

Abridged Version of Bhagavad-Gita

The Bhagavad-gita opens with blind King Dhritarashtra requesting his minister, Sanjaya, to narrate the battle between his sons, the Kauravas, and their cousins, the Pandavas. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, out of affection for His devotee, the Pandava prince Arjuna, has agreed to drive his chariot. As Arjuna takes up his bow and prepares to fight, he sees the sons of Dhritarashtra drawn in military array and requests Krishna to draw his chariot between the two fighting forces. There in the midst of both armies, Arjuna's mind reels as he foresees the imminent death of his teacher, relatives, and friends. He throws down his bow and arrows and hesitates to fight.

In Chapter One and in the beginning of Chapter Two, Arjuna presents his arguments for refusing to fight. Basically, he fears the sinful reactions of killing. But after Arjuna surrenders to Lord Krishna and requests the Lord to instruct him, the Lord begins countering Arjuna's objections. First, Krishna analytically explains that fighting in His service is transcendental and will bring no sinful reaction. Krishna also explains the Vedas' purpose as to gradually elevate souls to Krishna consciousness. Krishna thus encourages Arjuna to remain fixed in His service – fight – and ignore his mind's desires.

As Krishna's explanations why Arjuna should fight were only a summary, and since Krishna glorifies both '*buddhi-yoga*', intelligence used in spiritual advancement of knowledge (2.45, 2.49-50), and '*karma*', work (2.47-48, 2.50), Arjuna becomes confused and wishes to use Krishna's instruction to perform '*buddhi-yoga*' as an excuse to retire the battlefield for a life of contemplation. Arjuna therefore opens Chapter Three asking Krishna why He is encouraging fighting if intelligence is better than fruitive work.

Krishna then explains '*karma-yoga*', reaction-free devotional work, and clears up Arjuna's mistaken idea that all work is fruitive and leads to bondage. Krishna explains that Arjuna should fight, for avoiding sinful reactions though devotional work is better than attempting to escape reactions though renouncing work. Krishna also instructs Arjuna to fight to set the proper example of duty. Krishna therefore tells Arjuna to fight, but with knowledge and detachment (3.29-30), without falling victim to his own attractions and aversions.

Then, in answer to Arjuna's question on the cause of a soul's being impelled to improper action or neglect of duty, Krishna names the enemy: lust. He then recommends Arjuna to regulate his senses, become fixed in his pure identity as a servant of Krishna, and thereby avoid lust's control. Then, with spiritual strength and deliberate intelligence, he should conquer that forceful enemy – lust.

Since in Chapter Three, Krishna has recommended that Arjuna fight in full knowledge of Him (3.30), the Lord, in Chapter Four, explain different aspects of transcendental knowledge. First Krishna explains attaining knowledge through the disciplic succession. Then after successively explaining His appearance and then His mission, the Lord explains His devotional service as the goal of (Krishna had already referred to the importance of performing '*yajna*', sacrifice, in 3.9 Krishna next explains the soul's relationship with Him as eternal His part and parcel, which one must approach a bonafide spiritual master to learn. Chapter Four ends with Krishna glorifying transcendental knowledge and requesting Arjuna to arm himself with this knowledge – which burns all sinful reactions to ashes – and fight!

After Arjuna has been impressed with the importance of both work (which requires activity) and seeking knowledge (which tends to be inactive), Arjuna is perplexed. His determination is confused, and he sees fighting and knowledge as contradictory. Therefore, Arjuna opens Chapter Five by asking Krishna to

definitively explain whether the renunciation of work (speculation, '*sankhya*, *jnana*', inaction-in-knowledge) or work in devotion is superior. Krishna answers that one who is detached from his work's results is the one who is truly renounced. Such a person knows that while the body acts, he, the soul, actually does nothing. Arjuna should therefore, do his duty steadily act for the satisfaction of Krishna. Impartially viewing the external world, he should reside in his body aloof from bodily activities. By fixing his consciousness on the Supreme and knowing that Krishna is the true enjoyer, the goal of sacrifice and austerity, and the Lord of all planets, he, the pure soul, will find true peace beyond this material world.

In the first five chapters, Krishna has explained '*buddhi-yoga*', working with consciousness focused on Krishna without fruitive desires. The Lord has also explained '*sankhya*', '*karma-yoga*', and '*jnana-yoga*' to obtain liberation and as steppingstones to Krishna consciousness. Now, at the end of the Fifth Chapter (5. 27-28) and continuing to the Sixth Chapter (wherein Krishna explains practical points for a practitioner), Krishna explains '*dhyana- yoga*' concluding that '*dhyana*', or meditation upon Krishna, is meditation's final goal.

Krishna begins the Sixth Chapter by explaining that the neophyte yogi engages in fruitive sitting postures while the advanced yogi, the true '*sannyasi*', works without attachment. Such a yogi liberates, not degrades, himself by his mind's activities. Carefully controlling his mind and engaging it body, and his self in Krishna's service, the yogi strictly practices '*dhyana- yoga*' in a secluded place. Fixing his mind on the self and on Krishna, he attains transcendental happiness in the kingdom of God. Arjuna then points out the main difficulty in practicing yoga is controlling the mind. Krishna responds by saying that one can overcome the obstinate mind through constant practice and determination. In responding to Arjuna's about the fate of an unsuccessful yogi, Krishna answers that one unsuccessful in his practice will still take birth in a family of wise transcendentalists and automatically become attract yogic principles. Krishna finally states in the last two verses of the chapter that the yogi is greater than the ascetic, the *jnani* and the *karmi*. And the greatest of all yogis is he who always thinks of Krishna and with great faith worships Him in loving service.

Knowing Krishna's instruction at the end of Chapter Six, one should initiate his practice of yoga from the point of concentrating of the mind upon Krishna. Chapter Seven thus opens with Krishna explaining knowledge of Himself and His opulent energies. Thus, Arjuna can fully worship Krishna, as described at the end of Chapter Six, and think of Him with devotion as he fights.

Krishna first explains that as He is the Supreme Truth, everything in existence is a combination of His material and spiritual energies. He is the active principle within all and is all- pervasive through His diverse material and spiritual energies. Because the world's activities are conducted by the three modes of nature which emanate from Him, (Although Krishna is independent and above them) only those who surrender to Krishna can cross beyond these modes to know Him. Four kinds of impious souls never surrender to Krishna while four kinds of pious souls do surrender. Krishna also covers Himself from the impersonalists, who are less intelligent, and from those who surrender to the demigods. But those who are truly pious, the undeluded, serve Krishna as the governor of the material manifestation, the demigods, and sacrifice, can know and understand Krishna.

Chapter Eight begins by Arjuna asking Krishna about Brahman, karma, the demigods, the material world, and knowing Krishna at the time of death. Krishna first briefly answers Arjuna's first five questions and then begins explaining in detail how to know Krishna at the time of death. Since one attains what one remembers at the time of death, if one remembers Krishna, one goes to Him. Krishna then explains how

He can be constantly thought of as the transcendental person who knows everything, the oldest controller, the smallest, the maintainer. Thus, by practicing yoga and remembering Krishna, Krishna explains, one will go to the eternal spiritual world and never again to return to this temporary, miserable material world. Then, after describing the different yogic ways in which one may leave this world, Krishna advises Arjuna not worry about other paths – either Vedic study, yoga, austere sacrifices, charity, jnana, or karma – for the results of these will all be obtained through performing devotional service. And in the end, such a yogi in devotion, reaches the supreme eternal abode.

After Krishna answered Arjuna's questions in Chapter Eight, He continues speaking, in Chapter Nine, the knowledge about Himself that He had begun explaining in Chapter Seven. Krishna thus prefaces Chapter Nine by stating that the knowledge He will now reveal is most confidential, for it is about His actual position, which only the non-envious and faithful can understand. Krishna continues explaining that although independent and aloof, He pervades, creates, and annihilates the entire cosmos through His material energy. Those mahatmas who know Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead take shelter of Him and serve Him as the only enjoyer and the supreme object of worship.

Krishna then explains the fortunate position of such devotees: If one worships Krishna, Krishna cares, compensates for his deficiencies, and preserves his strengths. And all Krishna asks for is an offering of a leaf, a flower, or some water – if it is offered with devotion. Thus, His devotee comes to Him. Even if a devotee unintentionally commits a horrendous act, he will be rectified, for Krishna promises that His devotee will never perish.

In Chapters Seven and Nine, Krishna has explained knowledge of His energies. In Chapter Ten, Krishna explains His opulence more specifically and thereby reveals Himself the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all. Krishna also tells how His pure devotees know that He is the unborn Supreme Lord, the source of all sages, the source of the material and spiritual worlds, and the source of all qualities and attitudes. Thus, pure, and wise devotees worship Krishna, converse about Him, and with thoughts dwelling in Him, undeluded and free from sin, engage in His service. Out of compassion, Krishna within their hearts destroys any remaining ignorance.

After hearing of Krishna's opulence, Arjuna confirms Krishna as the Supreme Lord by quoting authorities and explains that only Krishna can truly know Himself. Krishna then tells of His divine manifestations within this world – as the Super soul, the ocean, the Himalayas – which merely indicate His limitless opulence, for a single fragment of Krishna's energy pervades and supports this entire universe!

Arjuna, although acknowledging that Krishna in the two-armed form that he now sees before him is Supreme, still requests Krishna to reveal that all-pervading Universal Form that supports the Universe. Thus, in Chapter Eleven, Krishna proves Himself as the Supreme Lord and He establishes the criteria that anyone who claims to be God must also show a Universal Form. Krishna then reveals to Arjuna His wondrous effulgent, all-expansive form, and Arjuna sees all soldiers on both sides dying within it. Krishna explains His form as time, the destroyer of all world, and requests that Arjuna, knowing in advance the inevitable d of all the warriors, become His instrument. In answer to Arjuna's fearful prayers, Krishna first shows His four-armed form before again returning to His original two-armed form. Krishna then states that his two-armed form can only be seen by pure devotees, and such pure devotees, working for Krishna, free from desiring fruitive activities, and who make Krishna the sole goal of their lives, certainly come to Him.

In Chapter Twelve, Arjuna, after witnessing Krishna's awesome Universal Form, wishes to clarify his own position as a devotee, the highest worshiper of the Supreme. He thus asks whether worshiping Krishna through devotional service or worshiping the impersonal is superior. Krishna immediately responds saying that one engaged in His personal service is the topmost. One should therefore engage in Krishna's service and fix his mind solely upon Krishna, and, if that cannot be done, one should follow the rules and regulations of '*bhakti-yoga*', which purify one so he is later able to do so. Krishna then describes other processes that eventually lead to His pure devotional service.

Then qualities that endear a devotee to Krishna, which Krishna next mentions, such as equality in both happiness and distress, independence from the ordinary course of activities, satisfaction, and the faithful following of the path of devotional service, are also part of the process of worshiping Krishna in devotional service.

Arjuna opens Chapter Thirteen by inquiring about the field of activities and the knower of that field. Krishna answers that the conditioned soul's body and that body's interactions within the material world are His limited field of activities. By understanding the difference between the body, the soul, and the Super soul and by following the process of knowledge, the soul can transcend the good and the bad he meets, realize his eternal subordination to Krishna, and attain the supreme destination.

The Thirteenth Chapter clearly explained that by humbly developing knowledge one can become free from material entanglement. It is also explained that the living entity's entanglement within the material world due to his association with the modes of material nature (13. 20-22). Now, in Chapter Fourteen, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in detail, explains the three modes – goodness, passion and ignorance – those forces that bind and control all conditioned souls within this world. A soul can, however, transcend these modes through devotional service (All other processes are contaminated by the modes). Thus, the limitations imposed by his field of activities can be overthrown and the soul can be elevated to the Brahman platform, the constitutional position of purity and happiness – a platform of which Krishna is the basis.

As one must be detached from the modes and their results in order to be attached to the service of the Lord, Krishna describes in Chapter Fifteen the process of freeing oneself from matter's grip. He begins by comparing the material world to a gigantic, upside-down banyan tree, invoking Arjuna to detach himself from it through surrender. Thus, the soul can end his transmigrations and return to Him in the spiritual world.

Although the foolish cannot understand that the soul transmigrates, quitting one body to obtain a new body based on his mind's desires, transcendentalists see this clearly. The foolish can learn to see properly by understanding that it is Krishna who is the splendor of the sun, moon, and fire, as the one keeping the planets in orbit and making vegetables succulent. They can see Krishna as the fire of digestion; as the *Paramatma* in everyone's heart; as the giver of remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness; and as the goal of the Vedas and the compiler of Vedanta. Krishna then reveals that knowing Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and engaging in His service is the ultimate purpose of the Vedanta and the most confidential part of the Vedas.

In Chapter Fifteen, auspicious, elevating activities were described as part of the banyan tree. In Chapter Sixteen, after mentioning twenty-six godly qualities, Krishna explains the demoniac nature which degrades the soul through arrogant, ignorant, and conceited pursuits of sense gratification and power.

Krishna explains the demonic mentality as follows: The world is unreal and is produced only of sex desire. Taking shelter of lust, they think of sense gratification as the goal of life and scheme to illegally increase their wealth. While plotting to kill their 'competitor' enemies, they think themselves powerful and happy, and they, surrounded by their relatives, use sacrifices and charity only to further increase their happiness. Perplexed by illusory anxieties, bewildered by self-complacency, impudence, and wealth; and envying the Super soul within their own bodies and within the bodies of others, demons blaspheme real religion. These mischievous, lowest amongst men are repeatedly cast by Krishna into demonic species to gradually sink to the most abominable forms of existence.

Krishna ends the chapter by explaining that because lust, anger and greed are the beginnings of demonic life, all sane men should therefore give them up and understand their duty through faithfully following the scriptures.

Krishna has concluded Chapter Sixteen by declaring that the ultimate difference between the divine and the demoniac is that the divine follow the scriptures while the demons do not. In the beginning of Chapter Seventeen, Arjuna inquires more about those who do not follow scriptures, but who worship according to their imaginations. Krishna answers by describing how the combination of the modes of material nature that control a particular person will dictate a person's faith, worship, eating, sacrifices, charity and austerity. The chapter ends with Krishna explaining the syllables '*om tat sat*' and how these syllables indicate that any sacrifice, austerity, or charity dictated by the modes and performed without devotional service is useless in this life the next. One should therefore directly take to Krishna's service in Krishna consciousness.

The entire Bhagavad-Gita is concluded in seventeen chapters, and in the Eighteen Chapter, Krishna reviews the knowledge already presented. In this chapter Krishna concludes, as He has done throughout the Bhagavad-Gita, that one should practice devotional service – Krishna consciousness.

Since Arjuna's basic desire to renounce his duty of fighting was fear of sinful reaction, Krishna explains true renunciation and how to transcend sinful reactions through (1) becoming renounced from the fruits of activities, (2) abiding by the order of the Super soul, and (3) worshiping the Lord through one's fruits of work by acting either as '*brahmana*', '*ksatriya*', '*vaisya*', or '*sudra*' according to one's mode of nature. (Each leads Arjuna to fight) Thus, one can achieve the self-realized position of '*brahma-bhuta*' and that position, detached from all material things, one can practice pure devotional service.

Krishna can only be known through surrendering to Him in devotional service, and by this direct process – free from karma or jnana, Arjuna should need not fear any sinful reactions. Under Krishna's protection, such a pure devotee will reach "*Krishna-loka*". Krishna instructs Arjuna that he should surrender to the Supreme Lord within his heart and thus attain peace in His supreme, eternal abode. The most confidential knowledge is then explained by Krishna: "Become My devotee, always think of Me, act for Me, worship Me, and offer all homage unto Me. Surrender unto Me alone. Do not fear sinful reactions."

After hearing the instructions of Sri Krishna, Arjuna is fixed and ready to fight. Sanjaya, after narrating this conversation to King Dhritarashtra, ecstatically thinks of the wondrous two-armed form of Krishna and predicts victory for Arjuna, the supreme archer, for he is surrendered to Krishna, the master of all mystics.

Super summary of Bhagavad-Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is a seven-hundred-verse scripture from the sixth book of the Hindu epic Mahabharata. It's believed to have been authored between the fifth and second centuries BCE. Although the Gita's author is unknown, it's usually attributed to the Hindu sage Veda Vyasa. Vyasa also chronicled Mahabharata and is featured as an important character in the epic's narrative. Considered one of the immortals in Hindu lore, Vyasa is honored every year on Guru Purnima, a date that's considered both his birthday and the day he divided the Vedas.

The Bhagavad Gita, or "Song of the Lord" in Sanskrit, is a dialogue between the Pandava Prince Arjuna, one of King Pandu's five sons, and his guide and chariot driver, Lord Krishna. Much of the narrative's conflict involves Lord Krishna guiding Arjuna to fulfill his duty as a member of the Kshatriya warrior class and establish dharma, or behaviors in accordance with the way of the universe.

The Bhagavad Gita synthesizes the concept of dharma, the work's primary theme. It also explores heroism, liberation, and the practice of yoga in multiple forms. Considered one of the most significant works of Hindu literature, the Gita was first translated into English in 1875 and has since been the subject of countless translations and analyses. It is still widely studied and read today by Hindus around the world and is considered to have influenced the twentieth century's Indian Independence Movement.

Divided into eighteen chapters, each named after a form of yoga, the Bhagavad Gita chronicles Arjuna's battles in the days leading up to the Kurukshetra War, as he realizes that his enemies are the people closest to him. Only the advice of his guide, the God incarnate Lord Krishna, can help him achieve his destiny as a warrior and prince. The Gita is usually prefaced by the "*Gita Dhyanam*," a nine-verse Sanskrit poem offering salutations to various sacred scriptures, figures, and entities.

The first six chapters follow Krishna as he moves his chariot between the opposing armies and guides Arjuna through his fear of losing friends and relatives in the war. Krishna teaches Arjuna about various subjects, including Karma yoga, Gyaana yoga, Sankhya yoga, Buddha yoga, and the immortal existence of the soul. He explains that performing one's assigned duties without attachment to results is the best approach for Arjuna. He also teaches Arjuna the importance of following a guru by talking about his past lives and teaching yoga for the protection of the holy. The fifth chapter debates whether it's better to act or to forgo action; Krishna says that while both strategies can achieve the same goal, it's best to act in Karma yoga. In "Dhyan yoga," Krishna describes Ashtanga yoga as well as the difficulties of the mind and how best to master it.

Krishna then describes the nature of reality, particularly its illusory energy, called Maya. The eighth chapter features an in-depth discussion of how the world will end and the best way to approach death. Krishna then discusses how God's eternal energy created and possesses the entire universe from a pantheistic perspective. He describes himself as the source of all things, and Arjuna accepts him as the Supreme Being. Krishna then displays his true form, which is best described as a being as bright as a thousand suns who faces every direction and contains everything in the universe. In "Bhakti yoga,"

Krishna describes the path of devotion to God and explores different forms of spiritual discipline. “Ksetra-Ksetrajna Vibhaga yoga” discusses the difference between the temporary physical body and the eternal soul, as well as the difference between individual and universal consciousness.

“Gunatraya-Vibhaga yoga” looks at the three modes of material nature, called gunas. They are goodness, passion, and nescience. The chapter also examines their influence on living beings.

“Purusottama yoga” looks at the nature of God, including omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. All of existence is described as a tree that has roots in the heavens and leaves on Earth.

“Daivasura-Sampad-Vibhaga yoga” identifies the human traits of both the divine and the demonic. Here, Krishna urges Arjuna to strive to give up lust, anger, and greed. “Sraddhatraya-Vibhaga yoga” looks at the three divisions of faith: thoughts, deeds, and eating habits that correspond to the three modes. In the final chapter, which sums up the entire work, Krishna asks Arjuna to abandon all known forms of dharma. Instead, he urges Arjuna to surrender unto him. Krishna describes this as the ultimate perfection that all should strive for.
