

## Reading Excerpt B

*The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*

Translated by Barbara Stoler Miller

Columbia Books, New York, 1986

### FIRST TEACHING, 28–31

Krishna, I see my kinsmen  
gathered here, wanting war.

My limbs sink,  
my mouth is parched,  
my body trembles,  
the hair bristles on my flesh.

The magic bow slops  
from my hand, my skin burns,  
I cannot stand still,  
my mind reels.

I see omens of chaos,  
Krishna; I see no good  
in killing my kinsmen  
in battle.

### 34–36

They are teachers, fathers, sons,  
and grandfathers, uncles, grandsons,  
fathers, and brothers of wives,  
and other men of our family.

I do not want to kill them  
even if I am killed, Krishna;  
not for kingship of all three worlds,  
much less for the earth!

## SECOND TEACHING, 4–7

### Arjuna

Krishna, how can I fight  
against Bhishma and Drona  
with arrows  
when they deserve my worship?

It is better in this world  
to beg for scraps of food  
than to eat meals  
smeared with blood  
of elders I killed  
at the height of their power  
while their goals  
were still desires.

We don't know which weight  
is worse to bear—  
our conquering them  
or their conquering us.  
We will not want to live  
if we kill  
the sons of Dhritarashtra  
assembled before us.

The flaw of pity  
blights my very being;  
conflicting sacred duties  
confound my reason.  
I ask you to tell me  
decisively—Which is better?  
I am your pupil.  
Teach me what I seek!