

Epilogue

“It looks like we’re off to good start,” Krishna said. “Do you see the value of investigating these matters further? Shall we continue?”

“This is a lot for me to absorb,” replied Arjuna. “Let me sit with it for a while. I want to spare you any trouble on account of my ignorance, so I’ll be sure to sort out what I can before I ask anything more of you.”

Krishna smiled in appreciation, then went on. “Let me sketch out the next step, which will assist you in your preparations. We’re going to reassess knowledge and action, and see how they fit together. Ordinarily there is a gulf between them, but yoga is a way to bridge the gap. I call the bridge karma yoga, unitive action.

“Our actions begin deep in the psyche, in what you might call our unconscious intelligence, whereas our knowledge is compiled mainly by our conscious mind, so it lies much closer to the surface. That’s why there isn’t always a good match between our thoughts and deeds, or you might say our desires and the demands of daily life. The chaotic battle you are caught up in is exactly the kind of thing that happens when knowledge and action are out of joint. When our knowledge and action are in accord, though, they function seamlessly. In fact, that’s how knowledge is converted to wisdom, by integrating it with our actions. You need to learn how to get them to work together, how to incorporate the impulses—both divine and demonic—from your unconscious into your awareness of the world around you. They are meant to be in harmony, but look what a disaster it is when they aren’t.”

“I can certainly see the disaster part,” agreed Arjuna, “but why is action such a big deal? I thought I was getting out of it.

Krishna shook his head, chagrined. “Action is pretty much the whole game,” he went on. “The universe is all about things happening. That’s the fun of it. Even thoughts are a kind of action. Our mental posturing either holds us captive in oppressive

conditions or frees us from them. A lot of your thinking is still tying you down. So you might want to investigate it a little further.

“I know we’ve touched on this already, but I don’t think you’ve understood it as much as you could, so let me reiterate. For most people, action means doing your duty. It’s like being in a work crew: you have your assigned job in an enterprise, be it building a skyscraper, playing team sports, running a business, raising a family or what have you, and you do it well or poorly, depending on how successfully your task is completed. For most, that’s the essence of spirituality, doing your duty well, what other people expect you to do well. And that’s fine as far as it goes, but those are actually the most mundane matters. Part of you, what I call the divine part, is desperate to express some of the more complex abilities you possess, and if you don’t bring them out they make you frustrated and depressed. You really are a miraculously complicated creation of mine, don’t you know? I always intended humans to do more than scrabble for food or run swords through each other.

“What I want to teach you is how to access your full inner being, because your real duty is to develop your unique talents, to become what you truly are capable of as an independent entity, instead of always conforming to a template laid down by someone else. Your best features have been driven so far underground you don’t even remember them yourself. Reclaiming them is the real spiritual quest, and it’s the essence of what I’ll be helping you to discover. I assure you, once you are in tune with your true nature, you will fulfill your mundane duties easily, and with pleasure. You will also know how to dance, how to flow through life creatively. That’s the best contribution you can make to yourself and the world around you. Sound interesting?”

Arjuna nodded thoughtfully. “When you put it that way, how can I refuse?”