

# Hindu Scriptures

A Brief Anthology

## Preface

The sublime principles taught by the great religions of the world have always saved mankind from self-destruction whenever they have been understood properly and practised sincerely. If these religions-some of which belong to the prehistoric eras-have survived to this day, it is mainly because of their great books in which are recorded these sublime principles revealed to their founders, prophets, messiahs, sages and saints.

How the Book or the scripture has saved a religious community can be understood better by analysing the Sanskrit equivalent for the same, viz., 'śāstra'. A śāstra is that which protects (trāṇana) if its commands (śāsana) are adhered to: śāsanāt trāṇanāc caiva śāstramityabhi-dhīyate.

The Book places before the members of the community a great ideal to be striven for. It gives them a code of conduct by following which they can maintain internal peace and harmony. It helps them to resolve their doubts and conflicts by offering them the necessary norms and standards. It is the fountain-head of eternal inspiration for the entire community.

In order to acquaint the spiritually oriented persons in general and the Hindus in particular, a short anthology of the Hindu scriptures is being placed before the readers. If it generates righteous pride in the hearts of the Hindus and a better understanding in the minds of others, the compiler feels rewarded.

Swami Harshananda

## Contents

1. Ṛgveda (3.62.10; 10.191.1-4)
2. Upaniṣads
  - a. Tīśāvāsya (1-2)
  - b. Kaṭha (2.1, 2, 9, 12, 23, 24)
  - c. Taittirīya (1.11)
3. Gītā (2.54-72)
4. Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (2.21.41; 2.27.6; 2.62.15; 3.29.3; 3.50.8; 3.50.19; 4.18.14; 4.33.46; 4.38.22; 6.21.15; 6.114.27)
5. Mahābhārata
  - a. Yakṣapraśna-Vanaparva-Ch. 313, (Verses 47-50, 57-60, 69, 70, 73-76, 91-96, 107, 108, 117)
6. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (Skandha 11, Chapter 19, Verses 33-45)
7. Yogasūtras of Patañjali (Pāda 1, Sūs. 2, 12, 13, 14, 15; Pāda 2, Sū. 1)
8. Nārada Bhaktisūtras (Sūs. 12, 35, 38, 43, 44, 45, 69)

## Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation – sounds like

अ, a-o in son,	ठ ṭh-th in ant-hill
आ , ā-a in master,	ड ḍ-d in den
इ i-i in if,	ढ ḍh-dh in godhood
ई ī-ee in feel,	ण ṇ-n in under
उ u-u in full,	त t-t in French
ऊ ū-oo in boot,	थ th-th in thumb
ऋ ṛ-somewhat between r and ri,	द d-th in then
	ध dh-the in breathe
ए e-ay in May,	न n-n in not
ऐ ai-y in my,	प p-p in pen
ओ o-o in oh,	फ ph-ph in loop-hole
औ au-ow in now,	ब b-b in bag
क k-k in keen,	भ bh-bh in abhor
ख kh-ckh in blockhead,	म m-m in mother
ग g-g (hard) in go,	य y-y in yard
घ gh-gh in log-hut,	र r-r in run
ङ ṅ-ng in singer,	ल l-l in luck
च c-ch in chain,	व v-v in avert
छ ch-chh in catch him,	श ś-sh in reich (German)
ज j-j in judge,	ष ṣ-sh in show
झ jh-dgeh in hedgehog,	स s-in sun
ञ ñ-n (somewhat) as in French,,	ह h-in hot
ट ṭ-t in ten, ँ ṁ-m in sum,	:ḥ-h in half

## ṚGVEDA (3.62.10; 10.191.1-4)

The Vedas are the basic scriptures of Hinduism. 'Veda' literally means knowledge or wisdom. It is also called 'śruti' which means 'what is heard or revealed'.

The Vedas are four in number: the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda and the Atharvaveda.

The Ṛgveda, which is the oldest and the biggest, consists of hymns which are mostly prayers. The Yajurveda deals mainly with sacrificial rites. The Sāmaveda contains a portion of the Ṛgvedic hymns set to music. These have to be sung at appropriate stages during a sacrifice. The Atharvaveda, which is a later composition, consists mostly of moral and ethical codes as also a few worldly sciences.

The first of the following selections from the Ṛgveda is the famous Gāyatrī-mantra. It is a wonderful prayer addressed to God the creator (using the sun as the symbol) for enlightening one's intellect.

The next four verses from the very last part of the Ṛgveda. They contain the exhortations of the leader ṛṣi to his followers given at the end of a successful sacrifice. Maintenance of unity and harmony is the main theme.

tat savitur vareṇyam  
bhargo devasya dhīmahi  
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt  
(3.62.10)

'We meditate upon the excellent effulgence of god Savitṛ (the creator). May He guide our understanding!'

saṁsamidyuvase vṛṣannagne  
viśvānyarya ā iḷaspade samidhyase  
sa no vasūnyā bhara  
(10.191.1)

'Agni, showerer (of choicest bounties), you who are the lord, have brought all beings together in close bond. You are kindled (by the ṛtviks) upon the footmark of Iḷa (the altar). Bring unto us riches!'

saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ  
saṁ vo manāmsi jānatām  
devā bhāgaṁ yathā pūrve  
sañjānānā upāsate  
(10.191.2)

'Meet together, talk together; let your minds apprehend alike; in like manner as the ancient gods, concurring, accepted their portion of the sacrifice.'

samāno mantraḥ samitiḥ samānī  
samānaṁ manaḥ saha cittameṣām  
samānaṁ mantram abhi mantraye vaḥ

samānena vo haviṣā juhomi  
(10.191.3)

`Common be the prayer of these (assembled worshippers), common be the acquirement, common the purpose, associated be the desire. I repeat for you a common prayer, I offer for you with a common oblation.'

samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni  
vaḥsamānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati  
(10.191.4)

`Common, (worshippers), be your intention; common be (the wishes of) your hearts; common be your thoughts, so that there may be thorough union among you.

## UPANIṢADS

`Upaniṣad' means that esoteric and sacred knowledge which destroys our ignorance of the Highest Truth (called Brahman), thereby loosens our worldly bonds and leads us to It.

The Upaniṣads usually form the last portions of the Vedic literature. Hence the name Vedānta.

Though the Upaniṣads are quite numerous, only ten of them are universally accepted as more ancient and authoritative: Īśāvāsya, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya.

Īśāvāyopaniṣad is one of the smallest in the series. The first two verses given here urge a man to aspire after living the full span of life in an active way, but not forgetting that everything belongs to God, the All-pervading Spirit. He can certainly enjoy the good things of life but in a detached way.

Kaṭhōpaniṣad which starts with the story of the young boy Naciketas is, perhaps, the most popular of the Upaniṣads.

In life, one is often faced with the difficult task of choosing between the good and the pleasant. The pleasant ultimately leads to bondage and suffering. The good, which may not be attractive, frees us from bondage and suffering. Hence it is wisdom to choose the good and reject the pleasant.

The Self or the Highest Truth obtained through the good is difficult to comprehend. It cannot be obtained through lectures or logic, intelligence or learning. It is only when a man has purified himself by good living, that he becomes fit to be instructed in the Self by a competent spiritual preceptor. When such a preceptor teaches, the Self reveals Itself to the disciple.

This is the gist of the selections given here.

The ancient system of Indian education made it obligatory for the disciple to live with the teacher during the period of training. At the end of the successful training, when the disciple was ceremonially taking leave of the teacher, it was customary for the latter to give him parting words of advice. The only piece of such an advice still extant in the Upaniṣadic literature is contained in the last section of the first chapter of the Taittirīyopaniṣad which is reproduced here.

In this 'Convocation Address,' the teacher is advising his disciple to speak the truth, to honour his parents and to conduct himself according to the rules of dharma which he has learnt from the scriptures and the teacher. Whenever he is in doubt, he should observe his elders who are the competent authorities in the field, and imitate them.

**(a) Īśāvāsya (1 and 2)**

Īśāvāsyaṃ idaṃ sarvaṃ  
yat kiñca jagatyāṃ jagat  
tena tyaktena bhujīthāḥ  
mā grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam (1)

'(Know that) all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet what belongs to others.'

kurvann-eveha karmāṇi  
jijīviṣet śataṃ samāḥvevaṃ  
tvayi nānyatheto'sti  
na karma lipyate nare (2)

'Always performing works here, one should wish to live a hundred years. If you live thus as a man, there is no way other than this by which karma (or deed) does not adhere to you.'

**(b) Kaṭha (2.1, 2, 9, 12, 23, 24)**

anyac-chreyo anyad utaiva preyas  
te ubhe nānārthe puruṣaṃ sinītaḥ  
tayoḥ śreya ādadānasya sādhu bhavati  
hīyate'rthād ya u preyo vṛṇīte (2.1)

'(Yama said:) Different is the good, and different, indeed, is the pleasant. These two, with different purposes, bind a man. Of these two, it is well for him who takes hold of the good; but he who chooses the pleasant, fails of his aim.'

śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyametas  
tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ  
śreyo hi dhīro'bhi preyaso vṛṇīte  
preyo mando yogakṣemād vṛṇīte (2.2)

'Both the good and the pleasant approach a man. The wise man, pondering over them, discriminates. The wise choose the good in preference to the pleasant. The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers the pleasant.'

P naiśā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā  
proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha  
yāṃ tvamāpas satyadhṛtir batāsi  
tvādr̥ṇ no bhūyān naciketāḥ praṣṭā (2.9)

'Not by reasoning is this apprehension attainable, but dearest, taught by another, is it well understood. Thou hast obtained it, holding fast to truth. May we find, Naciketas, an inquirer like thee.'

taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍham anupraviṣṭaṁ  
guhāhitaṁ gahvareṣṭhaṁ purāṇam  
adhyātmayogādhighamena devaṁ  
matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti (2.12)

`Realising through self-contemplation that primal God, difficult to be seen, deeply hidden, set in the cave (of the heart), dwelling in the deep, the wise man leaves behind, both joy and sorrow'.

nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo  
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena  
yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām (2.23)

`This self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained only by the one whom the (Self) chooses. To such a one the Self reveals his own nature.'

nāvirato duṣcaritān nāśānto  
nāsamāhitaḥ nāśāntamānaso  
vāpi prajñānenainamāpnuyāt (2.24)

`Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed, can reach this (self) through right knowledge.'

### (c) Taittirīya (1.11)

Vedam anūcyācāryo'ntevāsinam anuśāsti satyaṁ vada dharmāṁ cara svādhyāyān mā pramadaḥ  
ācāryāya priyaṁ dhanamāhṛtya prajātantuṁ mā vyavacchetsiḥ satyān na pramaditavyam dharmān na  
pramaditavyam kuśalān na pramaditavyam bhūtyai na pramaditavyam svādhyāya-pravacanābhyāṁ na  
pramaditavyam devapitṛkāryābhyāṁ na pramaditavyam

`Having taught the Veda, the teacher instructs the pupil: Speak the truth. Practise virtue. Let there be no neglect of your (daily) study. Having brought to the teacher the wealth that is pleasing (to him), do not cut off the thread of the offspring. Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be neglect of study and teaching. Let there be no neglect of the duties to the gods and the fathers.'

mātr̥devo bhava pitṛdevo bhava ācāryadevo bhava atithidevo bhava yānyanavadyāni karmāṇi  
tāni sevītavyāni no itarāṇi yānyasmākaṁ sucaritāni, tāni tvayopāsyāni no itarāṇi

`Be one to whom the mother is a god. Be one to whom the father is a god. Be one to whom the teacher is a god. Be one to whom the guest is a god.' `Whatever deeds are blameless, they are to be practised, not others. Whatever good practices there are among us, they are to be adopted by you, not others.'

ye kecāsmacchreyāṁso brāhmaṇāḥ teṣāṁ tvayāsanena praśvasitavyaṁ śraddhayā deyam  
aśraddhayā deyam śriyā deyam hriyā deyam bhityā deyam samvidā deyam

`Whatever brāhmaṇas there are (who are) superior to us, they should be comforted by you with a seat. (What is to be given) is to be given with faith, should not be given without faith; should be given in plenty, should be given with modesty, should be given with fear, should be given with sympathy.'  
atha yadi te karma-vicikitsā vā vṛtta-vicikitsā vā syāt ye tatra brāhmaṇās sammarśinaḥ yuktā āyuktāḥ  
alūkṣā dharmakāmās syuḥ yathā te tatra varteran tathā tatra vartethāḥ

`Then, if there is in you any doubt regarding conduct, you should behave yourself in such matters, as the brāhmaṇas there (who are) competent to judge, devoted (to good deeds), not led by others, not harsh, lovers of virtue, would behave in such cases.'

athābhyākhyāteṣu ye tatra brāhmaṇās sammarśinaḥ yuktā āyuktāḥ alūkṣā dharmakāmās syuḥ  
yathā te teṣu varteran tathā teṣu  
vartethāḥ

`Then, as to the persons who are spoken against, you should behave yourself in such a way, as the brāhmaṇas there, (who are) competent to judge, devoted (to good deeds), not led by others, not harsh, lovers of virtue, would behave in regard to such persons.'

eṣa ādeśaḥ eṣa upadeśaḥ eṣā vedopaniṣat etadānuśāsanam evam upāsitavyam evam u caitad upāsyam

`This is the command. This is the teaching. This is the secret doctrine of Veda. This is the instruction. Thus should one worship. Thus indeed should one worship.'

## **GĪTĀ (Chapter 2 Verses 54-72)**

Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, better known as the Gīta, forms an integral part of the great epic Mahābhārata (Bhīṣmaparva, chapters 25-42). When Arjuna, the Pāṇḍava hero, became deluded and confused with regard to his duties on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Śrīkrṣṇa, considered to be the incarnation of God Himself, taught him wisdom thereby dispelling his delusion.

The book runs into 700 verses spread over 18 chapters.

The selection given here is well-known as `sthita prajñalakṣaṇa,' since it gives a fine description of the characteristics of a man of steady-wisdom. These characteristics which are natural to a perfect man, can also be considered to be modes of sādhanā by the spiritual aspirants.

Arjuna uvāca

sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā  
samādhisthasya keśava  
sthitadhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣeta  
kimāsīta vrajeta kim (54)

Arjuna said: `What O Keśava, is the description of the man of steady wisdom, merged in samādhi? How (on the other hand) does the man of steady wisdom speak, how sit, how walk?

Krishna uvāca

Śrībhagavānuvāca  
prajahāti yadā kāmān  
sarvān pārtha manogatān  
ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ  
sthitaprajñas tadocyate (55)

The Blessed Lord said: `When a man completely casts away, O Pārtha, all desires of the mind, satisfied in the Self alone by the Self, then is he said to be one of steady wisdom.'

duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ  
sukheṣu vīgatasprhaḥ  
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ  
sthitadhīr munirucyate (56)

`He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear, and wrath, is indeed the sage of steady wisdom.'

yas sarvatrānabhisnehas  
tat tat prāpya śubhāśubham  
nābhinandati na dveṣṭi  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (57)

`He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his wisdom is steady.'

yadā samharate cāyaṁ  
kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ  
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (58)

`When also, like the tortoise withdrawing its limbs, he can completely withdraw the senses from their objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.'

viṣayā vinivartante  
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ  
rasavarjaṁ raso'pyasya  
paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate (59)

`Objects fall away from the abstinent man, leaving the longing behind. But his longing also ceases, who sees the Supreme.'

yatato hyapi kaunteya  
puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ  
indriyāṇi pramāthīni  
haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ (60)



`The turbulent senses, O son of Kunti, do violently snatch away the mind of even a wise man, striving after perfection.'

tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya  
yukta āsīta matparaḥ  
vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (61)

`The steadfast, having controlled them all, sits focussed on Me as the Supreme. His wisdom is steady, whose senses are under control.'

dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ  
saṅgas teṣūpajāyate  
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ  
kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate (62)

`Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed in a man. From attachment longing, and from longing anger grows.'

krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ  
saṁmohāt smṛtivibhramaḥ  
smṛtibhramśād buddhināśo  
buddhināśāt praṇāsyati (63)

`From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination, and from the ruin of discrimination he perishes.'

rāgadveṣaviyuktaistu  
viṣayān indriyaiścaran  
ātmavaśyair vidheyātmā  
prasādamadhigacchati (64)

`But the self-controlled man, moving among objects with senses under restraint, and free from attraction and aversion, attains to tranquillity.'

prasāde sarvaduḥkhānām  
hānir asyopajāyate  
prasannacetaso hyāśu  
buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate (65)

`In tranquillity, all sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect of him, who is tranquil-minded, is soon established in firmness.'

nāsti buddhirayuktasya  
na cāyuktasya bhāvanā  
na cābhāvayataḥ śāntir  
aśāntasya kutas sukham (66)

`No knowledge (of the Self) has the unsteady. Nor has he meditation. To the unmeditative, there is no peace. And how can one without peace, have happiness?'"

indriyāṇām hi caratām  
yanmano'nuvidhīyate  
tadasya harati prajñām  
vāyur nāvamivāmbhasi (67)

`For, the mind, which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his discrimination, as a wind (carries away from its course) a boat on the water.'

tasmād yasya mahābāho  
niḡṛhītāni sarvaśaḥ  
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (68)

`Therefore, O mighty-armed, his knowledge is steady, whose senses are completely restrained from their objects.'

yā niśā sarvabhūtānām  
tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī  
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni  
sā niśā paśyato muneḥ (69)

`That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled man is awake. That in which all beings are awake, is night to the sage (capable of) seeing the Self.'

āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭham  
samudramāpaḥ praviśanti  
yadvat tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve  
sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī (70)

`As into the ocean-brimful, and still-flow the waters, even so the sage into whom enter all desires, he, and not the desirer of desires, attains to peace.'

vihāya kāmān yas sarvān  
pumāmścarati nissprhaḥ  
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ  
sa śāntimadhigacchati (71)

`That man who lives devoid of longing, abandoning all desires, without the sense of "I" and "mine", he attains to peace.'

eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha  
nainām prāpya vimuhyati  
sthitvā'syāmantakāle'pi  
brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati (72)

`This is to have one's being in Brahman, O son of Pārthā. None, attaining to this, becomes deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of life, a man attains to oneness with Brahman.'

**VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAṆA (2.21.41;2.27.6;2.62.15;3.29.3;3.50.8;3.50.19; 4.18.14; 4.33.46; 4.38.22; 6.21.15; 6.114.27)**

If there is one holy book that has profoundly influenced the life, the thought and the culture of millions of Hindus over the millennia, it is, undoubtedly, the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. No aspect of Hindu religion and culture, whether it is literature, drama, music, art or sculpture, has remained unaffected by it. There also seems to be, apparently, no place in the Indian sub-continent that has not had the privilege of being visited by Rāma and Sītā or Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān. This rock contains the foot-print of Rāma; that mountain split into two, unable to bear the weight of Hanumān; the water of this rivulet is coloured since Sītā had washed her clothes-This is how, even now, the simple folk of rural India weave an affectionate bond between themselves and the immaculate heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa. Hence, a reverent study of this wonderful work can certainly contribute to the levelling up of our culture in the social field and add an inch or two to our inner evolution and elevation.

The verses given here, culled out from the various kāṇḍas or Books of this epic touch upon several virtues to be cultivated or the vices to be avoided.

dharmo hi paramo loke  
dharme satyam pratiṣṭhitam  
dharmasamśritametacca  
piturvacanamuttamam (2.21.41)

'Indeed, righteousness is paramount in this world. And, truthfulness is rooted in piety. This command of my father too is supreme in that it is based on righteousness.'

na pitā nātmajo nātmā  
na mātā na sakhījanaḥ  
iha pretya ca nārīṇām  
patireko gatis sadā (2.27.6)

'In the case of women, neither the father nor the son, nor their own body, nor the mother nor their female companions serve as an asylum here or hereafter. The husband alone is their refuge at all times.'

śoko nāśayate dhairyaṁ  
śoko nāśayate śrutam  
śoko nāśayate sarvaṁ  
nāsti śokasamo ripuḥ (2.62.15)

'Grief eradicates patience, grief effaces learning, grief destroys all; there is no enemy like grief !'

udvejanīyo bhūtānaṁ  
nṛśaṁsaḥ pāpakarmakṛt  
trayāṇāmapi lokānām  
īśvaro'pi na tiṣṭhati (3.29.3)

'He who oppresses (all) created beings, is hard-hearted and perpetrates sinful deeds, will not survive even if he be the ruler of all the three worlds!'

na tat samācared dhīro  
yat paro'sya vigarhayet  
yathātmanas tathānyeṣāṃ  
dārā rakṣyā vipāścītā (3.50.8)

`A wise man should not deliberately do that, on account of which another may revile him. The wives of others should be protected from evil even as one's own wife.'

P yat kṛtvā na bhaved dharmo  
na kīrtir na yaśo bhuvi  
śarīrasya bhavet khedaḥ kas  
tat karma samācaret (3. 50.19)

`Who will knowingly perform an act, as a result of which follows, neither religious merit nor glory nor lasting fame, but physical tiredness?'

yavīyānātmanaḥ putraḥ  
śiṣyaś cāpi guṇoditaḥ  
putravat te trayaś cintyā  
dharmaś ced atra kāraṇam (4.18.14)

`A younger brother, one's own son and a virtuous pupil too-these three should be looked upon as a son. Dharma alone is the authority and the basis for this.'

na hi dharmārtha-siddhyartham  
pānamevam praśasyate  
pānādarthaśca dharmaśca  
kāmaśca parihīyate (4.33.46)

`Drinking to this extent is not spoken highly of, for those who are endeavouring to acquire religious merit and earthly riches. Worldly prosperity and enjoyment as also religious merit are destroyed by drinking.'

hitvā dharmam tathārthañca  
kāmam yastu niṣevate sa  
vṛkṣāgre yathā suptaḥ  
patitaḥ pratibuddhyate (4.38.22)

`He who pursues sensuous enjoyment neglecting religious merit and worldly prosperity wakes up (only) when he has fallen (from his high position) like the one lying asleep on the top of a tree.'

praśamaśca kṣamā caiva  
ārjavam priyavādītā  
asāmarthya phalā hyete  
nirguṇeṣu sataṃ guṇāḥ (6.21.15)

`Indeed, calmness and forgiveness as also guilelessness and politeness of speech-these noble virtues are misconstrued as weakness, when directed towards those bereft of these virtues.'

na grhāṇi na vastrāṇi  
na prākārās tiraskriyāḥ  
nedṛśā rājasatkārā  
vṛttam āvaraṇaṁ striyaḥ (6.114.27)

`Neither apartments nor costumes, nor a protective wall, nor again royal honours constitute a veil for a woman. Her character (alone is her shield).'

**MAHĀBHĀRATA (Yakṣapraśna-Vanaparva-Ch. 313, Verses 47-50, 57-60, 69, 70, 73-76, 91-96, 107, 108, 117)**

Mahābhārata, one of the two great epics of Hinduism, is the biggest didactic poem in the literature of the world. This book of one hundred thousand verses divided into eighteen sections or 'parvans', is a veritable encyclopaedia of Hinduism. Though it mainly deals with the conflict between two houses-the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas-there is no spiritual, religious, ethical or moral topic that has not been described or touched upon.

The Yakṣapraśna (a few selections of which are reproduced here) from the Vanaparva is in the form of a long conversation between the Yakṣa (a demigod, who was none other than Yama) and Yudhiṣṭhira (the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas). It is a very interesting piece which deals with many subtle aspects of dharma.

Yakṣa uvāca  
kenasvic chrottriyo bhavati  
kenasvid vindate mahat  
kenasvid dvitīyavān bhavati  
rājan kena ca buddhimān (47)

Yakṣa asked: `By what does one become learned? By what does he attain what is very great? How can one have a second? And, O King, how can one acquire intelligence?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
śrutena śrottriyo bhavati  
tapasā vindate mahat  
dhṛtyā dvitīyavān bhavati  
buddhimān vṛddhasevayā (48)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: `It is by the study of the Vedas that a person becomes learned. It is by ascetic austerities that one acquires what is very great. It is by courage that a person acquires a second and it is by serving the elders that one becomes wise.'

2 Yakṣa uvāca

kiṁ brāhmaṇānām devatvaṁ  
kaśca dharmāḥ satām  
iva kaścaiṣām mānuṣo bhāvaḥ  
kimeṣām asatāmiva (49)

Yakṣa asked: 'What constitutes the divinity of the brāhmaṇas? What even is their practice that is like that of the pious? What also is the human attribute of the brāhmaṇas? And what practice of theirs is like that of the impious?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
svādhyāya eṣāṁ devatvaṁ  
tapa eṣāṁ satāmiva maraṇaṁ mānuṣo bhāvaḥ  
parivādo' satāmiva (50)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'The study of the Vedas constitutes their divinity. Their asceticism constitutes behaviour that is like that of the pious. Their liability to death is their human attribute and slander is their impiety.'

2 Yakṣa uvāca

indriyārthān anubhavan  
buddhimān lokapūjitaḥ sammataḥ  
sarvabhūtānāṁ ucchvasan  
ko na jīvati (57)

Yakṣa asked: 'What person, enjoying all the objects of the senses, endued with intelligence, regarded by the world and liked by all beings, though breathing, is not alive?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
devatātithibhṛtyānām  
pitṛṇāmātmanaśca yaḥ  
na nirvapati pañcānām  
ucchvasan na sa jīvati (58)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'He who does not offer anything to these five-gods, guests, servants, manes and himself-he, though breathing, does not live.'

Yakṣa uvāca

kiṁsvid gurutaraṁ bhūmeḥ  
kiṁsvid uccataraṁ ca  
khāt kiṁsvic chīghrataraṁ vāyoḥ  
kiṁsvid bahutaraṁ tṛṇāt (59)

Yakṣa asked: 'What is weightier than the earth itself? What is higher than the heavens? What is fleeter than the wind? What is more numerous than grass?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
mātā gurutarā bhūmeḥ  
khāt pitoccataras tathā  
manaś śīghrataraṁ vātāt  
cintā bahutarī tṛṇāt

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'The mother is weightier than the earth. The father is higher than the heaven. The mind is fleeter than the wind. And worry is more numerous than grass.'

Yakṣa uvāca kiṁsvid ekapadaṁ  
dharmyaṁ kiṁsvid ekapadaṁ yaśaḥ  
kiṁsvid ekapadaṁ svargyaṁ  
kiṁsvid ekapadaṁ sukham (69)

Yakṣa asked: `What is the highest refuge of virtue? What of fame? What of heaven? And what of happiness?

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
dākṣyam ekapadaṁ dharmyaṁ  
dānam ekapadaṁ yaśaḥ  
satyam ekapadaṁ svargyaṁ  
śīlam ekapadaṁ sukham (70)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: `Liberality is the highest refuge of virtue; gift, of fame; truth, of heaven; and good conduct, of happiness.'

Yakṣa uvāca  
dhanyānām uttamaṁ kiṁsvid  
dhanānām syāt kimuttamam lābhānām  
uttamaṁ kiṁ syāt  
sukhānām syāt kimuttamam (73)

Yakṣa asked: `What is the best of all laudable things? What is the most valuable of all his possessions? What is the best of all gains? And what is the best of all kinds of happiness?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
dhanyānām uttamaṁ dākṣyam dhanānām uttamaṁ śrutamlābhānām śreya ārogyam sukhānām  
tuṣṭiruttamā (74)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: `The best of all laudable things is skill. The best of all possessions is knowledge. The best of all gains is health. And, contentment is the best of all kinds of happiness.'

Yakṣa uvāca  
kaśca dharmaḥ paro loka kaśca dharmaḥ sadāphalaḥ kiṁ niyamyā na śocanti kaiśca sandhir  
na jīryate (75)

Yakṣa asked: `What is the highest duty in the world? What is that virtue which always bears fruit? What is that, which is controlled, leads not to regret? And who are they with whom an alliance cannot break?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
āṅśamsyaṁ paro dharmāḥ trayīdharmāḥ sadāphalaḥ mano yamyā na śocanti sandhis sadbhir  
na jīryate (76)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: `The highest of duties is to refrain from injury. The rites ordained in the three (Vedas) always bear fruit. The mind, if controlled, leads to no regret. (And), an alliance with the good never breaks.'

Yakṣa uvāca

kaś śatrur durjayaḥ puṁsām kaśca vyādhir anantakaḥ kīdrśaśca smṛtaś sādhuḥ asādhuḥ kīdrśas  
smṛtaḥ (91)

Yakṣa asked: 'What enemy is invincible? What constitutes an incurable disease for man? What sort of a man is called honest and what dishonest?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
krodhas sudurjayaś śatrur lobho vyādhir anantakaḥ sarvabhūtahitas sādhuḥ asādhuḥ  
nirdayas smṛtaḥ (92)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'Anger is an invincible enemy.

Covetousness constitutes an incurable disease. He is honest who desires the weal of all creatures and he is dishonest who is unmerciful.'

Yakṣa uvāca  
ko mohaḥ procyate rājan kaśca mānaḥ prakīrtitaḥ kimālasyaṁ ca vijñeyaṁ kaśca śokaḥ  
prakīrtitaḥ (93)

Yakṣa asked: 'What O king is delusion? And what is pride? What also is to be understood by idleness? And what has been spoken of as grief?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
moho hi dharmamūḍhatvam mānas tvātmābhīmānitā dharmaniṣkriyatā'lasyaṁ śokaś  
tvajñānam ucyate (94)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'Delusion consists in not knowing one's duties. Thinking too much of oneself is pride. Idleness consists in not discharging one's duties. Ignorance is itself, grief.'

Yakṣa uvāca  
kiṁ sthairyam ṛṣibhiḥ proktaṁ kiñca dhairyamudāhṛtam snānañca kim param proktaṁ dānañca kim  
ihocyate (95)

Yakṣa asked: 'What has been called as steadiness by the ṛṣis and what as courage? What is the highest ablution? And what is described as charity?'

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
svadharme sthiraṭā sthairyam dhairyam indriyanigrahaḥ snānam manomalatyāgo dānam vai  
bhūtarakṣaṇam (96)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'Steadiness consists in being well-established in the performance of one's duties. Subjugation of senses is (real) courage. Ablution consists in the washing of all impurities of the mind. Protecting all creatures is charity.'

Yakṣa uvāca  
rājan kulena vṛttena svādhyāyena śrutena vā brāhmaṇyam kena bhavati prabrūhyetat  
suniścitam (107)

Yakṣa asked: 'By what, O king-birth, conduct, study or learning-does a person become a brāhmaṇa?'



Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca  
śṛṇu yakṣa kulaṁ tāta na svādhyāyo na ca śrutam kāraṇaṁ hi dvijatve ca vṛttameva na saṁśayaḥ  
(108)

Yudhiṣṭhira replied: 'Listen O Yakṣa! It is neither birth nor study nor learning that is the cause of brāhmaṇahood; without doubt, it is conduct that constitutes it.'

tarko'pratiṣṭhaḥ śrutayo vibhinnā naiko ṛṣir yasya mataṁ pramāṇam dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām mahājano yena gatas sa panthāḥ (117)

'Argument leads to no definite conclusion. The śrutis differ from one another. There is not even one ṛṣi whose opinion can be accepted as authority (by all). The truth about religion and duty is hidden in the caves. Therefore that alone is the path along which the great have trod.'

### ŚRĪMAD BHĀGAVATAM (Skanda 11, Chapter 19, Verses 33-45)

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam though classed among the purāṇas (mythology) is in no way less important than the Gītā. It holds a very high place in the Hindu tradition as an authority on bhakti. But the beauty of this work is that it has maintained a perfect harmony between jñāna (knowledge) and bhakti (devotion).

Comprising 18,000 verses spread over twelve sections or skandhas, the Bhāgavatam is a fairly voluminous work. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the central figure whose life and deeds are depicted in detail in the tenth and the eleventh skandhas.

On the eve of his departure from the arena of the world, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives his parting instructions to his beloved devotee and disciple, Uddhava. This section, known as the Uddhava Gītā, contains the quintessence of the Lord's teachings and deals with a variety of spiritual subjects.

The verses presented here are taken from the Uddhava Gītā. They contain the Lord's answers to Uddhava's questions concerning certain yogic disciplines as well as ethical, moral and spiritual principles.

Śrībhagavān uvāca

ahimsā satyam asteyam asaṅgo hrīr asaṅcayaḥ āstikyam brahmacaryaṅca maunaṁ sthairyam kṣamā'bhayam (33)

The Lord said: 'Non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, non-attachment, modesty, non-accumulation of wealth, faith in God, chastity, silence, patience, forgiveness, fearlessness,'

śaucaṁ japastapo homaḥ śraddhā'tithyam madarcanam tīrthāṭanaṁ parārthehā tuṣṭir ācāryasevanam (34)

'Purity of mind and body, repetition of the Lord's name, austerity, offering of oblations in the sacred fire, faith in one's self, hospitality, worship of Me, visiting of holy places, working for the good of others, contentment and service unto the teacher.'

ete yamās saniyamā ubhayaḥ dvādaśa smṛtāḥ puṁsām upāsītās tāta yathākāmaṁ duhanti hi (35)

`These groups of twelve virtues enumerated in the above two verses constitute the yamas and the niyamas. These, my dear friend, if rightly practised by men, surely produce results according to their desires.'

śamo manniṣṭhatā buddher dama indriyaśamyamaḥ titikṣā duḥkhasammarṣo jihvopasthajayo dhṛtiḥ (36)

`Calmness is a steady attachment of the mind to Me. Self-control is control of the sense-organs. Fortitude is the bearing of grief. Self-command is a perfect control over the palate and sex-impulse.'

daṇḍanyāsaḥ param dānam kāmātyāgas tapas smṛtam svabhāvavijayaś śauryam satyañca samadarśanam

`The highest charity is the relinquishing of the idea of violence towards beings. Penance is the giving up of desires. Valour is the conquest of one's nature. Honesty is looking upon everything with an equal eye.'

ṛtam ca sūnṛtā vāṇī kavibhiḥ parikīrtitā karmasvasaṅgamaś śaucam tyāgas saṁnyāsa ucyate (38)

`Truthfulness is true and agreeable speech which the sages praise. Purity is non-attachment to work, and renunciation is the giving up of work.'

dharma iṣṭam dhanam nṛiṇām yajño'ham bhagavattamaḥ dakṣiṇā jñānasandēśaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ param balam (39)

`Religion is that wealth which men may covet. I, the Supreme Lord, am the sacrifice. The imparting of knowledge is religious remuneration. The highest strength is the control of prāṇa.'

bhago me aiśvaro bhavo lābho madbhaktiruttamaḥ vidyā'tmani bhidābādho jugupsā hrīr akarmasu (40)

`Fortune is my Divine State. The best profit is devotion to Me. Knowledge is the destruction of the idea of multiplicity in the Self. Shyness is abhorrence of evil deeds.'

śrīr guṇā nairapekṣyādyaḥ sukham duḥkhasukhātyayaḥ duḥkham kāmasukhāpekṣā paṇḍito bandhamokṣavit (41)

`Beauty consists in virtues such as spirit of independence.

Happiness is the transcending of pleasure and pain. Misery is the hankering after sense-pleasures. A scholar is one who can distinguish between bondage and liberation.'

mūrkho dehādyahambuddhiḥ panthā mannigamas smṛtaḥ utpathaścittavikṣepaḥ svargas sattvagunodayaḥ (42)

`A fool is one who identifies himself with the body etc. The right way is that which leads to Me. The wrong way is that which causes disturbance of the mind. Heaven is the rise of sattva in the mind.'

narakas tama unnāho bandhur gurur aham sakhe grham śarīram mānuṣyam guṇāḍhyo hyāḍhya ucyate (43)

`Hell is the rise of tamas in the mind. The teacher, who is no other than Myself, is the friend (O Uddhava). The human body is the home. He indeed is called rich, who is rich in virtues.'

daridro yastvasantuṣṭhaḥ      kṛpaṇo yo'jitendriyaḥ guṇeṣvasaktadhīrīśo      guṇasaṅgo viparyayaḥ  
(44)

`One who is discontented is poor. He who is not a master of his senses is mean. One who is not attached to sense-objects is lordly. One who is attached to sense-objects is the reverse of him.'

eta uddhava te praśnāḥ      sarve sādhu nirūpitāḥ kiṁ varṇitena bahunā      lakṣaṇaṁ guṇadoṣayoḥ  
guṇadoṣadṛṣṭir doṣo      guṇastūbhayavarjitaḥ (45)

`Here, O Uddhava, I have fully answered all your questions. Well, what is the use of dilating on the characteristics of merit and defect? Defect is distinguishing between merit and defect: and to be free from both is merit.'

### **YOGASŪTRAS OF PATAÑJALI (Pāda 1, Sūs. 2, 12, 13, 14, 15; Pāda 2, Sū. 1.)**

The Yogasūtras of Patañjali is the most authoritative and well-organised ancient treatise on the science of Yoga. It consists of 195 aphorisms spread over four chapters, the subject matter of these four being samādhi (superconscious experience), sādhana (means of attaining yoga), vibhūti (supernatural powers) and kaivalya (liberation).

The selections offered here are so chosen as to give us a definition of yoga and the primary steps leading to it.

yogaś-cittavṛtti-nirodhaḥ (2)

`Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (citta) from taking various forms (vṛttis).'

abhyāsa-vairāgyabhyām tannirodhaḥ (12)

`Their control is by practice and non-attachment.'

tatra sthitau yatno'bhyāsaḥ (13)

`Continuous struggle to keep them (the vṛttis) perfectly restrained is practice.'

sa tu dīrghakāla-nairantarya-satkāra-āsevito dṛḍhabhūmiḥ (14)

`It (the practice) becomes firmly grounded when it has been cultivated for a long time, uninterruptedly, with earnest devotion.'

dṛṣṭa-ānuśravika-viṣaya-vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra-samjñā vairāgyam (15)

`Non-attachment designated as "vaśīkāra" will arise in him who has no thirst for objects (of enjoyment) seen or heard.'

tapas-svādhyāya-īśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ (2.11)

`Austerity, study of scriptures and the dedication of the fruits of one's works to God (these are called) kriyāyoga.'

### **NĀRADA-BHAKTISŪTRAS (Sūs. 12, 35, 38, 43, 44, 45, 69)**

There are two treatises on devotion, written in the form of sūtras: Śāṅḍilya Bhaktisūtras and Nārada Bhaktisūtras. Between the two, the latter is much more popular for the simple reason that it is very simple and practical. Apart from defining devotion and describing its various forms, the work gives several invaluable hints for practice, warns against the pitfalls in spiritual life, eulogises the importance of devotion, gives its special features to enable the aspirants to imitate them, and finally paints a vivid picture of the ideal devotees.

The following selections deal mainly with the need for renunciation of worldly pleasures and shunning evil company.

bhavatu niścayadārḍhyād ūrdhvaṁ śāstrarakṣaṇam (12)

`Even after one is well-established (in the love of God) the scriptures are to be protected.'

tat tu viṣayatyāgāt saṅgatyāgācca (35)

`But that (supreme devotion is obtained by) the renunciation of sense-objects as well as attachment to them.'

mukhyatastu mahatkr̥payaiva bhagavatk̥rpāleśād vā (38)

`Primarily, it is got only through the grace of great souls or through a slight measure of divine grace.'

Dussaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ (43)

`Evil company must be shunned by all means.'

kāma-krodha-moha-smṛtibhraṁśa- buddhināśa-sarvanāśa-kāraṇatvāt (44)

`For, it leads to the rousing of desire, anger and delusion, to loss of memory, to loss of discrimination, and to utter ruin in the end.'

taraṅgāyitā apīme samudrāyante (45)

`Though they rise only in the form of ripples (in the beginning), they become like a veritable sea (as a result of evil company).'

tīrthīkuravanti tīthāni, sukarmīkurvanti karmāṇi, sacchāstrīkurvanti śāstrāṇi (69)

`(They) impart sanctity to places of pilgri-mage, render actions righteous and good, and give authority to the scriptures.'