

Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Introduction
&
Chapter 1
Arjuna Vishaada Yogah:
Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation
&
Brief Explanation

By

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Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Methodology of Presentation

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The radiance of the Bhagavad Gita is being brought to the readers under this column through the means of easy to handle tools. This arrangement consists of a series of essays covering the entire Gita in a simple, direct and interactive style employing the technique of a Distance Education Programme.

The presentation of each Chapter of the Gita will have

- All transliterated Sanskrit Verses with a lucid translation and explanatory notes divided into different topics for a clear-cut grasp of the subject
- A brief account of the issues and concepts involved
- Strategies to put the ideas discussed into practice and
- A questionnaire for self-assessment by the reader

The periodicity of posting these essays would be about once in a fortnight barring unforeseen circumstances.

In preparing these essays I have steered clear off all the scholastic debates and controversies with a view to reach out to the average modern educated young people who require the strength of the Gita to wade through the current day troubled waters. My purpose is just to help them to understand the essential message of the Gita so that they will blossom into integrated persons full of equanimity of mind, speech and action. Their needs in the context of our present habits of study were fully kept in view in this process.

If this effort ignites the minds of the readers and prepares them to take a dip in the *Gita Ganga* on their own, the objective of my mission would be accomplished. May Ganesha, The Lord of Wisdom, shower His grace on all of us in our voyage from darkness to light with the help of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Essence of Knowledge itself?

AUM

asatoma satgamaya tamasoma jyotirgamaya

mrityorma amritam gamaya

om shantih , shantih, shantih

>>>000<<<

Introducing Srimad Bhagavad Gita:
A User's Manual for Every Day Living
T.N.Sethumadhavan

“Live in the world but don't be of the world. Live in the world but don't let the world live within you. Remember it is all a beautiful dream, because everything is changing and disappearing. If you become detached you will be able to see how people are attached to trivia and how much they are suffering. And you will laugh at yourself because you were also in the same boat before”. - *Osho*

THE GITA'S WIDE APPEAL

The Bhagavad Gita was first translated into English by Charles Wilkins in 1785 and published by the British East India Company with an introduction by Lord Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-General of India, in which he prophetically wrote: “The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British Dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance”. He further wrote “I hesitate not to pronounce the Gita's performance of great originality, of sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled and a single exception amongst all the known religions of mankind”.

The Gita deals with human problems in a human way. That is why it has a tremendous appeal. It has inspired the human mind in India for centuries and today it casts its spell on millions of people across the various parts of the world. It remains the most translated work in the Globe. The modern technology like the Internet has further increased its reputation by carrying its message to every nook and corner of the world. A mere click on the word 'Bhagavad Gita' in the Google search engine throws about 963,000 results. An incredible reach for any scripture!

Among the great and extraordinary people who were inspired and found their outlook changed by the timeless wisdom of the Gita are thinkers, writers, scientists and philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi, B.G.Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Albert Einstein, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Herman Hesse, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aldous Huxley, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Annie Besant, Robert Oppenheimer Sir Edwin Arnold and Carlyle to name but a few.

In India it was left to Adi Sankara who lived in the 8th century A.D. to reveal the greatness of the Gita to the world. He retrieved it from the mighty tomes of the epic, the Mahabharata, and wrote a brilliant commentary on it. It is this commentary which prevails as a classic text even today. Later great *acharyas* like Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and others came out with their own commentaries which are popular among their followers. In modern times Sant Jnanesvar, B.G.Tilak, Aurobindo contributed their original thinking on the text.

Despite this enormous popularity, the Bhagavad Gita remains a less understood but a better known text; people know more about it than what is it about. On the analogy of what the Bhagavad Gita says in Chapter 2, Verse 29 some look upon the book as marvelous, a scripture of extraordinary or mysterious value, some others speak of the

book as wonderful. And still others though hearing its teachings do not comprehend its wonderful significance!

Bhagavan Sri Krishna also says in the Gita (7.3) “Among thousands of men , one by chance aspires for perfection; even among those successful aspirants only one by chance knows Me in essence.” A question arises why such enlightened persons are so rare in our midst and why such an achievement is not within the reach of everyone.

Vedanta being a subjective science rarely one tries to know how to remove one's weaknesses and develop inner strength much less one tries to live up to the ideals propounded by it and bring about consequent re-adjustments in one's life. Very few feel this urge to evolve themselves and most of us do not even find the need for self improvement. We grope along by the voice of tradition, authority, herd-instinct and group-mentality. Of those who strive to see the truth and reach the goal, only a few succeed. Of those who gain the sight, not even one learns to live by the sight.

No wonder once a teacher wanting to educate a child about the Gita asked him “Do you know Gita”? The child replied “Yes, I know, that is the name of my next door aunty”. The child obviously heard of Gita and had his own meaning of it in his mind and remained happy about it. That is the case with most of us today including the large mass of modern educated sections. Then where do we go from here? Again, the Gita says by constant learning and practice one can certainly improve oneself. Let us attempt to heed that advice through this series of essays.

WHAT IS THE GITA?

The dictionary meaning of the word ‘Gita’ is a song or poem containing an inspired doctrine and the word ‘Bhagavat’ means a blessed or adorable or venerable or divine One. Hence Srimad Bhagavad Gita is variously called as ‘The Song of God’, ‘The Divine Song’, ‘A Song of Fortune’, ‘The Lord’s Song’, ‘The Holy Song of God’, ‘The Song of the Lord’, *Gudārtha Deepika*, *Gita Rahasya*, *Jnaneshwari*, *Bhavaarthadipika*, *Sadhaka Sanjeevani* and so on. The noted English poet, journalist and a Principal of the Government Sanskrit College at Pune, Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) called his famous poetic version of the Bhagavad Gita as ‘The Song Celestial’. The Bhagavad Gita’s another title is ‘*moksha sastra*’ or ‘Scripture of Liberation’. However, it is more popularly known as “The Gita”.

The Bhagavad Gita is a sacred Hindu scripture, considered among the most important texts in the history of literature and philosophy. It finds a place in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. It comprises of 18 chapters spread out in 700 verses. Its author is Veda Vyasa, the compiler of the Mahabharata who wrote this epic through the hands of the Lord of Wisdom, Sri Ganesha. Its teachings are considered timeless and the exact time of revelation of the scripture is considered of little spiritual significance. The teacher of the Bhagavad Gita is Lord Krishna, who is revered as a manifestation of God, The Bhagvan, Parabrahman.

The content of the Gita is the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna taking place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra before the start of the war between the two clans of brothers - the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma about fighting his own cousins, Bhagavan Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince and elaborates on different Vedantic concepts. This has led to the Gita being described as one of the *prasthanas traya*, the triumvirate of the canons of Hindu Philosophy, the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras.

It is considered as a concise, practical, self-contained guide to play the game of life. During the discourse, Krishna reveals His identity as the Supreme Being (*Svayam Bhagavan*), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring vision of His divine universal form.

The Gita itself tells us about what it is. At the end of the first chapter we find a narration reading as under:

*om tat sat iti srimad bhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade arjuna vishaada yogo naama
prathamo'dyaayah //*

“Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the first discourse entitled: The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna”

The narration as given above at the end of the first chapter occurs also at the end of all the other subsequent chapters, the only difference being the respective title of the chapters. This narration is called '*sankalpa vakya*' meaning an epilogue for the chapter. It reveals in a very concise form the glory and greatness of the Gita and states the theme of the concerned chapter.

The meaning of this recital is as under:

- Om Tat Sat: A designation for the Absolute enabling everybody to turn towards Godhead.
- Gita is called: Upanishad because it contains the essence of all the Upanishads which are the revelations of the ancient sages.
- Brahma Vidya or the science of the Eternal because it teaches about the changeless Reality behind the ever-changing phenomenal world of perceptions, emotions and thoughts.
- Yoga Shastra because it is a scripture that explains the technique of right living and provides a practical guide to work it out in the form of Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga.
- Samvad because it is in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the Divine and the human, the former teaching the latter how to function successfully and efficiently in a community.
- This chapter is entitled '*Arjuna Vishaada Yogah*' or the Yoga of despondency of Arjuna.

STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

In the north of India, there flourished a kingdom with its headquarters at Hastinapur. King Pandu was ruling the kingdom after his father's death, as his elder brother,

Dhritarashtra, was born blind and therefore not qualified for the rulership according to the tenets of that age. King Pandu had five sons who were known as Pandavas. Dhritarashtra had one hundred sons who were called as Kauravas, the eldest of whom was Duryodhana. Bhishma was the uncle of Pandu and Dhritarashtra.

After Pandu's death his children, Pandavas, were brought up and educated along with Kauravas under the supervision of Bhishma and patronage of Dhritarashtra. Drona was a skillful teacher who taught them all the techniques of warfare. Pandavas were intelligent and brave. Within a short time they could master the art of warfare. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, succeeded his father as the king.

Duryodhana was jealous of the Pandavas. When Yudhishtira was proclaimed a king Duryodhana could not keep quiet and watch. He employed all foul means to destroy Pandavas and every time he tried to kill them he met with failure. On Bhishma's advice the kingdom was divided into two parts - the better one with Hastinapur as capital was taken by the Kauravas while the Pandavas took the other half and built a new beautiful capital called Indraprastha for themselves.

Dhritarashtra was equally affectionate towards his sons and Pandavas but had the weakness to be sympathetic towards his eldest son's sorrows and disappointments.

Once Duryodhana invited Yudhishtira for a game of dice wherein the former with the help of his cunning and deceitful uncle, Sakuni, defeated Yudhishtira by using all fraudulent means. As a result, Yudhishtira lost not only all his kingdom and possessions but also Draupadi, the wife of all the Pandava brothers. Draupadi was humiliated by the Kaurava brothers to such an extent that an attempt was made to disrobe her in public. Her honor was saved by Bhagavan Sri Krishna, a great family friend of the Pandavas.

Finally it was settled that Pandavas should live in the forest for twelve years in exile and further one year incognito untraced by any one. After successfully completing these thirteen years of ordeal when the Pandavas claimed their kingdom Duryodhana refused to part with even that much little land as could be covered by the point of a needle.

The good offices of Sri Krishna to bring sanity to Duryodhana who was intoxicated with power and greed proved futile. The Pandavas were left with no alternative but to take up arms against Kauravas to regain their kingdom lost through tricks, treachery and chicanery.

A war between Pandavas and Kauravas became inevitable and the preparations for the epic battle started. Both the sides mobilized their troops and took their respective positions in the battlefield at Kurukshetra, near modern Delhi.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna, the mightiest of the Pandava brothers. Arjuna asked Sri Krishna to place their chariot between the two armies to enable him to have a glimpse of all those with whom he had to fight. Although till that time he was in full fighting spirit, when he saw his teachers, elders, brothers, relatives and friends standing before him ready for the fight, his determination gave way to weakness of head and heart. He lost his enthusiasm to fight and told Sri Krishna that

he did not want to wage the battle against his seniors, relations and friends for the sake of a paltry kingdom.

When Arjuna refused to fight, Sri Krishna gave him a good piece of advice enlightening him upon where his duty lay. This marvelous advice delivered by The Bhagavan in the battlefield at Kurukshetra is the immortal poem, the song divine, the glorious SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA which epitomizes the whole gamut of knowledge contained in all the Scriptures.

Sage Vyasa offered Dhritarashtra the power of sight which would enable him to see the events of war. Unwilling to see the inevitable massacre of his sons, the blind king desired to know the full details of the war. To fulfill Dhritarashtra's request Vyasa bestowed Sanjaya, the trusted minister of Dhritarashtra, with the divine intuitive vision by which he could know not only the incidents of the battlefield but also the ideas in the minds of the warriors.

After ten days of war, Bhishma, the commander of the Kaurava army was severely wounded and thrown off his chariot. When Sanjaya informed Dhritarashtra about this incident the blind king became very sad and asked him to tell him all the details of the war. The reporting of Sanjaya about the events of war including the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna at the battlefield is contained in the Bhishma Parva of Mahabharata wherein The Gita text finds place. The Gita opens with the question of the blind king to Sanjaya asking him what happened on the battlefield when the two armies faced each other in the battle formation.

CENTRAL THEME OF THE GITA

The Bhagvad Gita can be studied from different angles such as a historical document, a spiritual treatise, a scriptural text for daily chanting and prayer, a sublime poetry, an exposition of Grammar and meter, or a management manual, depending on one's own outlook and purpose.

The objective here is to study it as a spiritual text and try to find out its main theme. Our ancient Rishis have given us a six-point test to determine the main theme of a text. This is called '*sadvidvidha tatparya nirnaya linga*'. In the light of this six-factor test let us look at the Gita to discover its central theme.

The 1st point is called *upakrama* and *upasamhara* - the beginning and conclusion of a text. The crux of the subject in the text starts with Arjuna's confusion, his acceptance of the delusion and surrender to the Lord as a *sisya* with a request to teach him what is the best for him. The text ends with his statement that all his doubts were cleared, his delusion is gone and he regained his memory of the Self. This kind of beginning and end of the text shows that the Bhagavad Gita contains the Knowledge that removes the delusion and bestows the Supreme Good.

Even from the teacher's view point, the text starts from Sri Krishna telling Arjuna that he is grieving for that which should not be grieved for thereby explaining how sorrow is borne of delusion. It ends by asking Arjuna whether the delusion had gone. This makes it clear that the entire purpose of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna was

aimed at removing spiritual ignorance which is the cause of delusion. Thus the removal of sorrow and delusion (*soka moha nivritti*) is the main theme of the Gita.

The 2nd point is called *abhayasa* - repetition and emphasis in the text. The 2nd chapter gives ample evidence to this aspect. Krishna frequently tells Arjuna not to grieve and puts forward the reasons for that view from several angles like the true knowledge, duty, ignominy etc. Similarly, the concept of *sthitaprajna* has been highlighted in several ways at various places. This shows imparting Self-Knowledge is the key note in the text.

The 3rd point is called *apurvata* - the novelty or uniqueness of the theme. Sri Krishna calls this Self-Knowledge as a secret, *guhya* because normal extroverted minds cannot grasp it and hence very few succeed in knowing it. Similarly, moderation in all walks of our lives has been stressed at many places. The teachings of the Gita are thus unique.

The 4th point is *phalam* or the fruit or the end result of the study of the text. Removal of sorrow and confusion and attainment of clear thinking and supreme knowledge - enlightenment - are the end result of the study of the text.

The 5th point is *arthavada* - positive praise of the subject and negative condemnation of the opposite. We find many slokas in the text extolling the supreme Self-Knowledge and condemning spiritual ignorance. Thus attaining the Supreme Knowledge is the goal of the Gita.

The 6th and the last point is *upapatti* - illustration and reasoning. We find in the text that Krishna has been giving a lot of logical explanations and reasoning to convince Arjuna about his teachings. He uses profusely the word '*tasmat*' meaning 'therefore'. His arguments are given from many standpoints, the main goal of all His efforts being elimination of sorrow and delusion through Self-Knowledge. The nature of Self is also revealed through examples and reasoning. These indicate the Supreme knowledge (*tattva jnanam*) as the main subject matter of the Gita.

Therefore Self-Knowledge (*atma jnana*) which eliminates our ignorance and the consequent problems created and bestows the ultimate good for all of us (*shreyas*) is the core theme of the Gita.

OVER-VIEW OF THE GITA

The entire Bhagavad Gita can be divided into five topics viz.

1. Identifying the problem (covered in the 1st and the starting portions of the 2nd chapters of the Gita).
2. Finding a solution (covered in the major portion of the 2nd chapter and reiterated in the 7th, 9th and 13th chapters).
3. Implementing the solution (This theme is dealt with in the 3rd, 5th, 12th and 18th chapters).
4. Understanding the values of life (stated in many places in the Gita and particularly in the 16th chapter) and
5. Achieving perfection (elaborated in the 2nd, 5th, and 14th chapters).

Arjuna's misunderstanding, his inability to see things as they are and consequent grief and self-pity just at the crucial moment of war are the problems. The solution to them can be short term which will only be of temporary nature or long term which will be of permanent nature. The Gita offers a long term solution with which anybody can face any situation in life at any time anywhere. This spiritual solution teaches us to look at life as a whole and live a whole life. Finding a solution is just not enough. We must know how to implement it. The Gita provides us with a practical guidance that helps us to understand how to live according to the guidelines offered.

But living a life according to the guidelines offered is also not adequate unless it is spiced with certain basic vision and values. If a person's vision of life is limited to mundane happiness derived from the senses, he will merely spend his life time in eating, drinking and making merry. His value system will revolve round making money by any means to satisfy his never ending needs. But the value system of a person with a philanthropic bent or an animal lover or an environmentalist or spiritually oriented will be entirely different. The Gita provides us with such an enlarged vision of life laying the foundation for a sense of fulfillment.

Finally, the Gita gives us the vision of a person who has gained the supreme Knowledge and lives anchored in it. One who faces problems and crisis in life gains the vision of Truth, puts it into practice, and lives according to that value system. He becomes a *jivan mukta*, liberated in this very life. He is called a *sthita prajna* and the Gita gives us a vivid description of his nature.

Such an analytical understanding of the various topics in the Bhagavad Gita makes it easy for us to study it fruitfully and gives us a ready reference point to check out the *slokas* (verses) according to our requirement.

MAIN CONCEPTS OF THE GITA

The main philosophical subject matter of the Bhagavad Gita is the explanation of five basic concepts.

- Jiva, the individual soul or the living being
- Jagat, the universe he lives in or nature or matter
- Jagadishvara, the creator of the universe or the Supreme Controller and the relationship between Jiva, Jagat and Jagadishvara.
- Dharma (Duty in accordance with Divine law)
- Kaala (Time)

Krishna counsels Arjuna on the greater idea of dharma, or universal harmony and duty. He begins with the tenet that the soul (Atman) is eternal and immortal. Any 'death' on the battlefield would involve only the shedding of the body, whereas the soul is permanent.

In order to clarify his point, Krishna expounds the various Yoga processes and understanding of the true nature of the universe. He describes the yogic paths of devotional service - Bhakti Yoga, action - Karma Yoga, meditation - Dhyana Yoga or Raja Yoga and knowledge - Jnana Yoga.

Fundamentally, the Bhagavad Gita proposes that true enlightenment comes from going beyond identification with the temporal ego, the 'False Self', the ephemeral world, so that one identifies with the truth of the immortal self, the absolute soul or Atman.

Through detachment from the material sense of ego, the Yogi, or follower of a particular path of Yoga, is able to transcend his/her illusory mortality and attachment to the material world and enters the realm of the Supreme.

Krishna does not propose that the physical world must be abandoned or neglected. Rather, one's life on Earth must be lived in accordance with greater laws and truths; one must embrace one's temporal duties whilst remaining mindful of timeless reality, acting for the sake of service without consideration for the results thereof. Such a life would naturally lead towards stability, happiness and, ultimately, enlightenment.

In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna refers to the war about to take place as 'Dharma Yuddha', meaning a righteous war for the purpose of justice. He also states that he incarnates in each age (*yuga*) to establish righteousness in the world.

WHY STUDY THE GITA?

Srimad Bhagavad Gita has been a source of inspiration and enlightenment for generations. The message of the Gita is not merely a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine but it has a bearing upon the practical aspects in the application of such principles in our day-to-day lives. It is indeed "An Users' Manual for the Practice of the Art of Right Living".

The centuries old Bhagavad Gita continues to be the most relevant beacon light for all of us today. The modern man, like Arjuna, is at the crossroads where the focus is more on improving the Standard of Living rather than the Standard of Life, more on the Stock Exchange Index than on the Human Development Quotient, more on the Cost of Living than on the Quality of Life. This has resulted in his disorientation and imbalance in an environment of shifting values. While science aims to enhance the comfort of human life, spirituality teaches us how to be comfortable with what we have. That is the difference. In this scenario, the Gita is the only source of strength for the development of an integrated personality, a complete man, within us.

The Gita teaches how to achieve harmony with divinity in the midst of disharmony by subduing all outward energies and remaining in equanimity with pairs of opposites like pain and pleasure, aversion and attraction, success and failure etc. The focus of the Gita is moderation and its aim is the total surrender of man before the Supreme while continuing to perform his duties in the spirit of Yoga.

The problem that is facing us today is that while the world is coming closer physically it is drifting apart mentally and emotionally. Hence all the conflicts and violence, destruction and damage across the globe. The urgent need, therefore, is the reconciliation and reconditioning of the human mindset, to inculcate a global vision and bring about the universal brotherhood.

The Gita is specially suited for the purpose, as it attempts to bring together varied and apparently antithetical forms of the consciousness and emphasizes the root conceptions of humanity which are neither ancient nor modern, belonging neither to the east nor the west, but eternal and universal.

Its beauty and sublimity lie in its everlasting relevance to the daily problems of human life, either occidental or oriental. It prescribes the methods which are within the reach of all. It has a message of solace, freedom, salvation, perfection and peace for all human beings. The more you study it with devotion and faith, the more you will acquire deep knowledge, penetrative insight and clear, right thinking. It is indeed a recipe for sane living for every man and woman across the world.

THOUGHTS FOR SELF EVALUATION

1. Where is the Bhagavad Gita to be found?
2. What is the historical epic Mahabharata?
3. Who is the author of the Mahabharata?
4. What is the Bhagavad Gita?
5. In what form the Gita was written?
6. Where was the Bhagavad Gita originally spoken?
7. What is the composition of the Bhagavad Gita?
8. What is the central theme of the Gita
9. What are the broad topics covered in the Gita?
10. What are the main concepts elucidated in the Gita?
11. What can be learned by the study of Srimad BhagavadGita?
12. Why the Gita is popular in the world even today?

We will take up Chapter 1 of the Bhagavad Gita next time.

HARIH OM

Bhagavad Gita - Chapter 1 (Part-1):
Arjuna Vishaada Yogah:
Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna
T.N.Sethumadhavan

INVOCATION

Generally before commencing the study of the Bhagavad Gita text, it is customary to study the meditation verses on the Gita called *Gita Dhyana Slokas*. We do not know who composed them. It is a set of 9 verses recited as invocation, dedication and prayer to the Gita Knowledge and its glory. For our purposes let us take up one of the verses and understand its meaning.

**Prapanna paarijaataaya totra vetraika paanaye |
Jnaanamudraaya krishnaaya geetaamrita duhe namah ||**

Salutations to Bhagvan Krishna, with His right hand in *Jnana Mudra*, the bestower of all needs to those who surrender to Him completely, the milker of the divine nectar of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the holder of the whip in one hand for driving the cows.

This verse describes Sri Krishna with His right hand held in *Jnana Mudra* - in knowledge posture - wherein the thumb is joined to the forefinger and all the other three fingers are stretched out, the gesture symbolizing knowledge. This is a remarkable concept in Indian Vedantic philosophy and spirituality which indicates that our body postures have psychological counter parts. As the mind is, so is the body; bodily expressions being the manifestation of the working of the mind or the effect of psyche. This is what we call 'body language' in the modern business school terminology. It means that there is nothing in this world so purifying as Knowledge.

We offer our obeisance to Sri Krishna who is the embodiment of Knowledge and who imparts such knowledge to all those who seek it from Him. This is what Arjuna does in the Gita. That knowledge is the Supreme Knowledge - the knowledge of the Absolute Reality, the knowledge of Dharma, the knowledge of righteousness, the knowledge about the right way of living.

With this prayer let us start our journey in the Gita Ganga and crave for Sri Krishna's enlightenment.

PREAMBLE

The 1st Chapter in the Gita introduces the scene, the setting, the circumstances and the characters involved determining the reasons for the espousal of the Bhagavad Gita. The scene is the sacred plain of Kurukshetra. The setting is a battlefield. The situation is that the war between the two clans of brothers, the Kauravas and the Pandavas is about to begin.

The main characters are Bhagavan Sri Krishna and the valiant Arjuna from the side of Pandavas and Duryodhana from the side of Kauravas in the midst of large armies on both the sides led by their respective commanders.

After noticing the principal warriors on both the sides, Arjuna falls into the mood of deep dejection and melancholy due to the fear of destruction of friends and relatives in the course of the impending war leading to his resolve not to take up arms against his kith and kin. This is the subject matter of this Chapter and hence it is called “Arjuna Vishaada Yogah: The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

The Text

THE QUESTION

**dhritaraashtra uvaacha
dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavah
maamakaah paandavaashchaiva kimakurvata sanjaya // 1.1 //**

Dhritarashtra said

What did the sons of Pandu and also my people do when they assembled together on the holy field of Kurukshetra, eager to fight, O Sanjaya?

In the entire Gita this is the only uttering of the blind king, Dhritarashtra. All the remaining verses are Sanjaya`s report to him about the happenings at the battlefield of Kurukshetra just before the war.

The battlefield is called *dharmakshetra* or the sacred field because The Lord who is the protector and embodiment of Dharma was actively present in it. Kurukshetra means the field of the Kurus, a leading clan of that era. This question of Dhritarashtra exhibits a sense of anxiety in him on two counts. If Pandavas decide not to undertake the war, his sons will automatically get the kingdom and in such an event, the stigma of waging the unrighteous war might not stick to his covetous and deceitful sons. If his sons decide not to wage the war they will lose the kingdom that was earlier acquired by them through deceit, because of which they will be as good as dead. Such was the anxiety in the king`s mind because of the greatness and spiritual atmosphere of the field of battle.

Mamakaah : My people. And ‘Pandus sons’. - This sort of divisive reference to one and the same family members indicates the absence of the sense of familiarity and closeness with regard to the Pandavas and thereby betrays hostility towards them.

This sense of a pair of opposites ‘mine-ness’ and ‘not mine-ness’ is the result of *ahamkara* or ‘I - ness’ which is the source of all evil. The conflict between the two cousin groups represents the clash between two sets of values of life - one standing for virtue, justice and righteousness staking a legitimate claim for the kingdom lost through deceit and treachery and the other for vice, injustice, greed, hunger for power and the foul means employed to justify the ends. It indirectly indicates that life itself is a battle between good and evil.

TWO ARMIES

**sanjaya uvaacha
drishtvaa tu paandavaaneekam vyoodham duryodhanastadaa
aachaaryam upasamgamyaa raajaa vachanam abraveet // 1.2 //**

Sanjaya said

Having seen the army of Pandavas drawn up in battle array, King Duryodhana then approached his teacher, Drona, and spoke these words.

Duryodhana was thinking all along that it might not be possible for the Pandavas to mobilize forces strong enough to face his own huge army. But what he saw on the battlefield unnerved his position and hence he rushed to his teacher and exclaimed:

**pashyaitaam paanduputraanaam aacharya mahateem chamoom
vyoodhaam drupadaputrena tava shishyena dheemataa // 1.3 //**

Behold, O Teacher, this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed by the son of Drupada, your wise disciple.

**atra shooraa maheshwaasaa bheemaarjunasamaa yudhi
yuyudhaano viraatashcha drupadashcha mahaarathah // 1.4 //**

Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna, Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada, the great chariot warrior.

**dhrishtaketush chekitaanah kaashiraajascha veeryavan
purujit kuntibhojashcha shaibhyashcha narapungavah // 1.5 //**

Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the valiant king of Kasi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Saibya, the best among men.

**yudhaamanyushcha vikraanta uttamaujaashcha veeryavan
saubhadro draupadeyaashcha sarva eva mahaarathaah // 1.6 //**

The courageous Yudhamanyu, the brave Uttamauja, Saubhadra and the sons of Draupadi - all great chariot-warriors.

**asmaakam tu vishishta ye taan nibodha dwijottama
naayakaa mama sainyasya samjnaratham taan braveemi te // 1.7 //**

Know also, O the best among the twice born, the names of those who are most distinguished amongst ourselves, the leaders of my army. These I relate to you for your information.

**bhavaan bheeshmashcha karnashcha kripashcha samitinjayah
ashwatthaamaa vikarnashcha saumadattis tathaiva cha // 1.8 //**

Yourself and Bhishma and Karna and Kripa, the victorious in war, Aswatthama and Vikarna and Jayadratha, the son of Somadatta.

**anye cha bahavah shooraa madarthe tyaktajeevitaah
naanaashastrapraharanaah sarve yuddhavishaaradaah // 1.9 //**

And many other heroes also, well-skilled in warfare and armed with many kinds of weapons are here; ready to lay down their lives for my sake.

**aparyaaptam tad asmaakam balam bheeshmaabhirakshitam
paryaaptam twidam eteshaam balam bheemaabhirakshitam // 1.10 //**

Our army defended by Bhishma is insufficient but the army of theirs defended by Bhima is sufficient.

**ayaneshu cha sarveshu yathaabhaagam avasthitaah
bheeshmam evaabhirakshantu bhavantah sarva eva hi // 1.11 //**

Now all of you being stationed in your respective positions in the divisions of the army guard Bhishma alone by all means.

By using the words 'your talented pupil' Duryodhana sarcastically told Drona that he was a mere simpleton to teach the art of warfare to the son of Drupada [Drstadyumna] who was standing before him to kill no other person than his teacher himself.

Duryodhana perceived the army of Pandavas as formidable because of his own guilty consciousness and doubts about the loyalty of his chief warriors. A list of all the names of the mighty warriors in the Pandava army was given.

Dwijottama means 'twice born' which refers to the Brahminical background of Drona. Duryodhana implied that Drona, a Brahmin and therefore being timid by nature and given to peaceful life, might be soft towards his students no matter to whichever side they may belong to.

Receiving no response from Drona despite his long speech and to make amends for his censuring him, Duryodhana enumerated the names of the warriors of his side also exaggerating their qualities in order to look self-confident and hide his nervousness. Duryodhana felt that his army led by Bhishma was insufficient because of the latter's softness towards Pandavas and the other led by Bhima as sufficient because of its high morale and efficiency. He ordered full protection to Bhishma from all sides and by all means not only to please him but to emphasize his important place in the entire Kaurava army. He was fully aware that once Bhishma were to be eliminated his whole edifice would collapse.

SOUNDING OF THE CONCH SHELLS

**tasya sanjanayan harsham kuruvridhdah pitaamahah
simhanaadam vinadyocchaih shankham dadhmau prataapavaan // 1.12 //**

Then the powerful Bhishma, grandsire and oldest of the Kauravas, roared like a lion and blew his conch in order to cheer up Duryodhana.

**tatah shankaashcha bheryashcha panavaanakagomukhaah
sahasaivaabhyahanyanta sa shabdastumulo bhavat // 1.13 //**

Then (following Bhishma) conches, kettle drums, tabors, trumpets and cow-horns suddenly blared forth from the Kaurava side creating a tumultuous noise.

**tatah shvetair hayair yukte mahati syandane sthitau
maadhavah paandavashchaiva divyau shankhau pradadhmatuh // 1.14 //**

Then stationed in their magnificent chariot, yoked with white horses, Madhava (Krishna) and the son of Pandu (Arjuna) also blew their divine conches with a furious noise.

**paanchajanyam hrishseekesho devadattam dhananjayah
paundram dadhmau mahaashankham bheemakarmaa vrikodarah // 1.15 //**

Hrishikesha (Krishna) blew the conch, Panchajanya, Dhananjaya (Arjuna) blew the Devadatta and Bhima, the doer of terrible deeds, blew the great conch, Paundra.

**anantavijayam raajaa kunteeputro yudhishtirah
nakulah sahaddevashcha sughoshamanipushpakau // 1.16 //**

King Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, blew the Anantavijaya, Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosha and Manipushpaka conches respectively.

**kaashyashcha parameshwaasah shikhandee cha mahaarathah
dhrishtadyumno viraatashcha saatyakishchaaparaajitah // 1.17 //**

The king of Kasi, an excellent archer, Sikhandi, the mighty chariot-warrior, Dhrshtadyumna, Virata and Satyaki, the unconquered.

**drupado draupadeyaashcha sarvashah prithiveepate
saubhadrashcha mahaabaahuh shankhaan dadhmuh prithak prithak // 1.18 //**

Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the earth, and the son of Subhadra, the mighty armed, blew their respective conches.

**sa ghosho dhaartaraashtraanaam hridayaani vyadaarayata
nabhashcha prithiveem chaiva tumulo vyanunaadayan // 1.19 //**

The tumultuous sound of the conches pierced the hearts of the members of the Dhritarashtra's side, making both the sky and earth resound.

Bhishma understood the mental agony of Duryodhana. In order to cheer him up he roared like a lion and blew his conch which was misunderstood as a signal for commencement of war. The Kaurava army blared forth their various conches and martial musical instruments signifying the declaration of war from the side of Kauravas.

In these verses Sanjaya had given the reaction of Pandavas to the war-cry raised from the opposite side and the names of various conches blown by the respective heroes. The most famous among them is the conch 'Panchajanya' blown by Krishna. The uproar seemed to penetrate the hearts of Kauravas deeply and abnormally because of their guilty conscience.

Metaphorically, the chariot represents the human gross body, the horses are the senses and their reins are the mind that controls the senses. The charioteer is the guiding spirit or the Self or Atman in the human beings. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the divine charioteer, is the Self in all of us.

By addressing Dhritarashtra as the lord of the earth (Verse 18) and hinting about the superiority of the Pandava side Sanjaya implied that as the ruling monarch he would take a decision even at that catastrophic moment to preserve the integrity of the country from the impending ruinous warfare. But that was not to be.

ARJUNA'S DESIRE TO SURVEY THE TWO ARMIES

**atha vyavasthitaan drishtwaa dhaartaraashtraan kapidhwajah
pravritte shastrasampaate dhanurudyamya paandavah // 1.20 //
hrisheekesham tadaa vaakyamidamaaha maheepate -1.21**

Then, O Lord of the earth, seeing Dhritarashtra's men being positioned and discharge of weapons about to begin, Pandava (Arjuna), whose ensign was Hanuman, raising his bow, spoke the following words to Krishna.

The critical situation prevailing just at that moment when the war was about to begin was described. The hero of Mahabharata war, Arjuna, arrived at the battlefield. Tension prevailed everywhere. Crisis was at its zenith.

Arjuna appeared impatient to fire the shot. He raised his bow to position it and at that crucial juncture he spoke to Krishna the following words which turned out to be historic as the starting point for the dialogue between them in the form of the great Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

**arjuna uvaacha
senayor ubhayormadhye ratham sthaapaya me'chyuta // 1.21 //
yaavad etaan nireekshe'ham yoddhukaamaan avasthitaan
kair mayaa saha yoddhavyam asmin ranasamudyame // 1.22 //**

Arjuna said

O Achyuta (Krishna) place my chariot in between both the armies so that I may survey those who stand here eager to fight. Let me know on the eve of this battle with whom I have to fight.

**yotsyamaanaan avekshe'ham ya ete'tra samaagataah
dhaartaraashtrasya durbuddher yuddhe priyachikeershavah // 1.23 //**

For, I desire to have a glance at those who are assembled here to fight, wishing to please the perverted son of Dhritarashtra.

Arjuna thus expressed his bravery, readiness, impatience, gallantry and determination to face the battle. This is an important stage in the story because up to this time Arjuna was an invincible hero full of self-confidence and enthusiasm with no signs of mental aberrations. However, a little later he became a completely changed personality.

SRI KRISHNA ENTERS THE SCENE

**sanjaya uvaacha
evamukto hrishheekesho gudaakeshena bhaarata
senayor ubhayormadhye sthaapayitwaa rathottamam // 1.24 //
bheeshma drona pramukhatah sarveshaam cha maheekshitam
uvaacha paartha pashyaitaan samavetaan kuroon iti // 1.25 //**

Sanjaya said

O Bharata (Dhritarashtra), thus requested by Gudakesha (Arjuna), Hrishikesha placed the magnificent chariot between the two armies in front of Bhishma and Drona and the other rulers of the earth and said `O Partha (Arjuna), behold all these Kurus assembled here'.

Gudakesha, one who has controlled sleep i.e. Arjuna. It implies that once a goal is set by him he will not rest contended till it is achieved. Partha means the son of Prtha (Kunti) i.e. Arjuna. Krishna placed his chariot with sagacity at such a point wherefrom Arjuna could see clearly his kinsman, Bhishma and preceptor, Drona and other kings and warriors of Kaurava side.

As a dutiful driver Krishna told Arjuna `Behold, O Arjuna, all the Kauravas gathered here'. These are the only words spoken by Krishna in the first chapter of the Gita which proved to be a spark to ignite the process of burning down the false perceptions of the mighty Arjuna.

WHAT DID ARJUNA SEE?

**tatraa pashyat sthitaan paarthah pitrin atha pitaamahaan
aacharyaana maatulaan bhraatrun putraan pautraan sakheemstathaa // 1.26 //**

Then Arjuna saw stationed there in the armies, uncles, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and friends too.

**shvashuraan suhridashchaiva senayorubhayorapi
taan sameekshya sa kaunteyah sarvaan bandhoo avasthitaan // 1.27 //
kripayaa parayaa'vishto visheedannidam abraveet - 1.28**

He saw fathers-in-law and friends also in both armies. Kaunteya (son of Kunti) i.e. Arjuna seeing all these relatives arrayed there, became overwhelmed by supreme compassion and said this sorrowfully.

Arjuna seeing his elders and other relations, teachers, friends and well wishers arrayed in the battle ready to fight suddenly developed extreme self-pity and compassion. His manliness gave way to faint-heartedness thinking about consequences that will follow in waging the war with his kinsmen which will result in destroying his own race.

The valiant hero, Arjuna, transformed himself into a kinsman of the opposite side i.e. as a son, a brother, a student etc. This change of disposition was verily spontaneous. It was not due to any discrimination, but on account of the very absence of it and

because of an erroneous understanding called delusion and mental confusion called grief which prevents right perception of the situation.

ARJUNA'S REACTION

**arjuna uvaacha
drishtwe mam swajanam krishna yuyutsum samupasthitam // 1.28 //**

*Arjuna said
O Krishna, seeing these relatives and friends gathered here eager to fight,*

**seedanti mama gaatraani mukham cha parishushyati
vopathushcha shareere me romaharshashcha jaayate // 1.29//**

My limbs fail me and my mouth gets parched up, my body trembles and my hairs stand on end.

**gaandeevam sramsate hastaat twak chaiva paridahyate
na cha shaknomyavasthaatum bhramateeva cha me manah // 1.30 //**

The Gandiva (bow) slips from my hand and my skin burns all over; I am unable even to stand steady and my mind is reeling.

**nimittaani cha pashyaami vipareetaani keshava
na cha shreyo'nupashyaami hatwaa swajanam aahave // 1.31 //**

And I see evil omens, O Kesava (Krishna), I do not see any good in killing my own people in this battle.

Arjuna's attention to omens indicates that his mental strength had gone down. It started showing its weakness and instability. The world he was seeing till a short while ago, now presented him with a different picture on account of his change of perception. Subjectivity replaced objectivity on account of his mental confusion. Losing self-control, he landed in the abyss of ignorance. His words make us think of the loneliness of man oppressed by doubts and emptiness from whom the comforts of human life are slipping away. This sadness is the first experience of those who aspire for the vision of the Reality.

ARJUNA'S ANGUISH

**na kaangkshe vijayam krishna na cha raajyam sukhaani cha
kim no raajyena govinda kim bhogair jeevitena vaa // 1.32 //**

For, I do not desire victory, O, Krishna, or pleasures or kingdoms. Of what avail is kingdom to us O, Govinda (Krishna), or pleasures or even life?

Indifference to acquisition of worldly pleasures is a sign of ethical and spiritual progress. However, Arjuna was far from it. It is only his delusion which is masquerading as mental achievement. It is nothing but a momentary temptation to

adopt the method of renunciation in times of great sorrow and crisis bordering on escapism from the reality.

**yeshaam arthe kaangkshitam no raajyam bhogaah sukhaani cha
ta ime'vasthitaah yuddhe praanaams tyaktwaa dhanaani cha // 1.33 //**

Those for whose sake we desire kingdoms, enjoyments and pleasures, stand here in battle staking their life and wealth.

**aachaaryah pitarah putraastathaiva cha pitaamahaah
maatulaah shwashuraah pautraah shyaalaah sambandhinas tathaa // 1.34 //**

Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, uncles and fathers-in-law, grandsons and brothers-in-law and other relatives

**etaan na hantum icchaami ghnato'pi madhusoodana
api trailokya raajyasya hetoh kim nu maheekrite // 1.35 //**

O, Madhusudana (Krishna), though these were to kill me, I do not wish to kill them even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds, leave alone killing them for the sake of the earth.

**nihatya dhaartaraashtraan nah kaa preetih syaaj janaardana
paapam evaashrayed asmaan hatwaitaan aatataayinah // 1.36 //**

By killing these sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasures can be ours O, Janardana (Krishna)? Only sin will accrue by killing these felons.

The term 'felon' refers to the one who sets fire to the house of another, runs with a sword to kill, poisons others, plunders the wealth and land of others or usurps the wife of somebody else. Duryodhana committed all these crimes against the Pandavas. According to Artha Sastra no sin is committed if such felons are killed. But Arjuna overwhelmed with a sense of sentimental sympathy for his near and dear ones takes the help of the general principle of Dharma Sastra which forbids the sin of killing one another. He is talking in terms of enlightened selfishness.

**tasmaan naarhaa vayam hantum dhaartaraashtraan swabaandhavaan
swajanam hi katham hatwaa sukhinah syaama maadhava // 1.37 //**

Therefore, we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our relatives; for, how can we be happy by killing our own people, O, Madhava (Krishna)?

**yadyapyete na pashyanti lobhopahatachetasah
kulakshyakritam dosham mitradrohe cha paatakam // 1.38 //
katham na jneyam asmaabhih paapaad asmaan nivartitum
kulakshyakritam dosham prapashyadbhir janaardana // 1.39 //**

O Janardana, though with their intelligence overpowered by greed they do not see any evil or sin in the destruction of families or hostility towards friends, why should

not we who clearly see evil in the destruction of a family, learn to turn away from this sin.

Arjuna was reinforcing his arguments for saving the Kaurava desperadoes due to his attachment for his relatives and friends by putting forward a philosophy of non-resistance to evil. Krishna in his discourses that will follow proved the hollowness of these arguments and their dangerous implications.

**kulakshaye pranashyanti kuladharmaaah sanaatanaah
dharme nashte kulam kritsnam adharmo'bhibhavatyuta // 1.40 //**

In the destruction of a family, its ancient religious traditions perish; on the destruction of spirituality, lawlessness overtakes the whole family.

Dharma or spirituality means the duties, rites and ceremonies practiced by the family in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures. War tends to tear us away from our natural home surroundings and uproot us from social traditions which are the essence of the mature will and experience of the people.

**adharmaabhibhavaat krishna pradushyanti kulastriyah
streeshu dushtaasu vaarshneya jaayate varnasankarah // 1.41 //**

And when lawlessness prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt and when women become corrupted it results in intermingling of castes O, Varshneya (Krishna- the descendent of Vrshni clan).

The idea is that when women are associated with their husbands who flouted their family traditions of righteousness, they may also feel emboldened to commit transgressions.

**sankaro narakaayaiva kulaghnaanaam kulasya cha
patanti pitaro hyeshaam luptapindodaka kriyaah // 1.42 //**

Admixture of castes leads the family and the slayers of the family to hell because the spirits of their ancestors fall, deprived of the offerings of rice and water.

**doshair etaih kulaghnaanaam varnasankarakaarakaih
utsaadyante jaatidharmaah kuladharmashcha shaashwataah // 1.43 //**

By these evil deeds of the destroyers of the family, which cause confusion of castes, the traditional duties of the caste and the family are destroyed.

**utsannakuladharmanaam manushyaanaam janaardana
narake niyatam vaaso bhavateetyanushushruma // 1.44 //**

O, Janardana, we have heard that dwelling in hell for an infinite period is inevitable for those people whose family duties have been destroyed.

Arjuna argued that impiety will predominate in the families because the death of the experienced persons in the battle field will leave none to control and guide them in

good conduct and right behavior. This would lead to the womenfolk of these families going astray causing intermingling of castes.

The word 'caste' meant a division of society based on one's mental tendencies and qualifications for taking up a particular type of work or avocation in the community. The division of society was never intended to be based on mere accident of birth. Therefore admixture of castes implies people choosing their avocations not suitable to their own inherent aptitude and tendencies resulting in the loss of professional ethics and excellence.

With the intermingling of castes, progeny would not perform 'Sraaddha' ceremonies to their deceased ancestors which would cause them a downfall in the other world. It was feared that the traditions of the individual families called *Kula Dharma* and those of a social group called *Jati Dharma or Varna Dharma* might get disturbed due to social upheaval as a consequence of war.

The import of Arjuna's arguments was that when the fundamental harmony of the domestic life gets broken, when purity of living and sanctity of thought were destroyed, when the ideals enshrined in immemorial traditions were shattered, when the social equilibrium is disturbed, chaos alone will reign supreme in the world.

**aho bata mahat paapam kartum vyavasitaa vayam
yadraajya sukhlobhena hantum swajanam udyataah // 1.45 //
yadi maam aprateekaaram ashastram shastrapaanayah
dhaartaraashtraa rane hanyus tanme kshemataram bhavet // 1.46 //**

Alas, what a pity that we have resolved to commit a great sin by being eager to kill our own kith and kin out of greed for the pleasures of a kingdom ! It would, indeed be better for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra, armed with weapons, were to kill me in the battle while I remain unarmed and unresisting.

The idea is that instead of committing the heinous sin of killing his own relatives and friends, Arjuna feels that purification from even such a thought itself will come from the amends in the form of an end to his own life itself.

Arjuna, exhibiting lack of self- confidence, became a victim of emotions instead of a master of the situation. In his weak state of mind he was imputing ulterior motives to a righteous war which he himself was stoutly defending up to the very day it was to start. He went to the extent of telling Krishna that non-injury was a virtue preferable to defending oneself against other's attacks. He was not aware that his attachment, selfishness and delusions were responsible for his faint-heartedness and cold-feet in the face of a crisis. His despondency ultimately culminated in meek pulling out from the situation in which he finds himself.

CONFOUNDED AND DISTRESSED, ARJUNA COLLAPSES

**sanjaya uvaacha
evamuktwaarjunah sankhye rathopastha upaavishat
visrijya sasharam chaapam shokasamvignamaanasah // 1.47 //**

Sanjaya said

Having spoken thus in the midst of the battlefield, Arjuna, throwing away his bow and arrows, sank into the seat of the chariot, with his mind afflicted by sorrow.

Arjuna finally decided not to fight. He threw away his arms and sank into his seat. This is really strange for a warrior of Arjuna's caliber. For all these outpourings, Krishna did not respond. The Lord allowed him to exhaust himself so that the message He was going to deliver shortly to Arjuna and through him to the entire humanity would be fully effective.

**om tat sat iti srimad bhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade arjuna vishaada yogo naama
prathamo'dyaayah ||**

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the first discourse entitled: The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

The significance of these narrations at the end of each Chapter has already been explained in the introductory essay.

We shall have a critical look at this Chapter next time.

HARIH OM

Bhagavad Gita - Chapter 1 (Part-2):
Arjuna Vishaada Yogah:
Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna
T.N.Sethumadhavan

When the Gods deal defeat to a person, they first take his mind away, so that he sees things wrongly. Time does not raise a stick and hit a man's head; the power of Time is just this topsy-turvy view of things.

-- Dhritarashtra (Mahabharata - The Book of the Assembly Hall)

Concepts and Issues

We have studied the text of the 1st Chapter last time. We shall now have a critical look at it. As we take up our seats in the comfortable opera house at Kurukshetra, the panorama unfolding before us on the stage is the gigantic field of the battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. While the text mentions the names of a number of characters about to play their roles on both the sides, we are concerned with only three of them for our critical evaluation. They are 1. King Dhritarashtra 2. The valiant Arjuna and 3. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who assumed the role of a charioteer to Arjuna.

If we analyze their mindsets we automatically understand the concepts and issues involved and their complexity. The immortal appeal of the Gita lies in the guided tour the Jagad Guru, Sri Krishna, takes us through the annoying wide-spread pot-holes of ignorance (lack of right knowledge, *avidya* in Sanskrit) on the road and who ultimately makes it possible for us to reach the destination of enlightenment, free from the shackles of bondage. This journey from darkness to light is definitely exasperating at times but yet manageable.

DHRITARASHTRA

Dhritarashtra already heard several reasons for the likely victory of the Pandavas. He was afraid of the possibility of loss of kingdom for his own sons, the Kauravas. He therefore asks Sanjaya “what did my sons, Duryodhana and others, as well as Pandu’s sons, Yudhishtira and others, actually do on the battlefield at Kurukshetra? Did they undertake the war according to their earlier plan for fighting or did they act otherwise or do something else as a result of sagging of the will to fight due to some reason?”

Apart from the inbuilt fear complex in the mind of Dhritarashtra, a significant aspect of his question is his making a distinction between his own sons and the sons of Pandu. Although the question in the form ‘What did my sons do?’ would have been sufficient, he, by separately mentioning his sons and Pandu’s sons exhibits an absence of family homogeneity and harmony in his mind.

The image of the King here is that he is not only physically blind but also is deprived of the vision of personal kindness and a human touch and inclusiveness. He is engrossed totally in his affection exclusively towards his sons.

In the entire Gita this is the only verse which the old king Dhritarashtra gives out. All the rest of the seven hundred stanzas are Sanjaya's report on what happened on the Kurukshetra battlefield, just before the war.

The old king is certainly conscious of the palpable injustices that he had done to his nephews, the Pandavas. Dhritarashtra knew the relative strength of the two armies, and therefore, was fully confident of the larger strength of his son's army. And yet, the viciousness of his past and the consciousness of the crimes perpetrated seem to be weighing heavily upon his heart, and so he has his own misgivings on the final outcome.

Dhritarashtra is physically blind. But passion and desire do not disappear with the absence of sight. Even if all the sense organs were lost, the desires hidden within the mind would not vanish and so his mind is curious, eager and troubled to know what is happening on the battlefield.

ARJUNA

Arjuna is intelligent and where there is intelligence there is doubt and where there is doubt there is dilemma. Arjuna is rational and where there is rationality, there lies the capacity to think from a totally different perspective. Where one has these qualities, it is difficult to enter into a dangerous situation like war with closed eyes.

Remember that life does not end the same way as it begins; the end is always unknown and invisible. In this war Duryodhana's focus was entirely on Bheema. He overlooked the fact that Krishna was on the side of Pandavas and particularly as the charioteer of Arjuna. He could not visualize that Krishna would retrieve Arjuna from his shortcomings and consequently the whole story took a different turn and Duryodhana lost.

Arjuna requested Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies so that he can observe with whom he has to fight. The points to be noted here are:

Once observation starts, analysis is not far too behind and analysis always leads to wavering of mind. So Arjuna analyses the question to fight or not to fight and comes to the conclusion that he should not fight. In all his arguments in support of that conclusion he puts forward several pleadings which apparently look valid and very wise but in fact are very hollow as Krishna proves them to be subsequently.

At this stage although it looks that Arjuna is not obsessed with war, he is not against war either and has no aversion to violence. All his life he fought many wars and his whole life's education and training and his lifelong conditioning is all violence and war. Then why he turns his face against war? *We have to understand this paradoxical situation very clearly because this is the very seed for all the teachings contained in the Bhagavad Gita. Had there not been this ironical situation, the Bhagavad Gita would not have come into existence.*

ARJUNA SYNDROME - ORIGIN AND CURE

Arjuna was overpowered by an emotional upheaval. He suddenly started exhibiting several symptoms of weakness both physically and psychologically. He was afflicted with great depression of mind masquerading as compassion. Arjuna himself described his physical symptoms in graphic terms. It was of the nature of a Fever of Unknown Origin (F.U.O.) or a *Bhava-roga* in Sanskrit. This disease is the oldest known to human kind. Its origin is traced to *ajnana* or *avidya* or ignorance in the Vedanta of Hinduism. The divine potion or elixir (*amrita*) that cures this disease is *Jnana* or Knowledge, grace of God, issuing from self-surrender, prayer and freedom from desire (*bhakti*, *sharnagati*, *prapatti*, *nirvasana*) and so on.

What makes the Gita, a unique medicine of *bhava-roga* is that it contains all the ingredients stated above, fit to be consumed by peoples of all ages, climes, genders - monastic or lay. The Arjuna syndrome, analyzed and diagnosed by the master physician Sri Krishna is the starting point of the preparation of this unique brew.

Adi Shankaracharya's description of the Arjuna syndrome is simple and remarkable. It is not that Arjuna was unwilling to do his duty as the Army General when he came for war. Arjuna is a picture of courage and self-confidence before the war. In the verses 21 and 22 of the 1st chapter he roars like an impatient lion waiting to pounce on its prey.

Afterwards, Arjuna's mood suddenly changes. At what point of time and for what reasons did he become a victim of the Arjuna syndrome?

Verses 28-46 of the 1st Chapter, if properly analyzed word for word, give us the clue. Arjuna saw in the huge armies **his own people**, (*svajana*)-fathers, grandfathers, brothers, teachers, friends etc., and was overcome with pity. The key word here is *svajana*, people who are one's **very own**. It may be noted that Arjuna uses the word 'svajana' four times in these verses. Arjuna's lament and depression are rooted in this feeling of *svajanatva* - one's own-ness. Arjuna's ego that strongly felt this attachment engendered by possessiveness - own-ness or *svajanatva*- plunged him into the abyss of sorrow and delusion (*shoka* and *moha*)

This pathological aberration of Arjuna can be traced to psychological roots that define the Arjuna syndrome. Arjuna displayed feelings of grief and delusion caused by ignorance and confused understanding and his attachment for and the sense of separation from dominion, the elders, sons, friends, kinsmen, relatives - all these arising from the notion that '*I* am theirs and they are *mine*'. It was when discriminative faculty (knowledge) was thus overpowered by grief and delusion that Arjuna, who had of himself naturally and spontaneously been engaged in battle as warrior's duty, abstained from fighting and prepared to lead a mendicant's life which was a duty alien to him.

It is thus that in the case of all creatures whose minds come under the sway of the defects of sorrow, delusion, etc. there verily follows, as a matter of course, abandoning their own duties and resorting to prohibited ones.

Even when they engage in their own duties their conduct in speech, thought and deed is certainly motivated by hankering for rewards, and is accompanied by egoism.

Egoism consists in thinking that one is the agent of some work and therefore the enjoyer of its reward.

Such being the case, the cycle of births and deaths, characterized by passing through desirable and undesirable births, and meeting with happiness, sorrow, etc. from the accumulation of virtue and vice, continues unendingly. Thus, sorrow and delusion are the sources of the cycles of births and deaths. Their cessation comes from nothing other than the knowledge of the Self which is preceded by the renunciation of all attachment to duties. Hence, wishing to impart that (knowledge of the Self) for the welfare of the whole world, Lord Vasudeva, making Arjuna the medium, said, 'You grieve for those who are not to be grieved for,' etc. (Chapter 2)

Thus the Arjuna syndrome analyzed could be reduced to the following flow-chart. Ignorance→confused understanding→feeling of I and Mine (*ahamkara* and *mamakara*) →sorrow and delusion (*shoka* and *moha*)→overpowering of discriminative faculty→ abandoning one's own duty (*svadharma*) and adopting alien duty (*para dharma*), even in own duty craving for reward and egoism→accumulation of merit and demerit (*dharma* and *adharma*)→endless cycle of birth and death, *samsara*, consisting of getting the experiences of the desirable and the undesirable, pleasure and pain.

The remedy prescribed by Krishna is Self-Knowledge (*atma jnana*) which He starts unfolding from the verse 11 of the 2nd chapter. This is the greatest relevance of the Bhagavad Gita for the modern world particularly to the youth - stress filled, strife torn, panic stricken, and conflict ridden, modern world. *Atma jnana* is the source of strength, infinite power, eternal knowledge and wisdom.

Like Arjuna we too are weak, we too have no will. The will has been lost in our never-ending debate 'What to do and what not to do? What is proper and what is improper?' All the ground beneath our feet is slipping like quick-sand. The Arjuna in us is in suspended animation, is in limbo. We too require a shock treatment.

Krishna is holding Arjuna's hands and starting to resolve his problems from the very place where Arjuna is. That is why the Gita is very dynamic psychological system. As Arjuna evolves step by step the Gita also rises and unfolds gradually. Krishna reforms Arjuna at Arjuna's level. All the time in the Gita, Arjuna is the focus and not Krishna.

KRISHNA, THE MASTER STRATEGIST

It is better to quote Swami Vivekananda here. He says: "I have heard about Krishna's life. I take it for granted there must have been a man called Krishna, and his Gita shows he has left a wonderful book. He is the most rounded man I know of, wonderfully developed, equally in brain, heart and hand. Every movement of his is alive with activity, either as a gentleman, warrior, minister or something else. Great as a gentleman, as a scholar, as a poet. This all-rounded and wonderful activity and combination of brain and heart you see in the Gita and other books. Most wonderful heart, exquisite language and nothing can approach it anywhere.

In Krishna we find two ideas stand supreme in his message. The first is the harmony of different ideas and the second is non-attachment. A man can attain to perfection,

the highest goal, sitting on a throne, commanding armies, working out big plans for nations. In fact, Krishna's great sermon was preached on the battlefield!

How hard it is to arrive at this sort of non-attachment? Therefore Krishna shows us the lower ways and methods. The easiest way for every one is to do his or her work and not take the results. It is our desire that binds us. If we take the results of actions, whether good or evil, we will have to bear them. But if we work not for ourselves, but all for the glory of the Lord, the results will take care of themselves. To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof. The soldier works for no results. He does his duty. If defeat comes, it belongs to the General and not to the soldier. We do our duty for love's sake-love for the General, love for the Lord".

With such a kind of the Charioteer guiding the eminent soldier Arjuna, let us see what strategy Krishna adopted in the very first scene of the Gita to achieve the purpose of his *avatar*, his descent from the *Vaikuntha*.

When Arjuna asked Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies, Krishna placed it with his sagacity, at such a point from where his kinsmen such as Bhishma, teachers like Drona and other chief kings and warriors of the Kaurava army, could be clearly seen. After keeping the chariot at a crucial spot he told Arjuna, "O Partha (the son of Prtha, Kunti, and Krishna's aunt) behold all these Kurus, assembled here". This statement has got a deep significance.

In the word 'Kuru', the sons of both Dhritarashtra and Pandu are included because of both of them belong to the Kuru lineage.. Krishna by saying 'behold all these Kurus assembled here' means that they are all one, whether they are on his side or opposite side and whether they are good or bad and thus a feeling of kinship may develop in Arjuna. This feeling of kinship may lead to attachment and make him inquisitive. Thus, by making Arjuna an instrument, Krishna wants to preach the gospel of the Gita for the humanity as a whole. Therefore, Krishna instead of using the word 'Dhartarashtran' used the word 'Kurun'. Had he used the former word, Arjuna would have become enthusiastic (as could be observed from Arjuna's dialogues using this word) and there would not have been any chance to expound the Gita.

Krishna considered his duty to destroy Arjuna's delusion by first arousing it and then destroying it as in the case of certain medical procedures for achieving his avowed purpose of establishing and protecting Dharma in the world through his several incarnations.

The relationship between Arjuna and Krishna in this scene is that of a car owner and his driver. The driver just drives the car to the place where its owner wants him to go. The driver does not question the owner or pass any comments on the owner's instructions or wish. But here Krishna tells or directs Arjuna "Behold these Kurus". There is no need for these remarks as Arjuna will see the assembled warriors anyway and Krishna could have placed the chariot without uttering any words. But he intentionally used the words '*Kurun Pasya*' to arouse attachment in Arjuna.

The main reason of Arjuna's grief is that when Krishna placed the chariot between the two armies and asked Arjuna to behold the Kauravas, he saw his relatives, teachers and friends etc. and thus his sense of attachment was aroused. He perceives good in

turning away from war and overwhelmed with grief he sinks into the chariot laying down his arms. Thus we see that it is delusion which changes a hero's great courage into anxiety and worry state neurosis.

Dr.S.Radhakrishnan says that Arjuna's cry or demand was simple yet tremendous and damaging one, "significant of the tragedy of man, which all, who can see beyond the actual drama of the hour, can recognize. The mood of despair in which Arjuna is found in the 1st Chapter of the Gita is what the mystics call the dark night of the soul, an essential step in the upward path. Krishna stands for the voice of God, delivering the message in the thrilling notes, warning Arjuna against dejection of spirit. As the dialogue proceeds, the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battlefield die away and we have only an interview between God and man".

Live as the Gita teaches you to Live

The core teaching of Krishna in the Gita is that where there is virtue there is the prospect of victory and glorious life, both in this world and hereafter and wherever there are vice, unrighteousness, injustice and immorality, there is destruction, physical, moral and spiritual.

The senses of 'I', 'Me', and 'Mine' are the root of all evils and bondages in the world and the senses of 'you' and 'your' bring freedom to the soul. A wise man is the one who goes beyond the sense of 'I', and knows the secret of 'you' by which he gets rid of the senses of 'I' and 'Mine'. As long as we remain selfish we are caught in the net of desires and the world, so long we shall not be able to realize the real essence of the Gita. So Krishna says detachment is freedom and attachment is bondage. Therefore he instructs everybody to perform work disinterestedly without asking for results thereof because desire for the result of works is the chain that binds men and drags them into the den of delusion or *maya*.

Krishna represents the realized soul free of all conditioning, capable of seeing the truth as it is. He is the Self in a state of *sat-chit-ananda*. Arjuna is consciousness crumpled by conditioning. The chariot he rides is the body. The horses are the senses. The two wheels are the desire and destiny. As a charioteer, Krishna does two things - 1. He helps Arjuna to realize the true nature of life and 2. He overpowers the forces that threaten social order.

He classifies all actions into two viz. reaction and response; the former is guided by one's ego, motivated by one's desires and the latter is guided by one's intellect motivated by one's duty. The former focuses on result while the latter focuses on action. Krishna proves that by responding rather than by reacting, by maintaining equanimity and not getting provoked by worldly stimuli, it is possible to satisfy the demands of worldliness, fulfill one's obligation to the society, repay one's debts to ancestors and still attain *moksha*, liberation.

The *varnashrama dharma* categorizes life into four stages to be lived sequentially viz., *brahmacharya*, *grihasta*, *vanaparstha* and *sanyasa*. Krishna's suggestion is that simultaneous rather than sequential achievement of material joy and spiritual bliss is possible.

Frequently asked Questions

1. Is the Gita a scripture that propagates war?

The answer is that it is concerned neither with violence nor with non-violence. It neither condones nor condemns war. The point it makes is to look at the root of any action. What is the yardstick that makes one war noble and the other ignoble? It is the motivation behind it - is it the ego or the common welfare based on justice that distinguishes the two.

Before the battle of Kurukshetra begins, Arjuna asks Krishna to drive their chariot into the open space between the two armies, so that he may see the men he must fight with. When Krishna does this, Arjuna recognizes many of his kinsmen and old friends among the ranks of the enemy. He is appalled by the realization that he is about to kill those whom he loves better than life itself. In his despair, he exclaims: 'I will not fight!'

Krishna's reply to Arjuna occupies the rest of the book. It deals not only with Arjuna's immediate personal problem, but with the whole nature of action, the meaning of life, and the aims for which man must struggle here on earth. At the end of their conversation, Arjuna has changed his mind. He is ready to fight. And the battle begins to fight the evil on the clear understanding that non-resistance to evil is as good as committing evil.

To understand the Gita, we must first consider what it is and what it is not. We must consider its setting. Krishna and Arjuna are on a battlefield. Arjuna is not a dedicated monk but a householder and a warrior by birth and profession. His problem is considered in relation to the circumstances of the moment.

In the background of Gita is a war, between two families, ready to start. Arjuna the main hero on one side looks at the family members, elders and friends on the other side and experiences a strong sense of frustration for infighting in the family. Although he was a great warrior, he merely broke-down by thinking on the utter futility of this war and in that moment of depression he asks his mentor about what he should do.

The answer given by Shri Krishna is equally unexpected. He says "your present reluctance to fight is illusion. Your problem is not regarding the fight as such but the fight against what you call my relatives, my brothers, my friends". Krishna says that "your real fight has to be against 'I' and 'My' rather than the fight outside". It is in this context of how to come out of our ego i.e. 'I' and the result of the ego 'My' that all the other seventeen chapters have been strung into one garland..

In teaching Arjuna, Krishna employs two sets of values, the relative and the absolute. He begins by dealing with Arjuna's feelings of revulsion, on general grounds. Arjuna shrinks from the act of killing. Krishna reminds him that, in the absolute sense, there is no such act called killing. The Atman, the indwelling Godhead (soul) is the only reality. This body is simply an appearance; its existence, its destruction, is likewise, illusory.

Having said this, Krishna goes on to discuss Arjuna's individual problem. For Arjuna, a member of the warrior caste, the fighting of this battle is undoubtedly 'righteous'. His cause is just. To defend it is his duty. Running away from the battle is avoiding duty and escapism.

Socially the caste system is graded, but spiritually, there are no such distinctions. Everyone, says Krishna, can attain the highest sainthood by following the prescribed path of his own caste duty. There have been instances of men everywhere who grew into spiritual giants while carrying out their duties as merchants, peasants, doctors, priests, or kings.

In the purely physical sphere of action, Arjuna is, indeed, no longer a free agent. The act of war is upon him; it has evolved out of his previous actions. It is his *svadharma*. At any given moment in time, we are what we are; and we have to accept the consequences of being ourselves. Only through this acceptance can we begin to evolve further. We may select the battleground. We cannot avoid the battle.

Arjuna is bound to act, but he is still free to make his choice between two different ways of performing that action. In general, mankind almost always acts with attachment; that is to say, with desire and fear. Desire for a certain result and fear that this result will not be obtained. Actions with attachments bind us to the world of appearances; to the continual doing of more actions.

But there is another way of performing action, and this is without desire and without fear. The doer of the non-attached actions is the most conscientious of men. Freed from desire and fear, he offers everything he does as a sacrament of devotion to his duty (surrenders all his actions to the Lord). All work becomes equally and vitally important. It is only toward the results of work- success or failure, praise or blame- that he remains indifferent. When action is done in this spirit, Krishna teaches, it will lead to the knowledge of what is behind action, behind all life; the ultimate Reality. And, with the growth of this knowledge, the need for further action will gradually fall away from us. We shall realize our true nature, which is God, *sat-chit-ananda*.

It follows, therefore, that every action, under certain circumstances and for certain people, may be a stepping-stone to spiritual growth – if it is done in the spirit of non-attachment. All good and all evil is relative to the individual point of growth. For each individual, certain acts are absolutely wrong. Indeed, there may well be acts that are absolutely wrong for every individual alive on earth today. But, in the highest sense, there can be neither good nor evil. Krishna, therefore speaking as God Himself, advises Arjuna to fight. The Gita thus neither sanctions war nor condemns it. Regarding no action as of absolute value, either for good or for evil, it cannot possibly do either. (Swami Prabhavananda).

Dharma and *satya* were at stake in Kurukshetra. So, preventing *adharma* from gaining victory over *dharma* was the purpose of Mahabharata war and fighting for *dharma* against *adharma* is the message of Gita.

However, we have forgotten this message of Gita and have distorted it in the name of *ahimsa* as our *dharma* unconditionally. Our *dharma* was *satya* (truth), and our duty was to fight and protect *dharma* and *satya* from every enemy. *Dharmao rakshati*

rakshitah - dharma protects those who protect it - is our creed. And violence was not prohibited in this fight for satya and dharma. Otherwise Rama would not have killed Vali or Ravana. Actually, violence committed for ensuring dharma by a kshatriya is no violence. That is why Krishna asks Arjuna in each and every chapter of the Gita "Arise Arjuna, pick up your weapon and fight to defeat adharma". So, we will have to hear the teachings of Krishna if we want to prevent the down sliding of the humanity.

To sum up, war is justified only when it is meant to fight evil and injustice and not for the purpose of self aggrandizement.

2. *How such a long discourse like the Gita took place in the midst of two impatient armies ready to fight it out?*

The rules of time and space as we understand them today were not applicable to the age when the Mahabharata war took place during which the discourse was delivered by God. What seems to us a long dialogue must have taken place in the blink of an eye on the battlefield! We come across many stories indicating that silence is more powerful and penetrating than speech and a teacher taught his students by maintaining silence - thought transference or telepathy. These instances might be a pre-cursor to the modern developments in the field of information technology.

3. *This chapter is entitled "Arjuna Vishaada Yogah: The Yoga of Arjuna's despondency". How despondency or grief can be yoga?*

The word *Yoga* means to join. Any conscious attempt on the part of an individual to lift his present personality and attune it to a higher, perfect ideal is called *Yoga*. The title of this chapter is self-contradictory. It is named as the *Vishaada Yoga* or *Yoga of Arjuna's grief, depression*. If 'grief' could be *Yoga*, everybody on the earth would be Yogins. It cannot be so for obvious reasons.

Arjuna's condition of utter despair is the most appropriate mental attitude wherein the seeds of the Gita can be ideally sown for their glorious flowering. The scriptural texts by themselves cannot help any one unless the seeker's mental condition is prepared to absorb their teachings. Therefore, even the initial mental condition of Arjuna is called as *Yoga* as this darkness of the soul is an essential step in the progress to spiritual life.

"Most of us go through life without facing the ultimate questions. It is in rare crises, when our ambitions lie in ruins at our feet, when we realize in remorse and agony the sad mess we have made of our lives, we cry out "Why we are here? What does all this mean? Where do we go from here? My God, why have you forsaken me?" Draupadi cries "I have no husbands, no sons, no kinsmen, no brothers, and no father, not even You, O Krishna". Arjuna passes through great spiritual tension. When he detaches from his social obligations and asks why he should carry out the duty expected of him by society, he gets behind his socialized self and has full awareness of himself as an individual alone and isolated. He faces the world as a stranger thrown into a threatening chaos. The new freedom creates a deep feeling of anxiety, aloneness, doubt and insecurity. If he is to function successfully, these feelings must be overcome". - Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Thus for learning and living the Gita, the Arjuna-Syndrome is the initial *Sadhana*, a pre-requisite and hence his grief is considered as Yoga.

4. Why in the courts of law in India does one take the oath by putting one's hand on the Gita and not on the other scriptures like the Ramayana?

The main reason for this practice is that the *avatar* of Krishna is considered as *Purnavatar* i.e. a complete and perfect incarnation. Krishna is multi-dimensional, touching all aspects of human personality while Rama is a *maryada purushottam*. The dictionary meanings of the word *maryada* are mark, landmark, boundary, limit, end, goal, strictly defined relation, bounds of morality, moral law. Thus *maryada purushottam* implies a uni-dimensional nature possessing one note and hence its appeal is bound by the limits of such nature while Krishna's appeal is universal. A thief, a dancer, a Gopika, a cow-herd, a warrior, an enemy, a *rakshasa* and of course a *jnani*, a saint uniformly are crazy about him from their own points of view.

Krishna is like an orchestra where many instruments are simultaneously played and each one is bound to fall in love with the note emanating from the instrument he likes. That is the reason why all people like some part of Krishna and nobody knows the whole of Him as the Gita itself says. To put it in terms of music performances, *Rama tattva* is like a solo performance while *Krishna tattva* is like a *jugalbandi* with a bout of *sawal-jawab*.

Generally only disputants go to the courts of Law. If anybody really swears by or believes in Rama he would never go there. For him courts are redundant. But a person coming before a court can love Krishna because Krishna is accessible even to the sinners and opens the doors for criminals also as the Gita puts it. Therefore it is the practice to use the Gita text for the purpose of taking oath. However, opinions on this point may differ.

Points to Ponder

1. Explain the significance of the background in which the message of Gita was delivered by Sri Krishna.
2. Explain the psychological condition of Duryodhana in the battlefield.
3. What was the reason for Arjuna's grief and despondency?
4. What were the arguments put forward by Arjuna to support his view for not fighting the battle?
5. Explain the central philosophy of the Gita.
6. Short notes on:
 - a) Dharmakshetra-Kurukshetra
 - b) Panchajanya
 - c) Devadatta
 - d) Significance of Arjuna's chariot and its charioteer
 - e) Arjuna syndrome and Krishna cure.

Next time we shall take up Chapter 2.

HARIH OM