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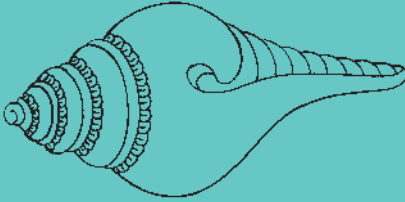
Maha·bhárata

Book Six

Bhishma

Volume One

Including the “Bhagavad Gita” in Context



Translated by

ALEX CHERNIAK

With a Foreword by Ranajit Guha

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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Artwork by Robert Beer.
Typeset in Adobe Garamond at 10.25 : 12.3+pt.
XML-development by Stuart Brown.
Editorial input from Dániel Balogh, Simon Brodbeck,
Linda Covill, Ridi Faruque, Chris Gibbons,
Tomoyuki Kono & Eszter Somogyi.
Printed in Great Britain by St Edmundsbury Press Ltd,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, on acid-free paper.
Bound by Hunter & Foulis Ltd, Edinburgh, Scotland.

MAHĀBHĀRATA

BOOK SIX

BHĪṢMA

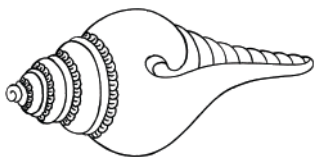
VOLUME ONE

INCLUDING
THE “BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ”
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Alex Cherniak

WITH A FOREWORD BY RANAJIT GUHA



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2008

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First Edition 2008

The Clay Sanskrit Library is co-published by
New York University Press
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www.nyupress.org

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-3202-1 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-8147-1696-2 (cloth : alk. paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mahābhārata. Bhīṣmaparva. English & Sanskrit.

Mahābhārata. Book six, Bhīṣma /
translated by Alex Cherniak;

with a foreword by Ranajit Guha. -- 1st ed.

p. cm. -- (The Clay Sanskrit library)

Epic poetry.

In English and Sanskrit (romanized) on facing pages;

includes translation from Sanskrit.

“Including the ‘Bhagavadgītā’ in context”--Vol. 1.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-3202-1 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8147-1696-2 (cloth : alk. paper)

I. Cherniak, Alex. II. Bhagavadgīta. English & Sanskrit. III. Title.

BL1138.242.B55E5 2008

294.5'92304521--dc22

2008014986

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25-42

BHAGAVAD GITA
(SONG OF THE LORD)

DHĪRTARĀṢṬRA uvāca:

25.1 **D**HARMA|KṢETRE Kuru|kṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ Pāṇḍavās c' āiva kim akurvata, Sañjaya?

SAÑJAYA uvāca:

dr̥ṣṭvā tu Pāṇḍav'ānīkaṃ vyūḍhaṃ Duryodhanas tadā
ācāryam upasaṃgamyā rājā vacanam abravīt:

«paśy' āitāṃ Pāṇḍu|putrāṇām, ācārya, mahatīṃ camūm
vyūḍhāṃ Drupada|putreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā.
atra sūrā mah" |ēṣv|āsā Bhīm'|Ārjuna|samā yudhi:
Yuyudhāno, Virāṭas ca, Drupadaś ca mahā|rathaḥ;

25.5 Dhṛṣṭaketuś, Cekitānaḥ, Kāśi|rājaś ca vīryavān;
Purujiṭ, Kuntibhojaś ca, Śaibyaś ca nara|puṅgavaḥ;
Yudhāmanyuś ca vikrānta, Uttamaujāś ca vīryavān;
Saubhadro, Draupadeyāś ca. sarva eva mahā|rathāḥ.

asmākaṃ tu viśiṣṭā ye, tān nibodha, dvi|j' |ōttama.
nāyakā mama sainyasya, saṃjñ" |ārthaṃ tān bravīmi te:
bhavān, Bhīṣmaś ca, Karṇaś ca, Kṛpaś ca samitiṃ|jayaḥ;
Aśvatthāmā, Vikarṇaś ca, Saumadattis tath" āiva ca.
anye ca bahavaḥ sūrā mad|arthe tyakta|jīvitāḥ,
nānā|śastra|praharaṇāḥ, sarve yuddha|viśāradāḥ.

25.10 a|paryāptaṃ tad asmākaṃ balaṃ Bhīṣm' |ābhirakṣitam;
paryāptaṃ tv idam eteṣāṃ balaṃ Bhīm' |ābhirakṣitam.
ayaṇeṣu ca sarveṣu yathā|bhāgam avasthitāḥ
Bhīṣmam ev' ābhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi!»

DHRITA-RASHTRA said:

WHEN THEY ASSEMBLED, eager to fight, on the field of 25.1
righteousness, the field of Kuru, what did my sons
and the sons of Pandu do, Sánjaya?

SÁNJAYA said:

Seeing the Pándava army drawn up for battle, King Dur-
yódhana approached the teacher and spoke these words:

“Master, behold this great host of Pandu’s sons, drawn
up in battle array by your skillful pupil the son of Drúpada.
Here are heroes, mighty archers, to match Bhima and Ár-
juna in battle: Yuyudhána, and Viráta, and the great warrior 25.5
Drúpada; Dhrishta-ketu, Chekitána, and the valorous king
of the Kashis; Púrujit, and Kunti-bhoja, and the bull-like
king of the Shibis; and mighty Yudha-manyu, and valiant
Uttamáujas; the son of Subhádra, and the sons of Dráu-
padi. And all of them are great warriors.

As for our most distinguished men, listen, best of the
twice-born. So we are clear, I will list my army’s leaders for
you: yourself, and Bhishma and Karna, and Kripa victori-
ous in battle; Ashva-tthaman and Vikárna, and the son of
Soma-datta too. And many other heroes, armed with vari-
ous weapons and missiles and all skilled in warfare, are ready
to sacrifice their lives for my sake.

Our army, protected by Bhishma, is unlimited; but theirs, 25.10
protected by Bhima, is limited. So stationed at your posi-
tions on all fronts, protect that Bhishma, all of you!”

tasya samjanayan harṣam
 Kuru|vṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ
 siṃha|nādaṃ vinady' ōccaiḥ
 śaṅkhaṃ dadhmau pratāpavān.
 tataḥ śaṅkhās ca, bheryās ca, paṇav'ānaka|go|mukhāḥ
 sahas" āiv' ābhayahanyanta. sa śabdas tumulo 'bhavat.
 tataḥ śvetair hayair yukte mahati syandane sthitau
 Mādhavaḥ Pāṇḍavaś c' āiva divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmatuḥ.

25.15 Pāñcājanyam Hṛṣīkeśo;

Devadattaṃ Dhanañjayaḥ;
 Pauṇḍraṃ dadhmau mahā|śaṅkhaṃ
 bhīma|karmā Vṛkodaraḥ;
 Anantavijayaṃ rājā Kuntī|putro Yudhiṣṭhiraḥ;
 Nakulaḥ Sahadevaś ca Sughoṣa|Mañipuṣpakau.
 Kāśyaś ca param'ēṣv|āsaḥ, Śikhaṇḍī ca mahā|rathaḥ;
 Dhṛṣṭadyumno, Virāṭaś ca, Sātyakiś c' ā|parājitaḥ;
 Drupado, Draupadeyās ca
 sarvaśaḥ, pṛthivī|pate,
 Saubhadraś ca mahā|bāhuḥ
 śaṅkhān dadhmuḥ pṛthak pṛthak.

sa ghoṣo Dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām hṛdayāni vyadārayat
 nabhaś ca pṛthivīm c' āiva tumulo vyanunādayan.

25.20 atha vyavasthitān dṛṣṭvā Dhārtarāṣṭrān kapi|dhvajah
 pravṛtte śastra|saṃpāte dhanur udyamya Pāṇḍavaḥ
 Hṛṣīkeśam tadā vākyam idam āha, mahī|pate.

Causing him joy, the elder of the Kurus, the mighty grandfather, roared a great lion-like roar and blew his conch. And conches and kettledrums, tabors, drums and trumpets were sounded all at once, and there was a tumultuous din. Then, standing on a great chariot yoked with white horses, Mádhava and the son of Pandu blew their divine conches. Hrishi-kesha blew Pancha-janya; Dhanan- 25.15
 jaya blew Deva-datta; Vrikódara of terrible deeds blew the great conch Paundra; King Yudhi-shthira, son of Kunti, blew Anánta-víjaya; Nákula and Saha-deva blew Sughósha and Mani-púshpaka. And the excellent archer of Kashi, and the great warrior Shikhándin; Dhrishta-dyumna and Viráta, and invincible Sátyaki; Drúpada and the sons of Dráupadi, and the mighty-armed son of Subhádra, all blew their conches, each his own, lord of the earth. That tumultuous noise, echoing through heaven and earth, broke the hearts of Dhrita-rashtra's sons.

The monkey-bannered Pándava, seeing Dhrita-rashtra's 25.20
 troops arrayed for battle, raised his bow as the clash of arms began, and said these words to Hrishi-kesha, Your Majesty.

ARJUNA uvāca:

senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me, 'cyuta,
yāvad etān nirīkṣe 'haṃ yoddhu|kāmān avasthitān.
kair mayā saha yoddhavyam asmin raṇa|samudyame?
yotsyamānān avekṣe 'haṃ, ya ete 'tra samāgatāḥ
Dhārtarāṣṭrasya dur|buddher yuddhe priya|cikīrṣavaḥ.

SAÑJAYA uvāca:

evam ukto Hṛṣīkeśo Guḍākeśena, Bhārata,
senayor ubhayor madhye sthāpayitvā rath'|ōttamam
25.25 Bhīṣma|Droṇa|pramukhataḥ, sarveṣāṃ ca mahī|kṣitām,
uvāca: «Pārtha, paśy' āitān samavetān Kurūn iti!»
tatr' āpaśyat sthitān Pārthaḥ pitṛn, atha pitāmahān,
ācāryān, mātulān, bhrātṛn, putrān, pauṭrān, sakhīṃs tathā,
śvaśūrān, su|hr̥daś c' āiva senayor ubhayor api.
tān samīkṣya sa Kaunteyaḥ sarvān bandhūn avasthitān
kr̥payā paray" āviṣṭo viṣīdann idam abravīt:

ARJUNA uvāca:

dr̥ṣṭv" êmān svaljanān, Kṛṣṇa, yuyutsūn samavasthitān,
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi, mukhaṃ ca pariśuṣyati;
vepathuś ca śarīre me roma|harṣaś ca jāyate.
25.30 Gaṇḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāt, tvak c' āiva paridahyate.
na ca śaknomy avasthātum, bhramat' īva ca me manaḥ.
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni, Keśava,
na ca śreyo 'nupaśyāmi hatvā svaljanam āhave.
na kāṅkṣe vijayaṃ, Kṛṣṇa, na ca rājyaṃ, sukhāni ca.
kiṃ no rājyena, Govinda? kiṃ bhogair jīvitena vā?

ÁRJUNA said:

Áchyuta, put my chariot between the two armies so I can see the warriors drawn up keen on battling. Whom do I have to fight in this war? Let me see those who will fight, who have assembled here to do a favor in battle for Dhritarashtra's evil-minded son.

SÁNJAYA said:

Thus addressed by Guda-ksha, O descendant of Bharata, Hrishi-ksha put that excellent chariot between the two armies, opposite Bhishma, Drona, and all the kings, and said: "Partha, behold these assembled Kurus!" And standing there in both armies the son of Pritha saw fathers, grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, companions, fathers-in-law, and friends. Seeing all those kinsmen in position, the son of Kunti was filled with profound compassion and said in despair: 25.25

ÁRJUNA said:

Krishna, at the sight of my own kin standing here ready to fight, my limbs feel tired and my mouth has gone dry, my body is trembling and my hair is standing on end. Gandíva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning all over. I can't stand up, and my mind seems to whirl. I see evil portents, Késhava, and I see no good in killing my own family in war. I don't desire victory, Krishna, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. What use is the kingdom to us, Govínda, or enjoyments, or life itself? 25.30

yeṣām arthe kāñkṣitaṃ no rājyaṃ, bhogaḥ, sukhāni ca,
ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāms tyaktvā dhanāni ca:
ācāryāḥ, pitarāḥ, putrās, tath" āiva ca pitāmahāḥ,
mātulāḥ, śvaśurāḥ, pautrāḥ, syālāḥ, saṃbandhinas tathā.

25.35 etān na hantum icchāmi ghnato 'pi, Madhu|sūdana,
api trailokya|rājyasya hetoḥ; kiṃ nu mahi|kṛte!
nihatya Dhārtarāṣṭrān naḥ kā prītiḥ syāj, Janārdana?
pāpam ev' āśrayed asmān hatv" āitān ātatāyinaḥ;
tasmān n' ārhā vyaṃ hantum Dhārtarāṣṭrān sa|bāndhavān.
sva|janaṃ hi kathaṃ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma, Mādharma?

yady apy ete na paśyanti lobh'|ōpahata|cetasāḥ
kula|kṣaya|kṛtaṃ doṣaṃ, mitra|drohe ca pātakam,
kathaṃ na jñeyam asmābhiḥ pāpād asmān nivartitum,
kula|kṣaya|kṛtaṃ doṣaṃ prapaśyadbhir, Janārdana?

25.40 kula|kṣaye praṇaśyanti kula|dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ;
dharme naṣṭe kulaṃ kṛtsnam a|dharmo 'bhibhavaty uta.
adharm'|ābhibhavāt, Kṛṣṇa, praduśyanti kula|striyaḥ;
striṣu duṣṭāsu, Vāṣṇeya, jāyate varṇa|saṃkaraḥ.
saṃkaro narakāy' āiva kula|ghnānām, kulasya ca;
patanti pitaro hy eṣāṃ lupta|piṇḍ'|ōdaka|kriyāḥ.
doṣair etaiḥ kula|ghnānām varṇa|saṃkara|kāraakaiḥ
utsādyante jāti|dharmāḥ, kula|dharmās ca śāśvatāḥ.
utsanna|kula|dharmānām manuṣyāṇām, Janārdana,
narake niyataṃ vāso bhavat', ity anuśūruma.

Those for whose sake we want kingdom, enjoyments, and pleasures are drawn up here for battle, ready to give up their lives and wealth: teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other relatives. Though they would kill me, slayer of Madhu, I wouldn't want to kill them even for the sovereignty of the triple-world; how much less, then, for the sake of the earth! What joy could there be for us, Janárdana, were we to kill Dhrita-rashtra's sons? Were we to kill these murderers, evil would befall us; so we mustn't kill Dhrita-rashtra's sons, our kinsmen. For how could we be happy having killed our family, Mádhava? 25.35

Even though they, blinded by greed, see no harm in ruining the whole family and no crime in betraying friends, why shouldn't we, who realize the evil in destroying the family, know not to do it, Janárdana?

When a family is destroyed the ancient family customs die; and when virtue has been lost, vice prevails over the whole family. When vice prevails the family's women become corrupt; and from the corruption of women comes the mixing of social classes, Varshnéya.* Such mixing leads the family's destroyers and the family itself to hell, for the ancestors fall if the offerings of rice and water aren't made. The sins of the family-destroyers cause the mixing of classes and bring the eternal caste traditions and family rites to ruin. We have heard, Janárdana, that people whose family rites have been ruined are doomed to dwell in hell for certain. 25.40

25.45 aho bata! mahat pāpaṃ kartuṃ vyavasitā vayam,
yad rājya|sukha|lobhena hantuṃ svaljanam udyatāḥ!
yadi mām a|pratīkāram, a|śāstraṃ śāstra|pāṇayaḥ
Dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus, tan me kṣemataraṃ bhavet.

SAÑJAYA uvāca:

evam uktv” Ārjunaḥ saṃkhye rath’|ôpastha upāviśat
viśrjya sa|śaraṃ cāpaṃ śoka|saṃvigna|mānasaḥ.

SAÑJAYA uvāca:

26.1 TAM TATHĀ KR̥PAY” āviṣṭam aśru|pūrṇ’|ākul’|êkṣaṇam
viṣīdantam idaṃ vākyaṃ uvāca Madhu|sūdanaḥ.

ŚRĪ|BHAGAVĀN uvāca:

kutas tvā kaśmalam idaṃ viṣame samupasthitam?
an|ārya|juṣṭam, a|svargyam, a|kīrti|karam, Arjuna.
klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ, Pārtha! n’ āitat tvayy upapadyate.
kṣudraṃ hṛdaya|daurbalyaṃ tyaktv” ôttiṣṭha, paran|tapa!

ARJUNA uvāca:

kathaṃ Bhīṣmam ahaṃ saṃkhye,
Droṇaṃ ca, Madhu|sūdana
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi?
pūj”|ārḥāv, ari|sūdana.

26.5 gurūn a|hatvā hi mah”|ānubhāvān
chreyo bhoktuṃ bhaikṣam ap’ iha loke;
hatv” ārtha|kāmāṃs tu gurūn ih’ āiva
bhuñjīya bhogān rudhira|pradigdhan.
na c’ āitad vidmaḥ, kataran no garīyo:
yad vā jayema, yadi vā no jayeyuh.
yān eva hatvā na jijīviṣāmas,
te ’vasthitāḥ pramukhe Dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ.
kārpaṇya|doṣ’|ôpahata|sva|bhāvaḥ

Woe! We are determined to commit a grave crime, since we are intent upon slaughtering our kinsmen out of greed for the kingdom and its pleasures! It would be better for me if Dhrita-rashtra's sons, armed with weapons, were to kill me in battle unresisting and unarmed! 25.45

SÁNJAYA said:

With these words, his heart struck with grief, Árjuna cast aside his bow and arrows and sat down on his chariot platform, on the field of battle.

SÁNJAYA said:

THEN THE SLAYER of Madhu spoke to Árjuna, who was dejected and overwhelmed with pity, his eyes blurred with tears. 26.1

THE LORD said:

Why has this faintheartedness overcome you at this difficult time, Árjuna? Unworthy of the noble, it doesn't lead to heaven but causes disgrace. Don't succumb to cowardice, Partha! It doesn't become you. Shake off this miserable weakness of heart and get up, scorcher of foes!

ÁRJUNA said:

How can I confront Bhishma and Drona with arrows in battle, slayer of Madhu? They deserve my homage, enemy-slayer. Better in this world to live on alms without killing the mighty elders; for were I to kill the elders, eager though they are for worldly gain, in this very world I would taste pleasures smeared with blood. And we don't even know which is preferable: to vanquish or be vanquished. Dhrita-rashtra's sons stand before us, but if we kill them we won't 26.5

pr̥cchāmi tvāṃ dharmā|saṃmūḍha|cetāḥ,
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṃ, brūhi tan me.

śiṣyas te 'haṃ; śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam!
na hi prapaśyāmi, mam' āpanudyād
yac chokam, ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṇām,
avāpya bhūmāv a|sapatnam ṛddhaṃ
rājyaṃ, surāṇām api c' ādhipatyam.

SAÑJAYA uvāca:

26.10 evam uktvā Hṛṣīkeśaṃ Guḍākeśaḥ, paran|tapa,
«na yotsya! iti» Govindam uktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha.
tam uvāca Hṛṣīkeśaḥ prahasann iva, Bhārata,
senayor ubhayor madhye viṣīdantam idaṃ vacaḥ.

ŚRĪ|BHAGAVĀN uvāca:

26.15 a|śocyān anvaśocas tvam, prajñā|vādāṃś ca bhāṣase.
gat' |āsūn a|gat' |āsūṃś ca n' ānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ.
na tv ev' āhaṃ jātu n' āsaṃ, na tvam, n' ēme jan' |ādhipāḥ;
na c' āiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayam ataḥ param.
dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṃ, yauvanam, jarā,
tathā deh' |āntara|prāptir. dhīras tatra na muhyati.
mātrā|sparśās tu, Kaunteya, śīt' |ōṣṇa|sukha|duḥkha|dāḥ,
āgam' |āpāyino, ' |nityās. tāṃś titikṣasva, Bhārata.
yaṃ hi na vyathayanty ete puruṣaṃ, puruṣa' |ṛṣabha,
sama|duḥkha|sukhaṃ, dhīraṃ, so 'mṛtatvāya kalpate.
n' āsato vidyate bhāvo, n' ābhāvo vidyate sataḥ.
ubhayor api dṛṣṭo 'ntas tv anayos tattva|darśibhiḥ.
a|vināśi tu tad viddhi, yena sarvam idaṃ tatam;
vināśam a|vyayasy' āsya na kaś cit kartum arhati.

want to live. My whole being afflicted with the vice of pity, my mind confused over my duty, I ask you to tell me for sure what would be best. I am your disciple; teach me, I am at your mercy! For were I to get an unrivaled thriving kingdom on earth and lordship even over the gods, I see no way to dispel the sorrow that withers my senses.

SÁNJAYA said:

Having said this to Hrishi-kesha, Guda-kesha told Go-vinda “I won’t fight!” and fell silent, enemy-scorcher. And Hrishi-kesha, almost laughing, spoke to the distressed hero between the two armies, Bhárata. 26.10

THE LORD said:

You are grieving for those you shouldn’t grieve for, and yet you speak words of wisdom. But wise men don’t grieve for the dead or the living. There wasn’t a time when you and I and these lords of men didn’t exist; and none of us will cease to exist hereafter. Childhood, youth and old age befall the embodied soul’s body; and likewise it attains another body. A wise person isn’t confused by this. Contacts with the material world, Kauntéya,* cause feelings of cold and heat, pleasure and pain, but they are unstable, they come and go. Endure them, Bhárata. Bull of a man, the wise man whom these contacts don’t disturb, to whom pain and pleasure are one and the same, is fit for immortality. 26.15

The non-existent can’t come into being, and the existent can’t cease to be. Those who see the truth* see the boundary between these two. So you should know that that by which all this is pervaded is indestructible; no one can bring about the destruction of this imperishable. It is only bodies that

antavanta ime dehā nityasy' ōktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ,
 a|nāśino, 'lprameyasya. tasmād yudhyasva Bhārata!
 ya enaṃ veti hantāraṃ, yaś c' āinaṃ manyate hatam,
 ubhau tau na vijānīto. n' āyaṃ hanti, na hanyate.

26.20 na jāyate mriyate vā kadā cin;

n' āyaṃ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ.
 aljo, nityaḥ, śāśvato 'yaṃ, purāṇo;
 na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.
 ved' ā|vināśinaṃ, nityaṃ ya enam aljam, a|vyayam,
 kathaṃ sa puruṣaḥ, Pārtha, kaṃ ghātayati? hanti kam?
 vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
 navāni gr̥hṇāti naro 'parāṇi,
 tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny
 anyāni saṃyāti navāni dehī.

n' āinaṃ chindanti śastrāṇi; n' āinaṃ dahati pāvakaḥ;
 na c' āinaṃ kledayanty āpo; na śoṣayati mārutaḥ.
 a|cchedyo 'yam, a|dāhyo 'yam, a|kledyo, 'lśoṣya eva ca.
 nityaḥ, sarva|gataḥ, sthāṇur, a|calo 'yaṃ, sanātanaḥ.

26.25 a|vyakto 'yam, a|cintyo 'yam, a|vikāryo 'yam ucyate.
 tasmād evaṃ viditv' āinaṃ n' ānuśocitum arhasi.

atha c' āinaṃ nitya|jātaṃ, nityaṃ vā manyase mṛtam,
 tath' āpi tvaṃ, mahā|bāho n' āinaṃ śocitum arhasi.
 jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur; dhruvaṃ janma mṛtasya ca;
 tasmād a|parihārye 'rthe na tvaṃ śocitum arhasi.
 a|vyakt'ādīni bhūtāni, vyakta|madhyāni, Bhārata,
 a|vyakta|nidhanāny eva. tatra kā paridevanā?

are said to come to an end—the bodies of the eternal, indestructible, immeasurable embodied soul. So fight, Bhárata!

Whoever thinks this soul can kill or be killed, doesn't understand. It neither kills, nor is it killed. It isn't born; it never dies; it isn't something that comes into existence and then ceases to be. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primordial; it is not killed when the body is killed. If a man* knows it to be indestructible, eternal, unborn, and imperishable, Partha, how can he be made to kill? Whom can he kill? Just as a man casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on other new ones, so the embodied soul casts off its worn-out bodies and takes other new ones. 26.20

Weapons can't cut it; fire can't burn it; water can't wet it; wind can't dry it. It is uncuttable, unburnable, unwettable, and undryable. It is eternal, all-pervading, fixed, immovable, everlasting. It is said to be unmanifest, inconceivable, and immutable. So, knowing it as such, you shouldn't grieve. 26.25

But even if you think of it as repeatedly born and repeatedly dying, strong-armed one, nonetheless you shouldn't grieve. For death is certain for those who are born, and birth is certain for those who die; and so, this being inevitable, you shouldn't grieve. Creatures are unmanifest at first, manifest in the middle, and unmanifest again at the end, Bhárata. What is there to mourn for in this?

āścaryavat paśyati kaś cid enam,
āścaryavad vadati tath” āiva c’ ānyaḥ,

āścaryavac c’ āinam anyāḥ śṛṇoti;

śrutv” āpy enam veda na c’ āiva kaś cit.

- 26.30 dehī nityam a|vadhyo ’yaṃ dehe sarvasya, Bhārata;
tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitum arhasi.
sva|dharmam api c’ āveksya na vikampitum arhasi;
dharmyādd hi yuddhāc chreyo ’nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate.
yadṛcchayā c’ ōpapannaṃ svarga|dvāram apāvṛtam
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ, Pārtha, labhante yuddham iḍṛśam.

atha cet tvam imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṃgrāmaṃ na kariṣyasi,
tataḥ sva|dharmaṃ kīrtiṃ ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi.
a|kīrtiṃ c’ āpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te ’|vyayām;
saṃbhāvitasya c’ ā|kīrtir maraṇād atiricyate.

- 26.35 bhayād raṇād uparataṃ maṃsyante tvāṃ mahā|rathāḥ,
yeṣāṃ ca tvam bahu|mato bhūtvā yāsya lāghavam.
a|vācyā|vādāṃś ca bahūn vadiṣyanti tav’ ā|hitāḥ
nindantas tava sāmartyaṃ; tato duḥkhataraṃ nu kim?
hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṃ, jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm.
tasmād uttiṣṭha, Kaunteya, yuddhāya kṛta|niścayaḥ!
sukha|duḥkhe same kṛtvā, lābh’|ā|lābhau, jay’|ā|jayau,
tato yuddhāya yujyasva. n’ āivaṃ pāpam avāpsyasi.

eṣā te ’bhīhitā Sāṃkhye buddhir; yoge tv imāṃ śṛṇu,
buddhyā yukto yayā, Pārtha, karma|bandhaṃ prahāsyasi.

- 26.40 n’ ēh ’ābhikrama|nāśo ’sti, pratyavāyo na vidyate;
sv|alpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.
vyavasāy’|ātmikā buddhir ek” ēha, Kuru|nandana;
bahu|śākhā hy an|antās ca buddhayo ’|vyavasāyinām.

Rarely does anyone see it, or speak of it, or hear of it; and even having heard of it no one really knows it. The soul is always inviolable in everyone's body, Bhárata; so you shouldn't grieve for any creature. You should attend to your own duty and stand firm, for there is nothing better for a warrior than a legitimate battle. Happy the warriors who find such a battle, Partha—an open door to heaven, arrived at by chance. 26.30

But if you won't wage this legitimate war, then, forsaking your duty and your fame, you will have committed a sin. For people will tell of your lasting disgrace; and to an honored man, disgrace is worse than death. The great warriors will think you withdrew from the battle out of fear, and though highly regarded by them before, you will be slighted. Your enemies too will say many unseemly things, disparaging your ability; and what could be more painful than that? Get up, son of Kunti, and resolve to fight! For you will either be killed and attain heaven, or you will prevail and enjoy the earth. Make yourself indifferent to pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat, and so gird yourself for battle. In this way you will incur no evil. 26.35

This understanding has been presented to you according to the Sankhya teaching;* now hear about it in relation to yoga practice. With this understanding, Partha, you will escape the bondage of the act. In this matter no attempts are in vain, there are no disappointments; even very little of this virtue can deliver one from great danger. There is one resolute understanding here, delight of the Kurus, but the understandings of the irresolute are multifarious without limit. 26.40

yām imāṃ puṣpitaṃ vācaṃ pravadyaḥ |vipaścitaḥ,
veda|vāda|ratāḥ, Pārtha, «n' ānyad ast', īti» vādinaḥ
kām'|ātmānaḥ svarga|parā janma|karma|phala|pradām
kriyā|viśeṣa|bahulām bhog'|āiśvarya|gatim prati.
bhog'|āiśvarya|prasaktānām tay" āpahṛta|cetasām
vyavasāy'|ātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate.

26.45 traiguṇya|viṣayā vedā. nis|traiguṇyo bhav', Ārjuna,
nirdvandvo, nitya|sattva|stho, nir|yoga|kṣema, ātmavān.
yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ saṃpluṭ'|ōdake,
tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ.

karmaṇy ev' ādhikāras te, mā phaleṣu kadā cana.
mā karma|phala|hetur bhūr, mā te saṅgo 'stv a|karmaṇi.
yoga|sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā, Dhanañjaya,
siddhy|a|siddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā; samatvaṃ yoga ucyate.
dūreṇa hy avaraṃ karma buddhi|yogād, Dhanañjaya.
buddhau śaraṇam anviccha; kṛpaṇāḥ phala|hetavaḥ.

26.50 buddhi|yukto jahāt' īha ubhe su|kṛta|duṣ|kṛte;
tasmād yogāya yujyasva. yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam;
karma|jaṃ buddhi|yuktā hi phalaṃ tyaktvā maṇiṣiṇaḥ
janma|bandha|vinirmuktāḥ padaṃ gacchanty an|āmayam.

Delighting in the words of the Veda and claiming there is nothing else, undiscerning men, full of desire and bent on heaven, speak flowery words accompanied by particular rites, Partha, for the acquisition of pleasure and power; but these cause rebirth as the fruit of the acts. The resolute understanding, when settled, isn't disturbed by the words of the mindless who cling to pleasure and power. The Vedas have the three modes* as their scope. Be free of the three modes, Árjuna, free of dualities, always established in purity, beyond acquisition and preservation, and self-possessed.* For the discerning brahmin, all the Vedas are as much use as a water-tank is when there are floods all around. 26.45

You have a right to the action alone, never to its fruits. Don't let the action's fruits be your motivation, and don't be attached to inactivity. Perform actions while established in yoga, Dhanan-jaya, having abandoned attachment, having become even-minded towards success and failure; for yoga is said to be evenness of mind. But action is far less important than the yoga attitude, Dhanan-jaya. Seek refuge in this attitude, for those who are motivated by the fruits are pitiful. The man of disciplined understanding leaves his deeds here, both good and bad; so be disciplined in yoga. Yoga is skillfulness in actions; the wise ones of disciplined understanding renounce the fruit produced by action and, released from the bondage of rebirth, they attain the perfect state. 26.50

yadā te moha|kalilaṃ buddhir vyatitariṣyati,
tadā gant” āsi nirvedaṃ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca;
śruti|vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā,
samādhāv a|calā buddhis, tadā yogam avāpsyasi.

ARJUNA uvāca:

sthita|prajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhi|sthasya Keśava?
sthita|dhīḥ kiṃ prabhāṣeta? kim āsīta? vrajeta kim?

ŚRĪ|BHAGAVĀN uvāca:

26.55 prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān, Pārtha, mano|gatān,
ātmany ev’ ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita|prajñas tad” ōcyate.
duḥkheṣv an|udvigna|manāḥ, sukheṣu vigata|spṛhaḥ,
vīta|rāga|bhaya|krodhaḥ, sthita|dhīr munir ucyate.
yaḥ sarvatr’|ān|abhisnehas, tat tat prāpya śubh’|ā|śubham
n’ ābhinandati na dveṣṭi, tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.
yadā saṃharate c’ āyaṃ, kūrmo ’ngān’ īva, sarvaśaḥ
indriyān’ indriy’|ārthebhyas, tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.
viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ;
rasa|varjaṃ. raso ’py asya paraṃ drṣṭvā nivartate.

26.60 yatato hy api, Kaunteya, puruṣasya vipāścitaḥ
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṃ manāḥ.
tāni sarvāṇi saṃyamya yukta āsīta mat|paraḥ;

When your understanding passes beyond its tangle of delusion, then you will become indifferent to what should be heard and what has been heard; and when, parting company with such hearsay,* your understanding remains steady, fixed in concentration, then you will have achieved yoga.

ÁRJUNA said:

How would you describe the man of steady wisdom who remains in concentration, Késhava? How might he whose thoughts are steadied speak? How might he sit? How might he walk?

THE LORD said:

When a man discards all desires from his mind, Partha, and by his own efforts becomes content within himself, then he is called a man of steady wisdom. He whose mind is unperturbed in times of sorrow, who has lost the craving for pleasures, and who is rid of passion, fear and anger, is called a sage of steadied thought. His wisdom is secure who is free of any affections and neither rejoices nor recoils on obtaining anything good or bad. When he completely withdraws his senses from the sense objects like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, then his wisdom is secure. For the embodied one who doesn't feed on them, the sense objects fade away; but their flavor doesn't. For the one who has seen the highest, even his taste fades away. 26.55

Even if a learned man tries hard, Kauntéya, the turbulent senses forcibly carry away his mind. He should restrain them and sit in yoga, intent on me; only when his senses are under control is his wisdom secure. When a man dwells 26.60

vaśe hi yasy' êndriyāṇi, tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.
 dhyāyato viṣayān puṃsaḥ saṅgas teṣ' ūpajāyate.
 saṅgāt saṃjāyate kāmah, kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate.
 krodhād bhavati saṃmohaḥ; saṃmohāt smṛti|vibhramah;
 smṛti|bhraṃśād buddhi|nāśo; buddhi|nāśāt praṇaśyati.
 rāga|dveṣa|viyuktais tu viṣayān indriyaiś caran
 ātma|vaśyair vidhey'|ātmā prasādam adhigacchati.

26.65 prasāde sarva|duḥkhānām hānir asy' ōpajāyate,
 prasanna|cetaso hy āśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate.

nāsti buddhir a|yuktasya, na c' ā|yuktasya bhāvanā.
 na c' ā|bhāvayataḥ śāntir; a|śāntasya kutaḥ sukham?
 indriyāṇām hi caratām yan mano 'nuvidhīyate,
 tad asya harati prajñām, vāyur nāvam iv' āmbhasi.

tasmād yasya, mahā|bāho, nigrhītāni sarvaśaḥ
 indriyāṇ' indriy'|ārthebhyas, tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.
 yā niśā sarva|bhūtānām, tasyām jāgarti saṃyamī;
 yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni, sā niśā paśyato muneh.

26.70 āpūryamāṇam a|cala|pratiṣṭham

samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat,
 tadvat kāmā yaṃ praviśanti sarve
 sa śāntim āpnoti; na kāmā|kāmī.

vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān puṃmāś carati niḥspṛhaḥ,
 nirmamo, nir|ahaṃ|kāraḥ, sa śāntim adhigacchati.
 eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ, Pārtha. n' āinām prāpya vimuhyati.
 sthity' āsyām anta|kāle 'pi brahma|nirvāṇam ṛcchati.

upon sense objects, he becomes attached to them. From attachment arises desire, and from desire, anger. From anger comes confusion; confusion disturbs the memory; when memory fails, so does understanding; and without understanding, one perishes. But the man whose self is restrained, who meets the sense objects with senses which are controlled by him and free of passion and aversion, attains serenity. In serenity all his sorrows come to an end, for a serene-minded man's understanding soon becomes secure. 26.65

The undisciplined man has no real understanding and no powers of contemplation. Without contemplation he has no peace, and how can there be happiness for those without peace? A mind that runs after the wandering senses carries away one's wisdom like the wind tossing a boat on the water.

And so, mighty-armed one, he whose senses are withdrawn altogether from sense objects is a man of secure wisdom. When it is night for all creatures, the self-restrained man is awake; and when all creatures are awake, it is night for the discerning sage. Water enters the ocean, but while being filled it remains unmoved in its depths. When this is how all desires affect a man, he attains peace; but he who cherishes desires is not like this. A man attains peace by abandoning all desires and acting without craving, selfishness or ego. This is the state of Brahman, Partha; having attained it, one is confused no longer. Remaining in it even at the time of death, one attains the nirvana* that is Brahman.* 26.70



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In “Bhishma,” the first of the MAHA-BHÁRATA’s battle books, at the onset of the epic’s orgy of violence, the narrative rises up to the ethical plane. Integral to this chronicle of a clan’s factional property feud, the “Bhagavad Gita” is the ever-relevant text of a universal morality, infinitely adaptable in its philosophy of self-questioning.

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
Washington Square
New York, NY 10003
www.nyupress.org

ISBN 978-0-8147-1696-0



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