

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADĠĪĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/A2-ggie4oh4>

The scene is set for the great Kuruksetra war

The 1st chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is **Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga- The Despondency of Arjuna.**

The session began with the lighting of the divine lamp, followed by prayers to the Supreme and the Guru.

This chapter talks about Arjuna's Viṣāda (distress / nervousness), who became distressed on seeing his kith and kin ready to wage war against each other. He expressed his distress to Śrī Krishna and declared that there was no point in fighting the war that is going to destroy their entire dynasty.

The chapter comprises of 47 shlokas, all in Anushtup chhanda. The first shloka is the only one spoken by Dhritarashtra, 25 are by Sanjaya and 21 by Arjuna. Śrī Krishna is a silent spectator, listening to the frustrations expressed by Arjuna. His discourse starts from chapter 2.

The background of the war was touched upon. The Pāṇḍavas were sent to 12 years of exile followed by one year of Ajnathavasa (living incognito / living in disguise), by their cousins, the Kauravas. Duryodhana continuously tried to eliminate them throughout their exile period, so that they did not return to claim their rights. However, the Pāṇḍavas returned after successfully fulfilling their exile term. Yet, they were denied their share of the kingdom, and they were forced to fight for their rights. The Pāṇḍavas also did not forget Dushasana's attempt to disrobe Draupadi in the royal court. They were ready to avenge their insult.

Śrī Krishna tried to bring about a compromise between the cousins and approached the Kauravas as a messenger of Peace. He requested them to give the Pāṇḍavas atleast 5 villages so that they could live in peace and the conflict could end. But Duryodhana declared with audacity that he would not part with even a small piece of land, as small as the tip of a needle. This left the Pāṇḍavas with no other choice than to wage the war.

When the war became inevitable, Maharishi Vedavyasa offered the power of divine sight (Divya dhristi) to the blind king, Dhritarashtra, so that he would be able to see the war. Dhritarashtra, who

was blind from birth did not wish to see bloodbath in his old age, and so declined the offer. He requested the Maharishi to give the divine power to his minister, Sanjaya, who could then narrate the happenings to him.

1.1

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre, ṣamavetā yuyutsavaḥ, māmakāḥ(ph) pāṇḍavāścaiva, kimakurvata sañjaya. 1.1

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

Sañjaya, gathered on the holy land of Kurukṣetra, eager to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do? Kurukṣetra, eager to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

dharmakṣetre = Place of religious importance

kurukṣetre = Name of the place where the war took place

ṣamavetā = get assembled

yuyutsavaḥ = desire to fight

māmakāḥ = my sons

pāṇḍavāścaiva = sons of Pandu (pandavas)

kimakurvata = what are they doing?

Dhritarashtra asked Sanjaya what his sons and Pāṇḍavas were doing at the divine place, Kurukshetra. Amongst the entire 700 shlokas of Bhagavadgītā, this is the only verse spoken by Dhritarashtra. It also highlights the cause of the war.

Kurukshetra was a religious place where demigods used to perform holy yajnas and tapas / austerities. It was considered a Dharmakshetra because it was saturated with spiritual energy. It was selected as the war field probably with a specific reason that the warriors who died at such a pious site may attain liberation (moksha).

A study of World history shows that wars take place for three reasons:

- **1) Land**
- **2) Wealth**
- **3) Women.**

The Kurukshetra war was fought for appropriation of land by the Kauravas. They did not wish to part with even a small piece of land, as small as the head of a needle.

Duryodhana was so adamant that he rejected the efforts of Śrī Krishna. He had a keener desire for war, as he wanted to seize the Pāṇḍavas' share of the property, by hook or by crook. On the other hand, the Pāṇḍavas, were ready to wage the war to uphold righteousness. The Pāṇḍavas always regarded Dhritarashtra as a fatherly figure and gave him the same respect due to their father Pandu, who had died at an early age. But Dhritarashtra was always partial to his own children and thought only of their well-being. He did not care about the Pāṇḍavas. He had love only for his sons.

Dhritarashtra's word "**māmakāḥ**" (mine) is the root cause for the Mahabharata war and led to destruction of the family of Kauravas. All of his 100 sons died in the war. This teaches a great lesson - never to be partial to anyone, be it family members, neighbours, or the society. Partiality leads to conflicts, instead of love and harmony. One must remain impartial in all situations, if he wishes to establish love and harmony in the society.

Dhritarashtra's distinction between "**māmakāḥ** (my sons) and **Pāṇḍavāścaiva**" (Pandua's sons) due to attachment for his own sons and aversion for his brother's sons, led to the commotion. The commotion in his mind caused the war. On the other hand, the commotion in the mind of Arjuna, who was confused about whether to wage the war against his kith and kin, revealed the Gītā to us., If Arjuna did not have these sentiments, probably Gītā would not have happened.

The message given here is not to become Dhritarashtra, but to keep eyes open to the reality. While Dhritarashtra was physically blind, common people are intellectually blinded by unawareness / ignorance/ inertia. They commit unconscious actions, and when they have to face the fruits of their actions, they wonder why they are suffering. They visit temples, and seek gurus, astrologers, or tantrics, hoping that some miracle will save them from the calamity. It is natural for everyone to want to enjoy pleasures and avoid pains. But it must be realised that there is no escape from the consequences of the bad karmas done in the past. One has to face it!

There is an interesting observation about Bhagavadgītā. It starts with words 'Dharma' in chapter 1 and ends with the word 'mama' in chapter 18. Taken together, the two words mean 'mama dharma' (My Dharma or My prescribed Duty). Thus, **Gītā teaches the importance of performing one's duty.**

1.2

sañjaya uvāca dṛṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānīkaṃ(ṽ), vyūḍhaṃ(n) duryodhanastadā, ācāryamupasaṅgamyā, rājā vacanamabravīt.1.2

Sañjaya said:

At that time, seeing the army of the Pāṇḍavas drawn up for battle and approaching Droṇācārya, King Duryodhana spoke the following words :

dṛṣṭvā = after seeing

Pāṇḍavānīkaṃ = Pāṇḍavas' soldiers

Paramapitā = military formation

tadā = at that time

ācārya = guru Dhronacharya

upasaṅgamyā = approach

vacanamabravīt = spoke the words

Sanjaya started narrating about the war field, by saying that Duryodhana, after seeing the military formation set by the Pāṇḍavas, went to Guru Dronacharya and spoke the following words.

The Kauravas' army was vast with 18 regiments, in comparison to the Pāṇḍavas' small battalion which had only 11 regiments. However, with Śrī Krishna at their side, the mightiness of the Pāṇḍavas army was multiplied many folds. They had arranged their army in such an intricate way to make it appear more larger and powerful that scared the enemy. When a person, despite feeling insecure, pretends and acts in a self-assured arrogant fashion, the opponent is easily deceived to believe that the person is powerful and decides it is wise not to mess with him. The Pāṇḍavas were using the same psychological tactic to get the upper hand in the war. Before using the physical weapons, they used the weapons of their mind, and arranged their military in an intricate manner that scared Duryodhana when he saw it. Worried, he went to his guru Dronacharya and spoke the following words.

1.3

paśyaitāṃ(m) pāṇḍuputrāṅām, ācārya mahatīṃ(ñ) camūm, vyūḍhāṃ(n) drupadaputrena, tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā. 1.3

Behold, O Revered Master, the mighty army of the sons of Pāṇḍu arrayed for battle by your talented pupil, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, son of Drupada.

Paśya =see, behold

pāṇḍuputrāṅām = sons of pandu

mahatīṃ = great

camūm = army

vyūḍhāṃ = army formation

drupada putrena= by drupada's son

tava śiṣyeṇa = your student

dhīmatā = very intelligent

Duryodhana, on his part too was playing the mind game with Dronacharya. He was provoking the guru that his disciples were bravely standing in the enemy camp of Pāṇḍavas, ready to fight against him. His most intelligent student, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the son of Drupada, had arranged the army in a formidable manner that scared the Kauravas. He also implied to say that he, being their guru had to strengthen his war game so as to defeat them. Despite knowing that his army was mightier than the pāṇḍavas army, Duryodhana was scared.

1.4

atra śūrā maheṣvāsā, bhīmārjunasamā yudhi, yuyudhāno virāṭaśca, drupadaśca mahārathaḥ. 1.4

There are in this army, heroes wielding mighty bows and equal in military prowess to Bhīma and Arjuna-Sātyaki and Virāṭa and the Mahārathī (warrior chief) Drupada;

Duryodhana continued that the Pāṇḍavas' army had many valiant warriors and archers, like Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada. They were all equal to Bhima and Arjuna in their fighting prowess.

Wrestling among princes was considered as a form of exercise, and friendly matches were held frequently in good spirits. In all those matches, Bhīmā used to defeat Duryodhana. Duryodhana mentioned Bhīmā in the first place, because he was most scared of him. It is well known that Bhīmā had colossal strength. There was a greater reason behind the fear; it was related to Draupadi's humiliation by the Kauravas. When the highly distraught Draupadi shed tears over the disgrace and dishonour meted to her, Bhīmā had roared ferociously and vowed that he would kill Duryodhana, crush his chest and wash Draupadi's hair locks with the blood. Duryodhana remembered this oath made by Bhīmā. He was well aware that not only was Bhīmā immensely powerful, but the fire of vengeance and anger burning in his heart had multiplied his power and determination many folds, making him an extremely formidable opponent.

Duryodhana also noted that besides Bhīmā and Arjuna, the enemy camp had many more stalwarts, all relatives and friends of Pāṇḍavas, and equally accomplished warriors. Drupada was the father of Draupadi and wanted to avenge his daughter's humiliation. He mentioned their names just to incite and provoke Dhronacharya.

On the sideline, the fate of these warriors was also pointed out. Dronacharya killed Drupada in the war. King Virat and his three sons, Uttara, Shweta and Shankha were also killed in the war. Yuyudhana did not die in the Kuruksetra war but was killed in a civil war amongst the Yadavas.

1.5

dhṛṣṭaketuścekitānaḥ(kh), kāśirājaśca vīryavān, purujitkuntibhojaśca, śaibyaśca narapuṅgavaḥ. 1.5

Dhṛṣṭaketu, Cekitāna and the valiant King of Kāśī, and Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and Śaibya, the best of men,

Besides, there were great, powerful, and brave warriors like Shishupal's son Dhṛṣṭaketu, the yadava king Cekitāna, the King of Kāśī, Yudhistira's father-in-law Śaibya, and Kunti's brothers Purujit and Kuntibhoja. The noblest of men were all there on the pāṇḍavas' side.

In the war, Dronacharya killed Dhṛṣṭaketu, Śaibya, Purujit and Kuntibhoja. while Duryodhana killed Cekitāna. The King of Kāśī also got killed. This shows that it was not only the Kauravas who suffered losses in the battle. Even the Pāṇḍavas lost many of their great warriors.

1.6

yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta, uttamaujāśca vīryavān, saubhadro draupadeyāśca, sarva eva mahārathāḥ. 1.6

and mighty Yudhāmanyu, and valiant Uttamaujā, Abhimanyu, the son of Subhadrā, and the five sons of Draupadī - all of them Mahārathīs (warrior chiefs).

The Pāṇḍavas army included the mighty Yudhāmanyu, the powerful Uttamaujā, **Abhimanyu the courageous son of Subhadrā**, and the five sons of Draupadī. Later in the war, Yudhamanyu, Uttamavya, and the **five sons of Draupadi - Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Srutakriti, Satanika, and Srutasena** were all killed by Ashwatthama when they were sleeping. Abhimanyu was unjustly killed by Dushasana's son, who attacked him with a mace from behind.

Duryodhana named these warriors one by one, in an attempt to provoke Dhronacharya, so that he would vow to kill the Pāṇḍavas. Before the war, the Pāṇḍavas accompanied by Sri Krishna, approached their guru Dronacharya, and sought his blessings. Under the powerful influence of Sri Krishna's presence, Dronacharya had blessed them with 'Vijayi Bhava' (be victorious). Receiving this blessing from one's guru at the time of war is a great blessing indeed. The Pāṇḍavas received this great blessing from their guru, due to Śrī Krishna.

Bhīṣma Pitāmaha too was a devotee of Śrī Krishna; it is well known that he recited the Vishnu Sahasranama in the battlefield. He was an invincible stalwart and a yogi, gifted with a boon that he could give up his body at his own will. Although he knew that the Kauravas were wrong, he had to fight on their side, due to the vow he had made to his father that he would protect the rulers of their kingdom, Hastinapur.

The situation was same with the gurus Dronacharya and Kripacharya. All of them repeatedly tried to convince Duryodhana not to enter into war, but having failed to do so, they too had no option but to stand by him. They were all bound by their loyalty to Hastinapur. Duryodhana was well aware of this fact, and was apprehensive if they would fight for him wholeheartedly. Hence, he was trying to spur Dronacharya by naming the enemies.

1.7

asmākaṃ(n) tu viśiṣṭā ye, tānnibodha dvijottama, nāyakā mama sainyasya, saññārthaṃ(n) tānbravīmi te. 1.7

O best of Brāhmaṇas, know them also who are the principal warriors on our side- the generals of my army. For your information I mention them.

Dronacharya was addressed as ***dvijottama*** (twice born), as he was a Brahmāna. Brahmānas are said to be twice-born. They are believed to take a second birth when they master the vedas and acquire jnana. Their status of Brahmāna is justified at that stage when they become jnani.

After describing the enemy's army in length, Duryodhana decided to highlight the leaders fighting on his side.

1.8

bhavānbhīṣmaśca karṇaśca, kṛpaśca samitiñjayaḥ, aśvatthāmā vikarṇaśca, saumadattistathaiva ca. 1.8

"Yourself and Bhīṣma and Karṇa and Kṛpa, who is ever victorious in battle; and even so Aśvatthāmā, Vikarṇa and Bhūriśravā (the son of Somadatta);

Duryodhana named all the mighty warriors on his side - Dronacharya, Bhīṣma Pitamah, Karna, Kripacharya, Ashvatthama, Vikarna, and Somadutta's son Bhūriśravā. Although Bhīṣma was senior to Dronacharya, Duryodhana mentioned Dronacharya first, to flatter him and make him feel superior.

It is said that a disciple mirrors his guru. But it is not so, as can be seen in the case of Arjuna and Duryodhana. In spite of being disciples of the same Guru, they were not alike; they had contrasting personalities.

Duryodhana further evoked Dronacharya's paternal feelings by naming his son Ashvatthama among the valiant generals of his army. He was shrewdly using his sentiments and exploiting Dronacharya's weakness for his son. A person may not mind losing but he would never want to see his son get defeated. He was provoking that if not for the sake of Kauravas, Dronacharya should be victorious for sake of his son.

He also mentioned his dearest friend, Karna, Vikarna, Bhūriśravā, and Kripacharya. There are eight immortals (Chiranjeevis) according to our Hindu scriptures: Ashwatthama, Bali, Maharishi Veda Vyasa, Hanuman ji, Vibhishana, Kripacharya, Parashurama, and Markandeya. Duryodhana was confident that the Kauravas would win the war, since two of the immortals, Ashwatthama and Kripacharya, were fighting on the side of Kauravas, and the Pāṇḍavas did not have any immortal persons on their side.

In the war, Dronacharya was killed by Dhrishtadyumna, and Karna by Arjuna. Vikarna was killed by Bhīma and Bhūriśravā by Satyaki. Bhīṣma Pitāmaha was seriously injured in the war, but since he had the boon from his father Shantanu, to choose the time of his death, he waited for a few days and left his body when the sun changed direction from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana. According to the 8th Chapter of Bhagavadgītā, yogis who die during Uttarayana are liberated from rebirth. Bhīṣma Pitāmaha being a yogi waited for Uttarayana to leave his body.

1.9

**anye ca bahavaḥ(ś) śūrā, madarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ,
nānāśastrapraharaṇāḥ(s), sarve yuddhaviśārādāḥ. 1.9**

And there are many other heroes, all skilled in warfare equipped with various weapons and missiles, who have staked their lives for me.

Duryodhana added that there were many more brave warriors on his side, prepared to sacrifice their lives for his sake. All of them were well equipped in handling different kinds of weapons, and possessed great skills in fighting the war.

The above words 'many warriors are prepared to sacrifice their lives for my sake' speak about his arrogance. He was implying that all the warriors including his guru were fighting for his sake. A war is fought for the state, not for an individual! Duryodhana was not even the king, yet he had the arrogance to say that everyone was working for him.

Before the war, Śrī Krishna was approached by both the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, each asking for his support in the war. Śrī Krishna asked the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas to choose between HIM and HIS Narayani army. Duryodhana foolishly chose the huge, well-equipped Narayani army, and Arjuna happily chose the unarmed Śrī Krishna. While Duryodhana had eyes on Śrī Krishna's army, Arjuna sought Śrī Krishna. The heart of a person who has his eye on Bhagavān is clean and refined. HIS strength is real and limitless. If HE is with a person, that person's strength too becomes real and limitless. Śrī Krishna's Narayani army was his own maya, and hence it cannot be stronger than HIM. Duryodhana was foolish to choose the army rather than the Paramātmā HIMSELF.

1.10

**aparyāptaṃ(n) tadasmākaṃ(m), balaṃ(m) bhīṣmābhirakṣitam,
paryāptaṃ(n) tvidameteṣāṃ(m), balaṃ(m) bhīmābhirakṣitam. 1.10**

This army of ours, fully protected by Bhīṣma, is unconquerable; while that army of theirs, guarded in everyway by Bhīma, is easy to conquer.

Duryodhana boasted that their army with 18 battallions was huge, with immeasurable strength and perfectly protected by Bhīṣma Pitamah, while the Pāṇḍavas army of only 11 battallions although protected by Bhima was limited.

The shlokas of Gītā can elicit different meanings from different people. The common interpretation drawn from this shloka is that Kauravas strength was huge and immeasurable, and Pāṇḍava's strength was limited. But some speakers draw a different and wonderful meaning of this shloka. They interpret the shlokas as follows; the forces of desires and sensory temptations displayed by the Kauravas, unlimited in number and protected by the strong ego may be inadequate because their strength is related to their identification with the body. The kamanas (desires) and the ways of sense gratification are unlimited, because they are attached to the body. On the other hand, the Pāṇḍava's army although limited in number, was based on principles of unchanging ultimate truth and defended by the power of Soul guided life force, Bhagavān Śrī Krishna. Hence, they were capable of destroying this body identification, and had unlimited power.

The session concluded with Question & Answers.

Questions and Answers

Sai Tanvi ji

Q: Gītā is a conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna. How did Dhritarashtra and Sanjaya jump into the conversation?

A: Sri Krishna and Arjuna had this conversation before the war could commence. Maharshi Vedavyas ji wrote it down in the form of Gītā, and included the background with details of Dhritarashtra's question and his minister Sanjaya's answers.

Manne Srimannarayana ji

Q: Why does the 10th shloka state Bhima as the commander of Pāṇḍava's army, when in fact the commander was Dhristadyumna?

A: Duryodhana's main competitor was the powerful Bhima, and hence his focus is on Bhima rather than the other warriors.

Ashok Sonpal ji

Q: When Sri Krishna could make Bhīṣma Pitāmaha give his blessings for victory to the Pāṇḍavas, why didnt HE use the same power/ trick to get Duryodhana to give away five villages to the Pāṇḍavas and prevent the war from happening?

A: Sri Krishna infact advised Duryodhana, but it went unheeded. Duryodhana was adamant not to give even a small piece of land to the Pāṇḍavas, and tried to arrest Sri Krishna when he came as a mediator on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas.



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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