

Perpetuating  
G.W)

MYSTICAL CLASSICS OF THE WORLD

The  
Bhagavad-Gita  
Krishna's Counsel in Time of War

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## The Second Teaching

# PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

*Sanjaya*

Arjuna sat dejected,  
filled with pity,  
his sad eyes blurred by tears.  
Krishna gave him counsel.

1

*Lord Krishna*

Why this cowardice  
in time of crisis, Arjuna?  
The coward is ignoble, shameful,  
foreign to the ways of heaven.

2

Don't yield to impotence!  
It is unnatural in you!  
Banish this petty weakness from your heart.  
Rise to the fight, Arjuna!

3

*Arjuna*

Krishna, how can I fight  
against Bhishma and Drona  
with arrows  
when they deserve my worship?

4



अभ्युत्थानम् सर्वं देवर्षिर्निशुचयम् । असितो देवलो  
व्यासः सार्धं चैव ब्रवीषी मे ॥ सर्वमिच्छतं पश्ये यव्यां

● कुरुषि केशव । न हि ते शक्यत्व्यक्ति  
मिदुदेवा न कन्याः ॥ सभ्येवत्सव्यानं  
देश्य तं पुरुषोत्तम । पृथपात्मन भूतेरा

द्रेश्येव जस्यते ॥ कर्णस्य शीघ्रैश्च क्रियां शक्यस्यैव तूत्तमः ।  
यथिविभूतिर्लोकानिर्वायान्दत्तं व्याप्य तिष्ठसि ॥ कथं  
विद्यापटं योषिस्तां रक्षां परित्यज्यस्यन् ।  
केषु केषु न भवेत् किञ्चिदपि शक्यत्वात् ॥  
विस्तरेणैवैते येषां विभूतिं न जगद्धनम् ।  
भूयः कथं तूमीं रुरुषो नस्ति येऽप्युत्तमम् ॥



It is better in this world  
to beg for scraps of food  
than to eat meals  
smeared with the blood  
of elders I killed  
at the height of their power  
while their goals  
were still desires.

We don't know which weight  
is worse to bear—  
our conquering them  
or their conquering us.  
We will not want to live  
if we kill  
the sons of Dhritarashtra  
assembled before us.

The flaw of pity  
blights my very being;  
conflicting sacred duties  
confound my reason.  
I ask you to tell me  
decisively—Which is better?  
I am your pupil.  
Teach me what I seek!

I see nothing  
that could drive away  
the grief  
that withers my senses;  
even if I won kingdoms  
of unrivaled wealth  
on earth  
and sovereignty over gods.

#### *Sanjaya*

Arjuna told this  
to Krishna—then saying,  
"I shall not fight,"  
he fell silent.

5

6

7

8

9

Mocking him gently,  
Krishna gave this counsel  
as Arjuna sat dejected,  
between the two armies.

#### *Lord Krishna*

You grieve for those beyond grief,  
and you speak words of insight;  
but learned men do not grieve  
for the dead or the living.

Never have I not existed,  
nor you, nor these kings;  
and never in the future  
shall we cease to exist.

Just as the embodied self  
enters childhood, youth, and old age,  
so does it enter another body;  
this does not confound a steadfast man.

Contacts with matter make us feel  
heat and cold, pleasure and pain.  
Arjuna, you must learn to endure  
fleeting things—they come and go!

When these cannot torment a man,  
when suffering and joy are equal  
for him and he has courage,  
he is fit for immortality.

Nothing of nonbeing comes to be,  
nor does being cease to exist;  
the boundary between these two  
is seen by men who see reality.

Indestructible is the presence  
that pervades all this;  
no one can destroy  
this unchanging reality.

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

Our bodies are known to end,  
but the embodied self is enduring,  
indestructible, and immeasurable;  
therefore, Arjuna, fight the battle!

18

He who thinks this self a killer  
and he who thinks it killed,  
both fail to understand;  
it does not kill, nor is it killed.

19

It is not born,  
it does not die;  
having been,  
it will never not be;  
unborn, enduring,  
constant, and primordial,  
it is not killed  
when the body is killed.

20

Arjuna, when a man knows the self  
to be indestructible, enduring, unborn,  
unchanging, how does he kill  
or cause anyone to kill?

21

As a man discards  
worn-out clothes  
to put on new  
and different ones,  
so the embodied self  
discards  
its worn-out bodies  
to take on other new ones.

22

Weapons do not cut it,  
fire does not burn it,  
waters do not wet it,  
wind does not wither it.

23

It cannot be cut or burned;  
it cannot be wet or withered;  
it is enduring, all-pervasive,  
fixed, immovable, and timeless.

24

It is called unmanifest,  
inconceivable, and immutable;  
since you know that to be so,  
you should not grieve!

25

If you think of its birth  
and death as ever-recurring,  
then too, Great Warrior,  
you have no cause to grieve!

26

Death is certain for anyone born,  
and birth is certain for the dead;  
since the cycle is inevitable,  
you have no cause to grieve!

27

Creatures are unmanifest in origin,  
manifest in the midst of life,  
and unmanifest again in the end.  
Since this is so, why do you lament?

28

Rarely someone  
sees it,  
rarely another  
speaks it,  
rarely anyone  
hears it—  
even hearing it,  
no one really knows it.

29

The self embodied in the body  
of every being is indestructible;  
you have no cause to grieve  
for all these creatures, Arjuna!

30

Look to your own duty;  
do not tremble before it;  
nothing is better for a warrior  
than a battle of sacred duty.

31

The doors of heaven open  
for warriors who rejoice  
to have a battle like this  
thrust on them by chance.

32

If you fail to wage this war  
of sacred duty,  
you will abandon your own duty  
and fame only to gain evil.

33

People will tell  
of your undying shame,  
and for a man of honor  
shame is worse than death.

34

The great chariot warriors will think  
you deserted in fear of battle;  
you will be despised  
by those who held you in esteem.

35

Your enemies will slander you,  
scorning your skill  
in so many unspeakable ways—  
could any suffering be worse?

36

If you are killed, you win heaven;  
if you triumph, you enjoy the earth;  
therefore, Arjuna, stand up  
and resolve to fight the battle!

37

Impartial to joy and suffering,  
gain and loss, victory and defeat,  
arm yourself for the battle,  
lest you fall into evil.

38

Understanding is defined in terms of philosophy;  
now hear it in spiritual discipline.  
Armed with this understanding, Arjuna,  
you will escape the bondage of action.

39

No effort in this world  
is lost or wasted;  
a fragment of sacred duty  
saves you from great fear.

40

This understanding is unique  
in its inner core of resolve;  
diffuse and pointless are the ways  
irresolute men understand.

41

Undiscerning men who delight  
in the tenets of ritual lore  
utter florid speech, proclaiming,  
"There is nothing else!"

42

Driven by desire, they strive after heaven  
and contrive to win powers and delights,  
but their intricate ritual language  
bears only the fruit of action in rebirth.

43

Obsessed with powers and delights,  
their reason lost in words,  
they do not find in contemplation  
this understanding of inner resolve.

44

Arjuna, the realm of sacred lore  
is nature—beyond its triad of qualities,  
dualities, and mundane rewards,  
be forever lucid, alive to your self.

45

For the discerning priest,  
all of sacred lore  
has no more value than a well  
when water flows everywhere.

46

Be intent on action,  
not on the fruits of action;  
avoid attraction to the fruits  
and attachment to inaction!

47

Perform actions, firm in discipline,  
relinquishing attachment;  
be impartial to failure and success—  
this equanimity is called discipline.

48

Arjuna, action is far inferior  
to the discipline of understanding;  
so seek refuge in understanding—pitiful  
are men drawn by fruits of action.

49

Disciplined by understanding,  
one abandons both good and evil deeds;  
so arm yourself for discipline—  
discipline is skill in actions.

50

Wise men disciplined by understanding  
relinquish the fruit born of action;  
freed from these bonds of rebirth,  
they reach a place beyond decay.

51

When your understanding passes beyond  
the swamp of delusion,  
you will be indifferent to all  
that is heard in sacred lore.

52

When your understanding turns  
from sacred lore to stand fixed,  
immovable in contemplation,  
then you will reach discipline.

53

### *Arjuna*

Krishna, what defines a man  
deep in contemplation whose insight  
and thought are sure? How would he speak?  
How would he sit? How would he move?

54

### *Lord Krishna*

When he gives up desires in his mind,  
is content with the self within himself,  
then he is said to be a man  
whose insight is sure, Arjuna.

55

When suffering does not disturb his mind,  
when his craving for pleasures has vanished,  
when attraction, fear, and anger are gone,  
he is called a sage whose thought is sure.

56

When he shows no preference  
in fortune or misfortune  
and neither exults nor hates,  
his insight is sure.

57

When, like a tortoise retracting  
its limbs, he withdraws his senses  
completely from sensuous objects,  
his insight is sure.

58

Sensuous objects fade  
when the embodied self abstains from food;  
the taste lingers, but it too fades  
in the vision of higher truth.

59

Even when a man of wisdom  
tries to control them, Arjuna,  
the bewildering senses  
attack his mind with violence.

60

Controlling them all,  
with discipline he should focus on me;  
when his senses are under control,  
his insight is sure.

61

Brooding about sensuous objects  
makes attachment to them grow;  
from attachment desire arises,  
from desire anger is born.

62

From anger comes confusion;  
 from confusion memory lapses;  
 from broken memory understanding is lost;  
 from loss of understanding, he is ruined.

63

But a man of inner strength  
 whose senses experience objects  
 without attraction and hatred,  
 in self-control, finds serenity.

64

In serenity, all his sorrows  
 dissolve;  
 his reason becomes serene,  
 his understanding sure.

65

Without discipline,  
 he has no understanding or inner power;  
 without inner power, he has no peace;  
 and without peace where is joy?

66

If his mind submits to the play  
 of the senses,  
 they drive away insight,  
 as wind drives a ship on water.

67

So, Great Warrior, when withdrawal  
 of the senses  
 from sense objects is complete,  
 discernment is firm.

68

When it is night for all creatures,  
 a master of restraint is awake;  
 when they are awake, it is night  
 for the sage who sees reality.

69

As the mountainous depths  
 of the ocean  
 are unmoved when waters  
 rush into it,  
 so the man unmoved  
 when desires enter him  
 attains a peace that eludes  
 the man of many desires.

70

When he renounces all desires  
 and acts without craving,  
 possessiveness,  
 or individuality, he finds peace.

71

This is the place of the infinite spirit;  
 achieving it, one is freed from delusion;  
 abiding in it even at the time of death,  
 one finds the pure calm of infinity.

72