

Session I

The World, the Deity, and Worship (Chapter 7)

As this course covers Chapters 7 to 12 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we will start the study with a consideration of the main ideas set forth in its seventh chapter. Chapter 6 is primarily concerned with the practice of meditational yoga. The principal aim of the techniques advocated there is to gain such complete powers of concentration that the mind can be fixed on the existence of the innermost self. It is claimed that meditation of this advanced nature eventually allows for direct experience of the spiritual ātman that is the true self; in this state experiential knowledge arises, which in turn brings liberation from rebirth. This yoga practice is very much of a *mokṣa-dharma*. In the final verse of Chapter 6, however, there is a clear indication of a move towards a theistic and devotional expression of religious ideology, although this is clearly connected to the teachings on yoga practice that have been presented earlier in that chapter.

This line of continuity between meditation and devotion can then be observed in the words of the opening verse of Chapter 7, *yogaṁ yuñjan mad-āśrayam*, practising yoga focused on myself. In the teachings that follow, we can witness a notable development on that theme as Kṛṣṇa speaks first

of all (vs 4–7) about himself as the Supreme Deity who presides over both the material domain and the embodied spiritual entities that give life to that domain. Here verse 7 is particularly noteworthy, as it gives a clear assertion of a monotheistic doctrine. This assertion is then tempered somewhat in the verses that follow (8–12), which present the idea of a Deity who not only creates the world but also pervades all aspects of this existence.

Verses 13 to 19 move on to discuss the distinction between those who understand the existence of the Deity, and therefore engage in acts of worship, and those who have no such theistic persuasions. From verse 20, Kṛṣṇa then speaks about the Vedic worship of secondary deities, which is motivated by worldly desires for prosperity. Such worship is considered to be inferior to the type of *bhakti* pursued by those who possess knowledge of the highest spiritual truth. Continuing this theme, verses 24 to 27 assert that the higher realisation of the truth about the Deity is hidden from those who are overly materialistic; Kṛṣṇa is concealed from such persons due to the power of what he refers to as *yoga-māyā*, which might be understood as ‘mystical illusion’. Verse 28, however, gives a picture of those who follow the path of *bhakti* by worshipping Kṛṣṇa; they are righteous in their deeds, they have set aside any tendency towards wrongdoing, and they have transcended the dualities of this world. It is the final two verses of this seventh chapter that give rise to Arjuna’s questions at the start of Chapter 8 and it is only there that we get some form of explanation of the meaning of the terms used in these two verses.

We can thus see that despite the connection between the last verse of Chapter 6 and the first verse of Chapter 7, this middle section of the *Gītā* offers a rather different form of spiritual ideology, although it would be a mistake to assert that this is entirely distinct from the teachings on *karma-yoga* and meditational yoga presented in earlier chapters. Here we are given an insight into the nature of the Supreme Deity and of the efficacy of devotional practices and knowledge of the Deity in leading the aspirant towards the highest spiritual goals. This Deity, who is Kṛṣṇa himself, is said to bestow blessings on those who are devoted to him and ultimately to lead them towards the final goal of liberation. This doctrine of grace is mentioned only briefly here,

in verse 14, but it is expanded upon in later chapters.

Verses 1–3: Introduction to Chapter Seven

The opening three verses of the chapter serve as an introduction to the line of instruction that follows, although the phrases and words they use have a notable significance of their own. After stating in verse 1 that he will now speak about yoga practice focused on himself, Kṛṣṇa says that after learning the knowledge he is now about to impart there will remain nothing further that Arjuna needs to know. Verse 3 then states that only one person amongst thousands endeavours for perfection and, of those who do endeavour, only one amongst thousands reaches that final goal. The point is made clear: spiritual perfection is only very rarely attained.

1. *śrī bhagavān uvāca*
mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan mad-āśrayaḥ
asaṁśayaṁ samagraṁ mām yathā jñāsyasi tac chṛṇu

The Lord said: Now hear, O Pārtha, how you can have full knowledge of me without any doubts by attaching your mind to me and practising yoga dedicated to me.

The first verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s seventh chapter ends with the words *tac chṛṇu*, 'Listen to this', and the verse itself states what it is that Arjuna should listen to, and why and how it should be learned. The intent of Kṛṣṇa's teachings now is to reveal how he can be known: *mām yathā jñāsyasi*, without doubts, *asaṁśayaṁ*, and in full, *samagram*. The first line further reveals that this knowledge is gained by practising yoga, *yogaṁ yuñjan*, with Kṛṣṇa as the object of meditation, *mad-āśrayaḥ*. Furthermore, this yoga should be undertaken with a mind that is focused on the Deity, *mayy āsakta-manāḥ*. It is thus apparent that the *Gītā*'s exposition is now moving on from the idea of focusing the mind on the individual ātman towards a similar concentration of the mind on the Deity who is Kṛṣṇa. If, however, one holds to the view that the Deity and the self are one and the same, then this chapter is simply repeating what has been said earlier by building on that previous revelation.

2. *jñānam te 'ham sa-vijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmy aśeṣataḥ*
yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate

I shall explain to you in full both the *jñāna* and the *vijñāna*. When this is understood, there is nothing else remaining that should be understood

In the first line of this verse, Kṛṣṇa explains what this chapter is about as he announces that he will now speak of *jñāna* and *vijñāna* in full. Here *te 'ham . . . idaṁ vakṣyāmi* means 'I will speak to you of this', 'this' being the *jñāna* and the *vijñāna*. Of course, the question that naturally arises is what is meant by these two words, and on this point the commentators have different ideas. Śaṅkarācārya indicates that *jñāna* should be understood to mean knowledge on a philosophical or theoretical basis, whilst *vijñāna* is knowledge based on realisation; one presumes that in the latter case he means the type of knowledge of the ātman that is gained through the yoga practices outlined in Chapter 6. Rāmānuja, however, offers more of a theistic understanding, saying that *jñāna* means knowledge of the Deity, whilst *vijñāna* is a more specific type of knowledge through which one understands the distinction between the Deity and all other forms of existence. This interpretation is probably based on verses 4 and 5, which follow on from the present passage. It might also be suggested that the term *jñāna* indicates knowledge of the Deity, whilst *vijñāna* means understanding the practices to be undertaken on the basis of that insight, primarily acts of worship. All three interpretations are possible – it is possible that all three are intended.

The second line begins with the words *yaj jñātvā*, meaning 'knowing which' and then says *na iha bhūyo 'nyat*, meaning 'here there is nothing else', and then *jñātavyam avaśiṣyate*, meaning 'remaining to be known'. The idea here would seem to be that after gaining knowledge of the Deity all things are known, because the Deity not only creates all things but also pervades all things. Hence when the Deity is known, all things are known. The word *iha*, here, and could be intended to mean 'here in this world' or else 'here on the subject of philosophical knowing'. Either meaning makes sense.

3. *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānām kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*

Amongst thousands of men, only one will endeavour for perfection, and amongst those who endeavour and achieve that goal, only one will come to know me in truth.

The first line of this verse is quite straightforward: amongst thousands of people, *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu*, someone, *kaścīd*, will endeavour for the state of perfection, *yatati siddhaye*. One might feel that there are many people in the world, both religious and non-religious, who strive to achieve the perfect way of living, but what is referred to here is the one who strives for liberation by becoming absolutely pure in heart. According to this verse, such a true seeker of liberation is very rare, one amongst thousands. The second line states that even amongst those who have achieved success in their spiritual endeavours, *yatatām api siddhānām*, only one may come to know Kṛṣṇa as he truly is, *kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*. Rāmānuja suggests that the true meaning of this line is that no one can truly know the full reality of the Deity. This might seem to be going beyond what is said by the verse, but in support of his view, Rāmānuja cites a later verse (7.26) in which Kṛṣṇa says, *mām tu veda na kaścana*, meaning ‘there is no one who knows me’.

Verses 4–7: The Supreme Deity and His Energies

These four verses give us a suggestion regarding the threefold definition of all existence, an idea that we can also recognise in the final verses of Chapter 15 and, more especially, in the Śvetāśvara Upaniṣad. Verse 4 gives an eightfold analysis of the material embodiment of each being and this is followed up in verse 5 with a consideration of the individual spiritual entities that give life and existence to the entire world. We might notice that in both these verses, Kṛṣṇa refers to these energies as ‘my own’, using the word *me*, the shorter form of the possessive case, thereby demonstrating the Deity’s proprietorship over all that exists in this world. In verse 6, he further states that these two energies, or forms of *prakṛti*, are the original source of all beings and that he himself is

both the origin and termination of the world. In verse 7, Kṛṣṇa declares that he alone is the Supreme Deity beyond whom nothing exists, and then uses the locative pronoun *mayi* to reveal that the whole world exists within himself.

4. *bhūmir āpo nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca
ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and the sense of ego comprise the eight component parts of my energy known as *prakṛti*.

Here Kṛṣṇa speaks of an eightfold *prakṛti* that is his own energy. The eight included are, first of all, the five great elements: earth, water, fire, air, and space. To these five are added the three component parts of the mental faculties of a living being: *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṁkāra*. *Manas* is that part of the mind that receives sensory perceptions and identifies them based on previous experience; *buddhi* is the part of the mind that then ponders these perceptions, makes decisions about them, and thinks about the world in general; *ahaṁkāra* is the sense of individual identity, the part of the mind that holds to the understanding of oneself as an individual being that is distinct from others. The word *prakṛti* is used in Sāṁkhya discourses and elsewhere to refer to the material manifestation, which is usually said to have twenty-four component elements. *Prakṛti* is then contrasted with the spiritual element that is the true self, the ātman or *puruṣa*. In this way the core precept of Sāṁkhya dualism is established; the *Gītā* makes use of this but adds a theistic element to the overall understanding.

5. *apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parāṁ
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat*

This is my inferior *prakṛti*, but you should also know about my higher *prakṛti*, which is distinct from it. This is the element of life, O mighty one, by means of which the world is held in place.

Here Kṛṣṇa states that there are two forms of *prakṛti*, both of which are said to be his own, as is indicated by the use of the word *me*. The *prakṛti*

outlined in verse 4 is here designated as *apara*, inferior, whilst the form of *prakṛti* introduced in this verse is said to be *para*, superior, and it is distinct, *anya*, from the inferior form. In the second line, this superior form of *prakṛti* is said to be the *jīva-bhūta*, the element of life, or the living being, which one might equate with the ātman in line with the dualism of Sāṃkhya thought. Reference to the spiritual self as *prakṛti* is unusual, but given what is being said here, one must take this to be the meaning. The sense of the concluding words of the verse, *yayedam dhāryate jagat*, which mean ‘by which this world is sustained’, would seem to be that it is the *jīva-bhūta* that gives life to an otherwise lifeless world; it is in this sense that word *dhāryate* is used to indicate that without the life force the world would not exist.

6. *etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇīty upadhāraya*
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā

You should understand that these two are the origin, the womb, of all living beings. I am the source of the entire world, and its passing away as well.

Verse 6 begins with the words *etad-yonīni*, which means ‘these are the womb’, followed by the words *bhūtāni sarvāni*, which means ‘all living beings’; this is followed by *ity upadhāraya*, which means ‘understand it thus’. The meaning here is that all living beings exist through a combination of the *para* and *apara prakṛti*, that is, through a combination of matter and spirit. Thus we have a replication of the dualism emphasised in Sāṃkhya teachings. Here, however, Kṛṣṇa states that in some way these two belong to himself, as they are his expanded energy, if we can accept that this is the meaning of *prakṛti* in the present context.

In the second line, a third component is added to this definition of reality, as Kṛṣṇa brings his own identity as the Supreme Deity to the fore. The first word is *aham*, meaning ‘I’, and to this is added the phrase *prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*, meaning the ‘origin’ and the ‘dissolution’. Before this we have the words *kṛtsnasya jagataḥ*, which mean ‘of the whole world’. So we could take this line as being an assertion from Kṛṣṇa that as the Supreme Deity he is the creator

and destroyer of the world in the manner that most monotheistic religions teach about the actions of God. We might, however, look for a slightly more subtle meaning, whereby Kṛṣṇa is indicating that he alone is the primal point out of which the two previously mentioned energies emerge at the time of creation and into which they return once more when the world is dissolved. If we take this line of interpretation, then we can better understand that the Deity is not merely the creator of the world, as a potter creates a pot, but also pervades every aspect of this existence through the divine presence within the spiritual and material energies.

7. *mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiṁcid asti dhanamjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

There is no other thing superior to me, Dhanamjaya. As jewels are strung on their thread, so all this world is strung on me.

Now Kṛṣṇa completes the triad of dimensions of reality by asserting that beyond himself there is no other person or object. We can perceive our own minds and bodies in terms of the eight elements listed in verse 4, and beyond these there is said to be a higher *prakṛti* that is the eternal self, the *jīva-bhūta*. Now it has been stated that the Deity is above and beyond even the spiritual self; there is nothing that is higher than the Deity. Here we find Kṛṣṇa using two first person pronouns to refer to himself, *mattaḥ* meaning ‘than me’ and *mayi* meaning ‘within me’ or ‘upon me’. So in line 1, Kṛṣṇa says that there is no other, *na anyat kiṁcid asti*, which is beyond himself, *mattaḥ parataram*.

When we turn to the second line, we can more readily identify the idea that the Deity not only manifests this world through the process of creation, but also pervades it. The comparison made here is worth further consideration. The word *protam* literally means ‘strung’; the comparison is made of the relationship between the world and Kṛṣṇa and the interaction of jewels with the thread on which they are strung. When we look at a necklace, we can recognise that there is an order to it which prevents the individual jewels from scattering in all directions, as sometimes happens when the thread becomes worn out. In the same way, it is said, the order that we can observe in the world,

enabling life to persist, is dependent on the Deity or the expanded energy of the Deity being present as the pervasive force of existence. It is also the case that, despite its being essential for the ordered form of a necklace, the thread, the *sūtra*, is invisible to our sight and can only be recognised on the basis of inference. In the same way, the presence of the Deity is imperceptible to our senses and can only be identified through the process of inference based on a recognition of the order of the world – unless, of course, there is some other way of knowing. Overall, I think we can see in this verse a clear statement of the *Gītā*'s monotheism, as Kṛṣṇa asserts that there is nothing above himself; but at the same time it is a form of monotheism that includes more than a touch of monism and *advaita*.

Verses 8–12: Kṛṣṇa's Pervasive Presence in the World

These five verses give a greater insight into what was meant by the words of verse 7 *mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ*, all this is strung upon me. What is apparent from this passage is that Kṛṣṇa defines his presence in this world as being the very essence of each category of existence. In verse 8, for example, he says that he is the effulgent light of the sun and moon, and we can recognise that if the sun and moon were not sources of light they would not be the sun and the moon; that effulgence is what makes them what they are and hence Kṛṣṇa identifies himself as that inherent characteristic of both. This line of discussion runs through to verse 12, which offers a slightly different perspective, as it asserts that all states of being emanate originally from Kṛṣṇa who is thus both the primal cause and the one whose presence sustains the order of the world.

8. *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarva-vedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu*

I am flavour in water, Kaunteya. I am the effulgence in the moon and the sun. I am *praṇava* (*om*) in all the Vedas. I am sound in space and maleness in men.

In the Sāṁkhya analysis of the world, there are said to be five great elements that form the basis all material phenomena: earth, water, fire, air, and

space. Each of these is said to have a particular quality that can be perceived through our senses. The particular quality associated with water is flavour; here Kṛṣṇa says that he himself is quality of flavour, that which makes water what it is. Then, as mentioned above, he states that he is the effulgence, the *prabhā*, of the moon and the sun, *śāsi-sūryayoḥ*. He is the sacred symbol of *om* for that is the very essence of the Vedic revelation, and he is sound in space, *śabdaḥ khe*. Again we can notice that the great element of space is defined by its inherent quality which is sound, and again Kṛṣṇa says that he himself is present as sound in space, thereby defining space for what it is. The final phrase is *pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu*, which I have translated here as ‘maleness in men’, for that is the essential quality that defines all men as what they are.

9. *punyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau*
jīvanam sarva-bhūteṣu tapaś cāsmi tapasviṣu

And I am the primal aroma in earth; I am the heat in fire. I am life in all beings; I am the austerity of those who undertake such austerities.

Here Kṛṣṇa continues in the same vein, first stating that he is the quality of aroma present in earth. Again it is the case that aroma as an object of perception is said to be the inherent quality of the element of earth; here Kṛṣṇa says that he is *punyo gandhaḥ*, the pure or primal aroma. The addition of the word *punya* is designed to show that he is the quality of aroma rather than any specific aroma, such that of a rose or daffodil. He then says that he is the heat present within fire, for that is one of its main defining characteristics.

The second line begins with the revelation that Kṛṣṇa is to be recognised as life in all beings, *jīvanam sarva-bhūteṣu*, which could be taken as a statement of the identity between the individual living being and the Deity. If we continue to read the passage along the same lines, however, the meaning that he is life in living beings because that is what defines living beings as such seems more likely. The defining essence of every living being is life itself, and life is therefore to be recognised as the pervading presence of the Deity. The final phrase is *tapaś cāsmi tapasviṣu*, ‘And I am the austerity of those who perform

austerities'. Again the meaning would seem to be that it is performance of austerity, *tapas*, which defines a person as a *tapasvin*; it is an obvious point, but without undertaking *tapas*, a person cannot be recognised as a *tapasvin*. Hence Kṛṣṇa identifies himself as such.

10. *bijaṁ mām sarva-bhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam*
buddhir buddhimatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham

You should know me as the eternal seed of all beings, Pārtha. I am the intelligence of those who are intelligent; I am the energy of all things that possess energy.

In the first line of this verse, Kṛṣṇa says that Arjuna should know him to be the eternal seed, the *bijaṁ sanātanam*, of all living beings, *sarva-bhūtānām*. The point here again would seem to be the understanding that the primal source of all that exists is the Supreme Deity, Kṛṣṇa himself. He is the eternal seed because he is constant and unchanging; it is from out of him that all things come into being. The second line repeats an idea we have encountered before, as Kṛṣṇa says that he is the intelligence of those who possess intelligence, his presence thereby defining what they are. The same can be said of the words *tejas tejasvinām aham*, 'I am the *tejas* of the *tejasvins*', *tejas* being a word that means heat or energy. In either case, Kṛṣṇa says that he is the defining quality of all such things.

11. *balaṁ balavatām cāhaṁ kāma-rāga-vivarjitam*
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo 'smi bharatarṣabha

And I am the power of the powerful when it is devoid of desire and passion. I am desire in living beings, O best of the Bharatas, when it does not transgress *dharma*.

This verse appears at first glance to continue a similar line of instruction to what has gone before, as Kṛṣṇa says that he is the strength of those who are strong or powerful, *balaṁ balavatām cāhaṁ*, then further states that he exists within living beings as the force of their desires, *kāmo 'smi*, presumably because desire is the primary motivating factor in their mode of existence.

Despite the apparent similarity to previous verses, however, there are some significant differences here, as both these assertions are qualified by caveats. Kṛṣṇa is the power of the powerful, but only when that power is exerted in a manner that is free of both selfish desire and passion, *kāma-rāga-vivarjitam*. Moreover, the Deity only exists in the form of *kāma*, desire, when it does not give rise to conduct that transgresses the precepts of *dharma*.

We can observe that in the first case, strength or power becomes a negative force in the world when it is used in anger or for selfish purposes. *Kāma* is named as one of the four legitimate pursuits for all people in their lives, the other three being, *artha*, prosperity, *dharma*, proper conduct, and *mokṣa*, liberation from the world. When, however, desires are pursued in a manner that causes harm to other beings, are based on deceit, or where there is no concern for the wellbeing of others, then desire is *dharma-viruddha*, in conflict with proper conduct. So when strength is not employed on the basis of selfish desire or passion, it represents the presence of Kṛṣṇa; otherwise it is a manifestation of the human factor. Likewise, the Deity is present in desire only when it accords with the highest principles of life; again, when it leads to breaches in the purity of action then it is a manifestation of our humanity alone. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says that he is *kāma* only when it is *dharma-aviruddha*.

12. *ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye
matta eveti tāt viddhi na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi*

You should understand that the states of existence based on *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* come into being from me. But I am not in them; they are in me.

This verse sums up and expands upon what has been said previously, as Kṛṣṇa says that all *bhāva*, all states of being, come into existence from him. He adds to this assertion by referring to the three *guṇas*, the essential qualities that pervade all material things. These three are *sattva*, purity, light, and goodness, *rajas*, energy, passion, and exertion, and *tamas*, darkness, ignorance, and aggression. All states of existence in this world are said to be pervaded by these qualities; Kṛṣṇa states here that all things pervaded by these *guṇas* come ‘from me’.

We might note that in the previous verses, Kṛṣṇa spoke of his presence within the world, whilst here he uses the word *mattaḥ*, meaning ‘from me’, implying that the world is an emanation from the Deity. The verse concludes with the rather cryptic statement, *na tv ahaṁ teṣu*, meaning ‘I am not present in them’ and then *te mayi*, ‘they are in me’. So here Kṛṣṇa seems to retract his teachings somewhat from previous assertions; this is almost certainly to avoid any pantheistic misunderstanding. Kṛṣṇa is the cause of the world and a cause is always present in its effects, but that does not mean that the causal factor is nothing but its effects. So this is what is being said here. The Deity is the cause from out of which the world emerges, but he retains his own state of being, which wholly transcends this existence.

Verses 13–15: Why the Deity is not Perceived or Understood

In these three verses, Kṛṣṇa explains why it is that he cannot be perceived by the living beings of this world, despite its being an expansion of his own energy and despite his apparently pervasive presence here. Two principal reasons are given. First of all, it is because of the power that the force of illusion exerts over living beings so that they cannot perceive the real truth of this existence. The second reason, given in verse 15, is that iniquitous persons do not look to the Deity for help with their position in the world; therefore, such persons do not acquire the requisite knowledge. In the midst of this discussion, in verse 14, it is said that the way to overcome illusion is by looking to Kṛṣṇa for help. This represents the first mention in the *Gītā* of a doctrine of divine grace and the passage is particularly noteworthy for that reason alone.

13. *tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvaṁ idaṁ jagat
mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam*

Being deluded by these three states of being, in which the three *guṇas* are inherent, this whole world cannot understand me,
for I am beyond all three states and I am undecaying.

This verse speaks of *sarvaṁ idaṁ jagat*, all this world, and gives a reason

for why it is that illusion, *mohitam*, predominates in this state of existence. This is due to the threefold influence of the *guṇas* on every aspect of life in this world, *tribhir guṇa-mayair bhāvaiḥ*. The result of this controlling force is *na abhijānāti mām*, ‘the world does not know me’. Kṛṣṇa has described ways in which he is present within the world as well as his being its original source, but the world is shaped by the *guṇas*, which represent a threefold network of illusion; hence he is not perceived by our senses. It is noteworthy here that even the *guṇa* of *sattva* is regarded as a source of delusion, although elsewhere it is suggested that *sattva* represents the first step on the path to enlightenment. In this regard, we might note the first three verses of Chapter 16 and verses 20 to 28 of Chapter 18.

The final phrase of the verse gives further information about the unperceived presence of the Deity, who is said to be *ebhyaḥ param*, beyond these, and *avyayaḥ*, without decay. The point being made here is that whereas the whole world is deluded by the force of the *guṇas*, Kṛṣṇa remains in a state of existence that is fully transcendent, untouched by the *guṇas*. Everything in the material realm of existence is subject to transformation and decay, but the Deity is beyond all such forces of change.

14. *daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā*
 mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te

This divine *māyā* of mine consisting of the *guṇas* is difficult to go beyond, but those who surrender to me alone cross beyond this *māyā*.

Here a further reason is given as to why the people of this world find it so hard to gain true enlightenment: *mama māyā duratyayā*, my *māyā* is difficult to transcend. Precisely what is meant here by the term *māyā* is difficult to ascertain. The word *māyā* can mean illusion or that which is not real, but it is also used to indicate the material manifestation as a whole. One might presume that the former is a more likely reading, but the *māyā* is said to be *guṇa-mayī*, consisting of the *guṇas*, or pervaded by the *guṇas*; given what has been said before, this might suggest that in this case *māyā* does mean the material

manifestation, which is also said to be ‘my own’, *mama*, and ‘divine’, *daivī*. Exactly why the *māyā* should be referred to as divine is hard to determine, although Rāmānuja explains that this is because it emanates from Kṛṣṇa.

The second line then explains how it is that one can go beyond this *māyā* that is so difficult to escape from. This is indicated by the words *mām eva ye pradyante*, which mean, ‘those who surrender to me alone’; the result of this is *māyām etān taranti te*, ‘they cross beyond this *māyā*’. Here we are surely in contact with a doctrine of divine grace. The idea of *prapatti*, total dependence, is one that is of particular importance for the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas who follow the teachings of Rāmānuja. As indicated by this verse, the idea is that if one lives one’s life in a state of absolute dependence on the will of the Deity, then one will achieve liberation through his grace alone.

15. *na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ*
māyayāpahṛta-jñānā āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ

Those wrongdoers who are foolish, the lowest of men, who have their knowledge taken away by *māyā*, or who take to the asuric form of existence, do not surrender to me.

This next verse, which speaks of those who do not surrender to Kṛṣṇa, *na mām ... prapadyante*, can be read in a number of different ways. Rāmānuja takes the verse to mean that there are five types of person who do not take to this path of *prapatti*, whilst Śaṅkara understands there to be a single type of individual, a *duṣ-kṛtin*, who displays the characteristics of all five. Prabhupāda’s reading of the verse is that there are four types of *duṣkṛtin*; given that there are four types of righteous persons, the *su-kṛtins*, designated in the following verse, this seems to be the most likely meaning of the text.

The word *duṣkṛtin* literally means ‘wrongdoer’, which we can take as referring to those who are devoid of compassion and act in a way that is deceitful or harmful to others. The first group of such persons are said to be the *mūḍhas*, ‘those who are foolish’, and one might suppose that this refers to those who take an entirely trivial, self-centred view of life. This is then followed by the term *nara-adhama*, which means the ‘lowest of men’;

although the word *nara* is gender-specific we should probably take it to include women as well.

The third type of person who does not seek the shelter of the Deity is referred to as *māyayā apahr̥ta-jñāna*, meaning one whose knowledge has been taken away by *māyā*, and in this case one should almost certainly take *māyā* as meaning ‘illusion’. Here Kṛṣṇa is probably referring to persons who may be learned in a scholarly way but due to illusion, perhaps due to pride, the understanding they have is stolen away by *māyā*. The final type is defined as *āsuraṁ bhāvam āśritāḥ*, those who resort to the nature of the *asuras*, the *asuras* being the eternal enemies of the gods who are by nature cruel, avaricious, and aggressive. However one reads the verse, the indication is that seeking the support of the Deity involves a moral dimension; those who behave wickedly towards others and are devoid of compassion will never gain the blessing of liberation from Kṛṣṇa.

Verses 16–19: Those who Worship Kṛṣṇa

In the next four verses, Kṛṣṇa suggests that there are four types of person who worship him. In the previous verse those who do not seek shelter with Kṛṣṇa were referred to as *duṣ-kr̥tins*, wrongdoers; here, by way of contrast, the four types of worshipper are all said to be *su-kr̥tins*, literally ‘right-doers’. Of these four types, most attention is focused on the *jñānin*, the one who possesses knowledge, and we have a noteworthy appearance of the idea of divine love and reciprocal love with the one who has knowledge. This idea of the love for and of the Deity becomes particularly prominent in the later forms of Indian devotional religion, but it would seem to appear for the first time here in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, this idea of devotion based on emotional expressions of love is found only in the *Anuśāsana-parvan* (Ch. 15), in a passage dedicated to Śiva. Also significant here is the statement in verse 19 about the knowledge possessed by the *jñānin* that makes such a person worthy of that epithet.

16. *catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ su-kr̥tino ‘rjuna*
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

There are four types of righteous person who worship me, Arjuna: one who is in distress, one who wishes to understand, one who seeks prosperity, and the *jñānin* who possesses knowledge, O best of the Bharatas.

Following on from the previous verse, we are here presented with the idea that there are four types of *su-kṛtin*, righteous persons, who worship Kṛṣṇa, and we might note the change in vocabulary from *prapadyante*, they seek shelter, to *bhajānte*, they worship. The first line refers to there being four types of such persons, *catur-vidhāḥ ... janāḥ*, in the second line they are listed as *ārta*, *jijñāsu*, *artha-arthin*, and *jñānin*. The *ārta* is one who is in distress, perhaps from poverty or poor health, the *jijñāsu* is one who is seeking knowledge or perhaps even enlightenment but has not achieved that goal, and the *artha-arthin* is one seeking prosperity and good fortune in this world. The nature of the *jñānin* and the knowledge possessed is explained in the ensuing verses. One might be tempted to look askance at those who engage in worship for material gain of some sort, but we should note that Kṛṣṇa regards all four types as *su-kṛtins*, righteous persons.

17. *teṣāṁ jñānī nitya-yukta eka-bhaktir viśiṣyate*
priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyaḥ

Amongst these four the *jñānin* who is always properly engaged and has one-pointed devotion is best. I am very dear to such a *jñānin*, and he is dear to me.

The first line of this verse clearly draws an equation between *jñāna* and *bhakti* as it states that of the four types of worshippers, the *jñānin* is in a superior position, *viśiṣyate*. Moreover, the *jñānin* is described *eka-bhaktiḥ*, one-pointed in devotion, and one can certainly take this to mean that the type of devotion being discussed is monotheistic in its orientation. It is in the second line that we find the language of love being introduced, as Kṛṣṇa says *priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham aham*, I am dearly loved by the *jñānin*, the word *priya* being particularly significant in indicating the *jñānin*'s love for Kṛṣṇa. The final phrase of the verse indicates that this feeling of love is reciprocal, as

it states *sa ca mama priyaḥ*, ‘he is the object of my love’. Now we can see that the *Gītā* is clearly moving on to a form of religious ideology that is distinct from the somewhat austere teachings witnessed in previous verses.

18. *udārāḥ sarva evaiti jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamām gatim*

They are all noble persons, but I regard the *jñānin* as my very self.
He is unwavering in dedicating himself to me alone as his ultimate goal.

Here again Kṛṣṇa refers positively to all types of devotee, even those whose worship is materially motivated; *udārāḥ sarve*, he says, they are all noble or exalted persons. The *jñānin*, however, is still set apart, as Kṛṣṇa says he regards the one who possesses true knowledge as his very self, *jñānī tv ātma eva*. This can certainly be read from the perspective of *advaita*, and in commenting on this verse, Śaṅkara says that the understanding of the *jñānin* is *aham eva bhagavān vāsudevaḥ*, ‘I am the Lord Vāsudeva’. Not surprisingly, Rāmānuja takes a different view, saying that the meaning is that the *jñānin* feels himself to be absolutely dependent on the Deity. It might also be suggested that in saying that the *jñānin* is his very self, Kṛṣṇa is putting forth a poetic statement of love rather than any philosophical doctrine.

In the second line it is said that the enlightened person is a *yukta-ātman*, one who engages or devotes himself, and *āsthitaḥ* without deviation. The object of this unwavering dedication is *mām eva anuttamām gatim*, meaning ‘myself alone as the unsurpassable goal’. So here again we can note that the paths of *jñāna* and *bhakti* are not regarded by the *Gītā* as entirely separate or distinct but are in fact two aspects of the same broad path of spiritual progression.

19. *bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ*

At the end of many births, one who possesses knowledge
surrenders to me, realising, ‘Vāsudeva is all things’. Such a great
soul is very rarely found.

The first line of this verse can be taken in two different senses. The phrase *bahūnām janmanām ante*, means ‘at the end of many births’ and *jñānavān mām prapadyate* means ‘one who possesses knowledge resorts to me’. This might indicate that one who is *jñāna-vat*, endowed with knowledge, undergoes many more births and then seeks refuge with the Deity, *mām prapadyate*. Alternatively, it could mean that after many births a person may become *jñāna-vat* and on the basis of that knowledge realise the need to resort to the Deity. The latter is Śaṅkara’s reading of the verse, and given what has been said about the *jñānin* in previous verses it does seem to be the most likely meaning.

The realisation gained by the *jñānin* is then given in the second line and is *vāsudevaḥ sarvam*, meaning ‘Vāsudeva is all’, Vāsudeva being a name of both Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu. For Śaṅkara, this expression confirms his advaitic perspective on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for he regards the Deity as equivalent to Brahman. Rāmānuja takes the meaning to be that all things are a part of Vāsudeva, for the part and the whole are in one sense non-different. It is clear that Madhvācārya, the ardent dualist, is most challenged by this statement; he therefore concludes that the meaning is that Vāsudeva is the cause of all things, or that *sarvam* here means ‘perfect’ so that the realisation becomes ‘Vāsudeva is perfect’.

The second part of line 2 states *sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ*, ‘such a *mahātman* is very rarely found’. There are, however, many millions of people who have studied the *Bhagavad-gītā* and many of these will have faith in its words; hence it must be the case that the *jñānin* is not one who has just studied the text or who has faith in its instruction, but rather one who has achieved a higher form of knowing, which we might refer to as realisation. This is not faith but knowledge; there is a distinction between the two.

Verses 20–23: Those who Worship the Vedic Gods

Previously, in verse 17, Kṛṣṇa spoke of *eka-bhakti*, which can be readily identified as an expression of monotheistic theology. It is well-known, however, that the Vedic texts refer to a number of different deities who are recipients of offerings made into the sacred fire. How then can the Vedic worship be

reconciled with the type of monotheism the *Gītā* is advocating? The answer is that it does so by relegating Vedic ritualism to a lower level than devotion to the one Supreme Deity and this point is made very clearly in this passage.

20. *kāmais tais tair hr̥ta-jñānāḥ prapadyante 'nya-devatāḥ
tām tām niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā*

Those who are bereft of knowledge because of their pursuit of this or that desire resort to other gods, accepting the appropriate discipline for worship as dictated by their own inner nature.

Here those who are *hr̥ta-jñāna*, bereft of knowledge, are contrasted with the *jñānins* discussed in the previous verses; the reason for that lack of knowledge is *kāmais tais taiḥ*, various forms of desire; and the consequence of its absence is *prapadyante anya-devatāḥ*, they resort to other gods. We might be tempted to view this line as a statement about contemporary Hindu belief and practice, but it is the Vedic form of worship that is almost certainly being referred to here; we can note that Śaṅkara agrees wholeheartedly with this idea, as he repeatedly asserts that Vedic ritualism does not form a part of the endeavour for realised knowledge.

The second line then states that in resorting to other deities, they accept various disciplines, *tām tām niyamam āsthāya*. The word *niyama* is frequently used within the context of yoga practice, but here it is almost certainly a reference to the various types of ritual offerings enjoined by the Vedic texts. The final phrase, *prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā*, is interesting because it means 'impelled by their own nature', which clearly suggests that those who take to ritualistic actions seeking worldly rewards are driven to do so because their nature, their *prakṛti*, drives them in that direction. This, of course, raises questions about the extent of our free will. Is it possible for those who are by nature selfish or materialistic to free themselves from such impulses by an effort of will?

21. *yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitum icchati
tasya tasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ tām eva vidadhāmy aham*

Whatever the form any devotee wishes to faithfully worship, I bestow upon him the firm faith that enables him to do so.

The wording of this verse has three repetitions, *yo yaḥ*, *yām yām*, and *tasya tasya*, which all give the meaning of ‘whoever’ or ‘whatever’. So first we have any person whatsoever, *yo yaḥ*, then any form whatsoever, *yām yām tanum*, and then in line 2, *tasya tasya*, of any such person. Hence the overall meaning is that whenever a devoted person has a faithful desire to worship the particular form of a deity, it is Kṛṣṇa himself who provides the firm faith that impels that person towards that form of worship. The words *acalām śraddhām* mean ‘firm faith’, *tām eva vidadhāmy aham* means ‘It is I who bestow that faith’. So the point is that even when those bereft of knowledge do not take to devotion to Kṛṣṇa and instead pursue Vedic rituals dedicated to a different deity, the Supreme Deity remains involved in that process by filling the worshippers’ hearts with the requisite faith that enables them to pursue their own path of worship. They are not punished for their practice of a different form of religion but are facilitated by the provision of faith in the efficacy of their worship.

22. *sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārāadhanam ihate*
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaiva vihitān hi tām

When endowed with such faith, he then engages in the worship of that god and as a result attains what he desires. These desired objects are, however, granted by me alone.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa speaks of the worship performed by those within whom he has instilled firm faith, *tayā śraddhayā yuktaḥ*. Endowed with such faith, the devotee of a specific deity performs acts of worship, *ārāadhanam*. The result of such rituals is then stated in line 2: from that worship, *tataḥ*, one gains the objects of desire, *labhate ... kāmān*. The second half of line 2 gives us further insight into this type of worship and the benefits it brings when Kṛṣṇa says *mayā eva vihitān hi tām*, these are bestowed by me alone.

We can see here a reinterpretation of the Vedic ritual so that it can be accommodated by the Vaiṣṇava monotheism expounded by the *Gītā* as a whole. In another passage of Vaiṣṇava theism in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Narāyaṇīyam* (Śānti-parvan, Chs 321–329), we are given a direct account of

how the ritual offerings of a *yajña* are taken and accepted by Viṣṇu alone, whilst Chapter 257 of the Śānti-parvan speaks of a Vaiṣṇava *yajña* in which the slaughter of animals is forbidden. In this verse it is therefore said that it is the Supreme Deity alone who oversees the rewards obtained by the ritualists, thereby showing again the transformation of understanding in relation to the Vedic ritual. This reading of the verse is presented by Rāmānuja in his commentary wherein he says, *tad-arcanaṁ ca mad-ārāadhanam*, worship of that deity is worship of myself. Śaṅkara takes a somewhat different view, suggesting that although the Vedic rules of worship and reward are originally ordained by Kṛṣṇa, it is still the lesser deities who actually bestow those blessings.

23. *antavat tu phalaṁ teṣāṁ tad bhavaty alpa-medhasām*
 devān deva-yajo yānti mad-bhaktā yānti mām api

The fruits of the worship performed by such unintelligent persons are all temporary. Worshipers of the gods go to the gods; my devotees come to me.

In verse 20, the worshippers of the gods were referred to as *hr̥ta-jñāna*, lacking in knowledge; in this verse Kṛṣṇa states that they are *alpa-medhas*, of small intelligence. Why is that so? It is because the fruits they derive from their religious practice are *antavat*, they come to an end, whereas the goal established by the *Gītā*'s teachings is that of eternal liberation. Line 2 goes on to say that those who worship the gods attain the abode of the gods, whilst those who become devotees of Kṛṣṇa, *mad-bhaktāḥ*, will go to him, *yānti mām*. One might feel that reaching the delightful abode of the gods is something worth striving for, but the *Bhagavad-gītā* is a *mokṣa-śāstra* and so regards anything less than complete liberation with some disdain. It is not clear exactly what is meant by the words *yānti mām*, they go to me, but all the commentators agree that it indicates an eternal release from the sufferings of this world.

Verses 24–28: Those Who Do Not Resort to Kṛṣṇa and Those Who Do

In these next five verses, Kṛṣṇa returns to a consideration of the reasons why individuals do or do not turn towards him in their spiritual quest, with one or two very significant points of a different nature made along the way. The reasons for turning away from the Deity are, firstly, because some do not accept his divine identity, and then it is said to be due to the force of *yoga-māyā* which holds the world in a state of delusion, continually pulled in one direction or another by the power of desire and loathing to which all in this world are subject. It is only in verse 28 that Kṛṣṇa returns once more to considering the nature and identity of those who do worship him, giving reasons for their adoption of this path.

24. *avyaktam vyaktim āpannam manyante mām abuddhayaḥ
param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam*

Those who lack intelligence think of me as a non-manifest entity taking a manifest form. They do not know my higher nature, which is unfading and unsurpassed.

Here Kṛṣṇa speaks of those who are devoid of intelligence, *abuddhayaḥ*, and how they think of his appearance in this world. Their view is that he is the non-manifest *avyakta* assuming a manifest form, and this almost certainly means that they think of him as an ordinary living being of this world, the non-manifest *avyaktam* being the spiritual ātman, which has taken on a form of embodiment that can be perceived, *vyaktim āpannam*. They are *ajānantaḥ*, unaware of Kṛṣṇa's *param bhāvam*, his higher nature through which he is unfading, *avyayam*, and unsurpassed, *anuttamam*. Given the fact that this verse clearly refers to the appearance of the Deity as Kṛṣṇa, it is not unreasonable to look to the *Mahābhārata* to find the specific case that underlies what is said here. During the protracted peace negotiations, Kṛṣṇa comes to the court of the Kauravas as a peace envoy and an attempt is made by Duryodhana and his associates to take him prisoner. Kṛṣṇa then reveals to

them a vision of all the gods existing in his body, a clear display of his divine identity. Duryodhana, however, dismisses this event as nothing more than a cheap magical trick, refusing to regard Kṛṣṇa as a manifestation of the divine (*Udyoga-parvan*, Ch. 129). It could well be the case that this is what Kṛṣṇa has in mind in presenting this verse.

25. *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga-māyā-samāvṛttaḥ*
 mūḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam

I am not manifest to all because I am concealed by *yoga-māyā*. So this deluded world does not know me, the one who is unborn and unfading.

Whilst the previous verse might have been related to a specific group of individuals, it is clear that this verse is considering the condition of all living beings in this world. Kṛṣṇa is not manifest to all living beings, *na ahaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya*, and the reason given for this unawareness is because he is *yoga-māyā-samāvṛttaḥ*; he is concealed by *yoga-māyā*. It is not clear what exactly is meant by the term *yoga-māyā*, although Śaṅkara explains that it is the sum total of all the elements of *prakṛti* that deludes living beings. In the second line, the point is repeated: *mūḍho 'yaṁ na abhijānāti*, this deluded world does not understand Kṛṣṇa's true nature, which is unborn and unfading, *ajam avyayam*. The word *avyayam* occurs both in this and the previous verse and one presumes that this repetition is to give emphasis to the idea that although all things in this world, and all living beings, exist in a state of constant change and decay, the Deity is changeless and untouched by the progression of time.

26. *vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna*
 bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana

I know the living beings of the past, the present, and the future, Arjuna, but there is no one who knows me.

This verse again establishes the absolute distinction between the Deity and the living beings of this world who live in a state of ignorance as to the

true nature of their existence. Kṛṣṇa here claims the power of omniscience with regard to the past, present, and future of all beings, and one might feel that the Deity's knowledge of our future raises questions about free will and destiny. If the future is known, can it be changed by our endeavours? That question, however, is not addressed here. The distinction between Kṛṣṇa and all others is a consistent theme of these verses and is confirmed here with the words, *mām tu veda na kaścana*, meaning 'there is no one who has knowledge of me'. The point would seem to be that despite all our mental cogitations and attempts to philosophise about the nature of our existence, the absolute truth that is the divine identity remains beyond the power of the mind to grasp. Theologians and others may attempt to analyse and explain the nature of God, but according to the assertion here their words will always fall short of the highest truth that is the Deity whose existence is beyond the range of conception and description.

27. *icchā-dveṣa-samutthena dvandva-mohena bhārata
sarva-bhūtāni saṁmohaṁ sarge yānti paramāta*

Through the illusion of duality, Bhārata, arising from desire and loathing, all living beings in this created world pass into a state of ignorance, Paramāta.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa explains more fully the nature and causes of the delusion that overwhelms all living beings, *saṁmohaṁ sarge yānti*; the word *sarge* can mean either 'in this creation' or 'at the time of their birth', and both possibilities carry the same fundamental meaning. The illusory force that overtakes all beings is referred to as *dvandva-moha*, the delusion of duality, and the nature of that duality is *icchā-dveṣa-samuttha*, the constant arising of desire and loathing. The point being made here is that the lives of all beings are predominated by the experience of desirable and painful circumstances so that we live in a constant cycle of becoming joyful through pleasure and experiencing distress due to the sufferings of life. It is because their lives are predominated by this duality that living beings are unable to grasp the higher truth of the divine presence. Here one might recall the advocacy of attaining

a state of aloof serenity, *prasāda*, referred to in Chapter 2 (vs 64–65), as it is this state of consciousness that might allow one to go beyond the influence of the constant transformations of life. One might naturally feel that given the nature of life in this world, it is impossible to move beyond this unending state of duality, but the next verse offers a solution that is in some ways quite surprising.

28. *yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām*
 te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ

But persons whose wickedness has reached an end and are engaged in virtuous acts become free from the illusion of duality. They worship me and remain firm in their vows.

Here the discussion moves on to consider those who are *dvandva-moha-nirmuktāḥ*, free from the delusion of duality, that was spoken of in the previous verse. Those who can achieve such a state of even-minded serenity then move forward to perform acts of devotion and worship Kṛṣṇa with resolute vows, *bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ*. One might think that anyone can engage in acts of worship without first achieving the state of transcendence referred to here, but it is clear that pure *bhakti* transcends the day-to-day worship practised by many people, as it is based on a state of consciousness that is transcendent to the world.

Turning to the first line of the verse, we can observe an assertion of the means by which this higher state of consciousness is achieved and the marks displayed by those who have achieved this status. One might expect to find some reference here to yoga practice or the acquisition of higher knowledge, as has been emphasised earlier in the *Gītā*, but in fact Kṛṣṇa's words here are related entirely to the manner in which one conducts oneself in one's daily life and the relationship one develops with other living beings. The first point made is that those who attain this state of enlightenment are *anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ*, meaning that any form of wickedness they may have performed has now been set aside. This must refer to the renunciation of thoughts, words, and deeds that are harmful to others or are based on greed and deceit. Moreover,

they are *punya-karman*, performers of righteous action. This means that their spiritual upliftment is brought about and exemplified not just by the avoidance of harmful actions but also by taking action on behalf of those in need, looking to promote the welfare of the world. It is on the basis of this wholly benign outlook on all other beings that one is able to attain a state of consciousness through which the gateway to spiritual elevation is opened up.

Verses 29–30: Knowledge of the Deity

The final two verses of Chapter 7 introduce a new line of discussion that builds on what has been said in the previous verses and which continues into Chapter 8. The verses themselves are somewhat obscure and provoke a series of further questions from Arjuna which form the opening two verses of the eighth chapter. The central point being made here is that those who strive for liberation, looking to Kṛṣṇa for refuge, come to know him in a number of different ways, which are not immediately clear but are explained at the start of Chapter 8.

29. *jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatante ye
te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmam karma cākhilam*

Those who resort to me and thereby endeavour for liberation from old age and death fully understand Brahman and have complete knowledge of *adhyātmā* and of karma.

This verse speaks of those who are striving for liberation from the sorrows of the world, epitomised by the experience of old age and death, *jarā* and *marāṇa*, which all beings must undergo. The crucial phrase here is *mām āśritya*, resorting to me, which marks a continuation of the discussion presented in the previous verses. The result such persons gain is three forms of knowledge, referred to here by the word *viduḥ*, ‘they know’. First of all, there is complete knowledge of Brahman, *brahma ... kṛtsnam*, and then a similarly complete understanding of *adhyātmā* and of karma. An explanation of these three terms is given by Kṛṣṇa at the start of Chapter 8 and so it seems best to postpone any further discussion until we progress to verses 3 and 4 of that chapter.

30. *sādhībhūtādhīdaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ
prayāṇa-kāle 'pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasah*

Those who also know me in relation to the *adhibhūta*, the *adhidaiva*, and the *adhiyajña*, with their consciousness fixed, can know me even at the time of death.

Here three more ways of knowing the Deity are presented using the technical terms of *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva*, and *adhiyajña*. These terms can be found in the Upaniṣads and other early texts, although the meaning that can be derived from the context is not always consistent. In this case, Kṛṣṇa gives an indication as to their meaning at the start of Chapter 8, and from his explanation there we can see that the idea is that the Deity is to be perceived in every aspect of our existence, whether spiritual or material. Those who are able to attain this knowledge are designated as *yukta-cetas*, meaning that they have properly engaged their minds; this again creates a connection between the meditational yoga of Chapter 6 and the devotional emphasis of the present chapter. The point would be that it is because they constantly focus their minds on the omnipresence of the Deity that they are able to do so even at the moment of death, *prayāṇa-kāle api*. The full significance of this assertion is also made clear at the start of Chapter 8, in verses 5 and 6.