.

Text 6: Nor do we know which is better-conquering them or being conquered by them. If we killed the sons of Dhrtarastra, we should not care to live. Yet they are now standing before us on the battlefield.

Arjuna does not know what to do. If he does not fight, he will have to beg. If he does fight, he will have killed almost all his friends and relatives. If he wins, he will lose and if he loses, he will also lose. Therefore, he is confused about his duty. Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport, however, that Arjuna has the qualities necessary to receive knowledge: his mind and senses are controlled, and he is detached, faithful, and tolerant.

Perplexed, yet eager for enlightenment, Arjuna recites the following verse: **[I just noticed that some verses are referred to by numerals and some spelled out. The proofreader should watch for consistency.]**

Text 7: Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.

Arjuna's reasons not to fight were all based on compassion, logic, and *sastra*, yet the result of all his reasoning has only been mental confusion. Therefore, Arjuna, to remove his confusion, surrenders to his *guru*, Sri Krsna. Srila Prabhupada explains that, on our own, we will always become confused, despite our best endeavors to solve our own problems. This confusion is not only Arjuna's dilemma; it is every living entity's situation. Srila Prabhupada states:

By nature's own way the complete system of material activities is a source of perplexity for everyone. In every step there is perplexity, and therefore it behooves one to approach a bona fide spiritual master who can give one proper guidance for executing the purpose of life. All Vedic literature advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life, which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone. Similarly, the world situation is such that perplexities of life automatically appear, without our wanting such confusion. No one wants fire, and yet it takes place, and we become perplexed. The Vedic wisdom therefore advises that in order to solve the perplexities of life and to understand the science of the solution, one must approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession. A person with a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything. One should not, therefore, remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master. This is the purport of this verse.

Because Arjuna surrenders to Krsna in text 7, we naturally expect Krsna to begin His instructions in text 8, but He doesn't. He has not yet accepted Arjuna as His student.

When Arjuna says, "I am perplexed, confused, and I want to surrender to You," the *acaryas* **[Brajabihri Prabhu: check which *acarya* said this and name him. My notes don't say. Bjd]** quote Krsna's reply as follows: "You used so much logic and *sastra* to support your view. If I speak, you will defeat Me with your scholarship. Furthermore, if you do need a *guru*, go see Vyasadeva. I am your friend! Why surrender to Me? Besides, you don't really need a *guru*. All you need is to do your duty and fight. That will solve all your problems. Fight and take your kingdom! Be successful!" Krsna is thus testing Arjuna's determination with this initial reply. Arjuna further expresses his desire to surrender to Krsna in the next verse.

Text 8: I can find no means to drive away this grief which is drying up my senses. I will no be able to dispel it even if I win a prosperous, unrivaled kingdom on earth with sovereignty like the demigods in heaven."

Again, Arjuna asks Krsna to enlighten him and to dispel his distress. He knows he will not be satisfied with a prosperous kingdom or heavenly pleasures.

Text 9: Sanjaya said: Having spoken thus, Arjuna, chastiser of enemies, told Krsna, "Govinda, I shall not fight," and fell silent.

By calling Krsna "Hrsikesa," the master of the senses, Arjuna indicates: "For now, I am not fighting, but You are the master of my senses. You want me to fight and I will ultimately fight. I will engage my senses in Your service. But that is later, not now."

Srila Prabhupada explains the significance of the word *parantapa*: "Dhrtarastra must have been very glad to understand that Arjuna was not going to fight and was instead leaving the battlefield for the begging profession. But Sanjaya disappointed him again in relating that Arjuna was competent to kill his enemies (*parantapa*). Although Arjuna was overwhelmed, for the time being, with false grief due to family affection, he surrendered unto Krsna." Sanjaya next relates to Dhrtarastra Krsna's reaction to Arjuna's words.

Text 10: O descendant of Bharata, at that time Krsna, smiling in the midst of both the armies, spoke the following words to the grief-stricken Arjuna.

Prahasan literally means, "smiling." Srila Prabhupada explains that Krsna is smiling because His friend has become a disciple. Krsna's smiling gradually changes to a more grave expression. He will now act as Arjuna's spiritual master, and the talks between spiritual master and disciple are serious. Therefore, Krsna first smiles. This is called a *rasa-sandhi*, or a meeting of two different *rasas*. Friendship here gives way to parental affection, which is similar to the relationship between *guru* and disciple.

Assuming the role of *guru*, Krsna became grave because He was teaching not only Arjuna, but all of humanity. Srila Prabhupada explains: "It appears that the talk between the master and the disciple was openly exchanged in the presence of both armies so that all were benefited. The *Bhagavad-gita* is not intended for any particular persons, society, or community, but for all people in all times."

Text 11: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.

Having now accepted Arjuna's surrender, Krsna immediately assumes the role of teacher and chastises His student. He tells Arjuna that although he is speaking with the authority of a wise man, he is lamenting for that which no wise man would lament. In essence, He is calling Arjuna a fool. Although Arjuna's words are true according to *dharma* and *raja-niti* (statesmanship), they do not take into consideration the true, basic standard of knowledge: the difference between body and soul.

It is also interesting to note that Arjuna's education, like ours, begins with the first letter in the alphabet, the letter "A" in *asocyan*.

This verse serves as a prelude to text 12, which will further establish spiritual truth by refuting the bodily concept of life.

Text 12: Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.

Krsna says, "In the past I was Krsna, in the present I am Krsna, and in the future I will be Krsna. In the past you were Arjuna, in the present you are Arjuna, and in the future you will be Arjuna. All these kings assembled here to fight were all individuals in the past, are individuals in the present, and will continue to be individuals in the future. In other words, we are all eternally spiritual individuals.

In this verse, Krsna immediately defeats the Mayavada concept of oneness between the Supreme and the living entities by identifying Himself as an individual, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He also identifies Arjuna and all the assembled kings as eternal individuals. He does not say that in the future Arjuna and the kings would become one with Him, nor does he say that He was formless in the past, that He has assumed a form now, and that in the future He will again become formless. Rather, He states His point clearly: "I was Krsna, I am Krsna, and I will always be Krsna." Similarly, Krsna asserts Arjuna's eternal individuality. It is not that Arjuna was merged into Krsna in the past, that he has now assumed a bodily form due to illusion, but in the future, will again be merged into Krsna. As Srila Prabhupada mentions, Mayavadis may argue that "the plurality mentioned in this verse is conventional and that it refers to the body." But previous to this verse such a bodily conception is already condemned. After condemning the bodily conception of the living entities, how was it possible for Krsna to place a conventional proposition on the body again?" On the contrary, Krsna clearly stresses spiritual individuality.

This basic understanding of the difference of the individual soul and his temporary body is further stressed in the next verse.

Text 13: As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.

Arjuna is afraid to kill Bhishma and Drona. Therefore, Krsna assures Arjuna that Bhishma and Drona are both souls and cannot die. Death is simply a change of body. Everyone must endure it. Bhishma passed through the stages of boyhood (*kaumaram*), and then youth (*yauvanam*), and now he is in old man (*jara*). He had already changed bodies many times. A wise man is not bewildered by these bodily changes. Neither does he lament because such lamentation is based on illusion.

The story of Maharaja Yayati provides a graphic example. After growing old, Maharaja Yayati traded his old age for his son's youth. Upon obtaining a youthful body, no one lamented that the king had relinquished his old body. Instead, everyone was happy. Here, Krsna tells Arjuna, "Why lament if Bhishma and Drona take on new, young bodies? Do not be bewildered. *Dhiras tatra na muhyati*. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change."

According to both Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Baladeva Vidyabhusana, Arjuna agrees with Krsna that Bhishma and Drona would be better off in younger bodies, but his relationship with them is in their present bodies. He feels he will be miserable in their absence.

Krsna replies to Arjuna's doubt in Verse 14:

Text 14: O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.

Krsna instructs Arjuna not to lament, but to tolerate. Arjuna should not forsake his duty because of the temporary pains and pleasures arising from illusion.

Text 15: O best among men [Arjuna], the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress and who is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.

Krsna once more instructs Arjuna to tolerate, to perform his duty, and to attain liberation. By performing our prescribed duties (*karma*) we obtain knowledge (*jnana*), which is a prerequisite for liberation.

Text 16: Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent [the material body] there is no endurance and of the eternal [the soul] there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both.

Krsna again rebukes Arjuna. Seers of the truth recognize the difference between the body and the soul. Indirectly, he tells Arjuna that despite his previous scholarly words, he is not understanding things as they are. Krsna clarifies the truth by offering two propositions in this verse: 1. *nasato vidyate bhavo*, and 2. *nabhavo vidyate satah*. First, the material body and all material situations are temporary. They have no actual existence. Second, only those things that are *sat*, eternal, truly exist.

Text 17: That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.

This verse refers to Krsna's second point (*nabhavo vidyate satah*) from the above verse. Krsna here explains the ABC's of the soul-body duality. After His brief explanation here, He will not mention this most basic point again in the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Krsna explains His first point (*nasato vidyate bhavo*) in Text 18.

Text 18: The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end; therefore, fight, O descendant of Bharata.

This verse reverses Arjuna's argument that not participating in the fight will save his family members from harm. Everyone's body must perish; no material body has true existence. Fearing the death of others is ignorance. The soul—the real person within the body—is indestructible. Srila Prabhupada writes: "So from both viewpoints there is no cause of lamentation, because the living entity as he is cannot be killed nor can the material body be saved for any length of time or permanently protected."

Text 19: Neither he who thinks the living entity the slayer nor he who thinks it slain is in knowledge, for the self slays not nor is slain.

Let us examine the grammar of the sentence, "Arjuna does not want to slay others." In this sentence, "Arjuna" is the subject, "does not want to slay" is the predicate, and "others" is the object. If Arjuna considers himself, the subject of the sentence, as the slayer, or thinks "others" to be the object of the sentence and thus to be slain, he is in ignorance "for the self slays not nor is slain." No one can truly kill or be killed. Krsna elaborates on this point in the next verse.

Text 20: For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.

Krsna clearly delineates the eternality of the soul. *Na jayate mriyate*: the soul is not born and it never dies. The soul is *aja*, not born in the past, present, or future, and *sasvatah*, can never die. Again, Arjuna's fear of killing his *guru* is defeated. In this way, Krsna continues to dismantle Arjuna's arguments against fighting.

Text 21: O Partha, how can a person who knows that the soul is indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable kill anyone or cause anyone to kill?

Krsna here offers Arjuna *jnana*, knowledge. With this knowledge he can engage in warfare, yet incur no sinful reaction. Srila Prabhupada describes why Arjuna should fight in his purport:

Although the justice of the peace awards capital punishment to a person condemned for murder, the justice of the peace cannot be blamed, because he orders violence to another person according to the codes of justice. Similarly, when Krsna orders fighting, it must be concluded that violence is for the supreme justice, and thus Arjuna should follow the instruction, knowing well that such violence, committed in the act of fighting for Krsna, is not violence at all because, at any rate, the man, or rather the soul, cannot be killed; so for the administration of justice, so-called violence is permitted.

Arjuna may think, "The soul is eternal. I therefore cannot kill anyone. Yet I will cause Bhishma and Drona to change their bodies. Let me not fight and I will save them from the pain of being forced to change bodies." Krsna explains to Arjuna the fault of this logic in the next verse.

Text 22: As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.

The change of body is inevitable. Arjuna's refusal to fight will not protect Bhishma, Drona, or anyone else on the battlefield from having to change their bodies. Thus Arjuna's reasoning is again defeated by Krsna.

Text 23: The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind.

Arjuna is a great *ksatriya* and he has an arsenal of powerful weapons. Although he has a hard-tempered sword, that sword cannot cut the soul. Although he possesses a fire weapon, the soul cannot be burned by fire. Although he has a water weapon, he cannot inundate the soul, and neither can his wind weapon wither it.

Text 24: This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same.

Text 25: It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body.

These *slokas* reiterate a principle Krsna has already established. Generally, such repetition in Sanskrit literature is considered improper, but Krsna does so to remove all doubts about the soul's eternity, because upon this premise, the rest of the *Bhagavad-gita* is based. Krsna now begins offering another argument to convince Arjuna to participate in the battle. Verse 26 starts with the words *atha ca*, "if however," which indicates that Krsna will now begin to discuss a new topic.

Text 26: If, however, you think that the soul [or the symptoms of life] is always born and dies forever, you still have no reason to lament, O mighty-armed.

Krsna first explained the soul's eternity. Now He argues on the basis of principles presented in other philosophies, namely the atheists and Buddhists. Krsna thus checkmates Arjuna.

If all the assembled warriors are in fact eternal souls, no one will die on the battlefield and Arjuna should therefore do his duty and fight. If no soul exists and life is simply the result of a chemical combination, then again Arjuna should do his duty and fight. If Arjuna accepts this argument, then he should not be afraid to fight. After all, how can he be the killer of a combination of chemicals? Therefore, whether the soul exists or not, Arjuna should not lament, but he should fight.

Text 27: One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament.

Arjuna is wrong if he thinks he will stop the Kauravas' death by not fighting. When the eternal soul contacts a temporary material body, that is known as birth. When the eternal soul loses contact with that body, death results. This point is again explained:

Text 28: All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?

Krsna has just explained that Arjuna should fight whether he believes that an eternal soul possesses a material body or that only a body with no soul exists. This verse explains that whether we believe in the soul or not, the material body was unmanifested previously, is now manifest for some time, and will later again become unmanifested. The body must be annihilated. What, therefore, is the use of lamentation? Arjuna should fight, regardless of whether or not he accepts the knowledge of the soul.

This *jnana* which describes the difference between body and soul continues until Text 30. Verse 29 is the "amazing" verse.

Text 29: Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all.

Ascarya-vat means "amazing." *Pasyati* means "sees." *Vadati* means "describes." *Srnoti* means "hears." The first line of this verse says *ascarya-vat pasyati*, "Some people look at the soul as amazing." The second line describes *ascarya-vad vadati*, "Some people speak about the soul as amazing," and the third line says *ascarya-vac . . . srnoti*, "Some hear about and think of the soul as amazing."

Each of these lines can be explained in three different ways because *ascarya-vat*, amazing, can refer to either the subject, the object, or the verb. In the first line of the verse, "Some people look on the soul as amazing," *ascarya-vat* is taken to modify the soul, which is the object of the sentence.

Or, *ascarya-vat* can modify "people," the subject of the sentence: "Some people, who are amazing, look upon the soul."

If we take *ascarya-vat* to modify the verb, "look," the sentence translates, "Some people look, amazingly, at the soul."

Depending on how one translates this "amazing" verse, the people who see the soul are amazing, the soul is amazing, and the power to see the soul is amazing.

The second line, "Some people describe the soul as amazing," can also be translated in three ways with *vadati*, "describing," replacing seeing. Similarly, the third line can be translated in three different ways by using the word *srnoti*.

Text 30 concludes these verses which have described *jnana*.

Text 30: O descendant of Bharata, he who dwells in the body can never be slain. Therefore you need not grieve for any living being.

As the best of communicators, Krsna has concluded this part of His instruction with a one-verse summary describing the soul's eternity. Thus Krsna has destroyed Arjuna's illusion with knowledge. Proper knowledge leads to proper action. This section directly attacks Arjuna's desire to neglect his duty out of a compassion based on ignorance for his family members.

In the next group of verses (31-38), Krsna continues His attempt to convince Arjuna to fight. The motivation He stresses here, however, is not based on knowledge, but on fruitive enjoyment and religious duty. In this way, Krsna attacks another of Arjuna's reasons—that he will not be able to properly enjoy himself if he engages in the battle.

Therefore, in texts 31-33, Krsna presents Arjuna with the argument that dutiful fighting, not escaping from the battlefield, will lead to enjoyment.

Text 31: 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.

Krsna is quoting from *dharma-sastra*. In the previous section, Krsna used arguments based on *jnana* to induce Arjuna to fight. Now Krsna will use less elevated principles, those of *dharma*, which promise a material reward.

Fighting for a *ksatriya* is equivalent to a *brahmana's* performance of fire sacrifices. By performing these duties, neither the *ksatriya* nor the *brahmana* incur sinful reactions. Therefore, Krsna argues that Arjuna will not suffer sinful reactions in fighting the battle of Kuruksetra.

Text 32: O Partha, happy are the ksatriyas to whom such fighting opportunities come unsought, opening for them the doors of the heavenly planets.

The heavenly planets are the goal for those following the *karma-kanda* processes. Since Arjuna is afraid for his relatives' welfare, Krsna tells him that he can send them to the heavenly planets by defeating them in battle. Arjuna, too, will gain everything by fighting. If he doesn't fight, he will lose all.

Text 33: If however, you do not perform your religious duty of fighting, then you will certainly incur sins for neglecting your duties and thus lose your reputation as a fighter.

This verse specifically defeats Arjuna's argument that he will incur sins by fighting. Rather, the opposite is true.

From texts 33-37, Krsna describes additional losses Arjuna will suffer if he neglects his duty. Arjuna thinks it will be more noble to leave the battlefield, but Krsna says:

Text 34: People will always speak of your infamy, and for a respectable person, dishonor is worse than death.

We may question why a devotee like Arjuna should be concerned about honor or dishonor. We should understand, however, that in this particular section of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Kṛṣṇa is not speaking to Arjuna on the platform of devotional service. Rather, He is addressing Arjuna's brave *ksatriya* spirit. The pain of a disgraced life will be more painful than death for a warrior such as Arjuna.

Srila Prabhupada paraphrases Kṛṣṇa's admonishments in his purport: "Both as friend and philosopher to Arjuna Lord Kṛṣṇa now gives His final judgment regarding Arjuna's refusal to fight. The Lord says, 'Arjuna, if you leave the battlefield before the battle even begins, people will call you a coward. And if you think that people may call you bad names but that you will save your life by fleeing the battlefield, then My advice is that you'd do better to die in the battle. For a respectable man like you, ill fame is worse than death. So, you should not flee for fear of your life; better to die in the battle. That will save you from the ill fame of misusing My friendship and from losing your prestige in society.'"

Text 35: The great generals who have highly esteemed your name and fame will think you have left the battlefield out of fear only, and thus they will consider you insignificant.

Prabhupada elaborates in his purport: "Lord Kṛṣṇa continued to give His verdict to Arjuna: "Do not think that the great generals like Duryodhana, Karna and other contemporaries will think that you have left the battlefield out of compassion for your brothers and grandfather. They will think that you have left out fear for your life. And thus their high estimation of your personality will go to hell."

Kṛṣṇa further provokes Arjuna by saying, "When you explain to the other generals and your contemporaries, 'I am leaving the battlefield out of compassion. I don't want to kill, although I am a *ksatriya*,' They will respond with sarcasm: 'Look what a great *ksatriya* Arjuna is! He is leaving the battlefield, but certainly not out of fear. He is leaving out of compassion. He does not want to hurt anyone.' No one will believe you, Arjuna, and your high esteem as a *ksatriya* will be finished. Losing your reputation will be more painful than your enemies' arrows. Don't do it."

Text 36: Your enemies will describe you in unkind words and scorn your ability. What could be more painful for you?

Arjuna's compassion will be seen as cowardly weakness. Thus Kṛṣṇa again defeats Arjuna's "compassion" argument. The result of his so-called compassion, which is based on illusion, will simply be infamy.

Kṛṣṇa gives his final verdict in the next verse.

Text 37: O son of Kuntī, either you will be killed on the battlefield and attain the heavenly planets, or you will conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom. Therefore, get up with determination and fight.

Since Arjuna wondered how fighting could bring him enjoyment, Kṛṣṇa addresses this point here. Arjuna thinks that if he wins the battle, those with whom he would enjoy the kingdom would all be dead. If he loses the battle, he will die and still not be able to enjoy. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa presents the reverse: "If you are killed on the battlefield, you will attain the heavenly planets. If you are victorious, you will enjoy the earthly kingdom." Since there is no loss in either event, Kṛṣṇa says, "Get up and fight with determination."

Kṛṣṇa's arguments are meant to inspire Arjuna to fight, but this particular set of instructions addresses material enjoyment based upon identifying oneself with one's body as the motivating force behind Arjuna's performance of duty. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa ends this section by taking the discussion to the higher level of working in knowledge:

Text 38: Do thou fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat and by so doing you shall never incur sin.

Arjuna reasoned earlier that fighting in the battle would cause him to suffer prolonged sinful reactions, but here Kṛṣṇa explains that no sin will be incurred by one executing his duty in the proper consciousness. Previously in verses 11-30, Kṛṣṇa presented the difference between the body and the soul (*jnana*) to push Arjuna to fight. Because Arjuna and the other warriors are eternal souls, it is not possible to kill anyone. Only the body, which is perishable by nature, can be killed. Then Kṛṣṇa encouraged Arjuna to fight based on fruitive considerations (*karma-kanda*)—to gain pleasure and to avoid suffering. Kṛṣṇa now combines these two motives to suggest that Arjuna fight based on a mixture of *karma* (activity) and *jnana* (knowledge) performed with detachment. This is technically called *niskama-karma-yoga*, or *buddhi-yoga*: detached work on the platform of knowledge.

One can perform *niskama-karma-yoga* on one of two levels depending on the advancement of one's transcendental knowledge. One who simply has *jnana*, knowledge that he is not his body, performs *niskama-karma*, detached work. Such a person receives no reactions for his work because of his dutiful detachment from the results.

One who has transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, however, possesses superior knowledge, for he knows not only that he is not his body, but that he is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Such a person also performs *niskama-karma-yoga* and receives no reactions for his work because he offers the fruits of his work to Kṛṣṇa.

Both levels of *niskama-karma-yogis* are free from reaction because they practice detachment in knowledge, but the *niskama-karma-yogi* who aspires for Kṛṣṇa's loving service is far superior. He may not yet be on the level of

transcendental devotional service, but his activities will one day lead him to Krsna's lotus feet. On the other hand, the *niskama-karma-yogi* who knows only that he is not his body may, if he desires *brahmavada* liberation, gradually attain *mukti*. Or, if his transcendental knowledge increases due to association with Vaisnavas, he may elevate his desire and attain to Krsna's service.

Srila Prabhupada states: "Lord Krsna now directly says that Arjuna should fight for the sake of fighting because He desires the battle. There is no consideration of happiness or distress, profit or gain, victory or defeat in the activities of Krsna consciousness. That everything should be performed for the sake of Krsna is transcendental consciousness."

Although Krsna is directly instructing Arjuna to fight only for the sake of fighting in this verse, Srila Prabhupada hints that Arjuna's fighting will ultimately be impelled by his desire to fulfill Krsna's order. The difference between detached work performed in knowledge and *bhakti* is in the consciousness with which activities are performed. The activities themselves are not the determining factor.

Text 39: Thus far I have described this knowledge to you through analytical study. Now listen as I explain it in terms of working without fruitive results. O son of Prtha, when you act in such knowledge, you can free yourself from the bondage of works.

In texts 11-30, Krsna described *jnana*, knowledge, as the difference between spirit and matter, the soul and the body. This *jnana* is the same as the fruit of *sankhya*, the analytical study of matter and spirit. To practice either *jnana-yoga* or *sankhya-yoga*, one must renounce all activities and practice meditation. Krsna has consistently instructed Arjuna in another way, however. He has told him to work in a renounced spirit, not to renounce activity.

Verse 39 hints that analytical study (*sankhya*) means renunciation of activity, which, if performed successfully, elevates one in *jnana* (the understanding that one is not the body.) But again, Krsna does not recommend that Arjuna renounce his activities. He therefore explains the benefits of action, not of renunciation of activities, and says that action should be executed in knowledge, with the understanding (*jnana*) that one is not his body. Krsna encourages Arjuna to listen attentively and to hear how to become free from sinful reactions.

Prabhupada explains in his purport: "Arjuna has already accepted Krsna as his spiritual master by surrendering himself unto Him: *sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam*. Consequently, Krsna will now tell him about the working process in *buddhi-yoga*, or *karma-yoga*, or in other words, the practice of devotional service only for the sense gratification of the Lord. This *buddhi-yoga* is clearly explained in verse Chapter Ten, verse ten, as being the direct communion with the Lord, who is sitting as Paramatma in everyone's heart. But such communion does not take place without devotional service. One who is therefore situated in devotional or transcendental loving service to the Lord, or in other words, in Krsna consciousness, attains to this stage of *buddhi-yoga* by the special grace of the Lord. The Lord says, therefore, that only to those who are always engaged in devotional service out of transcendental love does He award the pure knowledge of devotion in love. In that way the devotee can reach Him easily in the ever-blissful kingdom of God."

Buddhi-yoga or *karma-yoga*, may be practiced at different stages. The topmost stage, as Srila Prabhupada mentions above, is when Krsna blesses the devotee with full *buddhi*, and thus one effortlessly becomes fully absorbed in Krsna consciousness. That is called love of God.

Text 40: 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.

This endeavor (*buddhi-yoga*) saves us from taking birth in a lower species and again becoming trapped in the wheel of *samsara*. There is no loss or diminution because all advancement is eternal. Material advancement, on the other hand, is always temporary.

Krsna continues to encourage Arjuna to hear about the process of *buddhi-yoga*. Verse 41 has special significance for ISKCON devotees.

Text 41: Those who are on this path are resolute in purpose, and their aim is one. O beloved child of the Kurus, the intelligence of those who are irresolute is many-branched.

Vyavasayatmika-buddhi, one-pointed intelligence, is required to become successful in *buddhi-yoga*. Srila Prabhupada once told his disciples that in the 1950s, before he spread Krsna consciousness throughout the world, he read a commentary on this verse written by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. He said he was struck by the commentary because it so strongly emphasized the importance of being fixed on one's *guru's* order. Srila Prabhupada said that this commentary helped him become further fixed in his resolve to follow Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's order to preach Krsna consciousness in English.

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura states: "The best kind of intelligence I can have is intelligence used in the service of Krsna. That intelligence is defined as fixed when it is intent upon my spiritual master's instruction, such as chanting the name of Krsna, remembering His activities, and performing service to His lotus feet. My spiritual master's instructions are my *sadhana* and my life, both in the beginning stages of *bhakti* and in the perfectional stage. I desire only to follow his instructions. I accept nothing else as my life's work, even in dreams. Whether I am happy or distressed, whether the material world remains or is destroyed, I do not care. There is no loss for me. I simply must carry out my spiritual

master's orders. Fixedness upon his order is determined intelligence in devotional service, and only by being fixed in his orders is such determined intelligence possible."

[Our standard of when to use or not use "Srla" should be set for all three commentators: Prabhupada, VCT, and BV. BJD]

Text 42-3: Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the Vedas, which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets resultant good birth, power, and so forth. Being desirous of sense gratification and opulent life, they say that there is nothing more than this.

Here for the first time, Krsna mentions the *Vedas* to Arjuna. He tells Arjuna to give up his *karma-kanda* mentality, or the idea of using the *Vedas* through many sacrifices aimed at pleasing various demigods, to gain temporary, fruitive benedictions such as health, wealth, longevity, power, sons, or a bountiful harvest. It should be noted that Krsna encouraged Arjuna to fight in the previous section by appealing to the same mentality in Arjuna that He now condemns. Though previously encouraging Arjuna to fight to obtain heaven, Krsna now speaks on a higher level, the level of *buddhi-yoga*.

Text 44: In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place.

The result of being attracted to the flowery words of the *Vedas* without knowing their actual purpose is bewilderment. Due to ignorance and material attachment, *karma-kandis* cannot fix their minds on the Supreme. Instead, they use the *Vedas* as an excuse to avoid the Vedic purpose—surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Krsna next prescribes how can one overcome this mentality.

Text 45: The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes. Be free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in the self.

Krsna instructs Arjuna to rise above fruitive performance of duty. Rather than fighting to gain heavenly pleasures or to avoid infamy, he should be established in self-realization. Arjuna previously reasoned that destroying the family tradition would end the performance of *karma-kandiya* Vedic rituals. Krsna now defeats that argument by telling Arjuna to rise above those rituals, which are contaminated by the modes of material nature.

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada comments on Krsna's first mention of the three modes of material nature and summarizes the process of transcending the modes: "As long as the material body exists, there are actions and reactions in the material modes. One has to learn tolerance in the face of dualities such as happiness and distress, or cold and warmth, and by tolerating such dualities become free from anxieties regarding gain and loss. This transcendental position is achieved in full Krsna consciousness when one is fully dependent on the good will of Krsna."

Krsna concludes his argument in verse 46.

Text 46: All purposes served by a small well can at once be served by a great reservoir of water. Similarly all the purposes of the Vedas can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them.

In India, each well is used only for a specific purpose, either for drinking water, for washing clothes, for cleaning utensils, or for bathing. All these activities, however, can simultaneously be performed by the shore of a lake. Where a lake full of fresh water is available, one does not need to go from well to well to fulfill one's purposes. Similarly, one who is *vijanatah*, in complete knowledge of the Vedic purpose, need only perform *buddhi-yoga* for the Lord's pleasure. The performance of *buddhi-yoga* satisfies the purpose behind the *Vedas*. *Karma-kanda* rituals then become unnecessary. Even one who has material desires, but who performs *buddhi-yoga*, will become purified, because he is fixed in transcendental knowledge.

As Krsna has explained several alternative levels of activity to Arjuna, He now explains the specific level on which Arjuna is qualified to act.

Text 47: You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

This important verse begins *karmany evadhikaras te*. Arjuna's *adhikari*, his personal eligibility, is *eva*, certainly for *karma* (work). While working, however, he should not create further reactions by desiring to enjoy the fruit of his work. The concept of duty—dispassionate, proper actions whose performance is its own reward—is becoming increasingly foreign to modern society.

Srila Prabhupada describes this proper approach to work in his purport: "Arjuna was therefore advised by the Lord to fight as a matter of duty without attachment to the result. His non-participation in the battle is another side of attachment. Such attachment never leads one to the path of salvation. Any attachment, positive or negative, is cause for

bondage. Inaction is sinful. Therefore, fighting as a matter of duty was the only auspicious path of salvation for Arjuna."

Krsna explains the proper consciousness in which to work in the following *sloka*.

Text 48: Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga.

When one works and is unattached to the fruits of such work, he is performing *karma-yoga*. Detachment is then perfected when he offers the fruits of his work to Krsna. Therefore, Krsna tells Arjuna not to renounce work, but to renounce the fruits of work. It is that detachment and offering of the fruit to the Supreme that elevates us from *karma-kanda* to *karma-yoga*.

The next verse is important to note because it is connected to Arjuna's opening question in Chapter Three.

Text 49: O Dhananjaya, keep all abominable activities far distant by devotional service, and in that consciousness surrender unto the Lord. Those who want to enjoy the fruits of their work are misers.

What fruit does one attain who who tries to enjoy the results of his work? Only birth and death. Krsna criticizes fruitive desires and glorifies *buddhi-yoga* (which Srila Prabhupada translates as "devotional service"). The living entity should work hard to escape suffering, not to become further entangled in it. That *buddhi-yoga* gives this effect is described as follows.

Text 50: A man engaged in devotional service rids himself of both good and bad actions even in this life. Therefore strive for yoga, which is the art of all work.

The art of work is to act in such a way that we become free from both good and bad *karma*. Thus the resultant reactions from work—in Arjuna's case, the sinful reactions he fears will come from killing his kinsmen—will not effect us. We have to work, but we should be detached, through knowledge, from the fruits of our actions.

Jnanis desire to become free of reactions by renouncing all activities, but this is very difficult. The same effect can be more easily achieved by acting with detachment. For example, mercury is poisonous, but in the hands of an Ayurvedic doctor, mercury becomes a powerful medicine. Similarly, while regular attached work entangles the soul in the material world, detached, dutiful work, aimed at pleasing the Supreme and performed in knowledge, leads him to liberation.

Text 51: By thus engaging in devotional service (buddhi-yoga) to the Lord, great sages or devotees free themselves from the results of work in the material world. In this way they become free from the cycle of birth and death and attain the state beyond all miseries [by going back to Godhead].

Working in detachment leads to knowledge of the soul. When one thus becomes self-realized, he gradually becomes blessed with knowledge of the Lord and surrenders to Him. Such surrender frees him from the material world, and after liberation, he becomes eligible to attain Vaikuntha. This progression is referred to as the "yoga ladder." The *yoga* ladder is detailed in the first six chapters of *Bhagavad-gita*.

Text 52: When your intelligence has passed out of the dense forest of delusion, you shall become indifferent to all that has been heard and all that is to be heard.

The *karma-kanda* section of the *Vedas* describes how to attain fruitive benefit. Krsna here compares it to a dense forest of material illusion. Arjuna was preoccupied with the fruitive mentality. He considered that happiness was impossible to obtain and misery was certain if he performed his duty of fighting. Krsna tells him, however, that by fighting with *buddhi*, he will achieve fixed intelligence (*vyavasayatmika-buddhi*) and become indifferent to happiness and distress.

What is the criterion for achieving such success? Krsna answers this question and explains how one who understands the purpose of the *Vedas* views *karma-kanda* in the next verse.

Text 53: When your mind is no longer disturbed by the flowery language of the Vedas, and when it remains fixed in the trance of self-realization, then you will have attained the divine consciousness.

Arjuna must transcend fruitive desires and become fixed in *buddhi-yoga* to achieve success. The Vedic injunctions of prescribed duties—this sacrifice and that ritual—must no longer disturb the candidate desiring to attain *samadhi*, or the qualification for becoming liberated (*jivan-mukta*).

Krsna has for the time being finished describing *buddhi-yoga*. Arjuna now asks four questions in text 54 about the divine consciousness that Krsna has just mentioned. Krsna answers these questions one by one, beginning with text 55.

Text 54: Arjuna said: O Krsna, what are the symptoms of one whose consciousness is thus merged in transcendence? How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit, and how does he walk?

Arjuna wants to know the symptoms of a person situated in Krsna consciousness (*sthita-prajna*). He therefore asks: "What are his symptoms? How does he speak? How does he sit? How does he walk?"

Although these questions seem to deal with such a person's external behavior, our *acarya* commentators reveal each question's internal meaning. Text 55 answers the first question, which can be rephrased, "How does one transcendently situated (*sthita-prajna*) reveal his position?"

Text 55: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O Partha, when a man gives up all varieties of desire for sense gratification, which arise from mental concoction, and when his mind, thus purified, finds satisfaction in the self alone, then he is said to be in pure transcendental consciousness.

The *sthita-prajna* reveals his position by having no material affection. He is detached from both happiness and misery. Rather, he is fully satisfied by fixing his consciousness on the self.

Krsna next answers Arjuna's second question in texts 56-57: "How does he speak?" This question means, "How are his intelligence and words affected by another's affection, anger, or neutrality? In other words, how does he react?"

Text 56: One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind.

Text 57: In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge.

A *sthita-dhir-muni* is both fixed in knowledge and aloof from the material world. He lives on the transcendental platform and therefore his mind cannot be materially disturbed. Srila Prabhupada writes: "Such a fully Krsna conscious person is not at all disturbed by the onslaughts of the threefold miseries, for he accepts all miseries as the mercy of the Lord, thinking himself only worthy of more trouble due to his past misdeeds; and he sees that his miseries, by the grace of the Lord, are minimized to the lowest. Similarly, when he is happy he gives credit to the Lord, thinking himself unworthy of the happiness."

These symptoms describe a Krsna conscious person, but they may also describe one who is liberated but not Krsna conscious. One in Krsnaloka is also unaffected by material happiness or distress because his consciousness has nothing to do with matter, but one who is simply liberated in Brahman may be neutral in relation to the material world, while having no positive engagement in Krsna consciousness. Thus these symptoms are applicable both to personalists and impersonalists, although Srila Prabhupada emphasizes how they apply to personalists.

The next question, "How does he sit?" means, "What is his mentality when his senses are restrained from their objects?" Is it easy for him? Is it tortuous? Krsna answers in the following two verses.

Text 58: One who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness.

Such a person uses his senses only when required. Whether or not that is difficult for him is described in the next verse.

Text 59: The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.

A transcendentalist's renunciation is not difficult because he has a higher taste. This is especially true for Vaisnavas. As a tortoise naturally withdraws his limbs into its shell, a devotee naturally and fully withdraws his senses from matter by engaging them in Krsna's service.

In texts 60-63, Krsna explains that Arjuna's plan to renounce work, but to go to the forest to gain knowledge and avoid sinful reaction is dangerous.

Text 60: The senses are so strong and impetuous, O Arjuna, that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination who is endeavoring to control them.

Krsna tells Arjuna, "Do not give up work. Do not become a *jnani*, a man who simply discriminates between matter and spirit. Perform your duty in *buddhi-yoga*." Krsna is showing the defect in *jnana* in order to propose the superiority of *bhakti-yoga*.

Text 61: One who restrains his senses, keeping them under full control, and fixes his consciousness upon Me, is known as a man of steady intelligence.

The key words in this verse are *mat-parah*, "in relationship with Me." Thus Krsna, referring to Himself for the first time as the object of devotion, stresses *bhakti*. We can only control the senses by engaging them in relationship to Krsna. When our senses are fully subjugated, our consciousness is called *pratisthita*, or fixed.

The first half of this verse describes how the *bhakti-yogi* who is still practicing to attain perfection controls his senses by engaging them in devotional service. The second half describes the perfected sage who, having controlled his senses fully, has fixed consciousness.

What if when trying to achieve this stage, we by chance fix the senses on the sense objects, seeing them as separate from Krsna's service?

Text 62-3: While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.

The mind has to be fixed on something. If we don't fix it on Krsna, then this is the alternative that occurs.

Beginning with text 64 and continuing almost until the end of Chapter Two, Krsna answers Arjuna's last question: "How does he walk?" The purport of this question is, "How does a man in transcendence engage his senses?"

Text 64: But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord.

Through a controlled, fixed mind and intelligence, a man in transcendence remains fixed, disinterested in combining the senses with their objects. Everything such a great soul does is auspicious and gives full satisfaction.

Text 65: For one thus satisfied [in Krsna consciousness], the threefold miseries of material existence exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence is soon well established.

Here is the last, and most important requirement: satisfaction in Krsna consciousness. The result is freedom from the three-fold miseries and intelligence fixed on Krsna. Without *bhakti*, there is no happiness, as we see in the example of Srila Vyasadeva's lamentation in the First Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Vyasadeva compiled the entirety of the *Vedas*, dividing the *Veda* into four, added the *Puranas* which are the fifth *Veda*, and composed the *Mahabharata*. Yet because he did not emphasize *bhakti*, he remained dissatisfied in his mind and reflected, "I have, under strict disciplinary vows, unpretentiously worshiped the *Vedas*, the spiritual master and the altar of sacrifice. I have also abided by the rulings and have shown the import of disciplic succession through the explanation of the *Mahabharata*, by which even women, *sudras* and others [friends of the twice-born] can see the path of religion. I am feeling incomplete, though I myself am fully equipped with everything required by the *Vedas*. This may be because I did not specifically point out the devotional service of the Lord, which is dear both to perfect beings and to the infallible Lord." (*Bhag.* 1.4.28-31)

What is the result of dissatisfaction?

Text 66: One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Krsna consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?

The contrast between this verse and the previous one strengthens Krsna's argument. If the mind and intelligence deviate from meditation on Krsna, there can be no question of happiness. Deviation from thought of Krsna and contemplation on the objects of the senses means that we will be overwhelmed by desires for material enjoyment.

Text 67: As a strong wind sweeps away a boat on the water, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man's intelligence.

When the mind surrenders to the urge of the senses, we lose our discrimination. Our intelligence will be stolen by the unfavorable winds of the uncontrolled senses. The senses, however, once subdued, create favorable breezes.

Text 68: Therefore, O might-armed, one whose senses are restrained from their objects is certainly of steady intelligence.

Krsna thus tells *maha-baho*, the mighty-armed *ksatriya* Arjuna, to control his real enemy, the senses.

Text 69: What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled; and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage.

The attached and detached persons are as different as day and night. The *sthita-prajna* is as unaware of sense objects as a sleeping man is unaware of his surroundings. He is neutral to the happiness and distress that come from his *karma*. He remains undistracted by the objects of the senses.

Krsna then gives an example to illustrate the *sthita-prajna* nature.

Text 70: A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires.

He is unwavering. He does not chase after sense gratification. Krsna then explains his determination.

Text 71: A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego—he alone can attain real peace.

Maharaja Priyavrata is an excellent example of such a person. Although he behaved as a pious but worldly king, he was internally peaceful because his mind was fixed on the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

This verse ends Krsna's answer to the question: "How does he walk." Krsna concludes Chapter Two with a brief summary.

Text 72: That is the way of the spiritual and godly life, after attaining which a man is not bewildered. If one is thus situated even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God.

Krsna glorifies the position of the *sthita-prajna*.

Many topics have been discussed in this chapter: the *Vedas*, the modes of material nature, *karma-yoga*, *karma-kanda*, *jnana*, *sankhya*, *buddhi-yoga*, *Vedanta*, the *atma*, detachment, *samadhi*, *sannyasa*, and *bhakti-yoga*.

Srila Prabhupada writes: "Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has summarized this second chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* as being the contents for the whole text. In the *Bhagavad-gita*, the subject matters are *karma-yoga*, *jnana-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga*. In the second chapter, *karma-yoga* and *jnana-yoga* have been clearly discussed, and a glimpse of *bhakti-yoga* has also been given, as the contents for the complete text."

CHAPTER THREE

KARMA-YOGA

[Before I start on this chapter, I would like to make a list of things a proofreader should expect to do that I am not doing, even though you are requesting me to do it.

1. I am not carefully checking purports, and I am not checking verses at all, unless they don't sound right according to my memory. Both verses and quoted purports should be carefully checked both for accuracy, reference numbers, and punctuation. I notice mistakes especially in the punctuation of the verses, and sometimes in word's missing, etc. Especially check the use of ellipses.

2. I am putting in diacritics, but a proofreader should be prepared to carefully check the Sanskrit against the original in the *Bhagavad-gita*. That is especially true since Brajabihari will be reading on his IBM computer and then handing it over to the layout person on the Macintosh, etc.

3. There should be a consistent use of numerals vs. spelled out numbers. I think all the text numbers should be numerals because it gets awkward for the reader. If I notice it, I will fix it, but it should be carefully checked.

5. I am trying as much as possible to pay attention to tense usage, etc., but a proofreader should always be alert for inappropriate changes in tense.

6. Pronouns referring to Krsna should be capitalized. I'm catching what I catch, but a proofreader should be alert to watch for those.

I may add to this list here and there in the manuscript if other points arise.]

In Bg. 2.49, Krsna said, *durena hy avaram karma, buddhi-yogad dhananjaya*. Krsna instructs Arjuna, "Keep all abominable activities far distant by *buddhi-yoga*."

Buddhi-yoga means *bhakti-yoga*, but it literally may also refer to the *yoga* of *buddhi*, intelligence. In Bg. 2.50, Krsna says: "A man engaged in devotional service (*buddhi-yoga*) rids himself of both good and bad actions even in this life. Therefore strive for *yoga*, which is the art of all work."

Through the use of intelligence, one should avoid all abominable activities. Krsna has emphasized *buddhi*, intelligence, by using the word ten times in the final thirty-three verses of the second chapter.

Arjuna is perplexed. In the beginning of Chapter 2, Krsna spoke of *jnana* (the knowledge that discerns spirit from matter) and then followed with a discussion on *buddhi-yoga*. Toward the end of Chapter 2, Krsna described one who is *sthita-prajna*, fixed in the *samadhi* of transcendental knowledge and neutral to the material world. Krsna concluded those arguments by saying, "A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires." (Bg. 2.70)

We can easily imagine Arjuna coming to the understanding that he shouldn't try to satisfy his desires, but should be fixed in *jnana* by *buddhi-yoga*. Therefore, he should not engage in this abominable killing. "Why, then, is Krsna still asking me to fight?"

Thus Arjuna asks Krsna to clarify His apparently contradictory instructions in the first two verses of Chapter 3.

Text 1: Arjuna said: O Janardana, O Kesava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work?

Jana means "people," and one meaning of *ardana* is "causer of problems." "O Janardana" can thus be translated as "O one who causes problems for people." Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains Janardana as "who causes problems for His own devotees by the orders He gives them." Arjuna also calls Krsna "Kesava." *Ka* refers to Lord Brahma, *isa* to Lord Siva, and *va* to Lord Visnu, or the controller. "O Kesava, You control even Lord Brahma and Lord Siva. You are Lord Visnu. Therefore, I am bound to follow Your instructions. Nonetheless, You are Janardana because You are giving me this problem."

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport: "Arjuna also thought of Krsna consciousness or *buddhi-yoga*, or intelligence in spiritual advancement of knowledge, as something like retirement from active life and the practice of penance and austerity at a secluded place."

People generally think that a spiritualist must renounce activity and retire from the world. Arjuna wanted to retire from the battlefield. Srila Prabhupada explains: ". . . he wanted to skillfully avoid the fighting by using Krsna consciousness as an excuse. But as a sincere student, he placed the matter before his master and questioned Krsna as to his best course of action. In answer, Lord Krsna elaborately explained *karma-yoga*, or work in Krsna consciousness . . ."

Text 2: My intelligence is bewildered by Your equivocal instructions. Therefore, please tell me decisively which will be most beneficial for me.

Arjuna understands from Krsna's instructions that *karma* (work) and *jnana* (knowing that one is not his body) are two separate things. He therefore requests *tad ekam vada*, "Which one would You prefer?" Arjuna's preference is to avoid fighting. Therefore, He indirectly tells Krsna, "You have described devotion, work, and knowledge. If you think I

am unqualified for devotion, then give me knowledge. Why insist on engaging me in work (war)? Why are You recommending that I fight and kill, which is in the mode of passion?”

Srila Prabhupada’s purport explains the points Krsna has already covered in the second chapter: “In the previous chapter, as a prelude to the *Bhagavad-gita*, many different paths were explained, such as *sankhya-yoga*, *buddhi-yoga*, control of the senses by intelligence, work without fruitive desire and the position of the neophyte. This was all presented unsystematically. A more organized outline of the path would be necessary for action and understanding. Arjuna, therefore, wanted to clear up these apparently confusing matters so that any common man could accept them without misinterpretation. Although Krsna had no intention of confusing Arjuna by any jugglery of words, Arjuna could not follow the process of Krsna consciousness—either by inertia or by active service. In other words, by his questions he is clearing the path of Krsna consciousness for all students who seriously want to understand the mystery of the *Bhagavad-gita*.”

Krsna will begin answering Arjuna’s question by explaining in the following seven verses the defect in his desire to renounce his duty.

Text 3: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that there are two classes of men who try to realize the self. Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation, and others by devotional service.

Krsna calls Arjuna *anagha*, “sinless” to show that Arjuna is asking his question, “Should I work or become situated in knowledge and renunciation?” for others’ benefit.

In this verse Krsna begins to clarify His apparently “equivocal instructions.” The Sanskrit in this verse for those equivocal instructions is *karma-yogena yoginam* and *jnana-yogena sankhyanam*. One class of men is inclined to understand the self through renunciation, and the other class through work.

The word *nistha*, “faith,” or “platform,” is also significant. *Karma* and *jnana* are two platforms or stages on the path to transcendental consciousness. The *karma* stage is the platform on which work is recommended, and the *jnana* stage is the platform on which one is sufficiently purified and detached to renounce work. They are not separate processes, but are two rungs, one above the other, on the *yoga* ladder. Depending on one’s *nistha*, his position, faith, or purity of heart, one is recommended to act either on the platform of *karma* or *jnana*.

Arjuna has misunderstood this point. He thinks that *jnana* and *karma* are two different processes that lead in two different directions. A *karmi*, even though attached to the fruits of his work, can advance to the platform of *jnana* by performing his duties. At any time, however, one can quickly become liberated through changing his path to *bhakti*.

Krsna will now explain that premature renunciation—renunciation accepted before one is sufficiently purified and detached—will not bring liberation.

Text 4: Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection.

Srila Prabhupada’s purport states: “The renounced order of life can be accepted when one has been purified by the discharge of the prescribed form of duties which are laid down just to purify the hearts of materialistic men. Without purification of heart, *sannyasa* is simply a disturbance to the social order. On the other hand, if someone takes to the transcendental service of the Lord, even without discharging his prescribed duties, whatever he may be able to advance in the cause is accepted by the Lord (*buddhi-yoga*). Even a slight performance of such a principle enables one to overcome great difficulties.”

From text 4 to text 16, Krsna explains the active nature of the soul. Inactivity is not an option. One’s activities must therefore be directed toward self-purification, which is the purpose of performing prescribed duties.

Text 5: Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.

Prabhupada explains in his purport: “It is not a question of embodied life, but it is the very nature of the soul to be always active. Without the presence of the spirit soul, the material body cannot move. As such, the spirit soul has to be engaged in the good work of Krsna consciousness, otherwise it will be engaged in occupations dictated by illusory energy.”

In Chapter 2, Krsna told Arjuna *karmany evadhikaras te*, your eligibility (*adhikara*) on the *yoga* ladder is not renunciation of work, but action. Since the soul must act, the *Vedas* prescribe duties to purify the living entities. Then, by acting with a pure heart, in a detached mood, with knowledge of the difference between spirit and matter, one becomes elevated to the *jnana* platform. Only then does one have the option to give up prescribed duties and take *sannyasa*. If such a person renounces prescribed duties and accepts *sannyasa*, although his heart is still not purified, he will find himself in difficulty. Krsna describes such an unfortunate renunciant:

Text 6: One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.

Krsna says that if work is renounced without the *adhikara* (qualification, or requisite purity of heart), “Your mind will dwell on the sense objects because your heart is not yet pure. You will delude yourself, thinking ‘I am a renunciant.’” The Sanskrit word for false actor is *mithyacara*. *Mithya* means “false” and *acara* means “activities.” “Your activities will not match your dress and you will be a pretender.” Such a person is not qualified to receive the Lord’s mercy. Not only Arjuna, but all of us should act according to our eligibility. As Arjuna learned of his eligibility from his spiritual master, so we should similarly understand our own eligibility from our *guru*.

Krsna next compares an attached *sannyasi* and a detached householder.

Text 7: On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins *karma-yoga* [in Krsna consciousness] without attachment, he is by far superior.

This verse describes the dutiful householder as being better situated than the *mithyacara sannyasi*. In his purport, Srila Prabhupada glorifies the *varnasrama* system because it leads a conditioned soul gradually toward self-realization.

Text 8: Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one’s physical body without work.

Krsna tells Arjuna: “Work for you, with your *adhikara* for *karma*, is better than renunciation. You are not on the *jnana* platform wherein you can effectively renounce your prescribed duties.” Arjuna is concerned that by working he will develop material attachments and desires. To differentiate ordinary work from *karma-yoga*, Krsna says:

Text 9: Work done as a sacrifice for Visnu has to be performed, otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

Verses three to nine have described *niskama-karma*, work with both knowledge and detachment. *Niskama-karma*, in other words, combines *karma* and *jnana*. *Niskama-karma* allows a soul to be active, but in a detached way, so as he is protected from material entanglement. Higher still, as hinted in text 9, is when those detached activities are offered to Krsna with devotion. *Niskama-karma* is thus meant to lead to *bhakti*.

The question arises: “What if a person is overly attached to material life and cannot perform *niskama-karma-yoga*?” To explain this, Krsna now describes the *yoga* ladder, beginning with the lowest rung and gradually moving higher. The next seven verses describe the progression of the stages of the *yoga* ladder from *karma-kanda* to *karma-yoga*.

Every soul in the material world, whether subtly or grossly, attempts to position himself—not Krsna—as enjoyer and controller. This is true regardless of the body the soul inhabits. Ignorant animals enact their limited attempts for pleasure as much as spiritually undeveloped humans, who, in their attempt to taste sensual pleasure, act in ignorance. There are 100,000 *lakhs** of verses in the *Vedas* and their supplements. Of these, 96 percent discuss fruitive activities and only 4 percent discuss *jnana-kanda*, which lead the living entity toward transcendental knowledge and ultimately to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Vedic culture provides a system by which the materially attached person can satisfy his material desires and yet gradually become purified. Therefore, such a high percentage of Vedic information centers on *karma-kanda*. To become situated under the protection of such a system, one must agree to regulate his enjoyment by the descending authority of the Vedic formulas. One following that system does not simply act as he desires. His mood of subservience to God’s order in the form of the *Vedas*—even though his purpose is to attain sense pleasures—is purifying. Such followers of the *Vedas* are called *karma-kandis*.

Gradually, by following the Vedic system, one may accept an eternal, transcendental objective to replace his temporary, fruitive goals. With that acceptance, one abandons the designation of *karma-kandi* and becomes a *karma-yogi*. By properly performing his appropriate duties, the *karma-yogi* will gradually move from *sakama-karma-yoga* (attached work) to *niskama-karma-yoga* (detached work) *jnana* (knowledge). He can then follow the *yoga* ladder upwards toward liberation, Paramatma realization, and finally, devotional service to Krsna. His association and desires dictate how far he will actually climb on his step by step ascension of the *yoga* ladder. The *Bhagavad-gita* describes this gradual ascension in Chapters 3–6.

In addition to the step by step process, Krsna also describes what occurs when either from the beginning of his practices or on any rung of the ladder, one attains the association of a devotee and comes to accept Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and himself as Krsna’s servant. As soon as a person reaches this realization, although he may be practicing either *sakama-karma-yoga* or *niskama-karma-yoga*, he is no longer on the same step by step path as other practitioners. Although he may not be fully realized, and although he may still have material attachments, he is still most fortunate because he has acknowledged the ultimate goal and will, by steady and appropriate practice, gradually advance in a way that appears parallel to other practitioners but in fact is not. A devotee who practices *sakama-karma-yoga*, for example, will gradually have his material attachments loosened by his performance of appropriate practices. This is also true of the nondevotee *sakama-karma-yogi*. The devotee *sakama-karma-yogi*, however, is far superior because he has already begun to aspire for the highest goal. The nondevotee *sakama-karma-*

* 1 lakh = 100,000

yogi, on the other hand, is on the transcendental path, but may never reach an understanding of the highest goal. Therefore, he may never reach the highest rung of the *yoga* ladder.

In addition, when one proceeds in a step by step fashion, his advancement is limited by his own capabilities, but one who sets Kṛṣṇa's service as his goal attains the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas. They act as his support throughout his spiritual journey.

The nondevotee faces these two difficulties: he may never understand that the highest rung of the *yoga* ladder is to attain Kṛṣṇa's service, and he is limited by his own power to attain advancement and does not gain the assistance of Kṛṣṇa's descending mercy. In every purport of the *Bhagavad-gīta*, therefore, Śrīla Prabhupada mercifully reveals Kṛṣṇa's ultimate desire for the conditioned soul: *sarva-dharman parityajya*, that he abandon all forms of religion and surrender to Him. Why should we take the long path if we can reach the destination by a shorter, easier one? By his writing *Bhagavad-gīta As It Is*, Prabhupada clearly proves that the Lord's devotee is even more merciful than the Lord.

Text 10: In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Viṣṇu, and blessed them by saying "Be thou happy by this yajna [sacrifice] because its performance will bestow upon you everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation."

Kṛṣṇa now begins to explain the Vedic *karma-kanda* system: live happily, and ultimately, gradually, achieve liberation. How can a follower of this system satisfy his desires?

Text 11: The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you, and thus, by cooperation between men and demigods, prosperity will reign for all.

Text 12: In charge of the various necessities of life, the demigods, being satisfied by the performance of yajna [sacrifice], will supply all necessities to you. But he who enjoys such gifts without offering them to the demigods in return is certainly a thief.

A thief is punished by the state. The thieves who do not repay the demigods for their necessities are punished by Yamaraja. Followers of the Vedic system, even though having material desires, are not punished. Rather, they are elevated by their submission to the Vedic system. The Vedic system regulates sense enjoyment to that which is attained through Vedic formulas. Despite a follower's selfish desires, his adherence to Vedic injunctions is a step toward giving up his envy of and independence from Kṛṣṇa. **[Define fruitive work in glossary]**

Arjuna could think: "I don't need *yajnas*, demigods, and opulent necessities of life. Nor must I perform *yajnas* to live. I will go to the forest and live by begging. I won't take from the demigods, so I won't be sinful by not offering *yajnas* to them. Not only won't I be a thief, but I won't take part in this ghastly, sinful warfare."

Kṛṣṇa replies in the next two verses.

Text 13: The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment verily eat only sin.

Text 14: All living bodies subsist on food grains which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of yajna [sacrifice], and yajna is born of prescribed duties.

Kṛṣṇa herein warns Arjuna that, even in the forest, all food is nurtured by rain coming from the demigods. Therefore, he cannot avoid his obligation to perform the sacrifices born of his prescribed duty.

Text 15: Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consequently the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice.

Everyone is dependent on food grains. Grains grow from the earth, but their growth is dependent on rain. Rain comes from the performance of *yajnas* offered to Indra. The inspiration and direction to perform such *yajna* comes from the *Vedas* because the *Vedas* describe one's prescribed duties. The followers of the Vedic system, therefore, perform sacrifices to Indra which result in the rain that produces the grains upon which we all depend. The *Vedas* come directly from Lord Viṣṇu's breathing. Thus the link is established for an attached materialist—dependence on food ultimately means dependence on Viṣṇu.

The all-pervading Transcendence, the Personality of Godhead, being absolute, is nondifferent from the act of sacrifice. Gradually, the follower of the *Vedas* understands that Viṣṇu is above the demigods because He is the one who empowers the demigods who are worshiped in the sacrificial process. In other words, Indra's power to provide rain is supplied by the Personality of Godhead. This understanding gradually blossoms into the realization that Viṣṇu is the only true object of worship.

Kṛṣṇa ends His description of *karma-kanda* in the next verse.

Text 16: My dear Arjuna, one who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas certainly leads a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain.

He lives in vain because human life is meant for spiritual elevation and he has wasted that opportunity. Engaging solely in animal endeavors assures him of taking a lower birth. The performance of *karma-kanda* sacrifices, however, would gradually purify him by redirecting his desires from concentration on the temporal to concentration on the eternal.

Here is how a follower of the Vedic system progresses:

Instead of trying to enjoy his senses without restriction, a follower of the *Vedas* surrenders to Vedic authority which then regulates his actions and engages him in **[is there such a word, italicized? Diacritics?]** karma-kandic sacrifices. The goal of these sacrifices is to attain prosperity, either in this life or in a future life. Desiring abundance, he may perform a sacrifice to give birth to a son, to reap a bountiful harvest, or to overcome a disease. These are considered lower-class sacrifices because their fruits are limited to this current life.

Gradually, however, by associating with *brahmana* priests, he hears about sacrifices that will award him birth on the higher, heavenly planets. Simultaneously, as he lives in this world, he inevitably experiences a variety of miseries. Family members die, drought occurs, his riches are plundered—difficulties must over time arise because this is the nature of the material world. He is pushed to seriously contemplate Svargaloka: “Why be satisfied with a son, wealth, or health in this life? I can go to Svarga, drink *soma-rasa*, dance with beautiful women, and wander blissfully through the Nanda-kandana gardens. Why live for a hundred years when I can live for thousands?”

Both short- and long-term *karma-kanda* sacrifices are born of the mode of passion. They are performed for selfish, sensual enjoyment. Long-term sacrifices, however, are a step further on the path because they are based on the implicit acceptance of the soul’s eternality. He thinks, “I am not this body. Therefore, I will perform opulent sacrifices, leave this body behind, and attain heaven.” Within that thought is a seed of consciousness about eternal spiritual life.

Then he hears from his priests that there is distress even in heaven. Indra fears attacks on his kingdom. Thus he realizes that he too will experience fear, even in Svargaloka. Despite having fulfilled his material desires, he recognizes that his heart is still devoid of true satisfaction. Gradually the truth of material reality dawns on him: birth and death are everywhere and the material world is temporary, frustrating, and miserable.

Over time, he becomes receptive to the philosophy of transcendence. Having heard from his priests about sacrifices, and having experienced their results, he has become more trusting of the priests and the *sastra*. He has also become more detached from material life, because performing sacrifices has allowed him to taste the happiness of sacrificing the hard-earned results of his work. His goal slowly evolves. He no longer thinks of attaining more material happiness, but of leaving the material world. Now, after having heard countless verses glorifying *karma-kanda* sacrifices and their heavenly results, he is ready to consider the *jnana-kanda* section of the *Vedas* and to contemplate a nonmaterial, spiritual life based on eternality. Thus he is no longer a *karma-kandi*, but a *karma-yogi*.

A *karma-yogi* is someone who has accepted transcendence as his objective. There are two types of *karma-yogis*, Brahnavadis (impersonalists) and devotees. Each may be on one of two levels, *sakama* (with material desires) or *niskama* (free from material desires). If a Brahnavadi associates with merciful and powerful devotees, he can abandon his attempts to reach the Brahman and aspire for loving service at Krsna’s lotus feet.

Both types of *karma-yogis* progress gradually from *sakama* to *niskama* by dutifully performing their prescribed duties. As their realization increases, they also become more detached from matter. Thus they climb to the next rung of the *yoga* ladder and become *niskama-karma-yogis*, performers of dutiful, detached work. Their work is no longer motivated by fruitive desire and they perform their work on the platform of *jnana*.

While progressing in this way, however, the *karma-yogi* may conclude: “The prescribed duties are meant to bring material rewards. I no longer have material desires. I don’t want a son or money or a nice house. I have no desire to go to Svargaloka. I know I am not my body. Since I no longer have material desires, I do not need to perform my prescribed duties.”

In the following verses (17–32) Krsna explains why one free from material desires should nevertheless perform his prescribed duties.

Text 17: But for one who takes pleasure in the self, whose human life is one of self-realization, and who is satisfied in the self only, fully satiated—for him there is no duty.

Text 18: A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties, nor has he any reason not to perform such work. Nor has he any need to depend on any other living being.

These verses describe a *atma-ratih*, one who takes pleasure in the self. Such a person is not concerned with loss or gain when performing his duty. Nor is he disturbed by obstacles. The next verse explains whether such a person should work or not.

Text 19: Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme.

By acting dutifully, we advance further and attain the spiritual destination. Working without attachment is renunciation—renunciation caused by knowledge. Krsna gives an example of one elevated to perfection by working without attachment.

Text 20: Kings such as Janaka attained perfection solely by performance of prescribed duties. Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, you should perform your work.

Krsna tells Arjuna to work to set a good example. If he renounces work and goes to the forest as he is suggesting, people will follow his example. What will happen to them? They will find themselves in difficulty because they will be externally renounced but internally absorbed in their material desires. Krsna next confirms the importance of setting a proper example.

Text 21: Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

Few people consider their own disqualification: “He is more qualified than I, so I should beware of my tendency to imitate him.” If we see another’s activities and if they seem pleasurable, we immediately want to join in. We do not stop to consider whether or not such activities will uplift us or degrade us. Krsna’s instructions to Arjuna are meant to uplift humanity. Even though Arjuna, being highly qualified, might do well by going to the forest and begging, others who are less qualified will become degraded because they will imitate Arjuna without considering their own qualification for renunciation. Krsna uses Himself as an example.

Text 22: O son of Prtha, there is no work prescribed for me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything—and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties.

Krsna gives two examples: first, Janaka Maharaja, who attained perfection by performing his prescribed duties, then Himself. “I am certainly not in need of anything. I don’t have to perform prescribed duties. I am God! I am the source of all, and no one can force Me to perform prescribed duties. Nor do I need prescribed duties to obtain My desires. Just by My will an entire universe can be created or destroyed.” Although He has no need, Krsna acts according to the scriptures. Why?

Text 23: For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Partha, certainly all men would follow My path.

Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport: “Although such rules and regulations are for the conditioned souls and not Lord Krsna, because He descended to establish the principles of religion, He followed the prescribed rules. Otherwise, common men would follow in His footsteps, because He is the greatest authority. From the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* it is understood that Lord Krsna was performing all the religious duties at home and out of home, as required of a householder.”

One may argue that some of Krsna’s actions on the battlefield as well as His behavior in Vrndavana with the *gopis* do not follow the recommended *sastric* path. This is true. Although Krsna generally does not transgress scriptural injunctions, He occasionally does so to please His devotees. Krsna prefers to be known as *bhakta-vatsala* than as a mundane moralist. If, therefore, a discrepancy exists between Krsna’s words and His actions, His words should be followed; no one should act in opposition to *sastra*.

Krsna continues speaking about Himself.

Text 24: If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings.

In the first chapter, Arjuna said, “If I fight, the women will be unprotected and that will result in unwanted population, *varna-sankara*.” Here Krsna counters that argument and again defeats Arjuna’s reasoning: “If you neglect your duty and decline to fight, then you will be the cause of *varna-sankara*.”

Krsna will next compare the detached worker and the attached worker, then will describe how a detached man of knowledge should relate to one in ignorance. That description continues until text 32.

Text 25: As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path.

Even a perfect person should perform his duties.

Text 26: So as not to disrupt the minds of ignorant men attached to the fruitive results of prescribed duties, a learned person should not induce them to stop work. Rather, by working in the spirit of devotion, he should engage them in all sorts of activities [for the gradual development of Krsna consciousness].

We may preach to the attached materialists, “There is no use working for *maya*! You can’t take it with you when you die. What will be your eternal gain through such work?” Obviously this is true, but Kṛṣṇa herein recommends an additional strategy: to encourage those who are attached to use their work and its fruits for devotional service. Kṛṣṇa again expresses that premature renunciation, without spiritual realization, leads to degradation.

This verse describes how those with knowledge should relate to those without knowledge. A person with knowledge should, by his example and words, encourage those who are attached to the results of their work to engage them in Kṛṣṇa’s service. This is practical. The third line, *josayet sarva-karmani*, indicates that we should first work ourselves, and then (as stated in the fourth line) engage others in devotional work.

We have already discussed three levels of work: 1. Working only for the fruits (*karma-kanda*). 2. Establishing Kṛṣṇa as the goal, yet still being attached to the fruits (*sakama-karma-yoga*). In this second form of work, although the mode of passion is still present, one advances from passion to goodness by renouncing a portion of the results from one’s work. A person working in this way will gradually become detached, attain transcendental knowledge, and make advancement to the transcendental platform. 3. Complete detachment from the fruits of work (*niskama-karma-yoga*).

Two men may be doing similar work, but each may be working with a different consciousness. Superficially it may appear that their work is the same, but a *sakama* worker is attached to the fruits of his work as well as the specific nature of the work he performs. The *niskama* worker is detached from the fruits of his work, but remains attached to the work itself. The quality of the work is measured by their respective consciousness.

The highest stage of work is when one is detached from the fruits of his work as well as the work itself. He continues working, but his impetus is simply to surrender to the order of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. This consciousness was explained clearly in 2:41.

Kṛṣṇa next describes the thinking of the ignorant, attached person.

Text 27: The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.

This is one of several verses in the *Gita* that discuss the “doer” (*karta*). Here Kṛṣṇa explains that while the foolish conditioned soul thinks himself the doer (the one who is accomplishing the work), the work is actually being carried out by the modes of material nature (*gunas*). Srila Prabhupada, however, refers to a more ultimate doer in the purport: “The materialistic person has no knowledge that ultimately he is under the control of Kṛṣṇa.” This topic will be discussed again in Chapter Four.

Kṛṣṇa next explains the difference between the attached and the devotional worker.

Text 28: One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O mighty-armed, does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results.

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport to this verse: “The knower of the Absolute Truth is convinced of his awkward position in material association. He knows that he is part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and that his position should not be in the material creation. He knows his real identity as part and parcel of the Supreme, who is eternal bliss and knowledge, and he realizes that somehow or other he is entrapped in the material conception of life. In his pure state of existence he is meant to dovetail his activities in devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. He therefore engages himself in the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and becomes naturally unattached to the activities of the material senses, which are all circumstantial and temporary. He knows that his material condition of life is under the supreme control of the Lord; consequently he is not disturbed by all kinds of material reactions, which he considers to be the mercy of the Lord. According to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, one who knows the Absolute Truth in three different features—namely Brahman, Paramatma, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead—is called *tattva-vit*, for he knows also his own factual position in relationship with the Supreme.”

The difference is knowledge. The *tattva-vit* or knower of the Absolute Truth does not think of himself as the qualities he possesses under the modes of nature (*gunas*) nor does he think he owns the fruits of the work (*karma*) which are born by his contact with the modes of nature. He is, as Srila Prabhupada states, “convinced of his awkward position in material association.”

Text 29: Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But, the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers’ lack of knowledge.

Rather than pushing one in ignorance to renounce his false activities, the wise will engage him in activities that will lead to knowledge. Indeed, devotees should “undertake all kinds of risks, even to the point of approaching ignorant men to try to engage them in the acts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Without positive work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, emphasizing detachment for an unqualified person may lead him to a worse condition.

[This quote is not in its entirety. SP’s purport seems to indicate that Kṛṣṇa says we should not even approach ignorant people to engage them in acts of devotion, so to quote the entire paragraph, which is an important paragraph for ISKCON, seems to not be in line with the Overview. To quote only part of it may raise questions

in a discriminating reader. Prabhupada's point about not "simply wasting valuable time" is different from the concept of not preaching about renunciation to people. BB]

[I've adjusted it somewhat. But the purport seems to indicate that Krsna's devotees, knowing Krsna's mind, do engage others in work so that they will make advancement. The point is that it is dangerous for people to renounce material duties, work, without taking up spiritual work. As I say in the class, it produces hippies. Although Prabhupada does not make this point in the purport, it seems a valid point. BJD]

[One solution to this would be to add in the lines from Prabhupada's purport where he says the devotees are kinder than the Lord. This may tie in nicely with previous mentions of the benefits of meeting a pure devotee at any point in one's progress on the *yoga* ladder, and it may satisfy Brajabihari Prabhupada's point without compromising yours.—Kdd]

[Braja Bihari, please decide. It's your point. And then allow me to confirm the decision you made. BJD]

While the past several verses have stressed *niskama-karma-yoga* (detached work), the next verse will take one to *bhakti*.

Text 30: Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.

Krsna is asking Arjuna to choose. "Full knowledge" is born of the mode of goodness (*sattvat sanjayate jnanam*). "Without desires for profit" and "with no claims to proprietorship," indicate freedom from the mode of passion. "Freed from lethargy" hints at freedom from ignorance. When we add Krsna (*mayi sarvani karmani*) to acting in the mode of goodness, *niskama-karma* "fighting" becomes *bhakti-yoga*, detached work done in devotion, for Krsna's pleasure. Although Krsna often requests Arjuna to act on the platform of detachment and duty, His actual desire is for Arjuna to act in devotion.

Affected by passion, we think, "I cannot do my duty. It distracts me from my sense gratification." Influenced by ignorance, we think, "I cannot do my duty. I'm too tired." Duty is the platform on which Krsna consciousness is built. We cannot become Krsna conscious without first being in the mode of goodness and submitting the performance of our duty to Krsna, for His pleasure—without lethargy, a sense of proprietorship, or a profit motive.

Srila Prabhupada explains further: "This verse clearly indicates the purpose of the *Bhagavad-gita*. The Lord instructs that one has to become fully Krsna conscious to discharge duties, as if in military discipline . . . Arjuna was therefore ordered by Sri Krsna to fight as if the Lord were his military commander. One has to sacrifice everything for the good will of the Supreme Lord, and at the same time discharge prescribed duties without claiming proprietorship. Arjuna did not have to consider the order of the Lord; he had only to execute His order."

The next verse describes the results of acting in this way.

Text 31: Those persons who execute their duties according to My injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, become free from the bondage of fruitive actions.

Srila Prabhupada explains: "The injunction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is the essence of all Vedic wisdom and therefore is eternally true without exception. As the *Vedas* are eternal, so this truth of Krsna consciousness is also eternal. One should have firm faith in this injunction, without envying the Lord. There are many philosophers who write comments on the *Bhagavad-gita* but have no faith in Krsna. They will never be liberated from the bondage of fruitive action. But an ordinary man with firm faith in the eternal injunctions of the Lord, even though unable to execute such orders, becomes liberated from the bondage of the law of *karma*. In the beginning of Krsna consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Krsna consciousness."

In this verse Krsna spoke of the faithful, knowledgeable, non-envious person. In text 32 we hear the defect of not developing those qualities.

Text 32: But those who, out of envy, disregard these teachings and do not follow them are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and ruined in their endeavors for perfection.

On one hand success, on the other ruination. This is Arjuna's choice.

The question arises: "Why do some people choose incorrectly and neglect Krsna's order? Why do they choose *maya* when such a choice will bring such obviously negative results?" Krsna's answer follows.

Text 33: Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?

Maya is invested with the potency to push a conditioned soul away from Krsna consciousness. The next *sloka* answers the question: "If we all are simply acting according to our natures, what is the use of rules and regulations in the *sastra*?"

Text 34: There are principles to regulate attachment and aversion pertaining to the senses and their objects. One should not come under the control of such attachment and aversion, because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization.

According to the dictates of the modes of nature, the conditioned living entity does whatever his mind suggests. The mind, in turn, surrenders to the senses, and thus whatever we are attached to (*raga*), we do, and whatever we are averse to (*dvesa*) we avoid. Kṛṣṇa here instructs us that our actions should not be based on attachment and aversion because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization.

The senses are attracted to the pleasures of this world, especially sex life and wealth. They are repulsed by holy places, fasting, following our spiritual master, and other items that limit sense enjoyment. The *sastra* tries to shift our *raga* and *dvesa* away from sense gratification by encouraging us to perform our duty with the ultimate aim of acting only for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. The next verse, therefore, again stresses that we should perform our prescribed duties.

Text 35: It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous.

As Srīla Prabhupada explains in his purport, there are both material and spiritual prescribed duties: "But whether material or spiritual, one should stick to his prescribed duties even up to death, rather than imitate another's prescribed duties."

We should know our duty and follow it. If we are fortunate, we will learn of our duty directly from our spiritual master. We should be careful to do our own duty and not the duty of others. Duty, like medicine prescribed by a physician, has its proper, curative effect only upon the patient to whom it has been prescribed. A spiritual master prescribes different duties for different individuals according to their natures.

Next, Arjuna asks an important question. After hearing text 34, one may determinedly think, "Yes, today onward I will steadily do my duty and control my attachments and aversions. I will act only according to *sastra*." Experience teaches, however, that immediate inspiration is difficult to apply over the long-term. Arjuna, being aware of "reality," asks:

Text 36: Arjuna said: O descendant of Vṛṣṇi, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?

Sinful acts are defined here as neglect of prescribed duties. What is it that forces us to neglect our duty? Srīla Prabhupada writes, "Sinful actions are not, however, impelled by the Supersoul within, but are due to another cause, as the Lord explains in the next verse."

Text 37: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world.

Lust is more subtle than wrath. A man of lusty intentions may go undetected. An angry person, however, is easily noticed. Lust inevitably turns to wrath because it cannot be satisfied. Lust burns like fire, and like fire, it is all-devouring. If fuel is added to a fire, rather than the fire becoming satisfied, it burns more fiercely. In *raja-niti* (instructions for *ksatriyas* on diplomacy) it is said that an enemy is controlled with words, gifts, offering a position, or finally, punishment. Lust, however, is *maha-papma*, the mightiest enemy, and these ordinary methods will not defeat lust.

Lust arises from the mode of passion. We should meticulously avoid *rajo-guna* if we wish to be free of lusty desires. Srīla Prabhupada explains: "If the mode of passion, instead of being degraded into the mode of ignorance, is elevated to the mode of goodness by the prescribed method of living and acting, then one can be saved from the degradation of wrath by spiritual attachment."

Kṛṣṇa further explains:

Text 38: As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of this lust.

Three examples are given here in increasing degrees of covering. The first, "as fire is covered by smoke" indicates a thin covering because the heat and light are still usable. When a mirror is covered by dust, the covering is thicker. We cannot see the reflection, but we can still see the mirror. The thickest of coverings is on the embryo covered by the womb. The child within the womb can neither move nor be seen. Srīla Prabhupada compares this to the non-moving entities like trees; the dust-covered mirror to birds and beasts; and the smoke-covered fire to those in the human form. He concludes by saying, "In the human form of life, one can conquer the enemy, lust, by cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness under able guidance."

The enemy is further described:

Text 39: Thus the wise living entity’s pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire.

When one fears his enemy, he must discover where he is situated. Krsna next explains where to find lust and why it is so dangerous.

Text 40: The senses, the mind and the intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders him.

Lust is the greatest enemy because it covers our knowledge of the Absolute Truth. It is that knowledge that makes the difference between working for Krsna and working for fruitive results. This has been already explained in verse 28 of this chapter.

Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport to text 40: “The enemy has captured different strategic positions in the body of the conditioned soul, and therefore Lord Krsna is giving hints of those places, so that one who wants to conquer the enemy may know where he can be found.” Before a battle, we should know where to find our enemy. Krsna will therefore explain where to attack lust in our attempts to overcome its power.

Text 41: Therefore, O Arjuna, best of the Bharatas, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin [lust] by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization.

Among the senses, mind, and intelligence, the sense are the grossest. Being gross, they are the easiest to control. Krsna therefore recommends that we begin to bring lust under control by regulating the senses. This is automatically done through the *vaidhi-bhakti* process.

While controlling our senses, however, we should not neglect our intelligence. The intelligence, like a guard, is the next-door neighbor of the Supersoul, and its business is to protect us from *maya*. If the guard has been corrupted by lust, however, the situation is as dangerous as when a bodyguard is bribed by the enemy. Thus the materially contaminated intelligence, which works in the service of our enemy, should be neglected. We should instead accept the intelligence of *guru*, *sadhu*, and *sastra*.

Text 42: The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence.

Srila Prabhupada writes: “With intelligence one has to seek out the constitutional position of the soul and then engage the mind always in Krsna consciousness. That solves the whole problem. A neophyte spiritualist is generally advised to keep aloof from the objects of the senses. But aside from that, one has to strengthen the mind by use of intelligence. If by intelligence one engages one’s mind in Krsna consciousness, by complete surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then, automatically, the mind becomes stronger, and even though the senses are very strong, like serpents, they will be no more effective than serpents with broken fangs. But even though the soul is the master of the intelligence and mind, and the senses also, still, unless it is strengthened by association with Krsna in Krsna consciousness, there is every chance of falling down due to the agitated mind.”

The soul is the highest and can control all—the intelligence, the mind, and the senses.

Text 43: Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Krsna consciousness] and thus—by spiritual strength—conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.

We should use the strength of our intelligence, which should be trained and fixed in transcendental knowledge, to protect us from falling victim to inappropriate actions impelled by passion, *rajo-guna*.

In this chapter, Krsna has glorified transcendental knowledge as that which elevates us from *sakama-karma-yoga* to *niskama-karma-yoga*, from the platform on which we perform our duty with attachment to the platform of unattached action. Transcendental knowledge has been described as having the power to purify our consciousness from passion and exalt it to goodness. Now, in the final verse of this chapter, Krsna has certified transcendental knowledge as being able to award our intelligence the strength to overcome lusty desires. After describing so many of the benefits of transcendental knowledge, Krsna will further glorify it in Chapter Four.

Prabhupada summarizes this chapter as follows: “This Third Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* is conclusively directive to Krsna consciousness by knowing oneself as the eternal servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without considering impersonal voidness the ultimate end. In the material existence of life, one is certainly influenced by propensities for lust and desire for dominating the resources of material nature. Desire for overlordship and for sense gratification is the greatest enemy of the conditioned soul; but by the strength of Krsna consciousness, one can control the material senses, the mind and the intelligence. One may not give up work and prescribed duties all of a sudden; but by gradually developing Krsna consciousness, one can be situated in a transcendental position without being influenced

by the material senses and the mind—by steady intelligence directed toward one's pure identity. This is the sum total of this chapter."

CHAPTER FOUR TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Chapter Three discusses how lust covers knowledge and how ignorance (lack of knowledge) binds us with our own attachments. Dutiful detached work, *niskama-karma*, has been recommended as the means to attain transcendental knowledge, which also elevates us from one level of consciousness to the next. In the first two verses, Krsna describes how transcendental knowledge is received.

Text 1: The Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krsna, said: I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku.

Krsna first explains that Vivasvan, the root of the Surya *ksatriya* dynasty and a great authority, received this knowledge and attained perfection.

Text 2: This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost.

Why does Krsna speak this science specifically to Arjuna? The next verse describes Arjuna's qualification.

Text 3: That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science.

Only a devotee can understand Krsna. Others cannot because one's relationship with Krsna is *rahasya*, secret, confidential, and mysterious.

Arjuna next presents a doubt.

Text 4: Arjuna said: The sun-god Vivasvan is senior by birth to You. How am I to understand that in the beginning You instructed this science to him?

Krsna explains that one receives transcendental knowledge through disciplic succession. Since Vivasvan is thousands of years old and Krsna is Arjuna's contemporary, how is it possible that Krsna could have instructed this science to Vivasvan so many thousands of years before? This question, spoken for the benefit of others, gives Krsna the opportunity to speak directly about Himself.

Text 5: The Personality of Godhead said: Many, many births both you and I have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot, O subduer of the enemy!

Both Krsna and Arjuna have had many, many births, but because Krsna's body is fully spiritual and different from that of any *jiva*, Krsna can remember His many births while Arjuna cannot. Krsna's body is transcendental; He never changes His body.

Krsna is continuing to describe transcendental knowledge by describing His birth and His spiritual form.

Text 6: Although I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all living entities, I still appear in every millennium in My original transcendental form.

Krsna uses the term *atma-mayaya* to explain His appearance. *Atma-mayaya* means, "by My internal energy." Krsna's birth is not ordinary. He does not appear by force, nor is He subject to the modes of material nature.

In addition, *atma-mayaya* means that Krsna descends to this world by His causeless mercy. Srila Prabhupada explains: "His appearance in His original form is His causeless mercy, bestowed upon the living entities so that they can concentrate on the Supreme Lord as He is, and not on mental concoctions or imaginations, which the impersonalist wrongly thinks the Lord's form to be. The word *maya* or *atma-maya*, refers to the Lord's causeless mercy, according to the *Visva-kosa* dictionary." Thus Krsna appears by His mercy to fulfill His own desire and to uplift others. Krsna, like the sun, exists before He becomes visible on the earth, and again, like the sun, Krsna manifests Himself to our vision on schedule. Krsna's body, however, never deteriorates. He is *aja*, unborn and *avyaya*, without deterioration. His birth, unlike ours, is not forced by His pious and impious *karma*. He is the *isvara*, the controller of the laws of *karma*, and He appears by *prakrtim svam*, His internal *prakrti*, not by His material energy.

Because Mayavadis teach that Kṛṣṇa is in contact with the modes of nature, Srīla Prabhupāda describes the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa's body: "Kṛṣṇa appears in this material world in his original eternal form, with two hands, holding a flute. He appears exactly in His eternal body, uncontaminated by this material world."

Kṛṣṇa next explains the reasons for His appearance.

Text 7: Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself.

Kṛṣṇa "appears," He is not born. He only seems to take birth. Both *bhavati* and *srjami* mean that Kṛṣṇa becomes manifest. Srīla Prabhupāda writes: "The word *srjami* is significant herein. *Srjami* cannot be used in the sense of creation, because, according to the previous verse, there is no creation of the Lord's form or body, since all of Kṛṣṇa's forms are eternally existent. Therefore, *srjami* means that the Lord manifests Himself as He is."

Kṛṣṇa next answer the questions: "Why does He come?" and, "What does He do?"

Text 8: To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.

Prabhupāda mentions in his purport that the Lord comes to deliver the devotees, but Bg. 14.26 clearly states that a devotee is already beyond the material qualities and is in a transcendental position. If the devotee is already delivered, what need is there for Kṛṣṇa to come and deliver him? Both Srīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura and Srīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana answer this question: a devotee does not require material deliverance. He is anxious, however, to see the Supreme Lord and His loving pastimes. This is the source of his ecstasy and his reason for existence. We can thus say that Kṛṣṇa does not come to deliver His devotee from the material nature, which the devotee has already transcended, but to deliver him from the pain of separation from Him. Therefore, the Lord comes because He wants to exchange loving pastimes with His devotees. This is Kṛṣṇa's inner desire. As a devotee wants to satisfy the Lord in all respects, the Lord wants even more to satisfy His devotee.

Prabhupāda confirms this in his purport: "Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends for the specific purpose of mitigating the anxieties of the pure devotees, who are very anxious to see Him in His original Vṛndāvana pastimes. Therefore, the prime purpose of the Kṛṣṇa *avatara* is to satisfy His unalloyed devotees."

Text 9: One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.

Kṛṣṇa describes the results of realizing transcendental knowledge: the devotee never has to take birth again in this material world, but achieves liberation. The word *divyam* indicates that Kṛṣṇa's transcendental nature can only be learned from the *sastra* and not through logic and reasoning. Even before leaving his body, such a devotee becomes free from matter.

The result of going beyond knowledge of Kṛṣṇa to becoming in fact absorbed in Kṛṣṇa is given in text ten.

Text 10: Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of me—and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me.

Beyond liberation is the stage of attaining transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa. *Putā mad-bhavam agatah*. Without knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, how can we become absorbed in Him? We must hear about Him. Transcendental knowledge about Kṛṣṇa is far superior to the transcendental knowledge that we are souls and not our material bodies. By understanding that we are not our bodies, we can achieve liberation. By understanding Kṛṣṇa, we become further purified and attain love for Kṛṣṇa.

This verse describes being free from material attachment, fear, and anger. The third chapter listed these items as the coverings of the soul. When our assimilation of transcendental knowledge frees us from attachment, fear, and anger, we can become fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then, always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, we can take full shelter of Him and attain transcendental love.

By hearing about Kṛṣṇa, many, many persons became purified and attained love for Kṛṣṇa. They attained love for Kṛṣṇa because this was their desire and Kṛṣṇa fulfilled it. What, then, occurs when someone takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa for something other than a desire to achieve transcendental love for Him? What if someone is not interested in Kṛṣṇa's eternal service? What if someone wants knowledge of Brahman and takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa to obtain it? The next verse explains how Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with such souls.

Text 11: As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prthā.

Devotees who worship Kṛṣṇa in love go to Goloka Vr̥ndavana. The Brahmavadis who worship Kṛṣṇa in order to merge into Brahman, are awarded their desired result.

Srīla Prabhupada writes about going to Brahman and the *brahmajyoti* in his purport. Srīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura explains that Brahmavadis accept Kṛṣṇa's form and activities as eternal, but Mayavadis do not. Therefore, the Mayavadis are offenders. Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with the Mayavadis by turning them over to Maya-devī for repeated birth and death. Kṛṣṇa gives everyone what they desire, according to what they deserve—no more, no less.

One could ask: "If Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, gives a soul whatever he wants, why don't more people surrender to Him? Why do they worship others to fulfill their desires?" Kṛṣṇa answers this question in text 12.

Text 12: Men in this world desire success in fruitive activities, and therefore they worship the demigods. Quickly, of course, men get results from fruitive work in this world.

One who worships Kṛṣṇa for material benefits obtains his desires, but Kṛṣṇa first purifies his heart. The purification may take time and therefore the material reward may be delayed. Once the reward is achieved, however, the devotee usually no longer wants it. This was true in the case of Dhruva Maharaja and others. Therefore, greedy people who want material benefit worship Kṛṣṇa's servants, the demigods, to get quicker results.

One person worships the demigods for fruitive results, another worships Brahman, and yet another worships Kṛṣṇa with devotion. Does Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Isvara, control everyone's desires? Is it He who decides that one person will be a materialist and another a devotee and yet another a struggling spiritual aspirant? Is Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Controller, responsible for the suffering, enjoyment, pleasure, and pain of everyone in this world?

Text 13: According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable.

The *varṇasrama* system can raise someone from *karma-kāṇḍa* consciousness to the *niskama-karma* platform, whether one performs the duties of a *brahmana* or a *sudra*. That is the purpose of *varṇasrama-dharma*. Although the *varṇasrama* system was created by Kṛṣṇa, He does not place the *jivas* within that system. This fact was mentioned in text 11: *ye yatha mam prapadyante*. Kṛṣṇa reciprocates as the impartial Supersoul with the desires of the living entities. He always remains the non-doer and He does not directly reward the fruits of one's work.

Kṛṣṇa is unchangeable. According to *nyaya* (logic), one who reacts to another is himself transformed in some way. If I award you the fruits of your work, I must be transformed because I have reacted to what you have done. Kṛṣṇa directly says that He is the "non-doer" and "unchangeable" to show that He, although the Absolute Truth, is yet aloof. Although He is the creator of the *varṇasrama* system, He awards neither results nor reactions. Thus He is neither contaminated nor transformed.

This is inconceivable. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller and the cause of all causes, yet He will not accept responsibility for everything that happens to the *jivas*. We must each take responsibility for what occurs to us, even though everything ultimately depends on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa only sanctions—at times against His own desires—our wayward and rebellious activities and their subsequent results because those activities are products of our expression of free will. Kṛṣṇa is undoubtedly the cause of all causes—nothing happens without His sanction—yet for our rectification, He allows us to act as we like. In the meantime, he waits for the time when we will turn to Him and offer Him loving service. The material nature awards those who do not turn to Him the pious and impious fruits of their activities.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa explains that He is *akarta*, the non-doer. Kṛṣṇa has previously explained, *prakṛteh kriyamanāni, guṇaih karmani sarvasaḥ/ ahankara-vimudhatma, kartāham iti manyate*: "The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature." (Bg. 3.27)

Thinking that we are the cause of the results of our activities, Kṛṣṇa states, indicates that we are bewildered. Now Kṛṣṇa tells us that not only are we not the doer, but He is not the doer either. Who, then, is doing everything?

Kṛṣṇa sometimes takes one side of this issue and sometimes another. At times He wants to emphasize our position as tiny souls who should not be falsely proud of our prowess, thinking ourselves rightfully attached to the fruits of our activities. At such times, He emphasizes that we are not the doer, that we do not cause the fruits of our activities, and that the results of our activities are awarded to us by the material nature. At other times, He emphasizes our culpability; He wants us to take full responsibility for our actions and their reactions. Thus He may stress that He is also the non-doer.

In actuality, Kṛṣṇa, the material nature, and the living entities are all doers. The living entity desires to act, Kṛṣṇa (as the Supersoul) sanctions it, and the material nature facilitates the activity. Yet the weight of responsibility for the action rests solely upon the living entity. Although the living entity has no independent power to act, he initiates actions due to his desires, while both the Supersoul and the material nature facilitate their fulfillment as if neutral.

In the next verse, Kṛṣṇa will further explain how He is the non-doer, how He acts but does not act, as well as the value of thoroughly understanding these subtle truths.

Text 14: There is no work that affects Me; nor do I aspire for the fruits of action. One who understands this truth about Me also does not become entangled in the fruitive reactions of work.

Conditioned souls, bound by their independent desires for pleasure, attempt to act based on those desires. Their attempt causes the modes of material nature to react, resulting in activity and its reactions. Kṛṣṇa's own actions are different. Kṛṣṇa engages in many activities, but while acting, He is materially aloof and materially desireless because His activities are within the internal energy and are free from the modes of material nature. Because His work is materially desireless, no reactions attach themselves to His work. As both He and His devotees are transcendental to material control, neither fall within the *varṇasrama* system, despite their willingly following the strictures of prescribed duties.

As will be mentioned in the next verse, when the *jīva* understands these facts about Kṛṣṇa, and when he applies the same transcendental knowledge to his own work and becomes a servant of Kṛṣṇa, he also becomes aloof from the material world of action and reaction.

Text 15: All liberated souls in ancient times acted with this understanding of My transcendental nature. Therefore you should perform your duty, following in their footsteps.

Kṛṣṇa has no attachment to the fruits of work. Knowing this, Arjuna should fight with faith and for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure if he desires to become liberated. Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to fight, but in knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's position and as an offering to Him. In this way, Arjuna should follow the example of the previous great devotees.

In the next nine verses (16–24), and in pursuance of Kṛṣṇa's description of His own work, Kṛṣṇa will now explain how work (*karma*) can be seen as inactivity (*akarma*). Arjuna previously expressed that he wished to leave the battlefield and to avoid the results of his *karma*, like a *jñāni*, through inactivity. Kṛṣṇa will show him that no *karma* will be accrued by one who works in transcendental knowledge.

Text 16: Even the intelligent are bewildered in determining what is action and what is inaction. Now I shall explain to you what action is, knowing which you shall be liberated from all misfortune.

In the next verse Kṛṣṇa adds the principle of *vikarma* (forbidden action) to His presentation of *karma* and *akarma*.

Text 17: The intricacies of action are very hard to understand. Therefore one should know properly what action is, what forbidden action is, and what inaction is.

Karma refers to activities done according to Vedic injunction. Such activities are generally referred to as *karma-kāṇḍiya* actions. [Make all references to *karma-kāṇḍa*, *Karma-kāṇḍic*, and *karma-kāṇḍiya* consistent. BJD. I don't know what is most correct, so I leave it to Brajabihārī Prabhū.—Kdd] Due to the performer's material desires, *karma-kāṇḍiya* activities yield reactions, albeit "good" ones.

Vikarma means activities prohibited in the *Vedas*. Such prohibited activities produce "bad" reactions.

Akarma refers to work performed for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. Such work brings no material reaction, good or bad. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda classifies *vikarma* and *karma* together under the category of *vikarma*: "To understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness and action according to its modes, one has to learn one's relationship with the Supreme; i.e., one who has learned perfectly knows that every living entity is an eternal servitor of the Lord and that consequently one has to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The entire *Bhagavad-gītā* is directed toward this conclusion. Any other conclusions, against this consciousness and its attendant actions, are *vikarmas*, or prohibited actions. To understand all this one has to associate with authorities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and learn the secret from them; this is as good as learning from the Lord directly. Otherwise, even the most intelligent persons will be bewildered."

Having introduced the term *vikarma*, Kṛṣṇa returns to the distinction between *karma* and *akarma*.

Text 18: One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is intelligent among men, and he is in the transcendental position, although engaged in all sorts of activities.

"Inaction in action" refers to devotional service—activities performed only for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's servants receive no material reactions for their service because they act as Kṛṣṇa acts, without the contamination of seeking reward for their work.

"Action in inaction" is the opposite. A *sannyāsi* without transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa may appear to not be performing work, but as a soul, he can neither avoid activity nor the entangling results of that activity. Devoid of transcendental knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, he must act, but he cannot act in Kṛṣṇa's service, for he has no knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. He is thus liable to all reactions.

For example, the *sannyāsi* must breathe. He must also eat. He steps on living entities as he walks through the streets. All these activities have no transcendental basis for him and thus accrue reactions.

Every soul is unavoidably active. Artificial attempts at inactivity lead to further danger: unengaged senses coupled with an impure mind. Anyone who couples an attempt at spiritual practice while the mind meditates on sense enjoyment will fall down, even if such an unfortunate "renunciate" appears to be less "in" the world than a devotee.

Krsna further explains this verse in text 19.

Text 19: One is understood to be in full knowledge whose every endeavor is devoid of desire for sense gratification. He is said by sages to be a worker for whom the reactions of work have been burned up by the fire of perfect knowledge.

Srila Prabhupada comments: “Only a person in full knowledge can understand the activities of a person in Krsna consciousness. Because the person in Krsna consciousness is devoid of all kinds of sense-gratificatory propensities, it is to be understood that he has burned up the reactions of his work by perfect knowledge of his constitutional position as the eternal servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is actually learned who has attained to such perfection of knowledge.”

A devotee in transcendental knowledge never desires sense enjoyment because He knows Krsna as Lord and master and himself as Krsna’s servant. He is thus free from material desires and his actions are *akarma*, producing no reactions.

Text 20: Abandoning all attachment to the results of his activities, ever satisfied and independent, he performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of undertakings.

We should not give up work; we should be satisfied by dutiful work. We should also give up attachment to the fruits of the work. Such a person actually does “nothing.” This verse describes a *sadhaka*, one trying for perfection. The perfection of this consciousness (*siddha*) is explained in verses 21 and 22.

Text 21: Such a man of understanding acts with mind and intelligence perfectly controlled, gives up all sense of proprietorship over his possessions, and acts only for the bare necessities of life. Thus working, he is not affected by sinful reactions.

Srila Prabhupada explains: “[The Krsna conscious person] moves exactly like a part of a machine. As a machine part requires oiling and cleaning for maintenance, so a Krsna conscious man maintains himself by his work just to remain fit for action in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. He is therefore immune to all the reactions of his endeavors. Like an animal, he has no proprietorship even over his own body. A cruel proprietor of an animal sometimes kills the animal in his possession, yet the animal does not protest. Nor does it have any real independence. A Krsna conscious person, fully engaged in self-realization, has very little time to falsely possess any material object. For maintaining body and soul, he does not require unfair means of accumulating money. He does not, therefore, become contaminated by such material sins. He is free from all reactions to his actions.”

This verse speaks of a highly advanced, perfected devotee who is constantly greedy for Krsna’s service. He considers himself insignificant and gives no importance to anything outside that service. His qualities will now be further described.

Text 22: He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions.

A devotee on this platform makes no endeavor even to beg for his sustenance. He depends on Krsna, who looks upon such an exalted soul with great affection. Sripada Madhavendra Puri is an example of a devotee on this level. Madhavendra Puri neither worked nor begged for his food. He ate only when someone was prompted by Krsna from within to offer him food.

When Madhavendra Puri traveled in Vraja-dhama, he refrained from begging. One day, as Madhavendra Puri sat at Govinda-kunda near Govardhana Hill, Krsna saw Madhavendra Puri’s affection, detachment, and faith, and then personally brought him milk. The devotional consciousness of such a materially detached, spiritually attached soul is so sweet that it even attracts Krsna.

Endowed with this consciousness, the devotee’s mind is free from the dualities of the material world. All day the conditioned soul sees good and bad. He yearns for pleasure and attempts to avoid distress. The devotee is above such considerations because he sees Krsna’s hand in everything that happens.

The next verse introduces *yajna*. That subject will be expanded in verses 25–33.

Text 23: The work of a man who is unattached in the modes of material nature and who is fully situated in transcendental knowledge merges entirely into transcendence.

Here Srila Prabhupada translates *yajnaya* as, “for the sake of Yajna (Krsna).” Our work is automatically situated in transcendence when performed for Krsna’s pleasure. Then automatically we become attached to the Lord and detached from matter.

Krsna will now describe a variety of sacrifices in the upcoming verses because these sacrifices have transcendental knowledge, the theme of this chapter, as their ultimate goal.

We should not underestimate the importance of acquiring transcendental knowledge. Knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, the *jivatma*, the material world, and the process of devotional service firms our devotional practices. *Tahan vistarita hana phale prema-phala, ihan mali sece nitya sravanadi jala*: “The creeper greatly expands in the Goloka Vṛndavana planet, and there it produces the fruit of love for Kṛṣṇa. Although remaining in the material world, the gardener regularly sprinkles the creeper with the water of hearing and chanting. (Cc., *Madhya* 19. 155)

From Srīla Prabhupada’s purport to that verse:

Every living entity is wandering within this universe in different species and on different planetary systems according to his fruitive activities. Out of many millions of living entities, one may be fortunate enough to receive the seed of *bhakti-lata*, the creeper of devotional service. By the grace of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, one nourishes the *bhakti-lata* by regularly sprinkling it with the water of (dia)*sravanam-kirtana*, hearing and chanting. In this way the seed of *bhakti-lata* sprouts and grows up and up through the whole universe until it penetrates the covering of the material universe and reaches the spiritual world. The *bhakti-lata* continues to grow until it reaches the topmost planetary system, Goloka Vṛndavana, where Kṛṣṇa lives. There the creeper takes shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord, and that is its final destination. At that time the creeper begins to grow the fruits of ecstatic love of God. It is the duty of the devotee who nourishes the creeper to be very careful. It is said that the watering of the creeper must continue: (dia)*ihan mali sece nitya sravanadi jala*. It is not that at a certain stage one can stop chanting and hearing and become a mature devotee. If one stops, one certainly falls down from devotional service. Although one may be very exalted in devotional service, he should not give up the watering process of (dia)*sravanam-kirtana*. If one gives up that process, it is due to an offense.

Cultivating Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge is therefore essential. Only then can knowledge and work be combined so that one’s work becomes a sacrifice to Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa summarizes his teachings on *akarma* by next describing the absolute quality of a sacrifice performed in spiritual consciousness.

Text 24: A person who is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature.

Work done based on transcendental knowledge and performed as a sacrifice is, along with its results, absolute because all work done for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure produces no *karma* and is thus transcendental.

Srīla Prabhupada explains the sacrifices that will now be described: “The word brahma (Brahman) means ‘spiritual.’ The Lord is spiritual, and the rays of His transcendental body are called *brahmajyoti*, His spiritual effulgence. Everything that exists is situated in that *brahmajyoti*, but when the *jyoti* is covered by illusion (*maya*) or sense gratification, it is called material. This material veil can be removed at once by Kṛṣṇa consciousness; thus the offering for the sake of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the consuming agent of such an offering or contribution, the process of consumption, the contributor, and the result are—all combined together—Brahman, or the Absolute Truth. When the mind is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is said to be in *samadhi*, or trance. Anything done in such transcendental consciousness is called *yajna*, or sacrifice for the Absolute.”

The “contribution, contributor, consumption, and result” are all necessary aspects of any sacrifice. The ultimate goal of all the following sacrifices is the pleasure of the Absolute Truth, for they all advance a practitioner in transcendental knowledge. Srīla Prabhupada confirms this: “How activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can lead one ultimately to the spiritual goal is described here. There are various activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and all of them will be described in the following verses. But, for the present, just the principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is described.”

In the next eight verses, Kṛṣṇa will explain that it is transcendental knowledge—ultimately about Kṛṣṇa—that is to be obtained through these other systems of sacrifice and austerities, all of which are typical in Vedic culture.

Text 25: Some yogis perfectly worship the demigods by offering different sacrifices to them, and some offer sacrifices in the fire of the Supreme Brahman.

Kṛṣṇa will later explain that to worship the demigods as if they were supreme or as if they independently supplied life’s necessities is for less intelligent persons. Demigods are empowered agents who supply worshipers with their chosen desires. Demigod worship will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 9. **[Proofreader: check the use of these chapter numbers as opposed to spelling out the number for consistency through the book.]**

We can worship the demigods properly by understanding them as agents of Visṇu. Maharaja Bharata, as described in *Bhag.* 5.7.5–7, provides a proper example of demigod worship. He worshiped the demigods, considering them as parts of the universal body of Lord Visṇu, not for material rewards, but to please Lord Visṇu.

Next Kṛṣṇa explains sacrifices according to one’s position in *varnasrama*.

Text 26: Some [the unadulterated brahmacaris] sacrifice the hearing process and the senses in the fire of mental control, and others [the regulated householders] sacrifice the objects of the senses in the fire of the senses.

A *brahmacari*'s mind is controlled when he engages it solely in hearing about Kṛṣṇa. The *grhastha* performs his sacrifice by restricting sex life according to sastric injunctions.

Kṛṣṇa next discusses *astanga-yoga*.

Text 27: Others, who are interested in achieving self-realization through control of the mind and senses, offer the functions of all the senses, and of the life breath, as oblations into the fire of the controlled mind.

There are ten kinds of life airs circulating in the body, five major and five minor. Controlling them controls the mind, which is the point of this verse. Kṛṣṇa will speak about *astanga-yoga* in detail in Chapter Six.

Verse 28 mentions four more *yajnas*.

Text 28: Having accepted strict vows, some become enlightened by sacrificing their possessions, and others by performing severe austerities, by practicing the yoga of eight-fold mysticism, or by studying the Vedas to advance in transcendental knowledge.

All these sacrifices elevate the participants. Yet pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness is far above these *yajnas*, as Srila Prabhupada reminds us: “Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be attained by any one of the above-mentioned types of sacrifice but can be attained only by the mercy of the Lord and His bona fide devotees.” Still, these *yajnas* provide gradual upliftment and can be stepping stones to devotional service.

The following verse again speaks of *pranayama* (yogic breath control), a part of the *astanga-yoga* practices.

Text 29: Still others, who are inclined to the process of breath restraint to remain in trance, practice by offering the movement of the outgoing breath into the incoming, and the incoming breath into the outgoing, and thus at last remain in trance, stopping all breathing. Others, curtailing the eating process, offer the outgoing breath into itself as a sacrifice.

Kṛṣṇa begins to sum up the purpose of all these sacrifices in the next verse.

Text 30: All these performers who know the meaning of sacrifice become cleansed of sinful reactions, and having tasted the nectar of the results of sacrifices, they advance toward the supreme eternal atmosphere.

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada explains that sacrifices are meant to award sense control and free performers from sinful reactions.

Text 31: O best of the Kuru dynasty, without sacrifice one can never live happily on this planet or in this life: what then of the next?

Text 32: All these different types of sacrifice are approved by the Vedas, and all of them are born of different types of work. Knowing them as such, you will become liberated.

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport: “Different types of sacrifices discussed above, are mentioned in the *Vedas* to suit the different types of workers. Because men are so deeply absorbed in the bodily concept, these sacrifices are so arranged that one can work either with the body, with the mind, or the intelligence. But all of them are recommended for ultimately bringing about liberation from the body. This is confirmed by the Lord herewith from His own mouth.”

One's position in the modes of material nature dictates his tendency and ability to perform a specific type of sacrifice. One person, influenced by the modes of material nature and his impressions from previous lives, chooses to perform a sacrifice of breath control. Another, performs sacrifice through *yajnas*. Yet another sacrifices material wealth. Superficially these sacrifices appear different, but they are only different paths born of a variety of consciousness but leading to the same goal. That goal—transcendental knowledge—brings freedom from material life.

Human life is meant for advancing in spiritual life. The process of advancing is sacrifice. In Chapter 3, we heard Kṛṣṇa's description of the Vedic *karma-kanda* sacrifices. A man works and achieves results as fruits from his work. He should offer at least some of those results in sacrifice to Visnu. One who makes no offerings—neither money, abilities, intelligence, mind, nor physical body—simply lives selfishly, in vain, for he has not advanced towards the Supreme Objective.

Modern man attempts to find happiness without sacrifice. His sense enjoyment may increase, but happiness eludes him. He also suffers in his next life, devoid of transcendental knowledge and condemned as a thief, by the law of *karma*.

The next text establishes transcendental knowledge as the desired result of performing sacrifice.

Text 33: O chastiser of the enemy, the sacrifice performed in knowledge is better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. After all, O son of Prtha, all sacrifices of work culminate in transcendental knowledge.

We may perform a *karma-kanda* sacrifice and give up a limited amount of sense gratification so that later we can increase it by ten-fold. This is a sacrifice performed within the material realm. Such a sacrifice is performed with meager knowledge of the difference between body and soul, and with no factual knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's position. Thus that sacrifice is inferior to the sacrifice performed in knowledge. The sacrifice performed in knowledge leads one to higher platforms of transcendental knowledge.

Concluding His discussion of sacrifices, Kṛṣṇa now describes how to directly attain transcendental knowledge.

Text 34: Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge into you because they have seen the truth.

Srila Prabhupada's purport reveals: "The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple. No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. The *Bhagavatam* (6.3.19) says, *dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam*: the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help lead one to the right path. Nor by independent study of books of knowledge can one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective. One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding. In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries. A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect." [I'm not sure what Brajabihari Prabhū decided about whether to typeset lengthy quotes as extracts or not. I set one a few verses back, but it can either be changed back to regular text or this one changed to an extract.]

Srila Rupa Gosvami explains that accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master is the first item of devotional service (*adau gurupadasraya*). The knowledge we receive from the spiritual master will now be described.

Text 35: Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.

One result of knowledge is that we no longer fall into illusion. Arjuna should not think that his relatives will die. He should understand that all living entities, whether animal or demigod or human being, are different from their bodies. In addition, he should understand that all living entities are nondifferent from, and are situated within, Kṛṣṇa.

Srila Prabhupada writes: "The result of receiving knowledge from a self-realized soul, or one who knows things as they are, is learning that all living beings are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. The sense of an existence separate from Kṛṣṇa is called *maya*."

Maya turns us away from Kṛṣṇa. Instead of thinking that "Kṛṣṇa is mine and I am Kṛṣṇa's," we consider ourselves independent of Him. We are, however, eternally Kṛṣṇa's "part and parcels." We come from Kṛṣṇa (part), yet we are eternally individual units (parcels). We need to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa and serve Him, rather than imagining that we are the center of existence.

The next verse describes another fruit of transcendental knowledge: going beyond sin.

Text 36: Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries.

In Chapter 1, Arjuna feared sin and its resultant suffering. Kṛṣṇa herein tells Arjuna that one situated on the platform of transcendental knowledge is not affected by the good or bad results of his activities.

The words *api cet* ("even if") are used when one accepts the occurrence of an unlikely or apparently self-contradictory event. The question could be asked, "How can a sinful man gain knowledge? If he has knowledge, how can he still act sinfully?" Kṛṣṇa acknowledges this contradiction. He accepts the impossible situation to be possible so that He can glorify the purifying effects of transcendental knowledge.

Transcendental knowledge both nullifies sinful and pious reactions.

Text 37: As a blazing fire turns firewood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all reactions to material activities.

Transcendental knowledge destroys all reactions, both sinful and pious. All, that is, except *parabdha-karma* (the matured reactions, such as our present material body, etc.). *Parabdha-karma* can be removed only by *bhakti*. Why doesn't Kṛṣṇa destroy His pure devotee's *parabdha-karma*? Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura says that Kṛṣṇa keeps the pure devotee's *parabdha-karma* so that the devotee can preach.

Kṛṣṇa further glorifies transcendental knowledge.

Text 38: In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time.

Kalena means "in due course of time." Kṛṣṇa uses the word *kalena* to warn against premature renunciation—simply adopting the outer garb of a *sannyasi*—as if that will automatically fix us in knowledge and free us from sin. Kṛṣṇa also uses the term *kalena* to encourage detached work, which truly bestows transcendental knowledge. "In due course of time" indicates that transcendental knowledge is gradually revealed in the heart of one practicing *niskama-karma-yoga*. By work, not by renouncing work, it manifests.

Kṛṣṇa next explains the position of faith in acquiring knowledge.

Text 39: A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace.

Here Kṛṣṇa explains the qualifications a man needs to obtain transcendental knowledge. He must be faithful, dedicated, and sense-controlled. He works faithfully, knowing that his detached work will bring transcendental knowledge and "the supreme, spiritual peace" (liberation). Without faith, as Kṛṣṇa explains below, peace is unobtainable.

Text 40: But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next.

Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Thākura gives a technical explanation that differentiates between "the faithless" and "the doubter." He explains that in this verse Kṛṣṇa mentions three classes of people that fail: the ignorant (*ajnah*), the faithless (*asraddadhanah*), and the doubters (*samsayatmanah*). The ignorant are foolish. They have no knowledge of standard scriptures and are compared to animals. The faithless hear from many scriptures, but they do not have faith in any of them. They think, "One *sastra* says this, another says that."

Doubters have some faith, but they nevertheless harbor doubts that following *sastra* will truly award results. They thus follow, but not with full faith, hope, and optimism. Such doubters achieve happiness neither in this world nor the next. Even fools attain some material happiness. Doubters attain none.

Kṛṣṇa next reveals how to destroy doubts.

Text 41: One who acts in devotional service, renouncing the fruits of his actions, and whose doubts have been destroyed by transcendental knowledge, is situated factually in the self. Thus he is not bound by the reactions of work, O conqueror of riches.

When a person applies transcendental knowledge to work, he will both act dutifully and renounce the fruits of his actions. Such a person is actually situated in the self. He knows he is not the body. He knows that work performed for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure will not bind him with reactions. His transcendental knowledge has removed his doubts.

In the next and final verse in this chapter, Kṛṣṇa requests Arjuna to act on the strength of his conviction—based on transcendental knowledge.

Text 42: Therefore the doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Bharata, stand and fight.

Arjuna is sitting in his chariot and is determined not to fight. Kṛṣṇa wants him to stand and do his duty. He also wants him to fight in the right consciousness: fixed in transcendental knowledge and detached from the results. Combining work and knowledge will free Arjuna from the sinful reactions he fears.

Here is a summary of this chapter, according to Śrīla Prabhupada's purport to this verse. I have added titles to the sections of his purport to separate the different discussions:

The goal of sacrifice, part I

"The *yoga* system instructed in this chapter is called *sanatana-yoga*, or eternal activities performed by the living entity. This *yoga* has two divisions of sacrificial actions: one is called sacrifice of one's material possessions, and the other is called knowledge of self, which is pure spiritual activity. If sacrifice of one's material possessions is not

dovetailed for spiritual realization, then such sacrifice becomes material. But one who performs such sacrifices with a spiritual objective, or in devotional service, makes a perfect sacrifice.”

The two levels of spiritual knowledge

“When we come to spiritual activities, we find that these are also divided into two: namely, understanding of one’s own self (or one’s constitutional position), and the truth regarding the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One who follows the path of *Bhagavad-gita* as it is can very easily understand these two important divisions of spiritual knowledge. For him there is no difficulty in obtaining perfect knowledge of the self as part and parcel of the Lord. And such understanding is beneficial, for such a person can easily understand the transcendental activities of the Lord.”

Learning of the transcendental activities of the Lord

“In the beginning of this chapter, the transcendental activities of the Lord were discussed by the Supreme Lord Himself. One who does not understand the instructions of the *Gita* is faithless, and is to be considered to be misusing the fragmental independence awarded to him by the Lord. In spite of such instructions, one who does not understand the real nature of the Lord as the eternal, blissful, all-knowing Personality of Godhead is certainly fool number one.”

The goal of sacrifice part II

“Ignorance can be removed by gradual acceptance of the principles of Krsna consciousness. Krsna consciousness is awakened by different types of sacrifices to the demigods, sacrifice to Brahman, sacrifice in celibacy, in household life, in controlling the senses, in practicing mystic *yoga*, in penance, in foregoing material possessions, in studying the *Vedas*, and in partaking of the social institution called *varnasrama-dharma*. All of these are known as sacrifice, and all of them are based on regulated action. But within all these activities, the important factor is self-realization. One who seeks that objective is the real student of *Bhagavad-gita* . . .”

Properly learning transcendental knowledge

“But one who doubts the authority of Krsna falls back. One is therefore advised to study *Bhagavad-gita*, or any other scripture, under a bona fide spiritual master, with service and surrender. A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord as they were imparted millions of years ago to the sun-god, from whom the instructions of *Bhagavad-gita* have come down to the earthly kingdom. One should, therefore, follow the path of *Bhagavad-gita* as it is expressed in the *Gita* itself and beware of self-interested people after personal aggrandizement who deviate others from the actual path. The Lord is definitely the Supreme Person, and His activities are transcendental. One who understands this is a liberated person from the very beginning of his study of *Bhagavad-gita*.”

Chapter Five

Karma-yoga—Action In Krsna Consciousness

Although Krsna has now explained transcendental knowledge to him, Arjuna is still confused. In texts 16–18 of the fourth chapter, Krsna glorified *jnana* and spoke of action in inaction and inaction in action. In text 41, Krsna glorified both *jnana* and renunciation. Then in text 42, He again ordered Arjuna to fight. Therefore, Chapter Five opens with a question similar to the one Arjuna asked at the beginning of Chapter Three: “Which is better, work or renunciation of work?”

Text 1: Arjuna said: O Krsna, first of all you ask me to renounce work, and then again You recommend work with devotion. Now will You kindly tell me definitely which of the two is more beneficial.

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport: “In the Fourth Chapter the Lord told Arjuna that all kinds of sacrificial work culminate in knowledge. However, at the end of the Fourth Chapter, the Lord advised Arjuna to wake up and fight, being situated in perfect knowledge. Therefore, by simultaneously stressing the importance of both work in devotion and inaction in knowledge, Krsna has perplexed Arjuna and confused his determination. Arjuna understands that renunciation in knowledge involves cessation of all kinds of work performed as sense activities. But if one performs work in devotional service, then how is work stopped? In other words, he thinks that *sannyasa*, or renunciation in knowledge, should be altogether free from all kinds of activity, because work and renunciation appear to him to be incompatible. He appears not to have understood that work in full knowledge is non-reactive and is therefore the same as inaction. He inquires, therefore, whether he should cease work altogether or work with full knowledge.” It is Krsna’s plan that Arjuna should remain confused because the dialogue is actually taking place for our benefit, not for Arjuna’s. Arjuna’s perplexity gives Krsna the chance to further stress that work and renunciation are not opposed to each other; rather, one must learn to work in a renounced spirit. Arjuna thinks that *jnana* implies renunciation of work. Knowledge and work, like light and darkness, are mutually opposites. Krsna emphasizes, however, that one in knowledge should also work.

Text 2: The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied: The renunciation of work and work in devotion are both good for liberation. But, of the two, work in devotional service is better than renunciation of work.

This is the second time Kṛṣṇa has directly rejected seeking perfection through dry renunciation and *jnana* and instead recommends work. Renunciation and work both have the same goal, but of the two, detached work is safer, more practical, and easier. Working in knowledge purifies the heart and solidifies whatever realization we attain. The *karma-sannyasi* renounces work. If material desires arise, he cannot take shelter of work to purify himself because having restrained his senses from interaction with their objects, his senses have no engagement. There is a more practical path of renunciation.

Text 3: One who neither hates nor desires the fruits of his activities is known to be always renounced. Such a person, free from all dualities, easily overcomes material bondage and is completely liberated, O mighty-armed Arjuna.

Such a worker is called a *nitya-sannyasi*. A *sannyasi* is meant to achieve liberation; one who renounces the fruits of his activities will attain it. Such detachment—feeling neither hatred nor desire for the fruits of work—is the mark of a true *sannyasi*.

Text 4: Only the ignorant speak of devotional service [karma-yoga] as being different from the analytical study of the material world [sankhya]. Those who are actually learned say that he who applies himself well to one of those paths achieves the results of both.

Both *karma-yoga* and *sankhya-yoga (jnana)* involve renunciation. The question is whether one should work with detachment or renounce work altogether. Kṛṣṇa’s answer is consistent and clear: these are not two different paths with two separate goals, but aspects of the same path with the same goal.

How are renunciation and work the same? If I am holding a rock in my hand and I want to pick up my bead bag, I drop the rock to free my hand. Then I can pick up the bead bag. Similarly, someone who is attached to his material desires must first drop his material connection before picking up spiritual taste.

However, these two steps can also be performed as one step: by picking up one object I will automatically drop the other. *Karma-yoga* done with detachment allows us to become materially detached and spiritually attached at the same time. This topic will now be further discussed.

Text 5: One who knows that the position reached by means of analytical study can also be attained by devotional service, and who therefore sees analytical study and devotional service to be on the same level, sees things as they are.

Kṛṣṇa repeats His point from text 4 for emphasis. These two processes and how they are related to each other are described in Srīla Prabhupada’s purport:

“The real purpose of philosophical research is to find the ultimate goal of life. Since the ultimate goal of life is self-realization, there is no difference between the conclusions reached by the two processes. By *sankhya* philosophical research one comes to the conclusion that a living entity is not a part and parcel of the material world but of the supreme spirit whole. Consequently, the spirit soul has nothing to do with the material world; his actions must be in some relation with the Supreme. When he acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is actually in his constitutional position. In the first process, *sankhya*, one has to become detached from matter, and in the devotional *yoga* process one has to attach himself to the work of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Factually, both processes are the same, although superficially one process appears to involve detachment and the other process appears to involve attachment. Detachment from matter and attachment to Kṛṣṇa are one and the same. One who can see this sees things as they are.”

The verse begins, *sankhya-yogau*. Here, *sankhya* refers to *jnana* and *yoga* refers to *niskama-karma-yoga*. Kṛṣṇa clearly recommends devotional service (*karma-yoga*) as the better means to achieve the goal, even though both *jnana* and *karma-yoga* lead to *sthanam sasvatam*, “the place from which no one falls down.” It is important to understand that Kṛṣṇa is not speaking about a variety of paths leading to a variety of inferior or superior destinations. Rather, He is describing two paths, one easy and one difficult, leading to the same goal. (These verses are applicable whether someone is trying to attain Brahman, Paramatma, or Bhagavan realization, but Srīla Prabhupada has translated *yoga* as “devotional service” because he always directs his readers toward Bhagavan. This is also the preferred purpose of Kṛṣṇa’s words.)

If we renounce activities before our hearts are clean, we will be forced by our unclean hearts to engage in improper activities. The senses will demand engagement, but the *jnana-yoga* process forbids sense activity. Unless the senses are engaged in good work, it will be difficult to stop improper work. Kṛṣṇa therefore recommends keeping the senses always engaged while simultaneously purifying the heart by working with detachment. This is the practical and therefore better path. The comparison between the two paths continues in the following verse.

Text 6: Merely renouncing all activities yet not engaging in the devotional service of the Lord cannot make one happy. But a thoughtful person engaged in devotional service can achieve the Supreme without delay.

In texts 7–12, Kṛṣṇa describes how to practice *niskama-karma-yoga*.

Text 7: One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. Though always working, such a man is never entangled.

In his purport, Srīla Prabhupada paraphrases Bg. 2.12, which describes the individuality of the soul. Srīla Prabhupada does this because *sarva-bhutatma-bhutatma* can be taken to mean that we “become the soul of all living entities.” This is clearly not what Kṛṣṇa is saying. Instead, He uses the words *sarva-bhutatma-bhutatma* to refer to the qualities possessed in the three stages of advancement: *visuddhatma* (a purified soul with purified intelligence), *vijitatma* (one who is self-controlled), and *jitendriya* (one who has conquered his senses). A person who possesses these three qualities has not become one with everyone, as the Mayavadis interpret, but feels that everyone is dear to him.

How can everyone be dear to Arjuna as he stands on the battlefield, ready to kill his enemies? Srīla Prabhupada writes: “Arjuna was only superficially offensive because (as has already been explained in the Second Chapter) all the assembled persons on the battlefield would continue to live individually, as the soul cannot be slain. So, spiritually, no one was killed on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra. Only their dresses were changed by the order of Kṛṣṇa, who was personally present. Therefore Arjuna, while fighting on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, was not really fighting at all; he was simply carrying out the orders of Kṛṣṇa in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such a person is never entangled in the reactions of work.”

In the next two verses, Kṛṣṇa describes the *jitendriya*, the renounced, sense-controlled worker, as he goes about his activities.

Texts 8–9: A person in the divine consciousness, although engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving about, sleeping and breathing, always knows within himself that he actually does nothing at all. Because while speaking, evacuating, receiving, or opening or closing his eyes, he always knows that only the material senses are engaged with their objects and that he is aloof from them.

Kṛṣṇa describes how transcendental knowledge on the level of knowing that we are not our bodies should be expressed through work. This knowledge allows us to work aloof from the material body. Such a person sees his body acting, but he has no interest in the fruits of his actions. He thinks: “My senses are relating to the sense objects according to my previous *karma*. This has nothing to do with me, the consciousness, the soul within my body.” As will be explained in the next verse, by the power of his detachment, a man of knowledge does not implicate himself in *karma*.

Text 10: One who performs his duty without attachment, surrendering the results unto the Supreme Lord, is unaffected by sinful action, as the lotus leaf is untouched by water.

One should be situated in knowledge, and then do one’s duty with detachment. Such a person will perceive the body’s actions—it works, it touches, it moves, it does so many things—“but I myself do nothing. I am a soul and I am aloof.” With this realization, one can perform his duty without attachment and then surrender all the results to Kṛṣṇa. Thus there will be no sinful reactions accrued by his work, just as a lotus leaf sits on the water but is not touched by the water. Lotus leaves have a waxy surface. Water immediately glides off of them. In the same way, reactions “glide off” one performing *niskama-karma-yoga*.

The question can be raised, “If someone is detached from work due to his knowledge that he is spirit soul and not this body, what is the purpose of his work?”

Text 11: The yogis, abandoning attachment, act with body, mind, intelligence and even with the senses, only for the purpose of purification.

Kaivalya comes from the word *kevala*, which is defined as “purified” in the transliteration of this verse. *Kevala* can also mean “only.” Srīla Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, taking the meaning as “only,” explains that this word glorifies the purifying potency of *niskama-karma*, and that it applies to a person one step lower than the one spoken of in the previous verse. A person working in the knowledge that only his senses are acting is considered detached, even if his mind sometimes wanders due to material desire. Such a person gradually becomes purified by his detached work.

Srīla Baladeva Vidyābhusana, however, defines *kaivalya* as “purified.” He explains this verse in terms of *bhakti* and as an explanation of the previous verses. Purified senses have only one engagement—service to Kṛṣṇa. Srīla Prabhupada writes in his purport to this verse: “This is the perfect stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Kṛṣṇa next compares the attached to the unattached.

Text 12: The steadily devoted soul attains unadulterated peace because he offers the result of all activities to Me; whereas a person who is not in union with the Divine, who is greedy for the fruits of his labor, becomes entangled.

This is a summary of the previous verses.

The next four verses raise a point Kṛṣṇa has already discussed in the third and fourth chapters—namely, *who is the doer?*—the living entity, material nature, or Kṛṣṇa as Paramatma. In the first of these three verses, Kṛṣṇa describes the *jivatma*'s role.

Text 13: When the embodied living being controls his nature and mentally renounces all actions, he resides happily in the city of nine gates [the material body], neither working nor causing work to be done.

No one thinks, “Because I live in this city, I *am* the city.” A real *sannyasi* does not identify himself with the city of his material body, nor does he think that success and failure are achieved by his own power. He understands that he should renounce the fruits of his activities but not the work itself because he is not the doer. Everything is carried out and achieved by a power greater than himself. Neither does he think of himself as doing nothing. He knows that despite his endeavor, his success ultimately depends on powers beyond him. Is Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes, the awarder of material success and failure?

Text 14: The embodied spirit, master of the city of his body, does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he create the fruits of action. All this is enacted by the modes of material nature.

Srila Prabhupada explains: “The temporary body or material dwelling place which he obtains is the cause of varieties of activities and their resultant reactions. Living in such a conditional atmosphere, one suffers the results of the activities of the body by identifying himself (in ignorance) with the body. It is ignorance acquired from time immemorial that is the cause of bodily suffering and distress. As soon as the living entity becomes aloof from the activities of the body, he becomes free from the reactions as well. As long as he is in the city of body, he appears to be the master of it, but actually he is neither its proprietor nor controller of its actions and reactions.”

The living entity within the body does nothing. Kṛṣṇa, in the Sanskrit of this verse even repeats the word “*na*” three times (*na kartrtvam na karmani . . . na karma-phala-samyogam*). The conditioned soul does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he control the fruits of even his own activities. All this happens by the modes of material nature.

Who, then, controls the modes of material nature? The Supersoul controls them. This point is not difficult to understand and accept. Often, though, people draw a wrong conclusion, placing all responsibility for our actions and reactions on the Supersoul: “Because the Supersoul is the doer, He must also be responsible for my sinful actions. Why, then, should I receive the reactions for what is being caused by the Supersoul?” To remove this misconception, Kṛṣṇa speaks the next verse.

Text 15: Nor does the Supreme Lord assume anyone’s sinful or pious activities. Embodied beings, however, are bewildered because of the ignorance which covers their real knowledge.

Kṛṣṇa is beginning to further the progression of transcendental knowledge, which will take us from knowing ourselves as souls to our becoming liberated through surrender to the Supersoul.

Basic transcendental knowledge allows us to understand that we are not our bodies. Now we understand that the modes of material nature control our bodies. Both the modes and the living entities are controlled by the Supersoul. Although the Supersoul is the ultimate controller, He is not responsible for the living entity’s activities or their reactions.

To say that because the living entity is not ultimately the doer, he is not responsible for his actions and reactions, is to present Mayavada philosophy. The living entity cannot be considered completely aloof. Srila Prabhupada writes, “[The Supreme Lord] does not create a particular situation for any living entity, but the living entity, bewildered by ignorance, desires to be put into certain conditions of life, and thereby his chain of action and reaction begins. A living entity is, by superior nature, full of knowledge. Nevertheless, he is prone to be influenced by ignorance due to his limited power.” The living entity must accept responsibility for his own actions.

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* purport to 10.87.25 states, “Although the soul is in truth both conscious and active, the proponents of Sankhya philosophy wrongly separate these two functions of the living force (*atmani ye ca bhidam*), ascribing consciousness to the soul (*purusa*) and activity to material nature (*prakṛti*). According to the *Sankhya-karika* (19–20),

*tasmac ca viparyasat
siddham saksitvam purusasya
kaivalyam madhya-sthyam
drastrtvam akartr-bhavas ca*

‘Thus, since the apparent differences between *purusas* are only superficial (being due to the various modes of nature that cover them), the *purusa*'s true status is proven to be that of a witness, characterized by his separateness, his passive indifference, his status of being an observer, and his inactivity.’

*tasmat tat-samyogad
acetanam cetana-vad iva lingam
guna-kartrtve 'pi tatha
karteva bhavaty udasinah*

‘Thus, by contact with the soul, the unconscious subtle body seems to be conscious, while the soul appears to be the doer although he is aloof from the activity of nature’s modes.’

Srila Vyasadeva refutes this idea in the section of the *Vedanta-sutra* (2.3.31–39) that begins, *karta sastrartha-vattvat*: ‘The *jiva* soul must be a performer of actions, because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose.’ Acarya Baladeva Vidyabhusana, in his *Govinda-bhasya*, explains: ‘The *jiva*, not the modes of nature, is the doer. Why? Because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose (*sastrartha-vattvat*). For example, such scriptural injunctions as *svarga-kamo yajeta* (‘One who desires to attain to heaven should perform ritual sacrifice’) and *atmanam eva lokam upasita* (*Bṛhad-aranyaka Up.* 1.4.15: ‘One should worship with the aim of attaining the spiritual kingdom’) are meaningful only if a conscious doer exists. If the modes of nature were the doer, these statements would serve no purpose. After all, scriptural injunctions engage the living entity in performing prescribed actions by convincing him that he can act to bring about certain enjoyable results. Such a mentality cannot be aroused in the inert modes of nature.” [This is a long quote. It should be placed as an extract in the layed-out book.]

How the living entity in the tight grip of material nature is the doer can be compared to the attempt of a small boy to lift a weight he has just seen his father lift. The boy first desires to lift the weight and then tries. He cannot possibly succeed, but out of affection, his father sees his small son’s desire, stands above him, and does the actual lifting. Thus the father has actually lifted the weight, but he cannot be considered the only lifter because unless the desire was expressed and the attempt made by the child, the father would have never helped and the weights would not have been lifted.

Similarly, like the small child, the living entity should not become bewildered by false ego and pride and consider himself the doer of activities which he has no ability to perform. That does not mean, however, that the living entity can avoid the responsibility of having performed the activity because he both expressed the desire and made the attempt.

When the living entity is ignorant of his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, he chooses his independent position, which in turn, welds him to the material nature and places him under its control. Thus he is responsible for his own reactions.

Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport: “The Lord is *vibhu*, or omniscient, but the living entity is *anu*, or atomic. Because he is a living soul, he has the capacity to desire by his free will. Such desire is fulfilled only by the omnipotent Lord. And so, when the living entity is bewildered in his desires, the Lord allows him to fulfill those desires, but the Lord is never responsible for the actions and reactions of the particular situation which may be desired. Being in a bewildered condition, therefore, the embodied soul identifies himself with the circumstantial material body and becomes subjected to the temporary misery and happiness of life. The Lord is the constant companion of the living entity as Paramatma, or the Supersoul, and therefore He can understand the desires of the individual soul, as one can smell the flavor of a flower by being near it. Desire is a subtle form of conditioning for the living entity. The Lord fulfills his desire as he deserves: man proposes and God disposes. The individual is not, therefore, omnipotent in fulfilling his desires. The Lord, however, can fulfill all desires, and the Lord, being neutral to everyone, does not interfere with the desires of the minute independent living entities. However, when one desires Kṛṣṇa, the Lord takes special care and encourages one to desire in such a way that one can attain to Him and be eternally happy.”

Although the living entity is not the ultimate doer, he is still responsible for his actions because his actions are all the result of his desire to turn away from Kṛṣṇa. The Supersoul acts as the living entity’s best friend and fulfills his desires. Even though He is the Supreme Controller, He cannot be held accountable for the living entity’s choices because He acts only as the neutral sanctioner. The Supersoul is neutral and therefore not responsible. He does not accept the living entity’s good and bad reactions. This is knowledge. The result of understanding this point is described in the next verse.

Text 16: When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

One who is enlightened does not think himself the doer. He thinks, “Kṛṣṇa, who is the Supersoul, is fulfilling my desires. I am not independent.” Such knowledge destroys the “ignorance acquired from time immemorial” and reveals everything just as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

Due to knowledge born of the mode of goodness, the living entity becomes detached and aloof from his body. *Sattvat sanjayate jnanam*: The mode of goodness develops knowledge. Simply being in the mode of goodness, however, cannot liberate the living entity because he will still be influenced by one of the three modes of material nature. Knowledge springing from goodness—the understanding that the body and soul are different—is only the gateway to liberation. By definition, liberation, transcends the modes of material nature.

Here is another way to analyze how knowledge leads to liberation. There are three doers: the living entity is “doer #1.” If he has knowledge, he realizes that all bodily activities are automatically carried out by the three modes of material nature. Therefore, the modes are “doer #2.” The modes consist of inert matter, however. Therefore, they simply carry out the activities desired by the living entity and sanctioned by the Supersoul. Thus Supersoul is “doer #3.”

We become enlightened by understanding accurately the interrelation between the living entity, the three modes of nature, and the Supersoul. This knowledge removes ignorance. When ignorance is removed, the living entity takes shelter of the Supersoul and attains liberation.

Text 17: When one’s intelligence, mind, faith and refuge are all fixed in the Supreme, then one becomes fully cleansed of misgivings through complete knowledge and thus proceeds straight on the path of liberation.

This verse carries the progression of knowledge toward liberation further by stressing that knowledge is only the gateway to liberation; it does not in itself give liberation. Next, as described in this verse, we must become “fixed in the Supreme” and must then practice devotion to the Supersoul in order to achieve liberation. When we learn that the Lord is impartial and we fix our intelligence on that quality of the Supersoul, we ourselves become free of partiality. Our sins are then destroyed, we become purified, and ultimately, we transcend the material world. This is further explained in the next verse.

Text 18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

“True knowledge” refers not only to knowing the difference between matter and spirit, but to knowing the Supersoul.

The *brahmana* and the cow are in the mode of goodness. The elephant is in the mode of passion, and the dog and the dog-eater are in ignorance. The learned person sees that the Supersoul has been the impartially sanctioned the desires all the living entities, regardless of their present karmic positions.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura gives a wonderful explanation of this verse. Krsna has said that one who possesses knowledge is a *pandita*. A *pandita* is *sama-darsinah*, he possesses equal vision. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, however, brings the *pandita*’s Paramatma realization to the platform of Bhagavan realization. He explains that *sa* means “with” and *ma* indicates Laksmi, the goddess of fortune. A sage sees, therefore, not only Paramatma, but Lord Narayana, who is always with the goddess of fortune. Furthermore, since Srimati Radharani is the original goddess of fortune (*laksmi-sahasra-sata-sambhrama-sevyamanam*), the *sama-darsana* vision of a sage of the highest order is of Radha and Krsna. Seeing Radha and Krsna in everyone’s heart is the highest vision of equality toward all living entities.

Text 19: Those whose minds are established in sameness and equanimity have already conquered the conditions of birth and death. They are flawless like Brahman, and thus are already situated in Brahman.

Sameness and equanimity can be experienced on either the Brahman, the Paramatma, or the Krsna conscious platform. The Brahmanavadi sees everything as situated in Brahman. The Paramatmavadi sees the Supersoul at work in all dealings as He impartially sanctions the karmic reactions of all living entities. The Paramatmavadi is undisturbed because he understands that everything is occurring by Krsna’s will. Thus he remains calm, even in an ocean of material turbulence. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states:

*tat te ’nukampam su-samiksamno
bhunjana evatma-krtam vipakam
hrd-vag-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te
jiveta yo mukti-pade sa daya-bhak*

My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances with his heart, words and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim.

—*Bhag.* 10.14.8

A devotee recognizes everything that happens to him as Krsna’s kindness and, therefore, everything increases his devotion. Such a devotee is *mukti-pade*, already liberated. More of his characteristics are next mentioned.

Verse 20: A person who neither rejoices upon achieving something pleasant nor laments upon obtaining something unpleasant, who is self-intelligent, who is unbewildered, and who knows the science of God, is already situated in transcendence.

Both the practicing devotee (*sadhaka*) and the perfect devotee (*siddha*) should behave as this verse describes. Such a person does not identify with the transformations of the subtle body. His happiness and distress do not, therefore, bring him happiness and distress. Because he is not bewildered by what happens to him, but instead sees everything as Krsna’s mercy, he does not become entangled in matter. Text 21 continues to describe the symptoms of a person focused on the Supersoul.

Verse 21: Such a liberated person is not attracted to material sense pleasure but is always in trance, enjoying the pleasures within. In this way, the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness, for he concentrates on the Supreme.

The practitioner uses his intelligence to reject sense gratification and instead seeks pleasure in the Supreme. The degree to which he replaces sensuality with spirituality is the measure of his success. Srila Prabhupada explains: “The highest pleasure in terms of matter is sex pleasure. The whole world is moving under its spell, and a materialist cannot work at all without this motivation. But a person engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can work with greater vigor without sex pleasure, which he avoids. That is the test in spiritual realization. Spiritual realization and sex pleasure go ill together.”

When the devotee becomes *yukta*, connected with the Supreme, he experiences unlimited happiness and loses all attraction to matter. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura comments that just as a person eating sweetmeats has no inclination to eat mud, so a liberated person is not attracted to material sense pleasure.

In the next two *slokas*, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna why sensual desires are foolish.

Verse 22: An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are due to contact with the material senses. O son of Kunti, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise man does not delight in them.

The *sadhaka* needs to fix this principle strongly in his intelligence: “Sense gratification equals misery.” A *sadhaka* becomes free from the material modes by a combination of intellectual taste and a higher taste.

The result of tolerating sense desires and not succumbing to their pushings is explained below.

Verse 23: Before giving up this present body, if one is able to tolerate the urges of the material senses and check the force of desire and anger, he is well situated and is happy in this world.

Devotees often wonder how long we will have to tolerate the pushings of the mind and senses. Sometimes, they think *maya* will finally give up on them and leave them alone, and that one morning we will wake up a liberated soul. This verse informs us, however, that we must continue to tolerate sense attraction until death.

We can remain tolerant by fixing our consciousness on Kṛṣṇa. The pleasure of Kṛṣṇa consciousness combined with the conviction that nothing in this world can bring lasting happiness will help us tolerate the pushings of the body and mind.

The pleasure of spiritual realization is the topic of the next verse.

Text 24: One whose happiness is within, who is active and rejoices within, and whose aim is inward is actually the perfect mystic. He is liberated in the Supreme, and ultimately he attains the Supreme.

Srila Prabhupada writes: “Unless one is able to relish happiness from within, how can one retire from the external engagements meant for deriving superficial happiness? A liberated person enjoys happiness by factual experience. He can, therefore, sit silently at any place and enjoy the activities of life from within. Such a liberated person no longer desires external material happiness. This state is called *brahma-bhuta*, attaining which one is assured of going back to Godhead, back to home.”

We must get a higher taste. It is urgent. We have to hear, chant, and find good association. Otherwise, how will we be able to tolerate these urges over a long period of time?

Kṛṣṇa gives more symptoms of one seeking satisfaction in spirit not matter.

Text 25: Those who are beyond the dualities that arise from doubts, whose minds are engaged within, who are always busy working for the welfare of all living beings, and who are free from all sins achieve liberation in the Supreme.

After hearing verses 24 and 25, we may become discouraged. We may think it is too difficult to achieve liberation. In text 24, Srila Prabhupada’s translation uses the word “ultimately,” as if to assure us that we won’t achieve it quickly. Similarly, the qualities mentioned in these two verse are rarely found. Kṛṣṇa is reassuring in the next verse out of His kindness and His desire to encourage both Arjuna and ourselves.

Text 26: Those who are free from anger and all material desires, who are self-realized, self-disciplined and constantly endeavoring for perfection, are assured of liberation in the Supreme in the very near future.

This verse appears to contradict the last *slokas*. How is it possible that something so difficult to obtain will be achieved in “the very near future?” Srila Prabhupada answers this question in his purport when he quotes the verse, “By vision, by meditation and by touch only do the fish, the tortoise and the birds maintain their offspring. Similarly do I also, O Padmaja!” Kṛṣṇa constantly meditates upon, nurtures, and carries to His lotus feet the beloved devotees who fix their consciousness upon Him. It is not possible for us to weed out the unlimited manifestations of our material

conditioning on our own. Krsna will notice our sincerity and will personally help. The impossible becomes possible only by His mercy.

Krsna has now finished his discussion of how to gain liberation by working in complete knowledge of the Supersoul. The next two verses explain how to achieve that same liberated condition through *astanga-yoga*. These two texts serve as an introduction to Chapter Six, which deals with *astanga-yoga*.

Text 27–8: Shutting out all external sense objects, keeping the eyes and vision concentrated between the two eyebrows, suspending the inward and outward breaths within the nostrils, and thus controlling the mind, senses and intelligence, the transcendentalist aiming at liberation becomes free from desire, fear and anger. One who is always in this state is certainly liberated.

Srila Prabhupada explains how these verses fit into this section of the *Gita*: “After explaining the above principles of liberation in the Supreme, the Lord gives instruction to Arjuna as to how one can come to that position by the practice of the mysticism or *yoga* known as *astanga-yoga*, which is dividable into an eightfold procedure called *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. In the Sixth Chapter the subject of *yoga* is explicitly detailed, and at the end of the Fifth it is only preliminarily explained.”

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana explains that these verses point progressively upward on the *yoga* ladder: when knowledge is added to *karma*, it turns into *niskama-karma-yoga*. Now the *niskama-karma-yogi* who has purified his heart and learned to restrain his senses from their objects must remove the impressions of sense enjoyment which may linger in his mind through the *yoga* process.

After this brief preview to Chapter 6, Krsna ends this chapter by telling Arjuna how he can remain peaceful on, of all places, the battlefield.

Text 29: A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.

This is a famous verse. In it, Krsna summarizes many of the topics discussed thus far in the *Bhagavad-gita* and He brings them into the context of achieving liberation. *Bhoktaram yajna* and *sarva-loka mahesvaram* refer to Krsna, not the demigods, as the final enjoyer of all sacrifices performed by one practicing *karma-kanda* or *karma-yoga*. *Bhoktaram tapasam* refers to Krsna being the goal and the beneficiary of the *jnani*'s attempts at austerities. *Surhrdam sarva-bhutanam* is directed to the *yogis* who meditate on the Supersoul, because it is the Supersoul who accompanies the *jiva* from body to body as his well-wishing friend.

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura adds that Krsna, through His devotees, is the well-wishing friend of all living entities.

Knowing Krsna's position in relation to *karma-kanda* or *karma-yoga* activities, understanding that knowledge of Him is the goal of all *tapasya*, and finally recognizing Him as the Supersoul, the well-wishing friend in everyone's heart, brings us to the only true platform of peace: liberation from the material world.

Jnana (knowledge that we are eternal souls), renunciation, and sense control cannot actually give us liberation. We must take shelter of the Paramatma.

Srila Prabhupada discusses this chapter in his purport: “This Fifth Chapter is a practical explanation of Krsna consciousness, generally known as *karma-yoga*. The question of mental speculation as to how *karma-yoga* can give liberation is answered herewith. To work in Krsna consciousness is to work with the complete knowledge of the Lord as the predominator. Such work is not different from transcendental knowledge.” That transcendental knowledge is knowledge of the Supersoul, and that knowledge awards liberation.

(These are my comments on Chapters 6 and 7.

I've deleted most of the text where there are no comments. The comments appear as annotations; to see these, choose "Annotations" from the "View" menu above.)

Chapter Six

Text 1:

The phrase “lights no fire” refers to *brahmanas*. One of the

Text 3:

practices first *dharana*, then *dhyana*, different intensities of

Text 9:

This verse describes the most advanced stages of the *yogarudha* platform. It is difficult for even a great sage to give up family attachment, yet Krsna says *sama-buddhir*, the *yogi* must be equal to family members, friends, and enemies.

We tend to consider someone who appreciates us as a man of good discrimination and one who doesn't appreciate us as envious. *Suhrt* means one who does good to another who has done bad to him. *Mitra* is a friend, *ari* a killer. *Udasina* refers to a neutral, non-caring person. A *madhya-stha* is an impartial judge—he is concerned, but he doesn't take sides. The *dvesya* is envious. He doesn't kill, but he causes trouble. *Bandhusu* means blood relative. How can we

Text 10:

Having described the *yogarudha* stage, Krsna now explains how to practice yoga on that stage. One must be *nirasir*, completely free of material desires and possessiveness. He must also be *ekaki*, alone, and *rahasi*, live in a secluded place. He should not even be accompanied by his disciples.

Texts 11–12:

The aspiring *yogi* has to live alone, free from fear and attachment. He must sit still (not stand or sleep) and focus his mind. He must use his own *asana*, not another's *asana* because *asanas*, *kamadalus*

Text 18:

When the *yogi*'s mind is free from all disturbances and remains situated in the Self, he is call *yukta*—successful.

Text 25:

Sanaih sanair means “gradually, step by step.” The *yogi* should act slowly and steadily. He cannot expect instant success. The intelligence has to become fixed by properly hearing the *sastra*.

Text 26:

Here Krsna uses three adjectives to describe the mind. *Niscalati* (agitated), *cancaalam* (flickering), and *asthiram* (unsteady). The

Text 33:

By the strength of his intelligence, he might be able to do it for a few days, but how is it possible for Arjuna to see both his friends

Text 34:

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura comments that the intelligence is sometimes compared to a sharp needle. As a sharp needle can easily pierce cloth or paper, strong intelligence can pierce through a difficult problem or situation. Arjuna, however, does not

Text 35: Lord Sri Krsna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment.

Text 44:

His previous practice (*purvabhyasena*) automatically attracts him (*hriyate hy avaso*), and he remains attracted despite the

Text 45:

Because rigid practice (*prayatnat*) is more difficult to achieve from a *sucinam* birth (birth in a pious, religious family) or a *srimatam* birth (birth in a rich mercantile or royal family) than from a birth in a *yoginam-dhimatam* family (a family of transcendentalists possessing great wisdom).

Text 46:

The *tapasvi* is mentioned in 4.28. Although he performs more

advanced. Thus this verse reveals the progressive rungs on the yoga ladder by clearly glorifying *yogis* above *karmis*, *jnanis*, and *tapasvis*. Krsna now gives his final statement about the highest caliber of *yogi*.

Text 47:

Gradually he progresses to the point where *antar-atmana*, Krsna has entered his very existence and the devotee becomes *mat-gatena*, always absorbed in thoughts of Krsna.

Srila Prabhupada describes the process of becoming *mat-gatenantar-atmana* beautifully near the end of his purport:

Chapter Seven

Text 1:

Kṛṣṇa begins by saying *mayy asakta-manah*, “with mind attached to Me.” The word *asakta* refers to attachment to Kṛṣṇa (*asakti*). *Asakti* is the state one achieves before he experiences *bhava*. Then Kṛṣṇa says, *yogam yunjan mad-asrayah*, “by practicing yoga in full consciousness of me” *asamsaya samagram*, “we can know Kṛṣṇa completely without doubt.” How do we attain this? *Tac chrnu*, simply by hearing about Kṛṣṇa.

Text 2:

Jnana generally refers to knowing that the body and soul are different. Here, however, it also includes knowledge of Kṛṣṇa and His energies. Śrīla Ramanujacarya says that the *vijnana* mentioned here refers to knowledge of Kṛṣṇa’s form.

Text 4:

The first five gross elements, when combined with their sense objects (earth—smell, water—taste, fire—form, air—touch, and

fourth element, which is the cause of false ego. All these material elements are called *apara*, inferior, because they lack individual consciousness.

In the next two verses, Kṛṣṇa will explain that the material creation consists of two parts: the material energy and the *tathasta-sakti* (the living entities). It has already been explained in Chapter Two that the living entities are spiritual by nature.

Text 6:

The combination of Kṛṣṇa’s two energies makes up everything—both living and non-living—in the material world. The two energies are called *ksetra* and *ksetrajna* and they will be discussed in detail in Chapter 13. The point we are to understand here, however,

Text 10:

Śrīla Prabhupada writes that *bijam* means seed. That seed is *pradhana*, the undifferentiated sum total of the material elements—the seed of material existence.

Text 14:

The three modes tie us tightly to the material world. Śrīla Prabhupada tells us that *guna* also means “rope.” A rope is made strong by weaving together three strands. Similarly, these three modes woven together bind the conditioned soul tightly to illusion.

Text 15:

Śrīla Prabhupada describes each of these four types of *duskṛtinās* in his purport. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and

They take to hearing mundane village news (*gramya-katha*) the way pigs take to eating garbage. According to Śrīla Baladeva

Mayayapahrta-jnanis often follow atheistic *sankhya* philosophy and think that creation is enacted by material nature. Thus

Text 16:

The *jijnasur* is curious. He approaches Kṛṣṇa to understand the soul, Sanskrit grammar, logic (*nyaya*), and to become self-realized. Saunaka Āṣi is an example of a *jijnasur*.

The *artha-arthi* may want to enjoy land, money, sons, or a wife in this life or the next. Fortunately, he asks Kṛṣṇa, not the demigods, to supply his desires. Dhruva Maharaja is an example of an *artha-arthi*.

All of the above categories describe *sakama* devotees. More specifically, they are *karma-misra bhaktas* because they turn to

The *jijnasur* is mentioned in the Sanskrit verse between *artah* and the *artha-arthi* because both must come to the platform of *jijnasur*, curiosity about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to advance. If they are

Text 17:

He is called *eka-bhaktir*, interested only in devotional service. It is clear that Kṛṣṇa is using the term “*jnani*” to refer to one who has abandoned his pursuit of *jnana* and turned to *bhakti*. In other words, Kṛṣṇa is not referring to one who practices *bhakti* in order to obtain knowledge. Such a *jnani* loves Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa loves him.

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyabhusana comments that this type of *jnani* (the devotee in knowledge who desires only Kṛṣṇa’s service) is so dear to Kṛṣṇa that the Lord is not satisfied to say that he is the best of the four. Kṛṣṇa opens His heart further and says, *mama priyah* “he is most dear.”

After hearing this verse, one may conclude that the three *karma-misra bhaktas* are insignificant and only the *jnani* is important. Anticipating this, Krsna speaks text 18.

Text 18:

Such persons are also dear to Krsna because they have approached Him, out of love, to have their needs fulfilled.

Sri Cakravartipada continues saying that Krsna considers the *jnani*, on the other hand, to be like His own self. The *jnani* neither

Text 19:

This verse stresses the rarity of pure devotion. The *artah*, *jijnasuh*, and *artha-arthi* must come to the *jnani's* level before they are eligible to go back to Godhead. That is the clear message

Text 20:

Influenced by the lower modes, their knowledge is stolen away because they foolishly think the demigods can fulfill their desires

Text 23:

As the demigods eventually perish, so do the fruits that they offer. Both the demigods and Krsna give fruits to their worshippers, but the followers of the demigods are called *alpa-medhasam*, less

Text 24:

Krsna just described demigod worshipers as *alpa-medhasam*, possessing “small intelligence.” Here He labels the impersonalists *abuddhayah*, even less intelligent. *Abuddhayah* can also be translated as possessing “no intelligence.” Srila Prabhupada systematically reveals their misconceptions in his long purport.

Text 26:

She carries out His orders from afar and cannot affect Him. “*Mam tu veda na kancana*” signifies that truly knowing Krsna is very rare.

Text 27:

From the beginning of creation, the conditioned living entities are born into the illusory world of duality, desire, and hate. They desire (*iccha*) one set of sense objects and are repulsed (*dvesa*) by other

Text 30:

Three additional concepts now mentioned are: *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva*, and *adhyajna*. Arjuna will ask their meaning in the

Chapter Eight

“Who is the *adhidaiva*?” asks whether the *adhidaiva*, the governor of the demigods, refers to the Virata Purusa or the demigods themselves.

Text 4:

In answering Arjuna’s questions, Krsna has explained the potency of knowing and remembering Him at the time of death* by understanding Him as *adhibhuta*, the Lord controlling all material transformations, *adhidaiva*, the source of the Virata-rupa and the

Text 7:

at the time of death when our consciousness will be disjointed and overwhelmed with pain. Therefore, Krsna wants us to practice now. Krsna will repeat His desire for us to constantly remember Him in 18:57 as well as in other verses.

Text 14:

yoga and *hatha-yoga*. The principles of these yoga systems have some *bhakti* added, but this verse particularly mentions pure *bhakti-yoga*, without any mixture of *jnana*, *karma* or *hatha*. As indicated by the word *ananya-cetah*, in pure *bhakti-yoga* the devotee desires nothing but Krsna. A pure devotee does not desire promotion to

Ananya-cetah means undeviating, with no desire for heavenly pleasure or liberation. *Satatam* and *nitya* mean with no break, always serving for one’s entire life without consideration of time and place. Krsna is so pleased by such an

* ☐Those in full consciousness of Me, who know Me, the Supreme Lord, to be the governing principle of the material manifestation, of the demigods, and of all methods of sacrifice, can understand and know Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, even at the time of death.☐ (Bg. 7.30)

attitude that even if one is not on that platform but only desiring to reach it, He becomes *su-labhah*, easy to obtain. Krsna removes all obstacles from such a devotee's path.

A vivid example illustrating the importance of *ananya-cetah bhakti* is found in Lord Caitanya's *lila*. Once Lord Caitanya went to

Text 20:

These verses explain the *paramam gati*, the supreme abode mentioned in 8.15. That place is eternal and transcendental and it is

Chapter Nine

Text 2:

observed in sinful life. Sinful reactions may be just waiting to take effect (*phalonmukha*), reactions may be still further dormant (*kuta*), or the reactions may be in a seed-like state (*bija*). In any

Text 10:

Maya [check use of diacritic. It strikes me as wrong.] means "My," *adhya* means "under," and *aksa* means "eyes." Thus, *mayadyaksa* literally means "under My eyes." Everything is done under Krsna's supervision.

Text 15:

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada mentions three levels of Krsna worshippers: the *mahatma*, the *sukrtinas*,* and the three kinds of *jnani*'s who worship the Absolute Truth. It is these *jnanis* are being discussed in this verse.

"... there are others who are still lower, and these are divided into three: (1) he who worships himself as one with the Supreme Lord, (2) he who concocts some form of the Supreme Lord and worships that, and (3) he who accepts the universal form, the *visvarupa* of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and worships

The first type of *jnani* mentioned is the *ekatvena*, the one who worships himself as one with the Supreme. This person is the lowest of the three. Although he is a monist, he is still considered performing worship of God because he understands that he is not the material body, but spirit soul. This category is the most predominant.

Above them is the *prthaktvena*, the one who concocts some form of the Lord and worships that. This category includes those who worship the demigods, imagining any demigod form as the Supreme.

The best of the three is the *visvato-mukham*, he who worships the Lord's universal form. Such a person cannot conceive of anything beyond the manifestation of the material universe. He considers the universe to be the supreme entity and worships that, the *adhidaiva*.

Krsna already discussed the results gained by the *ekatvena* in verses 11 and 12. In the next four verses, He will explain how to recognize and worship Him in His universal form. This is for the *visvato-mukham*. Further on in this chapter, Krsna will also discuss the results of the *prthaktvena*'s worship of the demigods.

Text 16:

Next Krsna describes the *prthaktvena*, the one who worships the demigods as if they were Supreme, and do not directly worship their source and empowering agent, the Supreme Lord.

Text 22:

darsana of Krsna and Balarama. The "beating" marks on the beautiful dark boy's back were the result of the Acarya's having scratched out the word "*vahami*." Krsna had been forced to come personally to prove the truth of His words, "I carry what they lack."

Text 24:

To contrast the differing destinations of demigod worshippers and Krsna-*bhaktas*, Krsna speaks verse 25.

Text 26:

Worshipping Krsna is simple. *Patram*, *puspam*, *phalam*, *toyam*, are all in the singular.

Text 28:

narayana-parah sarve, na kutascana bibhyati
svargapavarga-narakesv, api tulyartha-darsinah(dia)

Text 29:

* Bg. 7.16

Krsna is compared to rain. Trees absorb rain water and then grow and produce fruits. Some trees produce bitter fruits and others produce sweet ones. Does this mean the rain is partial? Similarly, regardless of a living entity's situation, Krsna equally nourishes

Krsna vowed *ye yatha mam prapadyante, tams tathaiva bhajamy aham*, "As all surrender to Me, I reward them accordingly." Here He confirms that He reciprocates even more personally with His devotees who love Him. He is not like a *kalpa-vrksa* tree that

Text 30:

Still, the question may be raised: "How can a person committing *su-duracara* (highly improper activities) be regarded as saintly?"

Text 31:

Such a fixed devotee is quickly purified by his desire to remember the Lord. As Srila Prabhupada points out, there is no need for him to perform any ceremonial atonement (*prayascitta*). Devotion alone is sufficient.

"How can the performer of inappropriate behavior be considered a *sadhu*? Krsna says: *mantavya*—you should think of him as a *sadhu, eva*, certainly.

"Due to his determination, Krsna keeps him as a *sadhu* and accepts the impurity of his activity. Krsna does not use the future tense.

"Krsna: He very quickly becomes *dharmatma*, righteous, and thus I accept him. He laments for His bad deeds and remembers Me again and again. His heart burns in lamentation. 'Alas! Alas! No other devotee is like me! I'm a black spot upon the society of

"Arjuna: I understand. You are saying that such a person becomes *dharmatma*. I don't dispute this. But if he *remains* a *duracari*, should we consider him a *sadhu* during his life?

"Hearing this, Krsna became angry and His eyes opened wide. '*Kaunteya pratijanihi*,'" My devotee never perishes! He does not perish even at death.

"Why doesn't Krsna make this oath directly? This dialogue took place prior to the Kuruksetra war. Lord Krsna, before speaking, thought for a moment. 'Out of affection, I never fail to protect My devotee even if it entails breaking My word. In the upcoming battle, to protect Arjuna from Bhishma, I will have to break My vow not

Text 32: O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaisyas [merchants] and sudras [workers]—can attain the supreme destination.

Text 33: How much more this is so of the righteous brahmanas, the devotees and the saintly kings. Therefore, having come to this temporary, miserable world, engage in loving service unto Me.

Text 34:

Krsna herein gives four instructions: 1. *man-mana*—always think of me; 2. *mad-bhaktto*—become My devotee; 3. *mad-yaji*—worship Me; and 4. *mam namaskuru*—offer obeisances to Me.

Chapter Ten

Text 2 :

It is not possible for anyone to fully understand its source.

Text 3:

The demigods can be glorified as *loka-mahesvaram*, but they are neither *ajam* nor *anadi*. Lord Brahma is *ajam* and *loka-mahesvaram*, but he is a *jiva* and his existence as Lord Brahma is not beginningless. Similarly, the sages are liberated. Because they don't identify themselves with their bodies but as unborn, eternal, spirit souls, they can be considered *ajam* and *anadi*. But they are not *loka-mahesvaram*. Only Krsna possesses all three qualities.

were already tied around baby Krsna's waist never broke. Equally inconceivable is how Krsna, the *loka-mahesvaram*, the master of all, allowed Himself to be controlled by Arjuna as He drove

Text 7:

These next four verses are the *catur-sloki* of the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Text 8:

Everything emanates from Krsna. He is *svayam bhagavan*

Text 9:

Mad-gata-prana indicates that Krsna is the life of His devotees.

Text 10:

One may ask why Krsna gives *buddhi-yoga* (intelligence) to the devotees who already have *ramate* (bliss) [check Sanskrit usage]?

Text 11:

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains Krsna's thinking as follows: "After such devotees attain My mercy and I take charge, their attaining knowledge becomes My responsibility. This knowledge that I give does not refer to knowledge in goodness. This knowledge is different, for it comes from devotion and is like a darkness dispelling lamp. Because I personally destroy their ignorance, they need not make any personal endeavor. I Myself care for them and supply both their spiritual and daily needs." He adds, "These verses are the essence of the *Bhagavad-gita*. They remove the distress of the living entity and grant peace."

Understanding who Krsna is and how He reciprocates with His pure devotees, we naturally desire to surrender to Him. When we surrender to the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-bliss granting

Text 14:

"above." Even Brahma and Siva work under Krsna's control. How then can they independently understand Krsna, what to speak of less powerful demigods or demons? Therefore, only Krsna can truly know Himself, and Arjuna will point this out in the next verse.

Text 16:

Arjuna asks Krsna to tell him of His opulence, yet Krsna has already explained that He is everything (*aham sarvasya prabhavo*). Arjuna, however, is requesting more information. Why? Because he wants to think of Krsna. Krsna recommended this process to Arjuna at the end of Chapter 6 (*mad-gatenantar-atmana*, "always abide in Me, always think of Me within yourself") and in the last verse of Chapter 9 (*man-mana bhava mad-bhakto*, "always

Text 18:

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura describes how Arjuna wants to hear more to aid his meditation on Krsna. Therefore, he addresses Krsna as Janardana. *Jana* means "people" and *ardana*, in this context, means "beggar." Arjuna is begging to hear the nectarean glories of Krsna and wants to "... taste the nectar of Your words." How can one taste nectar with his ears? Arjuna's ears have become tongue-like in their eagerness to taste Krsna's sweet words.

Text 26:

Nara means "mankind" or "spiritual." *Da* means "giving or

Text 31:

The Rama referred to here is Parasurama because Krsna is explaining His *vibhutis*, His opulences, not His incarnations. Parasurama is a living entity empowered (*saktyavesa*) to wield weapons. Lord Ramacandra and Lord Balarama are incarnations.

Text 32:

Nyaya, logic, teaches different ways to reach a conclusion, including *vitanda*, *vada*, and *jalpa*. Krsna says, "I am *vada*, the natural conclusion." *Vitanda* and *jalpa* are forms of argument in which winning, not necessarily determining the truth, is the main consideration.

Text 33:

In Sanskrit, no word can be pronounced without the vowel "a." Similarly, nothing exists without Krsna.

A certain construction of Sanskrit compound words indicates that the first word is more important than the second. Another type of compound indicates that the second word is more important than the first. In yet another type of compound, neither word is important. [Neither word is important, or neither word is more important? Should be adjusted if necessary.

[From Bd: I think it must be as written. If otherwise, what would be the difference between the *dvandva* and the compound. Sanskritist, please check.] But in the *dvandva* compound, both words are equally important. In his grammar *Hari-namamrta-vyakarana*, Srila Jiva Gosvami calls this compound the *rama-krsna samasa* because both Rama and Krsna are of equal importance.

Text 34:

The word *sri*, fortune, refers to knowledge for a *brahmana*, strength for a *ksatriya*, and wealth for a *vaisya*. Possessing *vak*, the quality of fine speech, is reserved for one who speaks Sanskrit, a perfect language. *Smrti*, memory, is that by which one remembers his experiences. *Medha*, intelligence, refers to the capacity to retain *sastra*. *Dhrti*,

steadfastness, refers to one who remains calm, even when there is cause for agitation. *Ksama*, patience, is the quality by which a person is unaffected by happiness and distress.

Chapter Eleven

"The Universal Form"

Although Kṛṣṇa is driving Arjuna's chariot, He pervades and supports the entire universe. Arjuna therefore wishes to see Kṛṣṇa's all-pervading form. Thus after two introductory verses, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to reveal His universal form.

Text 1: Arjuna said: By my hearing the instructions You have kindly given me about these most confidential spiritual subjects, my illusion has now been dispelled.

Text 2: O lotus-eyed one, I have heard from You in detail about the appearance and disappearance of every living entity and have realized Your inexhaustible glories.

Text 3: O greatest of all personalities, O supreme form, though I see You here before me in Your actual position, as You have described Yourself, I wish to see how You have entered into this cosmic manifestation. I want to see that form of Yours.

In 10.16 Arjuna requested to hear the details of Kṛṣṇa's unlimited opulence, but Kṛṣṇa gave only eighty-two examples. Arjuna, having heard but an insignificant fragment of Kṛṣṇa's glories, is now eager to see Kṛṣṇa's all-pervading form of unlimited opulence. Actually, Arjuna will gain nothing for himself by seeing this form. *Yatha* ("as it is") means that Arjuna already accepts Kṛṣṇa's two-armed form as supreme. He calls Kṛṣṇa both *purusottama* and *paramesvara*, the best of personalities and the Supreme Lord. Why then does Arjuna request to see, as Srila Prabhupada calls it in his purport to 11.8, Kṛṣṇa's fearsome "godless display of opulence," a form that devotees generally never wish to see? Srila Prabhupada offers Arjuna's reasons in his purports to both texts one and three:

"Arjuna no longer thinks of Kṛṣṇa as a mere human being, as a friend of his, but as the source of everything. Arjuna is very enlightened and is glad that he has such a great friend as Kṛṣṇa, but now he is thinking that although he may accept Kṛṣṇa as the source of everything, others may not. So in order to establish Kṛṣṇa's divinity for all, he is requesting Kṛṣṇa in this chapter to show His universal form. . . . Arjuna wants to see the universal form to set a criterion, for in the future there would be so many impostors who would pose themselves as incarnations of God. The people, therefore, should be careful; one who claims to be Kṛṣṇa should be prepared to show his universal form to confirm his claim to the people."

Arjuna continues his request in text 4.

Text 4: If You think that I am able to behold Your cosmic form, O my Lord, O master of all mystic power, then kindly show me that unlimited universal Self.

The word *yogesvara*, master of all mystic power, is used by Arjuna to indicate that he feels himself unqualified to see the universal form, but that he has faith that Kṛṣṇa can enable him to see it by His mystic power. The word *prabhu* as used here can also mean "one who has the capacity, power or strength" (i.e., to show the universal form). Srila Prabhupada explains these points in his purport:

"Arjuna could understand that for a living entity it is not possible to understand the unlimited infinite. If the infinite reveals Himself, then it is possible to understand the nature of the infinite by the grace of the infinite. The word *yogesvara* is also very significant here because the Lord has inconceivable power. If He likes, He can reveal Himself by His grace, although He is unlimited. Therefore Arjuna pleads for the inconceivable grace of Kṛṣṇa. He does not give Kṛṣṇa orders. Kṛṣṇa is not obliged to reveal Himself unless one surrenders fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and engages in devotional service."

Kṛṣṇa's responds by offering to show Arjuna the opulences he spoke of in Chapter Ten.

Text 5: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, O son of Prtha, see now My opulences, hundreds and thousands of varied divine and multicolored forms.

Text 6: O best of the Bharatas, see here the different manifestations of Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvini-kumaras, and all the other demigods. Behold the many wonderful things which no one has ever seen or heard of before.

Text 7: O Arjuna, whatever you wish to see, behold at once in this body of Mine! This universal form can show you whatever you now desire to see and whatever you may want to see in the future. Everything—moving and nonmoving—is here completely, in one place.

Krsna used the word *pasya* three times in the last two verses. He is emphasizing that Arjuna should "just see" this wonderful universal form which has never been seen before, although an aspect of it was once shown to Duryodhana.

In an attempt to avoid the upcoming Battle of Kuruksetra, Maharaja Yudhishthira sent Krsna to Duryodhana as a messenger of peace. Duryodhana and Karna's response, however, was foolish. To express their disdain for the Pandavas' strength, they plotted to bind Krsna with ropes and throw Him into prison. Only a great devotee such as Yasoda-devi, however, can evoke submission within the unlimitedly powerful Lord and bind Him. Binding Krsna was impossible for Duryodhana because he was envious and devoid of *bhakti*. Duryodhana and Karna's attempt only caused Krsna to laugh out loud, saying, "You cannot bind Me. I exist everywhere!" At that time, Krsna showed part of His universal form to a frightened yet still unsubmissive Duryodhana. Duryodhana continued to minimize Krsna despite this show of power by saying, "Oh, Krsna simply has some mystic powers."

The universal form shown to Duryodhana was only a partial manifestation of the universal form Krsna will now show to Arjuna.

Srila Prabhupada explains the significance of the word *eka-stham* in his purport to text 7. Arjuna will inconceivably be able to see the whole universe—including, all space and time, past, present, and future—*eka-stham*, while remaining in one place, on one part of Krsna's body.

Text 8: But you cannot see Me with your present eyes. Therefore I give you divine eyes. Behold My mystic opulence!

Krsna uses the word *divyam* to describe the divine "eyes" or vision He will award to Arjuna to enable Arjuna to behold His universal form.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura poses and then answers the following question: "Why did Arjuna need Krsna's gift of 'divine' eyes to see His universal form when he was already so qualified that he was able to see Krsna's supreme form, His two-armed form?"

Divya-caksuh refers to the vision of a demigod, who, although having devotion, possesses material desires. It is "divine" because it is far above the vision of an ordinary human, although it cannot compare with the truly divine, love-saturated vision possessed by a pure devotee. Without *divya* vision, an exalted devotee such as Arjuna would have remained uninterested in the Lord's universal form; his consciousness was already always focused on Krsna in His two-armed form.

Yasoda-devi, for example, while testing whether or not Krsna had eaten dirt, showed no interest whatsoever in Krsna's universal form. (The universal form revealed to Yasoda did not contain the ghastly, destructive *kala-rupa* aspects that Arjuna will later see.)

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada shows that Arjuna's attainment of "divine vision" was not a sign of Arjuna's advancing, because Krsna specifically awards only the vision of the demigods and not the demigod mentality which may have bred within Arjuna attachment for the universal form. "A pure devotee does not like to see Krsna in any form except His form with two hands; a devotee must see His universal form by His grace, not with the mind but with spiritual eyes. To see the universal form of Krsna Arjuna is told not to change his mind but his vision. The universal form of Krsna is not very important; that will be clear in subsequent verses. Yet because Arjuna wanted to see it, the Lord gives him the particular vision required to see that universal form.

"Devotees who are correctly situated in a transcendental relationship with Krsna are attracted by loving features, not by a godless display of opulences. The playmates of Krsna, the friends of Krsna and the parents of Krsna never want Krsna to show His opulences. They are so immersed in pure love that they do not even know that Krsna is the Supreme

Personality of Godhead. In their loving exchange they forget that Krsna is the Supreme Lord. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* it is stated that the boys who play with Krsna are all highly pious souls and after many, many births they are able to play with Krsna. Such boys do not know that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They take Him as a personal friend."

And again, as in his purports to texts 2 and 3, Prabhupada explains the actual purpose behind Arjuna's desire: "The fact is that the devotee is not concerned with seeing the *visva-rupa*, the universal form, but Arjuna wanted to see it to substantiate Krsna's statements so that in the future people could understand that Krsna not only theoretically or philosophically presented Himself as the Supreme but actually presented Himself as such to Arjuna. Arjuna must confirm this because Arjuna is the beginning of the *parampara* system. Those who are actually interested in understanding this Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, and who follow in the footsteps of Arjuna should understand that Krsna not only theoretically presented Himself as the Supreme, but actually revealed Himself as the Supreme.

"The Lord gave Arjuna the necessary power to see His universal form because He knew that Arjuna did not particularly want to see it, as we have already explained."

Until this point, Krsna has only spoken about the universal form. In the next verse, Krsna gives Arjuna the *divya-caksuh*, the divine vision that will allow Arjuna to actually see it.

Text 9: Sanjaya said: O King, having spoken thus, the Supreme Lord of all mystic power, the Personality of Godhead, displayed His universal form to Arjuna.

Sanjaya, also empowered to see the universal form, next describes Arjuna's vision.

Text 10-11: Arjuna saw in that universal form unlimited mouths, unlimited eyes, unlimited wonderful visions. The form was decorated with many celestial ornaments and bore many divine upraised weapons. He wore celestial garlands and garments, and many divine scents were smeared over his body. All was wondrous, brilliant, unlimited, all-expanding.

The word *divya* is used four times in these two verses to describe the extraordinary ornaments, weapons, garlands, and fragrances of the universal form. Srila Prabhupada describes the word *aneka* (many) in the purport, showing that Arjuna saw unlimited manifestations distributed throughout the universe.

Text 12: If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once into the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form.

As Srila Prabhupada's purport to this verse explains, the universal form is wondrous, brilliant, unlimited, and all-expanding. Sanjaya uses a metaphor by which he attempts to compare something indescribable to something imaginable—the simultaneous rising of hundreds of thousands of suns. He does this to aid our understanding.

Text 13: At that time Arjuna could see in the universal form of the Lord the unlimited expansions of the universe situated in one place although divided into many, many thousands.

Arjuna saw not only this universe, but many universes of many sizes and compositions, all with their separate existences, yet all situated in one place—within the body of Krsna as He sat upon his chariot.

Text 14: Then, bewildered and astonished, his hair standing on end, Arjuna bowed his head to offer obeisances, and with folded hands began to pray to the Supreme Lord.

Arjuna, in astonishment, now sees the universal form. Astonishment, or wonder, is one of the secondary *rasas*. Impelled by Krsna's universal form, Arjuna now relishes this *rasa*.

An ordinary man would have fled after seeing this form, but Arjuna is an exalted *ksatriya*. He had the forbearance to stay. He simply lowered his head, folded his hands, and reverentially offered prayers.

Text 15: Arjuna said: My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I see assembled in Your body all the demigods and various other living entities. I see Brahma sitting on the lotus flower, as well as Lord Siva and all the sages and divine serpents.

Text 16: O Lord of the universe, O universal form, I see in Your body many, many arms, bellies, mouths and eyes, expanded everywhere, without limit. I see in You no end, no middle and no beginning.

Text 17: Your form is difficult to see because of its glaring effulgence, spreading on all sides, like blazing fire or the immeasurable radiance of the sun. Yet I see this glowing form everywhere, adorned with various crowns, clubs, and discs.

Text 18: You are the supreme primal objective. You are the ultimate resting place of all this universe. You are inexhaustible, and You are the oldest. You are the maintainer of the eternal religion, the Personality of Godhead. This is my opinion.

The universal form is dazzling and radiant. It is all-inclusive and is situated in one place. In text 17, Arjuna describes it as *aprameyam*, immeasurable. In text 18, he attempts to describe the immeasurable.

Text 19: You are without origin, middle or end. Your glory is unlimited. You have numberless arms, and the sun and moon are Your eyes. I see You with blazing fire coming forth from Your mouth, burning this entire universe by Your own radiance.

The "blazing fire" coming from the mouth of the universal form is "burning this entire universe" with its radiance. This is the beginning of the description of Kṛṣṇa's *kala-rupa*, His form as time. This description continues through text 30.

Text 20: Although You are one, You spread throughout the sky and the planets and all space between. O great one, seeing this wondrous and terrible form all the planetary systems are perturbed.

Kṛṣṇa has allowed the demigods to witness His universal form. Arjuna is also able to see those demigods.

Text 21: All the hosts of the demigods are surrendering before You and entering into You. Some of them, very much afraid, are offering prayers with folded hands. Hosts of great sages and perfected beings, crying "All peace!" are praying to You by singing the Vedic hymns.

The demigods are taking shelter of the Lord, crying *pahi, pahi*, "Please protect us." The sages are begging the Lord, *svasti*, "Let there be peace."

Text 22: All the various manifestations of Lord Siva, the Adityas, the Vasus, the Sadhyas, the Visvedevas, the two Asvis, the Maruts, the forefathers, the Gandharvas, the Yaksas, the Asuras and the perfected demigods are beholding You in wonder.

Text 23: O mighty-armed one, all the planets with their demigods are disturbed at seeing Your great form, with its many faces, eyes, arms, thighs, legs, and bellies and Your many teeth; and as they are disturbed, so am I.

Arjuna, seeing the fear of even the demigods, also becomes afraid, and his *rasa* here changes from astonishment to fear.

Text 24: O all pervading Viṣṇu, seeing You with Your many radiant colors touching the sky, Your gaping mouths, and Your great glowing eyes, my mind is perturbed by fear. I can no longer maintain my steadiness or equilibrium of mind.

"Touching the sky" indicates that Arjuna, looking up, could see only the universal form and not the sky.

Text 25: O Lord of Lords, O refuge of the worlds, please be gracious to me. I cannot keep my balance seeing thus Your blazing deathlike faces and awful teeth. In all directions I am bewildered.

The *kalanala* (fire of death) mentioned here to describe the universal form's blazing deathlike faces is the fire of destruction at the end of the universe.

Text 26-27: All the sons of Dhrtarastra along with their allied kings, and Bhishma, Drona, Karna—and our chief soldiers also—are rushing into Your fearful mouths. And some I see trapped with heads smashed between Your teeth.

Texts 26 to 30 describe future occurrences that Arjuna sees within the *kala-rupa*. In 11.7, Kṛṣṇa indicated that Arjuna would see "whatever you may want to see in the future." In the two above texts, Arjuna sees that Bhishma, Drona, and Karna—the three most feared members of the opposing army—will be destroyed.

Text 28: As the many waves of the river flow into the ocean, so do all these great warriors enter blazing into Your mouths.

Text 29: I see all people rushing full speed into Your mouths, as moths dash to destruction in a blazing fire.

Two analogies describe two distinct entrances into the blazing mouths: waves of the river flowing into the ocean, and moths entering into fire. Rivers flow into the ocean naturally, without conscious effort. Bhishma and Drona are compared to such rivers. They will lose their material qualities and enter into Kṛṣṇa's abode even though they must first enter into His blazing mouths. Duryodhana, on the other hand, is compared to a moth who consciously enters the fire and perishes. Duryodhana is consciously destroying himself by his demonic behavior.

Text 30: O Visnu, I see You devouring all people from all sides with Your flaming mouths. Covering all the universe with Your effulgence, You are manifest with terrible, scorching rays.

Here Arjuna describes the universal form's effulgence. Covering this universe, the form's effulgence is inescapable and all-pervading.

Arjuna next asks two questions.

Text 31: O Lord of lords, so fierce of form, please tell me who You are. I offer my obeisances unto You; please be gracious to me. You are the primal Lord. I want to know about You, for I do not know what Your mission is.

Arjuna asks: "Who are you?" and "What is Your mission?" Kṛṣṇa answers in the next verse.

Text 32: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people. With the exception of you [the Pandavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain.

What is Kṛṣṇa's all-destructive form? *Kala-rupa*—time. What is the mission of the *kala-rupa*? Destruction of all the soldiers except the Pandavas. Śrīla Prabhupada writes: "The Lord is saying that even if Arjuna did not fight, every one of them would be destroyed, for that was His plan. If Arjuna stopped fighting, they would die in another way. Death could not be checked, even if he did not fight. In fact, they were already dead." Arjuna cannot save anyone's life by not fighting, but he has the choice whether or not to participate in the battle. Kṛṣṇa, however, wants Arjuna to perform his duty. Even though the opposition is already dead, He wishes Arjuna to fight as His instrument.

Text 33: Therefore, get up. Prepare to fight and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a flourishing kingdom. They are already put to death by My arrangement, and you, O Savyasaci, can be but an instrument in the fight.

Savyasacin also means "one who can fight with either hand, left or right." Krsna requests Arjuna to now use all his skills to fight, without pride, because *purvam eva*, "by My previous arrangement," not simply by Arjuna's skills, the warriors have already been slain.

Text 34: Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and the other great warriors have already been destroyed by Me. Therefore, kill them and do not be disturbed. Simply fight, and you will vanquish your enemies in battle.

In Bg. 2.6, Arjuna expresses his uncertainty as to who will win the battle. Here, Krsna says, *jeta asi*, "you will conquer," to certify that Arjuna will be victorious. Krsna also adds Jayadratha's name to the three warriors already mentioned in text 26. Although he is not as powerful as the others, Jayadratha was given a boon by Lord Siva that he would be able to stop the Pandavas once. Because Arjuna knows this, he is concerned about Jayadratha. Krsna assures Arjuna that his concern is unwarranted.

Next Sanjaya introduces a change of speakers.

Text 35: Sanjaya said to Dhrtarastra: O king, after hearing these words from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the trembling Arjuna offered obeisances with folded hands again and again. He fearfully spoke to Lord Krsna in a faltering voice, as follows.

Arjuna is called Kiriti because Indra had given him a helmet after Arjuna had defeated Indra's enemies. Although Arjuna possessed so much power, he stood afraid and trembling in the presence of the universal form. Yet valiant Arjuna remained able to speak.

Text 36: Arjuna said: O master of the senses, the world becomes joyful upon hearing Your name, and thus everyone becomes attached to You. Although the perfected beings offer You their respectful homage, the demons are afraid, and they flee here and there. All this is rightly done.

In this, the beginning of eleven verses of prayers, Arjuna describes both the fearful and pleasing features of the Lord. This is possible because now Arjuna is composed enough to remember that the universal form has emanated from his friend, Krsna.

Text 37: O great one, greater even than Brahma, You are the original creator. Why then should they not offer their respectful obeisances to You? O limitless one, God of gods, refuge of the universe! You are the invincible source, the cause of all causes, transcendental to this material manifestation.

Text 38: You are the original Personality of Godhead, the oldest, the ultimate sanctuary of this manifested cosmic world. You are the knower of everything, and You are all that is knowable. You are the supreme refuge, above the material modes. O limitless form, this whole cosmic manifestation is pervaded by You!

Text 39: You are air, and You are the supreme controller. You are fire, You are water and You are the moon. You are Brahma, the first living creature and You are the great-grandfather. I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You a thousand times, and again and yet again!

Text 40: Obeisances to You from the front, from behind and from all sides! O unbounded power, You are the master of limitless might! You are all pervading, and thus You are everything!

Although his fear is dissipating, Arjuna, feeling so much reverence while seeing this wondrous form, wants to offer Krsna something. Since Krsna is already everything, Arjuna can only offer Him his respectful obeisances again and again.

Text 41-42: Thinking of You as my friend I have rashly addressed You "O Krsna," "O Yadava," "O my friend," not knowing Your glories. Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love. I have dishonored

You many times, jesting as we relaxed, lay on the same bed, or sat or ate together, sometimes alone and sometimes in front of many friends. O infallible one, please excuse me for all those offenses.

Arjuna is lamenting his previous, over-familiar relationship with Krsna. For example, he would usually call Krsna "Krsna," and not the more honorific "Sri Krsna." Arjuna's referring to Krsna as "Krsna" also indicates that Krsna is the son of Vasudeva, who was merely a minister, whereas Arjuna's father, Pandu, was a great warrior. Similarly, Arjuna, a member of the royal Pandava dynasty, would refer to Krsna as "Yadava," a member of a family unable to rule. Furthermore, Arjuna would at times say, "O my friend" as if being condescendingly kind: "Although I am superior to You, due to my affection, I accept You as my friend." Now aware of Krsna's actual position, Arjuna feels ashamed and begs forgiveness.

Text 43: You are the father of this complete cosmic manifestation, of the moving and the nonmoving. You are it's worshipable chief, the supreme spiritual master. No one is equal to You, nor can anyone be one with You. How then can there be anyone greater than You in the three worlds, O Lord of immeasurable power?

Text 44: You are the Supreme Lord to be worshiped by every living being. Thus I fall down to offer respectful obeisances and ask Your mercy. As a father tolerates the impudence of his son, a friend the impertinence of a friend, or a wife the familiarity of her partner, please tolerate the wrongs I may have done You.

Arjuna falls to the ground.

Text 45: After seeing this universal form which I have never seen before, I am gladdened, but at the same time my mind is disturbed with fear. Therefore please bestow Your grace upon me and reveal again Your form as the Personality of Godhead. O Lord of Lords, O abode of the universe.

When one sees a snake whose fangs have already been removed, he feels fearful yet happy. Both sentiments exist simultaneously. Similarly, Arjuna was glad that his friend, Krsna, was so powerful that He was able to exhibit such an incredible form. Nevertheless, beholding that awesome form filled him with fear. His curiosity now satisfied, Arjuna wishes Krsna to close up His universal form and again reveal Himself as Krsna. First, however, Arjuna requests Krsna to reveal His Narayana form, which Krsna had shown Vasudeva at the time of His birth.

Text 46: O universal form, O thousand-armed Lord, I wish to see You in Your four-armed form, with helmeted head and with club, wheel, conch and lotus flower in Your hands. I long to see You in that form.

Text 47: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, happily have I shown you by My internal potency the Supreme universal form within the material world. No one before you has ever seen this primal form, unlimited and full of glaring effulgence.

That Krsna displayed the universal form indicates that the universal form is not supreme, but, rather, that it is contained within Krsna's two-armed form. Arjuna was unable to see it previously due to Krsna's internal energy, His *yoga-maya*.

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Text 53: The form you are seeing with your transcendental eyes cannot be understood simply by studying the Vedas, nor by undergoing serious penances, nor by charity, nor by worship. It is not by these means that one can see Me as I am.

Text 53 is an indirect glorification of *bhakti* by using negatives. Krsna here mentions that the paths He has discussed in Chapters One through Six will not provide the means by which we can truly see Him in His most confidential, two-armed form. What, then, is the method by which we can see Krsna?

Text 54: 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 you can enter into the mysteries of My understanding.

This verse directly glorifies *bhakti*. The word *ananya* is used to emphasize that devotional service should be undivided, with no influence of *karma* and *jnana*. The word *pravestum*, "to enter into," is used in the sense of entering a city. When we enter a city, we don't become the city.

Text 55: My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of fruitive activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and is friendly to every living being—he certainly comes to Me.

Krsna herein gives Arjuna five powerful instructions on how to render pure devotional service. By executing these five instructions, a devotee can be carried to the Lord. Srila Prabhupada discusses each in his purport:

1. *Bhakti* must be performed purely (*mad-bhaktah*): the devotee must fully engage in the nine-fold processes of devotional service. The only goal is Krsna's service with no desire for the attainments of this world.

2. *Bhakti* must be free from *karma* and *jnana* (*sanga-varjitah*): a devotee should not associate with persons who are against Krsna, and they should not become attracted to things other than pure devotion. A devotee, at the same time, should not be envious of those who are inimical, because the *karma* of such a person has awarded him that mentality. We should remain disentangled from such a person's *karma*.

3. The work of *bhaktas* must be for Krsna (*mat-karma-krt*): A devotee should use his energy fully in Krsna's service while remaining detached from the fruits of his work.

4. Krsna must be the goal of life (*mat-paramah*): The devotee should remain unattracted to both heavenly and impersonal destinations.

5. The devotee must be friendly to all (*nirvairah*): He must compassionately desire to give Krsna consciousness to others.

In Chapter Seven, Krsna described Himself as the Supreme Lord and that we can see everything in this world as an expansion of two of His energies. In Chapter Nine, Krsna again explained that as the Supreme Lord, everything comes from Him and should be seen in relationship to Him. Krsna concluded Chapter Nine by saying everyone, regardless of birth, should worship Him with devotion. Next, in Chapter Ten, Krsna explained His opulences and described *aham sarvasya prabhavo, mattah sarvam pravartate*: "Everything emanates from Me." At the end of Chapter Ten, Krsna stated *ekamsena sthito jagat*: "the universe is sustained, supported, and pervaded by Me."

After explaining this confidential knowledge to Arjuna, Krsna proves His words by displaying His universal form before Arjuna, Sanjaya, and the demigods. Krsna thus establishes the future criterion for those claiming to be God. Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the Supreme Lord, also showed His universal form while displaying His *maha-prakasa* at the home of Srivasa Thakura.

Srila Prabhupada's purport sweetly concludes this chapter:

"In summary, the universal form of Krsna, which is a temporary manifestation, and the form of time which devours everything, and even the form of Visnu, four-handed, have all been exhibited by Krsna. Thus Krsna is the origin of all these manifestations. It is not that Krsna is a manifestation of the original *visva-rupa* or Visnu. Krsna is the origin of all forms. There are hundreds and thousands of Visnus, but for a devotee no form of Krsna is important but the original form, two-handed Syamasundara. In the *Brahma-samhita* it is stated that those who are attached to the Syamasundara form of Krsna with love and devotion can see Him always within the heart and cannot see anything else. One should understand therefore that the purport of this eleventh chapter is that the form of Krsna is essential and supreme."

Chapter Twelve
Devotional Service

Arjuna wants the *Bhagavad-gita's* middle set of six chapters—the set which has emphasized *bhakti-yoga*—to conclude with Krsna discussing *bhakti*. He especially wants this since the vivid description of the universal form in Chapter Eleven naturally fills us with awe, reverence, and fear, none of which are conducive to advanced Krsna consciousness. In addition, to avoid mistaking the universal form—impersonalism within matter—as the supreme aspect of the Absolute Truth, and to insure that all recognize the superiority of *bhakti* (devotional work to attain the loving service of Krsna) over *jnana* (the renunciation of work to attain impersonal realization), Arjuna questions Krsna.

Text 1: Arjuna inquired: Which are

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sier and which of the classes is most perfect. In other words, he is clarifying his own position because he is attached to the personal form of Krsna. He is not attached to the impersonal Brahman. He wants to know whether his position is secure. The impersonal manifestation, whether in this material world or in the spiritual world of the Supreme Lord, is a problem for meditation. Actually one cannot perfectly conceive of the impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth. Arjuna wants to say, 'What is the use of such a waste of time?' Arjuna experienced in the Eleventh Chapter that to be attached to the personal form of Krsna is best because he could thus understand all other forms at the same time and there was no disturbance to his love for Krsna. This important question asked of Krsna by Arjuna will clarify the distinction between the impersonal and personal conceptions of the Absolute Truth."

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Next, Krsna's reply.

Text 2: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Those who fix their minds on My personal form and are always engaged in worshipping Me with great transcendental faith are considered by Me to be most perfect.

Krsna's answer is clear: devotees engaged in His service are best. Srila Prabhupada's purport gives practical examples of Krsna conscious work on the transcendental platform: "Sometimes he chants, sometimes he hears or reads books about Krsna, or sometimes he cooks *prasadam* or goes to the marketplace to purchase something for Krsna, or sometimes he washes the temple or the dishes—whatever he does, he does not let a single moment pass without devoting his activities to Krsna. Such action is in full *samadhi*."

Arjuna is happy to hear that devotional service is superior, but he wonders, "What does an impersonalist who renounces work attain?" Krsna answers this question next.

Text 3-4: But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, the all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed and immovable—the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth—by controlling the various senses and being equally disposed to everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me.

Those worshipping the impersonal—*prapnuvanti mam eva*—certainly achieve Krsna, but only His effulgence, the *brahmajyoti*, His *nirviesa*, formless, attribute-less, and activity-less aspect. Or, if by good fortune, they later contact an exalted devotee, they may accept the personal path and eventually achieve Krsna's service.

Having replied that personal realization is superior, Krsna now informs Arjuna of the inferiority of the impersonalist's process of realization.

Text 5: For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. Indeed, to make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied.

The impersonalist's path of renunciation of activities is troublesome and miserable. Why? The embodied soul's senses are always demanding engagement. They want to contact sense objects. However, no spiritual activity exists for one who has renounced work. How then can he dovetail his sensual hankerings in transcendental activities which are free from karmic reactions? Nor is the impersonalist able to fix his mind upon the goal of his meditation practices, because how can one conceive the inconceivable?

We may argue that the devotees also experience trouble on their path because they too must follow rules and regulations that restrict the contact of the senses with their objects. However, a devotee's misery is reduced because he experiences Krsna's presence. Rejecting *maya's* demands for Krsna's service actually brings him pleasure.

Impersonalists may read this verse and respond, "Since Krsna has certified the path of renunciation and meditation as troublesome, I will engage in devotional service with the aim of achieving Brahman." Krsna, however, has already nullified the validity of practicing *bhakti* with an impersonal goal in Chapter 9.11-12:

*avajananti mam mudha
manusim tanum asritam
param bhavam ajananto
mama bhuta-mahesvaram*

"Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature as the Supreme Lord of all that be."

moghasa mogha-karmano
mogha-jnana vicetasah
raksasim asurim caiva
prakrtim mohinim sritah

"Those who are thus bewildered are attracted by demonic and atheistic views. In that deluded condition, their hopes for liberation, their fruitive activities, and their culture of knowledge are all defeated."

Those who think of Krsna's form as an object to be worshiped temporarily in order to facilitate impersonal realization become bewildered (*mogha-jnana vicetasah*). Due to their demoniac mentality, they are defeated.

The ease of attaining our desired goal by practicing true *bhakti* is next described.

Text 6-7: But those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Prtha—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.

Although a devotee may experience difficulties, he has faith in Krsna's promise to personally care for and deliver Him. Prabhupada powerfully expresses this in his purport:

"A devotee does not need to practice *astanga-yoga* in order to transfer his soul to the spiritual planets. The responsibility is taken by the Supreme Lord Himself. He clearly states here that He Himself becomes the deliverer. A child is completely cared for by his parents and thus his position is secure. Similarly, a devotee does not need to endeavor to transfer himself by yoga practice to other planets. Rather, the Supreme Lord by His great mercy comes at once, riding on His bird carrier Garuda, and at once delivers the devotee from material existence. Although a man who has fallen in the ocean may struggle very hard and may be very expert in swimming, he cannot save himself. But if someone comes and picks him up from the water, then he is easily rescued. Similarly, the Lord picks up the devotee from this material existence. One simply has to practice the easy process of Krsna Consciousness and fully engage Himself in devotional service."

A devotee's responsibility is to cultivate devotion and eagerness to serve Krsna. Krsna then accepts full responsibility for rescuing His devotee from *maya*. The devotee's mood is so pure that he doesn't even desire the liberation the Lord is willing to bestow upon him. Lord Caitanya prays, *janmani janmanisvare bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*, "All I want is Your devotional service, even if it means taking birth after birth in the material world." That intense, fully pure, and devotional desire of a devotee to serve attracts Krsna's full mercy.

In the next five verses, Krsna describes the levels of *bhakti* and progressive levels towards achieving *bhakti*, beginning from the highest and moving backward toward the lowest.

Text 8: Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt.

A *jnani* tries to fix his mind on the *avyakta*, the unmanifest, and the reality of his spiritual existence as a soul. Krsna's direct order to His devotee, however, is given here: "Always fix your mind upon My all-attractive, beautiful form." To emphasize this instruction, Krsna uses the word *mayi*, "upon Me," three times in this verse. By always meditating upon Krsna according to *sastra*, one will undoubtedly always live with Krsna. Thus Krsna has explained the most advanced stage—to always think of Krsna in attachment and transcendental affection.

As constant remembrance of Krsna is exalted consciousness, Arjuna next asks, "What practice should be followed if I am unable to always remember You? My mind runs in many directions." Krsna's reply describes the next level down.

Text 9: My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way develop a desire to attain Me.

rules. . . . Thus one may gradually become elevated to the state of knowledge. It is also found that when one who is not even interested in the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives charity to some hospital or some other social institution, he gives up the hard-earned results of his activities. That is also recommended here because by the practice of giving up the fruits of one's activities one is sure to purify his mind gradually, and in that purified stage of mind one becomes able to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the texts 8-11, the spiritual results of each recommended practice have been described. By thinking of Kṛṣṇa, as described in text 8, we will always live with Kṛṣṇa. By following the regulative principles of *bhakti*, as mentioned in text 9, we will develop our desire to attain Kṛṣṇa. By working for Kṛṣṇa, as described in text 10, we will come to the perfect stage. No result, however, has been mentioned for following the practice Kṛṣṇa recommends in text 11. The practice of giving up the fruits of work, unless those fruits are offered to Kṛṣṇa, is not in and of itself spiritual and it, therefore, does not yield spiritual fruit.

In text 12, however, Kṛṣṇa places the renunciation of the fruits of one's work *for Kṛṣṇa's service*—as described in text 10 (not simply the detached work described in text 11)—within the perspective of other practices of spiritual advancement.

Text 12: If you cannot take to this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind.

"If you cannot take to this practice" refers to the practice of *niskama-karma-yoga* described in text 10. "Knowledge" here refers to *brahma-jnana*, knowledge of the soul as different from the body, and "meditation" suggests realization of the Supersoul through *yoga*.

Thus the progression as described by Srila Prabhupada in his translations and purports is as follows:

1. Text 8: Perfected devotional service: always remembering Kṛṣṇa.
2. Text 9: Devotional service in practice: performing *sadhana-bhakti* and working for Kṛṣṇa, as Kṛṣṇa desires, in a temple atmosphere.
3. Text 10: *Niskama-karma-yoga*: working with detachment and offering the fruits of our work to Kṛṣṇa.
4. Text 11: Detached work: working with detachment, but without offering the fruits of our work to Kṛṣṇa.
5. Text 12: *Niskama-karma-yoga* will result in peace, or, as described in the "Peace Formula" (Bg. 5.29), *bhakti*.

The following stages, which are lower than the *niskama-karma-yoga* stage, are also mentioned in this verse: *yoga*, and the lowest stage mentioned, cultivating knowledge, *brahma-jnana*.

Still lower than *brahma-jnana* and without a direct transcendental result is the method mentioned in text 11, detached work without offering the fruits to Kṛṣṇa.

Thus Kṛṣṇa has delineated the progressive gradations of spiritual processes and advancement. Srila Prabhupada has also explained these stages in his purport:

In summary, to reach the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the highest goal, there are two processes: one process is by gradual development, and the other process is direct. Devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the direct method, and the other method involves renouncing the fruits of one's activities. Then one can come to the stage of knowledge, then to the stage of meditation, then to the stage of understanding the Supersoul, and then to the stage of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One may take either the step-by-step process or the direct path. The direct process is not possible for everyone; therefore the indirect process is also good. It is, however, to be understood that the indirect process is not recommended for Arjuna, because he is already at the stage of loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord. It is for others, who are not at this stage; for them the gradual process of renunciation, knowledge, meditation and realization of the Supersoul and Brahman should be followed. But as far as *Bhagavad-gita* is concerned, it is the direct method that is stressed. Everyone is advised to take to the direct method and surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana has delineated the levels of *bhakti* described by Krsna in verses 8-12 in a different manner:

1. Text 8: Our mind is naturally fixed on Krsna. Therefore, we easily attain Krsna.

2. Text 9: Although the mind does not always remember Krsna naturally, we practice again and again to fix our mind on Krsna. Later, with our mind firmly fixed on Krsna, we easily attain Him.

3. Text 10: If we are unable to endeavor in the specific practice of fixing the mind on Krsna, we should work for Krsna. What work should we do? We should engage in fully surrendered activities performed in the mood of menial service to Krsna and meant directly for His pleasure. This description corresponds to the appropriate mood and duties that are required of those who live in temples. Examples of such services are building temples, cleaning the temple, or making temple gardens. By performing these activities for Krsna's satisfaction, we become attached to the Deity and to His glories.

On this level of progress, the work we perform is surrendered and according to Krsna's direct desire. It is therefore different from *niskama-karma-yoga* wherein we work as we want and then offer the fruit of that work to Krsna. The above work, as described by Krsna, is fully surrendered and is thus considered on the level of *bhakti*.

4. Text 11: Those unable to work as Krsna wants should renounce the fruits of their activities and worship Krsna through their work. This precursor to actual devotional service, *niskama-karma-yoga*, gradually lifts us to the platform of *bhakti*.

5. Text 12: "If you cannot take to this practice," refers to the practice of renunciation of the fruits of one's work mentioned in text 11. Although Krsna wants devotion, in this verse, He glorifies and emphasizes *karm* which leads to *bhakti* and realization of Bhagavan.

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In the final verses in this chapter, Krsna again comes to the point of pure devotional service. He describes thirty-five transcendental qualities possessed by His pure devotees that make those devotees dear to Him.

Text 13-14: One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me—such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me.

These last eight texts describe the internal symptoms of one engaged in pure devotional service. The term *advesta*, nonenvious, can be exemplified when a devotee thinks towards an enemy: "Krsna has sanctioned this to person hate me."

Text 15: He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me.

Text 16: My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me.

Text 17: One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things—such a devotee is very dear to Me.

Text 18-19: One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipped in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service—such a person is very dear to Me.

Yasyasti bhaktir bhagavaty akincana: according to his advancement, a devotee manifests the exalted qualities of the demigods. These qualities mentioned here are basically those of detachment from the body, the mind, and the material world. Yet they are more in relation to *bhakti* than those previously discussed in Chapter Two or the qualities discussed in the next chapter which describe an accomplished *jnani*.

Text 20: Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

Srila Prabhupada summarizes this chapter in his purport: "In this chapter, from verse 2 through the end . . . the Supreme Lord has explained the processes of transcendental service for approaching Him. Such processes are very dear to the Lord, and He accepts a person engaged in them. The question of who is better—one who is engaged in the path of impersonal Brahman or one who is engaged in the personal service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead—was raised by Arjuna, and the Lord replied to him so explicitly that there is no doubt that devotional service to the Personality of Godhead is the best of all processes of spiritual realization."

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura concludes this chapter, "The qualities Krsna mentions are born of *bhakti*, not of the mode of goodness, for they enable one to become dear to Krsna. Even if someone has just one of these qualities, he is dear to Krsna. *Bhakti* is so glorious that *sadhakas* simply desiring these qualities are better than *siddhas* on other paths.

"Devotional service is wonderful, easy to perform, and grants all desirable results. This is the message of the twelfth chapter. *Jnanis* prefer *jnana-yoga*, which is compared to the bitter fruit of the *nim* tree. Devotees prefer *bhakti*, which is like a sweet, seedless grape. Some individuals like *nim* fruit and others prefer grapes. Each will follow a path according to his own taste."

Chapter Thirteen

Nature, the Enjoyer and Consciousness

In the first six chapters of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krsna discussed how *karma*, action, on the platform of knowledge leads to *bhakti*. In the second six chapters, Krsna spoke directly of Himself and the glories of devotional service. In this third set of six chapters, Krsna discusses how *jnana* leads one to *bhakti*.

Srila Prabhupada introduces the topics of the third set of six chapters in his purport: "Now, starting with the Thirteenth Chapter, how the living entity comes into contact with material nature and how he is delivered by the Supreme Lord through the different methods of fruitive activities, cultivation of knowledge, and the discharge of devotional service are explained. Although the living entity is completely different from the material body, he somehow becomes related. This also is explained."

In Chapter Twelve, text 7, Krsna promised to personally care for His devotees. In Chapter Thirteen, Krsna gives His devotees the knowledge to elevate them beyond the material world. Arjuna begins Chapter Thirteen by asking six questions.

Text 1-2: Arjuna said: O my dear Krsna, I wish to know about prakrti (nature), purusa (the enjoyer) and the field and the knower of the field, and of knowledge and the object of knowledge.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: This body, O son of Kunti, is called the field, and one who knows this body is called the knower of the field.

Arjuna requests knowledge about the following:

prakrti (nature); *purusa* (the enjoyer); *ksetra* (the field of activities); *ksetra-jna* (the knower of the field of activities); *jnana* (knowledge); *jneyam* (the object of knowledge).

Krsna immediately begins to answer Arjuna's third question by identifying the body as the field (*ksetra*). He also replies to his fourth question by saying that the soul is the knower of the field (*ksetrajna*).

In texts 3-7, Krsna will continue answering questions three and four, "What is the field of activities?" and "Who is the knower of the field?" In text 3, He will also begin His reply to Arjuna's fifth question, "What is knowledge?"

Text 3: O scion of Bharata, you should understand that I am also the knower in all bodies, and to understand this body and its knower is called knowledge. That is My opinion.

As we hear Krsna's answers in this chapter, we will learn how the living entity relates with and is entangled by his body. The body in this chapter is often referred to as *ksetra*, a field. Just as different crops grow in a farmer's field according to the seeds he has planted, a living entity's happiness and distress similarly grow in his body—his field of activities—according to his previous activities. The living entity, as *ksetra-jna*, may know his own body, but Krsna states that there is another *ksetra-jna* who knows all bodies. That is the Supersoul. A farmer, like the soul, knows all about his own field, but the king, like the Supersoul in everyone's heart, is the controller of all the fields and therefore knows the condition of each field in his kingdom. In addition, the soul can only imperfectly know his own body; the Supersoul has complete and perfect knowledge of all bodies.

Knowledge (*jnana*) is defined as knowing the difference between the body, the soul, and the Supersoul. Thus Krsna has partially answered Arjuna's fifth question: "What is knowledge?" He will further answer this question in texts 8-12, 24-37 when He describes the process of achieving knowledge.

Srila Prabhupada defines *jnana* in the purport: "Perfect knowledge of the constitution of the body, the constitution of the individual soul and the constitution of the Supersoul is known in terms of Vedic literature, as *jnana*. That is the opinion of Krsna. To understand both the soul and the Supersoul as one yet distinct is knowledge. One who does not understand the field of activity and the knower of activity is not in perfect knowledge."

This point has already been discussed in Chapter Five: that the living entity knows "I am not this body" constitutes "enlightenment." Such enlightenment is born of the mode of goodness, but it is not liberation. When one knows the Supersoul, however, he becomes liberated. Thus to come to the *brahma-bhuta* (liberated) platform, we need to know the Supersoul.

1. How the field of activities, the body is constituted (explained in verse 6).
2. What changes (*vikari*) the body goes through (explained in verses 7 and 20).
3. How, when, and where the body is produced (explained in verses 6, 21, 22).
4. Who the knower of the field is (explained in verses 14-18, 23).
5. What are the knower's influence (explained in verses 14-18).

Although Kṛṣṇa will discuss these five points as well as answer the remaining questions from verse 2, He says that He will explain them only in brief because they are limitless topics. If, however, Arjuna wishes to know them in further detail, He will next tell Arjuna where such information can be found.

Text 5: That knowledge of the field of activities and of the knower of activities is described by various sages in various Vedic writings. It is especially presented in Vedānta-sūtra with all reasoning as to cause and effect.

Although Kṛṣṇa has just said in text 3, "This is My opinion," and although He has already established His position as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He nevertheless quotes two other authorities to substantiate His words. Kṛṣṇa, in the role of *guru*, thus presents corresponding references to *sadhu* and *śāstra*. The sages He refers to are Vasistha Muni, Parasara Muni, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and others. Some of the *śāstras* He refers to are *Vasistha-yoga* [check exact title of book], the *Viṣṇu Purāna*, the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and the *Vedas* themselves. Śrīla Prabhupada states: "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the highest authority in explaining this knowledge. Still, as a matter of course, learned scholars and standard authorities always give evidence from previous authorities. Kṛṣṇa is explaining this most controversial point regarding the duality and nonduality of the soul and the Supersoul by referring to a scripture, the *Vedānta*, which is accepted as authority."

By quoting from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* of the *Yajur Veda*, Prabhupada confirms Kṛṣṇa's words that more details are available in the *Vedas*. There are basically two Vedic systems by which one progresses indirectly in self-realization. One is called *vyāsthī*, in which a person directs his meditation toward the self and thus seeks to understand the Absolute by considering himself a fragment of the Supreme. For example, we can study the nature of the entire ocean by scrutinizing a drop.

The second indirect method is called *samāsthī*, in which one studies the entire universe while considering it the body of the Supreme. The Second Chapter of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, which Śrīla Prabhupada refers to in his purport, addresses the *vyāsthī* system. The five *kosas* or sheaths (*anna-maya*, *prāna-maya*, *jñāna-maya*, *vijñāna-maya*, *ananda-maya*) covering the living entity's true consciousness are all manifestations of the Lord's energy and are progressively developed stages of consciousness in which Brahman, the Absolute, "the Greatest," is realized, even if indirectly or relatively. Therefore, the self-concept of the living entity progresses according to these stages. Because these *kosas* are manifestations of the Absolute Truth, they are accepted as the self-concept of the living entity according to his specific level of consciousness.

A mundane example of how a concept can exist both within ourselves (as a self-concept) and without ourselves (as the *kosas* exist as independent manifestations of the Absolute Truth) is our relationship with our country of birth. We do not create the country of our birth. It exists objectively outside both our self and our self-concept. However, one in a specific level of consciousness will identify with his country and consider himself Indian or American or Russian. Dogs, monkeys, birds, etc., do not possess this level of consciousness and therefore are unable to identify themselves with the country in which they were born although they certainly exist within it. In other words, all the *kosas* are given to the living entity by the Supreme. At the same time, they are objective degrees of realization manifest by the Supreme.

One experiencing the *anna-maya* stage—the most primitive form of consciousness wherein we realize the oneness of all existence—views everything as food. Such a consciousness makes no distinction between that which is alive and that which is not alive. One with such an understanding has no awareness of his own existence as separate from the existence of all else. His self-concept is therefore on the most basic, existential level. This level of realization is a manifestation of and from the Absolute Truth.

[Gopīpranadhana prabhu, please carefully check this section to make sure I've got it correct. BJD]

When we come to the stage of *prāna-maya*, our consciousness advances to an awareness of and an identification with our own active life symptoms. We thus see the external world according to the unifying principle of survival. Again, this realization or level of self-identification is provided by the Absolute Truth. Materialistic human society more or less exists only on this primitive level of realization.

The field of activities for the conditioned soul can be compared to a playground in a backyard surrounded by a big fence. The child playing in that yard has freedom to play as he wishes, but he cannot extend his pleasure beyond the allotted field. He is limited by the fence. Similarly, the living entity is limited by the interactions of his body, mind, and *karma*, which comprise his field of activities. An earthworm, for example, has a very small field of activities. He cannot read, write, jump, or run. He can simply crawl through the dirt, surface when it rains, and crawl back into the soil when the rain stops. A dog has a relatively larger field of activities, and a human being still larger. The *ksetra* is based on our *karma*.

A wealthy child will possess many toys with which he can play in his yard, but he is still restricted by the fence. Although he may be proud of the scope of his yard, and he may even think himself happy and free with his swing and toy car and sandbox, he is nevertheless absorbed only in an insignificant backyard. He knows nothing of life beyond the fence. Similarly, the living entity, according to the limitations of the body and mind he has received through his *karma*, cannot see beyond his limited field of activities.

Every living entity's *ksetra* is arranged by his *karma*, through the agency of *maya*. Krsna therefore is not partial, because as the Supersoul, the knower of all *ksetras*, He simply sanctions the awarding of each living entity's field of activities.

Krsna next explains the process of knowledge—that process that helps the living entity transcend his insignificant and limited "backyard."

Text 8-12: Humility; pridelessness; nonviolence; tolerance; simplicity; approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification; absence of false ego; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest; even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth—all these I declare to be knowledge, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance.

This is a continuation of Krsna's answer to Arjuna's fifth question: "What is knowledge?" These verses describe the process of obtaining *jnana*. Twenty items are mentioned, seventeen of which apply both to the *jnani* and the *bhakta*. The last two, accepting the importance of self-realization (*adyatma-jnana nityatvam*) and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth (*tattva-jnanartha-darsanam*) are technically explained as only for the *jnani*. "Constant and unalloyed devotion to Me" is the sole quality specifically for the devotee. All other qualities come to the devotee who exclusively endeavors for this exalted mood of constant devotion.

Krsna has already defined knowledge as knowing the field and the two knowers of the field. These twenty items, therefore, are the means to understand the body, the soul, and the Supersoul. Combined, they form a process. Not all of them are transcendental qualities in and of themselves. Cleanliness, for example, is a quality born of the mode of goodness. It does not lead one to transcendence; rather, it is part of the process of obtaining knowledge, as are all the elements mentioned here. Approaching a bona fide spiritual master and perceiving the evils of birth, death, disease, and old age are similarly not qualities, but rather, are part of the process of knowledge which has as its goal liberation from material entanglement.

Therefore, taken as a process, these twenty items have nothing to do with the interactions of the field of activity. Srila Prabhupada explains the relationship between the process of knowledge and the field of activities: "This process of knowledge is sometimes misunderstood by less intelligent men as being the interaction of the field of activity. But actually this is the real process of knowledge. If one accepts this process, then the possibility of approaching the Absolute Truth exists. This is not the interaction of the twenty-four elements, as described before. This is actually the means to get out of the entanglement of those elements."

In the next set of verses (13-19) Krsna answers Arjuna's sixth question, "What is the object of knowledge?"

Text 13: I shall now explain the knowable, knowing which you will taste the eternal. Brahman, the spirit, beginningless and subordinate to Me, lies beyond the cause and effect of this material world.

The term "knowable" (*jneyam*) used here is "the object of knowledge" about which Arjuna inquired in text 1. Srila Prabhupada clearly mentions here that there are two knowable objects: "The Lord has explained the field of activities

and the knower of the field. He has also explained the process of knowing the knower of the field of activities. Now He begins to explain the knowable, first the soul and then the Supersoul. By knowledge of the knower, both the soul and the Supersoul, one can relish the nectar of life."

Srila Prabhupada states that this verse describes the living entity as the *jneyam*, and that verses 14-19 describe the Supersoul as the *jneyam*: "The description of Brahman mentioned in this verse is in relation to the individual soul, and when the word Brahman is applied to the living entity, it is to be understood that he is *vijnana-brahma* as opposed to *ananda-brahma*. *Ananda-brahma* is the Supreme Brahman Personality of Godhead." These terms *ananda* and *vijnana* refer to the discussion in text 5 where the terms *ananda-maya* and *vijnana-maya* were discussed.

In verses 14-18, the Supersoul is described in lofty, Upanasadic-style verses, which may sound as if they are describing the impersonal Brahman as the knowable. However, it is clear, especially by the mercy of Srila Prabhupada's verses and purports, that these verses describe the Supersoul.

Text 14: Everywhere are His hands, and legs, His eyes, heads and faces, and He has ears everywhere. In this way the Supersoul exists, pervading everything.

Text 15: The Supersoul is the original source of all senses, yet He is without senses. He is unattached, although He is the maintainer of all living beings. He transcends the modes of nature, and at the same time He is the master of all the modes of material nature.

Text 16: The Supreme Truth exists outside and inside of all living beings, the moving and the nonmoving. Because He is subtle, He is beyond the power of the material senses to see or to know. Although far, far away, He is also near to all.

Krsna is explaining the knowable, *jneyam*, in these verses, but in text 16 He describes the knowable as *avijneyam*, unknowable. This indicates that the Supersoul cannot be understood by the material senses. Only by hearing with devotion from transcendental sources can He be understood.

Text 17: Although the Supersoul appears to be divided among all beings, He is never divided. He is situated as one. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops all.

Text 18: He is the source of light in all luminous objects. He is beyond the darkness of matter and is unmanifested. He is knowledge, He is the object of knowledge, and He is the goal of knowledge. He is situated in everyone's heart.

Finally in text 18 Krsna reveals exactly who the *jneyam* is: *hrdi sarvasya*, the Supersoul, although Srila Prabhupada kindly informed

of activities [the body], knowledge and the knowable have been summarily described by Me. Only My devotees can understand this thoroughly and thus attain to My nature.

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□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ of activities [the body], knowledge and the knowable have been summarily described by Me. Only My devotees can understand this thoroughly and thus attain to My nature.

Krsna uses the word *mad-bhakta* to indicate that only devotees can understand this subject matter; others cannot understand it. Srila Prabhupada confirms this: "The Lord has described in summary the body, knowledge and the knowable. This knowledge is of three things: the knower, the knowable and the process of knowing. Combined, these are called *vijnana*, or the science of knowledge. Perfect knowledge can be understood by the unalloyed devotees of the Lord directly. Others are unable to understand."

Later in his purport, Srila Prabhupada provides a valuable summary of the difficult subject matters described up until this point in the chapter:

"Now, to summarize, one may understand that verses 6 and 7, beginning from *maha-bhutani* and continuing through *cetana dhrtih*, analyze the material elements and certain manifestations of the symptoms of life. These combine to form the body, or the field of activities. And verses 8 through 12, from *amanitvam* through *tattva-jnanartha-darsanam*, describe the process of knowledge for understanding both types of knowers of the field of activities, namely the soul and the Supreme Lord, or the Supersoul.

"Thus three items have been described: the field of activity (the body), the process of understanding, and both the soul and the Supersoul. It is especially described here that only the unalloyed devotees of the Lord can understand these three items clearly. So for these devotees *Bhagavad-gita* is fully useful; it is they who can attain the supreme goal, the nature of the Supreme Lord, Krsna. In other words, only devotees, and not others, can understand *Bhagavad-gita* and derive the desired result."

The next set of verses (20-27) answer Arjuna's first two questions: "What are *prakrti*?" and "What is *purusa*?"

Text 20: Material nature and the living entities should be understood to be beginningless. Their transformations and the modes of matter are products of material nature.

Krsna begins His explanation of how material nature (*prakrti*) and the two *purusas* (referring to the soul in verses 20-22 and 24, and to the Supersoul in verse 23) combine. Their union is described as *anadi*, beginningless. Speaking of this combination, Srila Prabhupada in his purport explains: "Actually, the living entity is originally the spiritual part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, but due to his rebellious nature, he is conditioned within material nature. It really does not matter how these living entities or [superior] entities of the Supreme Lord have come in contact with material nature. The Supreme Personality of Godhead knows, however, how and why this actually took place."

Both the living entity and the Lord are of the eternal, superior energy. Only the material nature undergoes *vikara*, transformation. The living entity remains unchanged, but due to ignorance, he identifies with the changes of the body. This relationship between the living entity and the changes caused by material nature is elaborated upon in the next verse.

Text 21: Nature is said to be the cause of all material causes and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world.

This verse again addresses the topic about "the doer". The living entity is the cause of all his sufferings and enjoyments because he has illicitly embraced *maya* with the desire to predominate and enjoy independently of Krsna. He thus becomes entangled in material nature. Taking his *karma* into consideration, material nature then creates for him a field meant ultimately for suffering. This all takes place under the sanction of the real *purusa*, the real *ksetra-jna*, the Supersoul. Therefore, although nature is the cause of the entire material manifestation, the living entity causes his own happiness and distress. Krsna explains this point further in the next verse.

Text 22: The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species.

Krsna states clearly that only the body changes. The soul and the Supersoul are eternal and changeless. Arjuna next asks: "If both the *atma* and Paramatma are within the body, why don't they become bound?"

Text 33: The sky, due to its subtle nature, does not mix with anything, although it is all-pervading. Similarly, the soul situated in Brahman vision does not mix with the body, though situated in that body.

Krsna answers by saying that matter and spirit, like oil and water, do not mix.

Text 34: O son of Bharata, as the sun alone illuminates all this universe, so does the living entity, one within the body, illuminate the entire body by consciousness.

Here Krsna gives a second example to explain the point He just made in text 33. Finally, He offers a one-verse chapter summary:

Text 35: Those who see with eyes of knowledge the difference between the body and the knower of the body, and can also understand the process of liberation from bondage and material nature, attain to the supreme goal.

As suggested by the chapter title, "Nature, the Enjoyer and Consciousness," this chapter describes material nature, the Supersoul, and the living entity. Srila Prabhupada sums up the chapter's main points in his purport:

"The purport of this Thirteenth Chapter is that one should know the distinction between the body, the owner of the body and the Supersoul. One should recognize the process of liberation, as described in verses eight through twelve. Then one can go on to the supreme destination.

"One can understand that this body is matter; it can be analyzed with its twenty-four elements. The body is the gross manifestation. And the subtle manifestation is the mind and psychological effects. And the symptoms of life are the interaction of these features. But over and above this, there is the soul, and there is also the Supersoul. The soul and the Supersoul are two. This material world is working by the conjunction of the soul and the twenty-four material elements. One who can see the constitution of the whole material manifestation as this combination of the soul and material elements and can also see the situation of the Supreme Soul becomes eligible for transfer to the spiritual world. These things are meant for contemplation and for realization, and one should have a complete understanding of this chapter with the help of the spiritual master."

verses 14-15 describe the result of dying under the influence of each mode; and verses 16-18 describe actions and their resultant reactions under each mode.

Text 6: O sinless one, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating, and it frees one from all sinful reactions. Those situated in that mode become conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge.

Arjuna is addressed here a *anagha*, sinless. The two sins of the mode of goodness are attachment to *sukha* and *jnana*, but Arjuna is not bound by either of them. It should be noted that it is the *attachment* to happiness and knowledge that binds the living entity in the mode of goodness, not happiness and knowledge themselves. Such attachment breeds pride, and both attachment and pride are symptoms of the mode of passion. In other words, attachment to *jnana* brings *ajnana*, ignorance. As Prabhupada explains in his purport, "The difficulty here is that when a living entity is situated in the mode of goodness, he becomes conditioned to feel that he is advanced in knowledge and is better than others. In this way he becomes conditioned."

Text 7: The mode of passion is born of unlimited desires and longings, O son of Kunti, and because of this the embodied living entity is bound to material fruitive actions.

In the last verse the word *nirmala*, meaning "pure" or "white" was used. Here, *raga*, which can mean "colored" is used. The person in the mode of passion sees everything "colored" by his unlimited desires to and experiences *trsna-sangena*, a thirst or hankering for unlimited, material enjoyment. Because of his intense and multiple hankerings, he is forced always to engage in *karma-sangena*, hard work. As explained earlier in 3.37, passion tends to degrade to ignorance.

Text 8: O son of Bharata, know that the mode of darkness, born of ignorance, is the delusion of all embodied living entities. The results of this mode are madness, indolence and sleep, which bind the conditioned soul.

In goodness we can work purely. In passion we at least produce fruits from our work which may be offered to Krsna. Ignorance, however, produces nothing but further and deeper ignorance. The use of the word *tu* here indicates that ignorance is opposed to the other two modes. *Sattva* creates inactivity based on knowledge, but *tama* creates inactivity based on ignorance. *Alasya*, laziness, and *nidra*, sleep, are against the nature of the mode of passion. *Mohana*, delusion is also opposed to passion because it is characterized by inattentiveness in work. Srila Prabhupada describes the difference between goodness and ignorance in his purport:

"The mode of ignorance is just the opposite of the mode of goodness. In the mode of goodness, by development of knowledge, one can understand what is what, but the mode of ignorance is just the opposite. Everyone under the spell of the mode of ignorance becomes mad, and a madman cannot understand what is what. Instead of making advancement, one becomes degraded."

Text 9: O son of Bharata, the mode of goodness conditions one to happiness; passion conditions one to fruitive action; and ignorance, covering one's knowledge, binds one to madness.

This verse summarizes the previous three *slokas*.

When one is contaminated by goodness, he is too satisfied in himself to follow the dictates of the Supersoul. When he is contaminated by the mode of passion, his desires speak too loudly and he cannot hear the voice of his dear friend, the Supersoul. If one is contaminated by the mode of ignorance, he is too inert, ignorant, and mad to hear the Supersoul. Thus the modes of nature condition the living entity and keep him satisfied in his pursuit of pleasure in the different encasements of the material world.

All three modes exist. Does one become dominant within a person? If so, how?

Text 10: Sometimes the mode of goodness becomes prominent, defeating the modes of passion and ignorance, O son of Bharata. Sometimes the mode of passion defeats goodness and ignorance, and at other times ignorance defeats goodness and passion. In this way there is always competition for supremacy.

After describing the effects of the modes, Kṛṣṇa now tells Arjuna that they are not constant in their influence on the living entity. According to our *karma*, our work, our association, our choice of food, etc., a particular mode becomes predominant within us.

Indirectly, Kṛṣṇa is indicating that we should become aloof from the modes by understanding that the living entity himself is constant and able to transcend the modes' influence. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "Therefore, one who is actually intent on advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has to transcend

t of ignorance, O son of Kuru, darkness, inertia, madness and illusion are manifested.

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There are different activities, as Kṛṣṇa explains to Uddhava in the 11th Canto, that affect the mode of nature by which we are influenced: *āgama*, the *śāstra* we hear; *āpa*, the water we drink and the food we eat; *prajā*, our association; *deśa*, where we live and how it is influenced by the different modes; *kāla*, the time of the day; *karma*, our activities; *janma*, our conditioning from birth; *dhyāna*, our thoughts; *mantras*, what we chant; and *samskaras*, the ceremonies we undergo in the *varṇasrama* system beginning with impregnation and ending with burial.

Having described the all-pervasive control of the modes of nature, in the next and final section of this chapter Kṛṣṇa tells us how to transcend the modes and explains His own position in relation to them.

Text 19: When one properly sees that in all activities no other performer is at work than these modes of nature and he knows the Supreme Lord, who is transcendental to all these modes, he attains My spiritual nature.

Kṛṣṇa here equates transcending the modes of material nature with liberation from the material world. The first step is to observe the modes working upon us. Then, by observing the modes at work, we can understand that the modes, not us, are active and that we are separate. In this way, we can come to understand that we are eternal spirit soul, separate from both our everyday activities and the modes.

The second step is to understand Kṛṣṇa's position. Although Kṛṣṇa appears to be acting within the material sphere, He is fully transcendental. Śrīla Prabhupada writes: "A man in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not controlled by the spell of the material modes of nature. It has already been stated in the Seventh Chapter [7.13-14] that one who has surrendered to Kṛṣṇa is relieved from the activities of material nature. For one who is able to see things as they are, the influence of material nature gradually ceases."

Kṛṣṇa next describes the results we can look forward to if we transcend the modes.

Text 20: When the embodied being is able to transcend these modes associated with the material body he can become free from birth, death, old age, and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life.

A person free from the modes of nature is freed from distress and really enjoys life by being situated on the spiritual platform.

Next, Arjuna asks two questions about transcending the modes of nature. Kṛṣṇa gives His answers in texts 22-25.

Text 21: Arjuna inquires: O my dear Lord, by which symptoms is one known who is transcendental to these three modes? What is his behavior and how does he transcend the modes of nature?

Here Arjuna asks three questions. First, he asks how the symptoms of transcendence will manifest in a person who is no longer affected by the modes. How can we understand that someone has already transcended? The second question, "What is his behavior?" means, "How does he react to favorable and unfavorable circumstances?" The third question asks whether a person free of the modes follows rules and regulations or is independent of them.

Kṛṣṇa's answers to these three questions continue until the end of this chapter.

Text 22—25: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature.

Two out of the three questions are answered in these verses. The answer to question 1, (corresponding to text 22 in the *Gīta* up to the word "disappear" in the translation; and the first of the purport's two paragraphs) explains that the transcendentalist is neutral to the modes. He is free from hankering and envy, being indifferent to their pushings. These are the symptoms of one unaffected by the modes.

The second question, "What is such a person's behavior?" is answered in texts 23-25: "He is equally disposed and sees everything on an equal level because he knows perfectly well that he has nothing to do with material existence." Such a person does his duties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness while remaining aloof from the reactions of the modes.

While the answers to both questions seem similar, there is a subtle difference. The *symptoms* are only self-perceivable (text 22), whereas the *behavior* is perceivable by others (23—25). People who can display this behavior are truly worthy of the title *guṇa-atītaḥ*—transcendental to the modes of nature.

To be *guṇa-atītaḥ*, one must first come to the mode of goodness. No one in the mode of passion—possessed of "unlimited desires"—and of course, no one in ignorance, can "look upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye, nor be "situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor." While goodness is also binding, without first coming to goodness, the conditioned soul will not be able to transcend any of the modes. (For more discussion on the relationship between goodness and transcendence, see the essay "Elevation to Goodness" in the appendix.) **[I suggest making that parenthetical comment a footnote. I won't do it, but leave it to the layout person in case I mess up the formatting.] [I thought we were not going to include the essay in this book. We've put it into the Art of Teaching. Yet, it surely seems relevant at this point. Perhaps we (Kaisori, BB, and I) can speak about the merits and demerits of it's inclusion and decide. BJD] [Okay. I'll have to read it first. Kdd] [Please also bring up this question to BB. He's up on the pros and cons. Thank you. BJD] [Brajabihari Prabhu, I need to hear from you on this, then.]** Thus goodness is a precursor to attaining the stage discussed in these verses. It is interesting to note that the qualities mentioned here are similar to those described in 13:8-12 as the process of knowledge. (They are also similar to 12:1-20, and 5:13-14 and 18-22).

The basic point is the same: through knowledge we become detached from the pushings of the modes and liberated from this world.

The position of *bhakti-yoga* in this process of liberation from the modes is, of course, most important. Kṛṣṇa ends this chapter with a discussion of *bhakti* and simultaneously answers Arjuna's third question.

Text 26: One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.

While the process of knowledge just described gradually elevates us to the platform of equanimity, one engaged in full devotional service immediately and automatically transcends the modes of nature. The word *avyabhicārena* implies having no tendency to render service to anyone other than Kṛṣṇa. Because he is serving Kṛṣṇa exclusively, the devotee has no opportunity to serve the modes. This is the direct process of transcendence. Therefore, he immediately reaches the Brahman platform where the modes of material nature have no power over him. He is on the spiritual platform, which is the platform upon which actual pure devotional service takes place.

This is one reason why serving the spiritual master is the "secret of success" in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We have to develop a service mood, not an enjoying mood. The enjoying mood is the glue that adheres us to the material world. Thinking of ourselves as "my *guru's* servant" and fixing his order as our life and soul frees us from that glue. The modes may dictate a variety of allurements to us, but a devotee surrendered to his *guru* follows the *guru's* instructions and does not heed the pushings of the modes. Thus he rises immediately to the liberated platform. It is the service attitude, and not merely the *jñāni*-like ability to discriminate between the modes and the pure soul, that brings perfection.

Bhakti is for the both the *sādhaka*, the practitioner, and the *siddha*, the one who has already attained perfection. *Karmis* and *jñānis* must eventually give up their processes as they attain higher stages of consciousness, but one need never give up *bhakti*. Even *karmis* and *jñānis*, who do not desire the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's service as their ultimate goal, must take to devotional service in order to achieve the fruit of their process.

Srīla Prabhupāda further glorifies *bhakti*: "This verse is a reply to Arjuna's third question: "What is the means of attaining to the transcendental position?" As explained before, the material world is acting under the spell of the modes of material nature. One should not be disturbed by the activities of the modes of nature; instead of putting his consciousness into such activities, he may transfer his consciousness to Kṛṣṇa activities. Kṛṣṇa activities are known as *bhakti-yoga*—always acting for Kṛṣṇa. So if one engages himself in the service of Kṛṣṇa or His plenary expansions with unflinching determination, although these modes of material nature are very difficult to overcome, one can overcome them easily. This has already been explained in the seventh chapter. One who surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa at once surmounts the influence of the modes of material nature."

One may ask after reading text 26 why one in full devotional service will attain Brahman. After all, his desire is not Brahman realization, but Kṛṣṇa's service. Kṛṣṇa therefore expands His answer. He ends this chapter by again stressing *bhakti* and by describing His own relationship to Brahman.

Text 27: I am the basis of that impersonal Brahman, which is immortal, imperishable and eternal and is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains, "That Brahman, which is considered the ultimate shelter and achievement of the impersonalists, is sheltered by Kṛṣṇa. Thus Brahman, as one of His dependent features, is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa."

Srila Sridhara Svami comments: "Kṛṣṇa is the concentrated form of Brahman as the sun is the intensified form of light. Although Kṛṣṇa and Brahman are nondifferent, Kṛṣṇa is the support of Brahman. The completeness of Brahman is Kṛṣṇa." Arjuna, too, has confirmed Kṛṣṇa as the Parabrahma, the Supreme Brahman, in Chapter Eleven.

Brahman is the basic transcendental platform upon which pure devotional service takes place. In 13:13 Kṛṣṇa said: "Brahman, the spirit, beginningless and subordinate to Me, lies beyond the cause and effect of the material world." This Brahman is the shelter and goal of the impersonalists. Here, however, Kṛṣṇa indirectly hints that even the impersonalists must take to devotional service to achieve the fruit of their meditation.

Srila Prabhupada writes, "Gradually, by such association, by the influence of the spiritual master, one's material desire to dominate is removed, and one becomes firmly situated in the Lord's transcendental loving service. This method is prescribed from the twenty-second to the last verse of this chapter. Devotional service to the Lord is very simple: one should always engage in the service of the Lord, should eat the remnants of foodstuffs offered to the Deity, smell the flowers offered to the lotus feet of the Lord, see the places where the Lord had His transcendental pastimes, read of the different activities of the Lord, His reciprocation of love with His devotees, chant always the transcendental vibration Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and observe the fasting days commemorating the appearances and disappearances of the Lord and His devotees."

In his purport to the opening verse of this chapter, Srila Prabhupada had stated that one could come to an understanding of devotional service by studying this chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, "The Three Modes of Material Nature," through "philosophical speculation." By applying our intelligence to understand the nature of the modes' stringent control in the world, we will understand the power of He who controls those modes. Then, if we are free from envy, we will understand our own insignificance and surrender to that controller, the Paramatma.

Chapter Fifteen

The Yoga of the Supreme Person

Chapter Fourteen described the three modes of nature, those forces that simultaneously limit and control a soul within his field of activities. Now Kṛṣṇa, using an allegory of an *asvattha* tree, begins to describe the full material world with its varieties of fields and fruits.

Text 1: The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is said that there is an imperishable banyan tree that has its roots upward and its branches down and whose leaves are the Vedic hymns. One who knows this tree is the knower of the Vedas.

The banyan tree of the material world is upside down, roots upward and branches down, because it only reflects the reality of the spiritual world. As a reflection rests upon water, this tree rests upon the living entity's desire.

As the branches of a banyan tree grow into roots and further trunks, this reflected tree similarly has an endless complication of intertwined trunks, roots, branches, and sub-branches growing down into further trunks, roots, and branches. One can neither envision where this tree begins nor where it ends. A soul, "sitting" within the complexities of this incomprehensible tree, remains trapped. All existence beyond the tree is forgotten and he is fully enamored by the various tastes of the available fruits and berries.

The word *asvattham* can also be understood as follows: *sva* in *asvattham* can mean "tomorrow" and *asva* can thus mean "not tomorrow." *Ta* means stay. Thus *asvattham* can be taken as "that which will not exist tomorrow." The material world is *asvattham*, not existing tomorrow, both for the devotees and the nondevotees. It doesn't exist tomorrow for the devotees because the devotees will become liberated "tomorrow" and attain the spiritual world. The tree doesn't exist tomorrow for the nondevotees because everything that they are attached to will cease to exist (*avyayam*). The word *avyayam* also indicates that although the fruits of their attachment will cease to exist "tomorrow," the nondevotees' material existence is *avyayam*, everlasting.

In Sanskrit, *asva* also means horse. A horse often stands with three legs on the ground and one leg dangling. Similarly, the three solid-standing legs of existence, *tri-pada-vibhuti*, represent the spiritual world, while the dangling leg, the *eka-pada-vibhuti*, is the material world.

Prabhupada further explains, "The entanglement of this material world is compared here to a banyan tree. For one who is engaged in fruitive activities, there is no end to the banyan tree. He wanders from one branch to another, to another, to another. The tree of this material world has no end, and for one who is attached to this tree, there is no possibility of liberation. . . . If one can understand this indestructible tree of illusion, then one can get out of it. . . . This process of extrication should be understood. In the previous chapters it has been explained that there are many processes by which to get out of the material entanglement. And, up to the Thirteenth Chapter, we have seen that devotional service to the Supreme Lord is the best way. Now, the basic principle of devotional service is detachment from material activities and attachment to the transcendental service of the Lord. The process of breaking attachment to the material world is discussed in the beginning of this chapter. . . ."

"Now, there is no ready experience in this world of a tree situated with its branches down and its roots upward, but there is such a thing. That tree can be found beside a reservoir of water. We can see that the trees on the bank reflect upon the water with their branches down and roots up. In other words, the tree of this material world is only a reflection of the real tree of the spiritual world. This reflection of the spiritual world is situated on desire, just as a tree's reflection is situated on water. Desire is the cause of things being situated in this reflected material light. One who wants to get out of this material existence must know this tree thoroughly through analytical study. Then he can cut off his relationship with it."

Text 2: The branches of this tree extend downward and upward, nourished by the three modes of material nature. The twigs are the objects of the senses. This tree also has roots going down, and these are bound to the fruitive actions of human society.

Depending upon the banyan branch on which a living entity is located, he will possess a material body, a specific type of senses, and, according to the combination of modes that influence that particular part of the tree, he will be attracted to a specific set of "twigs," sense objects. Thus the living entity, traveling from one birth to the next, from the

upward branches of demigod life to the downward branches of animal life, seeks pleasure but in fact only attains further entrapment and future deaths—*mulany anusantatani karmanubandhini*.

Srila Prabhupada states in the last sentence of his purport: "This planet of human beings is considered the field of activities." This indicates that *karma* is only accumulated in the human birth. Knowing this, one who follows the *Vedas* can elevate himself within this tree.

Krsna continues His banyan tree allegory in the next two verses.

Text 3-4: The real form of this tree cannot be perceived in this world. No one can understand where it ends, where it begins, or where it's foundation is. But with determination one must cut down this strongly rooted tree with the weapon of detachment. Thereafter, one must seek that place from which, having gone, one never returns, and there surrender to that Supreme Personality of Godhead from whom everything has extended since time immemorial.

Each philosopher has his own opinion about the nature of the world. The Buddhists say the world is illusion. The Mayavadis say the world is false. The followers of Sankhya say the world is eternal. The materials say the world is reality. However, neither in time nor space can we actually understand the nature of the world's beginning or end. Can the banyan tree of this material world be pulled down? Can it be cut despite our ignorance of the world's beginning and end?

This strongly rooted tree, *su-virudha-mulam*, cannot be pulled down. It has to be cut. The ax with which we must chop at it is composed of detachment and renunciation and is sharpened with knowledge and discrimination. We must cut this tree down completely by full detachment lest our mind run again toward sense gratification.

Prabhupada describes both the process of detachment and the attainment of the real tree in his purport:

It is now clearly stated that the real form of this banyan tree cannot be understood in this material world. Since the root is upwards, the extension of the real tree is at the other end. When entangled with the material expansions of the tree, one cannot see how far the tree extends, nor can one see the beginning of this tree. Yet one has to find out the cause . . . One has to search out that origin of this tree, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, through the association of persons who are in knowledge of that Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then by understanding one becomes gradually detached from this false reflection of reality, and by knowledge one can cut off the connection and actually become situated in the real tree.

"The word *asanga* is very important in this connection because the attachment for sense enjoyment and lording it over the material nature is very strong. Therefore one must learn detachment by discussion of spiritual science based on authoritative scriptures, and one must hear from persons who are actually in knowledge. As a result of such discussion in the association of devotees, one comes to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the first thing one must do is surrender to Him . . . The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is the original root from whom everything has emanated. To gain favor of that Personality of Godhead, one has only to surrender, and this is a result of performing devotional service by hearing, chanting, etc.

Krsna further describes the process of surrender and the qualities of those who do surrender and thereby attain the spiritual world.

Text 5: Those who are free from false prestige, illusion and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are freed from the dualities of happiness and distress, and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attain to that eternal kingdom.

The process of surrender, as stressed in this verse, is highlighted by Prabhupada in his purport: "The first qualification is that one should not be deluded by pride. Because the conditioned soul is puffed up, thinking himself the lord of material nature, it is very difficult for him to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should know by the cultivation of real knowledge that he is not lord of material nature; the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Lord. When one is free from delusion caused by pride, he can begin the process of surrender. . . . One has to get out of this false notion that human society is the proprietor of this world. And when one has an understanding of things as

they are, he becomes free from all dual conceptions such as happiness and distress, pleasure and pain. He becomes full in knowledge; then it is possible for him to surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Krsna now answers two questions, "What is the nature of that place that a detached, surrendered soul will attain?" and, "If one goes there, does he come back?"

Text 6: That Supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never again return to this material world.

As He did in 8.20, Krsna here also gives a brief description of the spiritual world. Srila Prabhupada says we "should be captivated by this information," because if we are not, we will tend to be enamored by the objects of sense enjoyment and will endlessly transfer from one field of activity to another, jumping from branch to branch in the cycle of *samsara*.

Text 7: The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.

Krsna uses the word *sanatana* in this verse to inform us that the living entity is eternally an individual; that individuality is not imaginary as the Mayavadis claim.

All living entities—*mama eva amsah*—are certainly Krsna's fragmental parts and are eternal, just as Krsna is eternal. Therefore, they belong only with Krsna in His eternal abode. At present they are quite unnaturally being led by the mind's material attachments and plans for pleasure, and they are both struggling hard and suffering in this ever-changing material world. This verse thus emphasizes the mind's power to determine the living entity's future. The next verse continues that thrust, explaining how, determined by his thoughts, a soul attains his next body.

Text 8: The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another, as the air carries aromas. Thus he takes on one kind of body and again quits it to take another.

When the blowing wind passes over a fragrant rose garden it acquires a sweet scent. Yet the air itself is not sweet; its sweetness is acquired. When that same air passes over sewage its odor becomes vile. Again, the air's foul smell is not the actual scent of the air, but rather the scent of that with which the air has come into contact. Similarly, although the soul is trapped in a gross body and subtle mind, he remains aloof from all his apparent qualities, whether he exhibits the fragrant mode of goodness or the foul mode of ignorance.

The mind, like a magnet that has attracted an iron nail, attracts its next gross body, as explained in the following verse.

Text 9: The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of ear, eye, tongue, nose and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects.

It is as if Arjuna asked: "After going to the next body, what does the living entity do?" and Krsna replied, "After getting new senses and taking shelter of his mind's desires, he begins exploiting his specifically allotted sense objects."

Our particular body—our eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and everything else—is formed around our mind's desires. If we desire to fly, to hang-glide for example, why undergo the tribulation of artificially attaching ourselves to wings? We can fly in the body of a high-soaring hawk. If our life's pleasure is scuba-diving, why go to the trouble of having to resurface to fill our air tanks? It's easier to become a fish. Based on the mind's desires, a gross body is generated with its particular facility for pleasure.

Krsna will now answer the question of why people can't see this happening.

Text 10: The foolish cannot understand how a living entity can quit his body, nor can they understand what sort of body he enjoys under the spell of the modes of nature. But one whose eyes are trained in knowledge can see all this.

Those who lack knowledge are *vimudhas*, blinded due to their unending attempt to enjoy their senses. Because they identify with the happiness and distress arising from the senses, they remain unable to discriminate matter from spirit; their intense desire for bodily and mental pleasure has covered their ability to experience their own spiritual existence.

What is the cure for ignorance? Krsna says knowledge. Those whose "eyes" are trained in knowledge by hearing and learning *sastra* can see. Lack of sastric learning brings the following result.

Text 11: The endeavoring transcendentalists, who are situated in self-realization, can see all this clearly. But those whose minds are not developed and who are not situated in self-realization cannot see what is taking place, though they may try.

Pure-hearted spiritualists can see that the soul transmigrates; the blind who lack knowledge see nothing. Even one without knowledge, however, can see Krsna in His opulent manifestations in matter and become attracted to Him.

Text 12: The splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness of this whole world, comes from Me. And the splendor of the moon and the splendor of fire are also from Me.

Text 13: I enter into each planet, and by My energy they stay in orbit. I become the moon and thereby supply the juice of life to all vegetables.

In verse 6 of this chapter, Krsna described the spiritual world as needing neither sunlight, moonlight, fire, nor electricity. In the material world, however, where we need such things, Krsna says that He is their source. Although we conditioned souls, in our pride, neither acknowledge our dependence on Krsna nor upon those things produced from Him, we are nevertheless fully dependent on the sun, moon, and fire. Krsna's choice of examples is therefore most excellent, for those objects and processes He mentions provide our most basic necessities of life.

Text 14: I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of foodstuff.

The potency of vegetables, so essential for strength, health, and the pleasures of our palate, is supplied by Krsna. Yet even eating causes misery without the fire of digestion, which also comes from Krsna. Again, we are fully dependent on Krsna as our maintainer.

Krsna completes His description of Himself as maintainer in the next verse.

Text 15: I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas.

Krsna serves from within the heart of all living entities by activating remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. If we were to remember each occurrence, especially the miseries we have experienced throughout our unlimited births, we would remain unable to function. Krsna provides practical assistance in both forgetfulness and remembrance. Krsna also provides facility for those desiring transcendental knowledge.

After hearing Krsna say, "By the *Vedas* I am to be known," Arjuna asks, "How is knowing You the purpose of the *Vedas*? Of Vedic verses, eighty percent depict *karma-kanda* activities!" Krsna's reply: "*Vedanta-krt*, in my incarnation as Vyasa, I have compiled *Vedanta* and therefore give the true purpose of the *Vedas*: all Vedic glorification is ultimately meant for Me and not for the demigods." Arjuna inquires further: "Others may have different opinions." Krsna again replies: "I am *veda-vid*, the knower of the *Vedas*. No other interpretation harmonizes the totality of the Vedic evidence. I give liberation, I control all, I know the *Vedas*, and everyone should surrender to Me. Others may claim, 'I am also *veda-vid*, but only I can say, 'I am *veda-vid* and *vedanta-krt*.'"

Having said He is the knower of the *Vedas*, Krsna next summarizes the essence of the *Vedas*, the *Vedanta*, in three verses (16-18). These three verses are sometimes referred to as the *tri-sloki Gita* for knowledge.

Text 16: There are two classes of beings, the fallible and the infallible. In the material world every living entity is fallible, and in the spiritual world every living entity is called infallible.

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport: "As already explained, the Lord in His incarnation as Vyasadeva compiled the *Vedanta-sutra*. Here the Lord is giving, in summary, the contents of the *Vedanta-sutra*. He says that the living entities, who are innumerable, can be divided into two classes—the fallible and the infallible. The living entities are eternally separated parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When they are in contact with the material world they are called *jiva-bhuta*, and the Sanskrit words given here, *ksarah sarvani bhutani*, means that they are fallible. Those who are in oneness with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, however, are called infallible."

This oneness of those infallible souls in the spiritual world is herein called *kuta-sthah*, a oneness with Krsna in desire. We are therefore required, as Krsna said in texts 4 and 5, to be detached from the material world as Krsna is detached, and, overcoming our desire for independent enjoyment, to surrender to Him.

Text 17: Besides these two, there is the greatest living personality, the Supreme Soul, the imperishable Lord Himself, who has entered the three worlds and is maintaining them.

The word *tu* used in *uttamah purusas tv anyah* separates the Supersoul, the Supreme *purusa* mentioned in this verse, from the two other *purusas*, the fallible and the infallible, mentioned in the previous verse. In addition, Krsna now directly states what He has already described in texts 12-15: He is *bibharti*, **[is this the verb form and the noun is written differently?] [O Sanskrit editor, what is the correct answer?]** the maintainer of all living entities.

Krsna continues this analysis in the next verse.

Text 18: Because I am transcendental, beyond both fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the Vedas as that Supreme Person.

Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is different from all other living entities and is the source of both the Brahman and Paramatma features of the Absolute Truth. Prabhupada's purport explains, "No one can surpass the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna—neither the conditioned soul nor the liberated soul. He is therefore the greatest of personalities . . . This means that the Supreme Personality is exhibiting and diffusing His spiritual effulgence, which is the ultimate illumination. That Supreme Personality also has a localized aspect as Paramatma."

What are the activities of one who has assimilated the knowledge of the previous three verses, especially that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

Text 19: Whoever knows Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without doubting, is the knower of everything. He therefore engages in full devotional service to Me, O son of Bharata.

This knowledge is the true fruit of the *Vedas*, and one who knows it becomes *sarva-vit*, the knower of everything. Therefore, he performs pure devotional service.

Text 20: This is the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures, O sinless one, and it is disclosed now by Me. Whoever understands this will become wise, and his endeavors will know perfection.

This verse summarizes Chapter Fifteen. One who knows Krsna as the Supreme serves Him with devotion, which awards both wisdom and perfection. One who doesn't serve Krsna? As Prabhupada explains in his purport, "However intelligent he may be in the estimation of some common man, he is not perfectly intelligent."

Srila Prabhupada also comments on the word *anagha* before summarizing the chapter: "The word *anagha*, by which Arjuna is addressed, is significant. *Anagha*, 'O sinless one,' means that unless one is free from all sinful reactions it is very difficult to understand Krsna. One has to become free from all contamination, all sinful activities; then he can understand. But devotional service is so pure and potent that once one is engaged in devotional service he automatically comes to the stage of sinlessness.

"While one is performing devotional service in the association of pure devotees in full Krsna consciousness, there are certain things which require to be vanquished altogether. The most important thing one has to surmount is weakness of heart. The first falldown is caused by the desire to lord it over material nature. Thus one gives up the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Lord. The second weakness of the heart is that as one increases the propensity to lord it

over material nature, he becomes attached to matter and the possession of matter. The problems of material existence are due to these weaknesses of the heart. In this chapter the first five verses describe the process of freeing oneself from these weaknesses of heart, and the rest of the chapter, from the sixth verse through the end, discusses *purusottama-yoga*."

As stated above, to understand *purusottama-yoga* we have to be sinless. Thus this chapter discusses breaking our material attachments, understanding Kṛṣṇa as the source of Brahman and the maintainer, the Paramatma, and as Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Finally, knowing all this, one surrenders and becomes one with Him in desire and service. This is the conclusion of all *sastra*—the yoga of the Supreme Person.