



# THE BHAGAVAD GITA

**EDWIN ARNOLD**

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THE  
BHAGAVAD GITA

TRANSLATED BY  
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Abstaining from rewardment in the work,  
 While yet one doeth it full faithfully,  
 Saying, "'Tis right to do!" that is "true" act  
 And abstinence! Who doeth duties so,  
 Unvexed if his work fail, if it succeed  
 Unflattered, in his own heart justified,  
 Quit of debates and doubts, his is "true" act:  
 For, being in the body, none may stand  
 Wholly aloof from act; yet, who abstains  
 From profit of his acts is abstinent.

The fruit of labours, in the fives to come,  
 Is threefold for all men,- Desirable,  
 And Undesirable, and mixed of both;  
 But no fruit is at all where no work was.

Hear from me, Long-armed Lord! the makings five  
 Which go to every act, in Sankhya taught  
 As necessary. First the force; and then  
 The agent; next, the various instruments;  
 Fourth, the especial effort; fifth, the God.  
 What work soever any mortal doth  
 Of body, mind, or speech, evil or good,  
 By these five doth he that. Which being thus,  
 Whoso, for lack of knowledge, seeth himself  
 As the sole actor, knoweth nought at all  
 And seeth nought. Therefore, I say, if one-  
 Holding aloof from self- with unstained mind  
 Should slay all yonder host, being bid to slay,  
 He doth not slay; he is not bound thereby!

Knowledge, the thing known, and the mind which knows,  
 These make the threefold starting-ground of act.  
 The act, the actor, and the instrument,  
 These make the threefold total of the deed.  
 But knowledge, agent, act, are differenced  
 By three dividing qualities. Hear now  
 Which be the qualities dividing them.



There is "true" Knowledge. Learn thou it is this:  
 To see one changeless Life in all the Lives,  
 And in the Separate, One Inseparable.

There is imperfect Knowledge: that which sees  
 The separate existences apart,  
 And, being separated, holds them real.

There is false Knowledge: that which blindly clings  
 To one as if 'twere all, seeking no Cause,  
 Deprived of light, narrow, and dull, and "dark."

There is "right" Action: that which- being enjoined-  
 Is wrought without attachment, passionlessly,  
 For duty, not for love, nor hate, nor gain.

There is "vain" Action: that which men pursue  
 Aching to satisfy desires, impelled  
 By sense of self, with all-absorbing stress:  
 This is of Rajas- passionate and vain.

There is "dark" Action: when one doth a thing  
 Heedless of issues, heedless of the hurt  
 Or wrong for others, heedless if he harm  
 His own soul- 'tis of Tamas, black and bad!

There is the "rightful" doer. He who acts  
 Free from self-seeking, humble, resolute,  
 Steadfast, in good or evil hap the same,  
 Content to do aright- he "truly" acts.

There is th' "impassioned" doer. He that works  
 From impulse, seeking profit, rude and bold  
 To overcome, unchastened; slave by turns  
 Of sorrow and of joy: of Rajas he!

And there be evil doers; loose of heart,  
 Low-minded, stubborn, fraudulent, remiss,  
 Dull, slow, despondent- children of the "dark."

Hear, too, of Intellect and Steadfastness  
 The threefold separation, Conqueror-Prince!  
 How these are set apart by Qualities.

Good is the Intellect which comprehends  
 The coming forth and going back of life,

What must be done, and what must not be done,  
 What should be feared, and what should not be feared,  
 What binds and what emancipates the soul:  
 That is of Sattwan, Prince! of "soothfastness."  
 Marred is the Intellect which, knowing right  
 And knowing wrong, and what is well to do  
 And what must not be done, yet understands  
 Nought with firm mind, nor as the calm truth is:  
 This is of Rajas, Prince! and "passionate!"  
 Evil is Intellect which, wrapped in gloom,  
 Looks upon wrong as right, and sees all things  
 Contrariwise of Truth. O Pritha's Son!  
 That is of Tamas, "dark" and desperate!

Good is the steadfastness whereby a man  
 Masters his beats of heart, his very breath  
 Of life, the action of his senses; fixed  
 In never-shaken faith and piety:  
 That is of Sattwan, Prince! "soothfast" and fair!  
 Stained is the steadfastness whereby a man  
 Holds to his duty, purpose, effort, end,  
 For life's sake, and the love of goods to gain,  
 Arjuna! 'tis of Raias, passion-stamped!  
 Sad is the steadfastness wherewith the fool  
 Cleaves to his sloth, his sorrow, and his fears,  
 His folly and despair. This- Pritha's Son!-  
 Is born of Tamas, "dark" and miserable!

Hear further, Chief of Bharatas! from Me  
 The threefold kinds of Pleasure which there be.

Good Pleasure is the pleasure that endures,  
 Banishing pain for aye; bitter at first  
 As poison to the soul, but afterward  
 Sweet as the taste of Amrit. Drink of that!  
 It springeth in the Spirit's deep content.  
 And painful Pleasure springeth from the bond  
 Between the senses and the sense-world. Sweet  
 As Amrit is its first taste, but its last

Bitter as poison. 'Tis of Rajas, Prince!  
 And foul and "dark" the Pleasure is which springs  
 From sloth and sin and foolishness; at first  
 And at the last, and all the way of life  
 The soul bewildering. 'Tis of Tamas, Prince!

For nothing lives on earth, nor 'midst the gods  
 In utmost heaven, but hath its being bound  
 With these three Qualities, by Nature framed.

The work of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas,  
 And Sudras, O thou Slayer of thy Foes!  
 Is fixed by reason of the Qualities  
 Planted in each:

A Brahman's virtues, Prince  
 Born of his nature, are serenity,  
 Self-mastery, religion, purity,  
 Patience, uprightness, learning, and to know  
 The truth of things which be. A Kshatriya's pride,  
 Born of his nature, lives in valour, fire,  
 Constancy, skilfulness, spirit in fight,  
 And open-handedness and noble mien,  
 As of a lord of men. A Vaisya's task,  
 Born with his nature, is to till the ground,  
 Tend cattle, venture trade. A Sudra's state,  
 Suiting his nature, is to minister.

Whoso performeth- diligent, content-  
 The work allotted him, whate'er it be,  
 Lays hold of perfectness! Hear how a man  
 Findeth perfection, being so content:  
 He findeth it through worship- wrought by work-  
 Of HIM that is the Source of all which lives,  
 Of HIM by Whom the universe was stretched.

Better thine own work is, though done with fault,  
 Than doing others' work, ev'n excellently.  
 He shall not fall in sin who fronts the task  
 Set him by Nature's hand! Let no man leave  
 His natural duty, Prince! though it bear blame!

For every work hath blame, as every flame  
 Is wrapped in smoke! Only that man attains  
 Perfect surcease of work whose work was wrought  
 With mind unfettered, soul wholly subdued,  
 Desires for ever dead, results renounced.

Learn from me, Son of Kunti! also this,  
 How one, attaining perfect peace, attains  
 BRAHM, the supreme, the highest height of all!

Devoted- with a heart grown pure, restrained  
 In lordly self-control, forgoing wiles  
 Of song and senses, freed from love and hate,  
 Dwelling 'mid solitudes, in diet spare,  
 With body, speech, and will tamed to obey,  
 Ever to holy meditation vowed,  
 From passions liberate, quit of the Self,  
 Of arrogance, impatience, anger, pride;  
 Freed from surroundings, quiet, lacking nought-  
 Such an one grows to oneness with the BRAHM;  
 Such an one, growing one with BRAHM, serene,  
 Sorrows no more, desires no more; his soul,  
 Equally loving all that lives, loves well  
 Me, Who have made them, and attains to Me.  
 By this same love and worship doth he know  
 Me as I am, how high and wonderful,  
 And knowing, straightway enters into Me.  
 And whatsoever deeds he doeth- fixed  
 In Me, as in his refuge- he hath won  
 For ever and for ever by My grace  
 Th' Eternal Rest! So win thou! In thy thoughts  
 Do all thou dost for Me! Renounce for Me!  
 Sacrifice heart and mind and will to Me!  
 Live in the faith of Me! In faith of Me  
 All dangers thou shalt vanquish, by My grace;  
 But, trusting to thyself and heeding not,  
 Thou can'st but perish! If this day thou say'st,  
 Relying on thyself, "I will not fight!"  
 Vain will the purpose prove! thy qualities

Would spur thee to the war. What thou dost shun,  
 Misled by fair illusions, thou wouldst seek  
 Against thy will, when the task comes to thee  
 Waking the promptings in thy nature set.  
 There lives a Master in the hearts of men  
 Maketh their deeds, by subtle pulling-strings,  
 Dance to what tune HE will. With all thy soul  
 Trust Him, and take Him for thy succour, Prince!  
 So- only so, Arjuna!- shalt thou gain-  
 By grace of Him- the uttermost repose,  
 The Eternal Place!  
 Thus hath been opened thee  
 This Truth of Truths, the Mystery more hid  
 Than any secret mystery. Meditate!  
 And- as thou wilt- then act!

Nay! but once more  
 Take My last word, My utmost meaning have!  
 Precious thou art to Me; right well-beloved!  
 Listen! tell thee for thy comfort this.  
 Give Me thy heart! adore Me! serve Me! cling  
 In faith and love and reverence to Me!  
 So shalt thou come to Me! I promise true,  
 For thou art sweet to Me!  
 And let go those-  
 Rites and writ duties! Fly to Me alone!  
 Make Me thy single refuge! will free  
 Thy soul from all its sins! Be of good cheer!

[Hide, the holy Krishna saith,  
 This from him that hath no faith,  
 Him that worships not, nor seeks  
 Wisdom's teaching when she speaks:  
 Hide it from all men who mock;  
 But, wherever, 'mid the flock  
 Of My lovers, one shall teach  
 This divinest, wisest, speech-  
 Teaching in the faith to bring  
 Truth to them, and offering

Of all honour unto Me-  
 Unto Brahma cometh he!  
 Nay, and nowhere shall ye find  
 Any man of all mankind  
 Doing dearer deed for Me;  
 Nor shall any dearer be  
 In My earth. Yea, furthermore,  
 Whoso reads this converse o'er,  
 Held by Us upon the plain,  
 Pondering piously and fain,  
 He hath paid Me sacrifice!  
 (Krishna speaketh in this wise!)  
 Yea, and whoso, full of faith,  
 Heareth wisely what it saith,  
 Heareth meekly, - when he dies,  
 Surely shall his spirit rise  
 To those regions where the Blest,  
 Free of flesh, in joyance rest.]

Hath this been heard by thee, O Indian Prince!  
 With mind intent? hath all the ignorance-  
 Which bred thy trouble- vanished, My Arjun?  
 Arjuna. Trouble and ignorance are gone! the Light  
 Hath come unto me, by Thy favour, Lord!  
 Now am I fixed! my doubt is fled away!  
 According to Thy word, so will I do!

*Sanjaya.* Thus gathered I the gracious speech of Krishna, O my  
 King!  
 Thus have I told, with heart a-thrill, this wise and wondrous thing  
 By great Vyasa's learning writ, how Krishna's self made known  
 The Yoga, being Yoga's Lord. So is the high truth shown!  
 And aye, when I remember, O Lord my King, again  
 Arjuna and the God in talk, and all this holy strain,  
 Great is my gladness: when I muse that splendour, passing speech,  
 Of Hari, visible and plain, there is no tongue to reach  
 My marvel and my love and bliss. O Archer-Prince! all hail!  
 O Krishna, Lord of Yoga! surely there shall not fail

Blessing, and victory, and power, for Thy most mighty sake,  
Where this song comes of Arjun, and how with God he spake.

HERE ENDS, WITH CHAPTER XVIII,  
Entitled "Mokshasanyasayog,"  
Or "The Book of Religion by Deliverance and Renunciation,"  
THE BHAGAVAD-GITA.  
THE END

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