

The Principles of a Higher Order of Life

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The Import of the Gita's First Chapter

The war of life which's Gita's song
Is spread on Kurukshetra's field,
The arena that this world is,
A house disjointed, 'gainst itself.

The seer and the seen do stand
Opposed to each other, how strange!
Else how would seer run to seen
If seen is not apart, afar.

To grab, to pound, annihilate
The seen's existence out and out,
By love or hatred as the means
Is seer's purpose throughout life.

In love the seen is pulled, absorbed,
And made one's own, nay, one's own self,
So that the seen is all destroyed
And seer ever reigns supreme.

In hatred does the seer clinch
The life and substance of the seen
By abrogation, cutting off
The very soul and being seen's.

This confrontation is all life,
The good and evil are all here –
The high and low and great and small
Are all within this battlefield.

Eternal is this painful hold
Which seer exerts on the seen,
Ambivalent as love-hate grip
Of seer-seen, Bharata war.

The Pandavas and Kauravas
Descend from single family;
Dvaipayana, the divine sage,
Was source of all this warring fold.

So does the range of seer-seen
Is transcendent in origin,
For even conflict is on ground
Which's common both to contenders.

This supreme ground, the ground of grounds,
Is Gita's gospel's highest ground,
The ground of action as worship,
And ground to unite God and soul.

The warrior hates his opponents
And raises arms to tear and kill;
This is the scene where objects seen
Are treated as other than self.

But love erupts and pity wails
For warrior-chief is also friend
And brother-born to outside world
In secret connection to things.

Lo, men kill men by waging wars,
But wars are waged for peace of men –
Contradiction is life on earth,
It's hard to know what's right and wrong.

Thus Arjuna bewails his fate,
He loves and hates the Kauravas,
As all do love in zest the world,
And also cry that world is hell.

The past, present and future's men
Are represented her in one
As symbol of eternal man,
The soul that ensouled Arjuna.

Who is the generalissimo
Of impending armageddon
Now weeps in deepest affection
For what he hates on other side.

Do people love all this mankind,
For whose welfare is service done?
And yet to protect man from man
Law courts and soldiers are deployed.

This wisdom's anguish is the theme
Of first of chapters in the text,
The section first which though a wail
Is Yoga called of dejection.

It's Yoga, sure, for here, in this
Are dug up seeds of illusion
Which keeps the soul bound hard to earth
Through love as well as hate of all.

The mystery is seeker's grief,
The first condition of ascent
To freedom gain from thralldom life's
By surrender and detachment.

In supreme disillusioning
Of one's own role and world's status,
Thus humbly reached in careful search,
The path is cleared for light to dawn.

Renounce in hate or cling in love
Is not the choice in Yoga's core;
Immense and subtle is this way,
For none can live as an island.

Renunciation does not click
Since renouncer is closely linked
With renounced things and all the world,
for all creation stands as whole.

Nor has attachment any sense
For none can cling to one's own self,
And objects loved in secret bonds
Are in the heart of him who loves.

To do or not to do an act
All singly none can clearly know,
Unless the far-reaching results
Are weighed on balance carefully.

This question is equivalent
To be or not to be here;
The world is vast, creation big,
Where none is free to raise one's voice.

Interconnected are all things;
This is the reason why no one
Can safely say or do a deed
With no repercussions on things.

That is the good which clears the heart
Of tensions born of suppressed wish
By treatment method out to it
As sickness heal physicians.

In this the great enactment world's
No one approaches one-sided,
The drama is wholesomely full,
No act in it is by itself.

To throw the bow and arrows down
In resentment through confusion,
By wrenching oneself from the whole,
Is not a cure to aches of life.

Import of the Gita's Second Chapter

The highest wisdom and solace,
The Divine Song, the Gita called,
Condenses knowledge in practice,
And thrills the soul to fullness' peaks.

The Lord declares that no one dies
But forms are shed for soul's ascent,
That deathless soul pervades all space,
Immortal is the soul of man.

Many have died and gone to winds
And none is spared from ending thus;
So grief on death behoves us not
Since death is law of every life.

'Tis natural that beings die,
Unnatural they breathe and live;
For ocean's tide is life's turmoil
And not a drop fixed remains.

In such a sea of movement this,
Who can afford to stand unmoved;
All stasis forms seemingly don
Illusion's fantastic joke.

All speed and transit is this world,
A flux, a wisp, a puff of wind;
But steady none is ever posed;
All things are seen removed from truth;

Becoming though is all this life
And nothing is as being's core,
Yet one is there that knows the flux
Which itself is outside the flow.

Immortal soul, the Atman, here
Permeates all, the flowing stream;
Eternal, deathless, transcendent
Is self of all this universe.

Involved in earth, in plant and mind
The soul rises to reason's form
To think and act as human will
By cycles of evolution.

Since all the seeds of variants
Are hidden well in all species,
The worst can one day best become
And none is lowly anywhere.

If this is so, there are no norms,
Either aesthetic or ethic,
In all the world at any time,
Except within a framework's fence.

By contrast and comparison
The codes behavioural thrive;
An absolutely right or wrong
No one can pinpoint forever.

The finely forms or ugly looks
Are also not by themselves there;
These are the modes of reaction
Of conditioned mention's moods.

The pains and pleasures filling life
Are also psycho-physical;
Adjustments, maladjustments made
With Nature are pleasures and pains.

Hence duty and not right is law
Since all demands are out of tune
With law integral which is world;
The world is law rather than things.

To do one's duty one has right,
But not to covet fruits of deeds;
Be not attached to ends of works,
Not also cleave to inaction.

Action incumbent reigns all worlds,
Since action is evolution
To higher goals' integration
To culminate in Godhead's reach.

Balance is health, is Yoga known,
Participation is the rule,
Attachments lose their meaning here
Where all the world is self-contained.

Desires cease for want of things
That stand outside the knower's field;
The consciousness is firmly poised
In Yoga which is attention.

Rooted in itself is the world,
Its knowledge is its being's self;
To plant oneself in such a state
Is yoga's peak where sorrow melts.

As winds hurry the boats in sea,
The senses drive the reason out;
Hence, reason balanced his remains
Who restrains senses in the self.

As world of senses which see light
Is night of darkness for the sage;
The realm of light where sages live
Is dark abyss to passion's rage.

In subdued states of Yoga's heights
Desires merge in liquid mass
As rivers lose identity
In ocean's fullness, vast and deep.

This is the state of Brahman great,
In this established no one grieves;
Fixed thus even at end of life
Brahman's beatitude attains.

The Import of the Gita's Third Chapter

Knowledge and action are the rule,
The twain which constitute the world;
These twin approaches single aimed
Are not divided as opposed.

The eye of knowledge or of deed
Is hard to see since roots of things
Are screened from human perception
Which dual envisions the world.

As waves and ocean are not two,
Action and knowledge are the same;
As sun and light, or seed and oil,
Knowledge and action are combined.

Though Brahman-all is act and science
In one compass undivided,
In lesser levels deeds proceed
From subjects confronting objects.

An action is the relation
Obtaining fluidly moving
Between the seer and the seen -
Reciprocation ensouls deeds.

As one descends to lower realms
Cutting the seer from the seen,
Actions become the binding chains
Keeping the gulf a chronic ill.

The force of deeds gets mellowed down
When seer-seen approximate
To greater friendship and union,
Till vanish they in communion.

When knowledge sees its object there
As sundered from its subjectness,
Action becomes imperative
To thought and content harmonise.

Action is that which holds intact
The subject-object relation
In harmony and perfection,
For soul of all is harmony.

The soul's universality
Compels the performance of acts
So that its law of harmony
Is manifest in daily life.

Thus action itself is knowledge
Since union is its ambition
Where deed and doer merge in one
To form the higher soul of life.

The welfare works of society
Or actions for one's well-being,
Inward or outward, all move straight
Towards the Soul universal.

When soul the soul to itself pulls,
They call it love or selfless deed;
Nothing but soul there ever is,
Which haunts the world as men and things.

No one can exist without work,
For movement is the condition
Of all relative forms of life,
Whether on earth or in heaven.

Since thought is action finally,
Physical restraint is not poise
While mind revels in thoughts of deeds
Which connect it with world of sense.

The body's actions are not deeds
When mind to body is not tied
And lofty reaches contemplates
Within to contact soul of things.

Except as Yajna, sacrifice,
All deeds are binding in this world;
But what is Yajna, know this well
By careful thought in reason's calm.

When God created fields of life
He ordained then the role of works
Which gravitate to sacrifice,
So that all deeds are Deity's home.

The doer and the end of deed
Are bound together as a whole
By glorious Deity transcendent
To both the agent and the work.

Thus none can work by oneself free
As urge to acts is well ordained
By that which holds the two in one
Unseen by both as soul awake.

As triangle doer, deed and soul,
The soul ruling from high above,
Perform the scene of experience;
And none is owner in this play.

Obligation to one's duty
Refers to stages of Selfhood,
Wherein the balance in between
The seer-seen is clear maintained.

Oneself, society, nation, world,
The universe and Being's height
Are rising levels to the Self,
Through which perfection is attained.

The higher stage to lower stands
As Deity inclusive and real;
The Yajna is the higher goal
When to it lower is offered.

The lower isolation self's
Which opposed looks to its object
Is sacrificed in Yajna high
That integrates the sundered poles.

The Deity includes and transcends
The lower cleavage of the self
From its own object, though severed
Does still belong to widened self.

By sacrifice union is reached
With higher forms of wider self;
This divine cow which yields all wish
Is here at hand with everyone.

Who worships Deity in this way
Has all the wishes quick fulfilled,
To self the Deity stands good stead
In mutual graced recognition.

He is a thief who thinks he owns
Or does by himself deeds alone;
While all the wealth is Deity's form
And Deity rules ever supreme.

Here none is owner, share-holder,
For all belongs to Brahman great
Which is the Self of universe
And owns it indivisibly.

From That which is one alone
A cosmic impulse emanates;
From this the self-alienation
And desires' rains on crops of greed.

The world and body then emerge
And so the cycle continues
Of give and take which is this life,
The wheel of empirical law.

Since all is thus with all entwined,
All action though perennial,
Is no action in truest sense;
The deed is no deed binding none.

The mendicants though well detached
Are also in this cycle bound,
For who could expect alms of good
If none there is to offer alms.

But one who grounds himself afirm
In all-pervading Self of all
Does fear none and has no needs
Nor does depend on others' grace.

He does nothing while doing all,
Nor does he gain by doing deeds;
Actions done or not done here
Affect him not, nor disturb poise.

He disturbs not the ignorant
Who have their faiths illiterate,
But follows suit with environment,
Maintaining rule of harmony.

To disrupt minds is no teaching;
The sage with child as child behaves;
His presence thus is no presence
As sugar sweet in milk dissolved.

As wave collides with wave in sea
Senses with objects commingle,
Since sense and object both are formed
Of same substance universal.

Thus actions or performances
Are all of cosmic origin,
And none can claim a single act
As one's own move or claim its fruits.

Egoism, the arch-devil,
Does wrongly show that someone acts,
While acts are Nature's purposes
Which comprehend all history.

The duty each one's in the world
Depends on one's circumstances;
And no one unfit for a work
Can render that as duty's role.

The total of capacity
Determines work as duty-bound;
The body's strength and mental make
Do proclivity works' decide.

None takes from world what one gives not;
Here Karma Yoga sums up work;
Else, social balance gets disturbed
And chain of Karma binds one hard.

The other's duty is that work
For which one is not fitted best;
And one's own duty each shall choose
To bring to life stability.

Passion and anger are the foes
Which distort duty and prevent
The basic goodness of the soul
To rule one's life for commonweal.

These fiery forces, instincts dark,
Should get subdued by force of mind,
By force of reason and of soul,
Which surpasses all puissance.

By contemplation on the Self
The reason moves the mind aright,
And senses home of urges low
Get restrained well for Yoga's way.

The Import of the Gita's Fourth Chapter

The hands of God feel everywhere,
As Incarnations mighty come
To rid the earth of dissension
And free all souls from sorrow's pangs.

As four-dimensional transcendent
In three-dimensional forms abides,
The Supermental Infinite
Takes up the role of finitudes.

As conflagrations hide in sparks
God-Absolute as glory hails
As excellences seen in life
In great and grand and wondrous forms.

The harmonise extremes in life,
To Kingdom God's proclaim on earth,
To heal the sick and raise the low,
To trample ego God descends.

Of righteousness to plant the roots,
The universal justice fix
As forms of all performances
The Divine fingers operate.

As law unseen wakes up to work
When forms and things set up revolts,
The Arms of God are uplifted
As thunderbolt to ego's strikes.

As we approach the facts of life
So facts react to pay our dues;
However does one God adore
One reaps benefits in that way.

The social order is fitted
To enable the souls to rise
Above the finite involvements
To freedom's peak par excellence.

The wisdom's head and strength of arms,
Cooperative give and take,
And labour for life's sustenance
Sum up the pattern survival's.

As life exceeds mere survival
Reason has supreme part to play
In rooting every adventure
Firmly in Spirit's wide domain.

As social norms cannot negate
The needs of individuals,
They do arrange for gradual growth
By scales in life's experience.

To study and restrain senses,
To household keep and train passions,
To secluded as recluse live
And wisdom reach are steps levelled.

No action binds if intention
Does not connect the act with self;
And acts are done to free oneself
From impulses which compel acts.

Physical acts are no more acts
If acting mind is not attached;
And acts performed release the self
From subjection to life's instincts.

The greed for wealth and progeny
And world-renown are instincts called;
By means of them one transcends them.
This wisdom everyone should gain.

In sacrifice actions dissolve,
Whereby the self offers itself
In knowledge-fire burning all sins,
The all-inclusive Godhead's light.

Actor, action and action's goal,
Are waves in one abounding sea;
Here none does act and none fruits reaps
As all is just tumult of waves.

To adore gods, senses subdue,
Behold the One in sense-contacts,
Restrain all functions entirely,
Are some of Yoga's various ways.

To give material charity,
And offer gifts of belonging;
To fire create within oneself
By Tapas done, are Yoga's forms.

To drown oneself in scripture's lore,
To learning reach for clearing doubts,
To breath control in harmony
Are also Yoga's multi-limbs.

The highest sacrifice, Tapas,
Is union with universals,
Until the Great Universal
In meditation is attained.

By Yoga freed from action's bond,
By knowledge having dispelled doubts,
Rooted in all-pervading Self,
Forces act not on such a sage.

The Cosmic Form Speaks

“Behold this Form that myriad-faced here radiant includes all,
With all their facets, all conditions and all times in one.

Behold the gods and all the heavens, regions and all things,
The sun and moon and all the stars and all-pervading space.

Behold the beauty, grandeur, terror and the varieties,
Which all creation holds in bosom here and now at once.

The past and present and the future and all history
Do behold with the eye integral, flesh can never know.”

Then, thus declaring Yoga’s Lord revealed that mighty wondrous form
With marvels untold stunning thought and passing reason’s sharpest
reach.

The glory passing understanding, magnificence risen high,
With faces turned in all directions, everywhere its mouths and ears.

In every speck of space its eyes did twinkle as if flames
No atom lived in all creation where it missed to dwell.

Lo, Wonder’s heart in full blossom, all marvel’s secrets’ high relief,
That was Sri Krishna as he stood to represent the God of gods.

As million suns may rise suddenly darting forth their flooding rays,
Sri Krishna’s Person rose to heights that dazzled glory eternal.

The dirt and evil, ugliness, the darkest hell that threaten life,
There in that wondrous Frame of God did shine as rays eternal sun’s.

Distances flew, time took to heels and worlds got rounded into one,
In that miracle, timeless, spaceless, mind and reason glowed as flame.

No persons, things and regions there except as fiery limbs of God,
Where it did end or where began, none outside it could comprehend.

It new Itself, none else can know, It knowing-being was in one,
The hardest earth and worst of creatures melting rose to God adorn.

And every speck and particle did dance around that central core,
Which excelled beauty’s beauteous heart, all eyes did gaze in rapture
love’s.

The death of all who lived by ego, non-relentng icy hand
To everything that stood by finite mortal's value however grand.

What was, what is and what shall be were all displayed as here and now,
In that eternal magnitude in single grasp of consciousness.

The boundless splendour of that all, who that is born can ever gauge,
The Archetype of archetypes which range transcendent beyond forms.

As acts and deeds are objects posed to consciousness which is the truth,
No act can touch or act as means to reach this glory beyond time.

The Mighty Being, Subject Sole, as all-pervading truth of truths
Can scarce be reached by acts mundane which rise from non-subjective
modes.

How can the knower be the known, the All-Subject defies objects;
Thus casting knowledge empirical out of ken as shadows' fare.

Hence scriptures, works of charity, philanthropy, or sacrifice,
Austerity or study's lore, can none attain this vision's light.

When heart and reason surge in one as non-objective total soul,
The God beholds God everywhere, as no one else can behold God.

Doing all deeds for Its own sake, depending on It solely, lone,
Devoted to It in one's heart, and sundered from all attachment;

To none ever bearing ill-will, to man or beast or bird or life,
That blessed one does reach the Glory of the Absolute, the Great.