

THE CANONS OF A PERFECT LIFE

BEING COMPREHENSIVE SELECTIONS FROM
THE BHAGAVADGITA

by

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Be Bold and Not Cowardly - The Blessed Lord said:

- Whence is this perilous strait come upon thee, this dejection which is unworthy of you, disgraceful, and which will close the gates of heaven upon you, O Arjuna? (II.2)
- Yield not to impotence, O Arjuna, son of Pritha. It does not befit thee. Cast off this mean weakness of the heart! Stand Up, O scorcher of the foes! (II.3)

Life and Death Mean the Same Thing

- Thou hast grieved for those that should not be grieved for, yet thou speakest words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. (II.11)

The Soul Is Deathless

- Nor at any time indeed was I not, nor thou, nor these rulers of men, nor verily shall we ever cease to be hereafter. (II.12)
- The unreal hath no being; there is no non-being of the real; the truth about both has been seen by the knowers of Reality. (II.16)
- Know That to be Indestructible, by Which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of That, the Imperishable. (II.17)
- Weapons cut It not, fire burns It not, water wets It not, wind dries It not. (II.23)
- This Self cannot be cut, burnt, wetted, nor dried up. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable and ancient. (II.24)

Bear Pain with Courage

- The contacts of the senses with the objects, O son of Kunti, which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain, have a beginning and an end; they are impermanent; endure them bravely, O Arjuna. (II.14)

Our Physical Body Is by Nature Perishable

- These bodies of the embodied Self, Which is eternal, indestructible and immeasurable, are said to have an end. Therefore fight, O Arjuna. (II.18)

Grief and Sorrow Are Unbecoming

- This (Self) is said to be unmanifested, unthinkable and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing This to be such, thou shouldst not grieve. (II.25)

Grieve Not for Anyone

- This, the Indweller in the body of everyone, is ever indestructible, O Arjuna; therefore, thou shouldst not grieve for any creature. (II.30)

Inglorious Life Is Worse than Death

- People, too, will recount thy everlasting dishonour (for having retracted from duty); and to one who has been honoured, dishonour is worse than death. (II.34)

Treat Pleasure and Pain As Equal

- Having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat the same,

engage thou in battle (for the sake of duty); thus thou shalt not incur sin. (II.38)

In the Performance of Duty, There Is No Loss of Any Kind

- In this there is no loss of effort, nor is there any harm (production of contrary results or transmigration). Even a little of this knowledge (even a little practice of this Yoga) protects one from great fear. (II.40)

Duty Is Not to Be Confused with Personal Benefit

- Thy right is to work only, but never with its fruits; let not the fruits of the action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction. (II.47)

A Balanced Outlook Is Called Yoga

- Perform action, O Arjuna, being steadfast in Yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure. Evenness of mind is called Yoga. (II.48)

Yoga Is Dexterity in the Performance of Work

- Endowed with wisdom (evenness of mind), one casts off in this life both good and evil deeds; therefore, devote thyself to Yoga; Yoga is skill in action. (II.50)

Contentment Is the Mark of Greatness and Genius

- When a man completely casts off, O Arjuna, all the desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, then he is said to be of steady wisdom. (II.55)

The Perfected One

- He attains to Peace, into whom all desires enter as rivers enter the steady ocean, being filled from all sides, not he who desires objects (of sense). (II.70)

Inaction Is Contrary to Nature

- Verily, none can ever remain for even a moment without performing action; for everyone is made to act helplessly indeed by the qualities born of Nature. (III.5)

Action Is the Law of Life

- Do thou perform (thy) bounden duty, for action is superior to inaction; even the maintenance of the body would not be, possible for thee by inaction. (III.8)

Action Not Involving Self-sacrifice Is Binding

- The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of sacrifice; do thou, therefore; O son of Kunti (Arjuna), perform action for that sake (for sacrifice alone), free from attachment. (III.9)

God Created Beings with an Ordinance for Self-sacrifice

- The Creator, having in the beginning created mankind together with sacrifice, said, "By this shall ye propagate; let this be the milch cow of your desires (the source which yields all the desired objects)." (III.10)

Mutual Cooperative Spirit Brings Success

- With this (sacrifice) do ye nourish the gods, and may those gods nourish ye; thus nourishing one another, ye shall attain to the highest good. (III.11)

Set an Ideal Example to Others

- Whatsoever a great man does, that other men also do; whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows. (III.21)

Do Not Disturb the Faith of Others

- Let no wise one unsettle the mind of ignorant people who are attached to action; he should engage them in all actions, himself fulfilling them with devotion. (III.26)

You Are Not the Doer of Deeds, But Nature Is the Real Doer

- All actions are wrought in all cases by the qualities of Nature only. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks, "I am the doer." (II.27)

Offer Your Performances As a Dedication to God

- Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centred in the Self, free from expectation and egoism and (mental) agony, do thou fight. (III.30)

Doing One's Own Duty Is Better than Dabbling in Others', for Which One Is Not Meant

- Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear. (III.35)

Selfish Impulses Can Be Overcome by Resort to the Supreme Being

- Knowing That which is superior to the intellect, and restraining the self by the Self, slay thou, O mighty-armed, the enemy in the form of desire, hard to conquer. (III.43)

God Manifests Himself in Every Form of Crisis

- Whenever there is decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself. (IV.7)
- For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I manifest Myself in every age. (IV.8)

All Action Is, in Fact, God Working

- Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the melted butter; by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always beholds Brahman in action. (IV.24)

Sankhya and Yoga

- He who has renounced the sense of doership by means of Yoga, who has destroyed all doubts by knowledge, who is established in the Self, his actions do not bind, O Dhananjaya. (IV.41)
- Children, not wise ones, regard Sankhya and Yoga as different from each other; (in fact) one who is established in one obtains the results of both. (V.4)
- Without Yoga (of non-attachment) establishment in Sannyasa (relinquishment of

action) is hard to attain; the sage established in Yoga quickly reaches Brahman. (V.6)

- One who is harmonised in Yoga, of purified self, self-controlled, of subdued senses, whose self has become the Self of all beings, although acting, is not tainted (or affected in any way). (V.7)
- With understanding fixed in That, self-absorbed in That, rooted (entirely) in That, seeking That alone, - they go whence there is no return (to mortal life), having cleansed themselves with wisdom (of Truth). (V.17)
- Shutting off all external contacts (through the senses), with gaze fixed between the eyebrows, equalising the ingoing and outgoing breaths within the nostrils,
- With senses, mind and intellect firmly restrained, the sage, intent on the final liberation alone, casting off all impulses of desire, fear and anger, is, verily, liberated at all times. (V.27, 28)
- Knowing Me as the enjoyer of the fruits of all sacrifices and austerities, the Mighty Lord of all the worlds, Friend of all beings, one attains to Peace. (V.29)

Renunciation and Work Are Identical

- Do thou, O Arjuna, know Yoga (detached work) to be the same as that which they call renunciation; no one verily becomes a Yogi who has not renounced creative willing. (VI.2)

Self-help Is the Road to Achievement

- One should raise oneself by one's Self alone; let not one lower oneself; for the Self alone is the friend of oneself, and the Self alone is the enemy of oneself. (VI.5)
- The Self is the friend of the self of him by whom the self has been conquered by the Self; but to the unsubdued self the Self will act as a hostile enemy. (VI.6)

Moderation in Life Is Yoga

- Verily, Yoga is not possible for him who eats too much, nor for him who does not eat at all; nor for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who is (always) awake, O Arjuna. (VI.16)
- Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain for him who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate in exertion in actions, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness. (VI.17)
- Surrender to God and Faith in His Omnipresence Is the Primary Principle of All-round Attainment in Life
- One who is harmonised in Yoga sees the Self as abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self, beholding the same everywhere. (VI.29)
- He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, from him I never get separated, nor does he become separated from Me. (VI.30)
- He who, being established in unity, worships Me Who dwell in all beings, that Yogi abides in Me, whatever may be his mode of living. (VI.31)

- He who, beholding identity everywhere with the Self, O Arjuna, sees equality everywhere, be it pleasure or pain, he is regarded as the highest Yogi. (VI.32)

No Perfection Possible Without Control of Mind

- I think Yoga is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled self, but the self-controlled and striving one can attain to it by adopting proper means. (VI.36)
- God Accentuates and Stabilises the Different Faiths of People and Bestows on Them the Results of Their Own Faiths
- Whatever form any devotee desires to worship with faith - that (same) faith of his I make firm and unflinching. (VII.21)
- Endowed with that faith, he engages in the worship of that (form) and from it he obtains his desire, these being verily ordained by Me (alone). (VII.22)

God Is All Levels of Reality: The Absolute, the Self, Creativity, the Universe, the Deities, and the Field of Activity

- Brahman is the Imperishable, the Supreme; Its essential nature is called Self; the creative activity which causes existence and manifestation of beings and which also sustains them is called action. (VIII.3)
- The objective world is the perishable; the Purusha is the presiding Deity; I alone am the Lord of sacrifice here in this body, O best among the embodied. (VIII.4)

God Is Easy of Attainment

- I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast Yogi who constantly and daily remembers Me, not thinking of anything else (with singleness of mind), O Partha. (VIII.14)

God Is Worshipped As the One, As Twofold Reality, or As the Manifold, As Is One's Religious Perspective

- Sacrificing with the wisdom-sacrifice, the wise ones worship Me, the all-faced, as the One, as dual, and as manifold. (IX.15)

The Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omnipotence of God

- I am the Vedic rite, I the sacrifice, I the pious offering, I the medicine, I the holy chant, I the article of oblation, I the fire, I the burnt offering,
- I am the Father of this Universe, the Mother, the Sustainer, the Grandfather, the Purifier, the One Thing to be known, the Syllable OM, and also (the three Vedas), Rik, Yajus and Saman,
- The Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode; the Refuge, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Substratum, the Storehouse, the Seed imperishable,
- (As Sun) I generate heat; I withhold and also send forth rain; I am immortality and also death; being and non-being am I, O Arjuna! (IX.16-19)

Prayer, Meditation and Surrender to God Bring Every Benefit

- For those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, for those ever-united,

I secure what is not already possessed and preserve what they already possess. (IX.22)

- Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a little water—that, so offered devotedly by the pure-minded, I accept. (IX.26)
- Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, whatever thou givest as charity, whatever thou practisest as austerity, O Arjuna, do it as an offering unto Me. (IX.27)

The God of All Religions Is Ultimately the One God

- Even those devotees who, endowed with faith, worship other gods, worship Me alone, O Arjuna, by the wrong method (without knowing the Truth). (IX.23)

God Treats All Equally

- The same am I to all beings: to Me there is none hateful or dear; but those who worship Me with devotion are in Me and I am also in them. (IX.29)

Understanding, Appreciation, Clarity of Thought, Forgiveness, Truthfulness, Self-control, the Instinctive Impulses in Man, Compassion, Equilibrium of Attitude, Contentment, Charitable Feeling, and Such Qualities Are Aspects of God's Being

- Intellect, wisdom, non-delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, calmness, happiness, pain, existence or birth, non-existence or death, fear and also fearlessness,
- Non-injury, equanimity, contentment, austerity, beneficence, fame, ill-fame—(these) different kinds of qualities of beings arise from Me alone. (X.4,5)

As God Is All, Mutual Respect and Service Are the Divine Law

- I am the Source of all; from Me everything evolves; understanding thus, the wise, endowed with feeling, worship Me. (X.8)
- With their mind and their life wholly absorbed in Me, enlightening each other and ever speaking of Me, they are satisfied and do rejoice. (X.9)

God Is the Soul of Everyone, the Beginning and End of All Things

- I am the Self, O Gudakesa (Arjuna), seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings. (X.20)

All Excellence in This World Is a Ray of God's Glory

- Whatever being is glorious, prosperous or powerful, that know thou to be a manifestation of a part of My Splendour. (X.41)

Man Is Only an Instrument in the Hands of God, Since God Does Everything

- I am the full-grown world-destroying Time, now engaged in destroying the worlds. Even without thee, none of the warriors arrayed in the hostile armies shall live. (XI.32)
- Therefore, stand up and obtain fame. Conquer the enemy and enjoy the

unrivalled kingdom. Verily, by Me have they been already slain; be thou a mere instrument, O Arjuna. (XI.33)

Ritualism and the Letter of Religion Without the Soul and Spirit of Devotion Is Futile

- Neither by the Vedas nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifice can I be seen in this (Cosmic) Form as thou hast seen Me. (XI.53)
- But by single-minded devotion can I, of this Form, be *known* and *seen* in reality and also *entered* into, O Arjuna. (XI.54)

The Highest Religion That Makes for Salvation in God

- He who does all actions for Me, who looks upon Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who bears enmity towards no creature, - he comes to Me, O Arjuna. (XI.55)

Unflinching Faith Is the Mark of True Religion

- Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, are the best in Yoga, is My opinion. (XII.2)

The Great Virtues and Forms of Goodness of Conduct Based on the Unity of Godhead

- He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving,
- Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with the mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he, My devotee, is dear to Me.
- He by whom the world is not agitated and who cannot be agitated by the world, and who is freed from joy, anger, fear and anxiety - he is dear to Me.
- He who is free from wants, pure, expert, unconcerned, and free from pain, renouncing all undertakings or commencements - he who is (thus) devoted to Me, is dear to Me.
- He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, and who is full of devotion, is dear to Me.
- He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment,
- He to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, of a steady mind, and full of devotion - such a one is dear to Me. (XII.13-19)

Matter and Spirit

- This body, O Arjuna, is called the field; he who knows it is called the knower of the field by those who know them. (XIII.1)
- Do thou also know Me as the knower of the field in all fields, O Arjuna. Knowledge of both the field and the knower of the field is considered by Me to be the real knowledge. (XIII.2)

The Structure of the Universe

- The great elements, egoism, intellect, and also the unmanifested Nature, the ten senses and the one (mind), and the five objects of the senses,
- Desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the aggregate (the body), intelligence, stability of being, - thus the field has been briefly described with its modifications. (XIII.5-6)

The Grandeur of God, the Almighty Absolute

- I will declare That which has to be known, knowing which one attains to immortality, the beginningless Supreme Brahman, called neither being nor non-being.
- With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere, It exists in the worlds enveloping all.
- Shining by the functions of all the senses, yet without the senses; unattached, yet supporting all; devoid of qualities, yet their experiencer,
- Without and within (all) beings, the unmoving and also the moving; because of Its subtlety, unknowable; and near and far away is That.
- Undivided, yet It exists as if divided in divided beings; It is to be known as the supporter of beings; It devours and It generates.
- That, the Light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all. (XIII.12-17)

Matter, Spirit and Their Interaction Are Blended in God, the Supreme Perfection and the Final Salvation of All

- Know thou that Nature (matter) and the Spirit are both beginningless; and know also that all modifications and qualities are born of Nature.
- In the production of cause and effect relation, Nature (matter) is said to be the cause; in the experience of pleasure and pain, the soul (Purusha) is said to be the cause.
- The soul (Purusha) seated in Nature experiences the qualities born of Nature; attachment to the qualities is the cause of its birth in good and evil wombs.
- The Supreme Soul in this body is called the spectator, the permitter, the supporter, the enjoyer, the great Lord, Absolute Being.
- He who thus knows Spirit and Matter together with the qualities, in whatever condition he may be, he is not born again. (XIII.19-23)

Meditation, Self-knowledge, Rational Investigation, Listening Through Scriptures, and Service of All Beings Are the Ways to God

- Some by meditation behold the Self in the self by the self, others by the Yoga of knowledge, and still others by concentration of mind and by the Yoga of action.
- Others also, not knowing thus, worship, having heard of it from others; they, too, cross beyond death, regarding what they have heard as the supreme refuge. (XIII.24-25)

The Recognition of the One Equal God in All Is the Way to Avoid Self-destruction and to Attain Supreme Beatitude

- He sees truly, who sees the Supreme Lord, existing equally in all beings, the unperishing within the perishing.
- Seeing equanimously the same Lord equally dwelling everywhere, one does not destroy the Self by the self; and then reaches the highest goal. (XIII.28-29)

All Variety Is Rooted in the One

- When a person beholds the whole variety of beings as resting in the One, and spreading forth from That alone, then and there does he attain to Brahman (the Absolute). (XIII.31)

The Characteristics of Purity Are Lustre and Radiance

- When through every aperture in this body the wisdom light shines, then it should be known that *Sattva* (purity) is predominant. (XIV. 11)

The Characteristics of Impurity Are Greed and Fatiguing Drudgery of Activity

- Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, restlessness, longing - these arise when *Rajas* is predominant. (XIV.12)

The Characteristics of Lethargy and Torpidity Are Ignorance, Confusion, Inaction and Blundering

- Darkness, inertness, heedlessness and delusion - these arise when *Tamas* is predominant, O Arjuna. (XIV.13)

Purity Leads to Higher Divine Worlds, Impurity to Rebirth As a Human Being, and Lassitude to Embodiment in Sub-human Species

- If the embodied one meets with death when *Sattva* is predominant, then he attains to the spotless worlds of the knowers of the highest.
- Meeting death in *Rajas*, he is born among those who are attached to action; and dying in *Tamas*, he is born in the wombs of the senseless and idiotic. (XIV.14-15)

The Universe Is Like a Widespread Tree with Its Ramifications Below and Its Roots in God, Who Is Its Goal

- They (the wise) speak of the Indestructible Peepul Tree having its roots above and branches below, whose leaves are the sacred hymns; he who knows it is a knower of the Vedas. (XV.1)
- Then, (after having cut asunder this metaphorical tree of Samsara), That goal should be sought for, whither having gone none returns again: 'I seek refuge in That Primeval Purusha Whence streamed forth the ancient activity or energy.' (XV.4)
- Two Beings (Purushas) there are in this world, the perishable and the imperishable. All created beings are the perishable, and the unchanging being is called the imperishable.

- But distinct and above both is the Supreme Person, called the Highest Self, the indestructible Lord Who, pervading the three worlds, sustains them. (XV.16-17)

Qualities of a Divinely Oriented Hero in the Adventure of Life

- Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and Yoga, almsgiving, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of scriptures, austerity and straightforwardness,
- Harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion towards beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness,
- Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride-these belong to the one born for a divine state, O Arjuna. (XVI.1-3)

Characteristics of Demonic Elements

- They (the demoniacal) say, "this universe is without truth, without (moral) basis, without a God, brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause; what else?"
- Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellect and fierce deeds come forth as the enemies of the world for its destruction. (XVI.8-9)
- (They say) "That enemy has been slain by me; and others also I shall slay. I am the lord. I enjoy. I am perfect, powerful and happy." (XVI.14)
- Given over to egoism, power, haughtiness, lust and anger, these malicious people hate Me in their own bodies and those of others. (XVI.18)

The Three Gates to Hell

- Triple is this gate to hell, destructive of the self - lust, anger and greed; therefore one should abandon these three propensities. (XVI.21)

Pure, Impure and Harmful Food

- The foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the *Sattvic* (pure) people.
- The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning, are liked by the *Rajasic* and are productive of pain, grief and disease.
- That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, refuse and impure, is the food liked by the *Tamasic*. (XVII.8-10)

The Three Types of Self-discipline

- Worship of the gods, the twice-born, the teachers and the wise, purity, straightforwardness, celibacy and non-injury are called the austerity of the body.
- Speech which causes no excitement, truthfulness, pleasant and beneficial, the practice of study of the Vedas, are called the austerity of speech.
- Serenity of mind, good-heartedness, silence, self-control, purity of nature are called mental austerity. (XVII.14-16)

Duty to God, World and Human Beings

- Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed; sacrifice, gift and also austerity are the purifiers of the wise. (XVIII.5)

Renunciation Not to Be Motivated by Fear of Hardship Involved in the Performance of Duty

- He who abandons action on account of the fear of bodily trouble (because it is painful), does not obtain the merit of renunciation by doing such *Rajasic* renunciation. (XVIII.8)

Action Is a Collective Result of Cosmic Operations and Not Done Individually by Any Single Being

- The seat of action (body), the doer, the various senses, the different functions of various kinds, and the presiding deity as the fifth (are the causative factors of all action).
- Whatever action a man performs with his body, speech and mind-whether right or the reverse, these five are its causes.
- Now, such being the case, verily he who, owing to untrained understanding, looks upon his self alone as the agent, - he of perverted intelligence, sees not (the truth). (XVIII.14-16)

Spiritual Wisdom, Rational Knowledge arid Emotional Attachment Distinguished

- That by which one sees the one indestructible Reality in all beings, not separate even in all the separate beings, - know thou that knowledge to be *Sattvika* (pure).
- But that knowledge which sees in all beings various entities of distinct kinds as different from one another, - know thou that knowledge to be *Rajasika*.
- But that which clings to one single effect as if it were the whole, without reason, without foundation in Truth, and trivial- that (understanding) is declared to be *Tamasika*. (XVIII.20-22)

Three Kinds of Happiness

- That which is like poison at first but in the end like nectar – that happiness is declared to be *Sattvika*, born of the purity of one's own mind due to Self-realisation.
- That happiness which arises from the contact of the sense-organs with the objects, which is at first like nectar, and in the end like poison – that is declared to be *Rajasika*.
- That happiness which at first as well as in the sequel deludes the self, and which arises from sleep, indolence and heedlessness, - that is declared to be *Tamasika*. (XVIII.37-39)

Perfection Is Attained by Performance of One's Own Duty Without Interfering with Another's

- He from whom all the beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded –

worshipping Him with one's own duty, one attains perfection. (XVIII.46)

Resort to God Is the Solution of All the Ills of Life

- Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not. (XVIII.66)

Success Is Certain Where Man and God Act in Unison

- Where is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga; where is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, (acting together in harmony); there shall be prosperity, victory, happiness and firm polity; this is my conviction. (XVIII.78)