

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/YnvMOhfCVYs>

From Viṣāda to Victory: Understanding the Beginning of the Bhagavad Gītā

The first chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is **Arjuna Viṣāda Yoga**—the Yoga of Despondency or Dejection.

The Vivechan session began with the customary lighting of the lamp and prayers offered to Paramātmā and the Gurus.

**Guru Brahmā Guru Viṣṇuḥ, Guru Devo Maheśvaraḥ
Guruḥ Sākṣāt Paraṁ Brahma, Tasmai Śrī Gurave Namaḥ**

**Oṁ Kṛṣṇāya Vāsudevāya Haraye Paramātmāne
Praṇataḥ Kleśa-Nāśāya Govindāya Namō Namaḥ**

**Oṁ Pārthāya Pratibodhitām Bhagavatā Nārāyaṇena Svayam
Vyāsena Grathitām Purāṇa-Muninā Madhye Mahābhārata
Advaitāmṛta-Varṣiṇīm Bhagavatīm Aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
Amba Tvām Anusandadhāmi Bhagavad-Gīte Bhava-Dveṣiṇīm**

The main significance of this chapter emerges directly from its content. When viewed from this perspective, we find that it contains many philosophical principles as well as practical guidelines for life. At first glance, the chapter may appear simple and straightforward, but in reality, it is of immense importance. From one angle, it provides the essential background of the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā itself.

Swamiji often emphasizes one crucial point: the Bhagavad Gītā must be understood in the light of the Mahābhārata. What does this mean? It means that unless we know the background of the Bhagavad Gītā—unless we understand the mental and emotional state in which Arjuna was when this dialogue took place—it becomes very difficult to grasp the true purpose of the Gītā.

If we look back a few decades, even into our own childhoods, we can see how the Bhagavad Gītā was generally treated. It was mostly regarded as a scripture meant only for worship. It was kept in the prayer

room or temple and was usually chanted when someone passed away. Often, it was recited when the listener was not in a position to hear or understand, and the person chanting was also unable to focus. Everyone present was emotionally disturbed, and as a result, no one truly benefited. In this way, the Gītā came to be treated more as a ritual than as a living scripture.

Gradually, as time passed, we began to understand the depth of our scriptures. Slowly, the blanket of ignorance that Western education had wrapped around our minds started to lift. As that covering receded, we began to see the light of the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā. That light did not illuminate only individual lives, but the lives of thousands. We have witnessed how the Gītā has brought about remarkable transformations. People have overcome diseases, grievances, fears, and deep emotional struggles. Even among prison inmates, we see the confidence and clarity about life that the Bhagavad Gītā instills. Such profound transformation occurs not merely because the Gītā is a scripture worthy of worship, but because it is a scripture worthy of reflection.

The Bhagavad Gītā cannot be understood by reading isolated verses. It comes with a vast background. Unless we understand what led to the emergence of this scripture, its deeper meaning remains elusive. For a long time, many people also had a superficial understanding of the Mahābhārata itself. Some even believed that keeping the Mahābhārata at home would bring conflict, viewing it merely as a book of problems.

Our revered Gurudev has worked tirelessly for over thirty years to remove this misconception. He explained that the original name of this great epic is **Jaya**, which means victory. Any home that has this scripture will always be victorious. The Mahābhārata is truly a scripture of victory. It contains five great gems and countless strategies for life, just as the Bhagavad Gītā does.

Swamiji explains that the Mahābhārata is like an encyclopedia of human tendencies. It teaches us how to handle different kinds of people and situations. How should I respond to this behavior? How do I handle this challenge? The Mahābhārata offers guidance for all such questions. The essence of this vast encyclopedia of human life is condensed into a small book of seven hundred verses—the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā. It is like a pocket guide to success.

That is why all this background is discussed right at the beginning, in the first chapter. Many people wonder why the study does not begin directly with later chapters, such as the twelfth. The answer becomes clear when we understand the context in which the Bhagavad Gītā appeared. Most scriptures were composed in peaceful surroundings—on riverbanks, in forests, or in secluded places. The Bhagavad Gītā, however, was spoken on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, in the midst of an intense and massive war.

Thousands of warriors had assembled for a battle unlike anything seen before. It was a real war, involving real people, real emotions, and real consequences. Because of this, some parents worry that teaching the Bhagavad Gītā to children might lead them toward renunciation or monastic life. But the opposite is true. The Gītā was spoken precisely when Arjuna himself wished to renounce everything, and it was this very scripture that guided him back to his duty and led him toward victory. How, then, can a scripture that encouraged Arjuna to act lead others toward escapism?

The Bhagavad Gītā does not draw people away from their responsibilities. Instead, it inspires them to perform their duties with clarity, courage, and purpose. Born on a battlefield, the Gītā is a scripture meant to inspire action, not withdrawal.

When we look at its origin, we see that the Bhagavad Gītā arose from Arjuna's sorrow—hence the name **Arjuna Viṣāda Yoga**. What was troubling Arjuna? It was the same fears that trouble every human being: fear of the future, fear of loss, fear born of attachment, and fear of failure. He was deeply attached to his family and anxious about the consequences of his actions. He was even afraid that failure might cause him to lose the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Arjuna was caught in a web of fear, sorrow, pain, and attachment. This is the condition of every human

heart. These emotions become shackles that bind us. Anyone who experiences such sorrow deserves to read the Bhagavad Gītā, for this scripture exists precisely for such seekers. When we first understand Arjuna’s state of mind, we become ready to understand the Gītā itself.

That is why Gurudev designed the curriculum in a specific way—introducing essential concepts such as the qualities of an ideal devotee, the three guṇas, divine wealth, faith, and practical application. Once we are equipped with this understanding, we naturally develop an interest in completing all eighteen chapters. Then Arjuna’s sorrow no longer overwhelms us.

The Bhagavad Gītā is spoken by none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself. Saints have said that while the Vedas arose from the Lord’s breath in a meditative state, the Bhagavad Gītā is a conscious hymn—spoken when the Lord was fully awake, directly addressing humanity in clear and accessible language. All the Upaniṣads are condensed into this single scripture. Vedavyāsa divided this continuous dialogue into eighteen chapters so that people living in the age of Kali could comprehend it. The Gītā showers the nectar of non-duality—**Advaitāmṛta Varṣiṇī**. Ultimately, the Bhagavad Gītā is a scripture of victory and upliftment.

In our prayer, we address the Bhagavad Gītā as our mother—**Gītā Mātā**. Just as a mother consoles her crying child, the Gītā guides us through life’s difficulties. She does not judge our grammar or pronunciation; she looks only at our devotion. As Swamiji beautifully says, God does not see grammar; He sees the heart.

This Mother, Bhagavad Gītā, connects us to the Supreme Father. Just as she helped Arjuna emerge from despair, she will help us rise above sorrow, fear, and pain. Our connection with the Bhagavad Gītā is the result of past good deeds. Today, we find ourselves on the sacred field of Kurukṣetra, where Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself speaks—not merely as a historical figure, but as the Supreme Father in divine form.

1.1

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre, śamavetā yuyutsavaḥ, māmakāḥ(ḥ) 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?

How the Bhagavad Gītā Begins

So, how does the Bhagavad Gītā begin?

It begins with a question spoken by King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He asks Sañjaya:

“O Sañjaya, on the field of dharma—Kurukṣetra—where my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu have assembled, eager for battle, what did they do?”

The Bhagavad Gītā begins with a very interesting and significant personality. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is important not merely because he is a king, but because he is the father of the Kauravas. The very roots of the Mahābhārata are deeply embedded in his character and mindset.

The Mahābhārata: More Than a Family War

Many people believe that Duryodhana alone is responsible for the Mahābhārata. But the Mahābhārata is not merely a clash between two families. It is a profound exploration of human psychology, values,

tendencies, and choices. Lord Krishna Himself explains that the Mahābhārata can be understood through the imagery of two great trees—two lineages, two mentalities, and two ways of living: the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.

The Tree of the Kauravas

The Kaurava clan is described as a tree rooted in ego, anger, and uncontrolled desire. Duryodhana represents the intense ego of this tree. Even at the moment of his death, his pride remains unbroken. Struck down by Bhīmasena and lying helpless, he still declares that he lived and died like a king.

Karna forms the strong trunk of this tree—the unwavering supporter of Duryodhana. Śakuni is the poisonous root, constantly nourishing deceit, manipulation, and envy. Duḥśāsana and the other brothers are the flowers and fruits—outward prosperity sustained by inner corruption. At the very root of this tree stands King Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: Blindness Beyond the Eyes

Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind not only physically, but intellectually and spiritually as well. Saint Jñāneśvar Mahārāj describes him as blind in wisdom. Outwardly, Dhṛtarāṣṭra appeared polite and helpless. Inwardly, he was filled with resentment.

He could never truly accept Yudhiṣṭhira as the rightful heir to the throne. Only under pressure from elders like Bhīṣma did he reluctantly agree. His conversations with Vidura, known as Vidura Nīti, clearly reveal his inner conflict. He knew what was right, yet he repeatedly encouraged the ego, anger, and greed of his sons. In this way, Dhṛtarāṣṭra continuously nourished the tree of the Kauravas.

The Tree of the Pāṇḍavas

Opposite this stands another tree—the tree of the Pāṇḍavas. This tree is described as *Dharmamaya Mahādhruva*—a great and steady tree rooted firmly in dharma. Yudhiṣṭhira is the embodiment of righteousness. Bhīma and Arjuna are its powerful branches. Nakula and Sahadeva, the sons of Mādri, are its blossoms and fruits—nurtured with love, discipline, and values.

Among them all, Arjuna stands out uniquely. Not once in the entire Mahābhārata does Arjuna act with malice. Lord Krishna Himself calls him *Anagha*—one with a spotless heart. When Krishna uses this word, it reveals Arjuna's extraordinary inner purity.

The Roots of the Pāṇḍava Tree

What nourished this sacred tree?

It was nourished by Lord Krishna, the supreme guide; by Brahmā, representing the Vedas; and by the Brāhmaṇas, the carriers of scriptural wisdom. During the thirteen years of exile, thousands of Brāhmaṇas chose to accompany Yudhiṣṭhira. They told him that he would face sorrow and depression, and that they would remain with him—narrating the Vedas and Upaniṣads and keeping his mind firmly established in dharma.

Thus, the Pāṇḍavas were nourished not only by Krishna, but also by spiritual wisdom and righteous guidance. That is why Krishna stood unwaveringly on their side.

Kurukṣetra: The Field of Dharma

Kurukṣetra is not an ordinary battlefield. It is a sacred land, sanctified by King Kuru through severe penance. It is said that anyone who dies there attains liberation. The land is fertile, abundant, and spiritually powerful. That is why this great war was fought there.

On this *Dharmakṣetra Kurukṣetra*, Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks, “What are my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu doing?” Even in this single question, his attachment and partiality are clearly revealed.

Saṅjaya: The Sacred Witness

Saṅjaya is a remarkable personality. Though born in the Sūta lineage, he received the highest education. This proves that true learning in ancient India was not restricted by birth.

Vedavyāsa offered Dhṛtarāṣṭra divine vision to witness the war. Dhṛtarāṣṭra refused and instead requested that Saṅjaya be granted this vision. This single decision became a blessing for all humanity. Through Saṅjaya, we hear the Bhagavad Gītā, we witness the Viśvarūpa Darśana, and we receive the complete narration of the Mahābhārata.

Setting the Stage for the Gītā

Thus, the Bhagavad Gītā begins—with blindness questioning wisdom, with ego standing before dharma, with two trees facing each other on the sacred field of Kurukṣetra. From this moment onward, the dialogue of eternal wisdom begins.

1.2

saṅjaya uvāca dr̥ṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānikam(ṁ), vyūḍham(n) duryodhanastadā, ācāryamupasaṅgamyā, rājā vacanamabravīt.1.2

Saṅjaya said:

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

The question asked by King Dhṛtarāṣṭra is very simple, yet extremely revealing. He asks Saṅjaya, “Saṅjaya, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?” It almost feels as though Dhṛtarāṣṭra is sitting in front of a Doordarshan screen, watching the entire battlefield through Saṅjaya’s divine vision.

When Saṅjaya begins his narration, he says, “Seeing the Pāṇḍava army, King Duryodhana approached his teacher.” Here, we must pause and understand something very important. Duryodhana is not actually a king. He never became the rightful ruler. Yet, in many places, he is addressed as “king.”

Why is this so?

Because Duryodhana wanted to be called king, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra wanted to hear him addressed that way. To please Dhṛtarāṣṭra, this title is used. Therefore, Saṅjaya refers to him as “this king,” just as we often do in everyday life.

Think of how we say “the king’s son.” We do not literally mean that the son is already a king. But in our hearts, we believe our child is a king. It is an expression born out of attachment and assumption, not reality. In the same way, Duryodhana is repeatedly called king—not because he truly is one, but because he is assumed to be one.

So this “king’s son,” Duryodhana, now approaches Ācārya Droṇācārya. He goes to his teacher and begins to speak. What does he speak about? He points out the entire opposing clan—the Pāṇḍavas and their vast army—standing firmly in front of him on the battlefield.

This is how the scene is set. Duryodhana, filled with inner anxiety, stands before his teacher and describes

the strength of the opposing side. From this point onward, the deeper psychological and emotional drama of the Bhagavad Gītā slowly begins to unfold.

1.3

paśyaitāṃ(m) pāṇḍuputrāṅām, ācārya mahatīm(ñ) camūm, vyūdhāṃ(n) drupadaputreṇa, 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.

Duryodhana's Tone and His Ego

Now listen carefully to what Duryodhana says. He addresses Droṇācārya with these words: “Having seen the sons of Pāṇḍu, O Ācārya, I bow to you. Your wisdom is great.” At first glance, the words appear respectful, but if we observe the tone closely, something subtle yet significant emerges.

Duryodhana does not say “my cousins” or “my brothers.” Instead, he deliberately uses the phrase “**Pāṇḍu-putrāṅām**”—the sons of Pāṇḍu. This distinction is not accidental. It reveals the inner attitude with which he speaks. The choice of words exposes distance, separation, and a carefully guarded ego.

Arjuna's Language vs. Duryodhana's Language

Throughout the Bhagavad Gītā, whenever Arjuna speaks, there is warmth and inclusiveness in his language. He says “my brothers,” “my relatives,” “my elders,” “my sons,” and “my grandsons.” His words are rooted in relationship, belonging, and compassion.

In contrast, Duryodhana never once refers to the Pāṇḍavas as his brothers or cousins. He repeatedly calls them “the sons of Pāṇḍu.” This constant linguistic separation reveals his pride and ego. Dhṛtarāṣṭra may rightly call them brothers, for he truly has that relationship. But Duryodhana, in his heart, refuses to acknowledge it. This persistent distancing is why Duryodhana is often described as ego personified.

Provoking Droṇācārya's Old Wounds

Duryodhana then continues his speech. He says, “Look at your students. See the vast army they have assembled against us.” Then he deliberately points out who is leading that army. He does not simply mention the name Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Instead, he pointedly says, “Dhrupada's son.”

Why does he emphasize this? Why not simply say Dhṛṣṭadyumna?

Because Duryodhana is intentionally reopening an old wound. He is reminding Droṇācārya of a deep humiliation he once suffered at the hands of King Dhrupada.

The Friendship of Droṇa and Dhrupada

Droṇācārya and Dhrupada were childhood friends. Like Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā, they studied together in their early years. In the innocence of youth, Dhrupada once said affectionately, “When I become king, I will give you half my kingdom.” It was spoken playfully, without calculation or pride. Droṇa never took this statement seriously.

As time passed, Droṇācārya became a great scholar, a revered teacher, and a deeply spiritual person. He never expected anything from Dhrupada.

Aśvatthāmā and the Pain of Poverty

However, when Droṇācārya had a son, Aśvatthāmā, life became extremely difficult. While other princes lived in comfort, Droṇa remained poor. His wife would mix flour in water and give it to Aśvatthāmā, telling him it was milk. That was the “milk” on which the child was raised.

One day, Aśvatthāmā drank real milk at a friend’s house and immediately understood the difference. When he returned home, he said, “This is not milk. Why are you deceiving me?” Children grasp truth instinctively. Droṇācārya was deeply wounded. For the first time, he remembered his childhood friend and that long-forgotten promise.

The Humiliation by King Dhruvada

With a small hope in his heart, Droṇācārya went to Dhruvada. But by then, Dhruvada had become a powerful king, and his ego had grown immensely. He thought, “How can a poor Brāhmaṇa dare to call me his friend?” He publicly humiliated Droṇācārya.

That moment changed everything. Droṇācārya took a solemn vow: “My students will defeat you, seize half your kingdom, and place it at my feet.”

Guru Dakṣiṇā and the Students’ Test

Droṇācārya then declared to both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas that his guru dakṣiṇā would be half of Dhruvada’s kingdom.

Duryodhana, filled with arrogance, immediately proclaimed, “I will go first. We Kauravas will accomplish this. Those useless Pāṇḍavas need not even come.” He went—and was completely defeated.

After this failure, Droṇācārya sent the Pāṇḍavas. Arjuna said calmly and confidently, “Bhīma and I are sufficient.” They went and decisively defeated Dhruvada.

Arjuna’s Nobility

After the victory, Arjuna spoke with extraordinary dignity. He said, “You are a king. My enemy is my guru. I am not taking your kingdom for myself. I offer it only as guru dakṣiṇā.”

With complete respect, Arjuna handed over half the kingdom to Droṇācārya. Not a single word of insult was spoken. That restraint and humility became the greatest blow to Dhruvada’s ego.

The Birth of Dṛṣṭadyumna

Burning with anger and humiliation, Dhruvada performed a yajña. From that sacrificial fire was born Dṛṣṭadyumna—a son destined to kill Droṇācārya. Droṇācārya was fully aware of this destiny.

Yet, when Dhruvada later requested Droṇācārya to teach Dṛṣṭadyumna, the guru did not withhold anything. He imparted complete knowledge, without fear, bitterness, or compromise.

The Greatness of the Guru

Even while knowing his own fate, Droṇācārya taught his enemy’s son with sincerity and completeness. This reveals the greatness, integrity, and purity of the ancient guru-śiṣya tradition.

And this is precisely what Duryodhana is subtly reminding Droṇācārya of when he says, “Your students have grown powerful—just as Dhruvada’s son did.” This is the psychological pressure Duryodhana applies even before the war begins.

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 now begins listing the great warriors standing on the side of the Pāṇḍavas. What he is really doing is drawing attention to the sheer strength and skill of the army before him. He speaks of **Ati-rathas**, **Ati-śūras**, and **Mahā-śvasas**—terms used to describe exceptionally powerful warriors. These were not ordinary soldiers; they were heroes of immense courage, mastery, and battlefield experience. He mentions Bhīma, Arjuna, the mighty King Drupada, and several others, emphasizing how formidable this army truly was.

We must understand that the weapons of that age were neither light nor symbolic. The bows and arrows used in those times required extraordinary physical strength, stamina, and skill. The word “**śvasa**” refers to the bow, and **Mahā-śvasa** indicates those capable of wielding the most powerful bows—such as the bow of Lord Śiva himself. Only the mightiest warriors could handle such weapons. Therefore, those described as Mahā-śvasa Ati-śūras were not merely brave, but supremely powerful and victorious heroes on the battlefield.

Among all of them, Bhīma always stands foremost in Duryodhana’s mind. Bhīma’s sheer physical strength haunted him throughout his life. Duryodhana repeatedly places Bhīma and Arjuna together, almost as if unconsciously admitting that the combined power of these two alone equaled that of many warriors. Their very presence generated fear and deep insecurity within him.

Duryodhana then speaks of **Sātyaki**, also known as Yuyudhāna. Sātyaki earned this name because of the exceptional valor he displayed in battle. He was not an ordinary warrior; he was a direct disciple of Arjuna and had mastered the complete science of archery under his guidance. Among the seven warriors from the Pāṇḍava side who survived the war, Sātyaki was one of them—a fact that itself speaks volumes about his skill, resilience, and endurance.

He also mentions **King Virāṭa**, the powerful ruler under whose protection the Pāṇḍavas lived during their period of **Agyātavāsa**—the year of living in disguise. Virāṭa was no ordinary king; he was a formidable charioteer and warrior in his own right. Alongside him stands **Drupada**, whom we already know as a mighty fighter—one who had once single-handedly defeated the Kauravas.

Duryodhana continues listing **Mahā-rathas**, the highest class of warriors, each capable of fighting thousands single-handedly. The list appears endless, and with every name he utters, his inner anxiety intensifies. On the surface, he seems to be briefing Droṇācārya, but beneath that, his words betray fear and unease. The sight of such a powerful assembly of warriors on the opposing side deeply unsettles him.

Even before the battle begins, Duryodhana’s mind is already shaken. This long enumeration of mighty archers is not merely informational—it is an unconscious confession of the immense strength he faces and the growing insecurity within him.

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,

Although Duryodhana’s own clan was numerically very large, he could clearly see that the opposing side was filled with mighty and heroic warriors. He begins naming them one by one—**Dṛṣṭaketu, the kings of Kāśī (Kāśīrāja), Vīryavān, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and the Śaibyās**. These warriors are collectively referred to as **Nara-puṅgavāḥ**, meaning “the best among men.” This term especially highlights the valor of the Śaibyās, but it applies equally to all these exceptional warriors standing on the side of the Pāṇḍavas.

All these warriors were part of **Dṛṣṭaketu’s army**. Dṛṣṭaketu was the son of **Śísupāla**. While Śísupāla himself was not known for virtue or devotion, his son was entirely different in nature. Dṛṣṭaketu was righteous and devoted, and he had firmly chosen to follow the path of **Śrī Kṛṣṇa**. He also had a close family connection with the Pāṇḍavas—his sister was married to **Nakula**—which naturally placed him on their side in the war.

Another great warrior mentioned is **Chekitāna**, who belonged to the **Ṛṣiṇa dynasty**. Chekitāna displayed extraordinary valor during the battle. At one point, he even managed to overpower Kṛpācārya, who was regarded as nearly invincible. Chekitāna struck him with such force that **Kṛpācārya** was rendered unconscious. However, despite his heroism, Chekitāna was later killed by Duryodhana himself.

Then comes **Kāśīrāja**, the king of Kāśī. As his title indicates, he was a powerful and victorious ruler, widely known for his bravery and strength on the battlefield. His presence further strengthened the Pāṇḍava forces.

There is also special mention of **Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and the Bhojas**. These warriors were closely related—Purujit and Kuntibhoja were brothers—and they belonged to a noble and courageous lineage. **Śaibya and Mahā-Śaibya** were also kings, celebrated for their victories and valor in battle. Together, all these warriors formed a formidable force supporting the Pāṇḍavas.

Through this detailed listing, it becomes evident that although the Kaurava army was vast in numbers, the Pāṇḍava side was rich in quality, **courage, righteousness, and heroic strength**—a reality that deeply unsettled Duryodhana even before the war began.

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).

Duryodhana, in this śloka, continues his narration. All of these warriors present on the Pāṇḍava side were among the finest fighters of that age—**Yudhamanyu, Vikrānta, Uttamaujas, Vīryavān, Saubhadra (Abhimanyu), and the sons of Draupadī**. Each one of them was a great warrior—highly skilled, courageous, and battle-hardened.

Among them, **Yudhamanyu** and **Uttamaujas** carried a very special responsibility during the war. They were entrusted with the protection of **Arjuna’s chariot**. In those times, the chariot was the most critical war vehicle, and protecting the charioteer meant protecting the very heart of the battlefield. These two warriors stood firmly beside Arjuna, defending him from all sides and repelling every attack directed at his chariot. Their courage and vigilance were such that even powerful Kaurava warriors were unable to breach their defense.

Yudhamanyu and **Uttamaujas** fought with unmatched bravery. They defeated many mighty opponents, including several sons of the Kauravas. Their valor played a crucial role in weakening the Kaurava forces. However, despite their greatness, they met a tragic end. After the war had concluded, **Aśvatthāmā** killed

them deceitfully while they were asleep, committing one of the darkest and most condemnable acts of the Mahābhārata.

King Śaibya, another important warrior mentioned here, was the father-in-law of **Yudhiṣṭhira**. His sons—**Uttamaújās** and **Vīryavān**—were also great warriors who fought bravely on the side of the Pāṇḍavas. Their presence further strengthened the righteous army.

Then there is **Saubhadra**, none other than **Abhimanyu**, the beloved son of **Arjuna** and **Subhadrā**. Along with him were **Draupadī's five sons**, all of whom were trained warriors and fought courageously. These young heroes represented the future generation of the Pāṇḍava lineage and stood firmly for dharma on the battlefield.

All these warriors—young and old, kings and princes—were united on the side of the Pāṇḍavas. As Duryodhana lists them, one can clearly sense his growing anxiety. He realizes that for several verses now, he has been praising the strength of the enemy army. And suddenly, a thought arises in his mind: “*I have spoken so much about them—should I not now speak about our own warriors?*”

This inner unease reveals Duryodhana's fear and insecurity even before the war truly begins.

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.

After describing the entire strength and formation of the Pāṇḍava army, Duryodhana, in this śloka, begins to feel uneasy. He senses that his tone may not have been appropriate. **Droṇācārya** has not responded. He has neither nodded nor reassured him, nor acknowledged anything that Duryodhana has listed. This silence makes Duryodhana uncomfortable. Somewhere within, he begins to fear that he may appear weak, doubtful, or lacking confidence.

Realizing this inner disturbance, Duryodhana immediately changes his strategy. The first thing he does is flatter his commander. He turns toward **Droṇācārya** and addresses him with praise, calling him “**Dwijottama**”—O best among the twice-born, the foremost of all Brāhmaṇas.

The word *Dvij* means “twice-born.” Brāhmaṇas are called *Dvija* because they are believed to be born twice—once physically, and a second time through *saṃskāra*, when they receive the sacred thread, take the vow of *brahmacharya*, and formally enter the path of discipline, learning, and spiritual responsibility. By addressing **Droṇācārya** as **Dwijottama**, Duryodhana is deliberately elevating him, appealing to his identity, dignity, and sense of honor.

Having thus praised him, Duryodhana hastily reassures his teacher: “Do not worry. We are strong as well. Our side is not weak.” In essence, he says, “Now let me tell you about our army too.”

Turning toward Sañjaya—though fully aware that **Droṇācārya** already knows all of this—Duryodhana begins listing the warriors on his own side. This enumeration is not meant to inform. It is an attempt to regain confidence, to assert strength, and to re-establish authority before his teacher and commander.

Thus, even before the war begins, Duryodhana's inner fear, insecurity, and psychological imbalance stand exposed. His words reveal that while he outwardly boasts of power, inwardly he is unsettled—and his very need to flatter and reassure betrays the weakness he is trying so hard to conceal.

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);

In this śloka, Duryodhana begins listing the great warriors standing on his own side: **Bhavān (yourself), Bhīṣma, Karṇa, Kṛpācārya, Śakuni, Jayadratha, Aśvatthāmā, Vikarṇa, Somadatta**, and others.

First and foremost, he addresses **Droṇācārya** himself. Droṇa is the guru of both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. A guru is always supreme. No matter how great a disciple becomes, he can never surpass the guru, because all knowledge flows from the guru alone. Therefore, Duryodhana begins by saying "**Bhavān**"—first, it is *you*, the revered teacher of all.

Next, he mentions **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha**, the mighty and invincible warrior. Everyone knows that no one can defeat **Bhīṣma** in battle. Bhīṣma himself has declared that as long as he stands to protect the Kaurava clan, no one can overpower them. There is only one being capable of defeating Bhīṣma, and that is **Śrī Kṛṣṇa**. However, **Śrī Kṛṣṇa** has already taken a vow not to lift any weapon in this war. Therefore, Bhīṣma appears completely invincible on the battlefield.

Next comes **Karṇa**. Karṇa was undoubtedly a powerful warrior, though not naturally the greatest. His strength was accompanied by a curse upon his knowledge, given by his own guru—a story that can be explained separately. Because of this curse, Karṇa became both formidable and tragic. He was also a staunch supporter of **Duryodhana**. In fact, many of Duryodhana's wrong decisions were strongly influenced by Karṇa's counsel. Karṇa stood unwaveringly by Duryodhana and supported him in all his actions.

Then Duryodhana mentions **Kṛpācārya**, also known as **Kṛpa**, who is described as **Ajitinjaya**—one who has never been defeated in battle. While listing these names, Duryodhana suddenly realizes that he has mentioned Karṇa but not **Aśvatthāmā**, the son of **Droṇācārya** himself. It is well known that Karṇa was never especially favored by either Bhīṣma or Droṇa. Realizing this omission, Duryodhana quickly adds **Aśvatthāmā** and **Vikarṇa**, emphasizing that they too are mighty warriors firmly standing on their side.

Finally, he mentions **Somadatta**, whose son is **Bhūriśravā**. **Bhūriśravā** was also a powerful warrior and commanded a large Akṣauhiṇī army. He was opposed to **Śrī Kṛṣṇa** and stood strongly in support of **Duryodhana**. In this way, Duryodhana concludes that all these warriors are united and standing together on the Kaurava side.

Through this listing, Duryodhana attempts to reassure himself and his commander that despite the formidable strength of the Pāṇḍavas, his own side is equally powerful and well supported.

1.9

anye ca bahavaḥ(ś) śūrā, madarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ, nānāśastrapraharaṇāḥ(s), sarve yuddhaviśāradaḥ. 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.

When Duryodhana says "**anye ca bahavaḥ śūrāḥ**", what he truly implies is this: the list of warriors is still

incomplete. There are many more names that could be added. Yet this phrase subtly points toward those **bahavaḥ śūrāḥ**—the many heroic warriors—who were prepared to give up their lives, fighting bravely with weapons in their hands, battling like true kṣatriyas until their final breath.

Among them, the reference implicitly recalls **Bhūrīśravā**, a warrior who indeed sacrificed his life on the battlefield. He fought valiantly, wielding multiple weapons, displaying unwavering courage, and meeting death as a true warrior. There were many such heroes who laid down their lives in this war.

But we must pause here and look beneath the surface. What emotion stands out most clearly in this statement? It is not righteousness. It is not dharma. It is **ego**.

Duryodhana begins by taking the name of **Droṇācārya** himself—his own guru. And then the deeper implication becomes evident: *all of you are here to sacrifice your lives for me*. For **Duryodhana**, this war was never about right versus wrong. It was only about *his ego versus everyone else*. Whatever had to be sacrificed—people, relationships, values, even dharma—was willingly sacrificed at the altar of that ego.

Even his own mother ultimately gave up her life because of him. Everything revolved around **Duryodhana** alone. Through this speech, he conveys a very subtle yet dangerous message: *You may be my guru, but ultimately, you are also working for me*. You are bound to fight on my behalf. Your presence here is a declaration of loyalty to me—even if it costs you your life.

Finally, he asserts that the warriors of this age are fully prepared. They are armed with powerful weapons and divine missiles, endowed with the highest skills of warfare. They are mighty fighters and seasoned experts in battle. The army is completely equipped—every conceivable weapon is ready. There is no shortage of strength, no lack of resources—only the burning fire of **ego** driving everything forward.

Thus, even in this seemingly confident declaration, Duryodhana's inner world is laid bare: not devotion to dharma, but blind attachment to power and self, propelling the march toward destruction.

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.

This entire army is being protected by **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha**. Even though, at times, he may appear restrained or limited in his actions, his protection is still powerful enough to hold back the enemy. Under **Bhīṣma's** command, the Kaurava army stands firm and disciplined.

However, Duryodhana subtly draws a comparison between the two sides. He implies: *our* army is protected by **Bhīṣma**, but *their* army is protected by **Bhīma**, whose physical strength is boundless and whose force appears inexhaustible. Thus, although **Bhīṣma** is defending the Kauravas, Duryodhana inwardly feels that it may still not be sufficient. On the other hand, the army defended by **Bhīma** seems complete, self-sustaining, and formidable.

What Duryodhana is indirectly pointing toward is something much deeper. **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** is indeed doing his utmost to protect the Kaurava army, yet his heart remains inclined toward the **Pāṇḍavas**. Similarly, **Droṇācārya** loves all his students equally and has imparted his knowledge without discrimination. He is the guru of both sides. Yet, among all his disciples, **Arjuna** remains the closest to his heart.

Even during moments of war and moral conflict, **Droṇācārya's** faith in **Yudhiṣṭhira's** truthfulness never wavered. He firmly believed that **Yudhiṣṭhira** would never utter a lie. **Yudhiṣṭhira** stood unwaveringly on the side of dharma, and this faith was shared by both **Droṇācārya** and **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha**.

Thus, when Duryodhana says, “**Bhīṣma** is protecting us,” he is also subtly appealing to **Droṇācārya**: *At least be impartial*. **Bhīṣma** is leading the army and standing visibly on the Kaurava side. As long as **Bhīṣma** remains with us, the army cannot be easily broken. His mere presence lends strength, order, and stability.

This verse therefore carries two layers of meaning. Some commentaries highlight only the surface meaning—that the army protected by **Bhīṣma** is strong and secure. The deeper meaning, however, reveals a quiet contradiction: although **Bhīṣma** is physically defending the Kauravas, his inner alignment still rests with the **Pāṇḍavas**.

Finally, the image of **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** emerges as that of a universal father figure. According to each warrior's capacity and responsibility, he assigns positions and duties. When **Bhīṣma** indicates, “Each of you is supreme in your own place,” he emphasizes that the army must function with structure and discipline—every warrior standing in his rightful position and contributing according to his strength, role, and dharma.

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.

The army must be properly divided, exactly as it is now positioned. Every section of the army requires protection. The central point that **Duryodhana** keeps stressing is this: if **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** is protected, everyone will remain safe. As long as **Bhīṣma** stands secure, the entire army stands secure.

Bhīṣma Pitāmaha is the supreme commander of this army. After him, the next commander is **Droṇācārya**. Both **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** and **Droṇācārya** are unmatched in warfare and strategy. In terms of skill, wisdom, experience, and authority, they stand on an equal pedestal.

Yet, ironically, the person issuing all these instructions is **Duryodhana** himself. He is neither the commander, nor the guru, nor the most experienced warrior—yet he repeatedly interferes, advising and directing everyone. This is the core flaw in **Duryodhana's** nature. As a self-proclaimed king, he feels compelled to control every situation, issuing extra instructions to ensure that **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** remains protected at all costs.

Why does he do this?

Because **Duryodhana** knows that as long as **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** stands firm on the battlefield, the Kaurava army cannot be easily defeated. An army protected by **Bhīṣma** is extraordinarily difficult to overcome. This fear and insecurity drive **Duryodhana** to repeatedly emphasize **Bhīṣma's** protection.

However, despite all this anxious planning and excessive instruction, **Droṇācārya** remains silent. He does not respond. He neither agrees nor reassures. His silence itself speaks volumes—it reflects displeasure, restraint, and inner distance from **Duryodhana's** mindset.

At this point, a natural question arises:

Who comes forward next to lift **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha's** spirit?
Who steps in when the guru remains silent?
And what immediately follows this moment of tension?

That, the speaker says, will be revealed in the next session.

Question and Answer Session

Astha Chandak ji

Q: Who is **Śalya** in the Mahābhārata?

A: **Śalya Rāja** is the brother of **Mādrī**. King **Pāṇḍu** had two queens—**Kuntī Mātā** and **Mādrī**. **Śalya** is **Mādrī's** brother and therefore the maternal uncle of **Nakula** and **Sahadeva**. He was a very powerful and victorious king and originally wished to support **Yudhiṣṭhira**.

When kings were choosing sides for the war, **Śalya** was traveling to meet **Yudhiṣṭhira**. On the way, **Duryodhana** arranged grand hospitality to impress him. **Śalya** assumed these arrangements were made by **Yudhiṣṭhira**. When he declared, “Whoever has done this, I will grant whatever they ask,” **Duryodhana** revealed himself. Through this deception, **Duryodhana** secured **Śalya's** support.

Although **Śalya** fought on the Kaurava side, his heart remained with the Pāṇḍavas. Later, he became **Karṇa's** charioteer. Instead of encouraging **Karṇa**, he constantly demoralized him, which ultimately contributed to **Karṇa's** downfall.

Deva Ramanathan ji

Q: What is the meaning of “**paryāptam**” and “**aparyāptam**” in Bhagavad Gītā 1.10?

A: Both interpretations are correct. **Aparyāptam** means insufficient. Some commentaries explain that the army protected by **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** is insufficient to defeat the Pāṇḍavas, while the Pāṇḍava army protected by **Bhīma** is sufficient. Other texts interpret it the opposite way. Grammatically and contextually, both meanings are valid. **Gītā Press**, especially in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Tattva Vivecanī*, presents this explanation clearly. Through this verse, **Duryodhana's** ego is revealed from the very beginning.

D. Murty ji

Q: If **Duryodhana** was so egoistic, why did **Bhīṣma** and **Droṇa** support him?

A: A teacher can guide, but cannot change a person's basic nature. **Droṇācārya** tried his best. **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha** also tried his best. Even **Lord Kṛṣṇa** went for peace talks. Everyone advised against the war. But **Dhṛtarāṣṭra** repeatedly encouraged **Duryodhana**. That assurance from the father was the real support.

Bhīṣma had taken a vow—to protect the throne of **Hastināpura**, whoever sat upon it. **Droṇa** was bound by duty as a royal teacher. They were bound by their dharma, even when the side they stood on was wrong.

Q: Why is **Kṛṣṇa** only **Arjuna's** charioteer? Did others not have charioteers?

A: Every warrior had a charioteer. **Kṛṣṇa** served only as **Arjuna's** charioteer because **Arjuna** personally requested Him. **Yudhiṣṭhira**, **Bhīma**, **Nakula**, and **Sahadeva** all had different charioteers. **Kṛṣṇa** agreed on the condition that He would not wield weapons. **Balarāma ji** advised Him not to fight. **Kṛṣṇa** said, “I

will not fight, but I will be with you.”

Meenakshi ji

Q: If **Bhīṣma** and **Droṇa** knew the Kauravas were wrong, why didn't they leave them?

A: **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha's** vow was unbreakable—he had promised to protect **Hastināpura**. **Droṇācārya** was serving the kingdom as a guru. At that time, people did not abandon duties easily. Just as **Kumbhakarna** fought for **Rāvaṇa** despite disagreeing with him, **Bhīṣma** and **Droṇa** fulfilled their dharma even knowing it would lead to their death.

Harihara Panigrahy ji

Q: What message does the Mahābhārata give beyond the Bhagavad Gītā?

A: Many believe they know the Mahābhārata, but in reality, they know only the Bhagavad Gītā portion. The Mahābhārata is vast and profound. Even my own study is limited. Therefore, I always recommend listening to **Gurudev's** full Mahābhārata discourses.

Characters often labeled as negative also teach powerful lessons. **Swamiji** explains how **Duryodhana** gathered eleven Akṣauhiṇī armies—an example of leadership. **Draupadī's** mindset is often overlooked; **Swamiji** says her thinking is closest to **Śrī Kṛṣṇa's**. **Bhīṣma Pitāmaha's** teachings in the *Śānti Parva* explain Rājadharmā—how a kingdom and society should function.

After the war, **Yudhiṣṭhira** fell into deep depression, and it was **Bhīṣma's** guidance that uplifted him. The Mahābhārata is about establishing dharma and learning to take the right decision at the right time. **Gurudev** says that one who studies the Mahābhārata deeply always becomes victorious.

Dhanashri ji

Q: How should beginners study the Mahābhārata?

A: Begin with authentic texts, especially **Gītā Press** publications. Avoid biased interpretations. Study Sanskrit along with reliable translations. Listen to **Gurudev's** discourses.

For children, start with the **Rāmāyaṇa**. **Swamiji** often says that when a child is young, the Rāmāyaṇa is appropriate; the Mahābhārata becomes meaningful as one grows older. Even when showing the Mahābhārata serial, guidance is essential.

Śrī Rāma is the best example of Bhagavad Gītā teachings. One night He was about to be crowned king; the next day He was sent to the forest—yet His composure never changed. Understanding **Rāmcaritmānas** naturally leads to understanding the Bhagavad Gītā. The wisdom of the Gītā flows from the **Yoga Vāsiṣṭha**, which **Śrī Rāma** had learned earlier and which later manifested through **Śrī Kṛṣṇa**.

Therefore, build the foundation first. Study deeply yourself. Then guide others. Slowly, clarity arises—for both the teacher and the learner.



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