



ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga

2/4 (Ślōka 12-30), Saturday, 03 January 2026

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/KdiXJ6EheCE>

The Preparation for the Great War or the Dharma-Yuddha

The first chapter of Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā is Arjuna Vishāda Yoga – The Yoga of Dejection of Arjuna.

The evening session started with the ritual of Deepa Prajwalan, lighting of the divine lamp. Prayers were offered to Paramātmā and Guru Parampara.

In the Geeta Pariwar, we start the Bhagavadgītā with the twelfth chapter instead of the first one, and devotees often wonder about the reason behind it. The answer is simple. The twelfth chapter or the Bhakti Yoga is the shortest and the easiest chapter to understand. Hence, we proceed from the easiest to the difficult chapters. The first chapter or the **Arjuna Vishad Yoga** is the precursor to the remaining chapters as it deals with the very plot that has initiated the teachings of the Gītā. The chapter begins with both the armies of the Pandavas and Kauravas stationed in the battlefield, wherein after surveying his opponent, Arjuna starts feeling despondent and expresses his unwillingness to fight his kith and kin, especially his revered Guru Dronacharya and his beloved Bhīṣma Pitāmaha.

His reason, as stated in chapter 2 is as follows:

गुरूनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्
श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके ।
हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरूनिहैव
भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान् ॥ 5॥

(It would be better to live in this world by begging, than to enjoy life by killing these noble elders, who are my teachers. If we kill them, the wealth and pleasures we enjoy will be tainted with blood.)

After all, his Guru and his grandsire are the ones who have shaped Arjuna to his present stature as the most skilled warrior.

We, with our human limitations, would at first be in compliance with Arjuna's arguments and see perfect logic in his reasoning. This is because we have not yet heard Bhagavān give HIS view on the reasons why

Arjuna should fight instead of retreating from the war. Ishwar steps in only in the second chapter to impart HIS precious words of wisdom to Arjuna. That is why it is said that the real essence of the Gitā starts with chapter 2. Adi Shankaracharya too, started his commentary on Gitā Bhashya from the eleventh shloka of the second chapter:

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥ 11॥

(The Supreme Lord said: While you speak words of wisdom, you are mourning for that which is not worthy of grief. The wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.)

Thus far we have learnt from the previous shlokas that the war has started and that Dhritarashtra has asked Sanjaya to narrate the sequence of the events that are currently transpiring in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Unlike Dhritrashtra who is blind, Sanjaya has normal vision. However, even while sitting in the palace far away from the battlefield, Sanjaya can see what is happening on the war front as he has been blessed with 'Divya-Drishti' or Divine vision by Vyas Muni. In the next set of shlokas we see Sanjaya give detailed descriptions of the armies that are aligned with Pandavas and Kauravas respectively.

1.12

**tasya sañjanayanharṣam(ṅ), kuruvṛddhaḥ(ph) pitāmahaḥ,
siṃhanādam(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.

Before we delve into the twelfth shloka, let us recapitulate the tenth shloka of the first chapter, as this shloka explains the actions of Bhīṣma Pitāmaha in the subsequent shlokas:

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम् ।
पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम् ॥ 10॥

(The strength of our army is unlimited and we are safely marshalled by Grandsire Bhishma, while the strength of the Pandava army, carefully marshalled by Bhima, is limited.)

There are two interpretations of this verse. As per Ram Sukhdev ji Maharaj versus the other interpretations, the shloka can infer that the Pandavas are not sufficient in numbers to fight against the opponents. Alternatively, it can also imply that both the armies are well-matched in prowess.

According to Ram Sukhdev ji Maharaj, **Duryodhana makes such tall claims about the strength in the number of his armies to mask his fear.** He knows that he is fighting against righteousness and is hence afraid. In order to alleviate Duryodhana's fear, Bhishma blows his conch which sounds like the roar of a lion.

It is to be noted that **Bhīṣma pitāmaha had always been on the side of Dharma, yet he chose to be allied with the Kauravas as he owed his earnings to Hastinapur.**

It was a custom those days to blow the conches in order to signal the commencement of war. Hence, to take the edge off Duryodhana's anxiety and fill his heart with happiness, Bhishma blows his conch as loudly as ever.

1.13

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

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

No sooner did Bhīṣma Pitāmaha blow his conch, than the others present in the battlefield started sounding off their conches as well. The conches were accompanied by other war instruments like Mridang, Dhol and trumpets. The booming sound prepared everybody for war and simultaneously filled those present with an impending sense of fear.

In movies we often see that the actions take momentum when the hero makes his entry. **Similarly, we see in the next shloka the grand arrival of Sri Krishna and Arjuna.**

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.

Sri Bhagavān comes in a chariot driven by magnificent white horses, the sound of conches filling the air. Before the commencement of the war, Sri Krishna had vowed not to wield any weapon. On the other hand, Bhishma, a great devotee, had pledged that he would make Parameshwar break his promise and pick up a weapon, seeing it as a challenge to his own devotion and the war's outcome. The story goes that Bhishma forced HIM to take up a weapon by relentlessly attacking the Pandava army and targeting Sri Krishna's vow of non-combat, causing HIM to get angry and grab a chariot wheel to charge at Bhishma out of fury, thus fulfilling Bhishma's vow to make Ishwar break his promise. **However, it is a known fact that Paramātmā never fails HIS devotees, and if HE did take up a weapon it was entirely because of HIS love for Bhishma.**

Before the war had started, both Duryodhana and Arjuna had gone to Sri Krishna to seek HIS support. At the time of their visit, Paramātmā had been in a state of sleep. Duryodhana had positioned himself near the head of Ishwar, while Arjuna sat reverently at HIS feet. When Bhagavān woke up, HIS sight first fell on Arjuna and HE therefore greeted the latter warmly. When HE heard both Duryodhana and Arjuna asking for HIS support during the war, Parameshwar offered both of them to opt for one of the two options: They could choose HIS Narayani Sena that had been personally trained by HIM, or opt for Ishwar. Yet another clause was that Sri Krishna would not wield any weapon during the war. As Bhagavān had seen Arjuna first, HE gave the latter the privilege of stating his choice before Duryodhana could put forward his own plea. **Without a moment's hesitation, Arjuna chose Sri Krishna over HIS formidable Narayani Sena.** Duryodhana was, of course, thrilled as he had all along wanted Sri Krishna's army.

In the Mahabharat war, there were a total of 18 Akshauhini Senas. An Akshauhini Sena was a massive, structured ancient Indian army unit, comprising precise numbers of chariots, elephants, horses, and infantry.

Out of these, seven Akshauhinis were allied with the Pandavas while the remaining belonged to the Kauravas. In spite of a limited number of Akshauhinis, victory was certain for the Pandavas. After all, Ishwar HIMSELF was on their side!

1.15

pāñcajanyaṃ(m) hr̥ṣikeśo, 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.

This shloka reveals the names of the shankhas or conches that belonged to Ishwar, Arjuna and Bhima. Sri Krishna's conch is named Pāñcajanyaṃ. It is made of bones that belonged to an Asura called Panchajana, who had wanted to stay with Bhagavān forever. **Hence, Sri Krishna uses this conch named Pāñcajanyaṃ, which means, 'born of Panchajanya'.**

Here Bhagavān is called Hrishikesh i.e. Master of the senses. Arjuna has been called Dhananjay. When the Rajasuya Yagya was performed, the Pandava brothers went in different directions to acquire wealth. As Arjuna alone brought so much wealth from one direction which the other brothers could not bring together; he has been named **Dhananjay, a word derived from the word 'Dhana' or wealth.** Bhima has Vrikagni in his stomach which never calms down, hence he got the name Vrikodara. His conch called Pauṇḍraṃ is huge and needs a lot of energy and power to be blown. **It is not a conch that can be used by men of mediocre strength.**

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 conch belonging to Yudhiṣṭhiraḥ is called Anantavijayaṃ, while Nakula and Sahadev owned the conches called Sughoṣa and Maṇipuṣpaka respectively. Both Nakula and Sahadev were the sons of Madri who was Pandu's second wife, whereas Yudhiṣṭhiraḥ, Bhima and Arjuna were Kunti's sons. Much before Kunti's marriage, she bore a son famously known as Karna, who was discarded at birth by Kunti due to her fear of infamy. The Pandava warriors blew their conches together, causing fear in their foes. **The setting of the war is itself rather petrifying with a sizeable number of elephants, horses and warriors all assembled in arrays.**

1.17

kāśyaśca parameśvāsaḥ(ś), śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ, dhr̥ṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca, sātyakiścāparājitaḥ. 1.17

And the excellent archer, the King of Kāśī, and Śikhaṇḍī the Mahārathī (the great chariot-warrior), Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna and Virāṭa, and invincible Sātyaki,

This shloka describes key warriors on the Pandava side, listing the great archer King of Kashi, the mighty warrior Shikhandi, Dhrishtadyumna, Virāt and Sātyaki.

Shikhandi ultimately became the cause of death for Bhiṣma pitāmaha. In his previous birth, Shikhandi was the princess Amba who had been abducted by Bhishma on the day of her Swayamvar. Bhishma's actions resulted in Amba being rejected by her beloved King Salva, leaving her dejected and

despondent. Unable to marry Salva and denied her rightful place, Amba vowed vengeance against Bhishma, wherein in her reincarnation as Shikhandi, she caused the death of Bhishma in the mighty war.

Dhṛṣṭadyumno was the son of King Drupad and the brother of Draupadi.

1.18

**drupado draupadeyāśca, sarvaśaḥ(ph) pṛthivīpate,
saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ(ś), śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ(ph) pṛthakpṛthak. 1.18**

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.

Also aligned with the Pandavas were King Drupad, father of Draupadi, Draupadeyāśca or the five sons of Draupadi and Abhimanyu the son of Subhadra. The five sons of Draupadi were later killed treacherously by Ashwathama, while Abhimanyu was killed by Karna and his cohort in what can be termed as the most unfair encounter between the lone and hapless Abhimanyu and the Kauravas. These great warriors blew their conches in unison, indicating their preparedness for the great war.

1.19

**sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṅ(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.

The terrific sound emitted by the conches blown by the Pandavas, thundered across the sky and the earth, and shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhritarashtra. The Pandavas were on the side of righteousness and hence had little to fear, whereas the Kauravas were well aware that they were on the side of adharma, and were hence apprehensive about the outcome of the war.

There were many kings on the side of the Kauravas who had not really wanted to fight the Pandavas. However, torn between dharma on one side and loyalty towards Duryodhana on the other side, they were left with no choice.

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,

So far in the battle-field, Arjuna had no delusion. He had confidence in his skills as a warrior. **He has been referred to as Kapidhvajah in this shloka as the flag on his chariot bore the insignia of Lord Hanuman.** The word 'Kapi' alludes to Hanuman ji, while the word 'Dhvajah' means flag. The person who has the flag of Lord Hanuman on his chariot is Kapidhvajah. Seeing the sons of Dhritarashtra arrayed against him and ready to use their weapons, Arjuna takes up his Gandeeva or the bow.

1.21

**hr̥ṣikeśaṃ(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.

Turning to Sri Krishna, Arjuna requests HIM to place the chariot between the two armies. The word **senayorubhayormadhye** can be broken into three parts: **senayoh** meaning armies, **ubhayoh** meaning both, and **madhye** which means in the middle. Arjuna wants to see all the warriors who have gathered to support the evil minded Duryodhana and hence asks for the chariot to be placed in between the two armies. Arjuna is confident as he has not lost a single war so far. **His previous victories have assured him of the indisputable fact that he is the best of all the warriors who are taking part in this great war, the Mahabharata.**

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 wants to survey and analyze the adversaries who have assembled to fight with him. He wants to assess their strengths so that he can plan his own strategy in the war.

This is in fact a smart approach to any battle or even competition. Students engage in evaluation of their competitors whether it be in the field of sports or academics to plan their next move.

Arjuna wants to gauge the strength and weaknesses of his adversaries so that he can fortify himself and his army with the resources needed in order to gain an edge over his opponents.

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."

As stated earlier, Arjuna wants to see his opponents assembled in the battlefield in order to assess their state of preparedness for the war. He is particularly interested in getting a glimpse of the allies of the Kauravas. Duryodhana has been afflicted with 'durbuddhih' or an irrational mind-set. There is a well-known saying in Hindi:

विनाशकाले विपरीत बुद्धि

(The mind starts faltering when the time of doom approaches)

Duryodhana's inanity is particularly evident during Sri Krishna's visit to his court. Bhagavān asks Duryodhana to hand over just five villages to the Pandavas as part of 'Shānti Prastāv'; yet, the evil-minded Duryodhana refuses to part with even a small fraction of his land. Truly it can be said that when a person is a durbuddheḥ, he loses his sense of discrimination and vivek.

1.24

**sañjaya uvāca
evamukto hṛṣīkeśo, guḍākeśena bhārata,
senayorubhayormadhye, sthāpayitvā rathottamam. 1.24**

Sañjaya said:

O king, thus addressed by Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa placed the magnificent chariot between the two armies

Sanjay continues with his account of the events unfolding in the battle-field. Referring to Arjuna as **Gudakesha** or conqueror of sleep due to the latter's ability to stave off his slumber for almost six months, Sanjay tells Dhritarashtra that in response to Arjuna's request, Yogeshwar places his chariot between the two armies.

1.25

**bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ(s), sarveṣāṃ(ñ) ca mahīkṣitām,
uvāca pārtha paśyaitān, śamavetānkurūniti. 1.25**

in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the kings and said, "Arjuna, behold these Kauravas assembled here."

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna deliberately places the chariot right in front of Arjuna's beloved elders like Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and Dronacharya and asks him to survey all around. One would wonder why the mention of Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and Dronacharya is made repeatedly in this chapter. The reason is Arjuna's close emotional proximity to these luminaries.

Bhīṣma used to be dressed in white robes; yet he would allow the young Arjuna to sit on his lap. For Arjuna, Bhīṣma is no less than a father figure from whom he has learnt so much about notions of life!
Arjuna is well aware that only a person of his prowess and skill can fight with Bhīṣma.

Guru Dronacharya is the reason why Arjuna has become one of the most skilled warriors. With immense patience Dronacharya has trained Arjuna in the art of warfare. Of course, it may be claimed that Dronacharya's intention in taking special classes for Arjuna is because he wants to seek revenge on king Drupad. Nevertheless, **Arjuna owes his proficiency in war to his Guru. Arjuna is grateful and shares a close bond with both Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and Dronacharya.**

1.26

**tatrāpaśyatsthitānpārthaḥ(ph), pitṛnatha pitāmahān,
ācāryānmātulānbhrātṛn, putrānpautrānsakhīmstathā. 1.26**

Now Arjuna saw stationed there in both the armies his uncles, grand-uncles and teachers, even great grand-uncles, maternal uncles, brothers and cousins, sons and nephews, and grand-nephews, even so

friends, fathers-in-law and well-wishers as well.

Stationed between the two armies, Arjuna can see his much-respected grandfather Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and Guru Dronacharya standing in front of him. He can also see the other relatives including uncles, cousins, sons, nephews, grandchildren, friends, and well-wishers.

1.27

**śvaśūrānsuhṛdaścaiva, senayorubhayorapi,
tānsamīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ(s), sarvānbandhūnavasthitān. 1.27**

Seeing all the relations present there, Arjuna was overcome with deep compassion and spoke thus in sorrow.

Seeing so many of his loved ones present on the opposite side on the battlefield, relatives from his in-laws' side, his companions and supporters, Arjuna's attachment towards them resurfaces and he is overwhelmed with emotions, as revealed in the next shloka.

1.28

**kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo, viṣīdannidamabravīt,
arjuna uvāca
dr̥ṣṭvemaṃ(m) svajanaṃ(ñ) kṛṣṇa, yuyutsum(m) samupasthitam. 1.28**

Arjuna was overcome with deep compassion and spoke thus in sorrow. Kṛṣṇa, as I see these kinsmen arrayed for battle,

Arjuna is filled with pity as he wonders how he can possibly fight his kith and kin. He feels helpless and starts losing his confidence.

It is said that if wealth is lost, something is lost but if health is lost then everything is lost. Our Swamiji has further added, **“If wealth is lost, something is lost; if health is lost, everything is lost and if confidence is lost, everything is lost for ever.”**

If one is equipped with confidence, one can tide over the gravest of situations even if one has limited skills and material resources.

Earlier, Arjuna can be seen full of panache when he wants to assess his opponents. However, once he faces his opponent his determination starts faltering and he is filled with sorrow. Never before has he felt this kind of despondency-not even when he had fought with the Kauravas during his 'agyātvās', disguised as Brihannala.

The war about to take place at Kurukshetra is colossal in its scope, and would result in tremendous loss of lives. Hence, Arjuna is filled with remorse and sorrow.

1.29

**sīdanti mama gātrāṇi, mukhaṃ(ñ) ca pariśuṣyati,
vepathuśca śarīre me, romaharṣaśca jāyate. 1.29**

my limbs give way, and my mouth is getting parched; nay, a shiver runs through my body and hair stands on end.

Seeing his own kinsmen arrayed for battle, Arjuna's limbs give away and his mouth dries up. The word *gātrāṇi* means limbs. Arjuna's body is trembling and his mouth is arid and parched, as typically happens even with us when we get nervous during debates if we fail to come up with counter-points. The word *vepathuśca* means shuddering. **Arjuna's body shudders and his bodily hair stands on end when he sees his beloved relatives poised as adversaries in the battle-field.**

1.30

**gāṇḍīvaṃ(m) sraṃsate hastāt, tVākcaiva paridahyate, na ca
śaknomyavasthātum(m), bhRāmatīva ca me manaḥ. 1.30**

The bow, *Gāṇḍīva*, slips from my hand and my skin too burns all over; my mind is whirling, as it were, and I can no longer hold myself steady.

Arjuna tells Sri Krishna that his *gāṇḍīvaṃ* or bow is slipping from his hands; he feels his skin getting scorched and his mind whirling in confusion as he finds himself increasingly despondent and thus in no condition to fight.

In the subsequent shlokas, Arjuna continues telling Bhagavān about his dispirited and disheartened state of mind. These verses will be covered in the next session.

The evening concluded with a rendition of Hanuman Chalisa.



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Thank you-For reading the summary

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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