

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga

2/3 (Ślōka 11-25), Saturday, 08 July 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/0IGBjUtjaWM>

Grand Entry of Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇ

The session started with the auspicious lighting of lamps and prayers to the Supreme and the Guru.

Chapter 1 of Bhagavad Gītā is **Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga - The Despondency of Arjuna.**

This chapter talks about Arjuna's Viṣāda (distress and nervousness) on seeing his friends, relatives and Gurus aligned for war. He expressed his distress to Śrī Krishna and declared that there was no point in fighting the war.

1.11

**ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu, yathābhāgamavasthitāḥ,
bhīṣmamevābhirakṣantu, bhavantaḥ(s) sarva eva hi. 1.11**

Therefore, stationed in your respective positions on all fronts, do you all guard Bhīṣma in particular on all sides.

Ayanesu = strategic location of the military
sarvesu = everywhere
bhāgama = as differently arranged
avasthitāḥ = established
abhirakṣantu = to protect
bhavantaḥ = your good self
sarva = all

Sanjaya was describing that Duryodhana ordered all of them, including his guru Dronacharya, to take their respective places, and see to it that Bhīṣma Pitamah was protected from all sides. He was literally instructing his own guru to take his position! Ordering the Guru, master soldiers and war wizards who were versatile in war strategies and battle tactics exposed Duryodhana's arrogance and nervousness.

It also exposed his doubts on Bhīṣma Pitamah's loyalty. Bhīṣma Pitamah had a soft corner for the pāṇḍavas, and tried several times to convince Duryodhana not to wage war. He knew the Kauravas were on the wrong side. But Duryodhana did not concede, and the war became inevitable.

Probably, Duryodhana doubted that Pitamah was, at heart favouring the pāṇḍavas in the war, and hence had to be monitored closely. In reality, Pitamah did not need any protection, because no warrior could equal his fighting excellence. A person who was doubting his own senior commanders can hardly be an ideal leader in the war!

Alternatively, looking at it from a non-political view, Duryodhana may have genuinely wanted to protect his senior most commander in the war, because his fall could lead the whole army to go haywire. Thus, it was strategic to protect the senior most commander.

1.12

tasya sañjanayanharṣam(ṅ), kuruvṛddhaḥ(ph) pitāmahaḥ, siṃhanādaṃ(ṅ) vinadyoccaiḥ(ś), śaṅkhaṃ(n) dadhmau pratāpavān.1.12

The grand old man of the Kaurava race, their glorious grand-patriarch Bhīṣma, cheering up Duryodhana, roared terribly like a lion and blew his conch.

tasya = his

sañjanayan = to elevate; uplift

harṣam = cheerfulness

kuruvṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ = senior most in the kuru dynasty, Bhīṣma pitāmah

siṃhanādaṃ = sound like a lion's roar

vinadya = vibrating

uccaiḥ = at high level

śaṅkhaṃ = conch shell

dadhmau = blow

pratāpavān = someone who is very impressive

Bhīṣma pitāmah, the mighty grandfather of the Kurus, realised that Duryodhana was getting nervous. If his low morale was sensed by the generals, it would work like a hole in the bottom of the battleship, and could sink it. Hence, in order to boost up Duryodhana's spirits and cheer him up, pitāmah blew his conch, and the huge loud sound resonated in the atmosphere like a lion's roar.

Conch shell blowing is very beneficial. When the mind is restless, one must try to blow the conch shell. One needs to fill up the lungs by taking a long deep breath, and then exhale forcefully in order to produce the huge sound. The sound generated will resonate in the forehead, and the vibrations produced will have a deep effect on the body, particularly the lungs and nervous system. To boost up and keep the lungs and nervous system healthy, it is a good practice to blow the conch shell three times every morning.

1.13

tataḥ(ś) śaṅkhāśca bheryāśca, paṇavānakagomukhāḥ, sahasaivābhyahanyanta, sa śabdastumulo'bhavat. 1.13

Then conches, kettledrums, tabors, drums and trumpets blared forth all at once and the noise was tumultuous.

tataḥ = thereafter
śaṅkhā = conch shell
bherya = large drums
paṇavānaka = small drums
gomukhā = horn
sahasa = all of a sudden
ābhyahanyanta = started sounding
śābdas = compiled sound of all the instruments
tumulo = tumultuous
bhavat = become

Soon after Bhīṣma pitāmah blew his conch shell, the war hysteria engulfed the Kaurava army. Everybody got charged up, and other conch shells, drums, and horns all sounded suddenly. The combined sound produced was thunderous.

Music has a tremendous role in boosting up one's spirit and nationalism. The power can be experienced in the country on January 26th and August 15th, when the whole nation gets charged up with patriotism, boosted by the music and songs broadcast all over the country.

Similarly, in olden days, music played a very important role during the wars. Musical instruments were brought into the war field along with the weaponry. The Mahabharata war was fought from sunrise to sunset. Musicians gathered in the battlefield would play the instruments before the start of the war to boost up the soldiers' spirits. The loud booming sound of the instruments instilled great confidence even in the weak and feeble soldiers. At the end of the day, i.e., after the sunset, the musicians would play soothing music for the injured soldiers. The music acted like a healing balm for the wounded soldiers.

Unlike the wars of the present times, where the soldiers may enter and bomb residential areas, the wars of the olden days were righteous and were fought ethically, following certain rules, integrity and wisdom. Kurukshetra was chosen for the Mahabharata war as it was far away from the residential areas.

1.14

**tataḥ(ś) śvetairhayairyukte, mahati syandane sthitau,
mādhavaḥ(ph) pāṇḍavaś caiva, divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmatuḥ. 1.14**

Then, seated in a glorious chariot drawn by white horses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa as well as Arjuna blew their celestial conches.

tataḥ = Thereafter
śvetair = white
hayair = horses
yukte = being pulled
mahati = great
syandane = chariot
sthitau = situated
mādhavaḥ = Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇ
pāṇḍavaś = Arjuna
divyau = divine
śaṅkhau = conch

pradadhmatuḥ = blow

Thereafter, the great chariot drawn by pristine white horses entered the battlefield. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇ and Arjuna, seated on the chariot, blew their divine conches.

This shloka should be received with great applause as it marks the entry of Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇ. Although Bhagavadgita is Śrī Kṛṣṇ's divine song, it was written by Maharishi Vedavyasa out of his memory. One can visualize the divine scene - celestial white pristine horses drawing the grand chariot; seated on this chariot was the magnificent lord Śrī Kṛṣṇ adorned in yellow satin robes, beautiful peacock feathers on his head, and face beaming with lustrous radiance, dazzling smile on his lips! He was in sheer peace. An enchanting and pleasing sight to behold!

Although HE is the Lord of the Universe, here HE was performing the role of a charioteer for Arjuna, who was standing at the back of the chariot. Śrī Kṛṣṇ responded to the sound of the Kauravas army by blowing his own conch. The sound emanating from the Paramatma resonated everywhere, and instilled great enthusiasm in the generals of the Pandavas camp, and they too started blowing their conch shells immediately afterwards.

1.15

pāñcajanyaṃ(m) hr̥ṣīkeśo, devadattaṃ(n) dhanañjayaḥ, pauṇḍraṃ(n) dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṃ(m), bhīmakarmā vṛkodaraḥ. 1.15

Śrī Kṛṣṇa blew His conch named Pāñcajanya; Arjuna, Devadatta; while Bhīma of ferocious deeds blew his mighty conch Pauṇḍra.

pāñcajanyaṃ = name of conch shell blown by Śrī Kṛṣṇ

hr̥ṣīkeśo = Śrī Kṛṣṇ

devadattaṃ = conch shell of Arjuna

Paundra = conch shell of Bhīma

dadhmau = blow

mahāśaṅkhaṃ = big, terrific conch shell

bhīmakarmā = person who performs herculean tasks

vṛkodaraḥ = one who is a voracious eater and is ever hungry

Śrī Kṛṣṇa blew his conch, Pāñcajanya. Arjuna blew his conch, Devadatta, and Bhīma, the performer of herculean tasks, blew his marvellous and huge conch named Paundra. The reason for blowing the conch shells served to instill courage and enthusiasm in their army and simultaneously to dampen the spirits of their enemies.

The conch shells reflected everyone's individual personalities. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's conch was called Pāñcajanya, as it denoted the composite of five elements, pañca-mahā-bhūta. The sound that is produced from it is an interplay of the pañca-mahā-bhūta - Akāsha (Space), Vayu (Air), Agni (Fire), Jal (Water), Prithvi (Earth). These elements constitute the entire manifest world, not only of mortals, but also the body of the Paramātmā. Moreover, there are five sense organs - 5 gyanendriyas and 5 karmendriyas. The conch was named aptly, as it denoted all the 5 elements.

Each Pandava is a symbol of the pañca-mahā-bhūta. The scriptures describe the pure and noble-minded Arjuna as the embodiment of Teja. Devadatta means divine and virtuous, and the name of this conch shell justified his personality. It was given to him by king Indra when the pāṇḍavas performed Rajasuya yajna.

Bhīma was physically strong and robust, and his conch shell was called Paundra, which produced frightening thunderous sound. He was the embodiment of Vayu (wind). Vayu in storm and cyclone is very destructive, so is the characteristic of Bhīma.

1.16

anantavijayaṃ(m) rājā, kuntīputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ, nakulaḥ(s) sahadevaśca, sughoṣamaṇipuṣpakau. 1.16

King Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī, blew his conch Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew theirs, known as Sughoṣa and Maṇipuṣpaka respectively.

The series of conch blowing continued. King Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Kunti, blew his conch Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew their conches named Sughoṣa and Maṇipuṣhpaka respectively.

Yudhisthira, Bhima and Arjuna were sons of Kuntī, whereas Nakula and Sahadeva were the sons of Madri. The adjective used here, Kuntiputra referred to Yudhisthira. He was also addressed as Raja i.e., king because he was the ruler of half of the Indraprastha kingdom before the Pandavas were sent to exile. According to the promise and law, he should have been made the king on his return from the exile. Moreover, by calling him the King, probably, Sanjaya wanted to hint that Yudhisthira would be the king for the entire territory after the war.

Yudhisthira was also known as *Dharmaraja*, literally meaning 'king of Dharma'. However, the word Dharma here does not refer to the Self-realization and God-realization that are normally tagged with the word dharma. Yudhisthira was not a self-realized person, yet he was referred to as *Dharmaraja* because he sincerely followed the social rules and moral conduct. Nevertheless, he committed a blunder by erring in his judgement and gambled, losing his brothers and his wife to the Kauravas. But that single lapse did not wipe away his character and his inherent calm nature prevailed in all situations. He was extremely respectful to all the elders including Dhṛtarāṣṭra although he was very well aware of Duryodhana's animosity towards pāṇḍavas. He always stopped Bhima from retaliating, saying that their dharma did not allow such behavior, and that anger could not be a tool for retaliation. He was called Dharmaraja, for the principles he was following.

Dharma of following social and moral conduct is different from dharma of knowing the absolute truth, that is knowing oneself (self-realization) and God-realization which requires the highest wisdom. Yudhisthira's dharma was of the former category.

1.17, 1.18

kāśyaśca parameśvāsaḥ(ś), śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ, dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca, sātyakiścāparājitaḥ. 1.17 drupado draupadeyāśca, sarvaśaḥ(ph) pṛthivīpate, saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ(ś), śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ(ph) pṛthakpṛthak. 1.18

And the excellent archer, the King of Kāśī, and Śikhaṇḍī the Mahārathī (the great chariot-warrior), Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Virāṭa, and invincible Sātyaki, Drupada as well as the five sons of Draupadī, and the mighty-armed Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra, all of them, O lord of the earth, severally blew their respective conches from all sides.

The King of Kāśī was an excellent archer; Śikhaṇḍī was a Mahārathī. great chariot-warrior; Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa, and the unconquerable Sātyaki were warriors par excellence.

Drshtadyumna was the son of King Drupada. Virāṭa was the king who sheltered the Pandavas when they were living incognito for one year after completing 12 years in the forest. Sātyaki was described as āparājitaḥ as he was never conquered by his opponents. Śikhaṇḍī, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa, Sātyaki, Drupada as well as the five sons of Draupadī, and the mighty-armed Abhimanyu, son of Subhadrā, blew their respective conches.

Śikhaṇḍī was described as **Mahārathī**. The word Mahārathī defines a person who could fight against 1000 people alone, or could lead 10,000 soldiers on his own. The brave Śikhaṇḍī was born as Amba, the daughter of the king of Kashi in his previous birth. In his subsequent birth, he was born as the daughter of Drupada, but later changed his gender and became a male. Pitāmah, who was aware of these details, regarded Shikandi as a woman, and did not shoot any arrow at him in the Mahabharata war. Arjuna took advantage of this weakness of Bhīṣma Pitāmah. Placing Shikandi in between them, he shot multiple arrows at the Pitāmah and overthrew him from his chariot.

Arjuna's son Abhimanyu was a very brave and valiant warrior. He killed many warriors during the course of the war, by entering the *Chakra Vyuha*, a complex military formation arranged by Guru Dronacharya. When he appeared invincible, six mighty warriors of Kauravas surrounded him and attacked him by foul means from all sides. He was killed when Dushasana's son hit him on the head with his mace (gada) from behind. The valiant Abhimanyu would have remained undefeated had he not been attacked unethically from behind.

When naming the warriors who blew their conch shells, Sanjaya mentioned Pitāmah alone from the Kaurava's side, whereas he mentioned 18 warriors from the Pandava's side. Probably, he was not keen to describe the unrighteous Kauravas. On the other hand, he had great regard for Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Pandava's army. Knowing that the Pāṇḍavas were on the righteous side, he felt it was right to describe them and took delight in describing them in more detail.

1.19

sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām(m), hṛdayāni vyadārayat, nabhaśca pṛthivīm(ñ) caiva, tumulo vyanunādayan. 1.19

And the terrible sound, echoing through heaven and earth, rent the hearts of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's army.

sa = that

ghoṣo = sound / vibrations

dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām = sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

hṛdayāni = hearts

vyadārayat = shattered

nabha = sky

pṛthivīm = earth

tumul = very loud

vyanunādayan = sound and its echo

The blowing of the different conch shells from the Pāṇḍavas army was so loud, vibrating and thunderous, echoing through the sky and the earth. The loud sound shattered the hearts of Kauravas who had snatched the empire from the Pāṇḍavas, as well as the kings who had assembled there in support of the Kauravas. The sound of the conches induced the same effect as a weapon that pierces

the heart and instills pain. The sounds discouraged the Kaurava army.

The proportion of the size of Kaurava army versus Pandava army was 11 akṣauhiṇīs of the Kauravas against 7 akṣauhiṇīs of Pāṇḍavas. Akṣauhiṇī is a battle formation comprising of about 1,09,350 soldiers, 65,000 horses and 22,000 chariots. Although the Kaurava army was larger than that of the Pāṇḍavas, they were shattered by the conch shells blown by the Pāṇḍavas.

On the other hand, the Pāṇḍavas were not shattered by the conch shells blown by the Kaurava army, because the hearts of the righteous and just cannot be shattered. The hearts of those who are unjust and sinful like the Kauravas, are weak, doubtful and full of fear. The conclusion drawn here is that righteous people have strong hearts, whereas the unrighteous have weak hearts.

A sadhak should never have unjust or unrighteous feelings through his body, actions or speech. Actions taken by the body, or speech or mind should be considered as one's karma, as explained in the chapter 18 :

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः।

All the kriyas of the body, speech and mind are one's karmas. Hence, one should not be unrighteous and unjust in actions taken through body and speech, and mind. Unjust actions or speech weakens the heart and creates fear, even in a powerful person. Ravana was a very powerful king feared by all, including the demi-gods. But when he abducted Sita, his heart became weak and terrified, knowing that he was committing a wrong act. So, one should not follow any unrighteous means to achieve one's objectives.

1.20

**atha vyavasthitāndṛṣṭvā, dhārtarāṣṭrāṅkapidhvajaḥ,
pravṛtte śastrasampāte, dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ. 1.20**

Now, O lord of the earth, seeing your sons arrayed against him and when missiles were ready to be hurled,

atha = thereupon/ now

vyavasthitā = situated

dṛṣṭvā = seeing

dhārtarāṣṭrāṅ = the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

kapidhvajaḥ = flag of Hanuman

pravṛtte = about to start

śastrasampāte = use the weapons

dhanur = bow

udyamya = to lift

pāṇḍavaḥ = Arjuna

Sanjaya continued his description to Dhṛtarāṣṭra that Arjuna, whose chariot carried a flag with an insignia of Hanuman, saw the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and prepared himself for the war by lifting his bow and arrows.

Maharishi Vedavyasa's description that Arjuna's chariot that was charioteered by Śrī Kṛṣṇa had a flag bearing Hanuman ji's insignia on it, was not a mere coincidence, but has a meaning behind it. Śrī Rama of the previous era reincarnated as Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this era. Hanuman played a pivotal role in Ramayana, helping Śrī Rama on all fronts. It was impossible for Hanuman to keep himself away from Śrī Rama. How can one

expect him to keep away when his lord was waging a war, albeit in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

It is believed that Hanuman ji and Bhima were sons of VayuDeva, the wind god. Once, Bhima reached a hilltop to fetch a flower as per Draupadi's desire. The path was obstructed by Hanuman ji, in the form of an old monkey sleeping on the ground with his tail stretched out. Bhima, unaware of the true identity, ordered the old monkey to move away from the path. The monkey requested Bhima to move it himself, as he was old and unable to move the long tail. Bhima arrogantly tried to push it with his feet, but the tail did not budge. Then he grabbed it with his mighty hands and tried to move it, yet it did not move an inch. Realising that this was not an ordinary monkey, he bowed down, and humbly requested the monkey to reveal his real identity. Hanuman ji revealed His original form and said that He was his older brother, the son of Vayu. He advised Bhima to use his intellect rather than his physical power in the upcoming war, and not to make the error of judgement.

In the Mahabharata war, when all the families and friends of the Pāṇḍavas got together to wage the war, Hanuman ji too rendered His support. Although Hanumanji is one of the 8 immortals, as was explained in the last session, he could not manifest himself in His physical form as it was not his era. However, he appeared as an insignia on the flag of Arjuna's chariot, in order to support his brother Bhima, and also assist his beloved master, Śrī Rama who was in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In the war, many weapons were fired at the chariot, but nothing could destroy it. On the last day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to alight from the chariot. Arjuna respectfully asked HIM to get down first. Śrī Kṛṣṇa insisted that Arjuna should alight first and he would follow him. The moment HE stepped down, the chariot went up in flames. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was aware that the chariot was protected by Hanumanji all through the war. This highlights the pivotal contribution of Hanuman ji in Mahabharat as well.

1.21

**hṛṣīkeśaṃ(n) tadā vākyam, idamāha mahīpate,
arjuna uvāca
senayorubhayormadhye, rathaṃ(m) sthāpaya me'cyuta. 1.21**

Arjuna, who had the figure of Hanumān on the flag of his chariot, took up his bow and then addressed the following words to Śrī Kṛṣṇa; "Kṛṣṇa, place my chariot between the two armies.

Arjuna requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to place his chariot between the armies, so that he could see the opponents against whom he had to wage the war. He wanted to carefully observe all the war minded opponents assembled at the battlefield ready to fight.

This showed that the valiant Arjuna was full of spirit to wage the war. However, later when he saw his kith and kin, he was overtaken by attachment and developed an attitude of disinterest in the war.

If a man makes proper utilisation of whatever circumstance he encounters, he can be free from desires and realise HIM, because Paramātmā always remains uniform in all circumstances.

1.22

**yāvadetānnirīkṣe'haṃ(ṽ), yoddhukāmānavasthitān,
kairmayā saha yoddhavyam, asminraṇasamudyame.1.22**

"And keep it there till I have carefully observed these warriors drawn up for battle, and have seen with whom I have to engage in this fight.

Arjuna requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to hold the chariot inbetween the two armies, till he carefully observed the war minded kings assembled in the opponent side. He wanted to gauge the strength and position of the warriors who he had to encounter with.

The Pāṇḍavas had already sent proposals for reconciliation to the Kauravas which were not accepted. The Kauravas had the keen desire to wage the war, so he wanted to observe the brave and confident warriors who were keen to wage the war. It was a good practice to observe the enemies and plant a strategy for the war. Arjuna followed the strategy as a typical ksatriya warrior.

1.23

**yotsyamānānavekṣe'haṃ(ṽ), ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ,
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheḥ(r), yuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ.1.23**

"I shall have a look at the well-wishers of evilminded Duryodhana, in this war whoever have assembled on his side and are ready for the fight."

Arjuna referred to Duryodhana as evil minded (dhurbuddeh) conveying that he conspired for their destruction several times, during their exile and period of incognito.

He was also curious to see those friends of Duryodhana who, instead of advising him, were now standing by his side, with a keen desire to wage the war and support injustice.

1.24, 1.25

**sañjaya uvāca
evamukto hṛṣīkeśo, guḍākeśena bhārata,
senayorubhayormadhye, sthāpayitvā rathottamam. 1.24
bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ(s), sarveṣāṃ(ñ) ca mahīkṣitām,
uvāca pārtha paśyaitān, śamavetānkurūniti. 1.25**

Sañjaya said:

O king, thus addressed by Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa placed the magnificent chariot between the two armies in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the kings and said, "Arjuna, behold these Kauravas assembled here."

As instructed by Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stationed the chariot in the open space between the two armies.

Evamukta here implies that the Supreme listened to HIS devotee and friend Arjuna, and followed his commands. It shows that HE would listen to a true devotee who is not slave to idleness and materialistic pleasures.

Hṛṣīkeśa means the lord of senses, and refers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. HE who commands the whole world came

as a charioteer to carry out his devotee Arjuna's wish. This showed how kind HE was to Arjuna.

Arjuna is referred to as *Gudakesa*. The word *Gudakesa* has two meanings - *guda* means curly and *kesa* means hair. *Gudakesa* also means one who has control over sleep. Arjuna was a *gudakesa* as he had curly hair, and also had control over his sleep.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa initiated Arjuna's vishada by placing the chariot at such a vantage point, where he could see Bhīṣma Pitāmaha, Dronacharya and all the chief kings and warriors of the Kaurava army. If the chariot was placed in front of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, Arjuna would have started the war. But instead, HE tactically asked Arjuna to see the entire kuru dynasty standing there. HE did not ask to see the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. HIS choice of pointing to the Kuru dynasty was probably to instill a feeling of despondency and fear in Arjuna about fighting against his own people. HE was successful in triggering Arjuna's emotions, leading to the birth of Gītā.

The session concluded with obeisance to the Divine.



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Jai Shri Krishna!

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