

Upanishads: Some Background and Insights

Supreme Work of the Indian Mind

The *Upanishads* form the core of Indian philosophy. They are an amazing collection of writings from original oral transmissions, which have been aptly described by Shri Aurobindo as "the supreme work of the Indian mind". It is here that we find all the fundamental teachings that are central to Hinduism — the concepts of *karma* (action), *punarjanma* (reincarnation), *moksha* (*nirvana*), the *atman* (soul), and the *Brahman* (Absolute). They also set forth the prime Vedic doctrines of self-realization, yoga and meditation. The *Upanishads* are summits of thought on man and the universe, designed to push human ideas to their very limit and beyond. They give us both spiritual vision and philosophical argument, and it is by a strictly personal effort that one can reach the truth.

Meaning of *Upanishad*

The term *Upanishad* literally means, "sitting down near" or "sitting close to", and implies listening closely to the mystic doctrines of a guru or a spiritual teacher, who has cognized the fundamental truths of the universe. Both the meaning and the stance signal the need for humility and require listening primarily to one's inner spirit, but secondarily, to a wise person. In another sense of the term, *Upanishad* means "brahma-knowledge" by which human ignorance is annihilated and the mystical state is achieved wherein one listens to Wisdom Itself. Some other possible meanings of the compound word *Upanishad* are "placing side by side" (equivalence or correlation), a "near approach" (to the Absolute Being), "secret wisdom" or even "sitting near the enlightened".

Time of Composition

Historians have put the date of composition of the *Upanishads* from about 800 - 400 B.C., though many of the ancient spoken versions may have been written much later. In fact, originally sung, they were written over a very long period of time and do not represent a coherent body of information or one particular system of belief. However, there is a commonality of thought and approach.

The Main Books

Although there are more than 200 *Upanishads*, scholars single out thirteen as presenting the core teachings. They are the *Chandogya*, *Kena*, *Aitareya*, *Kaushitaki*, *Katha*, *Mundaka*, *Taittiriya*, *Brihadaranyaka*, *Svetasvatara*, *Isa*, *Prasna*, *Mandukya* and the *Maitri Upanishads*. One of the oldest and longest of the *Upanishads*, the *Brihadaranyaka* says:

"From the unreal lead me to the real!
 From darkness lead me to light!"

From death lead me to immortality!"

The core of the *Upanishads* is that this can be achieved by meditating with the awareness that one's soul ("atman") is one with all things, and that "one" is the Absolute ("Brahman"), which becomes the "all".

Who wrote the *Upanishads*?

The authors of the *Upanishads* were many, but they were not solely from the priestly caste. They were poets prone to flashes of spiritual wisdom, and their aim was to guide a few chosen pupils to the point of liberation, which they themselves had attained. According to some scholars, the main figure in the *Upanishads* is Yajnavalkya, the great sage who propounded the doctrine of "neti-neti", the view that "truth can be found only through the negation of all thoughts about it". Other important Upanishadic sages are Uddalaka Aruni, Shwetaketu, Shandilya, Aitareya, Pippalada, Sanat Kumara. Many earlier Vedic teachers like Manu, Brihaspati, Ayasya and Narada are also found in the *Upanishads*. Man is the central mystery of the universe holding the key to all other mysteries. Indeed, human beings are our own greatest enigma. As the famous physicist Niels Bohr once said, "We are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence." Hence the importance of developing of what is known as the "science of human possibilities." It was such a science that India sought and found in the *Upanishads* in an attempt to unravel the mystery of man.

Science of the Self

Today we see a growing urge in everyone to realize the "true self". We are keenly feeling the need to make our knowledge flower into wisdom. A strange yearning to know about the infinite and the eternal disturbs us. It is against this background of modern thought and aspirations that the contributions of the *Upanishads* to the human cultural legacy become significant.

The purpose of the Vedas was to ensure the true welfare of all beings, worldly as well as spiritually. Before such a synthesis could be achieved, there was a need to penetrate the inner worlds to its depth. This is what the *Upanishads* did with precision and gave us the science of the self, which helps man leave behind the body, the senses, the ego and all other non-self elements, which are perishable. The *Upanishads* tell us the great saga of this discovery — of the divine in the heart of man.

The Inside Story!

Very early in the development of the Indian civilization, man became aware of a strange new field of human experience — the within of nature as revealed in man, and in his consciousness and his ego. It gathered volume and power as years rolled on until in the *Upanishads* it became a deluge issuing in a systematic, objective and scientific pursuit of truth in the depth of experience. It conveys to us an impression of the tremendous fascination that this new field of inquiry held for the contemporary mind.

These Indian thinkers were not satisfied with their intellectual speculations. They discovered that the universe remained a mystery and the mystery only deepened with the advance of such knowledge, and one of the important components of that deepening mystery is the mystery of man himself. The *Upanishads* became aware of this truth, which modern science now emphasizes.

In the *Upanishads* we get a glimpse into the workings of the minds of the great Indian thinkers who were unhampered by the tyranny of religious dogma, political authority, pressure of public opinion, seeking truth with single-minded devotion, rare in the history of thought. As Max Muller has pointed out, "None of our philosophers, not accepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storm or lightnings."

While the Greeks and the others specialized in the subject of man in society, India specialized in man in-depth, man as the individual, as Swami Ranganathananda puts it. This was one ruling passion of the Indo-Aryans in the *Upanishads*. The great sages of the *Upanishads* were concerned with man above and beyond his political or social dimensions. It was an inquiry, which challenged not only life but also death and resulted in the discovery of the immortal and the divine self of man.

Shaping the Indian Culture

The *Upanishads* gave a permanent orientation to Indian culture by their emphasis on inner penetration and their wholehearted advocacy of what the Greeks later formulated in the dictum "man, know the self." All subsequent developments of Indian culture were powerfully conditioned by this Upanishadic legacy.

The *Upanishads* reveal an age characterized by a remarkable fervent of thought and inspiration. The physical and mental climate that made it possible is the land of plenty that was India. The entire social milieu of the Indo-Aryans was ripe with great potentialities. They had found leisure to think and ask questions. They had the choice to utilize the leisure either to conquer the outer world or the inner. With their mental gifts, they had turned their mental energies to the conquest of the inner world rather than of the world of matter and life at the sensate level.

Universal & Impersonal

The *Upanishads* have given us a body of reflections that have a universal quality about them and this universality derives from their impersonality. The sages who discovered them had depersonalized themselves in the search for truth. They wanted to go beyond nature and realize the transcendental nature of man. They dared to take up this challenge and the *Upanishads* are the unique record of the methods they adopted, the struggles they undertook and the victory they achieved in this astonishing adventure of human spirit. And this is conveyed to us in passages of great power and poetic charm. In seeking the immortal, the sages conferred the immortality upon the literature that conveyed it.

The *Upanishads* study the graceful conflict of thought with thought, the emergence of more satisfactory thought and the rejection of inadequate ideas. Hypotheses were advanced and rejected on the touchstone of experience and not at the dictate of a creed. Thus thought forged ahead to unravel the mystery of the world in which we live. Scholars distinguish thirteen principal *Upanishads*:

Chandogya Upanishad

The *Chandogya Upanishad* belongs to the followers of the Sama Veda. It is actually the last eight chapters of the ten-chapter *Chandogya Brahmana*, and emphasizes the importance of chanting the sacred Aum, and recommends a religious life of sacrifice, austerity, charity, and the study of the Vedas, while living in the house of a guru. This *Upanishad* contains the doctrine of reincarnation as an ethical consequence of *karma* and lists and explains the value of human attributes like speech, will, thought, meditation, understanding, strength memory and hope.
{Read Text}

Kena Upanishad

The *Kena Upanishad* derives its name from the word *Kena*, meaning "by whom" and has four sections, the first two in verse, the other two in prose. The metrical portion deals with the Supreme Unqualified *Brahman*, the absolute principle underlying the world of appearance, and the prose part deals with the Supreme as God, "Isvara". The *Kena Upanishad* concludes, as Sandersen Beck puts it, that austerity, restraint, and work are the foundation of the mystical doctrine; the Vedas are its limbs, and truth is its home. The one who knows it strikes off evil and becomes established in the most excellent, infinite, heavenly world.

Aitareya Upanishad

The *Aitareya Upanishad* belongs to the Rig Veda. This *Upanishad* leads the mind of the one sacrificing away from the outer ceremonial to its inner meaning and deals with the genesis of the universe and the creation of life, the senses, the organs and the organisms. It also delves into the identity of the intelligence that allows us to see, speak, smell, hear and know.

Kaushitaki Upanishad

The *Kaushitaki Upanishad* questions whether there is an end to the cycle of reincarnation, and upholds the supremacy of the soul ("atman"), which is ultimately responsible for everything it experiences.

Katha Upanishad

Katha Upanishad belongs to the Yajur Veda and consists of two chapters, each of which has three sections. Katha Upanishad recounts an ancient story from the Rig Veda about a father who gives his son to death (*Yama*), while bringing out some of the highest teachings of mystical spirituality. There are some passages common to the *Gita* and Katha *Upanishad*. Psychology is explained here by using the analogy of a chariot. The soul is the lord of the chariot, which is the body; the intuition is the chariot-driver, the mind the reins, the senses the horses, and the objects

of the senses the paths. Those whose minds are undisciplined never reach their goal, and go on to reincarnate. The wise and the disciplined obtain their goal and are freed from the cycle of rebirth.

Mundaka Upanishad

The *Mundaka Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva* Veda and has three chapters, each of which has two sections. The name is derived from the root *mund* (to shave) so he that comprehends the teaching of the *Upanishad* is shaved or liberated from error and ignorance. The *Upanishad* clearly states the distinction between the higher knowledge of the *Nirvana Brahman* and the lower knowledge of the empirical world — the six "Vedangas" of phonetics, ritual, grammar, definition, metrics, and astrology. It is by this higher wisdom and not by sacrifices or worship, which are here considered "unsafe boats", that one can reach *Brahman*. Like the Katha, the *Mundaka Upanishad* warns against "the ignorance of thinking oneself learned and going around deluded like the blind leading the blind". Only an ascetic ("sanyasi") who has given up everything can obtain the highest knowledge.

Taittiriya Upanishad

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* is also part of the Yajur Veda and divides into three sections: The first deals with the science of phonetics and pronunciation, the second and the third deal with the knowledge of the Supreme Self (*Paramatmajnana*). Once again, here, *Aum* is emphasized as peace of the soul, and the prayers end with *Aum* and the chanting of peace ("Shanti") thrice, often preceded by the thought, "May we never hate." There is a debate regarding the relative importance of seeking the truth, going through austerity and studying the Vedas. One teacher says truth is first, another austerity, and a third claims that study and teaching of the Veda is first, because it includes austerity and discipline. Finally, it says that the highest goal is to know the *Brahman*, for that is truth. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, *Isavasya Upanishad*, *Prashna Upanishad*, *Mandukya Upanishad* and the *Maitri Upanishad* are the other important and well known books of the *Upanishads*.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which is generally recognized to be the most important of the Upanishads, consists of three sections ("Kandas"), the Madhu Kanda which expounds the teachings of the basic identity of the individual and the Universal Self, the Muni Kanda which provides the philosophical justification of the teaching and the Khila Kanda, which deals with certain modes of worship and meditation, ("upasana"), hearing the "upadesha" or the teaching ("sravana"), logical reflection ("manana"), and contemplative meditation ("nididhyasana").

T S Eliot's landmark work *The Waste Land* ends with the reiteration of the three cardinal virtues from this *Upanishad*: "Damyata" (restraint), "Datta" (charity) and "Dayadhvam" (compassion) followed by the blessing "Shantih shantih shantih", that Eliot himself translated as "the peace that passes understanding."

Svetasvatara Upanishad

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* derives its name from the sage who taught it. It is theistic in character and identifies *Nirvana Brahman* with *Rudra* (Shiva) who is conceived as the author of the world, its protector and guide. The emphasis is not on *Brahman* the Absolute, whose complete perfection does not admit of any change or evolution, but on the personal "Isvara", omniscient and omnipotent who is the manifested Brahma. This *Upanishad* teaches the unity of the souls and world in the one Supreme Reality. It is an attempt to reconcile the different philosophical and religious views, which prevailed at the time of its composition.

Isavasya Upanishad

The *Isavasya Upanishad* comes from the opening word of the text *Isavasya* or *Isa*, *Lord* who encloses all that moves in the world. Greatly revered, this short *Upanishad* is often put at the beginning of the *Upanishads*, and marks the trend toward monotheism in the *Upanishads*. Its main purpose is to teach the essential unity of God and the world, being and becoming. It is interested not so much in the Absolute in itself (*Parabrahman*) as in the Absolute in relation to the world (*Paramesvara*) and teaches that renouncing the world and not coveting the possessions of others can bring joy. The *Isha Upanishad* concludes with a prayer to *Surya* (sun) and *Agni* (fire).

Prasna Upanishad

This *Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva* Veda and has six sections dealing with six questions or *Prashna* put to a sage by his disciples. The questions are: From where are all the creatures born? How many angels support and illumine a creature and which is supreme? What is the relationship between the life-breath and the soul? What are sleep, waking, and dreams? What is the result of meditating on the word *Aum*? What are the sixteen parts of the Spirit? This *Upanishad* answers all these six vital questions.

Mandukya Upanishad

The *Mandukya Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva* Veda and is an exposition of the principle of *Aum* as consisting of three elements, a, u, m, which may be used to experience the soul itself and contains twelve verses that delineate four levels of consciousness: waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and a fourth mystical state of being one with the soul. This *Upanishad* by itself, it is said, is enough to lead one to liberation.

Maitri Upanishad

The *Maitri Upanishad* is the last of what are known as the principal *Upanishads* and recommends meditation upon the soul (*atman*) and life (*prana*). It says that the body is like a chariot without intelligence but it is driven by an intelligent being, who is pure, tranquil, breathless, selfless, undying, unborn, steadfast, independent and endless. The charioteer is the mind, the reins are the five organs of perception, the horses are the organs of action, and the soul is invisible, imperceptible, incomprehensible, selfless, steadfast, stainless and self-abiding. It also tells the story of a king, *Brihadratha*, who realized that his body is not eternal, and went into the forest to practice austerity, and sought liberation from reincarnating existence.

The *Gita* and the *Tao*

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The few pages provide an “overview” of the *Gita* from the text of the *Tao*. Their intent is to facilitate the student’s reading of this involved and difficult poem. This ‘overview’ looks at the progression of the learning which Krishna seeks to provoke in Arjuna, moving Arjuna from concentration on the external world of his sense impressions to the internal world of his spiritual mind and soul. Indeed, Krishna moves Arjuna from the biological reality in which he is living because he views the battlefield of life as a war between himself and his foster parents and brothers, to his existential reality, that is, to the “war of living” between the mortality of his body in which his immortal soul and spiritual mind is encased.

As in the Buddhist *Dhamapadda*, so also in the Hindu *Gita*, Arjuna’s radical problem is his mental attitude toward life itself which is a reflection of his own self image. Were we to apply the Chinese *Tao* here, the *yin*, as breath of the soul allows the *yang* or body to manifest self, so the body as *being* depends upon the soul as *non-being* and the words we speak through the body can not adequately appreciate or express the emptiness which is the *yin* and *Tao*; thus, we need to know when to stop speaking with the mouth and start listening with the heart, thereby making room for us to hear (tone poems 1 and 32).

Arjuna’s problem stems from the way he thinks about himself and his life; he views his life as born and nurtured thanks to his natural and his foster parents; his very life manifested by his breathing, however, is actually a gift of God, in this case, *Siguna Brahman*, the source of the breath of life itself. So, Arjuna’s actual battle must be waged between the moral world of his body vis a vis the spiritual world of his soul. Krishna, therefore, must teach Arjuna the knowledge which will free him rather than the knowledge which he now practices and follows, a knowledge which renders him dependent upon the mortal world, as a slave of his human birth and nurture. Thus, the second chapter begins with the *yoga* of knowledge, that is, an attempt to bring Arjuna into a union with his mind and his body through breathing so his present self-knowledge as being dependent upon the moral world might be lifted to a self-knowledge as being free through a spiritual self-knowledge – an interesting fact is that the St. Augustine of the fourth century A.D. comments within his dialogue *Soliloquies* that the soul (*anima*) “...holds out life to the body (*corpus*)”. Of course, the Greeks from the Pre-socratics down through the Stoics called the principle which is the source of self-movement *psyche*, translated as soul, but when pronounced in Greek is the Greek word for breath because the Greeks observed that every being which moved itself breathed and so had to have a principle other than *hule*, or matter in its makeup.

The *Gita* is a difficult poem both because translations are less than clear and the multiple names assigned both to Krishna and Arjuna are distracting at best – however, these multiple names have their origin in the human tendency of lovers to assign many names to the “beloved” for the “beloved’s” many manifestations and the lover’s many reactions. So, this editor has chosen again to apply relevant tone poems of the *Tao* for two reasons: first, to show the underlying similarity of religious ideas across cultures since it seems that the *Tao* is some two thousand years older than the *Gita*; secondly, to elucidate the *Gita* text.

Chapter I
Arjuna's Depression

The *Gita* begins by setting the scene and by posing the problem. The scene is set on a battlefield and Arjuna confronts the problem, or the possibility of waging war. However, Arjuna thinks that the war is a physical one between himself and the household of his foster family. Of course, this thought confuses Arjuna and depression sets in so he refuses to fight his foster family. Arjuna misreads the kind of conflict which confronts him because he is thinking and knowing is triggered by his biological reaction, that is, his reaction is an emotional one when, in reality, the conflict confronting him is on the level of existence, that is, on the very basic level of being alive, that is, the natural war between his mortal living within his body and his immortal being within his soul. Krishna now begins to reeducate Arjuna to the real war which consists in choosing to live according to this mortal world of changing reality or to live according to the immortal world of spiritual being.

#73

To know that you do not know is the best.
To pretend to know when you do not know is a disease.
Only when one recognizes this disease as a disease can one be free from the disease.
The wise person is free from the disease because he recognizes this disease to be a disease, he is free from it.

#33

He who knows others is wise;
He who knows himself is enlightened.
He who conquers others has physical strength.
He who conquers himself is strong.
He who is contented is rich.
He who acts with vigor has will;
He who does not lose his place (with *Tao*) will endure.
He who dies but does not really perish enjoys long life.

#13

“Favor and disgrace cause one dismay;
What we value and what we fear are within the Self”.
What does this mean:
“Favor and disgrace cause one dismay”?
Those who receive a favor from above are dismayed when they receive it, and dismayed when they lose it.
What does this mean:
“What we value and what we fear are within the Self”?
We have fears because we have a self (literally, a mortal body).
When we do not regard that self as self (literally, the immortal soul)
What have we to fear?

Therefore, he who values the world as self (as spiritual),
May then be entrusted with the government of the world;
And he who loves the world as self (the spiritual self),
The world may then be entrusted to his care.

Chapter II The Yoga of Knowledge

Krishna's first attempt to teach Arjuna to practice the *yoga* of knowledge. *Yoga* means literally, union, that is, the purpose of yoga is to bring the body and soul together through breathing, so that the body and soul act as one and so that the body no longer divides from the soul through such physical reactions as the emotions, such as pity and its counterpart sorrow – as has occurred in Arjuna within the first chapter, thereby causing his depression. The first lesson is a practical one wherein Krishna observes that a wise person neither feels sorrow for the dead or the living; the wise person is devoid of such emotion – reflect back upon the *Apology* of Plato wherein Socrates lacked both fear of living virtuously and of dying. Krishna calls Arjuna to practice his *dharma*, that is, act righteously which radically means embracing the duty of really being alive, that is of being and acting as a spiritual human – here again, as in the Gilgamesh myth and in Eliade's book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, the human being is characterized essentially as a *homo religiosus*, that is, human most religious.

#47

One may know the world without going out of doors.
One may see The Way of Heaven without looking through the windows.
The farther one goes, the less one knows.
Therefore, the wise know without going about;
Understand without seeing and accomplish without any action.

#7

The universe is everlasting.
The reason the universe is everlasting is that it gives life to others (through its transformations)
There it can long endure.

Therefore, the wise put self last and find self in the foremost place;
Regards his body as accidental and his body is thereby preserved.
Is it not because he does not live for self that his Self is realized?

#21

The marks of great Character (*te*) follow alone from the *Tao*.
The thing which is called *Tao* is elusive, evasive, elusive, evasive.
Yet, latent in it are forms, elusive, evasive.
Yet, latent in it are objects, dark and dim.
Yet, latent in it is the life-force, the life-force being very true.
Latent in it are evidences.

From the days of old till now, its Named (manifested forms, the *yang*) have never ceased,
By which we may view the Father of All Things.
How do I know the shape of the Father of All Things?
Through These! (the manifested forms, the *yang*).

Chapter III The Yoga of Action

Krishna now urges Arjuna to act according to the knowledge of his *dharma* and thereby walk on the path by which he will attain goodness. The path is through the mind's control of the senses. Krishna tells Arjuna that his goodness, happiness and "salvation" lie in his ability to live detached or independent from the mortal world – remember, this English word, salvation comes from the Latin, *salvare*, literally, to be healthy, both physically and spiritually. The real enemy of living, states Krishna is desire, so Arjuna's *dharma* means that mind must kill desire.

and thereby eliminate sorrow. Linguistically, the **Dharma** (of the **Dhammapadda**) is the **Pali** form of this Hindu **Dharma**, a word with no fewer than six (6) meanings. The first is: the one ultimate reality. The other five meanings in order are: an ultimately real event. This ultimately read event, as reflected in life is: righteousness, virtue; as interpreted in Buddha's teaching, it is Doctrine, Scripture as well as Truth; and as an object of the sixth sense-organ, it is the mind. Again, an interesting point is that the Thirteenth Century A.D. Dominican monk and mystic Thomas Aquinas observes in his *Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 80, article 1* that the natural virtue of religion is a function of the virtue of justice (the word is Greek *dike*, frequently translated as righteousness but which actually means balance) in that humans have an obligation or duty to give thanks and honor to God, that is, bring into balance the relationship between the "creature" and the "Creator", the source of life itself.

#56

He who knows, does not speak.
He who speaks does not know.

Close the mouth.
Shut the doors.
Blunt the sharpness.
Untie the tangles.

Soften the light and become one with the dusty world.

This is called profound identification.

Therefore, it is impossible either to be intimate and close to **Tao** or to be distant and indifferent to **Tao**.

It is impossible either to benefit **Tao** or to harm **Tao**.

It is impossible either to honor **Tao** or to disgrace **Tao** for this reason **Tao** is honored by the world.

#12

The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.
The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.
The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.
Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.
Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.
For this reason, the wise are concerned with the belly and not the eyes.
Therefore, the wise reject the one but accept the other.

Chapter IV The Yoga of Knowledge

Arjuna does not understand this **yoga** of action because he does not understand the **yoga** of knowledge, so Krishna returns to this **yoga** of knowledge by observing that Arjuna's spiritual self is unborn just as divinity is unborn so whenever Arjuna turns toward his mortal self, he lives within the passion of mortal birth, losing his very spiritual self and consequent stability and peace. (Reflect that the very fact that the activity of human thinking has no beginning and no end – human thinking is a pure activity which does not stop, not even when humans sleep.) However, this mortal world of birth is one of dependence, one of attachment and thus, lacks the freedom of the spiritual world.

#2

When the people of the world all know beauty as beauty (that is, as the universal, or the absolute),
There arises the recognition of ugliness.
When they all know the good as good (again as a self-constructed universal by which we judge "goods"),
there arises the recognition of evil.
Therefore, Being and non-Being produce each other;
Difficult and easy complete each other;
Long and short contrast each other;
High and low distinguish each other;
Front and behind accompany each other.

Therefore, the wise manage affairs without action, and spread doctrines without words.
 All things arise and he does not turn away from them;
 He produces them but does not rely on his own ability.
 He accomplishes his task but does not claim credit for it.
 It is precisely because he does not claim credit that his accomplishment remains with him.

#4

Tao is empty (like a bowl).
 It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted.
 It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.
 It blunts its sharpness.
 It unties its tangles.
 It softens its light.
 It becomes one with the dusty world.
 Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.
 I do not know whose son it is.
 It seems to have existed before the Lord.

Chapter V The Yoga of Renunciation

Arjuna then asks Krishna how he can achieve spiritual freedom and Krishna tells him only by renouncing his own works. So, whenever Arjuna acts, he must do so without attachment; he must act unselfishly. Another way to express Krishna's advice is that whenever a human being acts, if he or she is to act virtuously, the person must act with unconditioned love, that is, a love which has no conditions attached to the act of love being practiced. Such love is self-purifying and enables one to "connect" with God-as-love. A different way of understanding this "without attachment" is to reflect upon the **yin** and then the **Tao**. The **yin**, after all, is emptiness, non-being, pure capacity with no conditions, so the non-action of this non-being is the source of all **yang**, or being, just as the hub of the wheel is the source of the action of the wheel's progress!

#11

Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel,
 But, it is on its non-being that the utility of the carriage depends.
 Clay is molded to form a utensil,
 But, it is on its non-being that the utility of the utensil depends.
 Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,
 But, it is on its non-being that the utility of the room depends.
 Therefore, turn being into advantage, and turn non-being into utility.

#10

Can you keep the spirit and embrace the One without departing from them?
 Can you concentrate your vital force and achieve the highest degree of weakness like an infant?
 Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless?
 Can you love the people and govern the state without knowledge?
 Can you play the role of the female in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?
 Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action?
 To produce things and to rear them, to produce, but not take possession of them.
 To act, but not to rely on one's ability, to lead them, but not to master them –
 This is called profound and secret virtue.

#65

In ancient times, those who practiced **Tao** well, did not seek to enlighten the people, but to make them ignorant.

People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.

Therefore, he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state.

He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.

One who knows these two things also (knows) the standard.

Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.

Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching and with it all things return to their original state.

Then complete harmony will be reached.

Chapter VI The Yoga of Meditation

Arjuna learns that to practice **yoga** and attain freedom from division of body from soul and freedom from the attachment to the mortal though human passions is possible to one who has become a **yogin**. All the actions of such a **yogin** concentrate by meditating on breathing "...having made equal the incoming and outgoing breaths moving within the nostrils". Such a person has achieved **yoga**, that is, union of spiritual soul with mortal body through breathing, the human's life proximate source. Such a person is freed forever because such a person through this proximate union becomes united with **Seguna Brahman**, the ultimate source of the breath of life in which each human and all living beings participate.

#56

He who knows, does not speak.

He who speaks does not know.

Close the mouth.

Shut the doors.

Blunt the sharpness.

Unite the tangles.

Soften the light.

Become one with the dusty world.

This is called profound identification.

Therefore, it is impossible either to be intimate and close to **Tao** or to be distant and indifferent to **Tao**.

It is impossible either to benefit **Tao** or to harm **Tao**.

It is impossible either to honor **Tao** or to disgrace **Tao**.

For this reason, **Tao** is honored by the world.

#15

The wise of old had subtle wisdom and depth of understanding so profound that they could not be understood.

Because they could not be understood, perforce must they be so described:

Cautious, like crossing a wintry stream;

Irresolute, like one fearing danger all around;

Grave, like one acting as a guest;

Self-effacing, like ice beginning to melt;

Genuine, like a piece of undressed wood;

Open-minded, like a valley and mixing freely like murky water.

Who can find repose in a muddy world?

By lying still, it becomes clear.

Who can maintain his calm for long?

By activity, it comes back to life.

He who embraces this *Tao* guards against being over-full.
Because he guards against being over-full, he is beyond wearing out and renewal.

#19

Abandon being wise and discard wisdom, then the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Abandon humanity and discard righteousness, then people will return to filial piety and deep love.
Abandon skill and discard profit, then there will be no thieves or robbers.
However, these three things are ornaments (*wen*) and are not adequate.
Therefore, let people hold on to these:
Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires.

#20

Banish learning and vexations end.
Banish 'Ah!' (approval) and 'UGH!' (disapproval), how much difference is there?
Between 'good' and 'evil', how much difference is there?
That which men fear is indeed to be feared; but, alas, distant yet is the dawn (of awakening)!
The people of the world are merry-making, as if partaking of the sacrificial feasts, as if mounting the terrace in spring;
I alone am mild, like one unemployed, like a new-born babe who cannot yet smile, unattached, as without a home.
The people of the world have enough and to spare, but I am like one left out.
My heart must be that of a fool, being muddled, nebulous!
The vulgar are knowing, luminous; I alone am dull, confused.
The vulgar are cleaver, self-assured; I alone am depressed, patient as the sea, drifting, seemingly aimless.

The people of the world all have a purpose;
I alone appear stubborn and uncouth.
I alone differ from the other people and value drawing milk from Mother (nature).

Chapter VII The Yoga of Wisdom and Understanding

The result of such meditation is that Arjuna achieves the wisdom of understanding that "all this universe is strung on Me (the blessed one) like jewels on a string". Arjuna, therefore, arises above the "blessed" as divided eight-fold nature, as "earth, water, fire, wind ether, mind, intellect and self-consciousness" or, as manifested within and through *maya* and unites with the 'Blessed' as the "higher nature...the life-soul by which this world is supported". This is to know *Brahman*.

#1

The *Tao* which can be told of is not the eternal *Tao* (See # 14, reproduced under Chapter XVII).
The name which can be named is not the eternal name.
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth; the Named is the mother of all things.

Therefore, let there always be non-being (*yin*), so we may see their subtlety and let there always be being (*yang*), so we may see their outcome.
The two are the same.
But, after they are produced, they have different names.

They both may be called deep and profound, deeper and more profound, the door of all subtleties!

#7

The universe is everlasting.
The reason the universe is everlasting is that it gives life to others (through its transformations).
There it can long endure.

Therefore the wise person puts (physical) self last and finds (spiritual) self in the foremost place;
Regards his body as accidental and his body is thereby preserved.
Is it not because he does not live for (physical) Self
That his (spiritual) Self is realized?

#21

The marks of great Character (*te*) follow alone from the *Tao*.
The thing which is called *Tao* is elusive, evasive, elusive, evasive.
Yet, latent in it are all forms, elusive, evasive.
Yet, latent in it are objects, dark and dim.
Yet, latent in it at is the life-force, the life-force being very true.
Latent in it are evidences.

From the days of old till now, its Named (manifested forms) have never ceased, by which we may view the Father of all Things.

How do I know the shape of the Father of All Things?
Through these (the manifested forms, beings or *yang*)!

#51

Tao produces them.
Virtue fosters them.
Matter gives them physical form.
The circumstances and tendencies complete them.
Therefore, the ten thousand things esteem *Tao* and honor virtue.
Tao is esteemed and virtue is honored without anyone's order.
They always come spontaneously.

Therefore, *Tao* produces them and virtue fosters them.
They rear them and virtue fosters them.
They rear them and develop them.
They give them security and give them peace.
They nurture them and protect them.
Tao produces them but does not take possession of them.
Tao leads them but does not master them.
This is called profound and secret virtue.

Chapter VIII The Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman

Arjuna asks Krishna what this Brahman is? Krishna responds: "Brahman is the indestructible, the supreme; the Self is called the essential nature and *karma* is the name of the creative power which causes beings to exist". Remember this Hindu *karma* has the same meanings as the Buddhist *Dharma*: The first is: the one ultimate reality, an ultimately real event; and this ultimately real event, as reflected in life is: righteousness, virtue; as interpreted in Buddha's teaching, it is Doctrine, Scripture as well as Truth; and as an object of the sixth sense-organ, it is the mind. Here obviously, the first meaning pertains, namely, the one ultimate reality, but all the others relate to this first.

#1

The *Tao* which can be told of is not the eternal *Tao*.
 The name which can be named is not the eternal name:
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
 The Named is the mother of all things.

Therefore, let there always be non-being, so we may see their subtlety.
 And let there always be being, so we may see their out-come.
 The two are the same.
 But after they are produced, they have different names.
 They both may be called deep and profound.
 Deeper and more profound.
 The door of all subtleties!

#32

Tao is eternal and has no name.
 Though its simplicity seems insignificant, no one in the world can master it.
 If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously.
 Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew.
 Without the command of man, it drips evenly over all.
 As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names.
 As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop:
 It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.
 Analogously, *Tao* in the world may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea.

#4

Tao is a hollow vessel,
 And its use is inexhaustible!
 Fathomless!
 Like the fountainhead of all things.
 Its sharp edges rounded off,
 Its tangles untied,
 Its light tempered,
 Its turmoil submerged,
 Yet dark like deep water it seem to remain.
 I do not know whose Son it is,
 An image of what existed before God.

#23

Nature says few words.
 For the same reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning, nor does a rainstorm last a whole day.
 What causes them?
 It is Heaven and Earth (Mother Nature).
 If even Heaven and Earth cannot make them last long, how much less can man?

Therefore, he who follows *Tao* is identified with *Tao*.
 He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.
 He who abandons *Tao* is identified with the abandonment of *Tao*.
 He who is identified with *Tao* – *Tao* is happy to have him.
 And he who is identified with the abandonment – the abandonment is also happy to abandon him.
 It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

#7

The universe is everlasting.
 The reason the universe is everlasting
 Is that it gives life to others (through its transformations).
 There it can long endure.

Therefore the wise person puts self last,
 And finds self in the foremost place;
 Regards his body as accidental,
 And his body is thereby preserved.
 Is it not because he does not live for Self
 That his Self is realized?

Chapter IX

The Yoga of Sovereign Knowledge and Mystery

Krishna explains to Arjuna that Brahman's un-manifested form pervades all this world and reveals the mystery, namely, that "All beings rest in Me but I do not rest in them". The profane maya (confer Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*), therefore, itself witnesses to the sacred presence of Brahman. Note that the distinction between the maya and Brahman precludes any identity between this Brahman and "me" and this "me" and the world, including any and every individual soul contrary to what some interpreters claim (namely, that this Hindi tenant constitutes "pantheism" – which in Greek merely means "God is everywhere", something which even *Genesis* states to be unequivocal!) If we apply this to ourselves, say our writing, or our artistic works, such as sculpting or painting, this only means that each writer or artist is present in the written work or artistic work which each produces!

#52

There was a beginning of the universe which may be called the Mother of the universe.
 He who has found the Mother (the pictograph indicates *Tao*) and thereby understands her sons (beings),
 Having understood her sons (beings) still keeps to the Mother will be free from danger throughout his
 lifetime.

Close the mouth.

Shut the doors (of cunning and desire) and to the end of life there will be peace without toil.

Open the mouth, meddle with affairs and to the end of life there will be no salvation.

Seeing what is small is called enlightenment.

Keeping to weakness is called strength.

Use the light, revert to enlightenment and thereby avoid danger to one's life.

This is called practicing the eternal.

#28

He who knows male and keeps to the female becomes the ravine of the world.

Being the ravine of the world, he will never depart from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of infancy.

He who knows white (*yang*, being light and, thus, white), yet keeps to the black (*yin*, being shadow and, thus darkness) becomes the model for the world.

Being the model for the world, he will never deviate from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of the non-ultimate.

He who knows glory but keeps to humility becomes the valley of the world.

He will be proficient in eternal virtue and will return to the state of un-carved wood (non-being).

When the un-carved wood is broken up, it is turned into concrete things (beings).

But, when the wise use it, he becomes the learning official.

Therefore, the great ruler does not cut up.

#49

The wise has no decided opinions and feelings (*hsin*, literally “heart” which denotes both thinking and feeling in Chinese; indeed, “knowing” for the Chinese is feeling, as in the belly).

But regards the people’s opinions and feelings as his own.

The good ones I declare good and the bad ones I also declare good.

That is the goodness of Virtue.

The honest ones I believe; the liars I also believe.

That is the goodness of Virtue.

The wise dwell in the world peacefully, harmoniously.

The people of the world are brought into a community of heart and the wise regard them all as their own children.

Chapter X The Yoga of Manifestations

This chapter describes the fruit of meditation, that is, the understanding of how Brahman (the Sacred) is present in and through the *maya* (the profane) so this chapter enables Arjuna to unite with Brahman through Brahman’s manifestations within this world: “How may I know You, O *Yogin*, by meditating always? What states of being are you, O Blessed Lord, to be thought by me?” Remember that in Chapter VIII, I listed the six meanings of *dharma*, the first of which was the Ultimate Reality and the sixth of which was: “...as an object of the sixth sense-organ, it is the mind”. Thus, the perfect circle exists, that is, the beginning (the Ultimate Reality) is the end as contemplated by the human mind. So what began as achieving union of soul with body through breathing now becomes achieving union with *Brahman* through the human mind! “I am the Self seated in the hearts of all beings...I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings” – this, of course is why the *Gita* ends with “*om*”, the breathing forth of this union of the human being with *Brahman*! Note that this passage echoes that of the *Old Testament, Deuteronomy*:

...Yhwh, our God, is the one Yhwh. You shall love Yhwh with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written in your heart...(Dt. 6:4-7)

#4

Tao is empty (like a bowl).

It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted.

It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.

It blunts its sharpness.

It unties its tangles.

It softens its light.

It becomes one with the dusty world.

Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.

I do not know whose son it is.

It seems to have existed before the Lord.

#16

Attain complete emptiness.

Maintain steadfast quiet.

All things come into being (*yang*) and I see thereby their return.

All things flourish, but each one returns to its root (*yin*).

This return to its root means tranquility.
 It is called returning to one's destiny.
 To return to destiny is called the eternal (**Tao**).
 To know the eternal (**Tao**) is called enlightenment.
 Not to know the eternal is to act blindly and results in disaster.
 He who knows the eternal is all-embracing.
 Being all-embracing, he is impartial.
 Being impartial, he is kingly (universal).
 Being kingly, he is one with Mother Nature.
 Being one with Mother Nature, he is in accord with **Tao**.
 Being in accord with **Tao**, he is everlasting and is free from danger throughout his lifetime.

#67

All the world says that my **Tao** is great and does not seem to resemble the ordinary.
 It is precisely because **Tao** is great that **Tao** does not resemble the ordinary.
 If **Tao** did resemble it, **Tao** would have been small for a long time.

I have three treasures: guard and keep them:
 The first is deep love.
 The second is frugality and the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.
 Because of deep love, one is courageous.
 Because of frugality, one is generous.
 Because of daring not to be ahead of the world, one becomes the leader of the world.
 Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love, to be generous by forsaking frugality and to be ahead of
 the world by forsaking following behind – that is fatal.

For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack and to be firm in the case of defense.
 When Heaven is to save a person, Heaven will protect him through deep love.

#73

He who is brave in daring will be killed.
 He who is brave in not-daring will love.
 Of these two, one is advantageous and one is harmful.
 Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it dislikes?
 Even the wise consider it a difficult question.
 The Way of Heaven does not compete and yet, it skillfully achieves victory.
 The Way does not speak and yet, it skillfully responds to things.
 The Way comes to you without your invitation.
 The Way is not anxious about things and yet, it plans well.
 Heaven's net is indeed vast; though its meshes are wide, it misses nothing.

Chapter XI The Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form

Arjuna now asks to see that of which Krishna has spoken, however, the answer is: "You can not see Me with your own eye. I give you a divine eye. Behold My Divine **yoga**" – this is an interesting chapter, but this statement is most interesting because the Catholic Christian Dominican teacher and mystic, Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century A.D. observes within his *Summa Contra Gentiles, chapter LI (51)* that after death the righteous, or virtuous will see God, but not by their own effort or ability because human beings, as creatures can not "see" the Creator – since now humans "see" in a mirror; however, God will give the virtuous creatures the capacity to see God, as promised by Moses "face to face".

#1

The **Tao** which can be told of is not the eternal **Tao**.
 The name which can be named is not the eternal name:
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Mother Earth;
 The Named is the Mother of all things.

Therefore, let there always be non-being (the **yīn**), so we may see their subtlety and let there always be being (the **yáng**), so we may see their outcome.
 The two are the same.

#7

The universe is everlasting.
 The reason the universe is everlasting is that it gives life to others (through its transformations).
 There it can long endure.

Therefore, the wise puts self last and finds self in the foremost place.
 The wise regards his body as accidental and his body is thereby preserved.
 It is not because he does not live for Self that his self is realized?

#21

The Marks of great Character (**te**) follow alone from the **Tao**.
 The thing which is called **Tao**, is elusive, evasive, elusive, evasive.
 Yet latent in it are forms, elusive, evasive.
 Yet latent in it are objects, dark and dim.
 Yet, latent in it is the life-force, the life-force being very true.
 Latent in it are evidences.

From the days of old till now its Named (Manifest forms, **yáng**, beings) have never ceased by which we
 may view the Father of All things (beings).
 How do I know the shape of the Father of all things (**yáng**, beings)?
 Through these (the manifest forms, **yáng**, beings).

#62

Tao is the storehouse of all things.
 It is the good man's treasure and the bad man's refuge.
 Fine words can buy honor and fine deeds can gain respect from others, even if a man is bad, when has
Tao rejected him?
 Therefore, on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers, rather than present
 large pieces of jade proceeded by teams of four horses, it is better to kneel and offer this to **Tao**.

Why did the ancients highly value this **Tao**?
 Did they not say, "those who seek shall have **Tao** and those who sin shall be freed"?
 For this reason, **Tao** is valued by the world, but after they are produces, they have different names.
 They both may be called deep and profound, deeper and more profound, the door of all subtleties.

#25

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete which existed before Heaven and Earth soundless
 and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change.
 It operates everywhere and is free from danger.

It may be considered the Mother of the universe.
 I do not know its name, but I call it *Tao*.
 If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great.
 Now, being Great means functioning everywhere.
 Functioning everywhere means returning to the original point.

Therefore, *Tao* is Great; Heaven is Great; Earth is great and the king is also Great.
 There are four things in the universe and the king is one of them.
 Man models himself after Earth
 Earth models itself after Heaven.
 Heaven models itself after *Tao* and *Tao* models itself after Mother Nature.

#34

The Great *Tao* flows everywhere.
 It may go left or right.
 All things depend on it for life and it does not turn away from them.
 It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.
 It clothes and feeds all things, but does not claim to be master over them.
 Always without desires, it may be called The Small.
 All things come to it and it does not master them.
 It may be called The Great.
 Therefore, the wise never strive themselves for the Great and thereby the Great is achieved.

Chapter XII The *Yoga* of Devotion

Arjuna now asks who is more learned in *yoga*, those who are always disciplined and honor, “You or those who worship the Imperishable and the Un-Manifest?” Arjuna answers that the most learned in *yoga* are those who “...fixing their mind on Me, worship Me with complete discipline and with supreme faith”. However, to worship the Imperishable and the Un-Manifest while in the body is very difficult and much harder. Then Krishna enumerates the characteristics of those devoted to Brahman who are so disciplined.

#23

Nature says few words.
 For the same reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning:
 Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day:
 What causes them?
 It is Heaven and Earth (Mother nature).
 If even Heaven and Mother nature cannot make them last long, how much less can men?

Therefore, he who follows *Tao* is identified with *Tao*.
 He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.
 He who abandons *Tao* is identified with the abandonment of *Tao*.
 He who is identified with *Tao* – *Tao* is also happy to have him and he who is identified with the
 abandonment – the abandonment is also happy to abandon him.
 It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

Chapter XIII The *Yoga* of the Distinction between the Field and the Knower of the Field

The prior chapter raises the distinction between the “field” and the “knower of the field”, an essential distinction for anyone seeking union with Brahman through the discipline of being a *yogin*. The “field” is everything mortal, the *maya* of this world, the mortal, whereas the “knower of the field” is “constancy in knowledge of the Self, insight into the end of essential knowledge”, that is the spiritual world, the eternal. He who knows this distinction and lives by it “attains to the Supreme”, “the light of lights beyond darkness”.

#1

The *Tao* which can be told of is not the eternal *Tao*.
 The name which can be named is not the eternal name:
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
 The Names is the mother of all things.

Therefore, let there always be *non-being* (the *yin*) so we may see their subtlety and let there always be *being* (the *yang*), so we may see their outcome.

The two are the same, but after they are produced, they have different names.
 They both may be called deep and profound, deeper and more profound, the door of all subtleties!

#4

Tao is a hollow vessel and its use is inexhaustible!
 Fathomless! Like the fountain-head of all things (all *beings*):
 Its sharp edges rounded off, its tangles untied, its light tempered, its turmoil submerged.
 Yet, dark like deep water it seems to remain.
 I do not know whose Son it is, an image of what existed before God.

#32

Tao is eternal and has no name.
 Though its simplicity seems insignificant, no one in the world can master it.
 If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously.
 Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew.
 Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all.
 As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names.
 As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop.
 It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.
 Analogically, *Tao* in the world may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea.

Chapter XIV

The Yoga of the distinction of the Three Gunas

Interesting is the fact that this chapter reverts to a biological analogy to explain how the wise become united to Brahman and, therefore, become spiritual and immortal by participation: “My womb is the great Brahman; in that I place the seed and the birth of all beings comes from that, Oh Arjuna”. Then Krishna lists the characteristics in which any jogin or wise person will share when united to Brahman. An interesting point is that Brahman observes: “Even those who are devotees of other gods and who worship them full of faith, even they worship Me only” – St. Paul parallels this observation within the Acts of the Apostles while viewing an altar To An Unknown God erected by the Council of the Areopagus within Athens (*Acts: 17:22-34*)

#28

He who knows male (*yang*) and keeps to the female (*yin*) becomes the ravine of the world.
 Being the ravine of the world, he will never depart from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of infancy.

He who knows white (**yang**, or light), yet keeps to the black (**yin**, or shadow and thus darkness) becomes the model for the world.

Being the model for the world, he will never deviate from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of the non-ultimate.

He who knows glory but keeps to humility becomes the valley of the world.

He will be proficient in eternal virtue and returns to the state of the un-carved wood (**yin**).

When the un-carved wood (**yin**) is broken up, it is turned into concrete things (**yang**, or beings)

But, when the wise use it, the wise become the learning officials.

Therefore, the great ruler does not cut-up.

#29

There are those who will conquer the world and make of it (what they conceive or desire).

I see that they will not succeed for the world is God's own Vessel.

It can not be made (by human interference).

He who makes it spoils it.

He who holds it, looses it.

For, some things go forward, some things follow behind;

Some things blow hot and some blow cold;

Some are strong and some are weak.

Some may break and some may fall.

Hence the wise eschew (avoid) excess, eschew extravagance, eschew pride.

Chapter XV

The Yoga of the Highest Spirit

This chapter presents another analogy to understand this relationship of unity of all beings (**yang**) to Brahman and Brahman to all beings (**yang**). The analogy is simple: that of a tree whose branches are above and whose roots are below the ground – again, note that in the *New Testament*, the Christ is quoted as comparing Himself as the vine and His followers as the branches (*St. John: 15: 1-17*). Again, the point is that Brahman is "...seated in the hearts of all; from Me (come) memory, wisdom and argument. I am that which is to be known by the *Vedas*; I am the author of the *Vedanta* (the *Upanishads*) and I am also the knower of the *Vedas*" – Here even the Gita claims divine inspiration in its authorship, just as do both the *Old* and *New Testaments* within the Jewish and Catholic Christian traditions. Also, this identification of Brahman with beings (**yang**) as existing as *maya* finds the same analogy within both *Genesis* and *Deuteronomy*, two of the five books of the *Pentateuch* or the *Torah*:

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. (Image, in Hebrew is *zelem*, literally, image and likeness.) (*Genesis:1:27*)

...Yhwh, our God is the one Yhwh. You shall love Yhwh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart...(*Dt. 6:4-7*)

Of course, as noted, above, this also mirrors Christ's own analogies about Himself and his followers found in John, namely, Christ being the vine and his followers being the branches and Christ being the Head and his followers being the other bodily members: (*John: 15:1-17* and St. Paul: *1 Corinthians:12:12-30*)

#65

In Ancient times, those who practiced **Tao** well did not seek to enlighten the people, but to make them ignorant.

People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.

Therefore, he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state.

He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.

One who knows these things also knows the standard.

Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.
 Virtue becomes deep and far reaching and with it all things return to their original state.
 Then complete harmony will be reached.

#67

All the world says that my **Tao** is great and does not seem to resemble the ordinary.
 It is precisely because **Tao** is great that Tao does not resemble the ordinary.
 If **Tao** did resemble it, **Tao** would have been small for a long time.
 I have three treasures; guard and keep them:
 The first is deep love.
 The second is frugality and the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.
 Because of deep love, one is courageous; because of frugality, one is generous; because of not daring to
 be ahead of the world, one becomes the leader of the world.
 Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love, to be generous by forsaking frugality and to be ahead of
 the world by forsaking following behind –
 This is fatal.
 For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack; and to be firm in the case of defense.
 When Heaven is to save a person, Heaven will protect him through deep love.

Chapter XVI

The Yoga of the Distinction Between the Divine and Demoniatic Endowments

This chapter draws a sharp distinction between the yogin and “...(one) who is born with the demoniac nature...”, that is, between one who lives a spiritual life and one who lives a material life. The virtues of the former include “...non-violence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peace, absence of guile, compassion towards beings, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness...” and the vices of the latter include “...hypocrisy, arrogance, excessive pride...anger, harshness and also ignorance...” Noteworthy here is the Krishna observes that the vicious people do not believe in God, however, the virtuous people believe in God. Mercia Eliade also makes this observation when he discusses the world as sacred and contrasts it with the world as purely profane, conceived of by the “secular humanists” who deny all Transcendence – which constitutes a contradiction since to state that no absolute exists is to ipso facto to declare that an absolute exists! (Read The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 200-206.)

#42

Tao produced the One (Mother Nature).
 The One produced the two (**yin** and **yang**).
 The two produced the three (Mother Nature and **yin, yang**).
 The three produced the ten thousand things (**beings**).
 The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang and even through the blending of the
 material force they achieve harmony.
 People hate to be children without parents, lonely people without spouses, or men without food to eat
 and yet kings and lords call themselves by names.
 Therefore, it is often the case that things gain by losing and lose by gaining.
 What others have taught, I teach also: ‘violent and fierce people do not die a natural death’.
 I shall make this the father of my teaching.

Chapter XVII

The Yoga of the Threefold Division of Faith

Krishna now describes the various kinds of faith because Arjuna wants to know the characteristic of faith which unites a believer to **Brahman**, since various kinds of faith are practiced by human beings – indeed, some humans have faith to have no faith, that is, believe not to believe! Krishna defines human beings as “faith people – the **homo religious**, or most religious human beings which Eliade, Cicero and Aquinas find humans to be so both Cicero and Aquinas define the verb religion to be composed of three Latin verbs or actions: to re-read, to re-choose and to re-bind. Then, Krishna states: “whatever faith a man has, that he is”. **Sattvic** men worship the gods; **rajasic** men worship demi-gods and demons and the **tamastic** men worship elemental spirits and ghosts”. **Sattvic** humans are united with Brahman through breathing of **OM** whereas the other two groups of men are not so they lack the breath of spiritual life!

#10

Can you keep the spirit and embrace the One without departing from them?
 Can you concentrate your vital force and achieve the highest degree of weakness like an infant?
 Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless?
 Can you love the people and govern the state without knowledge?
 Can you play the role of the female in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?
 Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action?
 To produce things and to rear them, to produce, but not to take possession of them?
 To act, but not to rely on one's own ability?
 To lead them, but not to master them?
 This is called profound and secret virtue.

#14

We look at it (**Tao**) and do not see it.
 Its name is The Invisible.
 We listen to it and do not hear it.
 Its name is The Inaudible.
 We touch it and do not find it.
 Its name is The Subtle (Formless). (See # 1 under Chapter VII.)

These three cannot be further inquired into and hence merge into one.
 Going up high, it is not bright and coming down low, it is not dark.
 Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name.
 It reverts to nothingness.
 This is called shape without shape.
 From without objects, it is The Vague and Elusive.
 Meet it and you will not see its head.
 Follow it and you will not see its back.
 Hold on to the **Tao** (the) Old in order to master the things of the present.
 From this one may know the primeval beginning (of the universe).
 This is called the bond (or, thread) of **Tao**.

#16

Attain complete emptiness; maintain steadfast quiet.

All things come into being and I see thereby their return.
 All things flourish, but each one returns to its root.
 This return to its root means tranquility.
 It is called returning to one's destiny.
 To return to destiny is called the eternal (**Tao**).
 To know the eternal is called enlightenment.

Not to know the eternal is to act blindly and results in disaster.
 He who knows the eternal is all-embracing.
 Being all-embracing, he is impartial.
 Being impartial, he is kingly (universal).
 Being kingly, he is one with Nature.
 Being one with Nature, he is in accord with *Tao*.
 Being in accord with *Tao*, he is everlasting and is free from danger throughout his lifetime.

Chapter XVII The Yoga of Freedom of Renunciation

The consequences of the instruction of the prior seventeen chapters is that Arjuna says: "I desire to know...the true essence of renunciation and abandonment...and the distinction between them..." Krishna then defines renunciation and abandonment simply as "...the giving up of acts of desire" and "...the surrendering of the fruits of all actions". But, such a life can only be lived as a result of unconditional love which basically is identical with the *Tao's Way*, that is, the way of non-action characteristic of the female, the yin, the valley and the earth whose abandonment of self permits conception, pregnancy and birth!

Krishna offers this conclusion to this *Gita* dialogue between Arjuna and himself:
 "And he who shall study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him I would be worshiped with the sacrifice of wisdom.
 Such is My thought".

#23

Nature says few words.
 For the same reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning:
 Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day:
 What causes them?
 It is Heaven and Earth (Nature).
 If even Heaven and Earth cannot make them last long,
 How much less can man?
 Therefore, he who follows *Tao* is identified with *Tao*
 He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.
 He who abandons *Tao* is identified with the abandonment of *Tao*.
 He who is identified with *Tao* - *Tao* is also happy to have him.
 And he who is identified with the abandonment - the abandonment is also happy to abandon him.
 It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

#25

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete which existed before heaven and earth.
 Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change.
 It operates everywhere and is free from danger.
 It may be considered the Mother of the universe.
 I do not know its name; I call it *Tao*.
 If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great.
 Now being great means functioning everywhere.
 Functioning everywhere means to be far-reaching.
 Being far-reaching means returning to the original point.
 Therefore, *Tao* is great.
 Heaven is great.
 Earth is great and the king is also great.
 There are four great things in the universe and the king is one of them.

Man models himself after Earth.
 Earth models itself after Heaven.
 Heaven models itself after **Tao** and **Tao** models itself after nature.

#34

The Great **Tao** flows everywhere.
 It may go left or right.
 All things depend on it for life and it does not turn away from them.
 It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.
 It clothes and feeds all things, but does not claim to be master over them.
 Always without desires, it may be called The Small.
 All things come to it and it does not master them.
 It may be called The Great.
 Therefore, the wise never strive for the great and thereby the great is achieved.

#40

Reversion is the action of **Tao**.
 Weakness is the function of **Tao**.
 All things in the world come from being (**yang**) and being comes from non-being(**yin**).

#41

When the highest type of men hear **Tao**, they diligently practice it.
 When the average type of men hear **Tao**, they half believe in it.
 When the lowest type of men hear **Tao**, they laugh heartily at it.
 If they did not laugh at it, it would not be **Tao**.
 Therefore, there is the established saying:
 The **Tao** which is bright (**yang**) appears to be dark (**yin**).
 The **Tao** which goes forward appears to fall backward.

Great virtue appears like a valley.
 Great purity appears like disgrace.
 Far-reaching virtue appears as if insufficient.
 True substance appears to be changeable.
 The great square has no corners.
 The great implement (or talent) is slow to mature.
 Great music sounds faint.
 Great form has no shape.
 Tao is hidden and nameless.
 Yet, it is **Tao** alone that skillfully provides for all and brings them to perfection.

#45

What is most perfect seems to be incomplete, but it, utility is unimpaired.
 What is most full seems to be empty;
 But its usefulness is inexhaustible.
 What is most full seems to be empty;
 But, its usefulness is inexhaustible.
 What is most straight seems to be crooked.
 The greatest skill seems to be clumsy.
 The greatest eloquence seems to stutter.
 Hasty movement overcomes cold,
 (But), tranquility overcomes heat.

By being greatly tranquil,
One is qualified to be the ruler of the world.

#46

When **Tao** prevails in the world, galloping horses are turned back to fertilize the fields.

When **Tao** does not prevail in the world, war horses thrive in the suburbs.

There is no calamity greater than lavish desires.

There is not greater guilt than discontentment.

And there is no greater disaster than greed.

He who is contented with contentment is always contented.