

BHAGAVAD-GITA: 06 - THE YOGA OF CONTEMPLATION

– *Version 1.4: First Complete Rendering, Extended* –

The sixth chapter of Bhagavad-Gita explores *dhyana-yoga* – the path of union through contemplative practice. It discusses the state and effects of *yoga*, literally "union", and the practices and path of the *yogi*, the contemplator on a quest for unification. Understand the speaker to be an incarnation of this absolute union, an embodiment of the reconciled essences of existence.

Translations are literal renderings of the original Sanskrit verses line-by-line – neither interpreting nor reordering the presentation. Annotations follow a classic commentarial style, featuring brief glosses on the terms and import of the source text. Our aim is to provide a reading of this chapter that is authentic, accessible, pragmatic, and enriching for the aspiring contemplator.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
anāśritaḥ karma-phalaṁ
kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ |
sa saṁnyāsī ca yogī ca
na niragnir na cākriyaḥ ||1||*

The illustrious one said:

Independent from the fruits of action,

who executes the works to be done -

That is the renunciate and the yogi,

Not who lights no flames or does no deeds.

Notes: The path of union properly begins with withdrawal from the pursuit of self-centered desires. In here, the term *saṁnyāsa*, commonly rendered as "full renunciation", has two imports. One meaning of *nyāsa* is "resigning" or "laying aside", and another is "assigning" or "depositing". The text hints at the real and complete meaning as "total reassignment", the deposition of every aspect of the fractured individual into a realm of integration and union. In the upcycling and repurposing of our being, we reach for a state of living and integral liberation – beyond a mere resignation from the complexity of existence.

*yaṁ saṁnyāsam iti prāhur
yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava |
na hy asaṁnyasta-saṁkalpo
yogī bhavati kaścana ||2||*

What they call total renunciation,
know that as union (yoga), Pandava;
Without total resignation of desire,
never will one become a yogi.

Notes: The forsaking of self-centered desire is a natural and obvious implication from the call for union. Pursuit of fragmented desire reinforces the separation of the individual from the whole and, as such, is evidently antithetical to unification. The *yogī* (unifier) necessarily pursues *yoga* (union) – instead of separation. When fragmented desires stem from the pursuit of a natural potential and promise beneficial collective outcomes, they can be repurposed into a pure and selfless momentum, integrated into the agency of the collective sphere. An aspiring yogi must discern between desires to be abandoned and desires that may be repurposed – releasing desires from the shackles of the finite self.

*ārurukṣor muner yogaṁ
karma kāraṇam ucyate |
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva
śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate ||3||*

For the sage keen to attain union,
action is said to be the means;
For the one elevated in union,
equanimity is said to be the means.

Notes: The word *karma* indicates a spectrum of active engagement, both practical works and contemplative practices, through which the senses and mind of the contemplator are captured and brought under the control of the underlying self. This is the initial practice. The word *śamaḥ* indicates "equanimity" relative to the world of action, an internal abiding where the phenomenal world is abstracted into an inner sphere of contemplation and cultivation, where the plurality of phenomena are distilled into the unity of yoga. This is the advanced practice.

*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu
na karmasv anuṣajjate |
sarva-saṁkalpa-saṁnyāsī
yogārūḍhas tadocyate ||4||*

Truly, when not for the sake of the senses,
nor for the outcomes of works does one strive;
Fully resigned from the pursuit of cravings,
that one is called "elevated in yoga".

Notes: We are bound to suffering with the ropes of our finite fixations, the various conditioned imperatives that govern our operation in this world. We strive to acquire material assets and to experience sensual pleasures. We long for particular emotions and mental states. We seek to validate and enhance a specific self-conception in our social and internal spheres. We pursue preferred conditions and states of existence – or even the cessation of existence. Finite fixations, whether positive or negative, rooted in the fractured self, are merely two poles of the same magnet of conditioning. All of these compulsive drives enforce our state of separation and stand in the way of our purification, reintegration, and ascension to unity.

*uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ
nātmānam avasādayet |
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur
ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ ||5||*

Uplift the self with the self,
instead of degrading the self;
Self indeed is the friend of the self,
self indeed is the enemy of the self.

Notes: The word *ātmā* or "self" has multiple imports. In here, the "self that uplifts" is the emergent higher self reached through purification and progressive union, the self-presence that is rooted in actuality, unconditioned by the hallucinations born of a fractured and finite sense of self. The common self is the conflicted being that navigates the dualities of existence, struggling to reconcile the push and pull of its internal polarization in relation to the environment. The "self that degrades" is the self given to the pursuit of self-centered desire – the nemesis of the authentic self. Another import of the term "self", discussed later in the text, is the "absolute self" in the sphere of undifferentiated consciousness.

*bandhur ātmātmanas tasya
yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ |
anātmanas tu śatrutve
vartetātmaiva śatruvat ||6||*

The self is the friend of the self for one
who has conquered the self with the self;
But enmity is there in the one not-as-self –
for him the self remains an enemy indeed.

Notes: When the mind has been tamed, with the self cleansed from its enmeshment in finite conditions, this refined self is the friend of the yogi – a luminous and resourceful collaborator in the great work of unification. For the one dwelling not-as-self, there is enmity both internal and interactive. Internal, with endless conflicting and self-defeating desires, and external, where other sentient beings are inherently at odds with the agendas of the fractured self. For one who has mastered the self, however, there is an ancient and ever-present friend within every vessel of embodied consciousness.

*jītātmanaḥ praśāntasya
paramātmā samāhitaḥ |
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu
tathā mānāpamānayoḥ ||7||*

For the conqueror of self in highest peace,
the supreme self has been consummated;
In cold and heat, in happiness and distress,
and thus also in honor and disgrace.

Notes: Here *paramātmā* or the "supreme self" refers to the unconditioned consciousness present in all sentient beings, the underlying witness of all cognitive processes, or the collective and omnipresent manifestation of super-awareness. When the finite self has been conquered and the causal shell enveloping our consciousness has been shattered, the individual yogi abides peacefully as the localized manifestation of this universal consciousness. Such perennial tranquility, resulting from ascension into self-union, with the transcendence of finity and consummation of the supreme self, is unphased by the inevitable oscillations of duality in the physical, emotional, and self-conceiving spheres of our living experience.

*jñāna-vijñāna-tṛptātmā
kūṣastho vijitendriyaḥ |
yukta ity ucyate yogī
sama-loṣṭāśma-kāñcanaḥ ||8||*

Self-satisfied in knowledge and realization,
established at the summit, senses conquered;
This connected one is called a yogi,
Equipoised to clay, rocks, and gold.

Notes: Clay is soft and malleable; rocks are hard and unyielding; and gold is versatile, adaptable, precious, and sought after. Abiding at the summit of self-realization, free of the polarizations born of desire and aversion, every material substance is relegated to a plane of utilitarian neutrality. All things ever are just as they are, each with their respective natural and practical functions. Some of them may be supportive and may be engaged when they fall within our natural allotment, yet none of it is required for ascending into the realization of self-integration and unity. Thus the yogi remains equipoised, independent, sovereign, and impervious to the affects of the world of substances.

*suhṛn-mitrāry-udāsīna-
madhyastha-dveṣya-bandhuṣu |
sādhuṣv api ca pāpeṣu
sama-buddhir viśiṣyate ||9||*

Well-wishers, allies, enemies, the neutral,
mediators, the disliked, and friends;
The saints and the sinners even,
equally conceived - this is more eminent.

Notes: The previous verse reviews equal vision and valence in relation to inanimate substances. In here, the same stance is related to interactive living beings, established in positive, negative, and neutral relations in the social sphere. An outstanding yogi remains impartial when faced with each of these classes of beings, regardless of how they present themselves, without self-rooted discrimination in perception and interaction. The equanimous yogi relates to all sentient beings from a self-dereferenced baseline of awareness, not leveraging them for personal achievement and gratification, but rather acts in service of their authentic needs and the ultimate well-being of the conscious collective.

yogī yuñjīta satatam
ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ |
ekākī yata-cittātmā
nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ ||10||

A yogi should be uniting perpetually,
established in solitude with the self;
Singular, governing the self's reflections,
free of longings, not striving to acquire.

Notes: The words *yogī* and *yuñjīta* are related; the task of the *yogī*, a cultivator of union, is *yuñjīta*, the connecting and unification of all things. Establishing the self in solitude, seclusion, privacy, even secrecy and concealment, is primarily and predominantly an internal establishment. While external solitude may at times be conducive and desirable, it is devoid of merit when the outflows of the mind remain unchecked. The "reflections" of consciousness (*citta*) refer to the interplay of awareness emanating into the environment. The resulting potentials must be wisely regulated by the dispassionate self – not misused as a playground for the endless conjurations that arise with untamed desire holding the reins of consciousness.

*śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya
sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ |
nātyucchritaṁ nātinīcaṁ
cailājina-kuśottaram ||11||*

Abiding steadfast in a pure location,
the self unfluctuating on its throne;
Neither too high nor too low,
fabric or leather atop sacred grass.

Notes: Here *āsana* is a seat, a throne, a sitting posture, and importantly, a stable internal seating for practice. It exists in a pure space, undefiled by engrossment with the world of duality and desire. It is neither too high or too low, nor too active or too passive. This seating is like a soft cloth placed atop sharp blades of kuśa-grass; and the true *āsana* is a state of comprehensive balance between the polarities of the world of duality. The fabric is the unifying softness, the blades of grass are the specifying sharpness, and the yogi is seated in purity as the deconstructor and integrator of existence. The prescription in this verse should be understood and applied both externally and internally.

*tatraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā
yata-cittendriya-kriyaḥ |
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād
yogam ātma-viśuddhaye ||12||*

There, the mind is brought to singular attention,
with control of thoughts, senses, and actions;
Seated in this abiding, one should connect
in union for the complete cleansing of the self.

Notes: The cultivation of *ekāgra* or singular attention is central to the practice of yoga. In Patanjali's classic formulation, this process unfolds over four major phases: Initial *pratyāhāra*, the withdrawal of consciousness from externality; a basis for *dhāraṇā*, the mental retention of the object of concentration; leading to *dhyāna*, the profound and effortless flow of contemplation; and into *samādhi*, the unification of the mental field with the object. This initial unification of consciousness is progressively refined over the stages of recursive *vitarka*, reflective *vicāra*, intuitive *ānanda*, and self-imploding *asmitā*, and ultimately reaches *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, an invariant union marked by the categorical dissolution of polarized boundaries.

*samaṁ kāya-śīro-grīvaṁ
dhārayann acalaṁ sthiraḥ |
saṁprekṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ
diśaś cānavalokayan ||13||*

Body, head, and neck aligned,
upholding an unmoving stillness;
Attending to one's nasal bridge,
gaze not wandering in any direction.

Notes: The term *nāsikāgra* or the "summit of the nose" is sometimes interpreted as the tip of the nose. However, a downward or forward-directed gaze associates the mind with the active sphere of external attention. In here, directing our inner gaze toward the nasal bridge or the "third eye", our awareness is drawn toward an internal realm, a cerebral dream state, and the subconscious mind, and we achieve a better introspective orientation. The Sanskrit term for the spinal cord is *meru-daṇḍa*, the "world-mountain pole", in reference to the mythic *axis mundi* of mount Meru. Cerebrospinal alignment upholds the imperturbable balance of our inner axis and supports the encircling harmonic flow and arrangement of our internal elements.

*praśāntātmā vigata-bhīr
brahmacāri-vrate sthitaḥ |
manaḥ samyamyā mac-citto
yukta āsīta mat-paraḥ ||14||*

In a tranquil self, having overcome fear,
established in the spirit-farer's ordinance,
with a subdued mind reflecting on me,
the connected one abides in my ultimatum.

Notes: While the term *brahmacāri-vrata* is conventionally translated as "vow of celibacy", the word *brahmacāri* literally means "spirit-farer", and refers categorically to an attitude and conduct characterized by withdrawal from the pursuits of fragmented desire. Fear and insecurity are the products of misperception, misidentification, and illusory fixation – or absorption in the oscillation of dualities. In this and the subsequent verses, the speaker refers to "me", and it is well for us to understand this pronoun in reference to the ultimate reality that incarnates through the consummate being of absolute union. The realm and state of the speaker is our existential objective – there is no separate "another" to be adored and venerated from a distance.

*yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ
yogī niyata-mānasaḥ |
śāntiṁ nirvāṇa-paramāṁ
mat-saṁsthām adhigacchati ||15||*

Thus always connecting the self,
the yogi of disciplined mentality;
into peace and supreme nirvana,
into union with me, he transcends.

Notes: As the mind of the yogi becomes increasingly regulated and contained, his connection with the self becomes increasingly constant. Disconnection results from the distracting outflows of the unregulated mind. The pristine self exists independent of an external context, as a transcendent and ever-accessible reality. Therefore, in all places, and at all times, the yogi may abide in connection – not only when seated in concentrated solitude. Such perpetual connection leads to the peace of the supreme subsiding (*nirvāṇa*). Impure outflows run dry in the absence of their generative fountain – the flame of craving snuffs out in lack of fuel. Where the impure heat and light of fractured desire no longer burn and blind the yogi, he ascends and transcends into the quiescence of absolute union.

*nātyaśnatas tu yogo'sti
na caikāntam anaśnataḥ |
na cātisvapna-śīlasya
jāgrato naiva cārjuna ||16||*

No union is there for the over-eater,
nor for one fixated with starvation;
Nor for one habituated to excess sleep,
nor indeed for one who's always awake, Arjuna.

Notes: Union follows balance. Balance is established by cultivating accurate perception and realistic understanding of the golden median of our actual needs – which may vary from time to time. This insight reveals the extremes of excess and deficit, born of desire and aversion, the underminers of balance in our lives. Over-eating leads to sluggishness and complacency – and indulgence itself fuels further desire. Starvation leads to apathy and weakness. Then, excessive sleep results in dullness and lethargy. Sleep deprivation results in fragility and cognitive impairment. In essence, lack of balance brings about negative physical, emotional, and cognitive impacts. The path of the aspiring yogi is fraught with obstacles – and imbalance stemming from lack of self-discipline augments the heap of challenges. Primed with balance, we persevere and prevail in our quest for union.

*yuktāhāra-vihārasya
yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu |
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya
yogo bhavati duḥkhahā ||17||*

With regulated eating and recreation,
regulated in efforts and obligations,
regulated in sleep and wakefulness,
union is manifest and misery is slain.

Notes: The word *yukta*, here "regulated", also "yoked", "connected", "tethered", shares the root with the word *yoga*. Proper self-regulation follows a standard of balance conducive for the practice of yoga or unification – discipline that supports our connection, tethers us to the path of union. Regulated eating is the intake of sufficient nutrition in adequate variety to sustain and nourish the body and the mind. Regulated recreation refreshes the body and the mind without overstimulation or derailment of priorities. Regulated efforts and obligations are proportionate to one's capacity and resources. Regulated sleep is the amount necessary for physical and mental rejuvenation. Misery is eliminated with the cultivation of balanced self-regulation in all aspects of our lives – and this living balance is a precondition and a foundation for the ultimate attainment of union.

*yadā viniyataṃ cittam
ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate |
niḥsprhaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo
yukta ity ucyate tadā ||18||*

Thus with a well-regulated mind,
abiding verily in the self,
not craving after each desire,
this is being connected, it's said.

Notes: The term *citta* refers to the "generative mind", a mirror-like aspect of awareness that reflects the environment and its potentials, pouring into and interacting with the phenomenal world. Yoga is defined as: *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* – "Union is the elimination of the patterns of *citta*." (Yoga-sutra 1.2) It is not that mind and awareness must be categorically eliminated. Rather, our concern is over the uncontrolled fluctuation of this reflective awareness and the resulting entanglement of the subject with the world of objects. Then, *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpē'vasthānam* – "There the witness abides in its intrinsic nature." The yogi's predicament is with a consciousness that entangles and identifies with mental dynamics. The faculties of life are not rejected – rather, they are "yoked" into the process and liberated into union with their respective natures, released from the bondage of the ego that assumes ownership of its slice of the universe.

*yathā dīpo nivāta-stho
neṅgate sopamā smṛtā |
yogino yata-cittasya
yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ ||19||*

As a lamp in a place without wind
wavers not – a metaphor so recalled;
The yogi with regulated mental flux
is connected with the self in union.

Notes: The unwavering lamp is a classic metaphor. While the lamp stands for unperturbed reflective awareness (*citta*), what exactly is the wind of our metaphor? It isn't the flux of manifest existence – the world of plurality is inherently in perpetual motion. The wind is the blowing of our awareness into the flux of dualities. Our fractured attention, followed by desire and attachment, are the pushings of the wind – the wavering of awareness, the loss of foundation, and the fall into identification with tumultuous substance. We ourselves are the makers and blowers of this wind – the dynamic world is innocent. When this fluctuation is stilled, with presence and awareness established in the self, the lamp of consciousness radiates undisturbed in union. While still living, the metaphor of "blowing out the lamp" is premature. Final liberation is preceded by embodied liberation, transcendence with presence – the "unwavering lamp" recollected here.

*yatroparamate cittam
niruddham yoga-sevayā |
yatra caivātmanātmānam
paśyann ātmani tuṣyati ||20||*

Here, with the reflective mind stilled,
restrained and attending to union,
surely the self, by means of the self,
witnesses the self – and is satisfied.

Notes: With mental fluctuations restrained, disowned, and decoupled from the self, the underlying field of mental processes becomes distinct and discernable. Established on a detached meta-cognitive plane of clear awareness, the contemplative yogi becomes a witness unto himself, examining and unraveling the composition and dynamics of the incarnated mind. The conditioned mind – once the untamed and unbridled sovereign, operating at will and whim, generating its matrix of misery – is subjugated, deconstructed and remediated by the witness at the summit of awareness with dominion over its creations. As the shackles, shadows, mirages and veils of the self are shattered, dispelled, evaporated and torn, the yogi witnesses the absolute self by means of the purified and luminous self. This is the plane of lasting satisfaction, the culminating ascension of the self.

*sukham ātyantikam̐ yat tad
buddhi-grāhyam atīndriyam |
vetti yatra na caivāyam̐
sthitaś calati tattvataḥ ||21||*

This very infinite happiness,
grasped by discernment, beyond the senses;
Knowing which, he will never
depart from the state of truths.

Notes: The term *buddhi*, commonly translated as "intellect", here refers specifically to discernment, or the process of examination where illusions are deconstructed and eliminated. These illusions, the projections of a conditioned mind as a holographic overlay of reality, are dispelled and replaced by the establishment of an unshaking perception of the *tattvas* and the *dharmas* – the fundamental and self-neutral elements, characteristics, and processes of existence – the categories of actuality existing and operating independent of the relative and deluded subject. Established as the witness of this underlying actuality, the yogi abides and operates on a plane of endless ease and comfort, with the matrix of the world but a liberated pastime unfolding on the clear canvas of awareness. Transcending the bondage of hallucinations, seated in unwavering truth, he is reposed in a domain of perception beyond the senses, in supreme independence.

*yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ
manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ |
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena
guruṇāpi vicālyate ||22||*

Having reached it, no gain is higher;
one deems nothing as greater than that;
And established there, not by misery
how-so-ever severe, is one shaken apart.

Notes: Ascension to union in the pristine self is the summit and supreme attainment of individual existence, the transcendence of its conditions and constraints. Just as one might conceive of a creator god generating the macrocosmic realm, so one should see the pure self as the creator of our subjective microcosm. Tragically, this "little creator" is fallen and lost amidst its own creations – as an unfortunate spider might be entangled in its own web – incarnating as a fragmented being into its own conjurations, dwelling lonely and distressed in a matrix of holographic mist. Dispelling the misconception of material identification and rising above the net of conditions, witnessing the actuality and steeped in the bliss of liberation, there is no pleasure or distress that would shake the consciousness apart from the purity of union. A return to the world of absurd hallucinations is inconceivable.

*taṁ vidyāḍ duḥkha-saṁyoga-
viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam |
sa niścayena yoktavyo
yogo'nirviṇṇa-cetasā ||23||*

Know this, severing the absorption in misery,
to be the proper understanding of union;
With this conviction, become connected
in union with awareness free of gloom.

*saṁkalpa-prabhavān kāmāṁś
tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ |
manasaivendriya-grāmaṁ
viniyamyā samantataḥ ||24||*

Desires generated from confabulation –
cast them all away without remainder;
With mind and the spectrum of senses
under control, in tranquility reconciled.

Notes: The term *saṁkalpa*, commonly rendered as "desire" or "persuasion", refers specifically to the ideation and confabulation of the mind that shapes our particular volitions and mental fixations. Renouncing specific desires, without targeting the underlying formative processes, will not terminate the regenerative cycle of disturbances. When suppressed by means of denial or concentration, the underlying seeds of ideation and desire will re-emerge at the first opportunity. Tranquility or *samantata* is literally the "equalization of ends", a state where each loose end of awareness is woven back into the contiguous fabric of existence – the purification, release, and return of all potentials into their selfless and pristine nature.

*śanaiḥ śanair upamed
buddhyā dhṛti-gṛhītayā |
ātma-saṁsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā
na kimcid api cintayet ||25||*

Step-by-step toward cessation,
with discernment and resolute grasp,
having established the mind in the self,
never contemplate on anything else.

Notes: Union is not attained in a sudden burst of insight and enlightenment. It is the outcome of progressive purification and reintegration. Discernment is the process of examining, identifying, deconstructing, and remediating the aspects of our awareness that exist in separation. Self-awareness that results from introspective discernment should be maintained with determination. Deviation and departure from all that has been understood and established should be vigilantly guarded against. When such contemplation becomes uninterrupted, the cessation of mental disturbances follows.

yato yato niścarati
manaś cañcalam asthiram |
tatas tato niyamyaitad
ātmany eva vaśam nayet ||26||

Where-so-ever you are misled
by the fickle and unsteady mind,
from there bring it under control,
subject to the guidance of the self.

Notes: The mind is not intrinsically unsteady. Its essence is neutral and malleable. Restlessness of the mind stems from a habit of sporadic absorption in the field of objects, like an untamed animal left without discipline or enclosure – driven by instincts and urges, unbound by structure or coherent grounding. It wanders into memories of the past and dreams of the future, leaping into endless cascades of intermingled sensory and mental stimuli. It must be reeled back, time and again from its countless misadventures, into an operative framework determined by the sovereign self – the witness and governor of the mind. Weaned from its habits and the broken programming, this saboteur meets a higher inclination and turns into a collaborator for unification.

*praśānta-manasaṁ hy enaṁ
yoginaṁ sukham uttamam |
upaiti śānta-rajaṣaṁ
brahma-bhūtam akalmaṣam ||27||*

With their minds in complete peace
the yogis, in supreme happiness,
reach the pacification of urges,
absorbed in the pristine absolute.

*yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ
yogī vigata-kalmaṣaḥ |
sukhena brahma-saṁsparśam
atyantaṁ sukham aśnute ||28||*

Thus ever-engaged with the self
the yogi eliminates impurities,
joyfully touching the absolute,
reaching the endless happiness.

Notes: The purification of impurities (*kalmaṣa*) through introspective reflection is a critical practice. Three root pollutions – attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and ignorance (*avidya*) – lead to a myriad of corrupted mental states and behaviors. Attachment becomes desire, greed, clinging, etc. Aversion becomes hatred, repulsion, resentment, etc. Ignorance becomes bewilderment, deception, cognitive bias, etc. In the sphere of the ego, these three corrupting roots become pride, envy, and self-absorption. Attachment is countered with detachment and generosity. Aversion is countered with acceptance and kindness. Ignorance is countered with insight and wisdom generated from the unveiling of truth and actuality.

*sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānaṁ
sarva-bhūtāni cātmani |
ikṣate yoga-yuktātmā
sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ||29||*

In all beings, the self is present,
and all beings are present in the self;
The self, linked in union, beholds and
perceives all things ever in equality.

Notes: All sentient beings share a common ground of being in the realm of consciousness. There is an underlying and undivided universal super-consciousness, as well as sets of universal commonalities entrapped in various configurations within the individual shells of consciousness. These sentient beings are integrated in the collective consciousness as local representations and agencies of the more abstract universality. By virtue of entrenching the self in union, with perception of the underlying principalities, an equal vision is established across all of space and time.

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra
sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi
sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||30||*

Who beholds me in all things ever,
and beholds all things ever in me;
From him I will not vanish,
nor will he vanish from me.

*sarva-bhūta-sthitam̐ yo mām̐
bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ |
sarvathā vartamāno'pi
sa yogī mayi vartate ||31||*

With myself established in all beings,
cultivating while abiding in oneness;
Everywhere and in all circumstances,
the yogi dwells and moves about in me.

Notes: Having established the various premises of equal vision and integrated abiding, we reach a natural conclusion – the state of yoga or union is not a static accomplishment limited to a realm of contemplative stillness, but rather a dynamic experience of existence that is perpetual and omnipresent, independent of the particular spheres and modalities of our engagement. In the world of plural phenomena, the yogi perceives a singular conscious organism, and interacts with none other than this absolute system. The illusion of separation and otherness has been replaced by an all-encompassing experience of abiding and operating in a realm of living union and oneness.

*ātmaupamyena sarvatra
samaṁ paśyati yo'rjuna |
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ
sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||32||*

Comparing everything with the self,
one who beholds sameness, Arjuna;
whether in happiness or in misery,
this is considered the highest yogi.

Notes: In here, "comparison with the self" is a process of empathic reflection founded in pristine insight. When awareness has been cleansed of obscurations, the elementary principles of actuality are perceived and engaged as threads and pathways of seamless connection with sentient beings and natural phenomena. The yogi functions like a taintless mirror placed before the collective of existence, incarnating freely into a myriad of harmonizing identities. He engages with insight into the fundamental composition and potentials of all things ever; his discernment penetrates the layers of confusion and the compounded entanglement of the sentient beings; and so he operates with empathy and deep affinity, grounded in the harmonic universals that are conducive for unification.

arjuna uvāca
yo 'yam yogas tvayā proktaḥ
sāmyena madhusūdana |
etasyāhaṁ na paśyāmi
cañcalatvāt sthitim sthirām ||33||

Arjuna said:

This union that you've described
via equanimity, Madhusudana;
In this, I do not foresee
a steady state – due to fickleness.

Notes: Following an exposition of a contemplative path of equanimity and unification, Arjuna – our student in the series of dialectic teachings with Krishna – brings forward his doubts. Is such a pursuit of union actually practicable and sustainable? Will not the mind, fickle and restless like the untamed wind, by its nature ever-unsettled, time and again divert us from such a contemplative abiding? These doubts stem from an evaluation locked into the present state of the mind. The mind is, however, hardly grasped and stabilized from within the problem sphere. Resolution becomes a possibility when the subject is decoupled from mental identification, as awareness shifts to a plane that transcends the workings of the conditioned mind.

*cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa
pramāthi balavad dṛḍham |
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye
vāyor iva suduṣkaram ||34||*

Restless indeed is the mind, Krishna,
stirring, powerful, and obstinate;
and its subduing, in my view,
is as arduous as taming the wind.

Notes: Three problematic properties of the untamed mind are highlighted. In its dynamic aspect, *pramāthi*, the mind is stirring and ravishing us, incessant in rending and scattering our attention. In its static aspect, *dṛḍha*, the mind is unmoving and obstinate, firmly bound to its constructs, unmalliable in the shackles of its conditioning. In its base nature, *balavat*, the mind is mighty and powerful, ruling as the sovereign over our internal domain, commanding us with an unyielding force and subverting our noble aspirations. How does one possibly subdue such a formidable adversary?

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
asamśayaṁ mahā-bāho
mano durñigrahaṁ calam |
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya
vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate ||35||*

The illustrious one said:

Without a doubt, mighty-armed one,
the mind is hard to conquer and fickle;
But with repeated training, son of Kunti,
and with dispassion, it is tamed.

Notes: In conquering the untamed mind, two primary means are deployed. Positive effort, *abhyāsa*, is repeated and persistent training – reconditioning of the mind, relentless infusion of proper behavioral and cognitive patterns, progressive reprogramming of our neural pathways, the establishment of a reformed internal order. Negative effort, *vairāgya*, is detachment and dispassion, distancing of the self from the objects of the mind's craving, and beyond that, indifference to the resistance, pleading, defiance, negotiating, rebellion, despondency, etc. brought forward by the mind-in-training. Through persuasive training and detachment, in due time the mind is domesticated.

*asaṁyatātmanā yogo
duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ |
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā
śakyo'vāptum upāyataḥ ||36||*

With an uncontained mind, union
is hard to attain, such is my view;
But in endeavoring with self-control,
by proper methods, attainment is possible.

Notes: In overcoming the compromising and degrading drives of the uncontained mind, we require a combination of self-control and appropriate means. Self-control is born of self-awareness and is discipline in recognizing and containing the urges of the mind and, further, in investigating the processes of their generation, endurance, and disempowerment. Methods of training and cultivation are best adapted to match and support the temperament and conditions of an individual, the aspiring yogi, who seeks to overcome the dominion of the mind with its particular configuration. An effective process of reconditioning the mind results in ample initial friction even without awkward and unnecessarily complicated methodologies.

arjuna uvāca
ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto
yogāc calita-mānasaḥ |
aprāpya yoga-samsiddhim
kām gatiṁ kṛṣṇa gacchati ||37||

Arjuna said:

Who loses control, having confidently sought,
whose mind deviates from unification;
Not attaining the consummation of union,
What destination is then attained, Krishna?

*kaccin nobhaya-vibhraṣṭaś
chinnābhram iva naśyati |
apraṭiṣṭho mahā-bāho
vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi ||38||*

Whether, having fallen from both,
he perishes like a cloud torn asunder;
Without any footing, mighty-armed one,
bewildered on the path to the absolute?

Notes: Here, "having fallen from both" refers to a perceived failure not only in the pursuit of union, but also in the sphere of mundane pursuits. Self-centered ambition and endeavors fueled by desire – often the "accomplishing force" behind worldly success – will naturally wane while attending to the path of purification and unification. A certain "material failure" commonly ensues – even in absence of exclusive dedication to contemplative practice. Rare is the being who can transmute and sustain their entire former domain of activities in the face of this path of transformation and its imperatives. Does this path not hold the significant risk of categorical failure, a loss of footing in both the mundane and the existential, a total bewilderment?

*etan me saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa
chettum arhasy aśeṣataḥ |
tvad-anyah saṁśayasyāsyā
chettā na hy upapadyate ||39||*

Such is my doubt, Krishna,
I plead you to remove it without residue;
Other than you, for these doubts,
there is truly no resolver to be found.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
pārtha naiveha nāmutra
vināśas tasya vidyate |
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid
durgatiṃ tāta gacchati ||40||*

The illustrious one said:

Son of Pritha, neither here nor beyond
is demise to be found for him;
A doer of beneficial deeds will never
reach a foul destination, my friend.

Notes: The beneficial deeds of the yogi result in a matrix of positive feedback loops, colloquially "good karma", or favorable cascades of causes and effects. There are direct effects, where a good impression results in a good response from the recipient. There are indirect effects, where a good impression is passed forward by the recipient, eventually circling back to the subject or his environment. There are also reflected effects, where the halo of the yogi's beneficial works, the echo of his internal record of deeds, emanates into the environment and brings about a favorable transformation. How then, having once committed to a sincere life of purification and unification, would one possibly reach a dark and miserable destination?

*prāpya puṇya-kṛtām lokān
uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ |
śucīnām śrīmatām gehe
yoga-bhraṣṭo'bhijāyate ||41||*

Having reached the realms of noble deeds,
and dwelled there for everlasting years,
into a house of the pure and beautiful
the one fallen from union is reborn.

*atha vā yoginām eva
kule bhavati dhīmatām |
etaḍ dhi durlabhataram
loke janma yad īdṛśam ||42||*

Or indeed into a family of yogis
the contemplative one is born;
this truly is the rarest attainment,
such a birth on this earthly plane.

*tatra taṁ buddhi-saṁyogaṁ
labhate paurvadehikam |
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ
saṁsiddhau kurunandana ||43||*

There, his discernment is recollected,
the previous existence reclaimed;
and there he will endeavor once again
toward a full perfection, scion of Kuru.

Notes: In here, the concept of "previous existence" is relevant beyond the literal understanding of a "physical reincarnation". Whenever a prior frame of reference expires, the continuity of its dominant characteristics will model into being our "rebirth" in a renewed context, with a transformed outlook and a revised sense of identity. Diverted from the pursuit of union and clouded by entanglement with the world of objects, the favorable momentum from significant prior contemplation will typically pave way for a pleasant abiding. In time, when the accrued merits for enjoyment are depleted, the fallen yogi will remember his deep-rooted prior pursuits, "recollecting his previous existence", and endeavor once again toward the complete perfection of life.

*pūrvābhyāsenā tenaiva
hriyate hy avaśo'pi saḥ |
jijñāsur api yogasya
śabda-brahmātivartate ||44||*

By such prior cultivation,
he is fascinated, and even unprompted
is an inquirer into this union,
transcending the sacred words.

Notes: With the continuum of mind-stream carrying the impressions of his prior cultivation, the reborn yogi is spontaneously drawn back to the path of unification, naturally propelled toward its continuation and consummation. In inquiring and reflecting, as the latent impressions of his past accomplishments are stimulated, the inclinations and insights of his prior existence are rekindled and reinstated. He reascends into a realm of insight behind and beyond the words and formulae of the sacred teachings and, transcending their forms, symbols, rituals, and philosophies, returns to a living experience of unification.

*prayatnād yatamānas tu
yogī saṁśuddha-kilbiṣaḥ |
aneka-janma-saṁsiddhas
tato yāti parām gatim ||45||*

And endeavoring with perseverance,
the yogi is fully cleansed of impurities,
consummating his multiple births
and attaining the supreme destination.

Notes: Inquiry into past births or states of existence is a matter of common curiosity. Our particular present state is the outcome of two intertwined inheritances – the genetic and the psychic continuums of existence. In here, there is a neither need for, nor benefit from a misguided fantastical pursuit for the discovery of the specifics of hypothetical past lives. Whatever the heritage and fruits of our past states of existence may be, some latent and some active, they are present in our current state of existence. Here alone – as the extant living being, the sum total of all that ever was – are these potentials operational. They are progressively accessed, harnessed, refined, and fulfilled through the persistent practice of purification and unification.

tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī
jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ |
karmibhyaś cādhiko yogī
tasmād yogī bhavārjuna ||46||

The yogi is higher than the ascetic,
deemed higher than even the philosopher;
the yogi is higher than the pious worker –
therefore, become a yogi, Arjuna!

Notes: Here the yogi is compared and contrasted with three classes of spiritualists. The self-satisfied yogi, by virtue of withdrawal from the dominion of the conditioned mind and its urges, is superior to the ascetic seeking to conquer desire by depriving the body of its enjoyments. The self-realized yogi, with insight born from the establishment of awareness in perennial actuality, unveiled via purity and unification, is superior to the philosopher seeking knowledge and analyzing the nature of existence with the power of his finite intellect. The all-empathic yogi, with his conduct and deeds naturally synchronized with the commonality of sentient beings and their deep and authentic needs, is superior to the doer of pious and altruistic deeds. Become a yogi, then!

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā |
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ ||47||*

Among all the yogis,
having reached me in the inner self,
who with heart's conviction is devoted in me,
that one I consider the most highly united.

Notes: The term *śraddhā*, often "faith" or "conviction", is an unwavering commitment of the heart – not mere belief. The highest yogi described here has attained to the experience of union, an encounter that supersedes and retires the need for assumptions. The verb *bhaja*, often to "worship" or "adore", stems from the root *bhaj* – also to "share", "distribute", etc. The yogi who has, through perception and experience of the integrality and unity of his being, shared his entire existence and resigned to its distribution via the network of absolute commonality, abides and operates in the highest state of union. This is the supreme move of absolute love and devotion by the yogi, the ultimate consummation of all hymns, rituals, philosophies, and contemplative practices.