



Uddhava Gita **Introduction and Chapter 1**

Introduction

Because this scripture is extracted from the Srimad Bhagavatam, the chapters are not so clearly defined in the original text. For convenience, I have chosen to follow the chapter selection and title used in the most comprehensive translation and commentary I could find, from Uddhava Gita Explained by Michael Beloved. When we reference any verse chapter numbers, I will be using this translation as the guide/source.

The importance of this teaching from Sri Krishna cannot be overemphasised because it not only completes his teaching from the Bhagavad Gita (extracted from the Mahabharata) but expounds a very full and final teaching of how to realise one's own identity with and as the Absolute Reality/Noumenon. Not only is it a full instruction and philosophy of awakening but also contains a detailed explanation of the 8 limbs of yoga as defined and taught by Sri Krishna himself. If the Bhagavad Gita were the beginnings of his teaching in his physical incarnation as Krishna, the Uddhava Gita would be the completion and totality of it.

(Note-The translation and commentary by Sajohn Daverly has omitted some of the less necessary verses but has excellent and unbiased commentary. The translation by Michael Beloved has all the verses and excellent translation. Some of his commentaries have an excellent insight whilst others seem to be off topic, have an agenda (of the translator) and seem to show some bias in certain areas. For this reason, I would suggest you take from this commentary what you feel aligned with and leave what you do not feel is useful.)

This Gita is Lord Krishna's final teaching before leaving his body, imparted to his dear friend and devotee, Uddhava. Whilst it may take the form of a dialogue between them, it was imparted to us all as detailed, precise and final instructions for those intent on realising Lord Krishna as their very own Self. When Krishna says "Me" in the Gita (just as with the Bhagavad Gita) he is referring to himself as the Absolute Reality/Totality/Noumenon/Self. All verses of this Gita should be read with that understanding.

I have written commentary on each verse and ask that a written report be sent to me which will be a compilation of everyone's insights as you read this chapter of the Gita and the commentaries. I am especially interested in hearing about your resistances to this, your breakthroughs and insights. Ideally, I would like every Acharya student to contribute at least one thing for each report (although you can contribute as many as you like).

Chapter 1 - Uddhava Approaches Lord Krishna

(1.1) Shuka is the narrator of the Gita, and he describes the beings that gathered together to go speak to Lord Krishna. Brahma is the creator of all things manifested. Shiva is also included

in this verse and is described as the “Lord of things manifested and things to be manifested”. Also included in the group are elemental beings. As we read this Gita, we can try to remember this unfolded in a different age or Yuga in which the energy was much higher than it is now. Whilst reading this teaching, we will experience amazing creatures, ways of beings, skills and siddhis that have been temporarily lost. We may find our disbelief arising that this is a “real” teaching because it references creatures that have not been seen for a long time. It does not matter so much whether we believe in the amazing stories, skills and creatures we encounter in the ancient Indian epics like the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and Puranas, but it will serve us to keep an open mind. In previous Yugas, things were possible that are not possible now (yet!). My first response was to think of these scriptures as simply enlightening but not “real” but everything has changed since then.

Lord Krishna lived in the Dwapara Yuga and in this time, dharma (law, righteous conduct and truth) were established, and upholding dharma was a way of life. There are four Yugas, and this Gita was told by Krishna in the third Yuga. It is important to keep this in mind as we study this monumental teaching.

Can you imagine living in a society where, if someone said they were going to do something, it was as good as done?

What would it be like to live in a culture where Truth was the highest goal (realisation of the Self) AND a way of living?

How would it change your life if you knew every word you uttered was shaping creation?

- (1.2) This verse continues describing the group gathered together. In this verse we see descriptions of gods, demi gods and sages. Shuka also references “supernatural rulers” which are beings who manage or control some of the higher and lower astral realms. There are many dimensions or realms above and below (in frequency not physically) this physical dimension. This dimension is only “physical” because it vibrates generally in the same resonance as what our senses are able to pick up. (Our senses are both physical and astral.)

Lord Krishna is the overall ruler of all realms or dimensions and is the Absolute Reality. He is described here as not only the Absolute Reality but also as his individual (but not separate) soul/astral form, and this teaching occurred when he was having a physical incarnation. Krishna is then simultaneously the Absolute and an individual. In his individual aspect, he is also a perfected being, having mastered everything that is possible in the astral worlds and physical world. It is this that makes him supremely qualified to impart this teaching to Uddhava and to us all after he had left his body. I would highly recommend getting to know Krishna yourself (by asking him mentally and starting a process of learning to listen to him).

We do not need to worry if we do not know who all the characters are in this verse (or any other). We do not need to know who everyone is in order to study this powerful teaching. It is more important to look for the spiritual teachings in the verses themselves.

- (1.3) This verse continues the description of the gathering group. Notice any resistance you may have to “horse-faced ones” and a possible urge to simply say “that is not possible”. We may hear the term “celestial” often and this refers to a being who is situated in a higher realm which is what most of us would call heaven or heavenly. There are realms above this physical one and below it, too.

It is important to remember that perfected Sages or Yogis are considered to be higher than even the gods just as any Self-realised being is. In this Gita we see an example of dharma being upheld because even these perfected yogis (those who have mastered the 8 limbs of yoga) pay respects to gods like Indra just as we would be respectful of the leader of a community we do not live in.

- (1.4) The party of travellers came to Krishna's city. These visitors mostly came in their subtle or astral forms (because they did not have a physical body.) As they came in their subtle forms, they would also be meeting Krishna's subtle form, too. Krishna's physical and astral forms are both stunningly beautiful and perfected in all ways. This beauty helped people to develop devotion to him, and with such pure devotion, his energy or transmission was able to spread throughout the world wherever another devotee of Krishna was found.

The astral worlds can also be called planes, realms or dimensions and do not exist in some other place than this physical one. Sometimes we hear them termed as being "above", "below" or "adjacent" to this physical realm, and these descriptions only describe the vibration of the realm and not a physical location.

In actuality, these realms are right here in the same space as the physical world but not perceptible to the physical senses, and so the mind imagines them to be elsewhere. Even now it is the subtle form or soul that is reading these words through the physical eyes. Even now you and I are interacting in the astral realm even as our physical bodies interact in this physical realm.

We are multidimensional beings existing on many planes at once, and the only thing that differs is whether we currently have a physical body or not. The physical words and interactions are a manifestation or unfolding of what is happening on a higher plane. Our bodies are mental, physical and spiritual, and they all occupy the same "place" at the same "time" (there is no space and time above the physical realm, and time and space only seem to be real in the physical realm, too.) We can compare these various bodies to colours in a rainbow which are all one but vibrating at a unique frequency, or a set of Russian dolls, each one vibrating at a faster speed/higher frequency than the one below.

Question - How does it change your perception of yourself when you realise that you are existing on many planes simultaneously? The "highest" plane or body that you have is infinite and formless and is the same as everyone else's.

- (1.5) Krishna's city, Dwarka, was said to be rich and opulent and it is important to understand that wealth was openly displayed as a sign of mastery over the self. In our awakening, we expect abundance to come into all areas of our life eventually (and in every way it can). Outer worldly abundance is simply a sign of complete self-mastery by following the path to enlightenment, and a lack of abundance is only a sign that we still perceive ourselves to be limited and finite in some areas.

The group saw Krishna with unsatiated eyes, indicating that seeing him was always going to make us want to keep seeing him. Our physical form is a representation of our subtle astral form or soul, and as we grow, open and release lower vibrations by realising who we really are, our subtle form becomes ever more beautiful. This will eventually translate down to the physical form, too, and people begin to see a radiance in you. Most people are unable to see your subtle form because they believe that you are only a physical being, and this lowers their energy and perception capabilities. We believe that the ability to see comes from our physical eyes when in reality, our astral eyes emulate the capacity to be aware and

see. Physical eyes help us see the physical realm. Astral eyes see the astral realm.

Question - Do you think your subtle/astral form or soul looks more beautiful than it did a year ago or at the beginning of this physical lifetime?

Question - Why can some humans perceive the subtle body of people (sometimes called auras)? Is it some special skill they have or is available to all beings?

- (1.6) The “best of the Yadus” refers to Krishna. Praising Krishna with garlands and beautiful words is also praising ourselves. Whenever we praise the Supreme Self, we also benefit. A mark of respect and honour for Krishna’s appearance as a human being also is offered here, and this celebrates and salutes his extraordinary individual achievements.
- (1.7) What does it mean to bow to Krishna’s Lotus feet, and why are they meditated upon at the core of being by those who are fixed or devoted to yoga practice? The feet of the teacher or guru (dispeller of darkness) are physically touched in some countries out of respect, but the highest meaning is that the feet represent the Eternal Infinite Self or Supreme Self. The one who is “fixed in yoga” is someone intent on mastering the eight limbs of yoga to free themselves from attachments to the physical world. There is nothing wrong with the physical or material realm, and it can even be enjoyed once free of attachment to it, but it is important to know that anything we are attached to in the physical realm will stop us fully awakening. We can love someone or something without being attached to them. Attachment is needing something or needing to get something from it.

In this sutra, we see the term “cultural activities” used for the first time. This describes the activities we must all perform in the world such as our role as a parent, an employee, a wife or husband and much more. It is important to note that very few of us can abstain totally from all cultural activities, and perhaps our role is to take part in these activities without attachment or identification. We all identify with the roles the body plays (as employer, wife, son, etc) and liberation is from this misidentification. This misidentification does not let the soul leave the body easily (except at night time when the mind is asleep), and the soul finds itself effectively locked into the physical body. Death is then an involuntary process for such identified beings who still have great interest in the physical plane, and they will be ejected from the physical body once it can no longer adequately support and house the soul.

The yogi strives for liberation which is being able to free oneself from all attachments and recognise what we truly are, and with this comes natural detachment from the physical plane of existence. Let us be sure to note that detachment is not aversion. Krishna’s own life is full of examples of him enjoying the world as a husband, teacher and many other ways. Enjoyment of the world is a form of love for it but without attachment. The physical plane or universe is but one of many realms we are experiencing, and for the Self-realised Being is no more special than any of the others. There is no fear then upon leaving it because we have already seen the higher realms that we are already experiencing.

Question - What are you attached to? When it comes time to leave the physical plane for the last time (because you do it every nighttime) what part of your world will you struggle to leave behind?

Question - Whatever your answer is to the above question, can you see you are already with them in the astral plane or as souls? There can only be attachment if you are obsessed with ONLY the physical realm.

Question - Have you realised that this written commentary is a physical manifestation of a conversation we had previously on an astral plane?

Question - What does it mean if you realise that right now we are in constant energetic conversation with each other?

- (1.8) This beautiful verse or sutra is in praise of Lord Krishna, and yet it is really in praise of the Infinite Self, for Krishna is the Omnipresence Itself. The term “mundane energy” is used to describe the physical realm (which is also just energy vibrating at a slower rate than the astral realms), and we see the first reference to the gunas here, too. The “three influences of material nature” are Krishna’s “mundane potency” or his influence in the material realm. He is the gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas, and he plays as this ever-shifting balance of the gunas in and as the world. He is the source of the world and the world itself.

We also hear of this when Christ is said to be “in the world but not of it”. He is the gunas (just as we all are), and yet he is not affected at all by anything in manifestation (just as we all already aren’t but keep imagining that we are). The infinite Self is both immanent and transcendent, being both beyond form and yet appearing as and inside all forms. There is no “Inside” or “forms” but simply the Self appearing as form.

Question - Do you realise that you are Krishna? (Just as everything is)

Question - Krishna creates and supports this whole multidimensional universe, and it costs less than the smallest drop in an infinite ocean of energy. Do you realise this means you cannot effort towards anything?

- (1.9) The addressing to Lord Krishna continues, and praise is given to his ability to confer purity upon us. This is speaking of the power of direct recognition of the formless nature of being or Krishna consciousness. The power of such a recognition is much more deeply absorbed by a mind of “clear disposition” than one muddled by many desires for worldly things and achievements. There is nothing wrong with worldly achievements, of course, except that we cannot take anything with us except our spiritual realisations. For this reason, we can make our physical lives comfortable, but let us never forget that all that remains once we leave this physical body is what the soul has learned and seen about Krishna/the Self. When we realise this, our devotion to the Lord is heightened and empowered, and this devotion allows us to absorb more of the benefits of our practice.

Hearing of and reading about Krishna’s life and exploits as an individual and also his glories as the Supreme Self will increase our devotion. Devotion is only love, and we all are devoted to the physical plane at first. Our task then is to switch that devotion over to the formless infinite Brahman. One who has such powerful devotion to the Self/Brahman/Krishna is always going to succeed no matter what type of practice they do, and they will eventually be able to be directed and instructed more directly by the great teachers (both those in and out of a physical body). One whose devotion is mostly to worldly achievements could do four times the practice of the devotee of Krishna and receive less benefit! It is never what and how much practice we do but why we do it that is so important.

Question - Why do you do spiritual practice?

Question - What does devotion mean to you?

Question - What does devotion to Krishna actually mean? What are we devoted to?

- (1.10) A devotee is someone who is devoted to a particular thing, deity or as we are discussing in this scripture, the Supreme Self itself. Worshipping the lotus feet of the Lord can mean

many things at various stages of our awakening, but by this stage we can appreciate that whilst we may go to a particular temple, shrine or worship an image of Krishna, the most powerful form of worship is not a physical act but a spiritual one. Direct self-inquiry and experiential seeing that there is no separate student or devotee and that all we find is Krishna, the great infinite formlessness that is our real nature is the best worship.

Direct experience of Krishna as our own seeing of the infinite Silence is the highest way to worship and the best offering we can give. It is superior to all other forms of worship, and the devotee or student sees that they are already what they are seeking. In this verse, we see that only worship of the Supreme Self is going to allow us to go beyond the subtle celestial (heavenly) planets or realms after leaving the physical body upon death. If a student has not fully allowed their individual consciousness to be completely saturated with and transformed by repeated samadhi experiences (total immersion in the Self which begins as temporary experiences but eventually becomes continuous then effortless), they will still be drawn to the subtle celestial realms upon leaving the body. Whilst these realms may be enjoyable, eventually one will be drawn back to a physical incarnation to complete our seeing and to become a living embodiment of Krishna. These celestial realms can be quite lovely and even enjoyable but will not bring us total liberation. It is best to complete our seeing as quickly as possible and allow it to transform our whole existence, and then upon death we can go to whichever realm we wish AND realise that we are beyond all realms (they exist inside us). Wherever we vibrate at (our level of consciousness/depth of seeing the Truth) upon death will determine the fate of our soul unless we have seen the Truth so completely that we are beyond the reach of the vibrational changes in manifestation (not identified with the gunas anymore).

The “impure psychology” referred to here is simply our tendency to think in separation (which is our karmic patterns or samskaras) and the resulting emotional energies and repetitive experiences that follow. Seeing experientially through self-inquiry that there is only One Being will burn our capacity to think in separation, and the result is peace, love and joy and abundance of all kinds.

(Krishna's many forms are also worshipped as he has appeared to others at certain times in various subtle/astral forms also which represent different aspects of himself).

Question - Why is direct and experiential seeing of our true nature the only way to transcend our karmic patterns?

- (1.11) In this verse, we see that the lotus feet of Krishna are worshipped by the group of supernatural rulers gathered to speak to Krishna by their ability to see his subtle or astral form. We also hear those yogis, intent on total liberation from all illusion, worship the intangible formlessness that is Krishna in order to realise their Oneness with him.

Worship of Krishna as the infinite Self/formlessness is done by following and mastering the 8 limbs of yoga (also called Ashtanga yoga) and this is the highest form of worship. At the end of the path of yoga, one becomes the Supreme Self or realises herself or himself to be simply another manifestation of Krishna.

- (1.12) This verse can be taken literally or symbolically as it hints that even Krishna's wife (the goddess Lakshmi) is not as close to him as the garland of flowers around his neck is. The flowers are in direct communion with his body, which is perhaps representative of the direct communion we have with him in our self-inquiry. Even though the flowers are withered, they are still perceived as the best way to worship him.

The goddess Lakshmi is subtly separated from Krishna as she represents an aspect of his manifestation (or a way that Krishna can appear or a quality or attribute of the manifestation). In his incarnation on the earthly plane, Lakshmi was his wife or consort (the meaning of the word “consort” has been highly distorted by modern society and was originally synonymous with “wife”).

- (1.13) To fully understand the meaning of this verse would take some knowledge of the Puranas (Hindu scriptures), and this would take more time than I want to spend here. The spiritual meaning of this verse is much easier to recognise. The party of Supernatural beings, etc. continue their praise of Lord Krishna by stating that his lotus feet (his essence or being) enable those who serve him to correct any character challenges, cravings or perceived flaws. By service to Krishna in any way at all helps us to wake up to the Truth and live as that.

We offer service to him each time we meditate, self-inquire or contemplate. Each time we assist someone with anything at all we are helping ourselves, too because there is only one of us. This is especially true when we offer spiritual help. Anything we do from a pure intention to help is helping Lord Krishna because he is everywhere as everyone. The last sentence speaks of the eternal dharma (truth) that our motivations and therefore our actions will have consequences that enable us to be elevated to higher realms or find ourselves in lower realms after leaving the body. Wherever we find ourselves vibrationally as a soul upon leaving the body determines what will happen afterwards. Whether we go to a higher or lower realm, we will have to come back for another chance at purifying our intentions in the physical realm.

Self-Realisation will allow us to end the cycle of involuntary incarnation back to physicality, and we can then choose whether to have another physical lifetime or not. Upon Self-Realisation, we become his lotus feet.

- (1.14) Continuing the address to Lord Krishna, we hear that Krishna is also an individual soul, interested in the material nature (the manifestation) just like all the rest of us, and he is described as the exploiter of manifestation. To understand this verse, it is important to see there is a difference between why most beings would exploit manifestation and why Krishna would. Most beings are trying to use (exploit) manifestation (people and other things in the material realm) to get things such as money, peace, health, patience, acceptance and approval. To exploit means to use it for a purpose and derive something from it. Our motivations for exploiting anything may be to help ourselves and derive benefit. Even to read this scripture could be seen as using it to derive spiritual benefit for ourselves. “Body-supported spirits” are the human beings who believe in separation and who want things for themselves (for one body and mind only) and this keeps them lost in illusion. All desires are from the Infinite Self/Krishna and are really to benefit the whole and never just one body.

In contrast, we can consider why Krishna would exploit manifestation and how we can emulate that. Krishna knows that the material realm, whilst being a beautiful expression of himself, is still temporary and nothing that we ever achieve in the material realm can be taken with us upon leaving the body at the time of death. The only thing we can take with us is what we have learned in this lifetime as a soul experiencing the physical realm. So, as we emulate Krishna, we may use the physical realm to help us recognise ourselves as that in which all realms appear. We may use what is physical, changing, being born and dying to point us back to the Supreme Self that is beyond and yet inclusive of all. In the “Yoga Sutras of Patanjali”, Sri Patanjali says “The seen exists for the Seer, but the Seer is not just

the Self of all beings. It is the essential Self of all objects in the universe". The Seer (you, the Supreme Self) is using the seen (manifestation) to help it recognise Itself.

- (1.15) The gathered party continues to address Krishna with a summary of his powers. Krishna rules over and appears as the unmanifested essence, the manifestation and all individual souls. He is also time (past, present and future).
- (1.16) This verse is a succinct explanation of creation. Krishna is represented here as the unmanifest and he provides the sexual potency and drive to create. This is described as inexhaustible creative power and is inherent in the Self itself. Sexual energy and power may bring to mind a physical connotation, but what would that raw creative power be or "look like" before it becomes physical? Of course, it wouldn't look like anything because it is before form, but we can see the unmanifest must be pregnant with creative power waiting to take shape as a form.

This mundane power or energy is showing up as the forms we perceive. The golden egg-shaped container is the universe as a whole and is described as a container for this potency.

- (1.17) The praise of Krishna continues by speaking of his virtues, and in this verse the ability to remain unaffected by anything that our senses perceive is highlighted. When we have a human body, we are constantly experiencing objects through our five senses, and most of us have lots of thoughts about what we think we are experiencing. The mind thinks that what we see through our eyes is an actual form, rather than a temporary shape in the shapeless Self. Because of this misperception by the mind, it constantly thinks about how to interact with forms that are not really there.

The mind is really a collection of thoughts about how to deal with, react to or interact with forms that are not really there. Mind is the outcome of believing in forms being actual things (like clouds being actually different than the sky). All of our thoughts are about an imagined relationship between ourselves and all these objects, and the thoughts consist of mainly two categories. We have a set of thoughts for imagined objects we think we want, like or need and a set of thoughts for the opposite. All of our mental activity is really a distortion of the One Being/Krishna Consciousness because it insists on dividing everything into these categories. The mind will even do this with Krishna and ask how to merge into him, join him, find him or reach him. It will even ask how to realise it is him. All of this is in our imagination only.

Krishna is praised here as the one who remains unaffected by any objects perceived by the senses. He neither craves what is deemed wanted and good nor fears what is deemed unwanted or bad. Being like this is how we live as Krishna does.

- (1.18) Continuing the theme of the previous verse, we see Krishna being praised as the one who can resist sixteen thousand wives and their alluring appeal. Krishna in his individual life was known to have many lovers, wives and other sexual encounters (as was the culture at the time). It is important to realise that this verse is not negating sexual intimacy and physical relationships or asking us to abstain from it (as indeed Krishna did not abstain during his human existence) but to live from that place where sexual intercourse arises spontaneously as an expression of love and intimacy on a higher plane.

We can have sexual relationships out of a need to satisfy a craving and express a building energy trapped in the lower chakras or to allow a beautiful unfolding of love in physical form. The first only temporarily satisfies a craving with an orgasm and will need to be

repeated over and over. The second finds no craving is possible, and sexual desire arises during the sexual act itself only (and not before) and is not a depletion of life force energy. On the contrary, such sexual encounters born from an intimacy with someone on an astral plane (soul level) can even increase life force energy.

- (1.19) This verse speaks of two types of rivers that give us life and immortality (liberation or Self-Realisation), and the first is the stream of flowing stories about Krishna's lifetime and activities. To hear or read about his life automatically increases our devotion to him and drives an aspiration to become like him.

The second type of river comes from contact with Krishna's physical body, association with him and washing his feet (which was a custom of the time and culture). Today, we may not be able to touch Krishna's physical body directly, but we can take care of our own body. The next time you wash your feet in the shower, will you remember you are washing Krishna's feet? Your body is Krishna's body. Krishna is appearing as you (and everything).

The meaning of "Acharya" is to teach by example, and when we strive not to reach Krishna but to realise we are him, we are in association with him and "touching his body".

- (1.20) This verse describes the continuation of the offerings to Krishna. Offerings were made by using beautiful words, gifts, sacrifices made and obeisances (showing respect in some way). Let us remember that the ones addressing Krishna were in astral or subtle forms only and could not be seen by humans who have not mastered the eight limbs of yoga. They were described as in the sky or having astral bodies only.

Hari Govinda is simply another name for Krishna and is one of many.

- (1.21) Brahma now addresses Krishna and gently reminds him of why he incarnated in the first place. These supernatural rulers requested Krishna to live a physical human life to address the changes happening in the world. Dharma (spiritual law, integrity, virtue or righteousness) was decreasing and human beings were beginning to lose their moral values and truthfulness. Lord Krishna was asked to incarnate to address this imbalance.

In previous ages, a person's word was considered total and absolute. Can you imagine living in a society where there were no contracts, courts or prisons? A society where something spoken was always upheld and was as good as a signed contract is how all humans used to live, and this was beginning to disappear from the earth. Krishna incarnated at the request of the other deities, and Brahma reminds him that he has accomplished his mission.

- (1.22) Brahma continues by reviewing what Krishna has achieved to protect the dharma. The protection of religious (this term is used as a synonym for spiritual in this Gita) principles was placed in the hands of righteous people who would remember the dharma at all times, even if the rest of the world forgot it.

Krishna also spread "his glories" in all directions. These glories are not just stories of his life and activities (which can increase devotion and inspire necessary drive for enlightenment) but also come in the form of his energies and transmission or Grace which is always available to anyone who wants it and is willing to do the necessary practices.

- (1.23) This verse continues the praise and summary of Krishna's deeds which were always performed for the benefit of all beings. Even when Krishna appeared to have favourite devotees (such as the Pandavas in the Mahabharata or Uddhava in this Gita), he favoured

those who displayed proper conduct, a love of Truth and the willingness to do spiritual practice consistently and always strive to improve. Krishna's "favourites" are anyone devoted to Truth and wisdom.

- (1.24) Brahma continues by saying that Krishna's lifetime serves as an example that can be used by anyone to help them transcend the lower energies of untruth that would surely come in the next Yuga or age. Hindu wisdom divides the time into four Yugas (Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali Yugas). Kali Yuga is the time where Truth, Dharma and righteous conduct may seem to be almost lost completely and untruth is worshipped by many. It is a time where our words and deeds may be very different or even opposite! Brahma describes it as the "era of religious deterioration".

It is said that Kali Yuga began upon the death of Lord Krishna. The saintly persons described are you! We are the upholders of Truth.

- (1.25) Brahma reminds Krishna that he is 125 years old, and that it is time for him to consider leaving his body. Whilst this may seem rude or negative in our society today, it is meant as a sign of respect here. Brahma is telling Krishna that his incarnation has achieved its purpose, and it is time for him to reside only in his subtle form.

It may help to remember that Krishna is so powerful that his physical presence in the world affected the whole realm. Such power can be beneficial sometimes but also can upset the balance sometimes too. Krishna and other beings do not see death as anything more than like taking off an old outfit that we have loved wearing. Stepping out of a physical body and viewing it compassionately from our astral form, death is not a big deal or an ending. It is a beginning.

Others, such as Uddhava himself (as we will see later) have not developed as yet the ability to see Krishna's subtle form and so feel bereft at the idea of him leaving his physical body. Can you imagine being close to your teacher's physical form for 125 years and then having to say goodbye?

- (1.26) Brahma continues by reminding Krishna that his work is complete, and that he does not even have to stay to look after his family. In the scriptures we learn of a curse that was placed upon Krishna's family, but we will not go into it here. Curses and boons were common in the time that Krishna lived physically.

- (1.27) Brahma politely asks Krishna to return to his abode or realm and to let them take over and look after the realm, reminding him that they are the servants of his realm and can look after the physical plane.

- (1.28) Krishna addresses Brahma now in a very respectful way. Even though Krishna could see Brahma as his equal or even as his inferior, he still treats Brahma with respect. This is but one of the many times Krishna displays how he lives and teaches by his example. Krishna did not incarnate to teach us how to uphold the dharma. His life and example *are* the teaching. (If you wish to hear more examples of this, I would recommend listening to/reading the Mahabharata).

Krishna gently agrees with Brahma and says the burden is removed from the world and even calls it "your assignment" to defer to Brahma.

- (1.29) As may be expected, Krishna's family (the Yadus) were also made up of powerful beings because of their association with Krishna and their own spiritual merit or growth. In this

verse, Krishna states his intention to manage this family by also urging them on to higher realms with him when he goes.

Such a spiritually evolved family really has no reason to continue incarnating in the physical realm and may even find they slow down the evolution of the beings around them by limiting their experiences and learning opportunities. Krishna cleared up this matter with his statement of intention to manage this.

- (1.30) Continuing on from the previous verse, Krishna shows he knows the consequences of not taking his family with him as he departs his physical body. Perhaps we can use this verse as a warning that having spiritual power without having mastered self-control is not such a good thing.
- (1.31) Krishna now tells Brahma that the curse put upon his family will allow them to leave their physical bodies, and that Krishna will leave his after this is done and visit Brahma in his own subtle realm. Again, we see Krishna praise Brahma by addressing him as the sinless one.
- (1.32) Having achieved what they wanted to from their talk with Krishna, Brahma rejoined the party and they returned to their own subtle realms.
- (1.33) Krishna now turns to speak to his family, the Yadus, about the destruction of his city, Dwaraka. Whilst the destruction may seem a bad thing from the physical perspective only, it is no coincidence that the curse and the destruction are happening at the time that Krishna and family have decided to leave. Krishna could have overcome the curse and destruction but chooses not to out of respect for the physical realm and its rules.
- (1.34) Krishna continues his speech, addressing what is happening in the city. Krishna does not try to counteract the curse because it is time for them all to leave anyway, and those who issued the curse are senior to him in terms of physical age, and so he showed them respect.
- (1.35) Krishna addresses the elders of the family, advising them to leave the city so that they would be safer for a while. Perhaps Krishna was offering them a less violent end to their lifetime in a holy place of pilgrimage. If physical death was to come to them anyway, surely it would be better to meet that end in a holy place and in the company of others who aspire to Truth.
- (1.36) Krishna cites the example of Chandra who was freed from a curse by sincere reflection, in a holy place, on why it had happened to him and set an intention that it will not happen again or that the curse was not necessary. This curse was put upon the whole of the Yadu family but was really instigated by the youths of the family. Krishna wished that his elders be released from the curse effects as they had no part in the offence that caused the family to be cursed by Brahmins (priests).

Krishna again follows the societal rules even though he is beyond any of them and could overturn them.

(1.37) and (1.38) combined...

- (1.38) In these two verses, Krishna shows us the proper way to deal with effects of actions that were not in alignment with the dharma. The curse on the Yadu family was issued because the youths of the family did not treat some sages they encountered properly and with respect. It is important to notice here that Krishna does not try to reverse the curse nor change it at all. He shows us that we cannot be responsible for the outcome of our actions, but that we are always accountable for the intentions behind them.

By following the proper procedures and paying respects to the “worthy” persons (worthy here means those who have reached awakening to some degree), Krishna advises that the sins will be counteracted. The procedures are compared to a boat that can cross an ocean of sin.

In modern society “sin” has taken on another meaning altogether and has been overused by certain authorities, but it originally meant ignorance of Truth. “Sin” in its most original meaning is a transgression against Divine Law or a misunderstanding of how dharma works. Each being is subject to cause and effect whilst they still believe they are separate beings, and this curse is the effect of a cause or sin committed by the youths in the family. The cause and the effect do not apply to one who has awakened fully, such as Sri Krishna, and yet he allows himself to be affected by it to uphold the dharma. Yet again, Krishna teaches us by his behaviour and actions.

(1.39) This verse simply tells us that the elders, after having listened to Krishna’s advice, followed it and left for the holy place.

(1.40) This verse is where we are first introduced to Uddhava who is a close friend and even closer devotee (student) of Lord Krishna.

Bad omens were happening which were foretelling the destruction of the city. It has always been known that animals and nature can sense what is about to happen because they are still deeply connected to all life. In many spiritual epics like the Mahabharata, we often hear of bad omens or portents being seen when something bad is about to happen. Uddhava was aware of what these signs meant and so hurried to Krishna.

(1.41) Although Uddhava is close to Krishna and a dearest friend, he still manages to show the proper respect for his teacher and this is a sign of a very advanced student. Respect for a teacher does not have to be shown in the way that Uddhava does (by bowing at Krishna’s feet) but it is important to respect the embodiment of Truth wherever we find it. This is for our benefit as a student because the very moment we begin to take for granted the teacher and teaching, that moment is the moment we are lost back in separation again.

Uddhava walks the fine line very well between respecting his teacher and also enjoying the close nature of their human friendship, without taking anything for granted. He is always aware of his great karmic merit to be friends with such a powerful teacher as Krishna (just as Arjuna was) We can clearly see the contrast in how Uddhava treats Krishna compared to how the youths of the family acted without thinking about the effects on Krishna and the rest of the family. This is a great teaching in itself.

(1.42) Uddhava tells Krishna he is aware of his impending departure from the physical world, knowing it must be for the best if Krishna is allowing the curse to destroy the bodies of his family. Uddhava knows that Krishna could have stopped the curse, but he does not even question why he did not. His trust in Krishna is absolute, and he knows Krishna always acts for the highest good of all (or that his inactivity to stop the curse is for the best of all).

It is important to remember that death was not so catastrophic for these great men and the society as a whole. They all knew that they would immediately begin to instigate another human lifetime as soon as possible, and death was not seen as a tragedy or ending but perhaps more of a slight inconvenience and a relocation to another body and mind vehicle. Perhaps it may even be seen as a welcome respite or a short vacation.

- (1.43) This verse is a beautiful expression of the love Uddhava has for Lord Krishna. He begs him to let him come to his subtle realm too and not to leave him behind (Krishna has his own realm or subtle plane where he resides after leaving his physical body). Uddhava is attached to Krishna's physical form and has not yet learnt to perceive his subtle form. If he had been able to see Krishna's soul/astral form he would not have really felt that anything was changing or ending as he would still be in constant communion with his teacher, even after Krishna left his physical body here on earth.

This is another important teaching on how best to use the close relationship between a teacher and student. Perhaps a devotee of Krishna who could not live in the physical proximity of Krishna would feel more determined to learn how to perceive his astral form because he cannot see his physical form. Those closest to Krishna physically often feel no urge at all to learn to perceive his subtle form until the moment that Krishna is about to leave. We can all imagine how Uddhava felt at that moment, and we can heed a warning here also and avoid a pitfall that many students fall into. The difficult news is that Uddhava could not have gone to Krishna's abode because he had not yet developed the necessary yogic mastery to allow him to live in such a high realm. Krishna already knew this, but Uddhava is only finding this out as the Gita unfolds.

- (1.44) Uddhava continues to speak to Krishna in this verse. We learn here that even hearing about Krishna and his lifetime, his activities and deeds is enough to greatly increase one's devotion to him and allow us to desire only to realise our Oneness with Krishna. All other desires fall away as one's devotion increases, and it is not because those other desires are wrong, but they simply will not lead to anything lasting and that we are able to take with us when we leave this physical body.

Devotion is the most important thing to develop, and it can always be intensified (my own devotion intensifies each day even now). Developing devotion to Krishna is really having devotion to the Truth. When devotion is strong it gives us all kinds of spiritual benefits that were not available to us before, and we are lifted onto the fast track to awakening. Desiring to associate ourselves with Krishna is the highest form of devotion as Krishna is the Supreme Self.

What is the most important reason for studying this great Gita? Is it mainly for absorbing the spiritual guidance Krishna gives here or to help us develop a deep bond with him? The former cannot happen without the latter for without devotion this would just be a good read full of powerful knowledge that does not become assimilated by us! Devotion is your superpower, and it is for this reason that I recommend you read or listen to the Mahabharata or read the Srimad Bhagavatam (the longer text which is one of the Puranas) that describes Krishna's many incarnations.

(Please note both these suggested readings are very long and so it is a lot of extra time to read. We can also speed the development of our devotion by understanding why and how it helps us. Later in the Gita, Krishna will ask some difficult things of Uddhava, and because of his devotion to Krishna, Uddhava immediately accepts what he needs to do, even if he does not like it.)

- (1.45) Uddhava expresses how difficult it is for him and others like him to give up the physical company of Lord Krishna.

- (1.46) Uddhava tells us that by simply wearing garlands Krishna has worn, eating the leftover food Krishna could not finish and other such things, one will be able to recognise themselves as

the Supreme Self who is not affected at all by maya (the bewildering mundane potency) or illusion.

Is this actually true, though? Is it enough to only do these things to reach liberation? The answer to that depends upon one's devotion! Devotion to Truth is the superpower that turbocharges all our spiritual practice and allows maximum benefit from it and growth in this lifetime. If we feel we do not have enough devotion, simply wish to increase it and listen to your intuitive urges. Some key ways to deepen devotion have already been given in this commentary and in the Gita.

- (1.47) In this verse, Uddhava speaks of those yogis who have mastered the eight limbs of yoga and who go to Krishna's abode upon leaving the body. Perhaps Uddhava may be stating his intention to fulfil this in his lifetime. Reaching Krishna's abode is not about travelling in our subtle body to a "place" and living there but rather the realisation that any "place" (physical or otherwise) is only my own Self already. Attaining Krishna's abode then is attaining complete union with the Supreme Self, recognising there is no "me and the Supreme" Self but only the supreme Self.

Let us not worry about the words Uddhava uses in this verse. He is simply praising the greatness of such yogis, and it does not mean that we have to learn to survive only on air but may be a reference to those who have mastered the breath through pranayama etc. Realisation of the Truth is available to all who are willing to do what it takes (consistent practice of recommended practices). Some of the eight limbs of yoga we have already begun to master in the four lessons of the Dissolving the Ego course. A lot of the work has already been done, and the only factor that may slow us down is our consistency (or lack thereof) in our practice. Adequate devotion will allow us to correct an inconsistency we may have or overcome any resistance to practising. If one develops deep devotion, combined with wisdom (such as studying these great scriptures), liberation is assured.

Perhaps consistent practice is only an outpouring of our habits, which is an outpouring of our devotion.

- (1.48) Uddhava continues to express his understanding of how great devotion is as a benefit on the pathway. He calls Krishna the "great yogi" because he knows Krishna can leave one human body easily and enter another just as easily, whilst still retaining all his knowledge of his past achievements. He is not lost in illusion upon incarnating again.

The "depressive influence" of manifestation is its seeming ability to mesmerise and fascinate us, drawing us away from our spiritual practice. Uddhava says that simply conversing with other devotees of Krishna is enough to lift us out of the power of illusion. Is this true? Could it be like this? Again, it depends on the devotion of the ones we associate with. True Satsang means to associate with those who are here for total liberation (or have already achieved it). Perhaps Uddhava referred to other devotees of Krishna with the same intensity of devotion for him.

- (1.49) Uddhava continues to list the activities that he feels will lead him or anyone like him to liberation. We must be careful here again not to assume that to be near such a great teacher is enough to allow full realisation to unfold. The measure of how deep our realisation has gone may only be fully realised upon leaving the presence of the teacher.

Those who could not live close to Krishna or even in the city of Dwaraka may even have had an advantage over those that could, such as Uddhava. In my own journey I only sat with a teacher physically twice and it certainly pushed me to deepen a subtle relationship

with all the great sages, yogis and teachers. I would probably not have been willing to do what was necessary to develop these relationships if I had been able to live with a teacher or near to them. Perhaps what we think is our greatest disadvantage is actually our greatest benefit and good luck. Once we have done the work to develop our subtle (astral) connection with a teacher, we will also find a closer proximity happens with them even on the physical plane.

Question - How do you think you can develop a subtle/astral connection with a teacher?

(1.50) This concludes the first chapter of the Gita as Uddhava finishes addressing Lord Krishna. In the next chapter we will hear Krishna's words who he addresses to the "totally attentive" Uddhava. Even though Uddhava can sit with Krishna almost any time he wants to, still he displays great maturity in being always attentive to the wisdom that will come.