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*All things arise and cease due to
interdependent causes and conditions*

~Δ~

The Eighteen Yogas of the Bhagavad Gita

By

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The Eighteen Yogas of the Bhagavad Gita

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The Gita story is a dialogue between Arjuna, a royal warrior, and Krishna, his spiritual teacher. Both are riding a chariot reviewing the massive contending forces about to engage in battle. Arjuna grapples with a momentous decision. And he questions Krishna for the right thing to do. And Krishna answers clearly.

The battle about to be fought is a metaphysical metaphor for the original Holy War. It is not a battle to be fought outside of ourselves. This is the ultimate battle *within*, the Armageddon of the heart and mind, to regain that *inner* Divine Kingdom lost on earth. Only the war within is holy, between selfishness and selflessness. The war is *holy* because the *holiness* is a restoration of our own original *Divine Wholeness*, from illusion to reality.

The Sanskrit word *Gita* means *Song*, and *Bhagavad* means the *Beloved* as the *Divine* or *God*; thus, *Bhagavad Gita* is *The Song of God*, *The Divine Song*, or *The Song of the Beloved*.

The original metric verses of the Gita are in classical Sanskrit. It is sang as a devotional hymn of spiritual realization. Its melodious rhythm is mantram, meaning, the power of sound can be invoked by the human voice motivated with the right understanding, as our spiritual centers or *chakras* are finely tuned.

Songs are much easier to remember. And this is how the Gita has been transmitted from time immemorial until its words were written into the immortal verses as they are today. The Gita's popularity is now made evident by several English translations.

The Greatness of the Gita, *Gita-mahatmyan*, is in the restoration of our own divine greatness, the awakening towards our own divinity in oneness with the source of Godhood.

The Spiritual Path of Gita Practice, *Gita-karadi-nyasah*, is a life to be lived, a day to day practice, leading to Divine realization.

The Gita Meditation, *Gita-dyanam*, is undertaken to turn our outward consciousness within where the Divine resides and awaits our prodigal return.

The significant highlights of the eighteen chapters of the Gita are grouped into three sets of yogas as follows:

- Preparatory Yogas, The First Set of Seven Chapters, 1 to 7
- Principal Yogas, The Second Set of Five Chapters, 8 to 12
- Final Yogas, The Third and Last Set of Six Chapters, 13 to 18.

The word *yoga* simply means union, that is, the original unity of our human and divine consciousness. *Yoga* from *yuj* means *to yoke, to hitch, bind, unite* or *connect* to a source of power, referring to divine power, also suggesting our spiritual connection as we re-unite with Divinity within each one of us.

• Preparatory Yogas, The First Set of Seven Chapters, 1 to 7:

Chapter 1. *Vishada-yoga*, Yoga of Decision-making

The necessary preparatory qualities for yoga are symbolized by the great names of the contending Generals, who represent ideal qualities that are awakened in our consciousness, such as, heroism, skill, valor, strength, loyalty, devotion to duty.

Chapter 2. *Samkhya-yoga*, Yoga of Total Reality

The valiant effort toward a true understanding of reality enables us to make the right spiritual decisions in life, from the materialistic to spirituality, from the unreal to the real, from ignorance to wisdom, from revelation to realization.

Chapter 3. *Karma-yoga*, Yoga of Action or Service

Karma is resolved by action without selfish motives or by selfless service, from egotism to de-egotization.

Chapter 4. *Jñānavibhaga-yoga*, Yoga of Devotion to Study

The devotion to the study of the highest spiritual truths is indispensable in the pursuit of yoga or divine realization.

Chapter 5. *Karma-samnyasa-yoga*, Yoga of Renunciation

The path of selfless service is undertaken for its own sake, not for the hope of a reward in heaven or for the escape from a punishment in hell. Thus the renunciation for all the fruits or results of action lead to enlightenment.

Chapter 6. *Adhyatma-yoga*, Yoga of Our Divine Nature

The role of meditation, inner solitude, spiritual awareness, control of mind, temperance, purity of heart, one-pointedness, fearlessness, detachment, desirelessness, sense stillness, abiding joy, peace, earnestness, right means, patience, regularity, perfect faith.

Chapter 7. *Jñāna-yoga*, Yoga of Spiritual Study

The unity of the human mind with the divine mind is restored by the study of spirituality. Thoughts dwell on the practice of spiritual discrimination, unity, harmony, wisdom.

• Principal Yogas, The Second Set of Five Chapters, 8 to 12:

Chapter 8. *Akshara-Brahma-yoga*, Yoga of Divine Realization

Attained by regular meditation, divine remembrance, stillness, senses shut down, mind in the heart, dedication, concentration, undivided love, absorption, perseverance, self-control.

Chapter 9. *Rajavidya-rajaguhya-yoga*, Yoga of the Royal Secret

Profound wisdom purifies and confers immortal freedom through one's devotion to the Divine within all creation.

Chapter 10. *Vibhuti-yoga*, Yoga of Divine Glory

The ineffable and glorious attributes of the Supreme as the One among the Many.

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Chapter 11. *Vishvarupadarshana-yoga*, Yoga of Illumination

Awesome and sweeping cosmic vision of the mystery and splendor of unlimited reality in its immortal form.

Chapter 12. *Bhakti-yoga*, Yoga of Devotion

Engenders the equanimity poised between friend and foe, praise and blame, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, selfish and unselfish, harmony and disharmony, true and false faith.

- Final Yogas, The Third and Last Set of Six Chapters, 13 to 18:

Kshetrajñā means "highly focused determination"

Vibhaga means "ardent ever glowing devotion"

Chapter 13. *Kshetrajñāvibhaga-yoga*, Yoga of Determination

Exposition of differences between the Knower and the Known, Matter and Spirit, Form and Consciousness.

Chapter 14. *Gunatrayāvibhaga-yoga*, Yoga of Manifest Reality

The triune cosmic qualities of Inertia-Activity-Harmony are described in their interaction with our personality and spirituality.

Chapter 15. *Purushottama-yoga*, Yoga of Unmanifest Reality

The transcendental nature of abstract or absolute reality amidst change and the changeless.

Chapter 16. *Daivasurasampadvibhaga-yoga*, Yoga of Spirituality

Exhortations on determination, dedication, self-control, sincerity, truthfulness, love, service, detachment, joy, renunciation, harmlessness, compassion, gentleness, vigor, patience, will, purity, goodwill, humility, uprightness, honesty.

Chapter 17. *Shraddhatrayāvibhaga-yoga*, Yoga of True Faith

The essence of all true action as faith or confidence in self-discipline, kind speech, continence, non-violence, calmness, trustworthiness, affection, respect, self-sacrifice, goodness.

Chapter 18. *Samnyasa-yoga*, Yoga of Absolute Reality

Summary pointing out the implications of freedom and self-renunciation in relation to cosmic reality, thereby, resolving all doubts about spiritual realization.

Finally, no study papers are ever a substitute for reading the actual verses of the Bhagavad Gita, approaching its study and practice with an open mind eager for the ageless wisdom. ~ Δ ~

Adapted from: *The Bhagavad Gita* by Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das, Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1926; 7th printing, 1979. See [Table of] Contents, pages vii-xiii.

Best readable modern translation: *The Bhagavad Gita* by [Ekanatha] Eknath Easwaran, 1985, Blue Mountain Center of Meditation: Nilgiri Press, Box 477, Petaluma, CA 94953. Inexpensive paperback edition.

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