

भगवद्गीता
BHAGAVADGITA
SIMPLIFIED

AS

***'WHEN
KRISHNA
SANG AGAIN'***

By

Narayanalakshmi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Narayanalakshmi, also known as Tejaswini in her ascetic life spent most of her life in the Himalayan terrain, engaged in the penance of knowledge. She is well-versed in all philosophies and is a scholar in Sanskrit language. Her mission life is to retrieve the lost knowledge of the ancient Rishis and offer it unblemished to all the seekers of the Truth.

NOTE TO THE READERS

Bhagavad-Gita - the Song Divine is presented here in the most simplified form of an informal dialogue, a conversation, between two close friends which is an almost accurate representation of the actual events that might have occurred.

- Narayanalakshmi

PRARTHANAA

SALUTATION TO THE GREAT AUTHOR

नमोऽस्तु ते व्यास विशालबुद्धे फुल्लारविन्दायतपत्रनेत्र
येन त्वया भारततैलपूर्णः प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयप्रदीपः ॥

*Salutations O Vyaasa of extensive intellect!
Your eyes are wide like the fully blossomed lotus-petals
(by the bliss of the Self enjoyed within).
For, you have lighted the lamp of Knowledge filled with the oil of (Mahaa)
Bhaarata.*

SALUTATION TO THE GREAT TEACHER

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

*Salutation to Krishna the Supreme Teacher of the world,
who is the supreme delight for Devaki (mother);
who is son of Vasudeva;
who killed Kamsa and Chaanoora (the wicked ones).*

BHAGAVADGITA- THE SONG DIVINE!

PROLOGUE

What need of an introduction to this great scripture which has been acclaimed in countries all over the world as the most wonderful divine dialogue ever written! Yes! It is a written version of the conversation we have now! In no way it is in the exact format as delivered by Sage Vyaasa to his disciples. The original was just a story of King Bharata in a very short form –comprising about just 8 to 9000 verses. Now it has taken the gigantic form of MahaaBhaarata comprising of 74000 verses. The one in heaven is supposed to contain more than one lakh verses.

This was a story told long ago in the Vedic times. It has made its own time travel and on the way picked up a lot of outside material; discarded some original pieces; and what we now have is just diluted milk or milk-flavored water!

There are also supposed to be many versions of this Mahabharata story which vary according to the listener's aptitude. If one is philosophically molded he will get only the philosophic version; if one is war oriented, he will get the war-version and so on. The present one we have is supposed to be a war-version which was delivered to King Janamejaya who was more interested in the eighteen days of the Great War between his forefathers than in any Upanishadic philosophy! Unfortunately even this one is a time-corrupted version.

As this story was highly popular, every person who retold the story added his or her own ideas into it.

That is how we even get the caste-system divisions described in a philosophical treatise like Gita. The verses decrying women as sinful creatures also might have been a recent addition to the sacred text.

Coming to Bhagavad-Gita as such, we do not have the exact version here also. In the MahaaBhaarata epic, this Gita occupies a very tiny portion of the whole book. It is just one of the dialogues buried in countless such philosophical dialogues in the book. Actually there are more excellent philosophical dialogues more informative than this Gita, in the main text. But this particular portion of the epic was extracted by Sri Shankaraachaarya and titled as 'Bhagavad-Gita' - 'the Song of God'; he raised it to the level of Upanishads and Brahma Sutras; and wrote detailed commentaries about all the three. His purpose might have been to make 'Krishna the Vaishnavite God-head' into an 'Upanishadic teacher'. Anyhow we have to take only his version as the most authentic.

Apart from these historical mess-ups what is Gita? It is just a dialogue between two friends.

One of them was a great royal personage - Arjuna!

He was a prince of the greatest dynasty ever at those times; and was the most cherished hero among all. Cheated out of the royal comforts he had to spend his entire childhood in forests with his widowed mother and four brothers. A fire of revenge was lit there which found its culmination only in the great battle of Kuru Kshetra!

The other friend was 'Krishna the dark one'! Dragged out of the adopted parentage he was forced into royalty by circumstances. Branded as a cowherd who dealt with cow dung and milking, he had to prove every moment of his life that he was not less in intelligence or prowess to anybody else out there. He mastered all Vedas, all weapons, all learning so much so that he was titled 'Bhagavaan' – 'One who excels in all learning' by the very committee of Sages. He built a port-city making the ocean itself as a moat and safeguarded his Yaadava kingdom. The city was acclaimed as one of the engineering marvels. He amassed enormous wealth through merchandise with foreign countries. He married many princesses and formed many powerful kings as his ally. Though he was insulted many a times by many an arrogant royal personage, Arjuna, the renowned Kuru prince guarded him against all these onslaughts and saw that due respect was given to this Yaadava prince.

Both were victims of circumstances; both nourished lots of wounds from the society; and both supported each other against the unfair world. Their friendship was unique. Their closeness was an envy of their many wives. There was no distinction of class or wealth. They played together, ate together, studied together, fought together, slept together; in fact they were two bodies with one soul. All secrets were shared; all mistakes were confided; all thoughts were exchanged. Both knew each other like one's own self. They were so much together that people addressed them as 'Two Krishnas' rather than call them by separate names! If one was called the other one was sure to pop up! As 'Krishna' also means 'attractive one' Arjuna the fair one was also a Krishna!

The only secret Krishna Vaasudeva hid from his friend, was his love for Raadhaa. Maybe he thought that this childhood fascination of his for an elderly country girl would have been a topic of ridicule even for Arjuna, a hero who excelled in romantic episodes. Krishna had also never told him that he was a realized Sage in the guise of a prince; that he had mastered all the 'Siddhis' - 'magical powers'; that he had studied all the Vedas and was an ardent disciple and assistant of Sage Vyaasa; that he never ever touched his wives but had always managed to please them with hallucinatory experiences. He thought maybe Arjuna was not mature enough to understand all these things. Other than that there was no barrier between these two great men! This other side of Krishna was revealed to Arjuna only at the battlefield of Kuru Kshetra!

When Arjuna saw his own kith and kin standing there to give up life for a puny kingdom, his heart trembled. He was unable to reconcile to the idea that he was going to pierce with his arrows the very bodies which bred him and taught him.

Krishna never felt these qualms. The war was not his doing. He had tried his best to prevent it. But the hatred and envy lurking in the hearts of everyone there from many years had culminated in this gigantic war! Their own Vaasanaas (latent tendencies) had led to this destructive phase!

If not this war, which was fought according to strict rules, they would have fought mindlessly in any way they liked and killed each other. Better fight in a war than have chaotic conflicts. Here at least there was the glory of patriotism and heavens hereafter. So Krishna had watched all the events leading up to the war like a 'witness'. He had also decided not to be an active partner in the war and also not to wield any weapons. But as a close friend of Arjuna he had taken the horse reins in his hands to veer Arjuna safely in the war-field. He did not mind being called a charioteer; after all his cowherd-name 'Gopala' still lingered in all the mouths reminding every one, of his humble beginnings; one more name to get ridiculed in future he did not mind.

But Arjuna was not a realized yogi. His mind faltered at the most crucial hour. An agitation also arose at the extreme unattached attitude of his dark friend. He was envious maybe of his calm disposition. Whatever the reason – he had decided to play the rebel. All the pent up anger at everyone there - including his own brothers – especially his own elder brother whose unearthly patience had brought this state of utter damnation – burst out of the depths of his mind. But for his brother's command, he and Bheema would have cut the heads of those damned cousins at that very hour Draupadi was dragged to the court and got humiliated. But Yudhishtira was always a big barrier to all their emotions. Because of him he and his brothers and their wife had to undergo untold suffering all these years. Now the battle was ready to be fought. Because of his elder brother, now thousands of families are going to lose their fathers and brothers.

So many bodies are going to shriek in pain as arrows pierced them; as maces cracked them; as horses trampled them; as chariots crushed them; as elephants smashed them to pulp! Arjuna knew his sharp arrows would spare none on the enemy side. Surely all the elders standing there now would be no more after the war. They would get a kingdom filled with widows and orphaned children cursing all the kings and emperors who brought destruction to the land. What happiness can be reserved for even the five valiant brothers also after the war? Everyone will be in tears. After all, the youthful phase of their life was already gone. Now after half the life was over why bring about destruction to one and all! Forest life was not new to them. They can leave the kingdom to their cousins and return to the forests; maybe seek Knowledge from the Sages and attain 'Moksha'! At least the people of the country would be safe and alive! What mattered to them whether Kauravas were the rulers or Paandavas!

Arjuna felt all these thoughts rushing through his mind, the moment he stepped into the chariot. At least now, he wanted to disobey his elder brother and save the lives of so many people. Maybe people will call him a coward. But it did not matter. He would spend the rest of his life in a cave and feel good that he had prevented all the bloodshed. He was exhausted by all these emotions and decided to quit the scene.

Krishna knew all that went through Arjuna's mind, yet waited for him to recover. When Arjuna was beyond reason, he had only one course left- to get him out of the battle field and explain to him all the events in a philosophical way. After a few hours of talks, he somehow removed all the negative feelings in his friend's mind and got the battle going.

This is the context of the acclaimed divine dialogue.

What conversation ensued between them – we have no audio video recordings of the same!

Sri Shankaraachaarya has given us only the philosophical version of the Gita!

Whether the two friends talked anything more of their own life- we do not know!

Whether Sage Vyaasa got the whole dialogue or a censored version- that also we do not know!

At least let us not be blind to reason and imagine that both the armies on the battlefield stood frozen magically for two hours or so, while the two friends posed as a God and a disciple in the centre; so that the future generations would worship them in that posture painted on a canvas.

A battle field is a battle field; not a lecture hall.

The clangs of the metallic weapons; the neighs of horses; trumpets of elephants; dust raising chariots; whispering murmurs of countless soldiers; such a noisy atmosphere is definitely not conducive for a serious conversation between a broken heart and a soothing medic.

Here is an attempt to bring the real scenes of the conversation alive. A thorough research was done analyzing each verse of the sacred book and a most probable scenario was brought forth. This version of the Gita is not the verse to verse dry translation the text. Rather the whole scene of the conversation, taking into account the closeness that was between Krishna and Arjuna and the psychological background of both the friends, is recreated as it were here.

No personal opinions are added; no modified meanings are presented; but this work just gives Gita as it was; a conversation between two friends.

BHAGAVADGITA

SIMPLIFIED

[WHEN KRISHNA SANG AGAIN]

PART ONE

THE CONTEXT

*Here again begins a story of a battle-field;
a field akin to your house-field.
The story here is nothing but your own story.
The war is fought in truth not with swords;
but with thoughts and ideas that you have stored so far!*

*There, on the battle-ground of 'Kuru Kshetra'
assembled all the warriors;
hearts trembling with excitement; who would win, who would lose?
Nobody knew; for, equal was their prowess!*

*On one side waited the Kauravas;
ready to kill but filled with guilt.
On the other side stood the army of Paandavas;
ready to fight but afraid to kill.*

*Their battle is not the one seen on the T.V. serials.
For, it was too magnificent to fill the 30" screen.
Nor did they wear costumes made of cheap plastic
but were decked in heavy armor.*

*Warriors of those days were not the
puny bodies you see on the screen;
but could reach the roof of your house
if they ever stood straight.*

*The bows and arrows held in their hands
weighed tons as far as I know;
and had you ever been there, you
would have fallen under their heavy weight!*

*Elephants and horses filled up the scene
like the black and white clouds floating in the expanse of the sky.
And colorful were their beautiful head-gear
like the hues of a million 'Bows of Indra' thrown together!*

*All warriors wore a 'Tilak' on their foreheads
applied by the trembling hands of their mothers and wives!
The pictures of their little sons and daughters filled their minds;
but their reddened eyes glared ferociously at their enemies!*

*Would they ever return in the evening to the lovely embraces of their wives?
Or enter the 'other world' to wander aimlessly?
Or, maybe if they fought with courage, they may end up in 'Veera Swarga'
and enjoy the bliss of the heaven forever!*

*But if they were wounded or fractured
in the ensuing war;
they may get trampled and crushed by the wheels of the chariots
to lie in a gory bed of blood and flesh.*

*War was never pleasant
whether it was there, or here, then or now.
The winning credit always goes to the leaders;
not to the men who really fought.*

*In the game of politics, don't these
poor souls play the part of the pawns
only to bleed till death and leave
their families forlorn?*

*Well, to come back to our story
of the battle-field,
both the armies stood facing each other
ready to fight but afraid to begin!*

*The elders of the party,
now 'the vowed enemies of the Paandavas'
stood still as if they were unconcerned;
for, they were in that 'field' not to kill relentlessly
but led by the 'loyalty' they cherished for the king.*

*Nor would the Paandavas blow their conches -
so that the fight could begin and screams tear the sky!
They were afraid they might be wrong.
How could they kill their kith and kin
even if their stupid cousins had done something wrong?*

*A deathly silence pervaded the whole 'field'.
Nobody breathed for fear of getting heard.
Even the animals understood these anxious vibrations
and they also stood still as if painted on a canvas!*

*Duryodhana, who was the cause of all these affairs
nervously glanced from side to side.
Neither could he escape, nor could he face the family elders;
he knew he was wrong;
but he held his head high as if nothing was wrong.*

*Unobserved by any he glanced at Bheema, his sworn enemy;
whose rugged face was swollen with fury.
In his hearts of hearts, the son of the blind king knew
that his own heart would be ripped apart by those strong hands
and his thighs would be broken with that mace of his.
Had he not done an action against Dharma
when he had forced the 'chaste lady' to the court?*

*Too arrogant at that time was he
and was blind to the results of his action
like his father; the old senseless emperor of Kuru dynasty
whose inner eyes were also as non-functional as his outer ones!
A deed was done and gone with;
but the consequences arose here
in this great 'Battle-field of Kuru Kshetra'!*

*And, his furious foe, the tall and handsome Bheema
was absorbed in his own thoughts for that moment.
He had left his tent in a confused mood;
the morning incidents had disturbed his mind!*

*There, his pretty wife Draupadi,
pretty even after all these years,
had held his hands secretly behind a tree!
Nothing had she spoken;
but her eyes had said everything he wanted to know!*

*Tears were up to the brim
but held back by her long eye-lashes.
All the insults she had borne shone in those eyes
pleading with him to avenge their plight.*

*A scene from a woman's life flashed forth there;
a slave of an 'evil man' once she was;
even with five magnificent husbands,
the envy of the three worlds!
Though she had fought tooth and nail;
though she had quoted all the scriptures and argued;
nobody had listened!
Wasn't she a 'woman'
branded forever as the weaker sex?
Her plight in the court of Kauravas
has been sung by devotees
to extol the praises of Krishna;
has been paraded on the screen
as the most decent rape-scene;
has increased the sales in the textile shops
to be advertised as the 'Draupadi-Sari'!*

*But did even one, at least one person
feel the cold blood dripping from her heart?
Did one woman cry and
feel the angry throbs of her wounded heart?*

*No! Nobody! Nobody but Bheema
understood her silent cry;
and, Bheema had sworn that the
accursed Dusshaasana would be torn apart;
and, with his blood would her
unwound hair would be oiled
and combed with the broken bones of that idiot!*

*Draupadi felt a 'drop' of joy in that accursed life;
where one husband at least of all the five
was her 'true love' and bled for her in his heart!*

*And that joy trickled down to form
a fountain at the cherished thought of
the dark-hued hero who had always come to her rescue
at a mere call from her heart!*

*She had adored that charming form
all through her youth
and would have worshipped those lotus feet
till death claimed her body!*

*By the play of fate she had been married to the fair-hued hero
and became a reward for his prowess in archery!
A woman even if she be a maiden born out of the sacred fire
enjoyed no freedom in this accursed world!*

*Bheema as he stood behind the 'peepul' tree;
holding in his embrace - his dearest queen,
knew all this; yet smiled with pretended fury
and he promised in that smile all that his queen wanted.*

*This time, it was not the white
'Paarijaata' flower she wished for;
but the reddened bones of that senseless wretch
and an embrace from his blood-soaked hands
wet from the blood of the other brother!*

*Bheema walked towards Arjuna's tent
in a pensive mood.
'Paartha' had sent a message to him
to meet him there.
Bheema felt a shiver in his heart
as if the end of the world was near!*

*Arjuna, the fair-hued hero had confused him again.
All the forest-life and preparation for the battle;
and now, he lectured about the evilness of the war
as if he was a saint straight coming down from a forest.*

*If war was evil, then
why did that handsome hero please all the Gods
and collect all the weapons powered with 'hymns'
if it was only to stop the war at the beginning itself?*

*Bheema had been too tired to argue
and just treaded like a robot
towards the 'Great -Field' nick named
as 'Dharma-Kshetra';
What was Dharma, his mind questioned!*

*Was it not right to fight the wicked,
whatever be the end, good or bad?
His mind answered; 'yes'; for, it was not like
the 'untrained mind' of his younger brother;
but ever kept under vigilance
in the state of the 'Witness'!*

*Krishna, his darling friend,
though young in age was wise beyond years;
and he had taught him the techniques of getting 'True Bliss'.
And whatever he said was indeed right.*

*And Krishna - the dark-hued warrior was
jumping around like a young boy;
hopping from tent to tent;
filling all with words of hope!*

*Not only were the magnificent leaders visited;
but even foot-soldiers did not escape his glance!
For, Krishna had heard in his 'vision',
the piercing screams of their wives
withering on the ground drenched with blood
beating their chests in untold agony!*

*All battles ended only in tragedies
and nobody had given a thought to these nameless men
who for the sake of the king were ready to kill ruthlessly
and shed their blood too, if needed!*

*They never knew 'words of quotes';
nor could they give a high-sounding speech;
nor did they have names famed enough
to echo in the quarters!*

*They knew only one thing and believed only one thing;
that their king was right!
Was their king right, by any chance?*

*Their 'King of Might'
the 'righteous' Yudhishtira
a king 'without a kingdom yet'
was also troubled at heart!*

*He also wondered
whether this war was right!
His heart shuddered at the very thought of
piercing his grand-pa with a sharpened arrow!*

*The entire battlefield was tense and tired!
The two sons of Maadri fidgeted in their chariots.
Time was running out and
the auspicious moment might be lost!*

*The deadly silence was then broken
by the mighty voice of the Kaurava king!*

*Duryodhana had somehow gathered up his courage
and encouraged by the 'knowing glances' of his brothers
had walked with a majestic gait and
approached the golden chariot of his Guru,
as the only possible step in starting the 'fight'!
He gave a big discourse
on the prowess of his army
and mentioned loudly
the names of all those who made up his army!*

*As each name was mentioned,
those honored souls stood up straight
and felt their ice-cold hearts
warming up with courage!*

*Drona glanced uninterestingly at his poor disciple!
He hated all this; yet he was here!
Oh! Why did he ever get employed in the 'Royal Chambers'
he wondered!
He had lost the peace enjoyed in his 'poverty-stricken life'!
Now he was rich and famous; but where was his 'peace'?*

*Duryodhana's words just brushed past his ears.
His mind was elsewhere nursing his own wounds.
His heart longed to embrace his dearest student Arjuna;
but he just stood there like a statue, bound by the 'cords of duty'!*

*He had indeed blessed that wonderful son of Paandu
and embraced him in the morning
when he had visited him!
Arjuna had walked straight towards his Guru
and had held his feet for long
as if afraid to let it go!
'Was there fear or confusion in his eyes?'-
Drona wondered!*

*Drona had hurriedly moved away to attend to his own duties!
He had no time to spare even Arjuna, a moment of advice!
He had to get ready to fight along with the 'commander of the army'!
He could not resist the bubbling 'excitement of war'!*

*This day was a 'special day',
when he could really see
all the prowess of his students
even if they fought each other
craving blood for blood!*

*Drona's mind woke up to the present scene of battle
at the mention of the venerable Bheeshma,
another honored elder caught in the trap of duty!
'What went on in the old man's mind?' - nobody knew!
his face was always wooden
and never betrayed his inner-most thoughts!*

*But, he had not missed the quick exchange of glances
between the venerable old man
and the dark hero of Dwaaraka!
What they smiled at, Drona wondered!*

*Always these two talked not with words but with eyes!
'And why shouldn't they smile?' - Drona concluded;
Theirs was a world beyond the 'humdrum' of this unreal world;
and everything was a 'play' which they thoroughly enjoyed!*

*His reverie was suddenly broken by the sound of the conch
majestically blown by the grand old sire Bheeshma!
The ever-alert old man, on seeing the 'lost look' on Drona's face,
had immediately rescued the situation by the blow of his conch!*

*The sudden conch sound was enough to wake up the 'sleeping' crowd!
Various war-drums echoed forth as a single wave of sound
inviting the 'Lord of Death' to come and dance there at once!*

*Krishna took the cue from Bheeshma
and blew his mighty conch- 'Paanchajanya'-
a hard earned treasure of his, reminding everyone there
of the daring adventures of his past life!*

*Bheema followed forth! He had a satisfied look!
He had managed to fill his belly with Krishna's help!*

*He had swallowed all the 'offerings'
 given by the adorers to their 'Dark-God' !
 Whenever he had a chance he never missed any act
 that could show out his own gratitude to the cowherd-king!
 He submerged all other sounds of the war-field
 with a 'mighty puff' at his own conch- 'Poundra'!*

*Arjuna did the same! But his conch sounded a little hollow!
 He had felt like crying; but couldn't somehow do it!
 He waited for a few minutes till all the tumult was over.
 As the echoes of all the conches subsided,
 the clangs and clutters of the weapons blasted his ears!*

*He spoke hurriedly, looking at Krishna,
 as if he would understand the plight he was at.
 "Station my chariot in between the two armies, my friend,
 so I can glance at the warriors with whom I am about to fight"!*

*Arjuna tried his best to sound majestic,
 but failed miserably!
 He didn't miss the quizzical smile of his friend,
 flashing forth like a lightning!*

*Like an obedient charioteer, the Yaadava King
 stationed the chariot exactly in front of the
 vehicles adorned by his cousins, Guru, and his grandfather;
 and watched Arjuna with an amused look!*

*Little did he know what went on in Arjuna's mind!
 Or, did he know and yet pretend ignorance?
 Who has been able to fathom his mind at any time
 except his 'precious' Raadhikaa,
 who now smiled as his very 'thought' every moment!*

*Failing to draw his friend out, choking in the throat,
 the best archer glanced at the enemy army in front.
 The clangs and clatters had stopped as if in reverence
 to the best warrior the world ever saw!*

*But our hero was in the least mood for heroic acts;
 for his mind was now shattered like glass!
 In each of the broken piece of glass- shone forth-
 his countless confused thoughts!
 His mind was now a jumble of questions,
 the answers for which never could be
 found in his weapons!*

*In one of the shattered pieces his heart held
 smiled his majestic queen of dark hue!
 So majestic was she in her looks
 that he never had felt comfortable in front of her.*

*The knowledge that shone forth in her eyes
 always made him tremble when he held her hands.
 ‘Was she truly in love with him’ he wondered,
 or married him to save the face of her father’?*

*He never knew and never had the courage to ask her;
 ‘Was it right for all the five brothers to marry her?
 Shouldn’t they have asked her permission
 before they did anything with her?’*

*How pretty and innocent her smile was
 in that grand Svayamvara hall of King Drupada;
 but never did he see that smile again,
 once she had entered their house
 as a ‘fruit’ to be shared by all!*

*Was she really happy or not, nobody knew;
 for- their own guilt had made their mouths silent he knew;
 only in the company of the ‘flute-player’ did she ever smile so joyously
 like a flower bloomed forth in spring;
 but rest of the time she smiled like a flower in a vase
 rudely removed from the creeper!*

*He had indeed married many a queens;
 but none he knew equaled the Paandava Queen!
 Yet, Subhadraa, a charming beauty, like her brother,
 had filled his heart with love supreme for ever!*

*'My own son Abhimanyu is here now, to bring my name into clear'
 so thought the unfortunate father, as the face of the young boy
 smiled in his mind-mirror!
 Little did he know the fate of his dearest son was sealed forever!*

*The mischievous friend of his, though he knew all,
 would lead his cousin silently through the dark tunnels of this war!*

*Like his own brave son Abhimanyu
 stood many a young lad arrayed on that day;
 many would return; but more would die
 never to see their mothers' faces again!*

*Arjuna's heart trembled at the thought
 that his son might meet the same fate;
 but his warrior's heart brushed away
 all those thoughts with force!*

*His hand was itching
 to take the Gaandiva bow
 and blast forth those demons
 who stood there facing him!*

*He- the greatest archer in the whole world;
 he- who had amassed various weapons by the power of penance;
 he- who had fought with the Great Shiva;
 he- the favorite student of the Great Guru Dronaachaarya;
 he- the holder of Gaandiva;
 he- who had refused the amorous embraces of even Urvashi,
 the heavenly damsel;
 he- by the mention of whose name the entire earth trembled;
 he- the Great Arjuna -
 what was this army for him?*

*He could destroy all the enemies at a moment's notice;
 make these Kauravas vanish from this earth forever;
 save Draupadi's honor by sweet revenge;
 but yet, why did his stupid heart tremble now?*

*He glanced at the dark-hued charioteer.
That cow-herd looked least bothered;
he was busy looking at an eagle flying afar!
Where his thoughts were, who can fathom?
He had never understood that flute-player till now!*

*How could he remain so cool and calm,
was beyond his sphere; he wanted to confide;
but something in his heart stopped him;
was it pride, was it his royal blood,
or was it his own built-up courage?*

*No! He could not fight this war!
He could not bear to kill these elders!
To hell with his brother, his wife, with everything!
Let anything happen; he would not fight!*

*How can he kill so many people and
yet call it Dharma?
Let these idiots have the kingdom;
who wants this blood-stained throne?
How could he ruthlessly cut his Guru's neck;
the Guru who had blessed him affectionately
just at dawn the same day?
And the great grand father;
how can he pierce that old worn out body
with sharp deadly arrows and kill?*

*Those boys, who were mounted on the steeds -
yes; next to Duryodhana; they..; yes..;
they had once sat by his side and
learnt all about archery from him.
Even now their innocence shone forth on their faces!*

*And all these men who were standing here,
didn't they have families, kith and kin?
Would their wives be left to mourn their deaths?
And the little flowers that adorned their houses;
the little boys and girls playing around in their gardens;
would they be left fatherless and become orphans?*

*What would their city be like after the war?
 Arjuna's mind shuddered at the very thought;
 a city filled with wails and screams;
 widows left alive to be consumed by the lustful vultures;
 morals flying away at the touch of the passion;
 Dharma thrown to dogs, as a result of this blood-thirsty war!*

*No, No! Never should this happen!
 I will stop the war - so he thought
 and felt that he could convince somehow
 the wise cow-herd with his speech!*

*And on and on he talked; arguing vehemently!
 He lectured well about the evils of war,
 and all that Dharma would have to face;
 but as he spoke, and as he choked,
 his friend's face remained unchanged.
 Not one single word of that well-worded discourse
 convinced him and his eyes were laughing as it were
 at the great warrior's plight!*

*Arjuna felt that he could stand it no more.
 He was slightly irritated too!
 This flute-player had been so calm
 and had not reacted,
 even when he had said that he will give away his kingdom
 to his own wicked cousin brothers.
 What did he know of this poor man's plight?*

*The Yaadava Prince had just brushed all his comments away,
 and had advised him harshly to get up and fight.
 Failing to convince him by his sociology lecture,
 the fair prince at last confided his innermost fears to his friend
 and said that he could never fight his elders.
 He would be rather in a forest as a mendicant;
 but never would he lift a finger against his fathers!*

*Seeing the expressionless face of the charioteer,
Arjuna understood that his argument led him nowhere!*

*His eyes were filled with tears.
Nobody understood his righteous fears, he thought -
neither his brothers, nor his friend Gopala!*

*Arjuna threw away his bow in disgust!
He sat down as if burdened by his own guilt!
He announced firmly to his amused friend -
“I will not fight”, and remained silent,
holding his chin with his hands!*

*Before the situation went out of hand
Krishna signaled Bheeshma with his eyes
and rode the chariot to the corner of the battle-field
away from the curious glances of the onlookers!*

*He of course knew the plight of his cousin!
But, was this the time to break down like this?
Kith and kin! Didn't he have any?
Wasn't his uncle his own enemy?
Hadn't he strangled his neck and forced the life out of him,
to avenge the imprisonment of his parents?*

*‘Well, this Arjuna needs a lesson’, he thought
and got ready to blast him to senses.
He knew Bheeshma would manage for a few minutes
the confusion that had risen fresh at this hour!*

*“The battle will begin after some time; everybody relax.”
was the command of the Grand-sire!
And relieved as it were, everybody waited.
Yet curious whispers spread like waves,
about what serious talks went on between the dark and fair friends!*

*Stopping the chariot away from the din,
Krishna chided his friend with a smile!*

PART TWO

THE DISCUSSION

CHAPTER I

SANJAYA SPOKE

तमुवाच हृषीकेशः प्रहसन्निव भारत
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वचः ॥

*Hey King (DhritaRaashtra)!
Krishna, as if smiling, spoke to him (Arjuna)
who was lamenting like this, in the midst of the two armies.*

Yes! Krishna smiled!

Arjuna, after washing his tear-stained face in the waters of the little stream, was now sitting on a rock nearby, in a pensive mood. His chin rested on his hands. His thoughts were many; doubts, fears, confusions were all churning his mind; and the butter..? The butter-maker was calmly sitting on the lower branch of a tree. The horses were grazing in the nearby pastures. His pet horse nuzzled against him drawing his attention. Krishna patted her back affectionately.

He could read clearly all the thoughts that were dancing in the mind-stage of his cousin! He winked at his horse-friend 'Karantika' - named so because of the black Tilak mark on her forehead. She moved away as if she understood her master's hint.

Krishna coughed a little.

Arjuna suddenly shocked back to reality, looked around confusedly. Krishna further shocked him with his sonorous voice!

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्जनावादांश्च भाषसे।
गतासूनगतासून्श्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः॥

*You are grieving for those who are not to be grieved upon.
Yet you talk like an intellectual!
Truly learned men do not worry about those who are dead or not dead!*

Krishna spoke:

“Very well indeed! What a high-sounding philosophy! All organizations preaching against wars must come to you for lessons!
War causes destruction! War causes intermingling of castes! War causes pain! What else? You can go on and on about the evil results of war!
But, where were these great ideas, when you performed penance in the Himalayas to obtain all the divine weapons from Gods? You even fought with the Great Shiva to get his ‘Paashupata’ (weapon of Pashupati)!
Why did you make an effort at all for such things, if they were useless to you? Just to get more arrogant, I suppose! Or you just wanted to use them as ‘worshipping hymns’ like the common lot worships the ‘works of the great’ rather than using them for improving their brains?

(ASTRAS, the divine weapons differ from ordinary man-made SHASTRAS, by the fact that they are just magical hymns which make any object available to be empowered by the respected deity.)

“So..! You want to run away to the forest and perform penance! You would gladly give away the kingdom to the wicked Kauravas! What magnanimity of heart! Why didn’t you do so in the first place? We could have avoided all the troubles taken to prepare for this war!

What...? You are worried about the deaths of your relatives?

Well... if you are really a self-controlled saint as you pose yourself to be with your discourse on ‘war and peace’, then- my dear saint, know this; real saints never worry about the births or deaths of the people around them! You are indeed wasting your tears on unworthy people! ‘Nobody dies’! Don’t you know?

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः।
न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम्॥

*Never was a time that I did not exist; or you or these kings for sure!
And also it is not that all of us will not exist in the future after this life.*

Yes! Neither you, nor these kings waiting at the door-step of Yama's city will ever die!

(Yama, the dark deity is the controller of deaths of mortals.)

I am also deathless! I am always there! Never was a time when I was not there!"

Arjuna looked up.

He was almost ready to raise objections to Krishna's reprimanding words with more arguments, but he stopped midway, as he heard the cowherd declaring firmly that all were deathless.

Death waits at the unseen corners of the life separating one's dearest kith and kin from oneself forever. If any achievement of man is said to be great, it falls flat at the resounding bell of death! Like a cunning vampire, death snatches away the life of anyone, be he a sinner or a saint without even a pre-warning! If one could indeed be deathless, what all one could achieve!

But, this dark-hued friend was assuring that every one was deathless! How is it possible? If I take my wonderful Gaandiva and just twang it once, heads of millions will roll away in a second!

Or, was he joking by any chance?

No! Maadhava looked very serious; but his eyes were twinkling with mischief, though his handsome face looked serious enough!

'How handsome he was!' Arjuna thought!

Nobody would have known that this dark hued person had seen thirty winters. He still looked as young and charming as at his first meeting with him! The dark face of course had grown a little mature and the veins in his hand stuck out as if oozing with the power imprisoned inside! With one hand he could rein in all the five horses together! He tended all the horses himself; all were his treasured pets!

Gaandivi knew well the strength of those powerful hands! Once he had had a mock fight with this cowherd and with just one light punch from the strong hand, had suffered concussions lasting for fifteen days at least! He never again dared this feat again!

The Kadamba grove!

The horses were grazing along the shady grove.

Sun had removed his arms of fire and remained partially covered by a cloud, as if afraid to cause any inconvenience to the unique pair of master and student, sitting under the Kadamba tree.

The tree was extremely beautiful. It had been there from ancient times; a creeper grown so thick and hard that no one could guess, where the original creeper had first put down its roots!

Flowers! Weren't they a wonder to look at! Some were red in their prime of beauty; some were turning violet slowly! Countless leaves had turned white with age and had carpeted the ground as if the tree had already prepared the stage for a historical dialogue to take place there! The fruits were green and red; some were half-green and some were half-red! In brief, the creeper-tree - 'entwining its ever-growing arms all over, spreading relentlessly everywhere' - was a web of leaves, fruits, and flowers! It was a colorful panorama that filled the on-looker's eyes with 'Indra-Dhanush'! Hundreds and thousands of variegated color birds lived since long, on the ever-stretching branches of that grove! A light fragrance filled the air shielding all the other winds from entering that great philosophical assembly! The grove which was praised in the hymns as the sacred abode of the Great Goddess Tripura now sheltered this unique couple; a cowherd turned into a charioteer and a warrior turned into a saint!

Krishna's thoughts were far from that battlefield and its problems!

He was reclining on a high piece of rock in a relaxed mood.

His charming eyes, two black bees hovering in a lotus pond were closed in an unknown bliss! His face had lost its seriousness a little! His curly hair was lightly moving in the wind like the tender waves of the Yamuna stream. Two heavy ear-rings made of conch shell embedded in gold, dangled - kissing the mirror-like cheeks in admiration! A small Tilak adorned his broad fore-head proclaiming the intellectual capacity of its owner to the world! The curly hair shy of all this attention tried to cover the dark fore-head by spreading out its curly arms! A crown adorned the head symbolizing the kingly status of this Dwaaraka ruler! No moustache adorned his face! No peacock feathers decorated the crown!

[He was the mighty charioteer in the battlefield, not a naughty child at Gokula!]

Arjuna himself had many times wondered how this man from the cowherd family was always spick and span in his dress and was always clean-shaven! Not even a surprise visit at midnight caught our dark hero unawares to his looks! He was renowned for his imaginative adornments and was the fashion model of his circle!

His dark body now freed from the heavy golden armor worn a few minutes ago, shivered as if by the wind that grazed his body which seemed to test the muscular prowess of this romantic sage!

The muscles of the arms stood out proving the innumerable wrestling matches, held under the supervision of his elder brother who always insisted on the strength of the body more than that of the brain! The broad chest, strong and yet with scarce hair was vast and stood up, proud of the inner organs which never complained even once their life-time till now! The tendency of the body towards plumpness was cut short as it were by the unfathomable powers of the Yoga, learnt at the sacred feet of the 'Venerable Sage Sandeepani'!

One leg rested on the other. The back reclined on the thick branch of the Kadamba creeper, which was eager to render any possible service to this Great Yogi, as it were! The feet were not adorned with twinkling anklets of Brindaavan but by heavy anklets weighing down the feet steadily on the ground!

In one hand absentmindedly was held the horse-whip by the 'ever-alert' one. The whip was never put to the purpose for which it was created; but always adorned the strong plump hands of the master! May be it was a replacement of the 'bamboo reed' which had once trembled shyly in the tiny rosy hands!

The bamboo reed!

The bamboo reed had been a present from Raadhikaa! So affectionately carved and made with perfect precision! He had kept it like some treasure in the innermost secret chamber of his private room; even hidden from the spying eyes of his wife Satyaa! Was he afraid of anyone touching it? Was he afraid of disclosing his love for Raadhaa to anyone? No! He rather considered the worn out bamboo reed to be too sacred to be defiled by any human hands!

What was Raadhikaa to him? What words can describe their love? What unique bond was there between a child and another child in an adult body?

He was then a bubbling 'naughtiness-incarnate'! Mischief ideas sprang out of his four-year old brain continuously!

Yes! He was four when he met her first! She was seventeen at that time!

She was married but had been rejected by her rich husband employed in Mathura, as a country girl without charms or grace! Maybe Krishna's own merits had brought about the meeting with her!

What fun they had!

She and his friends; all were of the same age, but Raadhaa! Of course she looked like a teenaged girl; but was brain-wise only equal to them! She never dressed like a lady! Uncombed hair; curly locks flying ; dresses torn; not much ornaments; palloo never covering her head; mud covered face; randomly plucked forest flowers dangling on her plaits; feathers of various birds dangling from her hair; echoing anklet-bells; uncontrolled laughter; not a female in any way! She was the 'Queen' of her gang! The boys never felt she was different from them!

Kaanhaa admired her a lot!

She was his treasured friend!

Attack on the mango grove; she was there!

Steal the butter from the stingy women of Gokula; she was there!

Loosen the knot of the calf to feed from its mother- unknown to the old greedy hag of the owner; she was there!

Jump into the river and have a swimming race; she was there!

Climb the tallest tree to look at the parrot babies; she was there!

Where she was not?

She was in his heartbeats, in his flute, in his music, in his eyes, in his Self! Yes! She was his 'Self'!

For- what human relationship can describe this unearthly love that bound this little boy to that young girl who was leaving behind her youthful charms? She was 'he'! He was 'she'!

Raadhaa did not belong to the village!

She was disliked by all the married girls of the village! Her sight was considered inauspicious. Young girls avoided her lest her fate infect them too. Older women never did miss a chance to curse her for running around the village with younger boys. She was considered too independent; too mischievous! She was a hated character discussed in all gossips everywhere!

But she was Kaanhaa's life-line! He adored her; he admired her; he followed her; he loved her; he remembered her every moment! Even after the cruel fate dragged him away from her company to the royal palace, he never could forget her! How can you forget one who was the very 'awareness' of the mind?

The bamboo flute!

The flute never danced on his lips again!

Whenever he could get a free moment alone, he just took the flute in the hand and kept staring at it!

It was the echo of their last laughter! It was a treasured memory of events long forgotten!

It was a sacred relic! It was his Raadhaa!

The music of the flute!

The music was a stream of waves rising from the very depths of his innermost self!

The music was his love for Raadhaa!

So pure and so innocent it was, like the 'Pranava-Naada' of the Vedas, purifying the heart of the listeners!

What bliss the yogis sought with hard penance in the dark forests, flowed out of his lips through the bamboo reed and entered the ears of that 'no-girl' and bound them both in an unknown union where the difference between the two vanished and they were 'One'!

The cows, the trees, the birds all remained silent in veneration of the two souls as it were; the two souls who had reached the great heights of 'Nirvikalpa Samaadhi', slowly climbing the steps made by that soul-filling music!

Was it a bamboo reed or a magic wand of Para Brahman?

[Pranava-Naada- Sound of AUM; Nirvikalpa Samaadhi- the equanimous state of contemplation where there is not even the least vibration.]

Krishna went to Gokula once!

Krishna had somehow managed to free himself from his endless duties and visited his native village!

He was in for a shock! His Raadhaa had grown older! She looked haggard and worn out! The eyes had lost their mischievous looks! Her clothes were torn! Homeless and friendless, she was wandering in the forest searching for her lost Kaanhaa! She had made hundreds of flutes from bamboo reeds and thrown them into the stream. She would sing sometimes, dance sometimes, she would talk with her Kaanhaa sometimes, but she lived in her own world. And - she never recognized the King of Dwaaraka!

Krishna himself had lost the 'Kaanhaa' in him!

Krishna, the ever-glorious realized sage in royal robes had broken down and cried many a times alone in his private chambers! He had somehow managed to send his close friend Uddhava as a messenger to Raadhikaa, to teach her the 'Knowledge of Self'! Uddhava had reported that he had uttered just six words-"He is the Self within you"! She had laughed aloud! Her laughter, like waves of music mingled with the roaring waves of River Yamuna! She had thrown the bundle of flutes tied in her palloo into the dark depths of the river and had walked away. She was still laughing when Uddhava saw her disappearing into the forests of Brindaavan! Krishna understood! He knew-'she knew'!

Time flowed on!

Later his life was filled with many kingly adventures, marriages, fights, so on! To protect the Yaadava clan from the powerful armies of Jaraasandha and to keep the 'Kuru clan' nearby as his trusted ally, he had built the great city of Dwaaraka in the midst of the ocean away from the reach of his sworn enemies and had managed to conquer his enemies one by one with effective planning combined with slight cunningness!

But whatever the passing events were, he never lost his 'inner bliss of the Self' which he had attained by unceasing contemplation practices, under the strict surveillance of Sage Sandeepani, long time ago in his schooling days! He had mastered all the Yogic powers whichever he could lay hands on! He had ascended the towers of all the sciences! He had analyzed the hidden meanings of all Vedas and Upanishads under the guidance of the Great Sage Vyaasa! He had learnt the philosophy of Saamkhya at the sacred feet of Sage Kapila! He was a 'Realized Sage'! Yet his heart never stopped beating the name of his dear Raadhaa! Who said a realized yogi has to be stone-like? The true Yogi is perfect in all emotions – even 'love'!

The War!

The final destructive phase!

He was now engaged in taking everyone through this final phase! Of course he had tried his best to stop this war. But he had no hand against the decisions of the Higher Self! He had seen all the future events in one of his contemplative states. He had seen the blood flow, heard the heart-rending screams; and hot tears had welled up in his lotus-like eyes! But he was helpless! What had to happen was bound to happen! The evil and selfish tendencies of everyone had to end in such destruction only! The sparks of hatred in every heart had collected together and started to roar like a raging fire. What could he do? He could only help his friend to strengthen his mind against the future tragedies! Now, Arjuna himself had caused an opportunity for such a talk!

CHAPTER II

*Krishna addressed his dear friend Arjuna-
“O My dear Arjuna! Think again!”*

Krishna had noticed the confusion in the eyes of his friend and decided that he needed a lesson in spiritual knowledge. He started with the first alphabets.
“What is death? What is there to worry about it? Death is nothing but a change! You changed again and again at each stage of your life. You do not have the same body as you had in the cradle as a baby; but do you lament for that? Death is another change in life, resembling youth and old age! Truly wise never grieve about death. Death is just like travelling from once city to another. What is there to fear about it?”
The ‘deathless saint’ stopped his discourse on death and looked at his bewildered friend.

देहिनोस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥

*For the embodied beings childhood, youth and old age are natural changes.
The process of getting another body after death is a similar change.
A wise man does not get deluded by that.*

“But Krishna....! Death gives pain...!” Arjuna screamed rather than arguing. His voice choked into a squeak.

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तान्तिक्षस्व भारत॥

*The experiences of the senses O Kunti’s son,
result in cold, heat, pleasure and pain.
They perish as they get consumed. They are impermanent.
O Prince of Kurus! Endure them!*

“Yes! Death causes pain!” The cowherd answered in a calm voice!
“But what is pain? And how long does it stay? Or, can you show me somebody who is eternally in pain?”

Pain and pleasure are like the two sides of the same coin; one cannot exist without the other. Summer reminds you of winter; winter chills the heart out and makes one long for summer. The farmer in the village prays for rain; the civilized man of the city curses it the same. What is pain for one is pleasure for another.

What is pain at one moment is pleasure the next moment. They come to go; they go to come. After all, life is a fleeting experience of pain and pleasure. Or aptly put, pain and pleasure are the fleeting experiences of life! So don't argue about pain, my dear Gaandivi! Remember that the blood which is going to ooze out from the hearts of those wicked souls will fall like a shower of nectar on the unkempt hair of your queen."

Arjuna was not convinced. He was still in the mood of running away to the forest. "Oh yes! But why did I marry at all? To hell with wife and children! If I could have led the life of a sage, then I need not have bothered about kingdom, revenge etc.!"

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते॥

*Hey the best of men!
That embodied wise man alone
who is not troubled by these
and who remains equal minded in pain and pleasure
is qualified for the eternal state of Para Brahman.*

Krishna continued.

"Well said! To hell with everything! If you dare to utter such dispassionate words, then my confused cousin, you must dare these pains and pleasures also bravely! He alone can ever befit the role of a realized sage, who can remain unaffected by the ephemeral phenomena of pain and pleasure. And the fact is, Arjuna, the seers know the secret of being unaffected by these.

Do you remember..? When we were very young, we used to get Bheema to pluck hundreds of jackfruits; they were very juicy but sticky and the hands would all become messy; then our stable-boy Neela used to bring oil from his house; we used to apply on it our hands and pick out the fruit easily..!

Well; the seers know of the secret oil which makes the dirty stickiness of the pains and pleasures of the world keep away from them! The secret..? Don't be impatient! I will tell you indeed! The truth is-

"Reality is never non-existent; unreality never exists!"

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः॥

The unreal never exists.

The real never ceases to exist.

The Knowers of the Truth know the difference between the two.

Arjuna had already forgotten about the war and its evil consequences. He was now interested in this new topic. He was regretting in his mind deeply; ‘Oh if I had only known that this cowherd friend knew so much about all these things, I could have learnt all this from him long ago and become a Sage already; this war situation would not have arisen at all! Past is past! Let me at least listen now and become a great seer! Hmm..! What did this friend-cum philosopher say? Reality is never non-existent; unreality never exists! So simple; yet true! Real things are always existent and unreal things can never be true.’

Arjuna gave words to his thoughts: “Oh! I already know all this, Maadhava! Don’t tell me philosophy is as simple as that!”

Krishna smiled again.

‘Teaching a fool is easy; convincing a wise one is easier; but to explain anything to a fool who thinks he knows everything already is impossible!’ Krishna knew his task was difficult; but he tried his best!

“My dear Arjuna...! Do you know actually what reality is and what unreality is?”

Arjuna remained silent. He knew Krishna was pointing out at something which was beyond his intellect.

Krishna’s voice resounded like his ‘Paanchajanya conch’!

“Arjuna! The reality is non-existent; so Existence is reality. The very ‘Principle of the Existence’ is the only existent thing. ‘Existence’ which is the substratum of all existent things can never cease to exist!

‘Existence’ was there even before the world came into being. The world exists because ‘Existence’ supports it. The world may change, vanish; but ‘Existence’ never can disappear! The ‘IS’ is behind everything; is always ‘IS’; and never is ‘NON-IS’! Even if ‘Non-Existence’ has to exist, ‘Existence’ has to exist as its support for it to exist! The changing world, changing life, changing environment, changing politics, changing relations, changing people, changing thoughts, - all have ‘Existence’ as their support. If change ‘is’, then ‘is’ is always ‘IS’, and the change itself has no existence apart from ‘IS’!

To give you an illustration-

An actor, who dons different roles in different performances, never ceases to exist as he is 'the support' of the very character roles he undertakes. If he didn't exist, then how can the roles he enacts exist? That 'actor'- we call 'Para Brahman' or the 'Supreme Self'! That 'Supremacy' alone expresses itself in all these individuals, in all these living and non-living objects. The actor is real; the roles he enacts are also real.

'Self' alone is real; but the world also is real. 'Self' is the support of the world; as the actor is the support for his roles. Maybe a single role he enacts might not be the 'whole' of the actor; yet it expresses one part of his, which he expresses through that role.

Similarly a single object of this world may not be the 'whole' of that Para Brahman; but it indeed is a part of that 'Supremacy'.

THAT is 'all this'! 'This (perceived phenomenon)' alone is not THAT!

THAT is real! 'This (world)' is real, because THAT is real!

As evidenced in the world Arjuna, the body is unreal, for- it perishes; but the embodied one is alone real. Bodies die; but the embodied does not die!"

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति॥

*Know that as imperishable by which all this is pervaded.
No one can destroy this Changeless principle of the Self.*

Arjuna argued:

"But my friend, I am the body! My form, my body is 'me' in person! How can there be two things, one inside and one outside? Or, are you referring to the 'spirits' of the other world affecting the living ones?"

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ता शरीरिणः।
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युद्ध्यस्व भारत॥

*The embodied Self is eternal, imperishable and infinite;
These bodies are perishable by nature.
So fight the battle O Prince of Kurus.*

येनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतं।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

*He who believes the Self to be the killer
and he who thinks that he is getting killed,
both of them are ignorant of the Truth.
This Self neither kills nor gets killed.*

न जायते म्रियते वा न कदाचित्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥

*The Self never is born; nor does it die ever.
It has not come into being newly; nor will it again come into existence in the
future.*

*The Self which is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and eternal,
does not get killed when the body gets killed.*

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम्।
कथम् स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम्॥

*How can the person (embodied being)
who knows the Self which is imperishable, eternal, unborn and changeless
hurt whom or kill whom, Hey Prithaa's son!*

Krishna continued patiently:

“No, No! Not at all, my friend! Please try to grasp the truth behind my words.
The ‘embodied one’ is the ‘true you’; or rather, ‘the true I’ –your own ‘Self’!
Your body is always ‘yours’ and never can be you! You are the ‘passenger in the chariot’
and are never ‘the chariot’! And the ‘Self’ which is the real ‘You’, is imperishable and
all-pervasive. No one can destroy it ever!”

Arjuna looked stunned.

'It is one thing to say- You are the Self'; but another thing to contradict the same with the word- 'all-pervasive'! I am the Self! Yes! True! Who denies it? But, how can I be all-pervasive?'

Krishna looked at his friend compassionately.

He saw that his words were beyond the grasp of his poor anxious friend. He decided to discontinue this dreary philosophy and stop torturing the immature mind of his cousin. He just ended the whole discourse with- "Come on! Get up Arjuna! It is time to fight! The battle-field is waiting!"

Arjuna was in no mood for getting up or fighting.

He suddenly found that he had missed something all along his life; failed to grasp the true knowledge in which his friend seemed to be an expert at! All his valorous acts of the past, all his romantic episodes, all his glory seemed to crumble into dust at that moment of shocked ignorance!

Yes! There were many debates and discussions held at the private chambers of his elder brother Yudhishtira.

Many scholars and sages were invited to attend the assembly and the discussions used to last for many hours, sometimes even days or months! Even when they had lived in the forest, there was no end to such meetings and discussions on various philosophical texts were a common pastime! Bheema would hover in and out of those discussions at will! But Arjuna..?

He never was interested in those dreary talks, thinking them to be impractical and out of the world topics! May be, if he had been serious then, he could have become a great seer by now! He had rejected this high-sounding philosophy as fit for the old and the weary and had given very little attention to it! It was now or never..!

He sat there adamantly looking expectantly at his dark friend, like a Chaataka bird waiting for the waters of the heavens!

Krishna knew- he was stuck!

Arjuna was not going to budge out of his seat till some drops of 'True Knowledge' soaked into his 'worldly' intellect! He resigned himself to the teacher's task.

The cowherd squeezed the udders of the 'divine cow called Upanishads' and fed the 'simplified truths of milk' to the waiting mouth of the 'little calf Arjuna'!

He spoke in a voice overflowing with compassion:

"My friend! This 'Self' which I am trying to explain is something which cannot be described in words.

How can you word that thing which has no form, which has no quality, which is beyond the reach of the senses and mind? Well! One thing is for sure! The so-called Self does not die; and nobody can kill it!

If anybody is foolish enough to think that he is a killer and the other a victim, both are the worst idiots of the world; the Self neither can kill nor be killed!”

Arjuna did not interrupt.

True! He still did not understand the so-called Self! Yet he listened like an over-enthusiastic student dreaming unconsciously about the glory that would be his one day, if somehow he could grasp the truths expounded here.

Krishna continued:

“Self, O Arjuna - does not die; because it was never born!”

‘What a foolish statement!’

Arjuna’s mind was churning!

‘Of course, I was born; maybe I didn’t know about it when I was just a new-born baby; but my venerable mother indeed can prove it; venerable Bheeshma also knows about it; why, even Bheema and Yudhishtira will vouch for it!’

Krishna was trying his best to describe the indescribable Self!

“Even if you believe the ‘Self’ to be born, or rather, if you cannot believe that you are ‘un-born’, and want to believe in an untrue idea, even then, the so-called ‘Self’ never ceases to exist; that means it will never die! But in truth, ‘Self’ is ‘unborn’! ‘You’ are ‘unborn’! ‘I’ am ‘unborn’! ‘Self’ is eternal!

The most permanent object in this impermanent world is the ‘Self’, the ‘Real You’! ‘You’ are the most ancient than the word ‘ancient’ can denote! In brief, the Self does not die when pierced with arrows; never dies when cut with a sword; never dies even when hit by a mace; never dies when trampled by the elephants; never dies even when the body lies without life on the pall! In short, you cannot kill the Self in all those people; they also cannot kill you; because you are the ‘eternal Self’ which appears to be imprisoned in the ‘non-eternal body’!

Self is beyond death! Do you understand all this, my friend?”

Krishna paused for a few moments, as if short of breath. He looked at Arjuna as if waiting for an answer.

But Arjuna?

Arjuna! Where was he?

He was lost to this world! His mind had soared high into hitherto unknown boundaries of contemplation!

No war; no brothers; no relatives; no Duryodhana; no wives; no world! Even Krishna was not there! Arjuna was somewhere very far; far from this messy world; far from the hit and run accidents of the world; far from the mad mad world!

Where? There - where no space and time could reach; where he had forgotten his own existence as Arjuna!

Why? What had happened? He had started to think now; for the first time in his life! 'Self'! 'What is this Self? A light? A ghostly apparition? Are there many selves? But then, why is Krishna referring to a single number? Where is the Self located in the body? Is it in the heart? Is it in the brain? Does it fill the whole body? Is it covering the whole body from outside like some giant entity? If it is not this body, if this body is cut off or removed, then what is left as 'I'? Who am 'I'?

WHO AM I?

It is the question which forms the very first step for ascending the heights of 'True Knowledge'!

Arjuna asked himself - Who am I?

Am I not Arjuna, the glory of Lunar dynasty? Was I not born? Will I never die? Then, who dies pierced by the arrows? The body?

Then, if the body is not 'Me', how can 'I' be 'I'; how can 'he' be 'he'?

Arjuna had to put a break to his racing thoughts! His friend was saying something more now. There was no time to think. He tried to concentrate hard on the sacred words flowing from the mouth of the Master!

Krishna spoke:

"Arjuna! If you can comprehend the truth about the Self, if you 'know' the 'Unknowable Self', then all your unnecessary worries will be over! You will then understand that there is neither 'the killer' nor 'the killed'; the duality will cease to exist! This Self cannot die; for it was never born!

This Self cannot be destroyed; for it is beyond the sensory grasp. This Self was in the past; is in the present; will be in the future. It is eternal. It is beyond all the changes that torment this physical body of ours. Our body is born, grows, decays, dies; but the Self remains ever the same."

Arjuna reflected.

'If I am beyond death, then I cannot be the body! Then, what is this body? The body which I pampered petted, loved; it is not me? The face that I lovingly appreciate in the mirror hundred times a day....; is it not mine? Am I not that? If bodies are unreal as Krishna says, then, who is the person acting in the world? If there was no differentiation of bodies and all are one as Self, wouldn't there be confusion in all our relationships? If I am not this body, then who am I - a nonexistent ghoul? No! It can't be! Krishna says, 'I is the only reality'

वासांस्त्रि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय अन्यानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥

*Just like a man discards worn out garments and takes other new ones,
the embodied Self discards the worn out bodies and takes over other new
bodies.*

Krishna observed the confused look on the face of Arjuna.

He tried hard once again to describe the principle of the physical body.

“Arjuna! This body of yours is a garment worn by you; a dress chosen for you! When your garment gets worn out or torn, you throw it away; don’t you? And you will wear a new garment without any regret too!

Similarly, this body is also discarded when it gets worn out and we term it as death! A new body is chosen and life continues; we call it birth!”

Krishna paused.

He waited for the statement to sink deep into Arjuna’s mind. Arjuna was pondering the logic of Krishna’s statement. ‘Is this body just a garment? But, do we allow others to tear it? Do we throw it away before even it is worn out? Do we cry when the cloth is lost? Can life and death be explained in such simple terms? Why does a man fear death then? How do we know which type of body will be available to us after death?

How can we think of the body as a cloth? We have the freedom to choose our new dress. Do we have the same freedom to choose our bodies? Death is not so simple...!

But, suppose, for the sake of the argument we keep aside all these questions, even then- how can anyone ever possibly explain the untimely deaths of little children, little babies..? Some die even in the womb itself; some outside! Little flowers wither even before they had a chance to bloom in this world! Their ‘clothes’ were new, tender, delicate!

Old people; yes; they can die, for- they would have known what life is; they would have fully experienced whatever life had offered them! May be even diseases are justified! But children....?

Death is not as simple as Krishna seems to suggest.

Arjuna’s mind went on asking hundreds of unanswered questions, for which maybe only this cowherd held the key!

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
 न चैनम् क्लेदयत्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः॥
 अच्छेद्योऽयमदाहयोऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।
 नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः॥

Weapons do not tear it apart.

Fire does not burn it.

Water does not wet it.

Wind does not try it.

It is unbreakable; unburnable; cannot be dissolved; cannot be dried.

It is eternal; all pervading; firmly placed; and immovable.

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते।
 तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हति॥

It is said to be unperceivable; unthinkable; changeless.

Therefore, understanding this truth, you should not grieve anymore.

Krishna understood that his analogy did satisfy his friend's mind. He knew he could go on for hours discoursing about this death business, but he thought that it could be attended to later, at another time maybe... after the war was over; after the whole of KuruKshetra was flooded with the waters of death.

He jumped back to the safest topic- the Self!

“Arjuna! Try to understand your own Self; half of your problems will be over. This Self - which I am trying to explain -can never be slain. Do believe this; later you can confirm this in your own personal experience.

The Self, my friend, is beyond death! How does a person die in this world; just think. Leave out the possibilities of deaths caused by diseases and old age. One may be slain with weapons, or burnt to death, or may drown in water, or even get dehydrated and die. But all these elements – fire, water, air, earth- do not have any effect on the Self! Self can never be cut; can never be burnt; can never become wet; can never be dried.

Self is never born. Self never dies. Self is eternal!

Self cannot be limited in a name or form; can not be conditioned by space and time.

Self is all-pervasive; it cannot move from place to place for the simple reason that it does not exist in any place.

Self is fixed; no not like a tree! It is not fixed in the sense – there is no place for it to move! Self is the only immovable thing in this ever-moving world. Self is not bound by the limitations of time!

It was; it is and it will be; it exists always.

My friend! You look still puzzled. I know; you think I am talking in riddles. But, what can I do? I fail to express with words- 'That' - which cannot be brought within the purview of any literature.

Believe me when I say that the Self is unknowable! Yet, the 'Seers' 'know' the 'Self'! The Self is not a physical object which can be sensed with our sense organs. The Self cannot be seen, heard, smelt, tasted or touched. The Self is not manifest at all. The tree inside the seed manifests as the trunk, leaves, flowers and fruits. The water vapor manifests as rain. Beauty manifests as a flower, as a butterfly, as the bewitching smile of the lady, as the chubby face of a child! But, the Self? It is unmanifest! So how can we 'know' it? Through thoughts....? Through the comprehensive property of the intellect, which can grasp the abstract things of the life..? No! The Self cannot be thought about; it is the very source from which thoughts arise!

Like the river which cannot turn back and see the source of its origin, like the eyes which cannot see themselves, the thoughts can never catch the one who gave them existence! Then, how to 'see' the Self?

The seed can be seen in its manifestations when it sprouts, when it grows, when it blossoms, when it bears fruits; but the Self has no such changes; so how can you 'see' it? Stop worrying, Arjuna! Have belief in my words! The Self cannot die; so logically you can never kill anybody. So you are never a sinner in the real sense!

Do not grieve! O Arjuna!"

Krishna was trying to push Arjuna back into his depression by reminding him about his previous discussion on war and peace. He wanted to close this incomprehensible topic and get back to the practical world of victories and defeats. He could select another day for his lessons on philosophy; but not today, when he could hear the uneasy grunts of many an eager warrior in the nearby battle-ground. But, Arjuna did not feel in the least depressed.

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम्।
तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैवं शोचितुमर्हसि॥

*Even if you believe this to be always getting born repeatedly and dying,
you have no cause to lament, Hey Mighty armed!*

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

For the person who is born, death is certain.

For a man who is dead, birth is certain.

Therefore wise men do not worry about that which cannot be prevented.

Krishna tried once more.

“Arjuna, anybody born must die; anybody who dies must get born!

Even if you do not kill your relatives, they have to die one day or the other; so why worry?

Come on; let us get back to the work in hand.”

Sure! Krishna had brought back the memories of Arjuna’s previous predicament; but to no effect.

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥

These beings were unmanifest before (birth);

are manifest in the middle;

will again become unmanifest after death.

What is there to lament about it?

Three tries were better than two; Krishna tried once more; but this time he tried adding some philosophic terms, as if to satisfy his cousin brother’s new fascination.

“Arjuna! All these beings were un-manifest before they were born; after death they will return to their un-manifest state. They appear as manifested and are seen because now they have names and forms which can be perceived through our senses. Therefore, there is no need to worry about killing the elders of the family; for- they are not truly dying when they are going to collapse under the onslaught of your sharpened arrows.”

Krishna met with failure for the first time in his life!

Arjuna’s face remained expressionless! He was waiting patiently for the right answers to his tormenting questions. He was adamant; he was least concerned about lamenting the deaths occurring in the future. He wanted philosophy then and there. To hell with Duryodhana and others; to hell with the kingdom; he wanted ‘Knowledge Supreme’!

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेनं आश्चर्यवत्त्वदति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥

*Some one sees it as a wonder.
Some one else, talks of it as a wonder.
Another one hears about it as a wonder.
Even after hearing about it, no one knows it ever.*

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।
तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥

Bhaarata!

*This embodied Self is indestructible though it is in each and every body.
Therefore you cannot grieve about any being (in this world).*

Krishna tried another trick; why not discourage Arjuna from his new fancy?
He said: “Arjuna! The knowledge of the ‘Unknowable Self’ which you want now here is not so easy to attain! Of course it is nice when you hear about these things; any man who can give a flowery discourse about it will make you gape in wonder. The Self is such a fascinating topic. Even then if you attend thousands of discourses on the Self also, you can never really comprehend it!
Arjuna, you are a prince; a ‘Kshatriya’, a warrior at heart. Remember your duties as a ‘Bharata Prince’.
Your duty is in the battlefield. Kill all your enemies relentlessly. Slay all the relatives be they young or old and win back the kingdom.
Do you remember? You started the topic of the sins committed with war etc; all that is not needed at all at this critical hour. Since the Self inside the body cannot be killed and can never die when the body falls dead, you stop worrying about all these deaths and sins and get ready to fight.”

Arjuna did not move out of his rocky seat.

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥

*Considering your own duties (as a Kuru prince),
you should not tremble like this.
There is nothing more conducive to the welfare of a man of warrior class
than a war fought with proper rules.*

यद्दृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम् ।
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम् ॥

Paartha! Only Kshatriyas of good fortune get a war opportunity like this which occurs unsought for and opens the door of the heavens.

Krishna taking a deep breath started another type of attack.

“Arjuna!” he sternly pronounced.

“Have you forgotten that you are a Kshatriya? How can you refuse to fight? Your very duty is to fight and protect Dharma. Have you forgotten that Duryodhana is your sworn enemy? Haven’t you taken an oath to destroy all these harmful weeds? Have you forgotten Draupadi’s anguish? And the ‘Mukti (liberation)’ you are so fond of, even that liberation, you will get as a gift-packet from heaven if you battle for Dharma!

You must consider yourself lucky for having gotten a chance like this; the doors of the heaven are kept open for the lucky ones like you, who take part in such battles to save their country. What is more wonderful than shedding the last drop of blood for the sake of one’s country?”

No change in Arjuna so far!

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

Or else, if you do not fight this righteous battle, then you will swerve from your duties; damage your reputation; and will incur sin.

Krishna threatened; “Arjuna!” he thundered. “If you refuse to fight the great battle of Dharma, you will be going against your duty as a king and will be the worst sinner.”

Sins did not frighten Arjuna any more.

अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।
सम्भावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते ॥

*The people will always talk of your infamy.
For a man of honor, death is better than infamy.*

भयाद्रणादुपरतं मन्त्स्यन्ते त्वं महारथाः ।
 येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम् ॥

*The great warriors will think that you have withdrawn from the battle
 because of fear.
 Having been highly respected, you will attain a degraded state.*

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।
 निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यम् ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ॥

*Your enemies will comment about you in insulting words.
 They will censure your talent.
 What could be more painful than this?*

Krishna changed his tone.

“My friend! Do you know the consequences of not fighting the battle? You will be in eternal ‘infamy’. People will talk ill of you. They will brand you as a coward. Can you bear it? No, Arjuna, even I cannot bear to think of such things!”

Krishna choked as it were. He knew if he felt sad, Arjuna may have a sympathetic reaction and start feeling sad; he even managed a few tear drops in his bee-like eyes.

He continued: “What will all these warriors think of you, my friend? Even the enemies used to regard you with a lot of respect; and such a famed archer like you will be talked of lightly as a coward by one and all!

Those who were ready to face your arrows will now relax and laugh at you; and what defaming words will they speak when mentioning your name! Oh! What can be more painful than that?”

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
 तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥

*If you are killed you will enjoy the heaven.
 If you win, you will enjoy the earth.
 Therefore, get up O Son of Kunti, determined to fight.*

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

*Considering equally
both pain and pleasure; both profit and loss; both victory and defeat,
get prepared to fight the battle.
In that way you will not incur sin.*

Krishna activated his tear-ducts and out came a few drops of Ganges, forming a stream on his manly cheeks. “Arjuna!” he choked again. “What can we do, being bound by the rules of the society always! We must always act duty-bound! If you die, you will get the heaven; if you win, you will get this Kuru Kingdom equaling heaven in its splendor! So, come on Arjuna, get up! Let not the name of your mother be tainted ever for wombng an unworthy son! Let us get back to the battlefield. Let us just take everything with an equal mind! May the Supreme Lord above decide the results of our endeavors; we will courageously face anything that arises out of this ‘Dhaarmic’ war! Remember what I said; the gates of the hell will never open up for you, for slaying the elders on the enemy side.”

Krishna glanced at Arjuna through the screen of his tear filled eyes to see the effect of his great speech; no use at all! Arjuna seemed to be lost in some world of his own! He did not seem to have heard all his talks on duty, battle and heaven etc; He was patiently waiting for Krishna to resume the topic of the ‘Secret Knowledge’ as it were. Arjuna had decided to become a ‘Seer’, not a ‘Hero’!

‘No escape now’- thought our poor trapped teacher! He was stuck with his job; he was here on this earth to teach, not to hold the horse reins and act out the role of a driver in a dumb battlefield! Here was an ideal disciple, who shunned duties, heavens, fame and relatives; a true disciple indeed!

Krishna gracefully wiped his crocodile tears away which had been wasted on an obstinate friend. He sat near another higher rock close to Arjuna; placed his affectionate hands on the muscular shoulder of his sincere disciple and said with a kinder voice, “Arjuna!” Arjuna looked up eagerly; he knew at last, now he had defeated his undefeatable friend.

Arjuna had won!

*Then began the sacred dialogue between the Master and the disciple;
a dialogue, so unique and filled with meaningful understanding that
any sincere seeker of the truth hearing it,
will be led towards the greatest heights of knowledge
to be drowned in the 'Supreme Bliss of the Self'!*

CHAPTER III

The sun peeped out of the clouds and smiled. A slight drizzle had cooled the sizzling atmosphere. Some parrots flew in a mad rush screeching with excitement. Everything was calm and peaceful. Everything was bright and beautiful. Even the minds of the Great Master and His beloved disciple were entwined in a blissful union.

“Lord! What is Brahman? What is its nature? How does one realize the Truth? How does one maintain the state of realization even at the time of death?”

At last...At last...a sensible question!
Krishna lost no time.

*Krishna at that sacred moment of transferring knowledge was not the son of
Devaki; he was not Vaasudeva, son of King Vasudeva; he was Vaasudeva,
the divinity which resides in every existing object as its essence!
The shadow-identity of the cowherd form was discarded!
He was now the SUN witnessing the play of the manifold Creation.
He was Brahman manifesting as sacred speech!
There was no teacher no disciple; there was only GITA, the divine song of
Para Brahman!*

“My Friend!

You are indeed one in a million; for, now you are aspiring for the perfect knowledge,
attaining which nothing ever remains to be known!

My nature is two-fold; higher and lower. The elements, the mind, the intellect, and the ego-sense make up my lower nature. The ‘Pure Consciousness’ which supports all these is my higher nature. The entire range of creations is supported by this dual nature of mine.”

*Krishna was not Krishna anymore!
Was it the formless Brahman itself explaining about itself?
What words could suffice when THAT speaks about THAT?
Krishna never spoke here. No words were exchanged.*

*Only 'Silence' reigned. He was THAT! THAT never speaks!
 Arjuna sat there with his body trembling in horripilations; eyes streaming
 forth blissful drops of pearls; his mind stilled into 'nothingness'!
 The Master spoke in silence! The disciple was freed of all delusions!
 The Lord spoke in silence! The devotee was merged in silence.
 How long? Neither of them knew!*

[Sage Vyaasa indeed did his best to put into words what THAT spoke in silence]

एषा तेऽभिहिता साङ्ख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
 बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥

*I gave you the theoretical aspects of Self–Knowledge.
 Now listen to the actual realization process of it.
 Endowed with such a knowledge
 you will be freed of the shackles of 'Action'.*

“Arjuna! I had given a briefing about the discriminative knowledge necessary for the attainment of the Supreme State. But let me impart the practical means of achieving it. Once you perfect the practice and sincerely put all your efforts in it, you will indeed be freed of the ‘shackles of action’ which are binding you.”

“What in truth is the ‘shackle of action’?”

“The ‘doer-ship’ you attach to all actions.”

“I am the doer! Am I not? How can you say that I do not do anything?”

“See for yourself! Your legs move; your hands work; mouth speaks; eyes see; ears hear; tongue tastes; skin feels; mind thinks ; intellect discriminates.”

“Yes; but I indeed am all these.”

“Rethink! Are these ‘you’ or ‘yours’?”

“They indeed belong to me; but I do not know it all the time.”

“That is why I am going to tell you the ‘secret method’ by which you will never get chained by the ‘actions performed by the instruments’ which you falsely consider as your own.”

“True! I do not deny it! But the methods taught vary and failures hit you at every step; many turn insane unable to reach the goal they set their hearts at!”

“Maybe..! But the method which I am going to teach is the easiest and the best; termed by the wise as the ‘Yoga of Knowledge’!”

“But Krishna...; now after all these years of passion-filled life, can I still expect some good gains out of this method? You must already know that I am not actually well qualified for such a great enterprise!”

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

*There is no loss when you undertake this; there is no diminution.
Even a little practice of this method will free you
from the great fear (of Samsaara).*

“Better late than never my friend! Moreover in this wonderful path there is no need for procrastination. You can start on this path anytime; now itself; this moment; here; in this battlefield! Any moment is an auspicious one, once the mind has been made up.”

“But, I have my family, duties etc. Even now you are forcing me to enter the battlefield! How can I?”

“Forget about it Arjuna! This is so easy and practical. You need not swerve from your ordained duties towards your family, society etc. You can practice this method anywhere anytime irrespective of what work you are engaged in.”

“And the result, Krishna? Are you sure you know what you’re saying? I am sorry; I am not disrespecting your intelligence or wisdom. But you see, I am an ordinary man of the world and if I am going to risk all my time and efforts in practicing some method, which may fail, it would not be worth much. I expect some definite results and a guarantee of success in whatever enterprise I engage in!”

“My friend! I am sure about the knowledge about what I am explaining. And trust me; even if you practice this method only for a few years, nay months; no- even for a few days, you will find yourself a different person –cheerful, equanimous and most important of all you will become absolutely fearless”

“Fearless! Ha ha ha!” Arjuna laughed aloud.

“Me, the Great Arjuna; the wielder of the greatest weapons of the three worlds; the Great Gaandivi! Afraid of what, O Gopala?”

“Of what..? Just now....a few minutes back, you were giving me a discourse on the evil consequences of war! What was the main fear that forced you to refrain from shooting the first arrow from your mighty bow and starting the great battle of Dharma? What stopped you mighty arm from moving? Are you absolutely fearless as you proclaim? No, my friend! You ‘were’ and ‘are’ afraid of the one common enemy; the one who can never be conquered! Any man even if he be the mightiest conqueror of the three worlds, yet bows before this ‘Great Death’! Nobody can destroy death! Yes! Your one and only unconquerable enemy can be got rid of for ever- if you apply yourself sincerely even a little in this practice! Now ...are you satisfied, my cousin?”

Arjuna sat back more comfortably and got ready!

His mind gathered up in absolute concentration, anxious not to miss any of the nectar like knowledge dripping from the wonderful dark bee hives in front of him. Even the endless chattering of the siblings hiding in the innumerable bowers of the gigantic Kadamba tree did not seem to enter his ears. He was now aiming his mind like an arrow towards the ‘Knowledge-sparrow’ seated on the faraway tree of the ‘unfathomable intellect of the cowherd saint’! Would success ever evade him?

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥

O Joy of Kuru dynasty!

*Those who are resolute in their purpose have single minded determination.
But the intellects of those with irresolute minds branch out endlessly in various ways.*

Krishna continued enthusiastically!

A good sincere disciple is rare to find even if the Guru is Krishna!
“O Kuru-Nandana! Listen attentively to this instruction disclosing the ‘greatest means’ to the ‘Highest Good’! Of course; you have to be completely open-minded and rational when you are going to analyze the good and bad of this path!
For, all along you have been taught many methods, many a spiritual practice which of course have never given a proper result. Those with ‘cultured minds’ decide on ‘one single path’ which will yield a ‘definite result’ and never become anxious about it. But those of ‘irresolute minds’, those of ‘uncultured minds’, they go after many a path with insincerity and end up in the same zero point from which they started!

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः ।
 वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥
 कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।
 क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम् ।
 व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥

*Interested only in the superficial statements of the Vedas;
 arguing that there is nothing more than that;
 filled with various desires in their minds;
 interested in the attainment of the heaven;
 the ignorant make flowery statements
 about the rituals filled with various rites
 as leading towards various pleasure of the senses,
 but which actually result only in binding one to repeated births.*

*For those intent on attaining the pleasure of heavens,
 with their minds dwelling only on that,
 the mind though resolute,
 does not get stabilized in the Self-state of composure.*

Krishna continued:

“You will meet many a philosopher who will describe his own method as the best and the surest.

Saivaites proclaim that ‘SHIVA’ is the ‘Supreme Deity’; which is thoroughly contradicted by the Vaishnavites who hold that ‘Lord Naaraayana’ is the ‘Supreme Controller’ of the worlds!

Buddhists or ‘Shoonya-vaadins’ speak of the ‘Supreme State’ as ‘Void’; some others call it as the freedom from births and deaths.

The ‘Saankhyas’ state that ‘Prakriti’ is the ‘ultimate source’ of the world when ‘she’ is enjoined with ‘Purusha’. ‘Shaaktas’ state, that the ‘Power of the supremacy’ is the ‘Cause’ of the world.

Whereas the ‘Materialists’ deny all these and proclaim that wine, wealth and women are the supreme enjoyments of life.

There is no agreement at all among all these followers of different cults either in the principles followed or the end that is reached.

One wants to press the lotus feet of Naaraayana in humble service; another wants to witness the 'Cosmic Dance' of Shiva; still another wants a permanent place in Indra's heaven!

Which is the Highest Good? Which indeed should a man strive for? Nobody, not even the wisest of the world can definitely declare! For, all the philosophical cults in this sacred land base their principles on the profound statements of the Vedas and the Upanishads; and each appear to be very convincing when one listens to the flowery speeches of these wonderful men!

Even these so-called 'Works of Divinity', the 'Vedas' which are referred to by all these cults as the 'Supreme authoritative Knowledge' have two kinds of followers; one addicted to the 'Action portion' of the Vedas and the other to the 'Knowledge portion' of the same.

How can the 'Vedas' which are proclaimed as the 'supremely sacred texts' have opposing theories encouraging contradictory spiritual practices? The unwise intellectuals are engaged only in attracting the audience with their capacity to coin words in a sophisticated language and revel in translating the 'words of the Vedas' in a variety of ways.

For the unwise indiscriminating ones, Vedas are not fully revealed.

Like the blind men describing an elephant, these ignorant ones hold on to one particular portion the Vedas alone and fail to have a comprehensive view of the 'Great Texts' unable to find the secret of the knowledge hidden in the vague and ordinary words of the Vedas. They waste their time in worthless arguments about the literal outer meanings of the texts and declare that there is nothing beyond the verbal hymns of these texts. Their goal is only the fulfillment of their own latent desires. Their minds desire for the maximum level of pleasures and aim at reaching heaven after death. Their polluted minds dream of worlds filled with divine damsels, unlimited enjoyments, miraculous powers and eternal embodiments as divine beings. They perform 'Sacrifices' and please the Gods and obtain merits and go to heavens after their deaths. But after the merits get exhausted they return to earth to continue the fulfillment of their unfulfilled 'Vaasanaas'.

They get caught in the 'cycle of births and deaths' and are ever in the performance of actions to fulfill their 'never -ending' desires. Such minds which have only 'pleasure-seeking' as their goal can never attain equanimity.

These Vedas which proclaim 'Karma' or 'Rituals' as the 'only duties to be performed by men' have impermanent heavens as their goal; they are concerned only with the three lower 'Gunas' of the human minds.

त्रैगुण्यविषयो वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्दो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

*Vedas are concerned with people having the three Gunas.
Arjuna! You become freed of all the three Gunas.
You remain freed of the duality. Be always established in true nature.
Do not be anxious about the goal to be attained.
Remain in the Self-state.*

Krishna continued:

“All actions can be categorized into three divisions; lethargic actions, desire-oriented actions and virtuous actions. The desire for heavens is actually a desire for fulfilling the basest desires of the mind and can be termed as ‘Taamasic’, the darker side of the mind. The performance of rituals is only pleasure oriented and seeks to fulfill selfish desires, and can be termed ‘Raajasic’ or dusty. The virtuous actions like worshipping Gods, or charity etc are also aimed at gaining merits so the innermost desires will be fulfilled and are ‘Saatvic’ or ‘light-like’. All these three Gunas create three types of worlds; dark, dusty and light-filled.

They still keep you away from the ‘Truth’ which is far beyond the reach of actions colored by any of these three Gunas. Vedas devoid of ‘Knowledge portions’ are concerned with just the ‘world of three Gunas’.

But, O Arjuna! You rise above these Gunas! You get rid of the dualities of ‘I and you’, ‘I and mine’ etc.

When you analyze, you will discover that these ideas of duality always divide you into two; always make you an incomplete part of something else; always prompt you to act one way or another; these are just ‘ideas colored by the three Gunas’.

Rise above these ‘dualities’! Be a mighty master! Don’t be anxious about any of the happenings of the world. Accept anything that life offers! Do not dwell upon the past or future! Live always in the present!

Only when you rise above dualities; only when you stop identifying with the mind, body and intellect; only when you understand that you are the very power which makes all these exist; only when you find your ‘Self’; then and then alone you have attained the ‘highest good’!”

“In your opinion, Vedas do not lead to the ‘Highest good’?” Arjuna questioned.

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

*What value is there for the well-water
when one is surrounded by water all over,
that is the value the Vedas get allotted by a Knower
who has realized the Brahman.*

Krishna answered:

“No Arjuna! I never said that Vedas do not lead to the ‘highest good’! I simply mentioned that their ‘true meaning’ has always evaded the impure seekers and has led to the formation of varieties of confusing theories.

After a comprehensive study of the Vedas along with their ‘Knowledge-portion’ is completed, then only can one reach a state that is beyond the Vedas. And you can then kick away the ladder of the Vedas after you climb up the terrace of ‘freedom’.

You can be ‘so free’ that you are freed even from the knowledge that you sought;
‘so free’ that you have nothing more to know anything further;
‘so free’ that you can laugh blissfully even when the worst disasters rush like waves to drown you;
‘so free’ that death becomes a curry to be consumed in your daily meal adding a new aroma to your life;
‘so free’ that the whole world is seen as a creation of names and forms authored by you and makes you chuckle aloud;
‘so free’ that you ultimately understand that you never were bound;
‘so free’ that instead of seeking freedom from births and deaths, you know that you were never bound;
‘so free’ that all the Gods become puppets in your hands;
‘so free’ that words like ‘freedom and bondage’ lose their meanings;
‘so free’ that you know your ‘true being’ as untouched by the ladders of knowledge of any sort.

You will then transcend the barriers of ‘I and you’; ‘space and time’; ‘God and devotee’. You will be freed of desires, anxieties, passions, furies, attachments, sense pleasures; inner tendencies. You will be completely freed of all the worldly dirt.

Even the Vedas reveal their unreal character in the end and are absorbed into the ‘all pervasive Self’ once the ‘Truth’ is attained. The Vedas lose their validity and usefulness to a ‘Knower of the Self’!

What purpose does the well water serve when one is flooded all around with water? By this statement I am not commenting that the Vedas are senseless or useless; do not misunderstand my words!

These texts are 'knowledge' arising from the deep depths of the 'hearts of Great Knowers'! They are the 'very foundation' on which all other 'sources of knowledge' are based! However, even these 'Sacred Texts' do not serve any purpose to the man who has gone beyond the limitations of words and their meaning!

Vedas- the 'ultimate essence of knowledge' equal a ship used for crossing the deep waters of the 'ocean of ignorance'; but what use is the ship to a man who has reached the 'shore of Supreme Bliss!'"

Arjuna still felt despondent. He said:

"True! I understand you Gopala! The futility of all my worthless endeavors...; whereas the true goal of my life was waiting for me beyond the hurdles of words, thoughts, and knowledge! All my life till now was just a waste! Is there any hope still left for me? Can I ever attain that blissful state where even the Vedas on which every branch of knowledge rests, melts into nothingness? Is there for me a simple practice to lead me up quickly? Do I have a chance.... Still...?"

"Why not? It is now or never! Anybody at any time can sincerely practice this 'means of knowledge' and attain the 'same state' that the sages of yore attained through severe penance! Age, status, gender, education or experiences prove no impediments in this path!"

"Krishna! I want quick results! Already I am on my way to the other world!"

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भू मा ते सङ्गोस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

*You have the right only to chose your work; not the results thereof.
Do not be after the result of the action. Do not avoid doing work also.*

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्धसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

*You have attained many a wealth by your endeavor!
Established in this Yoga of Knowledge,
equal minded towards success and failure, do actions without attachment.
This equanimity alone is known as
the perfect method of attaining the Supreme state.*

Krishna continued:

“Arjuna! Do not be anxious! It is very easy! Just keep acting in this world as before; as ordained by the society and the family you are born in; but take care never to covet the fruits of action; but perform every action as if it is the ‘utmost important thing’ at that moment.”

Arjuna’s voice was high pitched as he argued back vehemently.

“But, Krishna...! How is it possible? Any action performed definitely carries a result at the end and how can you not covet it? Every action we perform is result-oriented; but for the result, the action would not be performed at all! If I shoot an arrow at some object I do have a purpose in my action. I do expect some result to occur! How can I throw away the result? If not prompted by the idea of the result thereof, I will cease to perform any action whatsoever! If I really discard the fruits of my action, I will be branded as the most foolish person in all the three worlds!”

“Arjuna! I did not exactly say that you should throw away the fruits of the actions performed by you.

Do not miss the true meaning of my words. What you say is indeed is very true! I do not deny that at all!

Without the ‘idea of a result’ nobody can do anything in this world. Let me clarify the idea of ‘action bereft of fruit’!

Let us first analyze the sphere of actions. Some actions like bathing etc are daily duties to be performed mechanically without any great result waiting at the end to hug you.

Some actions indeed are performed with the definite idea of obtaining a result. What is the outcome of that result? It is either good or bad; gain or loss; liked or disliked! The result is dependent on one’s own sincerity, talent or fate-ordained. For, some unknown force always arises out of nowhere and destroys sometimes the ‘good effects’ of the actions in a second; whereas some fortunate persons seem to get ‘good results’ with the least of efforts.

But, whatever the case, you cannot just walk out of the result of the action which you have performed! But, suppose, you perform all actions with utmost sincerity; with all your capability squeezed into that one action you are performing at that time, then what happens? The result has to be perfect unless the ‘mythical- fate’ interferes to spoil it!

‘Fate’ can be defined as the result of a total chaos created in the human world. As an individual, you may have to succumb to it without a question. But other than that there is nothing else to make your action go wrong! Even if the ‘cruel-fate’ has decided to shower its wrath upon your actions to harass you with vengeance, can’t you laugh at the ‘un-fair fate’ by least bothering about the pros and cons of the actions and perform all your actions to your complete satisfaction - to ‘utmost perfection’, and be one step ahead of the fate?

Suppose, as you are performing any action, even if the 'idea' of the result does not disturb you; if you are just 'action-oriented' than 'result-oriented'; if the mind is rid of the 'least bit of anxiety' about the result; then, can the result ever turn out to be worthless? Does not 'anxiety about the result' disturb the 'performance of the action' and eventually end up in 'failure'?

Take the example of a potter who is designing pots to earn his livelihood! If he was worried only about the silver coins he may get for his art-work, he would never be able to make the best ones! Whereas, if he did not think about the result at all; if he did not worry about the monetary gains which are sure to come anyhow; if he engaged himself in his work with complete concentration; if he forgot all the surrounding world of people and objects around him; if he devoted himself in his work with single-minded attention; if he forced his entire thought-force into the little pot he is making; if his mind is beyond the boundaries of past and future but remains only in the present; then and then alone will his 'pot' become a 'perfect one' and also beget a 'perfect result'!

If you think you can value 'his work' in terms of money, you are mistaken; the joy he gets out of his 'perfect work' is far superior to the joy of the getting the money offered to him for his 'precious pot'! Who knows! He may be so overjoyed about his 'creation', he may refuse to sell the pot; or he may reluctantly sell it to eke out a living, as a necessity ordained by the 'stupid non-existent fate'!

But, I can vouchsafe this much; that the potter indeed was a 'Sage in contemplation' when he was creating that pot!

So my friend! What I suggested to you was nothing but this 'worship of work'; 'to perform actions without attachment to the result'! By the ordinance of the 'Creator', all actions have to produce results whether one wants it or not!

But, if a person is capable of performing one's duties untouched in the mind by the results of one's actions; unaffected by the pains and pleasures that hit him almost at every corner of his life; then would he be bothered by anything in this world? 'Results' – you have to bear with; True! But why bother about them so much? Why should the 'elation at a good result' and 'depression at a bad result' constantly play a ball with your mind?

If all the men and women of this world made this 'principle of unattached work', the 'foundation of their lives'; if everybody 'acted' and never 'reacted'; what words can describe the glory of such a society?

'Perfect Action' – 'has to' – 'must' – produce 'Perfect Result'! Even if uncontrollable forces turn your 'perfect action' into 'imperfect result', even then, you should be able to smile; for, you had done your 'best'!

Krishna continued:

“A person who worships his work is a Sage without matted locks and a saffron robe! Anybody, man, woman or child, can be a successful model of the society if the ‘secret of perfect work’ is achieved! However do not under-estimate the greatness of a Sage who does ‘silent work’ residing in some lonely spot far from the maddening rush of the world; for, he also works ‘to rise above the works’! A ‘man of the world’ can be a Sage in the midst of the society; and a ‘man of God’ can be a worker in the midst of a forest; both work; both are great; great equally; both are the two pillars of the society; both deserve adorations from the world.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि सम्यम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥

*The idiot who controls the organs of action and
remains thinking about the sense objects in his mind,
is called a hypocrite.*

Arjuna! Reach the state of ‘inaction’ through ‘perfect action’! By physical control alone you cannot pretend to be a ‘yogi’. Allow your ‘organs of action’ to work; but keep the mind away from the lures of the ‘organs of knowledge’.

By sitting with closed eyes, in a pretended posture of meditation you cannot become a ‘yogi’. You have to practice the art of ‘closing the mind’s eye’ while moving in the midst of countless responsibilities and duties; yet perfecting each point of the action as if that action alone is the most important thing in your life at that moment. Do everything through the mind, intellect and the body; yet be aware always that you do not do anything. Be a witness of your own actions. Become an outsider observing intently every point of your action. Become a ‘Karma yogi’!”

“Perfect work! Yes I agree that it is essential for a successful society; but ‘freedom from work’? You still have not answered my query, my dear Krishna; you still are pushing me back to the ‘wheel of work’!”

“Again the same doubt? And the answer is again the same!

‘Karma yoga’ is the only path that leads you away from the deep mires of work. When you perform any action undisturbed in your mind about the results of that action; least anxious about the comments of others; ready for any result, good or bad; cheerful while performing the work and cheerful when receiving the result; never getting either depressed or excited; when you develop the ‘art of equanimity’; then and then alone, you become fit for the climbing the ladder leading to the ‘highest good’. I do not say that it is very easy !

Yes, you have to struggle at the beginning stages; equanimity does not arise in one day or one month; it is a slow process, yet the surest process for attaining the ‘ highest good’.

The fervor of listening to flowery speeches of unrealized souls or reading philosophical texts may not last long! Many a times even when you are sincerely applying yourself to such a practice, failures might occur; you may lose your peaceful disposition unknown to yourself!

But keep trying; one day you may find yourself unmoved by any of the happenings of the outside world; yet perform your duties perfectly well and live in a blissful world of your own.”

Arjuna listened attentively to the golden words of the Sage in royal robes.

He was swallowing the words of the Supreme Teacher, like a bee sucking honey from a flower, anxious not to miss even a tiny drop of the nectar-like words. His mind had started the journey inwards. The war felt like a dream; his brothers, his enemies - all were becoming vague figures of a fiction; even the ever-charming Subhadraa, his one and only ‘true- love’, was now just a ‘name and form’ in the limitless canvas of the Supremacy! He sat there transfixed as it were...! He was lost as it were..! His mind was silent as it were..!

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय
 बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥
 बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते
 तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥

*Action (with the mind intent on the anxiety about the results)
 is far inferior to the path of Knowledge, O Expert in accumulation of
 Wealth!*

*Take shelter in Knowledge.
 Those who do result-oriented works are wretched.
 He who is endowed with Knowledge
 discards (the anxiety of) both the good and bad of the results.
 Strive to attain the Self-state through Knowledge.
 The Self-state always entails perfection in action.*

“Wake up, Arjuna!”

A thundering voice woke him up from his apparent state of ‘Samaadhi’!

“This ‘silent state’ is not the ‘highest good’ that I am trying to explain! Do you think that any person can act in this world if he sits silently absorbed in such a trance without realizing his own self? I have disclosed the method of qualifying for the ‘Highest Knowledge’; and the ‘easiest means’ of purifying the turbid waters of the mind is Karma Yoga!

Running away from the onslaught of pains and pleasures is not going to help in any way. Face everything cheerfully with courage! At the end of this ‘self -controlled path’ lies the ‘paradise of bliss and freedom’.”

Arjuna was completely awake.

The bliss of the trance was still lingering in the mind. ‘Work’ became less attractive! Silence was beckoning...! So he asked- “Is not the ‘contemplative method’ the best way to conquer the good and evil effects of the ‘work’?”

Krishna had enormous patience.

He explained: “My friend! ‘Contemplation’ without ‘Knowledge’ is like a lamp without oil! ‘Knowledge’ alone can help you cross over the ‘evils of action’ and land you in the ‘shores of freedom’.

It is the only ship available in this path; but this ship can be constructed only through ‘inaction in action’ i.e., ‘detached action’ i.e., ‘detachment to the results of the action’. Yoga is ‘Skill in Action’!”

Arjuna was still confused!

On the one hand Krishna was declaring that ‘Knowledge’ was the highest; on the other hand he was also extolling the glory of ‘perfect action’! Which again is the better of the two- ‘action’ or ‘knowledge’?

Krishna spoke:

“My friend! What is that still creates doubts in your sincere mind? Follow the Vedic instructions properly; have faith and devotion; apply yourself to the ‘practice’ with utmost sincerity ; develop equanimity of mind; practice the art of sleeping in the lap of your own Self; yet be awake to the happenings around you; you will become a ‘perfect yogi’!”

Arjuna worded his confusions:

“Well; when you say all these things, it sounds perfect; yet all perfect actions do not lead to perfect results!

I may not bother about the results as you advise; but the society? The society expects something out of me and I will be doing injustice to the world around me, if I fail to produce the results expected out of me!

Take the example of this battle itself; I may not care about the victory or defeat of the battle; but my friends, my relatives, my brothers, my wives, all expect me to win and how can I fail them? Tell me the method of avoiding failures in my actions and yet achieve the ‘highest good’ in my life!”

Krishna answered:

“Failures? How will you fail? Why will your ‘perfect action’ produce an ‘imperfect result’?”

Don’t tell me that ‘perfection’ itself led to the failure! Don’t evade the responsibility of the ‘failure’ which was caused not by the inert work you undertook; but because of the ‘selfishness’ that hides like a vampire in your heart, sucking away the blood of sincere work allowing you to enjoy only the skeleton of the fruit!

You perform all actions to get name, fame, wealth, and prosperity; tell me what you don’t aspire for! You want all the pleasures of the world here and hereafter; your wants have no limit! When one performs action not for the sake of the action but for the sake of fulfilling the selfish desires, the ‘perfect action’ of his results in a failure and creates an ‘imperfect result’.

So my friend! Act always with self-control! Safeguard your mind from the lures sense pleasures; be so self-controlled that even the taste for the pleasures disappears from the mind; then only can you dream of success and a paradise of a society!”

Sense pleasures!

Arjuna’s mind ploughed thorough his past life! He bent his head in shame! He was indeed a charming hero of all the three worlds; but was he equal in any way to this great man who seemed to be so simple, so innocent, so affectionate? Krishna had always been a perfect son; a perfect husband; a perfect diplomat; a perfect leader; a perfect friend; and a perfect yogi!

Not that this dark hero denied the pleasures that life offered to him in a golden platter; women just seemed to swoon in front of him, not with passion but with tears; some found a lost brother in him; some a husband; some a father; some a friend; he was the darling of all; yet he always was so calm and cool; so understanding; so clever!

Never had Arjuna seen a tear drop in those 'sea-like' deep eyes! But he - the great Arjuna, the greatest warrior in the three worlds; famed for his charm even in the heavens had never been free from passions, anxieties, furies, desires, hatreds, envies; the list was endless!

Krishna always had managed to 'rise in love'! But, he, the handsome Arjuna- had he 'fallen' in love?

His face reddened with embarrassment.

Krishna looked at his friend with utmost affection.

May be he had a glimpse of the thoughts that were running wildly in his friend's mind! "Arjuna! Do you think I had no problems at all in my life...no struggles at all..? But I had learnt the art of this 'detached action' - even as a child of 'eight'! How, from whom....? I do not know! I just knew it by myself! It helped me to confront the gigantic task that was facing me and fulfill it to the best of my ability!

आपूर्यमाणं अचलं प्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

*He alone into whom all the desires enter
like the waters entering the completely full, steady and firmly placed ocean,
attains the quiescent state;
not the one who runs after the gratification of desires.*

I too had to be in the midst of enemies, lovers, adorers; yet I remained in my own Self; in the bliss of the Self and just accepted everything the life offered me, like the ocean accepts all the waters that come to it, itself never rising or overflowing! I remained unaffected- whether pleasures embraced me or discarded me!

Be it the Brindaavan crowded with the simple folk who sang the hymn of love, or be it Mathura crowded with royalties playing the game of politics or be it the Dwaaraka burdened with the duties of rising my clan to a prosperous heaven or be it the loss of Raadhaa - 'the divine lotus blooming in the waters of Gokul' or be it the passionate embraces of roses pricking my body with thorns unknown to anybody; I lived through all these undaunted by the experiences that flowed around me! I never depend on the world for my happiness; rather it is the other way round"

Krishna paused....!

Did he choke....? Did he hear anything from far...? Was it a whisper...? Was it rising from the depths of his heart..? Kaanhaa...Kaanhaa....! He closed his eyes for a second. With a new vigor he continued:

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते
 सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
 क्रोधात्भवति सम्मोहः स्म्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः
 स्मृतिभ्रंशात्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशाद्विनश्यति ॥

*When a man keeps thinking about the objects of senses,
 he feels drawn towards them.*

By that attachment towards the objects, desire becomes intensified.

When desires get thwarted, anger bursts forth.

By anger confusion rises. By confusion all that was learnt gets forgotten.

*When the mind forgets the good and bad of actions learnt in the past,
 intelligence gets destroyed.*

When intelligence is gone, a person is ruined completely.

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
 यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि स निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

*The man with the subdued senses is awake in the night
 where all beings are asleep.*

Where all beings are awake, that is the night for the Sage who is realized.

“Arjuna ...! A man is destroyed only when he superimposes the idea of pleasure on the sense-objects; he runs after them; feels dejected at their loss; develops hatred towards the so-called obstacles in his mad race after pleasures! Desire alone drags one towards the doom. Even a Sage can very easily fall a prey to the lure of senses! A person who works incessantly in the ‘world of action’ unaffected by the experiences entering his mind is silent and inactive within. He sleeps; yet is awake in the ‘bliss of his true being’. But a man of the world is awake to the ‘apparent non-existent bliss of the sense pleasures’ and is drowned in the ‘dark waters of ignorance’.”

Arjuna was listening very intently.

He did not observe Krishna slowly moving towards a rock nearby. He opened his eyes at the sudden silence that hit him. Krishna was not there. He looked around and found him sitting on the rock; with his chin supported by his one hand; eyes staring vacantly at some ‘unseen void’. Had he become the ‘ocean’, Arjuna wondered.

From far away he could hear the neighing of some horses. Were they getting impatient with the 'action-less battlefield'? Should he return to the battlefield now? He looked at his friend. Krishna was looking elsewhere; he seemed to be lost in some other world; his face glowed with some hitherto unseen joy; his lips hid a budding smile. Arjuna walked towards him as if pulled by unknown force. He brushed aside his duty sense and decided to learn more about this 'silence' which his friend had managed to acquire!

Battleground or philosophy?

Action or silence?

Silence won!

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥

Krishna! Keshava! If you consider Knowledge to be better than action, then why are you guiding me towards this horrendous action?

Arjuna hesitatingly whispered- "Krishna...!"

The Great Sage slightly opened his eyes. His eyes looked enquiringly at his friend. Arjuna sat on the ground next to his friend. He managed to blurt out his question somehow. His voice sounded impatient; "Enough of this double-talk, Krishna! Either tell me how to sit and contemplate or command me to enter the battlefield. I cannot walk on two paths at the same time; so there!"

लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ।
ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥

O Taintless Arjuna!

I have long back spoken about a two-fold path for the beings of this world;

'Path of Knowledge' for the analytical thinkers;

and 'Path of Action' for those

who want to attain the identity with the Supreme Self

by some particular practice.

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
न च सन्न्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥

*A man does not attain 'Freedom from Action' by not doing any action.
Just by renouncing everything also one does not attain the Supreme state.*

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

*No one can remain doing nothing even for a moment at any time.
All do actions helplessly by the qualities natural to them.*

Krishna sighed!

He was no more the 'son of Vasudeva' but 'Vaasudeva' the 'Self of all'!
A majestic voice rose from the depth of his being. THAT spoke:

“Arjuna! In the past I alone expounded this 'single means' of 'two-fold nature';
'Deliberative method' for those with high intellectual capacity and 'Method of Action'
for those with action-based minds!
How can anyone be free of action at any moment of one's life? You just want to escape
your duties and sit in contemplation doing nothing!

Tell me honestly! Can you sit and meditate really even for a few minutes?
By just closing the eyes can the 'bliss of the Self' rise in you? With so many unfulfilled
desires and endless thoughts overflowing in your mind, how can you repose in the
'silence of contemplation'? Rather it is easier to engage oneself in some work and perfect
the control of the mind!”

Arjuna nodded in agreement.

“But what sort of work should I do? Any special rituals?”

“No! Just do the ordained duties that belong to you; duties towards the family; duties
towards the society; do whatever your mind seeks to do in the 'righteous way'! The
world is indeed action-bound; but one can free oneself from the 'shackles of duties' only
through a 'detached attitude'.

यज्ज्नाथार्त्कर्मणोन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

*All actions other than those done for Sacrifices are binding.
Therefore do actions for that only Arjuna, without attachment.*

Krishna continued:

“Propitiate the ‘Gods presiding over the manifold expressions of Nature’ and engage yourself in the ordained duties without ‘attachment to the results’.”

Arjuna! Offer all your actions as a ‘devoted offering’ to these divinities; gradually your mind will get purified; you will be fit then to receive the ‘Higher Knowledge’!”

“Higher Knowledge! Is there anything more to learn than what you have already taught so far?” Arjuna asked with curiosity.

“Of course, my friend...! Knowledge is unlimited! Knowledge has no bounds! Nobody can ever know everything; yet all kinds of knowledge culminate in the ‘Knowledge of the Supreme Self’! ‘That Supreme Self’ is denoted by various names- Self; Brahman; Immutable etc! But, ‘THAT’ is ‘nameless’; ‘formless’!

Yet, THAT forms the substratum of all the names and forms.

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

*Action (rites) rises (ordained) from the Brahma.
Brahma rises out of the Imperishable Brahman.
Therefore the all-pervading Brahman is always established
in the Sacrifice done for the good of the world.*

Krishna continued:

‘Fluctuations’ created in that ‘Unfluctuating ocean of Bliss’ alone is termed as ‘action’. ‘Action performed with true detachment’ alone is ‘True Yajna’-‘True Sacrifice’!

This ‘performance of the sacrifice’, ‘the vibrating principle of action’ gives rise to the ‘waters of experience’; which again creates the ‘various forms of food’ to be ‘eaten by the individual selves’ - who identify with their ‘physical and mental structures’; and the ‘beings’ rise out of the ‘food they eat’!

To make the long story short, Brahman is established in ‘selfless work’.

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
 आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥
 नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन।
 न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिद्व्यपाश्रयः ॥

*He who is absorbed in the Self;
 who is satisfied in that Self-state;
 who feels blissful in the Self-state;
 has no action belonging to him.
 There is nothing for him to gain
 by doing action or by refraining from action;
 and he is not dependent on anybody.*

When you learn to delight in your own 'Self'; when your mind constantly remembers the Self alone as the 'Supreme Truth'; when you do not even recognize the difference between good and bad; then and then alone you can throw away your 'Gaandiva bow' into the welcoming arms of River Yamuna and walk out of this world freed forever from the 'sense of duty'!

For a person who has found the 'true state of his existence', there is nothing more to gain from the performance or non -performance of action in this world!

He is free! He is free! He is free at last!!"

"Free at last!" The dark hued cloud thundered as it were!

Arjuna was in deep thoughts!

Many a figures of the yore appeared in his 'mind's arena'; the forms those men and women who had become indeed 'FREE', while living embodied on this earth! King Janaka was one realized sage, for sure; was Rama the 'fortunate one' blessed by becoming his son-in-law? Sage Yaajnavalkya, the greatest thinker of those times, knew the art of accumulating knowledge as well as wealth; he taught his dear wife Maitreyi also the secret of the 'Supreme Self'! The Greatest Sage Vasishta, the 'Royal Preceptor' of the 'Solar Dynasty' - had taught the sixteen year old Rama- the 'complete knowledge of Brahman'! Even now Arjuna knew that his grandfather Bheeshma was a realized soul and had faced many a calamities with a majestic smile! And there was Sage Vyaasa - the dark and un-handsome scholar who had painstakingly edited the Knowledge contained in the Vedas; he was the sole guide and shelter of the Lunar Dynasty.

His brother Bheema must be in a higher level of consciousness, no doubt; for, nowadays he appeared always lost in a world of his own; he had even stopped getting furious at the

mention of his vicious cousin's name! To top it all this simple 'cowherd-friend of his' was standing here expounding the 'greatest secret of the Upanishads' which escaped the grasp of even those who performed penance in the dark corners of the terrible forests! All these great souls never ran away from the family or the society; even their womenfolk were great realized souls – Maitreyi, Seeta, Gaargi...! Can I ever dream of becoming one of them? - Arjuna wondered!

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि स्मपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

*Janaka and others attained the Supreme state only by performing actions.
Considering the welfare of the people at least,
you should engage in action only.*

*What the noble ones act like, others follow the same.
Whatever role-model he provides, people follow the same.*

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यम् त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

Paartha!

*I do not have any duty to be performed in all the three worlds;
nothing to be gained or not gained.
Yet I keep doing actions.*

Krishna smiled.

He could see clearly what was going on in his friend's mind. He was not titled Bhagavaan in vain; he could read anybody's thoughts at will! His mesmerizing voice filled the air once more.

“My friend! The greatest men and women of this world never rejected the duties towards their family and society. They never ran away from their responsibilities. But for these great souls, this society would collapse without a proper support!

Even men of lower caliber imitate these great ones; so these model-souls can never afford to commit even a single mistake in their public or private lives. They are held in high esteem by the people and they are bound to live up to it.

If I was not an ideal figure emanating justice, righteousness and knowledge, my whole clan of Yaadavas, who adore me like a God would perish in no time!
After leaving the cherished village of Gokula and entering the strange royal apartments of Mathura – I have never felt truly comfortable donning the glamorous royal attires. But the call of the duty was too great to ignore.

After my study-days in the peaceful hermitage of Sage Sandeepani, I even thought of becoming a recluse to escape the burden of the royal crown; but I did not; I could not; I was not made that way; I could not run away from the very mission of my life for which I had taken birth here!

Yes! I struggled! I faltered! But, I succeeded! Now I am freed of the shackles of Karma! It does not matter to me now whether I do my duty or not; I actually need not bother; I have risen above the idea of duty and non-duty! I can choose to do ‘work’ or abstain from it; it does not matter; but I never shied away from duties.

I am proud that my Yaadava clan once humiliated and ridiculed as worthless is now acclaimed as the most important clan; my clan now overflows with riches and is now safe and secure within the fortress of the city of Dwaaraka, a mercantile centre establishing trade with strangest lands across the ocean.

However I was careful not to throw away the ‘Gems of Knowledge’ hidden within the treasure-chest of my heart randomly to each and every person I met! Nobody had even the slightest hint of the ‘inner state’ of my being!

I just plunged into the life with abandon; faced the turbulent waters of the life with a cheerful spirit of adventure! I thoroughly enjoyed the different phases of life whether they were good or not! And, I did not disclose the ‘Knowledge’ in me to anybody; not even to you, my closest friend! That is why you never caught wind of my innermost thoughts till today! And, fortunately or unfortunately you have chosen this critical hour for a discussion on ‘Knowledge’!”

Krishna paused...!

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः
अनिच्छन्नपि वाष्ण्य बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

*Then why does a man incur sin Krishna,
forced as it were against his own will?*

Arjuna was again lost in the flow of thoughts that rushed through his struggling mind! He looked at the calm face of his dearest friend! Krishna now looked like a stranger! He had never known that his fun-loving frolicking friend had a serious personality behind the mask of playfulness! What sort of thoughts would fill that ‘thoughtless mind’?

Even with such close proximity, he had failed to fathom the ‘enlightened heart’ of his friend! He only thought of him as given to materialistic pleasures like himself; but never as a Great Yogi in disguise!

Arjuna shivered a little! He trembled as it were in that ‘benign presence’! He could not help comparing his own meaningless life with that of this ‘Great Yogi’! He had an irresistible urge to fall at the dark lotus-feet of this ‘Great God’ and drench them with his tears; cry out like a child; weep aloud; rest his head on his lap and close his tired eyes ; embrace him and pour out all his troubled thoughts and wet his shoulders as of a long-lost ‘father’;! But how can a courageous archer like him break down and cry like an ignorant child? He can’t show his inner weakness to others like this! He bit his lips hard till some blood trickled out. He swallowed his tears; sighed deeply; cleared his throat; and questioned- “Krishna! Tell me then for what reason does a man commit sins?” Was there a tremor in his voice? He hoped his friend did not notice it! He actually wanted to ask- “Why am I not like you?”

Krishna did not hear! He was far far away! His face shone with a luster akin to that of a temple idol shining in the light of the dimly burning oil lamp.

Arjuna felt a light shiver in his heart; he did not feel like disturbing his friend’s ‘serene mood’. He did not speak any more.

The whole world seemed still at that moment. Time had stopped as it were.

Everything was silent. Even the birds forgot to make the usual chirping noises.

A red flower from the creeper above fell on Krishna’s bosom. The Sage woke up as if suddenly brought back to his senses.

“Did you ask something, my friend?” A compassionate voice questioned.

God had descended down!

Arjuna still hesitating repeated the question. He actually felt that he was too weak an intellect compared to his philosopher-friend unfit even for a conversation with the Great Yogi! He bent his head down in embarrassment. His hands fiddled with the pebbles on the ground nervously.

Suddenly –

He was held in tight embrace by two muscular hands. He -the great ‘wielder of Gaandiva bow’ broke down! Tears from his eyes bathed the dark chest of his friend!

How long....? Who kept count of the time? Time and space had vanished in that sacred union of the ‘God and the Devotee’! Silence reigned supreme!

Silence! Silence! Silence!

Was it a child on the mother’s lap? Was it a wife in the secure arms of her beloved?

Was it a friend in friend’s arms? Or was it a ‘man’ held by ‘God’?

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

*Know that this desire (with the other name of) this hatred,
produced by the quality of Rajas,
which is insatiable and leads one towards sinful acts,
is the real enemy.*

“My friend!” Krishna continued his discourse.

“The problem with everybody in this world is their failure to control their innermost desires. Pretending to be scholars, diplomats, politicians, teachers etc. - these masked men and women suppress even the simplest of their desires and act as if nothing in the world ever bothers them; but with the ‘fire of frustration’ burning deep within their hearts -they escape into materialistic pleasures.”

Arjuna, now slightly relaxed sat on the grassy ground leaning on the trunk of the huge tree. He had washed his face in the cool waters in the nearby stream. He felt life was not so bad at all; with such a friend nothing was impossible to achieve; even the Highest knowledge of Brahman was as easy as eating these fruits, which his friend had produced from nowhere! As the sweet juice of the fruits soothed his parched throat, Krishna’s enchanting voice entered his ears drenching his parched heart! A shadow of a smile lingered on his face now. He attentively listened to his friend’s discourse.

Krishna was lying down on a smooth rock nearby. The tree waved its umpteen branches and fanned the ‘tired God’ like a loyal servant. Krishna’s head rested on one of his hands. The other hand played with some fallen twig nearby.

He continued his speech:

“Only when the man nurtures the ‘child’ in him and becomes one with nature can he ever raise to the ‘state of God’! Of course, vicious desires indeed lead a man towards his downfall. Know Arjuna, that this Universe is an illusory tree rising out of the divinity and ‘devolving’ downwards into infinite branches of ignorance and giving out countless fruits of unending desires. The only way to get rid of such wicked desires, is to take the ‘Sword of Knowledge’ and cut off the head of ‘illusory tree of the Universe’ mercilessly. Man must learn to act like a human, not an animal!”

Arjuna with effort controlled his yawn. The monotonous discourse was lulling him to sleep. He was not able to concentrate on the high-sounding words of his friend. He fidgeted restlessly. His eye lids closed unknown to him.

His mind withdrew its countless arms and became silent in its own shell. He heard no more. His mind had lost its grip on reality.

Suddenly, a shower of cool flowers drowned him. He woke up with a start. He heard a laughter echoing in all the quarters of the universe. He opened his eyes as if from sleep. He saw his friend picking up handful of flowers from the ground. Again he felt a shower of the cool flowers chilling his body. Krishna was laughing aloud like a child. More and more flowers dashed against Arjuna; now with more force. Arjuna could not control himself anymore. A smile lighted up his face as he looked at the childish prank of his grown up friend. The 'child' in him woke up unknown to him.

He pushed away the heap of flowers which were up to his neck and got up as if in annoyance.

He pounced on the dark man like a tiger. For the next few minutes, the Kadamba tree watched silently the friendly wrestling match between this unique pair.

Dusty petals flew here and there as the two friends rolled on the ground punching each other in friendly abandon. Their resounding laughter filled the quarters. The battle ground was forgotten completely. They had time-travelled. They were young boys wrestling under the supervision of their strict teacher BalaRaama. Sweat flowed profusely from their bodies. They rolled on the ground like children. A fresh wind blew showering some more fragrant flowers on their persons. It was as if the tree was applauding their manly sport! Its branches waved as if inviting them to rest under its cool shadows!

Time passed on.

Krishna was resting his head on the lap of his friend, as Arjuna leaned on the ever-friendly trunk of the tree. Arjuna was caressing the dark curly hair of his friend. Both their eyes were closed. Silence prevailed.

Time stood still!

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम्
 विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत्॥
 एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः
 स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥
 स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः
 भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम्॥

*I gave this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvaan (Sun).
 Vivasvaan gave it to Manu. Manu instructed it to Ikshvaaku.
 Thus it was transferred from heir to heir and the royal sages knew it.
 O Scorcher of enemies!
 In course of the long span of time, this Yoga got lost.
 That ancient Knowledge alone was revealed to you today;
 because you are my adorer and also a friend.
 This is an excellent Knowledge and is hidden from one and all.*

Krishna tried a different topic now.

He started in a jovial manner, with a cheerful smile.

“Arjuna, have I told you about my disciples? Believe it or not; I taught this in the beginning to Vivasvaan, the ‘Sun’! Passing from one to the other this wisdom got lost in this world; but finding you equal to such great divinities, I am today again discoursing on the same topic!”

अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः
 कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति ॥

*Your birth is recent. Vivasvaan was born long before.
 How can I believe that you told this to him in the beginning?*

Both the friends were slowly treading the sandy path with their arms entwining each other, in a tight embrace. Arjuna stopped abruptly with a shock. He disentangled his muscular arms from his friend’s grip.

He stared unbelievably at Krishna’s face which seemed to revel in dropping bombshells on him at the most unexpected moments. He almost shouted-“Krishna do not play your jokes on me! You were born recently in the ‘Yaadava clan’ and you are proclaiming unabashedly that Vivasvaan is your first disciple! Do you think that this is a time for your silly jokes?”

Arjuna moved a few steps away as if annoyed at his friend’s audacity. “A philosopher you are, I agree! But a God...?” He kicked hard at a pebble stuck to his foot, as if to drive away his frustration!

बहूनि मे जन्म व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन
 तान्यहं वेद सर्वणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप ॥
 अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्
 प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥
 यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत
 अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
 परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्
 धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

*Many births I have passed through; you too Arjuna!
 I know; but you do not O Parantapa.*

*Though I am unborn, though I am changeless, though I am the Lord of all,
 I manifest by my own power of delusion in my original transcendental form.*

Hey Bharata!

*Whenever righteousness is on the decline,
 and unrighteousness is on the rise,
 I project myself as a human.*

*I appear with a form in and every Yuga
 to save the good people, destroy the wicked and establish righteousness.*

Krishna chuckled! He decided to disclose the divine secret to his friend.

“Arjuna! Today I am going to disclose the greatest secret of my life. It is true that I am the chieftain of the ‘Yaadava clan’ now; but the purpose and the goal of my life is entirely different from that of anybody born here!

My friend, I am not bound by any ‘Karma’ or ‘Vaasanaa’!

‘I’- the ‘Supreme Unfluctuating Principle of Divinity’!

‘I’ who am propitiated in the Vedas, descend down to the level of an ordinary human being; bind myself in the shackles of delusion; experience the same sufferings as other individuals in an unaffected state; set right the course of Dharma; destroy the wicked; and guide the miserable souls towards the final beatitude.

Nobody till now has been told the secret of my birth! Maybe the Venerable Bheeshma, the Great Sage Vyaasa, and Bala brother know about it!

Yes friend, I am ‘that God’ who has come down to save my children!”

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः
तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्नात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥

*Even the wise are confused about
what is action and what is non-action.
Therefore I will explain to you about 'Action'
by the understanding of which you will be freed of
the inauspiciousness (body).*

Arjuna's face was pale.

His eyes stared blankly at his friend. He sat down heavily on the sandy ground as if unable to bear this heavy burden of truth. Tears flowed incessantly wetting his upper garment. He just couldn't believe it; but had to! Krishna sat next to him and continued his speech non-chalantly. "And Arjuna, I need to explain the 'philosophy of action' in detail."

He seemed to ignore the blank stare of his stunned friend.

"What is 'action', what is 'non-action'? Let me define them properly for you; even great Sages are confused about this. 'Karma Yoga' means 'to work and yet not to work'; and 'not to work while doing work'!"

He paused in his discourse to see whether this confusing philosophy had any effect on his friend. No; Arjuna was not in a mood for such a riddle-ridden philosophy.

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

*Everything is offered to Brahman.
Brahman is the oblation.
Brahman is the fire.
Brahman alone offers the oblation.
Brahman is the result achieved
through he action of contemplation of Brahman.*

Our psychiatrist tried another diversion.

“Arjuna, do you know what the Upanishads teach? Do you know their essence? The entire, universe of names and forms, is nothing but ‘that Supremacy’- denoted by the name of ‘Brahman’ – expressing in these multifarious ways. The aspirant is also a form of ‘That’ alone. His ‘method of practice’ also is ‘THAT’; and he offers the very ‘vibrations of the mind’ known as ‘thoughts’ which are nothing but ‘That Brahman’ into the ‘realization of That Brahman as his ‘Self’; through the ‘Process of Sacrifice’ which is also Brahman.”

Arjuna did not comprehend a word of this profound statement. But his curiosity was kindled. His eyes got back their liveliness. He said, “Wait my dear friend; not so fast; take pity on your mortal companion; go slow.”

Krishna went indeed very slow.

“Arjuna! Many are the spiritual practices prescribed by many a teacher to reach that one goal; the ‘union of the individual soul’ with the ‘Supreme Soul’! And any effort of self-control in any spiritual path can be termed as a ‘Sacrifice’ offered to the ‘Supreme being’ by whatever name ‘That Supremacy’ is denoted by.

All such actions performed for the sake of attaining liberation purify the person’s mind and make him fit for receiving the ‘Supreme Knowledge of Brahman’; for, ‘Knowledge’ alone can free one from ignorance; and ‘action performed without attachment’ leads one towards the ‘Path of Knowledge’. It does not matter to which cult you belong, to which religion you belong, which ‘Teacher’ you adore, which philosophy appeals to you; just stop not till the goal is reached, till you know the ‘Supreme Truth’!”

सन्न्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शम्ससि
यच्छ्रेय एतयोरेकम् तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ॥

You are commending on the one side the renunciation of all actions and also on the other side praising the method of Action. Tell me for sure which one is better between the two.

Arjuna was not satisfied with this vague philosophy.

He questioned, “Krishna! Again and again you are beating around the same bush! Which is better – ‘renunciation of actions’ or ‘performance of actions’? Give a definite answer!”

सन्न्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयस्करावुभौ
तयोस्तु कर्मसन्न्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥

*Renunciation and Karma-Yoga,
both indeed lead towards the final beatitude.
Of the two, action and renunciation, Karma Yoga excels.*

यत्साङ्ख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते
एकं साङ्ख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

*That which is attained by the Saamkhya adherents (Analytical thinkers)
is attained by the Yoga followers also.*

*He alone ,
who sees the analytical method and Yoga method as equal,
has true understanding.*

Arjuna was not in a condition to return to the battlefield. He had not yet recovered from the shock of 'God' standing before him as an 'ordinary man'! So he repeated his question once more; well knowing that it would engage Krishna in a long discourse for a while. He will gain some time to stabilize his mind then. Krishna understood very well what Arjuna's intentions were. He felt trapped. But anything to satisfy a forlorn friend; so he began:

"My friend! This may be the umpteenth time I am repeating the same answer! Anyhow I will repeat it the umpteenth and one time, once more!

Actually 'renunciation of action' and the 'performance of selfless action', both lead to the same result; but according to me, the latter precedes the former and proves a necessary step in freeing oneself from the bonds of pleasure and pain. The two paths are not different; but are the two states in the spiritual path."

Arjuna himself was getting bored of the repeated statements. He stopped Krishna before another hour of boredom could drown him. "Yes my friend! I understand now. Now teach me the 'method of enquiry' suited for the sincere aspirant who has purified himself with 'selfless actions'."

Krishna felt relieved.

Here was a chance to show his warrior friend a glimpse into the Secret world of the Upanishads. He began his talk enthusiastically.

"My friend! The first enquiry in the 'Path of Knowledge' is to find 'That Principle', by which one hears, by which one sees, by which one touches, smells, eats, walks etc.

What is the 'ear of the ear'; 'eye of the eye'; 'mind of the mind'; 'Praana of the Praana'?

What is 'that power' on which stands the 'entire creation of names and forms'?

As one enquires in this manner in the silent contemplative sanctorum of his mind, the seeker finds the 'Truth' which holds everything together.

Once 'that Knowledge' is gained, he is freed from all the duties, all the 'action-bound results' and all limitations that bind him to the body and the mind and intellect.

Having lost the ‘differentiating idea of duality’; seeing ‘his own Self expressing as the manifold universe’; this ‘Knower’ merges into the ‘Supreme Consciousness’ after the fall of the body.....”

Krishna went on and on...!

Krishna went on and on...!

He gave an exhaustive lecture on the greatness of ‘selfless action’ and the ‘resulting knowledge’ and at last sat down on a nearby rock exhausted...! His eyes closed as if in sleep. Arjuna did not dare disturb his friend. Was he resting in the ordinary sense or had he merged himself in ‘his own Self’, the ‘Supreme Brahman’? The blissful vibrations rising from the lustrous face of his friend made the ‘Great Paandava’ a little envious. ‘If he can do it, why shouldn’t I?’ he thought! He also sat on a hard rock in the rigid ‘lotus posture’ and tried the wonderful method of contemplation on the Self! He chose one of the ‘Upanishadic mantras’ and started chanting it mentally, and tried to identify himself with ‘THAT PARABRAHMAN’! Minutes rolled by. The mind struggled hard to get out of this silly business. All the unwanted trash-like thoughts suddenly bombarded poor Arjuna, within a few minutes.

Where was Arjuna? Where was the Self? Where was the blissful state of ‘Samadhi’?

Only agitation and frustration filled his mind completely. He tried again and again to catch ‘That Self’! No use! His mind just would not stay still even for a fraction of a second. His muscles tightened. His struggle poured out as sweat drops all over his body.

Krishna opened his lotus-like eyes. His eyes kindled with compassion as he looked at his struggling student. He whispered with affection. His soft words bathed Arjuna like a soft cool wind. “Arjuna! Are you alright?”

Arjuna got up with a start! The realization dawned on him that he was an absolute failure in this pretentious contemplation. He had a practical

demonstration as it were as to why ‘selfless action’ was absolutely necessary before starting on the ‘meditative path’. Embarrassed by his own stupidity he stammered some unintelligible sounds.

Krishna smiled with understanding. He turned his eyes towards the dancing waves of the waterfall close by; he seemed to listen to some sounds from far away...!

Was it the jingling bells of an anklet...; or, was it a flute note...?

CHAPTER IV

The lands of the mental world were ploughed with selfless actions; cleared of all the weeds of desires, stones of arrogance and all other wasteful things. A shower from the heaven had drenched those purified lands with the waters of devotion. Now the lands were ready for the seeds of ‘Knowledge Supreme’!

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते
एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥

*Kaunteya! This body is known as the ‘Field’.
He who knows it is known as the ‘Knower of the Field.’*

Krishna spoke:

“Arjuna! True knowledge consists of the knowledge of the ‘field and its knower’. My friend! The body with all the ten sense organs, the mental faculty, the intellect, and ego; with all thoughts, all feelings, all deliberations, all objects of desire, all sensations, all the virtues, all the vice, knowledge, and ignorance is known as the ‘Field’. The Field – here one exhausts his ‘Vaasanaas’; here one gets the opportunity to develop new Vaasanaas for a better future; here the fruits of his actions will be experienced. Whether the harvest is good or bad depends on the sincere efforts of the farmer; his capacity to clear the field of all vices and desires; his capacity to direct the good waters of virtues and selfless actions towards the weed-less field; his selection of proper seeds of knowledge which will bear the fruits of liberation in the future; his capacity to constantly pay attention to the healthy growth of his crops; his steadfastness; his sincerity; his devotion; and lastly the most essential tool for the cultivation of the land –namely the ‘tool of knowledge’.

‘Knowledge of the Truth’ is very essential for any aspirant who sincerely seeks to reap the ‘fruit of liberation’. One who knows the ‘Supreme Self -the Great Goddess Tripuraa’ as his ‘own Self’ existing as the ‘support of the field of experiences’, he alone becomes qualified to merge into the ‘Supreme Self’. He alone is the ‘supreme experiencer’ of the ‘field of experiences’; and he knows that he does not experience anything while experiencing the ‘field of experiences’.”

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥

*Prakriti (Insentient nature) is said to be
the action, purpose of action and doer ship.
Purusha (sentient principle) is said to be
the cause of experiencing joy and pain.*

Arjuna struggled hard to understand the subtle meanings of the words which flowed like a torrent from the mouth of Krishna. Krishna tried explaining the same ideas in a more simplified way to the highly bewildered mind of Arjuna.

“Arjuna! The entire world of experiences can be divided into Prakriti and Purusha; the Nature and the Person; the Experienced and the Experiencer; the Power and the Source; the Manifest and the Unmanifest; the Three Gunas and their Substratum; the three states of Jagrat Svapna Sushupti (waking, dream and deep sleep) and the fourth state of Turiya (Transcendence); Shakti and Shiva.

The entire phenomenon of Creation is nothing but the play of Tripura Devi, the ‘Supreme Self’ manifesting as all the individual selves and also as the multifarious fields of experiences. When one realizes his ‘true self’ as united with the ‘non-experiencing player’, he is freed forever from the shackles of experiences entwined inseparably with the three Gunas.”

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥

*The three qualities arising from the Prakriti namely –
Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas,
bind the immutable Self in the body, Hey Mighty Armed!*

Krishna now shifted the topic to the ‘Three Gunas’.

Krishna never felt a loss of words when elucidating the three Gunas- Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas – the three qualities of illumination, perturbation and darkness. He gave an elaborate description of the qualities and their effects on the human minds; the binding nature of these three ropes and also the method of untangling oneself from them.

Krishna continued:

“My friend! Nobody, not even a realized man is free these ‘three Gunas’ as long as he is in contact with the body, mind, and the intellect; but a knower is unaffected by their existence. An ignorant man however performs every action in his life prompted by any one of these ‘Gunās’. While the former drives the chariot keeping these horses under control, the latter allows them to go berserk resulting in untold disasters. It is not that only one quality is found in any one individual at all times; each individual is continuously acted upon by one or the other of the three Gunas - every moment of his life.

One of the three qualities remains predominant in his mainstream of actions and he is termed Saatvic, Raajasic or a Taamasic person accordingly. The society also can be divided into the four main categories of intellectual, political, mercantile, and the working class. None of them is either superior or inferior; but they only contribute to the welfare of the society like the four strong pillars of a building.

The three ‘qualities’ which always drag a man towards freedom or bondage, if controlled willfully can be harnessed to produce the most prosperous and advanced society. Instead of developing a ‘false ego’, either a superior or inferior one because of the predominance of one particular quality, if a person can use it to bring out the utmost good within and without, the world will be no longer a dungeon filled with torture-cells.

The actions performed in any one of the births - the innermost desires pressurized into the deep caves of the heart in any one of the births - results in the predominance of one quality in particular in the next ensuing birth. The ‘environment where one is born’ - the ‘circumstances which seem to arise from nowhere’ - may appear to be fixed and overpowering; but still there is ‘freedom’ to ‘remain free in the mind’.

A person can learn the art of remaining unaffected by the changing patterns the life; can learn to love his family and friends to the utmost, yet with an understanding of the ephemeral nature of the relations; can learn to seek the Highest at all times, even in the darkest moments of his life; can learn not to fall into the deep wells of depression and dejection arising due to the binding factors experienced in life.

For, each birth is a field, where one collects the bricks for the mansion to be built in the future. One deserves the life that befalls his lot, for ‘he chooses it himself’.

Man creates his own destiny!

His own unfulfilled desires give him the life that he is chained with! God has made this one golden rule- ‘Whatever you want will be yours!’

My dear Arjuna! When destiny calculates the amount of desires and the meritorious acts which can fulfill them and the de-meritorious acts which obstruct them; a life-experience of an individual is created accordingly; and also add to it also the results of his misdeeds! Can destiny be blamed for the life you are burdened with?"

Krishna gave an exhaustive lecture on the three qualities and the means of rising above them. He even described in detail, the virtues which lead one upward and the vices that take a man downhill.

Krishna felt tired. He sat down for a refreshing breath of air. Arjuna also sat quietly close to him reflecting on the profound philosophy offered to him from the 'man who was God'.

The sun moved on.

Arjuna was deeply thinking. His mind was still troubled by the one unavoidable factor called 'death'!

'Is death one unavoidable hammer blow to all human endeavors? Everybody in this world, even a knower is puzzled by the mysterious phenomenon called death. Is it a full-stop or a comma or a semicolon?

This is the ever rising question troubling all the minds everywhere.'

Arjuna worded his doubt to Krishna. Krishna answered him with utmost patience.

"Do not worry about after-life, O Arjuna!

Being a warrior you may end up in the most wonderful heaven of manifold enjoyments attainable by some of the great achievers of this world. Anyhow death is not a skeleton waiting to gobble you up!

Death is just a turning point in everybody's life; just a rest place where you change your horses; the horses of course are not chosen by the so-called God but only by you; but the rule is that you will get the horse which you deserve and not the one you wish for; your own merits and demerits, your level of knowledge and ignorance decide your future course.

The path of the meritorious souls after the death of their bodies is filled with light and brightness depending on their level of knowledge and faith; whereas the path of the ignorant ones with only a few merits to back them up, will be dark and smoky leading towards repeated cycles of births and deaths.

The former one is the path of the Knowers and leads one gradually towards the eternal bliss of Brahman, for, they have freed themselves from the shackles of action through detached actions. The latter is the path of those 'bound by the shackles of action' through 'attachment to the fruits of the actions'.

Therefore these action-bound souls get dragged from one fruit to the other and never ever escape the 'eternal wheel of action'.

These two paths are allegorically referred to in the scriptures as the solar and lunar paths respectively. Therefore my dear friend, stop shunning death as an unknown enemy.

The individual soul is deathless; you are indeed deathless; I am also deathless; in fact nobody ever dies! Death exists as a myth; as an unknown dark corner frightening all without exception; never existing in reality.

Who dies? Who lives? Is the body – the ‘true you’?
Analyze and learn to find the true nature of your Self. When you know that ‘you never die’, then, ‘You do not die’!

Arjuna listened without missing even a single word.

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

*I will take care of all the needs of those
those people who worship me with devotion
thinking about me alone in their minds
ridding themselves of all other thoughts,
and who are absorbed in me always.*

‘Was really death just a myth? Then what was he bothered about? Whether he dies or the other elders standing on the enemy front die, it does not actually matter! Every one who departs from this body would be only continuing his journey towards the ‘Highest’. His heart suddenly felt light! He wanted to laugh aloud like a child. He had understood that the ghost which frightened him till then was just a harmless pillar seen in darkness. Death could frighten him no more. A smile hitherto unseen lighted up his face with a unique luster. But still a doubt arose again from the innermost depths of his being. ‘Who will guide him through all these journeys; through the countless births; through the multifarious experiences of hells and heavens?’

His wide forehead was creased with lines of worry. He was so much absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not notice his friend observing him with utmost compassion.

A strong dark hand rested on his shoulder.

“Arjuna!” A tender voice whispered. “What is there to worry about so much?”

God spoke to the ‘man’!

“Here in this world of course , I don a human costume and appear to be bound by limitations like you; but as I exist as your own ‘Self’ being the ‘Supreme Ruler of the creation’, I exist everywhere at all times.

When I am there why should you have any fear?”

Arjuna felt the squeezing embrace of his friend.

Krishna spoke no more. But in those few words Arjuna had heard all the promises that a God could bestow on a man! Arjuna knew- 'he was saved'! He knew- 'everyone was saved'! For, which mother has left her child uncared for? Which husband has left the wife uncared for? When has love ever failed? Love saves! Devotion saves!

His eyes wet with tears; his voice choking; his legs trembling; unable to hold himself; the great Arjuna collapsed into the strong hands of the Savior.

Krishna indeed had revealed the 'supremely secret means' of attaining the Highest Goal thought the easiest path – 'The Path of Love'! A 'lover' is always saved! A 'devotee' is always saved!

Arjuna's eyes bathed the broad chest of his friend with tears. Krishna held him tightly till his friend's entire sadness poured out. Soon Arjuna was lost to this world. A hitherto unknown bliss penetrated all his being.

He was 'the ocean' now! Silence reigned. Time stood still!

The first one to stir out of the silence was the Master! He continued his discourse as if nothing much had happened. Arjuna? He knew something had happened to him at least! With an unknown joy lurking inside him he listened to his friend's words.

Krishna spoke: "Arjuna! About your question regarding death; understand this much; one who has faced death while living; one who has lost the body-idea while embodied; he alone has conquered death and is 'liberated while living'; he never dies again.

Like a pot kept in the ocean-floor, which is filled within and without with waters; which remains the same even when the pot is broken; so also the 'Knower of the Self' - the 'JeevanMukta' - the 'one who is liberated while living' - just remains in his true state of deathlessness; having lost the body-idea while living, he never even notices the death of his body when the so-called death occurs to his body as perceived by the world."

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतः योगाच्चलितमानसः
अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिम् कां गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

*Though endowed with faith,
if one lacks discipline and his mind swerves from the path of Yoga,
he will not be able to attain the ordained goal;
then what will happen to him, My dear friend?*

"But, suppose he is not realized?" – Arjuna questioned.

Arjuna knew in his heart of hearts that the blissful experience of 'Samadhi' a few minutes back was a gift from his friend. He still had to gain it with his own hard efforts.

Krishna answered: “If he has not realized; if he has not completed his spiritual journey in the present life of his, then he continues his spiritual journey even after the ‘death of the body’ guided by the higher beings.”

“Suppose he is a devotee attached to a particular form of a deity...?”- Arjuna asked.

“Then he will experience the company of that particular deity whom he adores in his mind!”

“But which is the better path – the attainment of the worlds of divinities or the realization of one’s self as the non-dual Brahman?”

“Arjuna! Which is better -God with form or God without form?

That Supreme Principle of Brahman – how can ‘That’ have forms?

Can you call ‘That’ formless, which manifests as all the names and forms and fills all the mental spaces without a gap?

Do I have a ‘form’?

Yes!

Am I ‘formless’?

Yes!

But how can I – who am beyond the barriers of time and space, be contained within a form? But, at the same time I have the Supreme Power to manifest in any form I like!

The Upanishads sing of me as ‘formless’ without ‘duality’; but if a devotee lacks the capacity to comprehend my true nature I manifest as the particular deity which he adores! No matter to what gender, to what caste, to what level of intelligence one belongs; the ‘lover of the Supreme’ never perishes!

May he or she be the worst sinner, condemned to endless agonies for an eternal life-time; even then if that person is capable of washing away one’s sins in the pure waters of repentance and is capable of cultivating the simplest form of love and attachment towards the Divinity with form or without form, then the doors of ‘Knowledge and Bliss’ open up for that sincere aspirant!”

Krishna was indeed lost!

He was melting in the love of the countless devotees who called out his myriad names with deep love; those children of his who remembered with extreme devotion, his innumerable forms! He was at that moment not the cowherd-philosopher of Dwaaraka, but the Supreme Father, the Supreme Mother; the Supreme Brahman: the Self of all! In fact he was all that the world called him as; knew him as....!

He poured out supremely sacred words describing the glory of the indescribable bond of love between the devotee and his God! He showered supremely sacred promises of protection and care for those hearts filled with the holy waters of love!

*A slight drizzle had cooled the sweltering heat of the morning sun.
 Both the God and the devotee were lost! Had they found each other?
 No words were spoken! A 'koel' (cuckoo bird) somewhere from a distant
 tree incessantly cried out for its lover in a honeyed voice!
 Will the call be answered? It never lost hope!
 God himself had proclaimed, 'Love is God'!
 Under the Kadamba tree, the two lovers-, the God and the devotee - sat in
 silent union! Their eyes were half-closed in an unknown rapture.
 The dark cloud which contained within itself all the waters in abundance
 held them at the tip of its lotus eyes; the one who bathed in the holy waters
 of the heavens was unashamedly pouring out all the waters at the lotus feet
 of the so-called 'ordinary cowherd' of those times! Could any worship be
 better than that?
 The world was silent!
 Millions of unspoken words were exchanged in those sacred moments!
 The two lovers were unified as one!
 The bodies, names, the battlefield, the war, the world – all were forgotten!
 There was no Arjuna! There was no Krishna! There was no lover; nor the
 beloved!
 There was only love.... loveSupreme love!
 'Love' – the 'Highest Order' of all times!
 'Love' – the 'Highest means' of attaining the 'Highest Bliss'!
 Bliss! Love! Love! Bliss!*

It was Arjuna who broke the Supreme state of Silence! The lover still had many questions to ask; the lover wanted to know; which form was best suited for such a love.

*Krishna...! What could he say!
 In which form could the 'formless one' to be loved?
 'Where' he was not? 'What' he was not?
 He was Sun, Moon, and stars!
 He was the light! He was Knowledge!
 He was Trinities ruling the Tri-worlds!
 He was Shiva, the 'Destroyer' and 'Consort of Daakshaayini'.
 He was Vishnu, the 'Protector' and 'Consort of Padmaavati'.
 He was Kaartikeya Brahma, the 'Creator' and 'Consort of Vaani'.
 He was Rudra.
 He was Durga.
 He was Kaali.
 He was all the Gods.*

*He was all that a man could imagine his God to be!
 He was space; wind; fire; water; earth.
 He was the beginning, middle and end of everything.
 He was the very speech that filled the world with Knowledge.
 He was Victory. He was Defeat.
 He was all the hosts of great beings who adorn the world with their
 intellectual prowess and meditative powers.
 He was the mind. He was the body. He was the intellect.
 He was the Supreme Self which manifests as everything that was, that is and
 will be!*

Krishna tried his best again.

He expressed; he explained within the limitation of language - his glory, his greatness, his power of manifestation.

[Describe to a child about a wondrous fantasy land that really exists! What happens?

The child wants to go there immediately at that very moment; and the parent obliges. Would the child be capable of comprehending or understanding the joy of that fantasy land? Would the child be capable of withstanding the shock of the joy?

The child did not bother; and the parent was too kind to deny the vision.]

Arjuna pleaded with the Master to give him the ‘Cosmic Vision’ of the Para Brahman. Krishna complied.

COSMIC VISION

What was the vision like?

Can it be ever described in words?

Can anyone ever comprehend with the limited instruments of the mind and intellect – ‘That Vision’ which transcends the barriers of the mind and the intellect; of time and space; of speech and form; of life and death; of the ‘Seen’ and the ‘Seer’; of God and the devotee; of all existing dualities?

Sage Vyaasa somehow managed to describe the indescribable vision!

Did he succeed? Judge for yourself!

TRIPURAA THE SUPREME QUEEN

*THAT which is beyond the mind- can the mind experience it?
 THAT which is beyond the intellect - can the intellect comprehend it?
 THAT which exists beyond 'space-time' - can 'That' be compressed into 'a
 point in space and time'?*
IMPOSSIBLE!
But, the word 'IMPOSSIBLE' is not in the dictionary of PARABRAHMAN!

*Arjuna had the 'Vision Supreme' of Para Brahman compressed into the
 barriers of space and time!
 Arjuna had the 'Vision Supreme' of THAT inside 'this'!
 Arjuna had the 'Vision Supreme' of the 'Formless Pranava' personified in a
 'form'!
 Arjuna had the 'Vision Supreme' of the 'Great Tripura' in all her glory!
 Nobody ever had or would ever have the fortune of experiencing the
 'Cosmic Vision' Of Para Brahman - the Great Goddess Tripuraa -
 comprising within herself - countless creations; countless descents;
 countless worlds; countless sports of her dancing feet- inside one of the
 tiniest creations squeezed into the confines of a limited human mind!
 But the Supreme Goddess is an endless ocean of compassion!
 Goddess Tripuraa revealed one speck of her form for the 'tiny' Arjuna!*

*Was the Para Brahman a male or female or It?
 SHE IS AS SHE CHOOSES HERSELF TO BE!
 HE or SHE or THAT?
 If THAT can be referred to as He, then – THAT can also be referred to as
 SHE!
 SHE is TRIPURAA!
 The Empress who rules over all three states of existences- Jagrat-Svapna
 and Sushupti!
 The Supremacy which comprises the Trinities- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva!
 The Supreme Principle with the three-fold manifestations as Sharada, Kalki
 and Paraa Shakti!
 PARASHAKTI- the Supreme Power of Maayaa!
 KALKI – the Supreme Power of Judgment!
 SHAARADAA-The Supreme Power of Knowledge!
 The Three-fold Powers that rule the world as- PAVITRI -GAAYATRI –
 SAAVITRI!
 The Three-fold Powers of Delusion- MAAYAA- BHRAMA- MOHA!*

*The Three-fold Natures of- STRENGTH- COMPASSION- KNOWLEDGE!
 The Three Principles of- EXISTENCE- BLISS- CONSCIOUSNESS!
 The Three States of- TRUTH –GOODNESS- BEAUTY!
 The Three Functions of - CREATION - PROTECTION - DESTRUCTION!
 When all this and more appears before the human mind- what happens?*

[After the fantastic experiences of the fairy land the child burst out crying-“let me go home; let me go home!” The child was not yet ready; so – the parent took it back home!]

Arjuna was blinded!

He was not able to withstand the splendor of Tripuraa’s form!
 His intellects was about to burst into million pieces!
 His mind stopped functioning!
 His body went through innumerable horripilations!
 He was shivering uncontrollably!
 He saw his own world as a tiny speck of dust inside that cosmic form!
 He saw countless Narasimhas; countless Ramas; countless Krishnas; countless Brahmas;
 countless Vishnus; countless Shivas!
 What was ‘he’ in front of ‘THAT SHE’?

THE ‘FORMLESS TRIPURAA’ APPEARED WITH A ‘FORM!’

The sky was silent – meditating as it were!
 The earth was silent – meditating as it were!
 The river was silent – meditating as it were!
 The Kadamba tree was silent – meditating as it were!
 The birds were silent – meditating as it were!
 The horses were silent – meditating as it were!
 Everything was silent!
 Everything was quiescent!
 Everything was meditating as it were!
 Time was still! Space was nil!
 The whole universe stood still as it were!
 The whole universe was absorbed in contemplation it were!

**SILENCE! SILENCE! SILENCE!
 OM! OM! OM!**

Suddenly Arjuna woke up with a start!
 The silence was not broken by the manifold irrational creatures of Nature; but by the rational mind of Arjuna!
 Arjuna was frightened.
 Arjuna was shocked!
 Arjuna was awe-stuck!
 He burst out in prayers; in praises; in hymns; in profuse apologies; and heart felt pleadings!
 Arjuna pleaded with his Master to shut off the 'Vision Supreme'!
 Krishna complied!
 He pleaded for a sensible vision of Lord Naaraayana the charming God-head of the heavens!
 The 'immature child' - stood in front of the 'infinite mountain reaching the pinnacles of heights'; and begged for a tiny pebble!
 Goddess Tripuraa was an ocean of compassion!

दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन
 इदानीमस्मि संवृत्तः सचेताः प्रकृतिं गतः ॥

*Seeing your human form filled with quiescence Krishna,
 I have now regained my composure and feel normal.*

Arjuna had the vision of Lord Naaraayana; and was happy!

Arjuna questioned: "Lord! Who are all blessed to have such a vision?"
 The Lord answered:
 "Nobody in this world, my child is ever fortunate to have the vision of the great Goddess Tripuraa Devi!
 But all your merits totaled up from millions of births and your sincere desire for such a vision was satiated by 'My Grace'! Even penance, charities and studies of Vedas are incapable of producing such a vision!
 Even Gods can never ever dream of seeing Goddess Tripuraa in person! But you had the appropriate devotion and a thirst for Truth and SHE is 'compassion personified'! So you were blessed with this 'Supreme Vision'!!"
 Arjuna was really shocked! Was he really worthy of such a vision? He was not an expert in the knowledge of the Vedas! He was not a man of self-control! He was not 'anybody'! Yet he knew, he had loved the dark-hued friend of his as his own life; he was ever ready to give up anything at a mere word from those sweet lips; not for a moment had he forgotten the charming form of his friend; not even in the passionate embrace of the lovely Subhadraa; his breath went in and out with the sweet name of his friend; he was mad about his friend; Why, he never understood till that sacred hour!
 What binds a God to a devotee?

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥

*Those devotees who worship you with love always absorbed in you
and those who are absorbed in the contemplation of
the imperishable unmanifest Brahman,
who among these two types,
are the excellent Yogis?*

Arjuna's eyes brimmed with tears!

“Lord! Who is greater- he who loves you with all his heart without knowledge or; a knower who is always absorbed in the contemplation of the ‘Formless Supreme’?”

Krishna laughed aloud!

“Who is the beloved child of the mother, a child which always hangs on to her skirts; tags behind her; depends on her for every comfort and security; knows only the language of tears; but never understands why it should love the mother; or the grown up child who knows the nature of the mother; is independent with the knowledge of her support behind his actions; who loves his mother yet who can be without the presence of the form of the mother as such? Mother loves them both!

She knows that the child who hugs her with love and the child who ‘knows’ her –both are her children! She will wait for the immature child to grow up and ‘know’ her! She will wait for the ‘knowing’ child to grow up and ‘love’ her!

My friend! I love anybody who seeks to love me and know me!

Most of all - I love those who ‘know’ me and yet ‘love’ me!

Adore me with Awareness!

Adore me with Knowledge!

Adore me with Devotion!

My favorite devotee is one who knows me as his own Self; one who self-controlled; one who is equanimous; one who is always established in the ‘awareness of the Supreme Self’; one who works without attachment; one who has transcended the human nature to become divine!

Love me with all your heart – my child! Depend upon me for everything!

But grow up from the ‘limited love of a form’ to the ‘love the Highest Knowledge of the Truth’!

Yet love and depend on me; for- I am but ‘Thine own self’!

CHAPTER V

Arjuna was ready now for that knowledge; for that gem; which was treasured within the mysterious hymns of the Upanishads! Arjuna was now ready for the 'Riddle'!
And- Krishna presented him – the entire philosophy contained within the 'sanctum sanctorum of the Vedas' in the form of a riddle; the riddle of a tree; the riddle of an 'upside down tree'; the riddle of the ghost which haunts the upside down tree; the riddle of the Great Goddess Tripuraa!

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम्
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥

*The Ashvattha (Holy Fig) tree with roots above and branches below
is said to be never decaying.
Vedas are its leaves.
He who understands it is a true knower.*

Once upon a timeless time there existed a beautiful tree. It was known as 'Ashvattha'; that which never is stable the next moment; that which is always undergoing changes without a break! It was an ever-growing tree! Nobody knew from where the tree originated or the place where it ended; for there was no 'space' where it existed! The strangest fact about the tree was – it was upside down! The roots were above; the branches were below! Its leaves were the 'Knowledge'; these shining leaves rustled in the ever-blowing winds and sang the song of UDGEETHA [OM]! The branches grew unashamedly breaking all the rules of Nature; they were above, below, here, there, this side, that side, all around; wherever there was space; rather they created space! These creeping crawling branches intertwined with each other and formed a huge net to catch the unwary souls. These vicious branches were covered all over with sprouts of sense objects – attracting myriad forms of insects in the forms of desires – only to gobble them up when close by! The flowers of this magnificent tree bloomed wondrously in the three colors of green red and white; three delusions of MAAYAA, BHRAMA, and MOHA; three delusions of Illusion, Misapprehension and Attraction – forever attracting the ignorant bees towards them, only to imprison them inside the dark chambers within the maze of the entwining branches! From these network of branches rose up more roots-extending the dominion of the greedy tree – binding the souls forever with the chains of action! There was not one soul who had escaped the greedy grasp of this vicious tree expanding eternally; swallowing the endless mental spaces of all that exists anywhere, anytime!

How does one escape the carnivorous blood sucking tree and free oneself?

This tree can be cut off at one stroke with a magical sword only; and that magical sword is called 'ASAMGA' –'Detachment'! The mere touch of this magical weapon of detachment will blast the tree into pieces!

What happens when one cuts off this tree?

Well, the world does not vanish off into nothing; but it will lose its hold on you. You will see it as it is – non-existing! One reaches the Supreme state of PARABRAHMAN!

The clouds move away to reveal the splendorous Sun in its full glory! This ‘luster’ which lights up the entire creation is not supported by the light of the Sun, Moon or Fire; the witnessing seer, the fluctuating mind or the experiencing ego!

Transcending all the delusory states of the mental faculty one exists in the ‘Supreme state of Awareness’. One experiences the blissful existence as ‘Seeing’ devoid of the seen and the seer; ‘Experiencing’ devoid of the experienced and the experiencer; ‘Cognizing’ devoid of the cognized and the Cognizer!

One ‘knows’ in that ‘Supreme State’; he never was ‘This’; he was always ‘That’; he was never bound; he was always ever-liberated!

The bondage that never was- is broken! The liberation that never is – is attained!

The tree that never exists is cut! What is leftover is – Freedom! Bliss!

And only just the ‘I’!

Arjuna?

Hundreds of doubts and questions sprang up in his mind at the same moment. So much had to be known; and yet so little time! Yes; after the battle he can again have some time with his friend; but only if he was alive! Arjuna was not a person to ignore opportunities, that life presented him with; so he shot questions after questions - connected and unconnected to his quest - at the ‘Fountain of Knowledge’ and when the pure waters of the Upanishads overflowed from that ‘dark hued fountain’ he swam with abandon forgetting everything. He could hear the impatient murmurings of the army waiting for his return; he was aware of the anxieties he had caused in the minds of his affectionate brothers by his unexpected departure from the battle-field in that crucial hour. The time was up; he had to return to the battlefield quickly! He had to wield the mighty bow and shatter those who were against the Supreme order of the world. Failure or success did not matter any more! Death or life had lost their meaning! He had understood at last the purpose of his life! But, some more doubts had to be cleared before he returned to the battle-ground; so he questioned the ever-patient teacher:

CHAPTER VII

“Lord! If every individual soul only attains the Supreme state of non-duality, then what is the status of Brahma, the creator?”

“Arjuna! The so-called Brahma – the Creator who creates this multifarious world at will is the ‘Golden-Wombed’ – ‘HiranyaGarbha’ of the Upanishads. He is the ‘Cosmic Being’ who experiences all the experiences of all the beings of this creation simultaneously; yet remaining in the blissful state of Para Brahman! He is the ‘Supreme Knower’; the ‘Supreme Consort’ of the ‘Goddess of Knowledge’; the ‘Supreme Lord Kaartikeya’! He is of the golden hue; he shines with the luster of Supreme Knowledge! He is Vaishvaanara – the ‘Cosmic Experiencer’ in the gross level existing within all the individual souls as the ‘Praana’- the ‘Energy Supreme’- supporting all their actions- physical and mental! He is the source of all the five Vedas and he is the ‘Supreme Creator’ propitiated in all the Vedas!”

“Lord! What should one take as authority when met with dilemmas regarding one’s duties in one’s life?”

“Arjuna! What else can guide you in life but the ‘Sacred Scriptures’ - the ‘Supreme Source of Knowledge’- the Vedas! When one follows the injunctions of the Vedas with a detached mind he is sure to cross over the hurdles appearing in one’s life. By Vedas My friend, I do not mean ‘Sacrificial rites’ and ceremonial propitiations; but the ‘Supreme Practice’ instructed by the ‘seers’ for the attainment of the ‘Highest’!”

“Lord! Is faith necessary or is it enough to blindly adopt these practices? Or, can a man attain the ‘Supreme’, ignoring the scriptural injunctions by just being sincere in his path?”

“Arjuna! Faith and sincerity of course are extremely necessary in any spiritual practice. The performance of various meditations, the multifarious methods of propitiating the favorite deities, the different types of penance, various worships ; all indeed bear fruit to all the beings whether they have faith or not. But remember this truth; action is always inert; the results are attained as ordained by the Supreme Creator; only you can make it come alive with your own feelings of selfless love; of desiring fulfillment for the endless wants of human life; of vicious nature inviting endless harm on others. The first one leads you towards the Highest Knowledge of the Supreme Self. The second one just manages to fulfill your worthless desires if unopposed to your destiny. The last one pushes you into deep bottomless wells of ignorance and suffering. Action as opposed to Knowledge drowns you in the vast oceans of duties. Only ‘detached action’ ever frees you from action!”

“Lord! What is the difference between renunciation and relinquishment?”

“Arjuna! Renunciation or Sannyas means the rejection of all actions ordained by one’s birth and status in life; whereas relinquishment is the renunciation of attachment to the fruits of actions while performing the duties ordained by one’s birth and status in life. Whether it is renunciation within or without -one should remember never to cease from performing Sacrificial rites, charities and penance. One should maintain a detached attitude even while performing these noble deeds; one should perform all the actions for the good of the world into which he is born”

“Lord! What are the causes which promote the accomplishment of all actions?”

“Arjuna! The five causes which promote the fulfillment of an action are -the purpose; the doer; the instrument; the movement; and destiny!”

“What indeed is mandatory for any action?”

“The threefold mandates of the action are – Knowledge, Knowable and the Knower; the instrument, the work and the agent in the ordinary sense!”

“How should we contemplate, while doing any action?”

“If you can perform any action to the utmost perfection, but all the while watching your own action as a witness and remain in the state of pure awareness; without the anxiety attached to the result of the action, then- you will be in the stabilized state of blissful contemplation even while performing action!”

“Lord! Many are the doubts still lingering in my mind; but I know they have to wait! Before both of us leave for the battlefield is there anything you would like to say – a parting advice to your disciple?”

Arjuna’s eyes were brimming with tears. The blissful conversation was coming to an end. Both will be in a few minutes, lost in the tumults of the war! Of course they may steal a few close moments now and then in between the painful attacks of the maddened army! Maybe they will meet again under this very Kadamba tree after the war was over! Will they? Arjuna was not sure!
His eyes were expectant.
Krishna smiled.

Krishna spoke :

“My child! Just trust me! Have faith me!

You can forsake everything for my sake; but do not forsake ‘Me’!

I WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU!

I WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU!”

THE SONG WAS OVER! WAS IT?

EPILOGUE

The war was over!

The battlefield as expected by Arjuna was a mire of blood and flesh pulp. All enemies had been killed without a trace. All soldiers on both sides were wounded or dead. Streets were filled with wailing women and children. Paandavas were victorious. But no garlands awaited them. Curses flew from every mouth. They themselves were not happy about the victory. Their own sons were dead.

And Arjuna?

He had changed a lot. He looked much older than he actually was. Streak of worry creased his forehead. He looked completely broken down. He was remembering again and again the death of his dear son Abhimanyu. He experienced on his own person, the stabbing wounds dealt by the cruel cousins of his and his own Guru Dronaachaarya on his innocent son of tender age. He felt disgusted with one and all. He was disgusted with his own dark hued friend also.

Yes! Arjuna had changed!

He felt somehow that his dark-hued friend was the cause of all the calamities that had occurred in his life. He was sure that Krishna had purposely had pushed Abhimanyu to his untimely death. Otherwise he would not have led Arjuna away from the battlefield and left Abhimanyu to fend for himself.

He hated Krishna now.

Forgotten were all the scenes before the battlefield.

Forgotten were all the philosophies discussed at the commencement of the war.

Forgotten was the 'Divine Song'!

How could it happen? How could such a friendship break down?

Why not?

All those who attend discourses on philosophy do not realize; they do not change instantly into saints as if by magic. Arjuna was after all human!

Krishna walked on the streets of Hastinaapura thoughtfully. His eyes were wet!

He had gone to congratulate his victorious cousins. But the scene there was like a mourning arena!

Everyone of the family was huddled in some dark corner lost in their own gloomy interiors. Womenfolk had cried so much that most of them had fainted into peaceful unconscious states.

No one had greeted their dark cousin! Everyone ignored him willfully!

Yudhishtira had welcomed him with a faint smile and walked away as if busy. Bheema had bent his head in embarrassment as if ashamed of seeing this unperturbed Sage who was the cause of every tear that flowed there. Draupadi turned her face away as if in fear; maybe she was afraid that this Yogi may cause more disasters in the future.

Krishna had not minded all this! He had walked straight towards Arjuna.

He had extended both his hands to embrace his dear friend in a tight grip and forget all the hurts he had received so far from the other members of the family. But Arjuna had rudely pushed him away and had glared at him angrily. Without speaking even a word, he had walked away. Krishna had followed him calling his name repeatedly to stop and talk to him. But Arjuna had never turned back. He had soon disappeared into the garden groves. Krishna had returned crestfallen. Nobody had bothered about him. No one had, had even the courtesy to give him a polite conversation. Krishna had known at that moment that he was no more wanted by that esteemed family of Kurus. His own words to Arjuna at the battlefield rang in his mind.

I DO NOT FORSAKE THOSE WHO DO NOT FORSAKE ME!

They had forsaken him now.

He had nothing more to do with any members of the Kuru family.

Krishna walked on the streets of Hastinaapura thoughtfully. His eyes were wet!

His thoughts were disturbed by a sudden pain on the forehead. Some child had thrown a stone on him. His face was bleeding. Some old voice cursed him and his birth.

Krishna silently walked away; away from his cousins; from his family; from his friends; from his wives; from his people; from one and all; from his dear friend Arjuna too!

He walked and walked; not knowing his destination. He was soon in a forest; very deep forest which he had not visited in all his life.

He walked day and night without stopping.

Somewhere his body collapsed and he fainted. When he woke up, a kind hunter was feeding some honeyed water into his dried up lips. Krishna felt all his emotions burst out suddenly. He held on to the dark sweaty body of the hunter and wept. Then he got up; gave away all his jewelry and royal garments to the hunter in exchange for a simple bark garment. He thanked the kind hunter and walked away.

The hunter was unfortunately mauled by a wild animal of the forest. Someone identified the royal garments he wore as Krishna's! News spread that the Yaadava chieftain was dead and killed by some hunter and that his body had become a prey to some wild animals. Some said that the hunters shot him in the leg when he was sleeping under the tree. Many more stories circulated as per their whims and fancies. Many even saw a magical light streaking through the sky.

Paandavas performed the funeral rites for the dead Krishna in their city.

Nobody wondered as to how could a Yogi who knew the happenings of the past, present and future die suddenly like that or just get killed by a hunter's arrow?

They believed that he was dead. May be they wanted to believe that he was dead.

They felt relieved that it was all over.

A powerful neutral friend was as bad as an enemy, they might have thought!

Sage Vyaasa did not bother to mention the truth about Krishna's final days and betray his friend's secret. He left the matter at that.

Krishna had died for his friends and family.

The living Krishna?

He walked away!

The world had forsaken him!

He had forsaken it!

The dark forest embraced him with affection like a mother.

He was soon lost in its dark womb.

END OF THE SONG?