

Philosophies of Happiness

Chapter 5 The *Bhagavad Gītā*: Supplementary Notes

9. Patrick Olivelle notes that among its many meanings, *brahman* may mean a formulation of truth, the Veda, or the ultimate essence of the cosmos, but “always retains its verbal character as ‘the sound expression’ of all reality.” Olivelle, lvi. For other scholarly studies of the many meanings of *brahman*, see Jan Gonda, *Notes on Brahman*; Paul Thieme, ‘Brahman;’ Hermann Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*. Gonda traces the original meaning of the term to the root *br̥h* “to be great,” and hence power. Oldenberg summarizes the basic meaning of *brahman* as the sacred formula and the power in it. Thieme traces the root meaning to forming or formulation—poetic formulation and then formulation of truth. Heesterman emphasizes the context of the *brahmodya*, the verbal contest, which formed part of the Vedic ritual: “It consists of a series of rounds of verbal challenges and responses. In each round two contestants put riddle questions to each other. The point of the riddle contest is to show that one has “seen” or understood the hidden “connection” by responding with a similar, if possible even more artfully contrived, riddle. The one who holds out longest and finally reduces his opponent to silence is the winner, the true *brahman*, holder of the hidden connection . . . the live ‘connection’ that holds together the cosmos.”

11. Some of the esoteric sections teaching the mystical significance of ritual actions and words came to be known as *Āraṇyakas*—texts to be recited in the forest wilderness, outside the village—while others came to be known as Upanishads. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*—which opens with a meditation on the horse sacrifice—is considered both an *Āraṇyaka* and an Upanishad. Yet, many of the texts of the *Brāhmaṇas* also set forth the mystical significance of details of the rituals. See Hopkins, 20, 30, 31-35, 38; Flood, 36, 40, 75; Patrick Olivelle, *Upanishads*, xxxii.

13. This account of the evolution of the term *brahman* follows the somewhat simplified presentations of Franklin Edgerton, Gavin Flood, Thomas Hopkins, and R.C. Zaehner. For example Hopkins, who presents the original meaning of *brahman* as the power of the sacred utterance and the sacrifice, uses the term “*brahman* power” to explicate a statement from the *Atharva Veda*: “Who knows the thread of the thread, he would know the great *brahman* [power]” (10.8.37). In this account, the meaning of *brahman* evolved from the power of the sacrifice and the sacred word to that passively dynamic principle that sustains the universe. Brereton explicates the mysterious concept of *brahman* by pointing out that while for the later Vedānta tradition, *brahman* has a specific meaning and designation, for the Upanishads, “the *brahman* remains an open concept. It is simply the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable. It is the reality sought by the householder who asks a sage: ‘Through knowing what, sir, does this whole world become known?’” (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.13). Brereton, “Upanishads,” 118. See similar descriptions by Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, 116-117; Flood, 84; Zaehner, 36-56, especially 37, 47; and Hopkins, 32-34, 37-38.

15. Flood, 84. Renou notes the context of the life-or-death riddle (see Louis Renou and Liliane Silburn “Sur la notion de ‘Brahman’”) and this theme is developed by J.C. Heesterman, who writes: “*brahman* is distinguished by its enigmatic or paradoxical nature. The *brahman*, then, is the formulation of the cosmic riddle, a riddle that cannot be solved by a direct answer but only formulated in paradoxical terms that leave the answer—the (hidden) connection (*bandhu*, *nidāna*) between the terms of the paradox—unexpressed.” In Renou’s phrase, *brahman* is the “connective energy compressed in riddles.” (p. 43) As the concept of *brahman* evolved, “identification made it possible to concentrate the whole of the spoken and acted proceedings of the ritual in the person of the single sacrificer, who in this way internalizes the whole of the ritual, that is, the transcendent cosmic order, and so becomes identical with *brahman* . . . Here the development leads over to the Upanisadic doctrine of the unity of *ātman*, the principle of individuation or the individual ‘soul’, and *brahman*, which gave rise to the monistic philosophy of the Vedānta.” The complex, multi-layered account of Heesterman (also note 11 above) thus affirms the

evolution of the concept of *brahman* from the power of the word or verbal formulation—through the dimension of the cosmic enigma, enacted through the verbal contest and the sacrifice—to the ultimate essence underlying the cosmos. See J.C. Heesterman, “Brahman,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*; idem, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 71-74. For Jan Gonda’s response to Renou on the notion of the enigma, see his *Notes on Brahman*, 57-61.

18. Recently, scholars have argued that the term *upaniṣad* actually signifies “connection” or “equivalence”. Viewed as such, the *Upanishads* reveal the secret teachings of the interconnections of beings in the universe, and ultimately, the reality that lies at the heart or summit of this chain of connections. The *upaniṣad* is the subordination of one thing to another; one would arrange things in a progression in order to identify the dominant reality behind an object. Regarding the “ultimate identification” made by the *Chāndogya Upanishad*, Olivelle refers to it as the final *upaniṣad* or equation: that between the individual *ātman*, the essential I, and the ultimately real. Olivelle, lvi; see also note 20 below. On the meaning of *upaniṣad* as equivalence, see Louis Renou, “*Connection en védique; “cause” en buddhique;*” H. Falk “*Vedisch upaniṣad*”.

19. Brereton and Hopkins point out, for example, that while the teacher Uddālaka suggests that the world evolved progressively out of Being and so must evolve progressively back, Yājñavalkya suggests that once we awaken to the knowledge that Being alone is real we become one with Being itself; the self that is the subject of the individual is also the self of the world. Even a cursory reading of the fourth chapter of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* reveals a great diversity of creation myths and models of the relationship between the One and the many. *Chāndogya Upanishad* 6:9-6:16; *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 4.3.44, 4.4.8 ; S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, 78-90; Hopkins, 43-47; Brereton, “The *Upanishads*,” 129-30.

21. Brereton argues that the refrain “*tat tvam asi*” travelled to the later parables from its original formulation in the case of the tree: “‘this finest essence which you do not see, my dear, from this finest essence stands this so great *nyagrodha* tree’ . . . As the *nyagrodha* tree exists because of an invisible essence so also both the world and Śvetaketu himself have such an essence as their true nature and true self.” Thus he argues that each parable shows “there is an invisible essence from which all things evolve, to which all things devolve and which is thus the inner reality of all things. “ (105). Just as the tree and the world are pervaded by the finest essence, which is the truth and the self for them, so also is Śvetaketu in the same condition, a being pervaded by a finest essence which is his truth and self. He would thus translate the refrain as follows: “That which is this finest essence, that the whole world has as its self. That is the truth. That is the self. In that way are you, Śvetaketu.” (109) Or: “that which is this finest essence—this whole world has that as its self. That is the real. That is the self. Thus are you, Śvetaketu! (Brereton, “The *Upanishads*,” 124). In classical Vedāntic exegesis, such as that of Śaṅkara, “That” is taken to refer to Being and “You” to *ātman*. (102-3). Brereton’s point is rather that “that” is a description of the condition of Śvetaketu. Although I certainly cannot say that I remember Sanskrit grammar well enough to make a learned evaluation of the issue, the linguistic argument he brings from other passages seems convincing. See also the response of Julius Lipner, “The Self of Being and the Being of Self: Śaṅkara on “That You are” (*tat tvam asi*),” p. 55 note 9; see also Daniel Raveh, “*Ayam aham asmīti*: Self-consciousness and Identity in the Eighth Chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* vs. Śaṅkara’s *Bhaṣya*.”

25. On the view that outside the Advaita Vedānta, there may be a plurality of individuals, see Kalidas Bhattacharyya, “The Status of the Individual in Indian Metaphysics; in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Charles A. Moore, (Honolulu: East-West Center Press and University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 299-319; for the variety of approaches in Indian philosophy, see also other essays in that volume.

29. The term *dharma* is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhṛ*, “to sustain, support, uphold”. William Mahoney succinctly describes the multi-faceted notion of *dharma* as follows. It is the essential foundation of something and thus truth; that which is established, customary or proper and thus traditional or ceremonial; it is one’s duty, responsibility, or imperative and thus one’s moral obligation; it is that which is right, virtuous, meritorious and thus ethical; and it is that which is required and thus legal. The underlying connotation is therefore that of correctness—the way things are and should be. In the Vedic period it is closely connected with *ṛta*, the universal cosmic order in which all things have a place and function. However, whereas *ṛta* is an impersonal order, *dharma* refers to personal actions required to maintain cosmic order. In the *Rig Veda*, these actions are incumbent upon the gods, especially Varuṇa. Later, the actions become prescribed for each class and station of human being (see Mahoney, “*Dharma: Hindu Dharma*,” 329). The term *moksha* and its feminine synonym *mukti*, on the other hand, are derived from the root *muc*, meaning “release”. The notions of *saṃsāra* and release from *saṃsāra* are not in evidence in Vedic texts; the earliest evidence we have is from texts from the 6th century BCE.

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The concept of *moksha* is developed in both the *Mahabharata* and the *Laws of Manu*; it appears infrequently in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The term appears in the relatively late *Upanishads*: “He who is the maker of all . . . The Cause of *saṃsāra* and *mokṣa*, of continuance and of bondage” (*Śvetāśvatara U.* 6.16); “One should stand free from determination, free from conception, free from self-conceit. This is the mark of liberation (*mokṣa*) (*Maitri U.* 6.30); “The mind, in truth, is for mankind the means of bondage and release (*mokṣa*); for bondage, if to objects bound; From objects free—that’s called release! (*mokṣa*) (*Maitri U.* 6.34). The *Bhagavad Gītā* employs the word *moksha* in at least three passages: “Those who strive toward release (*mokṣāya*) from old age and death, taking refuge in Me, they know that brahman completely, as it relates to the self and all action (7.29); “They who know, through the eye of knowledge, the distinction between the field and the knower of the field, as well as liberation (*mokṣam*) of beings from material nature (*prakṛiti*), they go to the Supreme” (13.34); “The understanding (*buddhi*) which understands action and nonaction, what is to be done and what is not to be done, danger and freedom from danger, bondage and liberation (*mokṣam*), that is the understanding (*buddhi*) of *sattva*” (18.30.) The root *muc* also provide terms to specify those who seek release: “Knowing this, the ancients who sought liberation (*mumuṣubhis*) also performed action” (4:15); and one who is released is referred to with the adjective form *mukta*: “The sage whose highest aim is release (*munir mokṣaparāyanas*) from whom desire, fear and anger have departed, is forever liberated (*mukta*).” (5.28). The substantive form appears as *vimokṣa* —“the divine destiny [leads] to liberation (*vimokṣāya*)” (16.5)— or *nirvimokṣa* with the same meaning. See A.M. Ensoul, “*Mokṣa*,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*. I thank Joel Brereton for providing passages from G. A. Jacobs, *A Concordance to the Principal Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā*. Translations here from Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*; Winthrop Sargeant, *The Bhagavad Gītā*; David White, *The Bhagavad Gītā: A New Translation with Commentary*.

30. Van Buitenen maintains there was an inevitable tension between the world-affirming ideal of *dharma* and the world-renouncing ideal of liberation from *saṃsāra*. Ingalls maintains that the two ideals were for the most part integrated within Hindu culture and only put in tension by sporadic challenges. In a final footnote, Ingalls minimizes the differences between the two papers. He argues that van Buitenen was speaking of the psychological tension felt by those religious “professionals” or innovators—presumably those who sought total release from the world—whereas he was speaking of the social reality for the majority of Hindu believers. See van Buitenen, “*Dharma and Mokṣa*,” 33-40; Ingalls, “*Dharma and Mokṣa*,” *ibid*, pp. 41-48. Malinar argues that the *Gītā* is world affirming in the sense that one cares for the maintenance of the world order as a positive creation of Krishna, the god to whom one is devoted, who

created and protects this world. See Malinar, 102. Wendy Doniger notes that the tension between *dharma* and *moksha* is often described as a tension between Vedic and Upanishadic/Vedāntic world views. “Karma and Rebirth,” 4. On the tension between dharma and moksha, and the way a system of three goals of life became four, with the integration of moksha into the ideal, see J.A.B. Van Buitenan, “Dharma and Moksha,” *Philosophy East and West* 7 (1/2): 33-40; Daniel H.H. Ingalls, “Dharma and Moksha,” *Philosophy East and West* V.7 (1957):41-48; and the following articles from the illuminating anthology *The Fruits of Our Desiring: An Enquiry into the Ethics of the Bhagavadgītā for our Times*, ed. Julius Lipner (Calgary, CA: Bayeux Arts, 1997): Gavin Flood, “The Meaning and Context of the *Puruṣārthas*,” in,” 11-27, at 20-23; Jacqueline Hirst, “Upholding the Word: Dharma in the *Bhagavadgītā* , 48-66; ”Will Johnson, “Transcending the World? Freedom (*moksa*) and the Bhagavadgītā ,” 92-104.

32. Theodor describes three tiers of reality: the first tier is that of *dharma* and *adharma*, in which one seeks human worldly prosperity. In the second tier, one rejects worldly prosperity and embraces non-attachment to success and failure, happiness and distress. One thus experiences oneself not as a simple human being, but what Theodor terms a spiritual soul. In the third tier, one turns from the non-attachment of the second tier toward attachment to the bliss of *brahman* and devotion to the supreme Person. One is no longer an individual spiritual soul but “a pure existence and one with Brahman,” and also a loving servant of the Supreme Person.

With respect to stages of action, we see that in the first stage, we have simple utilitarianism; one performs Vedic sacrifices for reward in this life or the next. The second level is *dharmic* utilitarianism, in which one follows one’s *dharma* for the sake of a reward. Next we ascend to performing duty for its own sake, with no motive of reward. However, this level still remains within the first tier, as one has not yet aimed at the higher good of freedom from *saṃsāra*. The second tier represents the stage of various yogic practices to achieve liberation, the highest good, or *brahman*. The third tier is that of *moksha*, becoming absorbed in Brahman, either in an impersonal or personal form. As Śankara presents it, liberation is reaching a union with the impersonal Brahman, as described in *Gita* 5.24: “He whose happiness is within, whose pleasure is within, and his enlightenment too is within is actually a yogi; with his whole being absorbed in *brahman*, he attains to extinction in *brahman*.” Rāmānuja presents an ideal of devotion to a personal God, as suggested in *Gita* 9.24: “Always think of me and become my devotee, worship me and pay homage to me; thus yoked to me and intent on me as your highest goal, you shall come to me.” Thus Theodor describes a kind of yogic ladder of refining one’s motives for action, until one achieves liberation and pure devotion. Theodor, 17-24.

36. The term is based on the Sanskrit root *kr*, meaning to act, do, or bring about. The concept is that action creates; by doing something one creates something. Action has real and tangible effects. There is linguistic speculation that the root *kr* may be related to the Indo-European term ceremony which has both a sacred dimension—ritual acts prescribed according to norms—and a social dimension, acts that keep the world running smoothly. These two dimensions are present in the Hindu concept as well, and are related to the Hindu concept of *dharma*, the action that keeps the world functioning (see above, note 33). In the Vedic context, *karma* was sacrificial action. It was originally believed that the gods were free to accept or reject sacrificial gifts and respond as they pleased. Over time the ritual came to be seen as autonomous; if the priest performed the ritual correctly, the gods were forced to respond. Thus the concept of *karma* gradually became detached from the ritual context and came to be seen as an impersonal and autonomous system of cause and effect. The *Upanishads* envision two paths to afterlife reward: the way of the fathers, for those who performed rituals with hopes of material rewards, leads to rebirth on earth; the way of the gods, for those who renounce worldly rewards and practice ascetically does not lead to earthly rebirth. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, the source of reward is extended from the realm of ritual, sacrificial action to all action: “truly one becomes good through good action, bad by bad.” (*Br U* 3.2.13). See William Mahoney, *Karman: Hindu and Jain Concepts*, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 261-66.

52. He notes that in other contexts, *brahman* can refer to *prakṛiti*, Krishna's lower nature, all that is non-self in this world (4.24-25, 8.3, 8.16). In 6.44 *brahman* refers to the Vedas. In a few places, *brahman* even refers to Krishna (6.28, 10.12, 13.12, 13.62). See *Bhagavad Gītā: An Exegetical Commentary*, 78-79, 96-99, 198-200.

61. Within Islamic literature, there is, however, a consensus that the *hadith* is weak—i.e. not well attested, with missing links and unknown narrators. Al-Bayhaqi (458/1066) narrates it in *al-Zuhd al-kabīr*, ed. 'Amir Ahmad Haydar (Beirut: Dar al-Jinan, 1987), 165 §373, and comments: "This is a chain that contains weakness." Ibn Taymiyya (728/1328) and Ibn Hajar (852/1448) also independently examine the chain and identify similar problems, commenting that while the tradition is commonly cited, it is of little or no value as a report. Compare the saying attributed to 'Umar II in al-Mubarrad, *al-Kamīl fī al-lughā wa-l-adab* (Beirut, 1997) I, p. 120. See David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35 and note 9. Thanks to Ahmid Atif Ahmad for his research. For additional sources, see those documented by Dr. G.F. Haddad, http://www.livingislam.org/n/dgjh_e.html.

82. Van Buitenen translates, "When he thus yokes himself continuously, the yogin of restrained thought attains to the peace that lies in me, beyond *nirvana*." He comments that it is beyond *nirvana* "because it is not pure extinction but a positive union of the persisting *atman* with the personal God." On "he attains to the *nirvana* that is *brahman*," (2.72), Van Buitenen comments that this is "surely a reply to the Buddhists, declaring that even while taking a brahmanistic stance in a life of social activity, a person can attain the serenity which the Buddhists have arrogated to themselves while not socially active." Thompson maintains that if it means "the peace that transcends *nirvana*, as Van Buitenen suggests, this may reflect anti-Buddhist sentiment. Minor suggests that peace is attained for the liberated one in this life, while *nirvana* is attained at death. Thompson notes that the compound *brahmanirvana* in 2.72, 5.24 and 5.26 "seems to be a clever attempt to assimilate the term *nirvana*, a fundamental term in Buddhism, to Brahman, which is a fundamental term of Hinduism." Van Buitenen, 95 and 165, note 6; 81 and 163 note 22; Thompson 94, note 3; Minor, 216 on 6.15; cf. 99 on 2.72; Thompson 94 note 3; Malinar, 118-120, 125. Malinar notes the overlap in goals between yogic and Buddhist practices, and the fact that the distinction made was often between those who seek to extinguish the body totally, such as Jain ascetics, and those who use the body as a vehicle for liberation. Malinar, 123-124, citing Johannes Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions of Meditation in India* (Dehli: Motinal Banarsidas, 1993).

86. The term *jiva-bhuta* means literally "become as souls," or become "souls." Most commentators agree that Krishna's higher nature is the collection of individual souls. Minor suggests that this passage and 15.7, in which each soul or self is said to be a part of Krishna, support the qualified non-dualistic interpretation of Rāmānuja, where matter and soul comprise the body of God, modes that are eternally distinct. Van Buitenen suggests that the "other higher nature (*prakṛiti*) that comprises the souls is in line with certain ideas in the Upanishads that, like Rāmānuja, speak of creation as the body of God. Minor, 240; Van Buitenen, 165 note 2. Zaehner translates *jiva-bhutam* as "'Nature' developed into life." He suggests that this must mean the totality of conscious matter, in contrast to the individual conscious self spoken of in 3.43. He writes that "this totality of conscious matter keeps the world in being because each individual, conscious self is a 'part of God' (15.7 and to sustain the world is, of course one of God's prime functions (9.5 etc.)." Zaehner, 245. This helps explicate Miller and Thompson's rendering "the life force that sustains the universe." See also Malinar, 130-131. Compare 15.16-18 on the two *purushas*. See below, note .

88. Zaehner writes pungently:

Attach your mind to me: this is utterly new and apparently at variance with the whole content of the last two chapters. There we had been told almost *ad nauseum* that we had to detach ourselves from everything: only by total detachment could liberation be won. Meditate on God certainly as a means of

concentrating your mind, as the Yoga Sutras recommend but do not *attach* yourself to him or anything else because ‘liberation’ is clearly incompatible with attachment of any kind. Here, however, Arjuna is told most bluntly that this is not so: the true athlete of the spirit who has succeeded in integrating his personality and in becoming *brahman* must now not only continue his spiritual exercise unremittingly, he must also attach his whole personality in all its newfound fullness and freedom to Kṛṣṇa who is God and, being God, transcends the immortal *Brahman* as much as he transcends the phenomenal world. Continued spiritual exercise preserving the integrated personality intact, attachment to God, and total trust in him are what Krishna demands in this stanza. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Oxford, 1969), 244; quoted by Theodor, 69-70. See also Malinar, 129.

93. Why do we not all discern this hidden essence? The world is deluded by these qualities inherent in nature, and doesn’t realize that Krishna is beyond them and unchanging. The world is infused with the divine spirit, but people are deluded by the qualities that veil the divine. The veil of illusion (*māyā*) is woven from these strands of nature; those who take refuge in Krishna can pass through this veil of illusion (7.14) The term *māyā* in the Śāṅkara school of Vedānta philosophy will signify that the world is less than fully real in an ontological sense. That is not the sense here in the *Gītā*, since Krishna has said that the *gunas* are in fact his lower nature. However, they conceal the divine reality for those who have not taken refuge in Krishna. Minor notes that the term *māyā* always connotes power, which has something inexplicable about it; hence “mysterious, power.” There is no sense that the world is a “trick of illusion” or a delusion in the *Gītā*. Rāmānuja notes that *māyā* does not refer to something false but to “that which is capable of producing marvelous results.” Minor writes that “if there is an illusion at all in the meaning it is confusing *Krishna* with his *prakṛiti*,” as we see in 7.13 and 7.24.

102. Minor notes that this is an unmanifest that is higher than the whole process of *Prakṛiti*, the unmanifest in 8.18. This returns us to the place of Krishna above the process of change and evolution of 8.11-15. “In 8.5 this was called Krishna’s state of being; in 8.7, 8.15, going to Krishna; in 8.8, 8.10, going to the Supreme Divine Person; in 8.13, the highest goal; and in 8.11, Krishna’s place. Here it is also a state of being *bhava*. This unmanifest state of being, Krishna says, does not perish when the world perishes (8.16-19), or more importantly, when all beings *survesu bhutesu*, gods and men perish, those in Krishna’s place (his highest home, 8.21) will not perish (cf. 14.2).” Minor, 276.

103. Minor notes three ways in which the term *puruṣa* is used in the *Gītā*, and suggest that the passage summarizes these three usages. The perishable is the phenomenal human being; the imperishable refers to the true self, and the highest person of 15.17-18 refers to Krishna. He notes “When the verse describes the ‘perishable’ as all beings, *sarva bhūta*, it refers to the being as considered phenomenally, not to the self of these beings.” The *akṣhara puruṣa* is the true self, *ātman*. “Thus in 15,16 Krishna summarizes his teaching about personhood. There is the phenomenal person and the true person. This is all the verse seems to say without discussing any relationship between the two, though both are said to be ‘in the world.’ It is unlikely, therefore, that the imperishable *puruṣa* is any transcendent non-dualist Self, especially since the following verses are meant to set Krishna above these two.” Minor, 429. The Supreme Person is Krishna himself, who is higher than both the phenomenal person (who is *prakṛiti* and self) and the true self. Minor, 430. Malinar, 141-142, agrees with Zaehner that “the realm of *puruṣa* is higher than the impersonal, unmanifest being (*brahman* as the source of creation) that is Krishna’s *dhaman*,” and discusses the passage in relation to Upanishadic parallels.

104. Malinar emphasizes the royal character of Krishna’s relationship to creatures, 144-150, and notes that the questions of legitimate kingship connect the *Gītā* with the *Mahābhārata* as a whole, especially the *Udyogaparvan* (*Book of Preparations*), 145.

116. Malinar notes the significance of Saṁjaya as witness and reporter of both the self-revelation of Krishna and Arjuna’s devotional hymnic response, which is in some ways parallel to the composition of

Vedic truth formulations (*brahman*). Arjuna is depicted like a Vedic seer or poet; his trembling signals a state of poetic and devotional ecstasy. Arjuna is thus presented as both a poetic seer and a yogin given divine sight; in many *bhakti* traditions, the visual encounter (*darśana*) with the beloved god or goddess is connected with the gift of poetic expression (Malinar, 167-168, 180-183). She also notes the connection between the solar nature of Krishna's appearance and "older Vedic concepts that link the power and position of a king to the different forms of fire, primarily the sun and the sacrificial fires." (Malinar, 167-168).