

Holy One, the object of knowledge, the mystic purifying syllable OM, the Rik, the Sama, the Yajur, and all the Vedas. I am the goal, the Comforter, the Lord, the Witness, the resting-place, the asylum and the Friend; I am the origin and the dissolution, the receptacle, the storehouse, and the eternal seed. I cause light and heat and rain; I now draw in and now let forth; I am death and immortality; I am the cause unseen and the visible effect. Those enlightened in the three Vedas, offering sacrifices to me and obtaining sanctification from drinking the soma juice ³, petition me for heaven; thus they attain the region of Indra ⁴, the prince of celestial beings, and there feast upon celestial food and are gratified with heavenly enjoyments. And they, having enjoyed that spacious heaven for a period in proportion to their merits, sink back into this mortal world where they are born again as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted; thus those who long for the accomplishment of desires, following the Vedas, obtain a happiness which comes and goes. But for those who, thinking of me as identical with all, constantly worship me, I bear the burden of the responsibility of their happiness. And even those also who worship other gods with a firm faith in doing so, involuntarily worship me, too, O son of Kunti, albeit in ignorance. I am he who is the Lord of all sacrifices, and am also their enjoyer, but they do not understand me truly and therefore they fall from heaven. Those who devote themselves to the gods go to the gods; the worshipers of the pitris go to the pitris; those who worship the evil spirits ⁵ go to them, and my worshipers come to me. I accept and enjoy the offerings of the humble soul who in his worship with a pure heart offereth a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water unto me. Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. Thus thou shalt be delivered from the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action; and thy heart being joined to renunciation and to the practice of action, thou shalt come to me. I am the same to all creatures; I know not hatred nor favor; but those who serve me with love dwell in me and I in them. Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright. Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul and obtaineth perpetual happiness. I swear, O son of Kunti, that he who worships me never perisheth. Those even who may be of the womb of sin, women ⁶, vaisyas, and sudras, ⁷ shall tread the highest path if they take sanctuary with me. How much more, then, holy brahmans and devotees of kingly race! Having obtained this finite,

joyless world, worship me. Serve me, fix heart and mind on me, be my servant, my adorer, prostrate thyself before me, and thus, united unto me, at rest, thou shalt go unto me.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Ninth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE KINGLY KNOWLEDGE AND THE KINGLY MYSTERY.

Footnotes:

1. That is to say, by the power of “prakriti.”
2. This reads that “they are inclined to the nature of the asuras and rakshasas,” a class of evil elementals of beings, or, as some say, “of the nature of the very low constituents of nature.”
3. Among the Hindus the drinking of the soma at the end of a sacrifice is an act of great merit, with its analogy in the Christian faith in the drinking of the communion wine.
4. “The region of Indra” is the highest of the celestial spheres. It is the devachan of theosophical literature, for Indra is the prince of the celestial beings who abide in deva-sthan.
5. These evil spirits are the Bhutas, and are the same as the so-called spirits of the dead — the shells — worshiped or run after at spiritualistic seances.
6. This may seem strange to those who have been born in Christendom, and perhaps appear to be testimony to harsh views on the part of Hindu sages respecting women, but in the Bible the same thing is to be found and even worse, where in 1 Tim. 2, 11-15, it is declared that the woman shall be saved through her husband, and that she must be subservient.
7. Vaisyas and suidras are the two lower castes, or merchants and servitors.

Chapter X

Devotion by Means of the Universal Divine Perfections

KRISHNA:

“Hear again, O thou of mighty arms, my supreme words, which unto thee who art well pleased I will declare because I am anxious for thy welfare.

“Neither the assemblage of the Gods nor the Adept Kings know my origin, because I am the origin of all the Gods and of the Adepts. Whosoever knoweth me to be the mighty Ruler of the universe and without birth or beginning, he among men, undeluded, shall be liberated from all his sins. Subtle perception, spiritual knowledge, right judgment, patience, truth, self-mastery; pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity; birth and death, danger and security, fear and equanimity, satisfaction, restraint of body and mind, alms-giving, inoffensiveness, zeal and glory and ignominy, all these the various dispositions of creatures come from me. So in former days the seven great Sages and the four Manus who are of my nature were born of my mind, and from them sprang this world. He who knoweth perfectly this permanence and mystic faculty of mine becometh without doubt possessed of unshaken faith. I am the origin of all; all things proceed from me; believing me to be thus, the wise gifted with spiritual wisdom worship me; their very hearts and minds are in me; enlightening one another and constantly speaking of me, they are full of enjoyment and satisfaction. To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me. For them do I out of my compassion, standing within their hearts, destroy the darkness which springs from ignorance by the brilliant lamp of spiritual discernment.”

ARJUNA:

“Thou art Parabrahman! ¹ the supreme abode, the great Purification; thou art the Eternal Presence, the Divine Being, before all other Gods, holy, primeval, all-pervading, without beginning! Thus thou art declared by all the Sages — by Narada, Asita, Devala, Vyasa, and thou thyself now dost say the same. I firmly believe all that thou, O Kesava, sayest unto me; for neither Gods nor demons comprehend thy manifestations. Thou alone knowest thyself by thy Self, Supreme Spirit, Creator and Master of all that lives, God of Gods, and Lord of all the universe! Thou alone canst fully declare thy divine powers by which thou

hast pervaded and continuest to pervade these worlds. How shall I, constantly thinking of thee, be able to know thee, O mysterious Lord? In what particular forms shall I meditate on thee? O Janardana — besought by mortals — tell me therefore in full thine own powers and forms of manifestation, for I am never sated of drinking of the life-giving water of thy words.”

KRISHNA:

“O best of Kurus, blessings be upon thee. ² I will make thee acquainted with the chief of my divine manifestations, for the extent of my nature is infinite.

“I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all existing things. Among Adityas ³ I am Vishnu, and among luminous bodies I am the sun. I am Marichi among the Maruts ⁴, and among heavenly mansions I am the moon. Among the Vedas I am the Samaveda ⁵, and Indra ⁶ among the Gods; among the senses and organs I am the Manas ⁷, and of creatures the existence. I am Sankara among the Rudras; and Vittesa, the lord of wealth among the Yakshas ⁸ and Rakshasas. ⁹ I am Pavaka among the Vasus ¹⁰, and Meru ¹¹ among high-aspiring mountains. And know, O son of Pritha, that I am Brihaspati ¹², the chief of teachers; among leaders of celestial armies Skanda, and of floods I am the ocean. I am Bhrigu among the Adept Kings; of words I am the monosyllable OM; of forms of worship, the silent repetition of sacred texts, and of immovable things I am the Himalaya. Of all the trees of the forest I am Asvattha the Pippala tree; and of the celestial Sages, Narada; among Gandharvas ¹³ I am Chitraratha, and of perfect saints, Kapila. Know that among horses I am Uchchaisrava, who arose with the Amrita out of the ocean; among elephants, Airavata, and among men their sovereigns. Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; among cows, Kamadhuk, the cow of plenty; of procreators, the God of love, and of serpents, Vasuki ¹⁴, their chief. I am Ananta among the Nagas ¹⁵, Varuna among things of the waters; among the ancestors, Aryarman, and of all who judge I am Yama. ¹⁶ Among the Daityas I am Prahlada, and among computations I am Time itself; the lion among beasts, and Garuda ¹⁷ among the feathered tribe. Among purifiers I am Pavana, the air; Rama among those who carry arms, Makara among the fishes, and the Ganges among rivers. Among that which is evolved, O Arjuna, I am the beginning, the middle, and the end; of all sciences I am the knowledge of the Adhyatma ¹⁸, and of uttered sounds the human speech. Among letters I am the vowel A, and of all compound words I am the

Dvandva ¹⁹; I am endless time itself, and the Preserver whose face is turned on all sides. I am all-grasping death, and the birth of those who are to be; among feminine things I am fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, patience, and forgiveness. Among the hymns of the Samaveda I am Brihat-Saman, and the Gayatri among metres; among months I am the month Margasirsha ²⁰, and of seasons spring called Kusumakara, the time of flowers. Of those things which deceive I am the dice, and splendor itself among splendid things. I am victory, I am perseverance, and the goodness of the good. Of the race of Vrishni I am Vasudeva; of the Pandava I am Arjuna the conqueror of wealth; of perfect saints I am Vyasa ²¹, and of prophet-seers I am the bard Usana. Among rulers I am the rod of punishment, among those desiring conquest I am policy; and among the wise of secret knowledge I am their silence. I am, O Arjuna, the seed of all existing things, and there is not anything, whether animate or inanimate which is without me. My divine manifestations, O harasser of thy foes, are without end, the many which I have mentioned are by way of example. Whatever creature is permanent, of good fortune or mighty, also know it to be sprung from a portion of my energy. But what, O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this? I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Tenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE UNIVERSAL DIVINE
PERFECTIONS.

Footnotes:

1. Beyond Brahman.
2. In the original the first word is one which carries a blessing with it; it is a benediction and means “now then,” but this in English conveys no idea of a benediction.
3. Adityas, the twelve Sun-Gods, who, at the recurrence of the time for dissolution by fire, bring on the universal conflagration.
4. The Gods of air.
5. In Western language this may be said to be the Veda of song in the very highest sense of the power of song. Many nations held that song had the power to make even mere matter change and move obedient to the sound.
6. In the original it is “Vasava” which is a name of Indra.
7. The heart or the mind.
8. Spirits of a sensual nature.
9. An order of evil spirits.
10. Among the first created Beings of a high order.
11. Said by some to be the North Pole.
12. Jupiter, the teacher of the Devas.
13. Celestial host of singers; they are a class of elementals.
14. Poisonous serpents.
15. Non-poisonous serpents of a fabled sort, said to have speech and wisdom.
16. The Judge of the dead.
17. Garuda, the bird of Vishnu, and also means esoterically the whole manvantaric cycle.
18. The highest spiritual knowledge.
19. A form of compound word in the Sanskrit which preserves the meaning of the words making up the compound.
20. The month when the regular rains have stopped and the heat abated.
21. Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata.

Chapter XI

The Vision of the Divine Form as Including All Forms

ARJUNA:

“My delusion has been dispersed by the words which thou for my soul’s peace hast spoken concerning the mystery of the Adhyatma — the spirit. For I have heard at full length from thee, O thou whose eyes are like lotus leaves, the origin and dissolution of existing things, and also thy inexhaustible majesty. It is even as thou hast described thyself, O mighty Lord; I now desire to see thy divine form, O sovereign Lord. Wherefore, O Lord, if thou thinkest it may be beheld by me, show me, O Master of devotion, thine inexhaustible Self.”

KRISHNA:

“Behold, O son of Pritha, my forms by hundreds and by thousands, of diverse kinds divine, of many shapes and fashions. Behold the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvins, and the Maruts, see things wonderful never seen before, O son of Bharata. Here in my body now behold, O Gudakesa, the whole universe animate and inanimate gathered here in one, and all things else thou hast a wish to see. But as with thy natural eyes thou are not able to see me, I will give thee the divine eye. Behold my sovereign power and might!”

SANJAYA:

O king, having thus spoken, Hari ¹, the mighty Lord of mysterious power, showed to the son of Pritha his supreme form; with many mouths and eyes and many wonderful appearances, with many divine ornaments, many celestial weapons upraised; adorned with celestial garlands and robes, anointed with celestial ointments and perfumes, full of every marvelous thing, the eternal God whose face is turned in all directions. The glory and amazing splendor of this mighty Being may be likened to the radiance shed by a thousand suns rising together into the heavens. The son of Pandu then beheld within the body of the God of gods the whole universe in all its vast variety. Overwhelmed with wonder, Dhananjaya ², the possessor of wealth, with hair standing on end, bowed down his head before the Deity, and thus with joined palms ³ addressed him:

ARJUNA:

“I behold, O God of gods, within thy frame all beings and things of every kind; the Lord Brahma on his lotus throne, all the Rishis and the heavenly Serpents. ⁴ I see thee on all sides, of infinite forms, having many arms, stomachs, mouths, and eyes. But I can discover neither thy beginning, thy middle, nor thy end, O universal Lord, form of the universe. I see thee crowned with a diadem and armed with mace and chakra ⁵, a mass of splendor, darting light on all sides; difficult to behold, shining in every direction with light immeasurable, like the burning fire or glowing sun. Thou art the supreme inexhaustible Being, the end of effort, changeless, the Supreme Spirit of this universe, the never-failing guardian of eternal law: I esteem thee Purusha ⁶, I see thee without beginning middle, or end, of infinite power with arms innumerable, the sun and moon thy eyes, thy mouth a flaming fire, overmastering the whole universe with thy majesty. Space and heaven, and earth and every point around the three regions of the universe are filled with thee alone. The triple world is full of fear, O thou mighty Spirit, seeing this thy marvelous form of terror. Of the assemblage of the gods some I see fly to thee for refuge, while some in fear with joined hands sing forth thy praise; the hosts of the Maharshis and Siddhas, great sages and saints, hail thee, saying “svasti,” ⁷ and glorify thee with most excellent hymns. The Rudras, Adityas, the Vasus, and all those beings — the Sadhyas, Visvas, the Asvins, Maruts, and Ushmapas, the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, and Siddhas ⁸ — all stand gazing on thee and are amazed. All the worlds alike with me are terrified to behold thy wondrous form gigantic, O thou of mighty arms, with many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs and projecting tusks. For seeing thee thus touching the heavens, shining with such glory, with widely-opened mouths and bright expanded eyes, my inmost soul is troubled and I lose both firmness and tranquillity, O Vishnu. Beholding thy dreadful teeth and thy face like the burning of death, I can see neither heaven nor earth; I find no peace; have mercy, O Lord of gods, thou Spirit of the universe! The sons of Dhritarashtra with all these rulers of men, Bhishma, Drona and also Kama and our principal warriors, seem to be impetuously precipitating themselves into thy mouths terrible with tusks; some are seen caught between thy teeth, their heads ground down. As the rapid streams of full-flowing rivers roll on to meet the ocean, even so these heroes of the human race rush into thy flaming mouths. As troops of insects carried away by strong impulse find death in the fire, even so do these beings with swelling

force pour into thy mouths for their own destruction. Thou involvest and swallowest all these creatures from every side, licking them in thy flaming lips; filling the universe with thy splendor, thy sharp beams burn, O Vishnu. Reverence be unto thee, O best of Gods! Be favorable! I seek to know thee, the Primeval One, for I know not thy work.”

KRISHNA:

“I am Time matured, come hither for the destruction of these creatures; except thyself, not one of all these warriors here drawn up in serried ranks shall live. Wherefore, arise! seize fame! Defeat the foe and enjoy the fullgrown kingdom! They have been already slain by me; be thou only the immediate agent, O thou both-armed one. ⁹ Be not disturbed. Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna, and all the other heroes of the war who are really slain by me. Fight, thou wilt conquer all thine enemies.”

SANJAYA:

When he of the resplendent diadem ¹⁰ heard these words from the mouth of Kesava ¹¹, he saluted Krishna with joined palms and trembling with fear, addressed him in broken accents, and bowed down terrified before him.

ARJUNA:

“The universe, O Hrishikesa ¹², is justly delighted with thy glory and is filled with zeal for thy service; the evil spirits are affrighted and flee on all sides, while all the hosts of saints bow down in adoration before thee. And wherefore should they not adore thee, O mighty Being, thou who art greater than Brahma, who art the first Maker? O eternal God of gods! O habitation of the universe! Thou art the one indivisible Being, and Non-Being, that which is supreme. Thou art the first of Gods, the most ancient Spirit; thou art the final supreme receptacle ¹³ of this universe; thou art the Knower and that which is to be known, and the supreme mansion; and by thee, O thou of infinite form, is this universe caused to emanate. Thou art Vayu, God of wind, Agni, God of fire, Yama, God of death, Varuna, God of waters; thou art the moon; Prajapati, the progenitor and grandfather, art thou. Hail! hail to thee! Hail to thee a thousand times repeated! Again and again hail to thee! Hail to thee! Hail to thee from before! Hail to thee from behind! Hail to thee on all sides, O thou

All! Infinite is thy power and might; thou includest all things, therefore thou art all things!

“Having been ignorant of thy majesty, I took thee for a friend, and have called thee ‘O Krishna, O son of Yadu, O friend,’ and blinded by my affection and presumption, I have at times treated thee without respect in sport, in recreation, in repose, in thy chair, and at thy meals, in private and in public; all this I beseech thee, O inconceivable Being, to forgive.

“Thou art the father of all things animate and inanimate; thou art to be honored as above the guru himself, and worthy to be adored; there is none equal to thee, and how in the triple worlds could there be thy superior, O thou of unrivaled power? Therefore I bow down and with my body prostrate, I implore thee, O Lord, for mercy. Forgive, O Lord, as the friend forgives the friend, as the father pardons his son, as the lover the beloved. I am well pleased with having beheld what was never before seen, and yet my heart is overwhelmed with awe; have mercy then, O God; show me that other form, O thou who art the dwelling-place of the universe; I desire to see thee as before with thy diadem on thy head, thy hands armed with mace and chakra; assume again, O thou of a thousand arms and universal form, thy four-armed shape!”¹⁴

KRISHNA:

“Out of kindness to thee, O Arjuna, by my divine power I have shown thee my supreme form, the universe, resplendent, infinite, primeval, and which has never been beheld by any other than thee. Neither by studying the Vedas, nor by alms-giving, nor by sacrificial rites, nor by deeds, nor by the severest mortification of the flesh can I be seen in this form by any other than thee, O best of Kurus. Having beheld my form thus awful, be not disturbed nor let thy faculties be confounded, but with fears allayed and happiness of heart look upon this other form of mine again.”

SANJAYA:

Vasudeva ¹⁵ having so spoken reassumed his natural form; and thus in milder shape the Great One presently assuaged the fears of the terrified Arjuna.

ARJUNA:

“Now that I see again thy placid human shape, O Janadana, who art prayed to by mortals, my mind is no more disturbed and I am self-possessed.”

KRISHNA:

“Thou hast seen this form of mine which is difficult to be perceived and which even the gods are always anxious to behold. But I am not to be seen, even as I have shown myself to thee, by study of the Vedas, nor by mortifications, nor alms-giving, nor sacrifices. I am to be approached and seen and known in truth by means of that devotion which has me alone as the object. He whose actions are for me alone, who esteemeth me the supreme goal, who is my servant only, without attachment to the results of action and free from enmity towards any creature, cometh to me, O son of Pandu.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eleventh Chapter, by name —

THE VISION OF THE DIVINE FORM AS INCLUDING ALL FORMS.

Footnotes:

1. Hari, an epithet of Krishna, meaning that he has the power to remove all difficulty.
2. Arjuna.
3. This is the Hindu mode of salutation.
4. These are the Uragas, said to be serpents. But it must refer to the great Masters of Wisdom, who were often called Serpents.
5. Among human weapons this would be known as the discus, but here it means the whirling wheel of spiritual will and power.
6. Purusha, the Eternal Person. The same name is also given to man by the Hindus.
7. This cry is supposed to be for the benefit of the world, and has that meaning.
8. All these names refer to different classes of celestial beings, some of which are now called in theosophical literature “elementals”; the others are explained in H. P. Blavatsky’s Secret Doctrine.
9. Arjuna was a famous archer who could use the celestial bow, Gandiva, with either hand equally well.
10. Arjuna wore a brilliant tiara.
11. Krishna, by another name.
12. Krishna.
13. That is, that into which the universe is resolved on the final dissolution.
14. Arjuna had been accustomed to see Krishna in his four-armed form, not only in the images shown in youth, but also when Krishna came into incarnation, and could therefore look on the four-armed form without fear.
15. A name of Krishna.

Chapter XII

Devotion by Means of Faith

ARJUNA:

“Among those of thy devotees who always thus worship thee ¹, which take the better way, those who worship the indivisible and unmanifested, or those who serve thee as thou now art?”

KRISHNA:

“Those who worship me with constant zeal, with the highest faith and minds placed on me, are held in high esteem by me. But those who, with minds equal toward everything, with senses and organs restrained, and rejoicing in the good of all creatures, meditate on the inexhaustible, immovable, highest, incorruptible, difficult to contemplate, invisible, omnipresent, unthinkable, the witness, undemonstrable, shall also come unto me. For those whose hearts are fixed on the unmanifested the labor is greater because the path which is not manifest is with difficulty attained by corporeal beings. ² But for those who worship me, renouncing in me all their actions, regarding me as the supreme goal and meditating on me alone, if their thoughts are turned to me, O son of Pritha, I presently become the savior from this ocean of incarnations and death. Place, then, thy heart on me, penetrate me with thy understanding, and thou shalt without doubt hereafter dwell in me. But if thou shouldst be unable at once steadfastly to fix thy heart and mind on me, strive then, O Dhananjaya, to find me by constant practice in devotion. If after constant practice, thou art still unable, follow me by actions performed for me ³; for by doing works for me thou shalt attain perfection. But if thou art unequal even to this, then, being self-restrained, place all thy works, failures and successes alike, on me, abandoning in me the fruit of every action. For knowledge is better than constant practice, meditation is superior to knowledge, renunciation of the fruit of action to meditation; final emancipation immediately results from such renunciation.

“My devotee who is free from enmity, well-disposed towards all creatures, merciful, wholly exempt from pride and selfishness, the same in pain and pleasure, patient of wrongs, contented, constantly devout, self-governed, firm in resolves, and whose mind and heart are fixed on me alone, is dear unto me.

He also is my beloved of whom mankind is not afraid and who has no fear of man; who is free from joy, from despondency and the dread of harm. My devotee who is unexpecting ⁴, pure, just, impartial, devoid of fear, and who hath forsaken interest in the results of action, is dear unto me. He also is worthy of my love who neither rejoiceth nor findeth fault, who neither lamenteth nor coveteth, and being my servant hath forsaken interest in both good and evil results. He also is my beloved servant who is equal-minded to friend or foe, the same in honor and dishonor, in cold and heat, in pain and pleasure, and is unsolicitous about the event of things; to whom praise and blame are as one; who is of little speech, content with whatever cometh to pass, who hath no fixed habitation, and whose heart, full of devotion, is firmly fixed. But those who seek this sacred ambrosia — the religion of immortality — even as I have explained it, full of faith, intent on me above all others, and united to devotion, are my most beloved.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Twelfth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF FAITH.

Footnotes:

1. That is, as described at the end of Chapter XI.
2. The difficulty here stated is that caused by the personality, which causes us to see the Supreme as different and separate from ourselves.
3. The works referred to here are special works of all kinds performed for the sake of the Supreme Being, which will have their effect upon the performer in future lives.
4. In the original this reads as “not peering about.”

Chapter XIII

Devotion by Means of the Discrimination of the Kshetra from Kshetrajna

KRISHNA:

“This perishable body, O son of Kunti, is known as Kshetra; those who are acquainted with the true nature of things call the soul who knows it, the Kshetrajna. Know also that I am the Knower in every mortal body, O son of Bharata; that knowledge which through the soul is a realization of both the known and the knower is alone esteemed by me as wisdom. What the Kshetra or body is, what it resembleth, what it produceth, and what is its origin, and also who he is who, dwelling within, knoweth it, as well as what is his power, learn all in brief from me. It has been manifoldly sung by the Rishis with discrimination and with arguments in the various Vedic hymns which treat of Brahman.

“This body, then, is made up of the great elements, Ahankara — egotism, Buddhi — intellect or judgment, the unmanifest, invisible spirit; the ten centers of action, the mind, and the five objects of sense; desire, aversion, pleasure and pain, persistency of life, and firmness, the power of cohesion. Thus I have made known unto thee what the Kshetra or body is with its component parts.

“True wisdom of a spiritual kind is freedom from self-esteem, hypocrisy, and injury to others; it is patience, sincerity, respect for spiritual instructors, purity, firmness, self-restraint, dispassion for objects of sense, freedom from pride, and a meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness, and error; it is an exemption from self-identifying attachment for children, wife, and household, and a constant unwavering steadiness of heart upon the arrival of every event whether favorable or unfavorable; it is a never-ceasing love for me alone, the self being effaced, and worship paid in a solitary spot, and a want of pleasure in congregations of men; it is a resolute continuance in the study of Adhyatma, the Superior spirit, and a meditation upon the end of the acquirement of a knowledge of truth; — this is called wisdom or spiritual knowledge; its opposite is ignorance.

“I will now tell thee what is the object of wisdom, from knowing which a man enjoys immortality; it is that which has no beginning, even the supreme Brahman, and of which it cannot be said that it is either Being or Non-Being. It has hands and feet in all directions; eyes, heads, mouths, and ears in every direction; it is immanent in the world, possessing the vast whole. Itself without organs, it is reflected by all the senses and faculties; unattached, yet supporting all; without qualities, yet the witness of them all. It is within and without all creatures animate and inanimate; it is inconceivable because of its subtlety, and although near it is afar off. Although undivided it appeareth as divided among creatures, and while it sustains existing things, it is also to be known as their destroyer and creator. It is the light of all lights, and is declared to be beyond all darkness; and it is wisdom itself, the object of wisdom, and that which is to be obtained by wisdom; in the hearts of all it ever presideth. Thus hath been briefly declared what is the perishable body, and wisdom itself, together with the object of wisdom; he, my devotee, who thus in truth conceiveth me, obtaineth my state.

“Know that prakriti or nature, and purusha the spirit, are without beginning. And know that the passions and the three qualities are sprung from nature. Nature or prakriti is said to be that which operates in producing cause and effect in actions ¹; individual spirit or purusha is said to be the cause of experiencing pain and pleasure. ² For spirit when invested with matter or prakriti experienceth the qualities which proceed from prakriti; its connection with these qualities is the cause of its rebirth in good and evil wombs. ³ The spirit in the body is called Mahesvara, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the Paramatma, the highest soul. He who thus knoweth the spirit and nature, together with the qualities, whatever mode of life he may lead, is not born again on this earth.

“Some men by meditation, using contemplation upon the Self, behold the spirit within, others attain to that end by philosophical study with its realization, and others by means of the religion of works. Others, again, who are not acquainted with it in this manner, but have heard it from others, cleave unto and respect it; and even these, if assiduous only upon tradition and attentive to hearing the scriptures, pass beyond the gulf of death. ⁴

“Know, O chief of the Bharatas, that whenever anything, whether animate or inanimate, is produced, it is due to the union of the Kshetra and Kshetrajna —

body and the soul. He who seeth the Supreme Being existing alike imperishable in all perishable things, sees indeed. Perceiving the same Lord present in everything and everywhere, he does not by the lower self destroy his own soul, but goeth to the supreme end. He who seeth that all his actions are performed by nature only, and that the self within is not the actor, sees indeed. And when he realizes perfectly that all things whatsoever in nature are comprehended in the ONE, he attains to the Supreme Spirit. This Supreme Spirit, O son of Kunti, even when it is in the body, neither acteth nor is it affected by action, because, being without beginning and devoid of attributes, it is changeless. As the all-moving Akasa by reason of its subtlety passeth everywhere unaffected, so the Spirit, though present in every kind of body, is not attached to action nor affected. As a single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body, O son of Bharata. Those who with the eye of wisdom thus perceive what is the difference between the body and Spirit and the destruction of the illusion of objects ⁵, go to the Supreme.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Thirteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE
KSHETRA FROM KSHETRAJNA.

Footnotes:

1. Prakriti, matter or nature, is the cause of all action throughout the universe, as it is the basis by which action may take place; and herein are included all actions, whether of men, of gods, powers, or what not.
2. Purusha is the aspect of the individual spirit in every human breast; it is the cause of our experiencing pain and pleasure through the connection with nature found in the body.
3. Here Purusha is the persisting individuality which connects all reincarnations, as if it were the thread, and has hence been called the “thread Soul.”
4. This last sentence means that they thus lay such a foundation so that in subsequent lives they will reach the other states and then to immortality.
5. This refers to what has previously been said about the great illusion produced by nature in causing us to see objects as different from Spirit, and it agrees with Patanjali, who says that, although the perfectly illuminated being has destroyed the illusion, it still has a hold upon those who are not illuminated — they will have to go through repeated rebirths until their time of deliverance also comes.

Chapter XIV

Devotion by Means of Separation from the Three Qualities

KRISHNA:

“I will explain further the sublime spiritual knowledge superior to all others, by knowing which all the sages have attained to supreme perfection on the dissolution of this body. They take sanctuary in this wisdom, and having attained to my state they are not born again even at the new evolution, nor are they disturbed at the time of general destruction.

“The great Brahman is my womb in which I place the seed; from that, O son of Bharata, is the production of all existing things. ¹ This great Brahman is the womb for all those various forms which are produced from any womb, and I am the Father who provideth the seed. The three great qualities called sattva, rajas, and tamas — light, or truth, passion or desire, and indifference or darkness — are born from nature, and bind the imperishable soul to the body, O thou of mighty arms. Of these the sattva quality by reason of its lucidity and peacefulness entwineth the soul to rebirth through attachment to knowledge and that which is pleasant. Know that rajas is of the nature of desire, producing thirst and propensity; it, O son of Kunti, imprisoneth the Ego through the consequences produced from action. The quality of tamas, the offspring of the indifference in nature, is the deluder of all creatures, O son of Bharata; it imprisoneth the Ego in a body through heedless folly, sleep, and idleness. The sattva quality attaches the soul through happiness and pleasure, the rajas through action, and tamas quality surrounding the power of judgment with indifference attaches the soul through heedlessness.

“When, O son of Bharata, the qualities of tamas and rajas are overcome, then that of sattva prevaleth; tamas is chiefly acting when sattva and rajas are hidden; and when the sattva and tamas diminish, then rajas prevaleth. When wisdom, the bright light, shall become evident at every gate of the body, then one may know that the sattva quality is prevalent within. The love of gain, activity in action, and the initiating of works, restlessness and inordinate desire are produced when the quality of rajas is prevalent, whilst the tokens of the predominance of the tamas quality are absence of illumination, the presence of idleness, heedlessness, and delusion, O son of Kunti.

“If the body is dissolved when the sattva quality prevails, the self within proceeds to the spotless spheres of those who are acquainted with the highest place. When the body is dissolved while the quality of rajas is predominant, the soul is born again in a body attached to action; and so also of one who dies while tamas quality is prevalent, the soul is born again in the wombs of those who are deluded.

“The fruit of righteous acts is called pure and holy, appertaining to sattva; from rajas is gathered fruit in pain, and the tamas produceth only senselessness, ignorance, and indifference. From sattva wisdom is produced, from rajas desire, from tamas ignorance, delusion and folly. Those in whom the sattva quality is established mount on high, those who are full of rajas remain in the middle sphere, the world of men, while those who are overborne by the gloomy quality, tamas, sink below. But when the wise man perceiveth that the only agents of action are these qualities, and comprehends that which is superior to the qualities, he attains to my state. And when the embodied self surpasseth these three qualities of goodness, action, and indifference — which are coexistent with the body — it is released from rebirth and death, old age and pain, and drinketh of the water of immortality.”

ARJUNA:

“What are the characteristic marks by which the man may be known, O Master, who hath surpassed the three qualities? What is his course of life, and what are the means by which he overcometh the qualities?”

KRISHNA:

“He, O son of Pandu, who doth not hate these qualities — illumination, action, and delusion — when they appear, nor longeth for them when they disappear; who, like one who is of no party, sitteth as one unconcerned about the three qualities and undisturbed by them, who being persuaded that the qualities exist, is moved not by them; who is of equal mind in pain and pleasure, self-centered, to whom a lump of earth, a stone, or gold are as one; who is of equal mind with those who love or dislike, constant, the same whether blamed or praised; equally minded in honor and disgrace, and the same toward friendly or unfriendly side, engaging only in necessary actions, such an one hath surmounted the qualities. And he, my servant, who worships me with exclusive devotion, having completely overcome the qualities, is fitted

to be absorbed in Brahman the Supreme. I am the embodiment of the Supreme Ruler, and of the incorruptible, of the unmodifying, and of the eternal law, and of endless bliss.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fourteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION BY MEANS OF SEPARATION FROM THE THREE QUALITIES.

Footnotes:

1. In this verse Brahman is to be taken as prakriti, or nature.

Chapter XV

Devotion Through Knowledge of the Supreme Spirit

KRISHNA:

“Men say that the Asvattha, the eternal sacred tree ¹, grows with its roots above and its branches below, and the leaves of which are the Vedas; he who knows this knows the Vedas. Its branches growing out of the three qualities ² with the objects of sense as the lesser shoots, spread forth, some above and some below; and those roots which ramify below in the regions of mankind are the connecting bonds of action. Its form is not thus understood by men; it has no beginning, nor can its present constitution be understood ³, nor has it any end. When one hath hewn down with the strong axe of dispassion this Asvattha tree with its deeply-imbedded roots, then that place is to be sought after from which those who there take refuge never more return to rebirth, for it ⁴ is the Primeval Spirit from which floweth the never-ending stream of conditioned existence. Those who are free from pride of self and whose discrimination is perfected, who have prevailed over the fault of attachment to action, who are constantly employed in devotion to meditation upon the Supreme Spirit, who have renounced desire and are free from the influence of the opposites known as pleasure and pain, are undeluded, and proceed to that place which endureth forever. Neither the sun nor the moon nor the fire enlighteneth that place; from it there is no return; it is my supreme abode.

“It is even a portion of myself which, having assumed life in this world of conditioned existence, draweth together the five senses and the mind in order that it may obtain a body and may leave it again. And those are carried by the Sovereign Lord to and from whatever body he enters or quits, even as the breeze bears the fragrance from the flower. Presiding over the eye, the ear, the touch, the taste, and the power of smelling, and also over the mind, he experienceth the objects of sense. The deluded do not see the spirit when it quitteth or remains in the body, nor when, moved by the qualities, it has experience in the world. But those who have the eye of wisdom perceive it, and devotees who industriously strive to do so see it dwelling in their own hearts; whilst those who have not overcome themselves, who are devoid of discrimination, see it not even though they strive thereafter. Know that the brilliance of the sun which illuminateth the whole world, and the light which is

in the moon and in the fire, are the splendor of myself. I enter the earth supporting all living things by my power, and I am that property of sap which is taste, nourishing all the herbs and plants of the field. Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with the upward and downward breathing, and cause the four kinds of food to digest. I am in the hearts of all men, and from me come memory, knowledge, and also the loss of both. I am to be known by all the Vedas; I am he who is the author of the Vedanta, and I alone am the interpreter of the Vedas.

“There are two kinds of beings in the world, the one divisible, the other indivisible; the divisible is all things and the creatures, the indivisible is called Kutastha, or he who standeth on high unaffected. But there is another spirit designated as the Supreme Spirit — Paramatma — which permeates and sustains the three worlds. As I am above the divisible and also superior to the indivisible, therefore both in the world and in the Vedas am I known as the Supreme Spirit. He who being not deluded knoweth me thus as the Supreme Spirit, knoweth all things and worships me under every form and condition.

“Thus, O sinless one, have I declared unto thee this most sacred science; he who understandeth it, O son of Bharata, will be a wise man and the performer of all that is to be done.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Fifteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT.

Footnotes:

1. This is a symbol for the universe, which, although apparently destroyed and then again renovated, is never ending, for it is the same as the Evolutionary Stream.
2. See preceding Chapter.
3. This means that the bound Ego cannot understand it.
4. It is the place of the Supreme.

Chapter XVI

Devotion Through Discriminating Between Godlike and Demoniactal Natures

KRISHNA:

“Fearlessness, sincerity, assiduity in devotion, generosity, self-restraint, piety, and alms-giving, study, mortification, and rectitude; harmlessness, veracity, and freedom from anger, resignation, equanimity, and not speaking of the faults of others, universal compassion, modesty, and mildness; patience, power, fortitude, and purity, discretion, dignity, unvengefulness, and freedom from conceit — these are the marks of him whose virtues are of a godlike character, O son of Bharata. Those, O son of Pritha, who are born with demoniactal dispositions are marked by hypocrisy, pride, anger, presumption, harshness of speech, and ignorance. The destiny of those whose attributes are godlike is final liberation, while that of demoniactal dispositions, born to the Asuras’ lot, is continued bondage to mortal birth; grieve not, O son of Pandu, for thou art born with the divine destiny. There are two kinds of natures in beings in this world, that which is godlike, and the other which is demoniactal; the godlike hath been fully declared, hear now from me, O son of Pritha, what the demoniactal is.

“Those who are born with the demoniactal disposition — of the nature of the Asuras — know not the nature of action nor of cessation from action, they know not purity nor right behavior, they possess no truthfulness. They deny that the universe has any truth in it, saying it is not governed by law, declaring that it hath no Spirit; they say creatures are produced alone through the union of the sexes, and that all is for enjoyment only. Maintaining this view, their souls being ruined, their minds contracted, with natures perverted, enemies of the world, they are born to destroy. They indulge insatiable desires, are full of hypocrisy, fast-fixed in false beliefs through their delusions. They indulge in unlimited reflections which end only in annihilation, convinced until death that the enjoyment of the objects of their desires is the supreme good. Fast-bound by the hundred cords of desire, prone to lust and anger, they seek by injustice and the accumulation of wealth for the gratification of their own lusts and appetites. ‘This today hath been acquired by me, and that object of my heart I shall obtain; this wealth I have, and that also shall be mine. This foe

have I already slain, and others will I forthwith vanquish; I am the lord, I am powerful, and I am happy. I am rich and with precedence among men; where is there another like unto me? I shall make sacrifices, give alms, and enjoy.’ In this manner do those speak who are deluded. Confounded by all manner of desires, entangled in the net of delusion, firmly attached to the gratification of their desires, they descend into hell. Esteeming themselves very highly, self-willed, full of pride and ever in pursuit of riches, they perform worship with hypocrisy and not even according to ritual ¹, but only for outward show. Indulging in pride, selfishness, ostentation, power, lust, and anger, they detest me who am in their bodies and in the bodies of others. Wherefore I continually hurl these cruel haters, the lowest of men, into wombs of an infernal nature in this world of rebirth. And they being doomed to those infernal wombs, more and more deluded in each succeeding rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region. ²

“The gates of hell are three — desire, anger, covetousness, which destroy the soul; wherefore one should abandon them. Being free from these three gates of hell, O son of Kunti, a man worketh for the salvation of his soul, and thus proceeds to the highest path. He who abandoneth the ordinances of the Scriptures to follow the dictates of his own desires, attaineth neither perfection nor happiness nor the highest path. Therefore, in deciding what is fit and what unfit to be done, thou shouldst perform actions on earth with a knowledge of what is declared in Holy Writ.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Sixteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION THROUGH DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN GODLIKE AND DEMONICAL NATURES.

Footnotes:

1. This refers to the irregular performance of Vedic sacrifices by those who are without the right spiritual gifts, and only wish to imitate ostentatiously the right performance.
2. This is final annihilation of those who deny their own soul and thus lose it. It is worse than the hell before spoken of, for there is no return.

Chapter XVII

Devotion as Regards the Three Kinds of Faith

ARJUNA:

“What is the state of those men who, while they neglect the precepts of the Scriptures, yet worship in faith, O Krishna? Is it of the sattva, the rajas, or the tamas quality?”

KRISHNA:

“The faith of mortals is of three kinds, and is born from their own disposition; it is of the quality of truth — sattva, action — rajas, and indifference — tamas; hear now what those are.

“The faith of each one, O son of Bharata, proceeds from the sattva quality; the embodied soul being gifted with faith, each man is of the same nature as that ideal on which his faith is fixed. Those who are of the disposition which ariseth from the prevalence of the sattva or good quality worship the gods; those of the quality of rajas worship the celestial powers, the Yakshas and Rakshasas; other men in whom the dark quality of indifference or tamas predominates worship elemental powers and the ghosts of dead men. Those who practice severe self-mortification not enjoined in the Scriptures are full of hypocrisy and pride, longing for what is past and desiring more to come. They, full of delusion, torture the powers and faculties which are in the body, and me also, who am in the recesses of the innermost heart; know that they are of an infernal tendency.

“Know that food which is pleasant to each one, as also sacrifices, mortification, and alms-giving, are of three kinds; hear what their divisions are. The food which increases the length of days, vigor and strength, which keeps one free from sickness, of tranquil mind, and contented, and which is savory, nourishing, of permanent benefit and congenial to the body, is that which is attractive to those in whom the sattva quality prevaieth. The food which is liked by those of the rajas quality is over bitter, too acid, excessively salt, hot, pungent, dry and burning, and causeth unpleasantness, pain, and disease. Whatever food is such as was dressed the day before, that is tasteless or rotting, that is impure, is that which is preferred by those in whom predominates the quality of tamas or indifference.

“The sacrifice or worship which is directed by Scripture and is performed by those who expect no reward but who are convinced that it is necessary to be done, is of the quality of light, of goodness, of sattva. But know that that worship or sacrifice which is performed with a view to its results, and also for an ostentation of piety, belongs to passion, the quality of rajas, O best of the Bharatas. But that which is not according to the precepts of Holy Writ, without distribution of bread, without sacred hymns, without gifts to brahmans at the conclusion, and without faith, is of the quality of tamas.

“Honoring the gods, the brahmans, the teachers, and the wise, purity, rectitude, chastity, and harmlessness are called mortification of the body. Gentle speech which causes no anxiety, which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the Scriptures, are said to be austerities of speech. Serenity of mind, mildness of temper, silence, self-restraint, absolute straightforwardness of conduct, are called mortification of the mind. This threefold mortification or austerity practiced with supreme faith and by those who long not for a reward is of the sattva quality.

“But that austerity which is practiced with hypocrisy, for the sake of obtaining respect for oneself or for fame or favor, and which is uncertain and belonging wholly to this world, is of the quality of rajas. Those austerities which are practiced merely by wounding oneself or from a false judgment or for the hurting of another are of the quality of tamas. Those gifts which are bestowed at the proper time to the proper person, and by men who are not desirous of a return, are of the sattva quality, good and of the nature of truth. But that gift which is given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance, is of the rajas quality, bad and partaketh of untruth. Gifts given out of place and season and to unworthy persons, without proper attention and scornfully, are of the tamas quality, wholly bad and of the nature of darkness.

“OM TAT SAT: these are said to be the threefold designation of the Supreme Being. By these in the beginning were sanctified the knowers of Brahman ¹, the Vedas, and sacrifices. Therefore the sacrifices, the giving of alms, and the practicing of austerities are always, among those who expound Holy Writ, preceded by the word OM. Among those who long for immortality and who do not consider the reward for their actions, the word TAT precedes their rites of sacrifice, their austerities, and giving of alms. The word SAT is used for

qualities that are true and holy, and likewise is applied to laudable actions, O son of Pritha. The state of mental sacrifice when actions are at rest is also called SAT. Whatever is done without faith, whether it be sacrifice, alms-giving, or austerities, is called ASAT, that which is devoid of truth and goodness, O son of Pritha, and is not of any benefit either in this life or after death.”

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Seventeenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION AS REGARDS THE THREE KINDS OF FAITH.

Footnotes:

1. It reads “Brahmanas,” and does not seem to refer to any caste.

Chapter XVIII

Devotion as Regards Renunciation and Final Liberation

ARJUNA:

“I wish to learn, O great-armed one, the nature of abstaining from action and of the giving up of the results of action, and also the difference between these two, O slayer of Kesin.” ¹

KRISHNA:

“The bards conceive that the forsaking of actions which have a desired object is renunciation or Sannyasa, the wise call the disregard of the fruit of every action true disinterestedness in action. By some wise men it is said, ‘Every action is as much to be avoided as a crime,’ while by others it is declared, ‘Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity should not be forsaken.’ Among these divided opinions hear my certain decision, O best of the Bharatas, upon this matter of disinterested forsaking, which is declared to be of three kinds, O chief of men. Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise. But even those works are to be performed after having renounced all selfish interest in them and in their fruits; this, O son of Pritha, is my ultimate and supreme decision. The abstention from works which are necessary and obligatory is improper; the not doing of such actions is due to delusion springing from the quality of *tamas*. The refraining from works because they are painful and from the dread of annoyance ariseth from the quality of *rajas* which belongs to passion, and he who thus leaves undone what he ought to do shall not obtain the fruit which comes from right forsaking. The work which is performed, O Arjuna, because it is necessary, obligatory, and proper, with all self-interest therein put aside and attachment to the action absent, is declared to be of the quality of truth and goodness which is known as *sattva*. The true renouncer, full of the quality of goodness, wise and exempt from all doubt, is averse neither to those works which fail nor those which succeed. It is impossible for mortals to utterly abandon actions; but he who gives up the results of action is the true renouncer. The threefold results of action — unwished for, wished for, and mixed — accrue after death to those who do not practice this renunciation, but no results follow those who perfectly renounce.” ²

“Learn, O great-armed one, that for the accomplishment of every work five agents are necessary, as is declared. These are the substratum, the agent, the various sorts of organs, the various and distinct movements and with these, as fifth, the presiding deities. These five agents are included in the performance of every act which a man undertaketh, whether with his body, his speech, or his mind. This being thus, whoever because of the imperfection of his mind beholdeth the real self as the agent thinketh wrongly and seeth not aright. He whose nature is free from egotism and whose power of discrimination is not blinded does not slay though he killeth all these people, and is not bound by the bonds of action. The three causes which incite to action are knowledge, the thing to be known, and the knower, and threefold also is the totality of the action in the act, the instrument, and the agent. Knowledge, the act, and the agent are also distinguished in three ways according to the three qualities; listen to their enumeration after that classification.

“Know that the wisdom which perceives in all nature one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen, is of the sattva quality. The knowledge which perceives different and manifold principles as present in the world of created beings pertains to rajas, the quality of passion. But that knowledge, wholly without value, which is mean, attached to one object alone as if it were the whole, which does not see the true cause of existence, is of the nature of tamas, indifferent and dark.

“The action which is right to be done, performed without attachment to results, free from pride and selfishness, is of the sattva quality. That one is of the rajas quality which is done with a view to its consequences, or with great exertion, or with egotism. And that which in consequence of delusion is undertaken without regard to its consequences, or the power to carry it out, or the harm it may cause, is of the quality of darkness — tamas.

“The doer who performs necessary actions unattached to their consequences and without love or hatred is of the nature of the quality of truth — sattva. The doer whose actions are performed with attachment to the result, with great exertion, for the gratification of his lusts and with pride, covetousness, uncleanness, and attended with rejoicing and grieving, is of the quality of rajas — passion and desire. The doer who is ignorant, foolish, undertaking actions without ability, without discrimination, with sloth, deceit, obstinacy, mischievousness, and dilatoriness, is of the quality of tamas.

“Hear now, O Dhananjaya, conqueror of wealth, the differences which I shall now explain in the discerning power ³ and the steadfast power within, according to the three classes flowing from the divisions of the three qualities. The discerning power that knows how to begin and to renounce, what should and what should not be done, what is to be feared and what not, what holds fast and what sets the soul free, is of the sattva quality. That discernment, O son of Pritha, which does not fully know what ought to be done and what not, what should be feared and what not, is of the passion-born rajas quality. That discriminating power which is enveloped in obscurity, mistaking wrong for right and all things contrary to their true intent and meaning, is of the dark quality of tamas.

“That power of steadfastness holding the man together, which by devotion controls every motion of the mind, the breath, the senses and the organs, partaketh of the sattva quality. And that which cherisheth duty, pleasure, and wealth, in him who looketh to the fruits of action is of the quality of rajas. But that through which the man of low capacity stays fast in drowsiness, fear, grief, vanity and rashness is from the tamas quality, O son of Pritha.

“Now hear what are the three kinds of pleasure wherein happiness comes from habitude and pain is ended. That which in the beginning is as poison and in the end as the waters of life, and which arises from a purified understanding, is declared to be of the sattva quality. That arising from the connection of the senses with their objects which in the beginning is sweet as the waters of life but at the end like poison, is of the quality of rajas. That pleasure is of the dark tamas quality which both in the beginning and the end arising from sleep, idleness, and carelessness, tendeth both in the beginning and the end to stupefy the soul. There is no creature on earth nor among the hosts in heaven who is free from these three qualities which arise from nature.

“The respective duties of the four castes, of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, are also determined by the qualities which predominate in the disposition of each, O harasser of thy foes. The natural duty of a Brahman compriseth tranquillity, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. Those of the Kshatriya sprung from his nature are valor, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character. The natural duties of

the Vaisya are to till the land, tend cattle and to buy and sell; and that of the Sudra is to serve, as is his natural disposition.

“Men being contented and devoted to their own proper duties attain perfection; hear now how that perfection is attained by devotion to natural duty.

“If a man maketh offering to the Supreme Being who is the source of the works of all and by whom this universe was spread abroad, he thus obtaineth perfection. The performance of the duties of a man’s own particular calling, although devoid of excellence, is better than doing the duty of another, however well performed; and he who fulfills the duties obligated by nature, does not incur sin. A man’s own natural duty, even though stained with faults, ought not to be abandoned. For all human acts are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke. The highest perfection of freedom from action is attained through renunciation by him who in all works has an unfettered mind and subdued heart.

“Learn from me, in brief, in what manner the man who has reached perfection attains to the Supreme Spirit, which is the end, the aim, and highest condition of spiritual knowledge.

“Imbued with pure discrimination, restraining himself with resolution, having rejected the charms of sound and other objects of the senses, and casting off attachment and dislike; dwelling in secluded places, eating little, with speech, body, and mind controlled, engaging in constant meditation and unwaveringly fixed in dispassion; abandoning egotism, arrogance, violence, vanity, desire, anger, pride, and possession, with calmness ever present, a man is fitted to be the Supreme Being. And having thus attained to the Supreme, he is serene, sorrowing no more, and no more desiring, but alike towards all creatures he attains to supreme devotion to me. By this devotion to me he knoweth fundamentally who and what I am and having thus discovered me he enters into me without any intermediate condition. And even the man who is always engaged in action shall attain by my favor to the eternal and incorruptible imperishable abode, if he put his trust in me alone. With thy heart place all thy works on me, prefer me to all else, exercise mental devotion continually, and think constantly of me. By so doing thou shalt by my divine favor surmount every difficulty which surroundeth thee; but if from pride thou wilt not listen

to my words, thou shalt undoubtedly be lost. And if, indulging self-confidence, thou sayest 'I will not fight,' such a determination will prove itself vain, for the principles of thy nature will impel thee to engage. Being bound by all past karma to thy natural duties, thou, O son of Kunti, wilt involuntarily do from necessity that which in thy folly thou wouldst not do. There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master — Isvara — who by his magic power causeth all things and creatures to revolve mounted upon the universal wheel of time. Take sanctuary with him alone, O son of Bharata, with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place.

“Thus have I made known unto thee this knowledge which is a mystery more secret than secrecy itself; ponder it fully in thy mind, act as seemeth best unto thee.

“But further listen to my supreme and most mysterious words which I will now for thy good reveal unto thee because thou art dearly beloved of me. Place thy heart upon me as I have declared myself to be, serve me, offer unto me alone, and bow down before me alone, and thou shalt come to me; I swear it, for thou art dear to me. Forsake every other religion and take refuge alone with me; grieve not, for I shall deliver thee from all transgressions. Thou must never reveal this to one who doth not practice mortification, who is without devotion, who careth not to hear it, nor unto him who despiseth me. He who expoundeth this supreme mystery to my worshipers shall come to me if he performs the highest worship of me; and there shall not be among men anyone who will better serve me than he, and he shall be dearest unto me of all on earth. If anyone shall study these sacred dialogues held between us two, I shall consider that I am worshiped by him with the sacrifice of knowledge; this is my resolve. And even the man who shall listen to it with faith and not reviling shall, being freed from evil, attain to the regions of happiness provided for those whose deeds are righteous.

“Hast thou heard all this, O son of Pritha, with mind one-pointed? Has the delusion of thought which arose from ignorance been removed, O Dhananjaya?”

ARJUNA:

“By thy divine power, O thou who fallest not ⁴, my delusion is destroyed, I am collected once more; I am free from doubt, firm, and will act according to thy bidding.”

SANJAYA:

Thus have I been an ear-witness of the miraculous astonishing dialogue, never heard before, between Vasudeva and the magnanimous son of Pritha. By the favor of Vydsa I heard this supreme mystery of Yoga — devotion — even as revealed from the mouth of Krishna himself who is the supreme Master of devotion. And as I again and again remember, O mighty king, this wonderful sacred dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, I am delighted again and again. Also, as I recall to my memory the wonderful form of Hari ⁵, the Lord, my astonishment is great, O king, and I rejoice again and again. Wherever Krishna, the supreme Master of devotion, and wherever the son of Pritha, the mighty archer, may be, there with certainty are fortune, victory, wealth, and wise action; this is my belief.

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eighteenth Chapter, by name —

DEVOTION AS REGARDS RENUNCIATION AND FINAL
LIBERATION.

Footnotes:

1. Kesin was a daitya, a demon, fabled to have been sent by Kansa for the purpose of destroying Krishna.
2. This verse refers not only to effects after death in the post-mortem states, but also to subsequent lives in the body upon reincarnating.
3. This is Buddhi, the highest intellection, the power of judgment.
4. The word is “Achyuta.”
5. One of the names of Vishnu, and also applied to Krishna.