

- Chapter 1 -
Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra

TEXT 1

Begins section 1:
Setting the scene

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय ॥ १ ॥
dhṛtarāṣṭra¹ uvāca
dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre²

Comment [jh1]:

- One should study *Bhagavad Gītā* with the help of a devotee of the Lord
- Discuss the reasons for Dhṛtarāṣṭra's fear about the outcome of the battle.
- Discuss the likely outcome of the battle (Goswami J., 1986).

¹ One meaning of the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra is “he by whom the kingdom is held.” As this name indicates, Dhṛtarāṣṭra tried to hold the kingdom for himself. (Tripurari, 2001)

² “This work of Indian spirituality not only raised the question of the appropriate action for Arjuna to adopt, it also defines the existential challenge facing every human being. As struggling souls we ultimately attempt to transform our precarious painful world into a meaningful one. In the first half of the opening verse, spoken by the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Gītā presents such an existential tension: ...

“The first two lines, *dharma-kṣetre*, “on the field of dharma” and *kuru-kṣetre*, “on the field of Kuru,” set the stage for this tension. The field of Kuru, the holy place known as Kurukṣetra, is presented here as a place of “dharma.” Named after the pious King Kuru, the common ancestor of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, Kurukṣetra is, ironically, the site where the civil war between the sons of these two brothers, along with their respective armies, is about to take place. The reader learns that in the world of human interaction, we have an opportunity to live a life of dharma—a godly life promoting true happiness in relation to our worldly responsibilities and ultimate spiritual goals—or an ungodly life, in which forces destructive to dharma constantly prevail. The armies of the Pāṇḍavas, the sons of Pāṇḍu, represent the life of dharma; Dhṛtarāṣṭra's armies, the Kauravas, are destroyers of dharma.

“Like Arjuna, we humans often are caught between Pāṇḍava—and Kaurava—like forces, vacillating between thoughts and activities that elevate the spirit, helping us to rise above the destructive forces surrounding us, and those that degrade the spirit and further embroil us in the perils of worldly existence. The Gītā speaks deeply to each of us, for at some point, doesn't every soul, like Arjuna, face a unique battlefield in the other world as well as within? Throughout, Krishna proffers not only that we must act, but also how we must act to fight our individual battles. The axial core of the Gītā is this perpetual existential tension that we encounter—but not without purpose, the Gītā propounds.

“The foundational theme for the entire Gītā is dramatically established in the opening verse through the king's inquiry, “How did they act, O Sanjaya?” This question reveals the major theme of actions, around which the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā revolves: what action is, why and how we must act, or relation to action

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavās caiva
kim akurvata sañjaya

dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ uvāca—King Dhṛtarāṣṭra said; *dharma-kṣetre*—in the place of pilgrimage; *kuru-kṣetre*—in the place named Kurukṣetra; *samavetāḥ*—assembled; *yuyutsavaḥ*—desiring to fight; *māmakāḥ*—my party (sons); *pāṇḍavāḥ*—the sons of Pāṇḍu; *ca*—and; *eva*—certainly; *kim*—what; *akurvata*—did they do; *sañjaya*—O Sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: O Sañjaya, after my sons³ and the sons of Pāṇḍu assembled in the place of pilgrimage at Kurukṣetra, desiring to fight, what did they do?

Bhagavad-gītā is the widely read theistic science summarized in the *Gītā-māhātmya* (*Glorification of the Gītā*). There it says that one should read *Bhagavad-gītā* very scrutinizingly with the help of a person who is a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and try to understand it without personally motivated interpretations. The example of clear understanding is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā* itself, in the way the teaching is understood by Arjuna, who heard the *Gītā* directly from the Lord. If someone is fortunate enough to understand *Bhagavad-gītā* in that line of disciplic succession, without motivated interpretation, then he surpasses all studies of Vedic wisdom, and all scriptures of the world. One will find in the *Bhagavad-gītā* all that is contained in other scriptures, but the reader will also find things which are not to be found elsewhere. That is the specific standard of the *Gītā*. It is the perfect theistic science because it is directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The topics discussed by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Sañjaya, as described in the *Mahābhārata*, form the basic principle for this great philosophy. It is

and nonaction, when action is right or wrong, and how we should understand action in all circumstances. The blessings that surround us in this world, symbolized by the holy place of Kurukṣetra as a place of dharma the struggles that awe face in the world, represented by the desire to fight and the dilemma of how to act in light of the tension between the two, expressed by the king's questions, combine to make this opening verse of the *Gītā* the "seed" verse of the whole text" (Schweig, 2007, p. 8-9).

³ One meaning of the name Duryodhana is "dirty fighter." In the *Mahābhārata*, *āśrama-vāsika*, chapter one, Duryodhana is described as a partial incarnation of Kali. (Tripurari, 2001)

Comment [jh2]: Must hear Gita from a qualified source

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

understood that this philosophy evolved on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, which is a sacred place of pilgrimage from the immemorial time of the Vedic age. It was spoken by the Lord when He was present personally on this planet for the guidance of mankind.

The word *dharma-kṣetra* (a place where religious rituals are performed) is significant because, on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was present on the side of Arjuna. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the father of the Kurus, was highly doubtful⁴ about the possibility of his sons'

Comment [jh3]: Dhṛtarāṣṭra knew that Kurukṣetra gave the Pāṇḍavas an advantage and was therefore concerned about his sons' welfare.

⁴ In this verse Dhṛtarāṣṭra's voice is filled with doubt. He realized there was little hope that his sons would prevail. "Perhaps," he thought, "the piety of the Pāṇḍavas combined with the influence of Kurukṣetra will cause the Pāṇḍavas to walk away from the battle giving victory to Duryodhana by default." However, the Pāṇḍavas were more the pious. They were intimate devotees of Kṛṣṇa and thus transcendentalists of the highest order. Moreover, Kurukṣetra was far more sacred than Dhṛtarāṣṭra realized. Its sanctity is brought out by the devotional mystics of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition in their commentaries of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Jīva Goswāmi details the chronology of event leading to Kṛṣṇa's first coming to Kurukṣetra in his treatise on the *Bhāgavatam*, *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā*. At the age of fifty Kṛṣṇa came to Kurukṣetra with his royal entourage from Dwārakā. The secret purpose of the pilgrimage was to meet with the villagers and in particular the cowherd girls (*gopīs*) of Vraja, the rural setting of his youth. He wanted to assure the Vraja devotees that he loved them and that, although he was living outside of Vraja in high society, he was thinking of them constantly. After Kṛṣṇa had killed the evil king Kāmsa, he feared that those who sought to avenge his death would cause havoc in Vraja, whose residents were unequipped to deal with a military invasion. As Kṛṣṇa established the *dharma* throughout the land, he did so with his Vraja devotees in mind. In separation from him for over one hundred years with only one brief and somewhat awkward meeting here at Kurukṣetra, his devotees of Vraja never swayed in their love for him. Separation made their hearts grow fonder, in the same way that it made Kṛṣṇa's heart grow fonder for them. Now more than fifty years after his brief meeting with them at Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa was once again setting foot in this holy place and he was reminded of his previous meeting here with the *gopīs*.

When Kṛṣṇa met previously with the inhabitants of Vraja at Kurukṣetra, he had a private meeting with the *gopīs*, who loved him more than their own lives. How great must their necessity have been at that time? They were again with Kṛṣṇa, yet he was in princely dress. His peacock feather crown had been preplaced with royal jewels, his sweetness covered by majesty. He invited them to join him, but owing to circumstances they could not

They loved Kṛṣṇa the cowherd, but now in Kurukṣetra he appeared before them as a prince. He used to herd cows barefoot in the forests of Vraja, but now he was riding an elephant. He used to hold a flute in his two hands, but as a prince he sometimes appeared four-handed. The *gopīs* could not join him in the big city of Dwārakā. Being simple village girls they did not know how to act in high society, nor were they interested in being his queens. They longed for the full-moon nights of Vraja and the river Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa's friends and cows, all of which created an atmosphere conducive to the highest love, the *gopīs* could not be satisfied even in Kṛṣṇa's presence. They did not go with him to be members of his royal assembly, but in effect he went with them, promising them that he would soon return to Vraja and telling them that in the meantime they should know that he was theirs alone. Although he physically returned to Dwārakā, Kṛṣṇa admitted that Rādhā's devotion to him had conquered him. (Tripurari, 2001)

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

ultimate victory. In his doubt, he inquired from his secretary Sañjaya, "What did they do?" He was confident that both his sons and the sons of his younger brother Pāṇḍu were assembled in that Field of Kurukṣetra for a determined engagement of the war. Still, his inquiry is significant. He did not want a compromise between the cousins and brothers, and he wanted to be sure of the fate of his sons on the battlefield. Because the battle was arranged to be fought at Kurukṣetra, which is mentioned elsewhere in the *Vedas* as a place of worship—even for the denizens of heaven—Dhṛtarāṣṭra became very fearful about the influence of the holy place on the outcome of the battle. He knew very well that this would influence Arjuna and the sons of Pāṇḍu favorably, because by nature they were all virtuous. Sañjaya was a student of Vyāsa, and therefore, by the mercy of Vyāsa, Sañjaya was able to envision the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra even while he was in the room of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. And so, Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked him about the situation on the battlefield.

Both the Pāṇḍavas and the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra belong to the same family, but Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mind is disclosed herein. He deliberately claimed only his sons as Kurus, and he separated the sons of Pāṇḍu from the family heritage. One can thus understand the specific position of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in his relationship with his nephews, the sons of Pāṇḍu. As in the paddy field the unnecessary plants are taken out, so it is expected from the very beginning of these topics that in the religious field of Kurukṣetra, where the father of religion, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was present, the unwanted plants like Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana and others would be wiped out and the thoroughly religious persons, headed by Yudhiṣṭhira, would be established by the Lord. This is the significance of the words *dharma-kṣetre* and *kuru-kṣetre*, apart from their historical and Vedic importance.

TEXT 2

सञ्जय उवाच

दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा ।
आचार्यमुपसंगम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ २ ॥

sañjaya uvāca
dṛṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānikam
vyūḍham duryodhanas tadā

Comment [jh4]: Dhṛtarāṣṭra was so bereft of vision that he excluded his nephews from his family.

Comment [jh5]: Worried about his prospects for victory, Duryodhana goes to speak to his commander in chief, Droṇācārya (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*ācāryam upasaṅgamyā
rājā vacanam abravīt*

sañjayaḥ uvāca—Sañjaya said; *dr̥ṣṭvā*—after seeing; *tu*—but; *pāṇḍava-anīkam*—the soldiers of the Pāṇḍavas; *vyūḍham*—arranged in a military phalanx; *duryodhanaḥ*—King Duryodhana; *tadā*—at that time; *ācāryam*—the teacher; *upasaṅgamyā*—approaching; *rājā*—the king; *vacanam*—words; *abravīt*—spoke.

Sañjaya said: O King, after looking over the army arranged in military formation by the sons of Pāṇḍu, King Duryodhana went to his teacher and spoke the following words.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind from birth. Unfortunately, he was also bereft of spiritual vision. He knew very well that his sons were equally blind in the matter of religion, and he was sure that they could never reach an understanding with the Pāṇḍavas, who were all pious since birth. Still he was doubtful about the influence of the place of pilgrimage, and Sañjaya could understand his motive in asking about the situation on the battlefield. Sañjaya wanted, therefore, to encourage the despondent king and thus assured him that his sons were not going to make any sort of compromise under the influence of the holy place. Sañjaya therefore informed the king that his son, Duryodhana, after seeing the military force of the Pāṇḍavas, at once went to the commander in chief, Droṇācārya, to inform him of the real position. Although Duryodhana is mentioned as the king, he still had to go to the commander on account of the seriousness of the situation. He was therefore quite fit to be a politician. But Duryodhana's diplomatic veneer could not disguise the fear he felt when he saw the military arrangement of the Pāṇḍavas.

TEXT 3

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणामाचार्य महतीं चमूम् ।
व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता ॥ ३ ॥

*paśyaitāṁ pāṇḍu-putrāṇām
ācārya mahatīm camūm*

Comment [jh6]:

a. Duryodhana wants to make sure the Droṇācārya remains alert and uncompromising in the fight
b. Discuss Droṇācārya's vulnerable points (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*vyūḍhām drupada-putreṇa
tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā*

paśya—behold; *etām*—this; *pāṇḍu-putrāṇām*—of the sons of Pāṇḍu; *ācārya*—O teacher; *mahatīm*—great; *camūm*—military force; *vyūḍhām*—arranged; *drupada*—*putreṇa*—by the son of Drupada; *tava*—your; *śiṣyeṇa*—disciple; *dhīmatā*—very intelligent.

O my teacher⁵, behold the great army of the sons of Pāṇḍu, so expertly arranged by your intelligent disciple the son of Drupada⁶.

Duryodhana, a great diplomat, wanted to point out the defects of Droṇācārya, the great *brāhmaṇa* commander in chief. Droṇācārya had some political quarrel⁷ with King Drupada⁸, the father of Draupadī, who was

Comment [jh7]: Excellent diplomacy in this and the next several verses

⁵ “There was another great rishi named Bharadvaja, who used to perform austerities at the source of the Ganga. One day, when he went with many other rishis to bathe in the river, Bharadvaja happened to see the beautiful Apsara, Ghrītachi. Ghrītachi had also come there a little earlier to bathe, and as she got out of the water, Bharadvaja gazed upon her with great delight. Then, as Ghrītachi began to walk along the bank of the Ganga, her transparent dress revealed the full extent of her exquisite feminine loveliness. Indeed, just by meditating on Ghrītachi’s beautiful bodily features, Bharadvaja became maddened with the sensuous desire to enjoy her. As a result of this strong urge of passion, the rishi involuntarily discharged semen and so he quickly picked up an earthen jar called a drone in order to catch it before it could fall to the ground. It is for this reason that the child who was born from this clay pot received the name Drona” (Das, 1998, p. 53-54).

⁶ Said this way to incite Drona; see purport.

⁷ “Drona speaking to Bhishma: ‘Once when Ashvatthama was a small boy, he saw some rich man’s son drinking milk from a cow and then started crying. I was very pained to see the grief of my under privileged son and so I began to wander from country to country in search of someone who had many cows so that I could beg one from him in charity. I did not want to approach someone who possessed only a few cows, thinking that it might hinder him in the performance of his sacrifices. Anyway, in spite of all my attempts, no one agreed to give me a cow and so I had to return home empty-handed.

“One day thereafter, some of Ashvatthama’s playmates gave him water mixed with rice powder to drink. My poor son was deceived by this, and he was so happy that he began to dance with joy singing, ‘I have drunk milk! I have drunk milk!’ the other boys smiled when they saw Ashvatthama’s innocence, and since I also witnessed the incident, I felt very pained at heart. Then, soon after this, I overheard some people deriding me for not earning any money and thus allowing my son to become a laughing stock. At last, I decided to visit my old friend, Drupada, who had meanwhile been installed as the king of the Panchalas. I approached Drupada with great confidence, but unfortunately, he would not even recognize me as a friend, since I had fallen into such abject poverty. In fact, he claimed that he didn’t not even remember his childhood promise and all that he gave me was food and shelter for one night. Then next morning, I quickly left the kingdom of the Panchalas and came here, hoping to become the teacher of your grandsons” (Das, 1998).

“It was now time for the princes to leave Droṇa’s school. To complete their training they had to pay their

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

guru's fees by offering him dakṣiṇa. Traditionally, the dakṣiṇa was determined by the guru himself. Droṇa assembled the princes and said, 'There is only one thing I want. You should take King Drupada prisoner. Then bring him before me as your captive.'

"The princes replied, 'So be it.' They knew of their guru's enmity with the king. Drupada and Droṇa had lived together as children under the Ṛṣi Agniveśya. Drupada had promised that when he inherited his kingdom he would bestow half of it on his dear friend Droṇa. Later, when they had both grown to maturity, Droṇa went to Drupada and reminded him of their friendship and the promise. Seeing the poor Droṇa standing before him, Drupada had said, "O luckless Brahmin, how do you consider me as your friend now? Past friendships are meaningless. Only equals can be friends. I am a great king and you are an indigent Brahmin. Do not try to invoke a long-dead relationship.'

"Drupada had then laughed at Droṇa and offered him a little charity. Deeply insulted, Droṇa had left Pañchāla, Drupada's vast kingdom, his mind fixed on revenge. The time for that revenge had arrived. Droṇa looked about at his accomplished students and knew that Drupada would soon regret his arrogance.

"The princes mounted their chariots and sped toward Pañchāla. Accompanied by a large force of horsemen, they soon arrived at Drupada's capital, Kāmpilya. Duryodhana and his brothers vied with one another to lead the attack. They rushed toward the city gates with weapons raised. Sending up cries, they burst into Kāmpilya along its main highway while the terrified citizens hid in their houses.

"Outside the city Droṇa waited with the Pāṇḍavas. Arjuna had suggested to his brothers that they not accompany the Kauravas. 'They will not be able to overpower the mighty Drupada,' Arjuna had said. 'We should make our attack after theirs has been repulsed.'

"Drupada heard the attacking Kauravas crashing through his city and came straight out of his palace, mounted on his huge, white chariot. Roaring with joy at the chance for battle, he charged at the head of his army to defend the city. He showered his enemies with forceful arrows. His speed and lightness of motion were such that the Kauravas thought they were facing many Drupadas. He careered fearlessly in his chariot and entered into their midst, his bow constantly drawn to a circle and his searing shafts flying in all directions.

"The Pañchālas sounded thousands of conches, trumpets and drums, creating a noise that sounded like the roar of a tremendous lion. Drupada struck the Kuru princes with his arrows and sent them reeling. Seeing their king in the forefront of battle, the citizens came out of their houses to hurl clubs, maces and other missiles at the Kurus. The princes were surrounded by thousands of assailants and they felt oppressed and overwhelmed. They fled howling from the city with the Pañchālas in pursuit.

"The Pāṇḍavas laughed. Arjuna said scornfully to Yudhiṣṭhira, "Here come the proud Kauravas, put to flight by Drupada. They are strong in words only. It is time for us to fight. You stay here. I shall go with the others."

"Yudhiṣṭhira remained behind with Droṇa. His four brothers flew toward Kāmpilya. Bhīma bounded along with mace held aloft, while Arjuna raced behind him on a chariot with Nakula and Sahadeva on either side. The Pañchālas were waiting for them and had blocked the city gates with a row of elephants. Bhīma struck at them with his club. With their heads smashed and covered in blood, the elephants fell to the ground like cliffs broken off by thunderbolts. Bhīma spun like a furious tornado amid the Pañchāla warriors. Elephants, chariots and infantrymen fell in the thousands. The Pāṇḍavas drove the hostile force back as a herdsman drives cattle.

"Arjuna, keen to please his preceptor, released volleys of arrows at the immense Pañchāla forces. His straight-flying shafts came in an endless stream and sped unerringly at the enemy warriors. Arjuna resembled the all-devouring fire that appears at the end of an aeon. Protected on either side by his two brothers, he felled thousands of fighters.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Arjuna's wife. As a result of this quarrel, Drupada performed a great sacrifice, by which he received the benediction of having a son who would be able to kill

“Drupada raced to the head of his troops and they rallied with lion-like roars. Led by their king, they mounted a powerful counterattack against the Pāṇḍavas. Arrows, darts, spears and clubs rained down on the four brothers. Arjuna repelled all their missiles with his arrows. The Pañchālas enraged him with their furious attack and fought with redoubled energy. His foes could not mark any interval between his pulling an arrow from his quiver and bending his bow to fire it. All they saw was a constant stream of shafts speeding toward them. The mighty Pañchāla warriors shouted praises at Arjuna for his prowess.

“Along with his commander-in-chief Satyajit, Drupada personally rushed toward Arjuna. Like the king, Satyajit was a warrior capable of contending with thousands of other warriors at once. He struck Arjuna with a hundred fierce arrows and sent up a great roar. Not tolerating the attack, Arjuna pierced Satyajit with ten arrows and simultaneously cut his bow to pieces with three more shafts. Seeing this wonderful feat, the other warriors cheered. Satyajit grasped another bow and immediately pierced Arjuna's steeds as well as his charioteer. Arjuna again split Satyajit's bow, then killed his horses and smashed his chariot to pieces.

“Drupada came quickly to his commander's assistance. A powerful exchange of arrows and other missiles followed between the king and Arjuna. Gradually Arjuna overpowered Drupada. He shattered the king's bow, tore off his armor, felled his flagstaff and killed his horses. Seeing Drupada confounded, Arjuna threw down his own bow and took up a huge scimitar. He leapt down from his chariot and jumped onto Drupada's, seizing him and holding the sword to his throat.

“Bhīma had meanwhile been wreaking havoc among Drupada's troops. Arjuna shouted to him to withdraw. They had achieved their aim and captured Drupada. The troops saw their king's plight and fled in fear. Arjuna then dragged Drupada onto his own chariot and rode back toward Droṇa.

“When Droṇa saw the captive king, he smiled. “So, O mighty king, do you now desire to revive our old friendship? It seems that your kingdom and wealth have become mine.”

“Drupada squirmed and blushed. He looked down as Droṇa continued, ‘You need not fear for your life for I am a Brahmin and it is my duty to be ever forgiving. Indeed, I have always cherished an affection for you since we were children.’

“Droṇa then ordered Arjuna to release Drupada. The king listened in silence as Droṇa continued. ‘I still desire your friendship, Drupada, but how can one who is not a king be a king's friend? Therefore I have decided to allow you to keep half your kingdom. I shall take the other half.’

“Drupada was in no position to argue. He knew that Droṇa's martial power far exceeded his own—especially as he now had the mighty Kurus as disciples. There would be no question of defeating him in battle. Drupada nodded in assent. ‘You are a truly noble soul to act in this way, Droṇa,’ he replied, summoning all his patience. ‘Great personalities like yourself are always magnanimous. I, too, desire your friendship. Let us live peacefully, each ruling his own half of the Pañchāla kingdom.’

“Drupada had Brahmins perform appropriate rituals and bestowed the northern half of his kingdom upon Droṇa, who then left with the Pāṇḍavas for Hastināpura. Drupada burned with humiliation. Somehow he had to avenge his honor. Absorbed in thought, the king returned to his palace (Goswami J. , 1986)” (Dharma, 1999).

⁸ Drupada—‘rapid step’; the King of Pāñcāla, and the father of Draupadī and Dhṛṣṭadyumna (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Droṇācārya⁹. Droṇācārya knew this perfectly well, and yet as a liberal

⁹ “After being humiliated by Droṇa and losing half his kingdom, Drupada thought only of revenge. He knew he could never defeat Droṇa in battle, so he had gone to the forest to seek out a powerful Brahmin. He knew that only a Brahmin’s spiritual power could match Droṇa’s strength.

“After some time Drupada came across two Brahmin brothers named Yaja and Upayaja, descendants of Kaśyapa, a powerful son of Brahmā. The king worshipped and served the two Brahmins for some time, then asked for their assistance. He approached the younger of the two, Upayaja, first, knowing him to be the more powerful. Drupada asked him to conduct a sacrifice that would give the king a son capable of killing Droṇa. Drupada offered him ten thousand cows as payment, but the Brahmin replied, ‘I shall not perform any act directed toward material gain, either for myself or for another.’

“The disappointed Drupada continued serving Upayaja in the hope that he might relent. Finally after a full year had passed the Brahmin took pity on him and said, ‘I once saw my elder brother take up and eat a fruit from the ground without considering whether or not it was clean. When we were both boys studying in our guru’s house I often saw him eat the remnants of other people’s food. One who has no regard for purity in one thing will not have such regard in another. Therefore approach him, for he will surely perform your sacrifice.’

“The Brahmin’s words proved true and Yaja agreed to Drupada’s proposal. The Brahmin, realizing what difficult a task the king had requested, engaged his younger brother to assist him. Although Upayaja had no personal desire to perform Drupada’s sacrifice, he could not refuse his elder brother’s request. Thus the two Brahmins went to Kāmpilya to perform a fire sacrifice intended to propitiate the gods headed by Lord Viṣṇu. Thus Drupada would be able to get a son capable of killing Droṇa.

“As the sacrifice commenced the king again spoke with Yaja. Remembering the day he had been overpowered by Arjuna, he asked the priest if, as well as a son, he might obtain a beautiful daughter whom he could offer to Arjuna as his wife. Drupada thought that if Arjuna became his son-in-law, his happiness would be complete. Yaja replied, ‘It shall be so,’ and Drupada joyfully sat down by the sacrificial fire with his queen.

“As the ritual neared completion Yaja called for Drupada’s wife. ‘Come quickly, O queen. A son and daughter have now come for you.’

“The queen replied, ‘O Brahmin, I am not pure. My mouth is filled with saffron and my body is smeared with perfumes. I am not ready to receive the sacrificial ghee.’

“Yaja replied, ‘Whether or not you are ready the object of this sacrifice, which I have prepared and Upayaja has sanctified, cannot be thwarted.’

“Yaja had then poured the oblation into the fire. Immediately there arose from the flames a god-like boy. He was encased in brilliant golden armor and he shone like fire. He wore a bright crown on his head and held a long bow and a sword. That youth was terrible to behold and he rose from the fire roaring. Stepping clear of the flames, he mounted the king’s chariot and immediately rode about, displaying all kinds of skill.

“The people of Kāmpilya had shouted with joy upon seeing this boy who would fulfill the king’s desire and kill his enemy. As their cries of happiness resounded a celestial woman appeared from the fire. Her complexion was dark and her smiling eyes were shaped like lotus petals. Her long and curling hair was bluish in color and it fell down her back as she emerged from the flames. She had rising breasts and tapering thighs. At the end of her graceful fingers were nails that shone like bright copper. Her body emanated the sweet fragrance of blue lotuses which could be perceived at a distance of two miles. That divine woman captivated the mind of every man who saw her. She had no equal even among the gods or the Gandharvas.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

brāhmaṇa he did not hesitate to impart all his military secrets when the son of Drupada, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, was entrusted to him for military education. Now, on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Dhṛṣṭadyumna took the side of the Pāṇḍavas, and it was he who arranged for their military phalanx, after having learned the art from Droṇācārya. Duryodhana pointed out this mistake of Droṇācārya's so that he might be alert and uncompromising in the fighting. By this he wanted to point out also that he should not be similarly lenient in battle against the Pāṇḍavas, who were also Droṇācārya's affectionate students. Arjuna, especially, was his most affectionate and brilliant student. Duryodhana also warned that such leniency in the fight would lead to defeat.

Comment [jh8]: Look at the culture.

TEXT 4

अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुनसमा युधि ।
युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः ॥ ४ ॥

Comment [jh9]: Duryodhana points out the most powerful fighters on the Pāṇḍavas side (Goswami J. , 1986).

*atra śūrā maheṣv-āsā
bhīmārjuna-samā yudhi
yuyudhāno virāṭas ca
drupadaś ca mahā-rathaḥ*

atra—here; *śūrāḥ*—heroes; *mahā-iṣu-āsāḥ*—mighty bowmen; *bhīma-arjuna*—to Bhīma and Arjuna; *samāḥ*—equal; *yudhi*—in the fight; *yuyudhānaḥ*—Yuyudhāna; *virāṭaḥ*—Virāṭa; *ca*—also; *drupadaḥ*—Drupada; *ca*—also; *mahā-rathaḥ*—great fighter.

Here in this army are many heroic bowmen equal in fighting to Bhīma and Arjuna: great fighters like Yuyudhāna¹⁰, Virāṭa¹¹ and Drupada.

“The ascetic then told his attentive audience how a heavenly voice had spoken from the skies as soon as the boy and girl had appeared. Booming like thunder it had said, “This dark-skinned beauty will be the best of all women and she will be the cause of the destruction of the world’s warriors. The boy shall be called Dhṛṣṭadyumna and he shall slay Droṇa.”

“Droṇa heard about this prophesy, but, considering destiny to be supreme, he nevertheless agreed to train Drupada’s son in martial arts. The noble Droṇa did this to repay Drupada for taking half his kingdom” (Dharma, 1999).

¹⁰ Yuyudhāna—‘anxious to fight’; the charioteer of Lord Kṛṣṇa and a Pāṇḍava ally; also known as Sātyaki, the son of Satyaka (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Even though Dhṛṣṭadyumna was not a very important obstacle in the face of Droṇācārya's very great power in the military art, there were many others who were causes of fear. They are mentioned by Duryodhana as great stumbling blocks on the path of victory because each and every one of them was as formidable as Bhīma and Arjuna. He knew the strength of Bhīma and Arjuna, and thus he compared the others with them.

TEXT 5

धृष्टकेतुश्चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान् ।
पुरुजित्कुन्तिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुरावः ॥ ५ ॥

*dhṛṣṭaketuś cekitānaḥ
kāśirājaś ca vīryavān
purujit kuntibhojaś ca
śaibyaś ca nara-ṣuṅgavaḥ*

dhṛṣṭaketuḥ—Dhṛṣṭaketu; *cekitānaḥ*—Cekitāna; *kāśirājaḥ*—Kāśirāja; *ca*—also; *vīrya-vān*—very powerful; *purujit*—Purujit; *kuntibhojaḥ*—Kuntibhoja; *ca*—and; *śaibyaḥ*—Śaibya; *ca*—and; *nara-ṣuṅgavaḥ*—hero in human society.

There are also great, heroic, powerful fighters like Dhṛṣṭaketu¹², Cekitāna¹³,

Sātyaki—'son of Satyaka'; a prominent member of the Yadu dynasty; intimate friend of Lord Kṛṣṇa and student of Arjuna (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

After the Pāṇḍavas had completed their incognito exile, Lord Kṛṣṇa went with Sātyaki and other Yadus to see them in Indraprastha. The Pāṇḍavas greeted the Lord and embraced Him in great ecstasy. Their new bride, Draupadī, shyly approached Kṛṣṇa and bowed down to Him. Then the Pāṇḍavas properly worshiped and welcomed Sātyaki and the Lord's other companions, offering them sitting places (SB 10.58 Summary)

¹¹ Virāṭa—'ruling widely'; the King of the Matsyas who unknowingly sheltered the Pāṇḍavas during their last year of exile (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

virāṭa-tanayā—the daughter of Virāṭa (Uttarā) (SB 1.10.9-10, synonyms).

Mahārāja Uttara was the son of Virāṭa and maternal uncle of Mahārāja Parikṣit (SB 1.16.2, purport).

¹² Dhṛṣṭaketu—'he whose brightness is bold'; the son of Śiśupāla who took the side of the Pāṇḍavas during the Kurukṣetra war and who was killed by Droṇa (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

¹³ Cekitāna—'intelligent'; a warrior of the Yadu dynasty who fought on the side of the Pāṇḍavas (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Kāśirāja¹⁴, Purujit¹⁵, Kuntibhoja¹⁶ and Śaibya¹⁷.

TEXT 6

युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान् ।
सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः ॥ ६ ॥

*yudhāmanyuś ca vikrānta
uttamaujāś ca vīryavān
saubhadro draupadeyāś ca
sarva eva mahā-rathāḥ*

yudhāmanyuḥ—Yudhāmanyu; *ca*—and; *vikrāntaḥ*—mighty; *uttamaujāḥ*—Uttamaujā; *ca*—and; *vīrya-vān*—very powerful; *saubhadraḥ*—the son of Subhadra; *draupadeyāḥ*—the sons of Draupadī; *ca*—and; *sarve*—all; *eva*—certainly; *mahā-rathāḥ*—great chariot fighters.

There are the mighty Yudhāmanyu¹⁸, the very powerful Uttamaujā¹⁹, the son of

¹⁴ Kāśirāja—King of Kāśī; also known as Kāśya (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

The fight between Paraśurāma and Bhīṣmadeva concerns three daughters of Kāśirāja—Ambikā, Ambālikā and Ambā—who were forcibly abducted by Bhīṣmadeva, acting on behalf of his brother Vicitravīrya. Ambā thought that Bhīṣmadeva would marry her and became attached to him, but Bhīṣmadeva refused to marry her, for he had taken the vow of brahmacarya. Ambā therefore approached Bhīṣmadeva's military spiritual master, Paraśurāma, who instructed Bhīṣma to marry her. Bhīṣmadeva refused, and therefore Paraśurāma fought with him to force him to accept the marriage. But Paraśurāma was defeated, and he was pleased with Bhīṣma (SB 9.22.20, purport).

¹⁵ Purujit—great, heroic, powerful fighter and a Pāṇḍava ally (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

¹⁶ Kuntibhoja—a king of the Yadu dynasty, and the foster father of Kuntī who he took the side of the Pāṇḍavas during the Kurukṣetra war (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

King Śūra, the leader of the Yadu dynasty, was the father of Vasudeva [who later became the father of Lord Kṛṣṇa]. Śūra's daughter was named Pṛthā, and no woman on earth had beauty like hers.

The sister of King Śūra's father had a son named Kuntibhoja who was unable to beget children, and so the mighty Śūra promised to give his first child to his cousin. Thus when Pṛthā was born, Śūra declared, "This girl is my first child," and acting as a true friend, he gave the baby girl to his friend Kuntibhoja, a great soul who yearned for the gift of a child (Goswami, 1993)

¹⁷ Śaibya—'relating to the Śibis'; King of the Śibis; great, heroic, powerful fighter and a Pāṇḍava ally (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

¹⁸ Yudhāmanyu—a prince of Pāncāla who fought on the side of the Pāṇḍavas (VedaBase Gita Appendix:

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Subhadrā and the sons of Draupadī. All these warriors are great chariot fighters.

TEXT 7

अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान्निबोध द्विजोत्तम ।
नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान्ब्रवीमि ते ॥ ७ ॥

*asmākaṁ tu viśiṣṭā ye
tān nibodha dvijottama
nāyakā mama sainyasya
samjñārthaṁ tān bravīmi te*

asmākaṁ—our; *tu*—but; *viśiṣṭāḥ*—especially powerful; *ye*—who; *tān*—them; *nibodha*—just take note of, be informed; *dvija*—*uttama*—O best of the *brāhmaṇas*; *nāyakāḥ*—captains; *mama*—my; *sainyasya*—of the soldiers; *samjñā-arthaṁ*—for information; *tān*—them; *bravīmi*—I am speaking; *te*—to you.

But for your information, O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, let me tell you about the captains who are especially qualified to lead my military force.

TEXT 8

भवान्भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिंजयः ।
अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सौमदत्तिस्तथैव च ॥ ८ ॥

*bhavān bhīṣmaś ca karṇaś ca
kṛpaś ca samitiṁ-jayaḥ
aśvatthāmā vikarṇaś ca
saumadattis tathaiva ca*

bhavān—your good self; *bhīṣmaḥ*—Grandfather Bhīṣma; *ca*—also; *karṇaḥ*—Karna; *ca*—and; *kṛpaḥ*—Kṛpa; *ca*—and; *samitiṁ-jayaḥ*—always victorious in battle; *aśvatthāmā*—Aśvatthāmā; *vikarṇaḥ*—Vikarna; *ca*—as well as; *saumadattiḥ*—the son of Somadatta; *tathā*—as well as; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—

Names of Other Persons).

¹⁹ Uttamaujā—a warrior ally of the Pāṇḍavas (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Comment [jh10]: Duryodhana describes his own most powerful fighters, who are prepared to lay down their lives (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

also.

There are personalities like you, Bhīṣma, Karṇa²⁰, Kṛpa²¹, Aśvatthāmā²²,

Comment [jh11]: Now to build confidence.

²⁰ Karṇa: Born of Kuntī by the sun-god prior to her marriage with Mahārāja Pāṇḍu, Karṇa took his birth with bangles and earrings, extraordinary signs for an undaunted hero. In the beginning his name was Vasusena, but when he grew up he presented his natural bangles and earrings to Indradeva, and thenceforward he became known as Vaikartana. After his birth from the maiden Kuntī, he was thrown in the Ganges. Later he was picked up by Adhiratha, and he and his wife Rādhā brought him up as their own offspring. Karṇa was very charitable, especially toward the brāhmaṇas. There was nothing he could not spare for a brāhmaṇa. In the same charitable spirit he gave in charity his natural bangles and earrings to Indradeva, who, being very much satisfied with him, gave him in return a great weapon called Śakti. He was admitted as one of the students of Droṇācārya, and from the very beginning there was some rivalry between him and Arjuna. Seeing his constant rivalry with Arjuna, Duryodhana picked him up as his companion, and this gradually grew into greater intimacy. He was also present in the great assembly of Draupadī's svayaṁvara function, and when he attempted to exhibit his talent in that meeting, Draupadī's brother declared that Karṇa could not take part in the competition because of his being the son of a śūdra carpenter. Although he was refused in the competition, still when Arjuna was successful in piercing the fish target on the ceiling and Draupadī bestowed her garland upon Arjuna, Karṇa and the other disappointed princes offered an unusual stumbling block to Arjuna while he was leaving with Draupadī. Specifically, Karṇa fought with him very valiantly, but all of them were defeated by Arjuna. Duryodhana was very much pleased with Karṇa because of his constant rivalry with Arjuna, and when he was in power he enthroned Karṇa in the state of Aṅga. Being baffled in his attempt to win Draupadī, Karṇa advised Duryodhana to attack King Drupada, for after defeating him both Arjuna and Draupadī could be arrested. But Droṇācārya rebuked them for this conspiracy, and they refrained from the action. Karṇa was defeated many times, not only by Arjuna but also by Bhīmasena. He was the king of the kingdom of Bengal, Orissa and Madras combined. Later on he took an active part in the Rājasūya sacrifice of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, and when there was gambling between the rival brothers, designed by Śakuni, Karṇa took part in the game, and he was very pleased when Draupadī was offered as a bet in the gambling. This fed his old grudge. When Draupadī was in the game he was very enthusiastic to declare the news, and it is he who ordered Duḥśāsana to take away the garments of both the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī. He asked Draupadī to select another husband because, being lost by the Pāṇḍavas, she was rendered a slave of the Kurus. He was always an enemy of the Pāṇḍavas, and whenever there was an opportunity, he tried to curb them by all means. During the Battle of Kurukṣetra, he foresaw the conclusive result, and he expressed his opinion that due to Lord Kṛṣṇa's being the chariot driver of Arjuna, the battle should be won by Arjuna. He always differed with Bhīṣma, and sometimes he was proud enough to say that within five days he could finish up the Pāṇḍavas, if Bhīṣma would not interfere with his plan of action. But he was much mortified when Bhīṣma died. He killed Ghaṭotkaca with the Śakti weapon obtained from Indradeva. His son, Vṛṣasena, was killed by Arjuna. He killed the largest number of Pāṇḍava soldiers. At last there was a severe fight with Arjuna, and it was he only who was able to knock off the helmet of Arjuna. But it so happened that the wheel of his chariot stuck in the battlefield mud, and when he got down to set the wheel right, Arjuna took the opportunity and killed him, although he requested Arjuna not to do so (SB 1.15.16, purport).

²¹ Kṛpa (Kṛpācārya)—'pity'; one of Duryodhana's captains; brother-in-law of Droṇa (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Kṛpācārya is the son of the great Ṛṣi Sarḍban and was born in the family of Gautama. The birth is said to be accidental. By chance, the great Ṛṣi Sarḍban met Janapadī, a famous society girl of heaven, and the Ṛṣi Sarḍban discharged semina in two parts. By one part immediately a male child and by the other part a female child were born as twins. The male child was later on known as Kṛpa, and the female child was known as Kṛpī. Mahārāja Śāntanu, while engaged in chase in the jungle, picked up the children and brought them up to the

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Vikarṇa²³ and the son of Somadatta²⁴ called Bhūriśravā²⁵, who are always victorious in battle.

Duryodhana mentions the exceptional heroes in the battle, all of whom are ever victorious. Vikarṇa is the brother of Duryodhana, Aśvatthāmā is the son of Droṇācārya, and Saumadatti, or Bhūriśravā, is the son of the King of the Bāhlikas. Karṇa is the half brother of Arjuna, as he was born of Kuntī before her marriage with King Pāṇḍu. Kṛpācārya's twin sister married Droṇācārya.

brahminical status by the proper purificatory process. Kṛpācārya later became a great general like Droṇācārya, and his sister was married to Droṇācārya. Kṛpācārya later on took part in the Battle of Kurukṣetra and joined the party of Duryodhana. Kṛpācārya helped kill Abhimanyu, the father of Mahārāja Parikṣit, but he was still held in esteem by the family of the Pāṇḍavas due to his being as great a brāhmaṇa as Droṇācārya. When the Pāṇḍavas were sent to the forest after being defeated in the gambling game with Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra entrusted the Pāṇḍavas to Kṛpācārya for guidance. After the end of the battle, Kṛpācārya again became a member of the royal assembly, and he was called during the birth of Mahārāja Parikṣit for recitation of auspicious Vedic hymns to make the ceremony successful. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, while quitting the palace for his great departure to the Himalayas, entrusted Kṛpācārya with Mahārāja Parikṣit as his disciple, and he left home satisfied because of Kṛpācārya's taking charge of Mahārāja Parikṣit. The great administrators, kings and emperors were always under the guidance of learned brāhmaṇas like Kṛpācārya and thus were able to act properly in the discharge of political responsibilities (SB 1.12.13, purport).

²² “Drona then married Kripi and in due course of time a son was born. At birth, this child neighed just like the celestial steed, Uchchaisrava, and then a voice from the sky announced, ‘This child’s name shall be Ashvatthama (the horse voiced)’” (Das, 1998, p 54).

²³ Vikarṇa—a brother of Duryodhana (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

²⁴ Somadatta—the son of King Bāhlika and the grandson of King Pratīpa (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

²⁵ Bhūriśravā—‘he whose praise abounds’; Kaurava warrior and one of the three sons of Somadatta, a King of the Kuru dynasty (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Naptā, or Bhūriśravā: Bhūriśravā was the son of Somadatta, a member of the Kuru family. His other brother was Śalya. Both the brothers and the father attended the svayamvara ceremony of Draupadī. All of them appreciated the wonderful strength of Arjuna due to his being the devotee friend of the Lord, and thus Bhūriśravā advised the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra not to pick any quarrel or fight with them. All of them also attended the Rājasūya yajña of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. He possessed one akṣauhiṇī regiment of army, cavalry, elephants and chariots, and all these were employed in the Battle of Kurukṣetra on behalf of Duryodhana's party. He was counted by Bhīma as one of the yūtha-patis. In the Battle of Kurukṣetra he was especially engaged in a fight with Sātyaki, and he killed ten sons of Sātyaki. Later on, Arjuna cut off his hands, and he was ultimately killed by Sātyaki. After his death he merged into the existence of Viśvadeva (SB 1.15.16, purport).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

TEXT 9

अन्ये च बहवः शूरा मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः ।
नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः ॥ ९ ॥

*anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā
mad-arthe tyakta-jīvitāḥ
nānā-śastra-praharaṇāḥ
sarve yuddha-viśāradaḥ*

anye—others; *ca*—also; *bahavaḥ*—in great numbers; *śūrāḥ*—heroes; *mat-*
arthe—for my sake; *tyakta-jīvitāḥ*—prepared to risk life; *nānā*—many; *śastra*—
weapons; *praharaṇāḥ*—equipped with; *sarve*—all of them; *yuddha-*
viśāradaḥ—experienced in military science.

There are many other heroes who are prepared to lay down their lives for my sake. All of them are well equipped with different kinds of weapons, and all are experienced in military science.

As far as the others are concerned—like Jayadratha²⁶, Kṛtavarmā²⁷ and

²⁶ Jayadratha—the King of Sindhu who was killed by Arjuna in the battle of Kurukṣetra (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

Jayadratha: Another son of Mahārāja Vṛddhakṣetra. He was the King of Sindhudeśa (modern Sindh Pakistan). His wife's name was Duḥśalā. He was also present in the svayamvara ceremony of Draupadī, and he desired very strongly to have her hand, but he failed in the competition. But since then he always sought the opportunity to get in touch with Draupadī. When he was going to marry in the Śalyadeśa, on the way to Kāmyavana he happened to see Draupadī again and was too much attracted to her. The Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī were then in exile, after losing their empire in gambling, and Jayadratha thought it wise to send news to Draupadī in an illicit manner through Kotīśaśya, one of his associates. Draupadī at once refused vehemently the proposal of Jayadratha, but being so much attracted by the beauty of Draupadī, he tried again and again. Every time he was refused by Draupadī. He tried to take her away forcibly on his chariot, and at first Draupadī gave him a good dashing, and he fell like a cut-root tree. But he was not discouraged, and he was able to force Draupadī to sit on the chariot. This incident was seen by Dhaumya Muni, and he strongly protested the action of Jayadratha. He also followed the chariot, and through Dhātreyikā the matter was brought to the notice of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. The Pāṇḍavas then attacked the soldiers of Jayadratha and killed them all, and at last Bhīma caught hold of Jayadratha and beat him very severely, almost dead. Then all but five hairs were cut off his head and he was taken to all the kings and introduced as the slave of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. He was forced to admit himself to be the slave of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira before all the princely order, and in the same condition he was brought before Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was kind enough to order him released, and when he admitted to being a tributary prince under Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Queen Draupadī also desired his release. After this incident, he was allowed to return to his country. Being so insulted, he went to Gaṅgotri in the Himalayas and undertook a severe type of penance to please Lord Śiva.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Śalya—all are determined to lay down their lives for Duryodhana's sake. In other words, it is already concluded that all of them would die in the Battle of Kurukṣetra for joining the party of the sinful Duryodhana. Duryodhana was, of course, confident of his victory on account of the above-mentioned combined strength of his friends.

TEXT 10

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम् ।
पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम् ॥ १० ॥

*aparyāptam tad asmākaṁ
balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam
paryāptam tv idam eteṣāṁ
balaṁ bhīmābhirakṣitam*

Aparyāptam—immeasurable; *tad*—that; *asmākaṁ*—of ours; *balaṁ*—strength; *bhīṣma*—by Grandfather Bhīṣma; *abhirakṣitam*—perfectly protected; *paryāptam*—limited; *tu*—but; *idam*—all this; *eteṣāṁ*—of the Pāṇḍavas; *balaṁ*—strength; *bhīma*—by Bhīma; *abhirakṣitam*—carefully protected.

Our strength is immeasurable, and we are perfectly protected by Grandfather Bhīṣma, whereas the strength of the Pāṇḍavas, carefully protected by Bhīma, is limited.

He asked his benediction to defeat all the Pāṇḍavas, at least one at a time. Then the Battle of Kurukṣetra began, and he took sides with Duryodhana. In the first day's fight he was engaged with Mahārāja Drupada, then with Virāṭa and then with Abhimanyu. While Abhimanyu was being killed, mercilessly surrounded by seven great generals, the Pāṇḍavas came to his help, but Jayadratha, by the mercy of Lord Śiva, repulsed them with great ability. At this, Arjuna took a vow to kill him, and on hearing this, Jayadratha wanted to leave the warfield and asked permission from the Kauravas for this cowardly action. But he was not allowed to do so. On the contrary, he was obliged to fight with Arjuna, and while the fight was going on Lord Kṛṣṇa reminded Arjuna that the benediction of Śiva upon Jayadratha was that whoever would cause his head to fall on the ground would die at once. He therefore advised Arjuna to throw the head of Jayadratha directly onto the lap of his father, who was engaged in penances at the Samanta-pāñcaka pilgrimage. This was actually done by Arjuna. Jayadratha's father was surprised to see a severed head on his lap, and he at once threw it to the ground. The father immediately died, his forehead being cracked in seven pieces (SB 1.15.17, purport).

²⁷ Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī explains that men such as Kṛtavarmā had sought the hand of Satyabhāmā (SB 10.56.44, purport).

Comment [jh12]: Duryodhana concludes that his superior army will emerge victorious (Goswami J., 1986).

Comment [jh13]: Add to footnote from Garuda: "This double me"

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Herein an estimation of comparative strength is made by Duryodhana. He thinks that the strength of his armed forces is immeasurable, being specifically protected by the most experienced general, Grandfather Bhīṣma. On the other hand, the forces of the Pāṇḍavas are limited, being protected by a less experienced general, Bhīma, who is like a fig in the presence of Bhīṣma. Duryodhana was always envious of Bhīma because he knew perfectly well that if he should die at all, he would only be killed by Bhīma. But at the same time, he was confident of his victory on account of the presence of Bhīṣma, who was a far superior general. His conclusion that he would come out of the battle victorious was well ascertained.

TEXT 11

अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागमवस्थिताः ।
भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्तः सर्व एव हि ॥ ११ ॥

*ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu
yathā-bhāgam avasthitāḥ
bhīṣmam evābhirakṣantu
bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi*

ayaneṣu—in the strategic points; *ca*—also; *sarveṣu*—everywhere; *yathā-bhāgam*—as differently arranged; *avasthitāḥ*—situated; *bhīṣmam*—unto Grandfather Bhīṣma; *eva*—certainly; *abhirakṣantu*—should give support; *bhavantaḥ*—you; *sarve*—all respectively; *eva hi*—certainly.

All of you must now give full support to Grandfather Bhīṣma, as you stand at your respective strategic points of entrance into the phalanx of the army.

Duryodhana, after praising the prowess of Bhīṣma, further considered that others might think that they had been considered less important, so in his usual diplomatic way, he tried to adjust the situation in the above words. He emphasized that Bhīṣmadeva was undoubtedly the greatest hero, but he was an old man, so everyone must especially think of his protection from all sides. He might become engaged in the fight, and the enemy might take advantage of his full engagement on one side. Therefore, it was important that other heroes not leave their strategic positions and allow the enemy to break the phalanx.

Comment [jh14]: Duryodhana tries to inspire his army by using his expert (Goswami J., 1986).

Duryodhana clearly felt that the victory of the Kurus depended on the presence of Bhīṣmadeva. He was confident of the full support of Bhīṣmadeva and Droṇācārya in the battle because he well knew that they did not even speak a word when Arjuna's wife Draupadī, in her helpless condition, had appealed to them for justice while she was being forced to appear naked in the presence of all the great generals in the assembly. Although he knew that the two generals had some sort of affection for the Pāṇḍavas, he hoped that these generals would now completely give it up, as they had done during the gambling performances.

TEXT 12

तस्य सञ्जनयन्हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः ।
सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः शङ्खं दध्मौ प्रतापवान् ॥ १२ ॥

*tasya sañjanayan harṣam
kuru-vṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ
simha-nādam vinadyoccaiḥ
śaṅkham dadhmau pratāpavān*

tasya—his; *sañjanayan*—increasing; *harṣam*—cheerfulness; *kuru*—*vṛddhaḥ*—the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty (Bhīṣma); *pitāmahaḥ*—the grandfather; *simha-nādam*—roaring sound, like that of a lion; *vinadya*—vibrating; *uccaiḥ*—very loudly; *śaṅkham*—conchshell; *dadhmau*—blew; *pratāpa-vān*—the valiant.

Then Bhīṣma, the great valiant grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, the grandfather of the fighters, blew his conchshell very loudly, making a sound like the roar of a lion, giving Duryodhana joy.

The grandsire of the Kuru dynasty could understand the inner meaning of the heart of his grandson Duryodhana, and out of his natural compassion for him he tried to cheer him by blowing his conchshell very loudly, befitting his position as a lion. Indirectly, by the symbolism of the conchshell, he informed his depressed grandson Duryodhana that he had no chance of victory in the battle, because the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa was on the other side. But still, it was his duty to conduct the fight, and no pains would be spared in that connection.

Comment [jh15]: Bhīṣma can foresee the outcome of the battle, but still as a matter of duty, he tries to encourage Duryodhana (Goswami J., 1986).

TEXT 13

ततः शङ्खाश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः ।
सहसैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दस्तुमुलोऽभवत् ॥ १३ ॥

*tataḥ śaṅkhāś ca bheryaś ca
paṇavānaka-gomukhāḥ
sahasaiivābhyahanyanta
sa śabdastumulo 'bhavat*

tataḥ—thereafter; *śaṅkhāḥ*—conchshells; *ca*—also; *bheryaḥ*—large drums; *ca*—and; *paṇava-ānaka*—small drums and kettledrums; *go*—*mukhāḥ*—horns; *sahasā*—all of a sudden; *eva*—certainly; *abhyahanyanta*—were simultaneously sounded; *saḥ*—that; *śabdaḥ*—combined sound; *tumulaḥ*—tumultuous; *abhavat*—became.

After that, the conchshells, drums, bugles, trumpets and horns were all suddenly sounded, and the combined sound was tumultuous.

TEXT 14

ततः श्वेतैर्हयैर्युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ ।
माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः ॥ १४ ॥

*tataḥ śvetair hayair yukte
mahati syandane sthitau
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaś caiva
divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmaṭuḥ*

tataḥ—thereafter; *śvetaiḥ*—with white; *hayaiḥ*—horses; *yukte*—being yoked; *mahati*—in a great; *syandane*—chariot²⁸; *sthitau*—situated; *mādhavaḥ*²⁹—

²⁸ The chariot of Arjuna is singled out here. Although all of the warriors were also seated on chariots, Arjuna's chariot stands out in comparison because it was a gift he received from Agni, the god of fire. It is thought to be invincible in the plane of mortals. The fact that Kṛṣṇa was driving it only added to invincibility (Tripurari, 2001).

²⁹ "Mādhava: Name of Krishna meaning "a descendent of Madhu" (of the Yadu dynasty). This name indicates Krishna's distant family relationship with Arjuna, whose ancestry goes back to Puru. Yadu and Puru were sons of the great king Yayāti" (Schweig, 2007, p 25).

Comment [jh16]: Discuss the indications of victory for the Pāṇḍavas (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Kṛṣṇa (the husband of the goddess of fortune)³⁰; *pāṇḍavaḥ*—Arjuna (the son of Pāṇḍu); *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *divyau*—transcendental; *śaṅkhau*—conchshells; *pradadhmatuḥ*—sounded.

On the other side, both Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, stationed on a great chariot drawn by white horses, sounded their transcendental conchshells.

In contrast with the conchshell blown by Bhīṣmadeva, the conchshells in the hands of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are described as transcendental. The sounding of the transcendental conchshells indicated that there was no hope of victory for the other side because Kṛṣṇa was on the side of the Pāṇḍavas. *Jayas tu pāṇḍu-putrāṇām yeṣām pakṣe janārdanaḥ*. Victory is always with persons like the sons of Pāṇḍu because Lord Kṛṣṇa is associated with them. And whenever and wherever the Lord is present, the goddess of fortune is also there because the goddess of fortune never lives alone without her husband. Therefore, victory and fortune were awaiting Arjuna, as indicated by the transcendental sound produced by the conchshell of Viṣṇu, or Lord Kṛṣṇa. Besides that, the chariot on which both the friends were seated had been donated by Agni (the fire-god) to Arjuna, and this indicated that this chariot was capable of conquering all sides, wherever it was drawn over the three worlds.

TEXT 15

पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनञ्जयः ।
पौण्ड्रं दध्मौ महाशङ्खं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः ॥ १५ ॥

pāñcajanyaṁ hr̥ṣīkeśo

³⁰ The name Mādhava carries with it the implication that Arjuna, who is also introduced in this verse, will be victorious, as Mādhava is often rendered “husband of the fortune.” The syllable *mā* indicates the Goddess and *dhava* means husband. The epithet Mādhava is particularly sweet. *Mad* is the Sanskrit root from which *madhu* (honey) is derived. It also indicates intoxicated with passion and madness (*mada*). In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmi uses the term *mādhurya* (sweet) in characterizing *śṛṅgāra rasa*, the sacred aesthetic rapture of conjugal love that drove Śrī Caitanya to spiritual madness. Within the appellations Mādhava both Kṛṣṇa and his consort Rādhā reside, for there is no meaning to the husband of the Goddess of fortune without the Goddess herself. Mādhava also means spring. Later in chapter ten Kṛṣṇa identifies himself with the spring, the season of love. Herein Sañjaya indicates that the *Gītā* is ultimately a doctrine of divine love that reaches its zenith in Rādhā’s love for Mādhava (Tripurari, 2001).

Comment [jh17]: Important point.

Comment [jh18]: Discuss the significance of Kṛṣṇa’s name, Hṛṣīkeśa. On the Pāṇḍavas side, even the conchshells are famous and noteworthy, indicating victory (Goswami J. , 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*devadattam dhanañjayaḥ
pauṇḍram dadhmau mahā-śaṅkham
bhīma-karmā vṛkodaraḥ*

pāñcajanya—the conchshell named Pāñcajanya; *hṛṣīka-īśaḥ*—Hṛṣīkeśa³¹ (Kṛṣṇa, the Lord who directs the senses of the devotees); *devadattam*—the conchshell named Devadatta; *dhanam-jayaḥ*—Dhanañjaya³² (Arjuna, the winner of wealth); *pauṇḍram*—the conch named Pauṇḍra; *dadhmau*—blew; *mahā-śaṅkham*—the terrific conchshell; *bhīma-karmā*—one who performs herculean tasks; *vṛka-udaraḥ*—the voracious eater (Bhīma).

Lord Kṛṣṇa blew His conchshell, called Pāñcajanya³³; Arjuna blew his, the Devadatta³⁴; and Bhīma, the voracious eater and performer of herculean tasks,

³¹ Although Kṛṣṇa himself was a powerful warrior, he had vowed not to fight in the battle. Instead he agreed to be the charioteer of Arjuna. Nonetheless, the power of his presence on the battlefield is not to be underestimated. Here Kṛṣṇa is addressed as Hṛṣīkeśa, which indicates that he is the controller of the senses and will thus factor significantly into the outcome of the battle. Conquering one's sensual appetite is a prerequisite to fully understanding and entering into the sacred conjugal love implied in the name Mādhava invoked in the previous verse (Tripurari, 2001).

³² Dhanañjaya refers to Arjuna's capacity to gather wealth, as he did for Yudhiṣṭhira during the great sacrifice preceding his coronation. The name also implies Arjuna's capacity to gather the wealth of love of God in the instructions he will receive from Kṛṣṇa (Tripurari, 2001).

³³ Pāñcajanya—the conchshell of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It was taken from the demon Pañcajana after Kṛṣṇa slew him (in rescuing the son of his teacher) (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Conchshells).

O best of conchshells, O Pāñcajanya in the hands of the Lord, you are always filled with the breath of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore you create a fearful sound vibration that causes trembling in the hearts of enemies like the Rākṣasas, pramatha ghosts, Pretas, Mātās, Piśācas and brāhmaṇa ghosts with fearful eyes (SB 6.8.25).

Kṛṣṇa's conchshell is known as Pāñcajanya. This Pāñcajanya conch is also mentioned in Bhagavad-gītā. Kṛṣṇa sounded it before the Battle of Kurukṣetra. It is said that when Lord Kṛṣṇa blows on His transcendental conchshell, the wives of the demons become subject to abortions, and the wives of the demigods become blessed with all auspiciousness. In this way, the sound of Kṛṣṇa's conchshell used to vibrate and circulate all over the world (NOD 26).

³⁴ Devadatta—the conch of Arjuna which was obtained by Maya Dānava from Varuṇa. The name means, “God given.” (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Conchshells).

Arjuna also promised all protection to one Mayāsura, and the latter presented him one valuable conchshell celebrated as the Devadatta. Similarly, he received many other valuable weapons from Indradeva when he was satisfied to see his chivalry (SB 1.12.21, purport).

There was a leader of the Asura race named Maya, who had been dwelling in the Khāṇḍava. Having hid himself underground, he now rushed out of the forest and tried to escape. Agni chased the Asura and Kṛṣṇa

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

raised His discus weapon, Sudarśana, ready to kill him. The intelligent Maya ran to Arjuna and fell at his feet. “O Arjuna, I seek your protection. Save me! I supplicate myself before you.”

Arjuna raised his hand and replied, “Do not fear.” He could not refuse to protect anyone who sought his shelter. He turned toward Kṛṣṇa and asked Him to spare the Asura’s life. Kṛṣṇa lowered His weapon and Agni also stood back.

As the flames in the forest died down, Indra again appeared before Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. Agni stood next to him as he said, “O Pārtha, O Keśava, you have achieved that which could not be achieved by any celestial. Please ask from me any boon you desire. I am very much pleased.”

Arjuna asked Indra for all his celestial weapons. Indra smiled and replied that he would indeed give him the weapons—but not yet. When Śiva would give Arjuna his Pāśupāta weapon, then Indra would bring him to heaven and give him all the fire and wind weapons. That time would come in the future.

Kṛṣṇa then asked that His friendship with Arjuna might last forever and Indra said, “It shall be so.”

Finally, Agni said, “I also wish to give you a boon. Just as I pervade this universe, so by my power will you be able to go anywhere you desire within the universe.” The gods then returned to the heavens.

As Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna made their way back to their mansion, Maya approached them. He bowed at Arjuna’s feet and said, “O son of Kuntī, you have saved me from the angry Kṛṣṇa and the hungry Agni. Tell me what I can do for you in return.”

Arjuna replied, “I cannot take anything from you to repay me. This is my firm principle. I act only out of duty. It was my duty to save you and therefore you bear me no obligation. Go in peace.”

Maya praised Arjuna’s virtue, but he insisted upon doing something for the Pāṇḍava. “I simply wish to please you, O Pārtha. You need not see it as repayment.”

Arjuna again said that he could not accept anything from Maya. “I do not want to frustrate your desire. If you want to please me, then do something for Kṛṣṇa. That will be more pleasing to me than anything else.”

Maya turned and looked expectantly at Kṛṣṇa who was smiling softly. After reflecting for a moment he said, “You are the architect of the celestial demons. If you wish to please Me, then build a splendid assembly hall for Yudhiṣṭhira. The like of this hall should not be found anywhere in the world. It should contain the features of celestial architecture and be impossible for anyone else to emulate.”

The Asura’s skills were well known to Kṛṣṇa. Maya had constructed many wondrous edifices in the higher planets for the Daityas and Dānavas. Maya then assented to Kṛṣṇa’s request and accompanied Him and Arjuna back to Indraprastha, where he was introduced to Yudhiṣṭhira. The eldest Pāṇḍava marveled as Arjuna narrated the story of how the Khāṇḍava forest was burnt. He received Maya with honor and discussed the hall with him. After much thought Maya drew up a design. He then began to consider where to find the necessary materials for constructing the celestial hall. He told the Pāṇḍavas that he needed to go to the Himālayas. “I have left there a large quantity of rough diamonds and other precious stones of every description, including those not found on this earth. I shall go to fetch them.”

Maya explained that he had formerly been engaged by Vṛṣaparvā, king of the Dānavas, to construct sacrificial altars for the Asuras. He had gathered all kinds of celestial materials which he had stored at Vṛṣaparvā’s house high up on the Maināka mountain. There was also a great club with which Vṛṣaparvā had once withstood the gods in battle. Maya would bring that club, equal to one hundred thousand ordinary clubs, and give it to Bhīma. He would also fetch from the depths of a lake on Maināka the large celestial conch shell known as

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

blew his terrific conchshell, called Pauṇḍra³⁵.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is referred to as Hṛṣīkeśa in this verse because He is the owner of all senses. The living entities are part and parcel of Him, and therefore the senses of the living entities are also part and parcel of His senses. The impersonalists cannot account for the senses of the living entities, and therefore they are always anxious to describe all living entities as senseless, or impersonal. The Lord, situated in the hearts of all living entities, directs their senses. But He directs in terms of the surrender of the living entity, and in the case of a pure devotee He directly controls the senses. Here on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra the Lord directly controls the transcendental senses of Arjuna, and thus His particular name of Hṛṣīkeśa. The Lord has different names according to His different activities. For example, His name is Madhusūdāna because He killed the demon of the name Madhu; His name is Govinda because He gives pleasure to the cows and to the senses; His name is Vāsudeva because He appeared as the son of Vasudeva; His name is Devakī-nandana because He accepted Devakī as His mother; His name is Yaśodā-nandana because He awarded His childhood pastimes to Yaśodā at Vṛndāvana; His name is Pārtha-sārathi because He worked as charioteer of His friend Arjuna. Similarly, His name is Hṛṣīkeśa because He gave direction to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

Arjuna is referred to as Dhanañjaya in this verse because he helped his elder brother in fetching wealth when it was required by the king to make expenditures for different sacrifices. Similarly, Bhīma is known as Vṛkodara because he could eat as voraciously as he could perform herculean tasks, such as killing the demon Hiḍimba. So the particular types of conchshell blown by the different personalities on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, beginning with the Lord's, were all very encouraging to the fighting soldiers. On the other side there were no such credits, nor the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme

Devadatta for Arjuna. If Arjuna blew that conch on the battlefield, it would shatter his opponents' hearts.

Having gained Yudhiṣṭhira's permission, the Asura left quickly for the north. He found all his wealth guarded by Yakṣas and Rākṣasas, and with their assistance he brought it back to Indraprastha. After presenting the club to Bhīma and the conch shell to Arjuna, he commenced work (Dharma, 1999, p. 150-2).

³⁵ Pauṇḍra—the conchshell of Bhīma (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Conchshells).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

director, nor that of the goddess of fortune. So they were predestined to lose the battle—and that was the message announced by the sounds of the conchshells.

TEXTS 16-18

अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः ।
नकुलः सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ ॥ १६ ॥
काश्यश्च परमेष्वासः शिखण्डी च महारथः ।
धृष्टद्युम्नो विराटश्च सात्यकिश्चापराजितः ॥ १७ ॥
द्रुपदो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्वशः पृथिवीपते ।
सौभद्रश्च महाबाहुः शङ्खान्दध्मुः पृथक्पृथक् ॥ १८ ॥

*anantavijayaṁ rājā
kuntī-putro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ
nakulaḥ sahadevaś ca
sughoṣa-maṇipuṣpakau*

*kāśyaś ca parameṣv-āsaḥ
śikhaṇḍī ca mahā-rathaḥ
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaś ca
sātyakiś cāparājitaḥ*

*drupado draupadeyāś ca
sarvaśaḥ pṛthivī-pate
saubhadraś ca mahā-bāhuḥ
śaṅkhān dadhmuḥ pṛthak pṛthak*

ananta-vijayaṁ—the conch named Ananta—vijaya; *rājā*—the king; *kuntī-putraḥ*—the son of Kuntī; *yudhiṣṭhiraḥ*—Yudhiṣṭhira; *nakulaḥ*—Nakula; *sahadevaḥ*—Sahadeva; *ca*—and; *sughoṣa*—*maṇipuṣpakau*—the conches named Sughoṣa and Maṇipuṣpaka; *kāśyaḥ*—the King of Kāśī (Vārāṇasī); *ca*—and; *parama-iṣu-āsaḥ*—the great archer; *śikhaṇḍī*—Śikhaṇḍī; *ca*—also; *mahā-rathaḥ*—one who can fight alone against thousands; *dhṛṣṭadyumnaḥ*—Dhṛṣṭadyumna (the son of King Drupada); *virāṭaḥ*—Virāṭa (the prince who gave shelter to the Pāṇḍavas while they were in disguise); *ca*—also; *sātyakiḥ*—Sātyaki (the same as Yuyudhāna, the charioteer of Lord Kṛṣṇa); *ca*—and;

Comment [jh19]: With so many great warriors on both sides, tremendously loss of life bound to occur—and Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

described the other fighters on the Pāṇḍavas' side. Having named many of them as atirathas and maharathas, he spoke about Śikhāṇḍī. "You have all heard that he is destined to kill me. But he was born a woman and I will not, therefore, face him in battle. Listen now as I tell you his history, which I have heard from Nārada Ṛṣi."

(as told by Bhīṣma)

As you know, I long ago accepted a vow neither to occupy the throne nor to have children who could lay claim to it. My father, Śantanu, then married the beautiful Satyawatī and had two sons, Citrāṅgadā and Vicitravīrya. He died before his sons were grown and I was left as their protector. Citrāṅgadā was killed in a battle with the Gandharva king, and Vicitravīrya was left sole heir to the throne.

As he came of age, I thought it time to find him a wife. I heard that the king of Kashi had arranged a svayamvara for his three daughters, Amba, Ambikā and Ambālikā. I decided to ride into Kashi on my chariot, prepared for battle. Kings and princes had assembled at the svayamvara from all over the world, all hoping one of the girls would choose to marry them.

Upon seeing this, I remembered that the wise approve of many kinds of marriage, but for a kṣatriya the best is when the bride is snatched from an assembly of warriors after defeating them in a fight. I then announced to the kings that I had decided to carry away all three princesses for my younger brother, and challenged them to prevent me if they could.

Then I took all three maidens onto my chariot and sped away. The kings were at first surprised, then furious. They pulled on their armor and mounted their chariots. Soon hundreds of them were in pursuit. Thousands of arrows showered down upon my chariot, but I dexterously avoided them all. As the princesses trembled in fear, I took up my own bow and turned to face the kings. I countered the shower of their shafts with my own. At the same time, I pierced every one of my antagonists. So swiftly did I shoot my arrows that my foes were completely confounded and could only applaud my prowess. Some were killed and others had their weapons smashed and their armor torn off. They retreated and fled in various directions.

Shalva, however, continued to chase me. He was determined to win the hand of one of the maidens, and he rushed after me shouting, "Stay, stay!"

Provoked, I faced him. A furious but short-lived battle ensued. I soon overpowered Shalva and destroyed his chariot, although I decided not to kill him. I then returned to Hastināpura with the three maidens.

When I arrived in Hastināpura, the eldest princess, Amba, approached me and said, "I had already chosen Shalva as my husband. He too accepted me in his heart and my father agreed to the match. I would have chosen him in the svayamvara, but you kidnapped me and I did not have the opportunity. O knower of virtue, tell me what I should now do."

I asked her to wait while I discussed the matter with the Brahmins. It was concluded that Amba should be allowed to go to Shalva's city and offer herself to him. We gave her an escort of priests and maidservants, and sent her to Shalva. When he saw her, however, he said, "O lady of fair complexion, I no longer desire to accept you as my wife, for you have already been taken by another. You were led away cheerfully by Bhīṣma before all the other kings. How can I, who must lay down the law for others, now accept you? You have been touched by another. According to holy books, I cannot now accept you as my wife."

Amba tried to change Shalva's mind, pleading that she had not been happy to be kidnapped. She had gone to Shalva at the first opportunity. The king was adamant. He would not accept her. He told the disappointed princess to return to Hastināpura. Weeping like a she-osprey she thought, "What woman in the world could fall into greater trouble than the predicament I now face? I have been robbed of my friends, Shalva has

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

wronged me, neither can I now return to Hastināpura, and neither can I go home in such shame and rejected by everyone.”

Reflecting on the cause of her troubles, Amba decided that I was to blame. She wanted revenge. Rather than return to Hastināpura, she chose to go to a hermitage and stayed the night. In the morning, the ṛṣis saw her weeping and inquired about her sorrow. The lady told them everything and asked them to help her, but the ṛṣis replied, “We have renounced all worldly action. What can we possibly do to help your cause?”

Amba asked that they allow her to remain with them and to engage in asceticism. She had decided that the calamity that had befallen her was the result of her past sins, and that by practicing penance, she could become freed of them.

The ṛṣis consulted among themselves. Some thought Shalva should have accepted her, while others proposed that I should marry her. Eventually they decided that she should return to her father, for a woman must always be under the shelter of a husband, son or father. But Amba refused to go. She said she would never return to her father’s city and suffer disgrace.

While the ṛṣis thus sat pondering about what to do, the royal sage Hotravahana arrived at the hermitage. He took special pity on Amba because he happened to be her maternal grandfather. He became enraged that I had stolen her and thus ruined her life. With his lips trembling in anger he said, “O Amba, you have grieved enough. Do not go to your father’s house, for that will only increase your grief. You should place your case before the great Paraśurāma. He is my good friend and well-wisher. For my sake he will surely remove your grief. Either he will convince Bhīṣma to accept you, or he will slay him in battle. Only this sage is powerful enough to do either.”

It so happened that Paraśurāma was due to arrive at the hermitage the next day. He arrived early in the morning, clad in black deerskins and surrounded by his disciples. With an axe over his shoulder and a bow in his hand, he was a frightening sight. Long matted locks hung down to his shoulders, and his eyes blazed like fire. After he had been properly received and worshipped by the other sages, he sat down with Hotravahana and was told of Amba’s plight. He called for her and said, “You are as dear to me as you are to Hotravahana. Tell me what I should do for you. If you like, I can order Bhīṣma to accept you. If he will not, then I will consume him and all his ministers in battle. Or, if you prefer, I will order Shalva. Tell me your decision, O princess.”

Amba replied, “It seems that Bhīṣma is the cause of my present calamity. I think you should slay him. I have become so vengeful that I now wish only to bring about his death. O great sage, kill that covetous and mean-spirited man for my sake.”

Paraśurāma was reluctant to take up arms against me and said, “I will only use my weapons if the Brahmins request it. This is my vow. I can, however, make either Bhīṣma or Shalva accept my order. Therefore, select one of them as your husband, fair maiden, and I will do the rest.”

Amba had already concluded that all she wanted was for me to die. She asked Paraśurāma again and again to challenge me to a fight. At that time another ṛṣi, Akritavana, feeling compassion for Amba, also requested him to fight. Because a Brahmin requested him, Paraśurāma finally said, “All right, I will go to Bhīṣma to seek a solution by peaceful means. If he will not accept my words, then I will certainly slay him.”

The following day he made his way to Hastināpura with Amba. I worshipped him with all respect, and then he said with anger in his voice, “O Bhīṣma, in what consciousness did you kidnap Amba? Although you took her by force, you then sent her away. You have robbed her of her virtue, for no other man will now accept her. Therefore, you should accept her either for your brother or for yourself.”

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

I replied, “I cannot by any means take back this maiden, for she has given her heart to another. It is always wrong for a virtuous man to accept such a woman. I cannot renounce my duty out of fear, greed, attachment or pity. This is my vow, O Rāma.”

The sage blazed. “If you do not act according to my instructions, then I shall slay you and all your ministers.”

He said this repeatedly, and I tried in many ways to calm him with gentle words. Realizing that he was bent upon fighting, I asked, “Why do you wish to fight with me, O best of your race? In my childhood I was your pupil, and you taught me the military arts.”

Paraśurāma replied, “Although I am your preceptor, you have not obeyed my command. There is only one way to gratify me: either accept this maiden and perpetuate your race, or prepare yourself for death.”

But my guru’s words found no place in my heart. I replied, “O lord, what you are commanding me to do I cannot do. What is the use of laboring for it? What foolish man would accept into his house a woman sighing for another? Furthermore, I have made a solemn vow never to marry. I see no virtue in your order. The god Vāyu has stated that a preceptor may be abandoned if he is vain, has swerved from the right path, or does not know his proper duties. I see no sin in fighting with you on this occasion rather than accepting your order. You are asking me to engage in an unrighteous act only for your profit. Witness now the strength of my arms and my superhuman prowess. Let us go to Kurukṣetra. Slain by my arrows, you will attain the glorious regions you have earned by asceticism, O you whose only wealth is devotion.”

By then, I was myself infuriated. I added, “You boast that you have conquered the entire kṣatriya race, but today I will prove that boast false. When you defeated the kṣatriyas, I had not yet been born, nor anyone like me. You consumed straw. He who will end your boasts and your desire for battle has now been born. I will destroy your pride. Do not doubt it.”

The sage smiled. “It is fortunate, O Bhīṣma, that you wish to fight. I will thus curb your arrogance. We will fight at Kurukṣetra. There your mother Gaṅgā will see you thrown down and turned into food for vultures. O ruler of the earth, your mother does not deserve to see such a sight, but it must be so, for you are foolish and overly proud.”

I bowed before the sage and said, “Be it so.” After performing propitiatory rites to invoke the Brahmins’ blessings, I mounted my chariot and headed out of the city. Equipped with all my weapons, I shielded my chariot with a white umbrella and yoked my white horses, which can move with the speed of the wind. As I moved off, bards and singers eulogized me. I arrived at Kurukṣetra and saw Rāma waiting there, grasping his huge bow. Thousands of his followers were present, and around the battlefield stood numerous ṛṣis. In the sky I saw the gods, headed by Indra. Celestial music sounded and flowers fell from the heavens.

My own mother, assuming her divine human form, came before me and asked, “What do you wish to do, my dear son?”

When I told her, she reproved me. “You should not fight with a Brahmin. Do not fight Jamadagni’s son. His strength is equal to that of Śiva. He exterminated the kṣatriya race. You know all this. Why, then, have you come to fight with him?”

I explained to my mother all that had happened and made it clear that I would not now turn back. She then implored the sage not to fight with me. I was, after all, his disciple, which is nondifferent than his son.

The sage said he was determined to teach me a lesson. Helpless to stop either side, my mother retired from the battlefield, feeling anxious for my sake.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

... [description of the battle].

On the twenty-third day of the battle, Rāma fought with redoubled strength. All of a sudden he fired a number of arrows which fell upon my horses and charioteer like venomous serpents. They were all slain and I was left standing on an immobile chariot as Rāma shot arrows charged with death at me. As I fought off his shafts, Rāma fired a powerful missile that came at me like a streak of lightning. It caught me on the chest and threw me backwards off the chariot. I fell on the ground a full fifty paces away.

Thinking me dead, Rāma roared like a thundercloud and all his followers cheered. The Kurus who had accompanied me were overwhelmed with sorrow. As I lay there stupefied, I saw eight brilliant Brahmins with celestial forms surrounding me. They raised me off the ground and gently supported me. Sprinkling my face with cool water, they said, "Do not be afraid. You will soon be successful."

Revived and comforted, I stood up and saw my chariot yoked to fresh horses that my mother was tending. I touched her feet and worshipped the memory of my ancestors. Then I ascended the chariot and sent her away. I took the reins and continued fighting. I managed to catch him with an arrow of great power that pierced him deeply. He dropped to his knees and his bow slipped from his grasp as he fell down senseless.

I then saw many inauspicious omens. The sky rained blood and meteors fell. The sun was eclipsed, high winds blew, and the earth trembled. But Rāma was only stunned. In a short while, he got back to his feet and continued the fight. Both of us threw our fiercest weapons at each other until the sun set, when we again retired for the night.

That night, as I lay on my bed, my mangled body being tended by physicians, I thought that the battle would never end. I prayed to the gods that they would show me some way to overcome Rāma. Then, while I was sleeping, I again saw the eight Brahmins who had visited me on the battlefield. Comforting me again, they said, "Fear not, O son of Gaṅgā. You are our own body and we will give you all protection. You will surely vanquish Rāma. Here is a weapon which was known to you in your previous birth. Manufactured by Viśvakarmā, it is called the Prashwapa, and no one on earth knows it—not even Rāma. Call it to mind in the battle tomorrow and it will come to you. Rāma will be thrown down by that weapon, but not killed. He cannot be slain, but he will be defeated and rendered unconscious by the Prashwapa. You will then be able to revive him with the Samvodhana weapon."

The luminous Brahmins vanished and I awoke with joy. The sun rose and the battle began again. Encouraged by the celestial Brahmins, I was enlivened and fought with renewed energy. After a furious exchange of weapons I thought of the Prashwapa. The mantras suddenly appeared in my mind, but as they did I heard a tumultuous uproar of heavenly voices: "O Bhīṣma, do not release the Prashwapa missile."

Disregarding them, I placed the weapon on my bow and aimed it at Rāma. Suddenly, Nārada Ṛṣi appeared before me. "The gods are stationed in the sky and they forbid you to use this weapon. Rāma is an ascetic, a Brahmin, and your preceptor. O son of Kuru, do not humiliate him by any means."

As Nārada spoke I again saw the eight Brahmins in the heavens. They smiled and said, "O best among the Bharatas, obey Nārada. This will benefit all creatures."

Paraśurāma, seeing the irresistible Prashwapa upon my bow and not realizing that I had been forbidden to release it, shouted, "Alas, O Bhīṣma, I am vanquished!" and he dropped his bow. His father, Jamadagni, along with other heavenly ṛṣis, then came to him and ordered him to stop fighting. They told him that I was one of the eight Vasus and that he could not slay me in battle. Jamadagni said, "Arjuna, the powerful son of Indra, will later cause Bhīṣma's death. Brahmā has ordained this."

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

So the battle ended. Severely wounded, I went before my preceptor and prostrated myself at his feet. After this he said to Amba, “O princess, you have seen me exert myself to defeat Bhīṣma. Still I have not been able to overpower him. Therefore, you may go where you please. There is nothing more I can do.”

The maiden replied mournfully, “Be it so, O holy one. You have done your best on my behalf and I am grateful. Still, my heart burns with revenge. I will practice asceticism. In this way I will gain the power to personally bring about Bhīṣma’s death.”

My preceptor was highly pleased with my prowess and he blessed me that I would be without any equal in battle. After Amba had bowed before him, he left with all his followers.

Amba then entered the forest. She went to the Yamunā and performed severe penance. I knew everything because when I returned to Hastināpura I appointed men to watch over her constantly. They gave me regular reports. For one year she stood on the river bank without eating. Emaciated and rough-skinned, bronzed by the sun, her hair matted—she stood with hands upraised.

After one year she broke her fast by eating a single dry leaf. Then she remained waist-deep in the water for another year, standing on one foot, fired with indignation.

For twelve years she went on in this way. Neither her relatives nor anyone else could convince her to desist. Then she left the Yamunā and wandered at will, visiting the sacred hermitages of many ṛṣis. All the while she continued her austerities, bathing three times daily, meditating silently, and fasting. Her appearance changed from gentle to fierce, and she began to glow with ascetic power.

One day as she was bathing in the Ganges, my mother said, “Why do you perform such terrible penance, O maiden?”

Amba replied, “I desire to destroy Bhīṣma, who is so powerful that not even Paraśurāma could defeat him. Thus I am set upon achieving insuperable power by my austerities.”

My ocean-going mother became angry upon hearing her words. “O lady, you act crookedly. You will not be able to attain your object because you are so weak. O daughter of Kashi, if you hold to your determination, I will curse you to become a terrible river in which water flows in you only during the rainy season. May you be full of crocodiles and other fierce aquatics.”

After saying this and pretending to smile, my mother vanished, leaving Amba in her waters. Still, the princess did not desist. She performed even more severe austerities, abstaining from all food and water and controlling even her breathing. She wandered on, and when she arrived at Vatsabhumi, she fell down and began to run as a river. It is recorded that the river in Vatsabhumi runs only during the rainy season and is unapproachable due to its many crocodiles and dangerous fish.

By merit of her austerities, however, only half of her body became a river while the other half continued as before. She went on with her asceticism, and after some time the ṛṣis at Vatsabhumi approached her. They asked her what she desired and when she had explained they said, “You should seek Mahadeva’s favor, for that deity can fulfill any desire.”

Amba supplicated Śiva and he soon appeared before her asking to know her desire. When she asked the god for the power to kill me, he replied, “You will slay him.” Amba then asked how it would be possible, since she was a woman. Śiva replied, “My words can never be false. O blessed one, you will become a man and kill Bhīṣma in battle. You will remember all this in your next life. Born in Drupada’s line, you will become a maharatha, quick in the use of weapons and highly skilled and fierce in battle. This will come to pass soon.”

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

the unconquerable Sātyaki, Drupada, the sons of Draupadī, and the others, O King, such as the mighty-armed son of Subhadṛā⁴⁰, all blew their respective conchshells.

Sañjaya informed King Dhṛtarāṣṭra very tactfully that his unwise policy of deceiving the sons of Pāṇḍu and endeavoring to enthrone his own sons on the seat of the kingdom was not very laudable. The signs already clearly indicated that the whole Kuru dynasty would be killed in that great battle. Beginning with the grandsire, Bhīṣma, down to the grandsons like Abhimanyu and others—including kings from many states of the world—all were present there, and all were doomed. The whole catastrophe was due to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, because he encouraged the policy followed by his sons.

When Śiva vanished, Amba gathered wood and built herself a funeral pyre in the sight of all the ṛṣis. Setting fire to it, her mind burning with wrath, she hurled herself onto the pyre, crying, “For the destruction of Bhīṣma!”

So, Śikhaṇḍī was Amba in his last life. He was born first as a woman and then attained his present form. Listen as I tell you how this occurred.

Drupada’s queen was childless for a long time. Together, she and her husband worshipped Śiva for a child. He prayed for a powerful son, but Śiva told him that his wife would give birth to a daughter who would later be transformed into a man. Although Drupada beseeched the god for only a son, Śiva replied, “It shall be as I have said, for it has been decreed by destiny.”

Soon after, Drupada’s queen conceived. In due course she gave birth to a daughter...

When Bhīṣma finished telling the story, he added, “Thus Śikhaṇḍī, formerly Amba, hates me, but because he was first born a woman, I will never raise weapons against him. I have vowed this: I will not fight with weapons against women, or those who bear women’s names, or even those who appear like women. O Duryodhana, I will not fight with Śikhaṇḍī even if he attacks me, desiring my death” (Dharma, 1999, p 522-34).

⁴⁰ Abhimanyu—‘into anger’; the heroic son of Arjuna and his second wife, Subhadṛā (VedaBase Gita Appendix: Names of Other Persons).

TEXT 19

स घोषो धार्तराष्ट्राणां हृदयानि व्यदारयत् ।
नभश्च पृथिवीं चैव तुमुलोऽभ्यनुनादयन् ॥ १९ ॥

*sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām
hṛdayāni vyadārayat
nabhaś ca pṛthivīm caiva
tumulo 'bhyanunādayan*

saḥ—that; *ghoṣaḥ*—vibration; *dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām*—of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *hṛdayāni*—hearts; *vyadārayat*—shattered; *nabhaḥ*—the sky; *ca*—also; *pṛthivīm*—the surface of the earth; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *tumulaḥ*—uproarious; *abhyanunādayan*—resounding.

The blowing of these different conchshells became uproarious. Vibrating both in the sky and on the earth, it shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

When Bhīṣma and the others on the side of Duryodhana blew their respective conchshells, there was no heart-breaking on the part of the Pāṇḍavas. Such occurrences are not mentioned, but in this particular verse it is mentioned that the hearts of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra were shattered by the sounds vibrated by the Pāṇḍavas' party. This is due to the Pāṇḍavas and their confidence in Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who takes shelter of the Supreme Lord has nothing to fear, even in the midst of the greatest calamity.

Comment [jh20]: Because of Kṛṣṇa's presence on their side, the Pāṇḍavas have boundless confidence (Goswami J., 1986).

TEXT 20

अथ व्यवस्थितान्दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान्कपिध्वजः ।
प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसम्पाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डवः ।
हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यमिदमाह महीपते ॥ २० ॥

*atha vyavasthitān dṛṣṭvā
dhārtarāṣṭrān kapi-dhvajaḥ
pravṛtte śastra-sampāte
dhanur udyamya pāṇḍavaḥ
hṛṣīkeśam tadā vākyaṃ
idam āha mahī-pate*

atha—thereupon; *vyavasthitān*—situated; *dṛṣṭvā*—looking upon; *dhārtarāṣṭrān*—the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *kapi-dhvajaḥ*—he whose flag was marked with Hanumān; *pravṛtte*—while about to engage; *śastra-sampāte*—in releasing his arrows; *dhanuḥ*—bow; *udyamya*—taking up; *pāṇḍavaḥ*—the son of Pāṇḍu (Arjuna); *hṛṣīkeśam*—unto Lord Kṛṣṇa; *tadā*—at that time; *vākyaṃ*—words; *idam*—these; *āha*—said; *mahī-pate*—O King.

At that time Arjuna, the son of Pāṇḍu, seated in the chariot bearing the flag marked with Hanumān⁴¹, took up his bow and prepared to shoot his arrows. O

⁴¹ The Pāṇḍavas remained in Badarikā Ashram for six days and nights. On the seventh day, a wind blew up from the northeast, carrying a single celestial lotus. The flower fell at Draupadī's feet. The princess looked in wonder at the golden thousand-petalled flower. Its fragrance delighted her mind and she was charmed by its beauty. She had never seen anything like it and she showed it to Bhīma. "Just behold this flower, O mighty-armed one. Have you ever seen anything so wonderful? It gladdens my heart and I desire to give it to Yudhiṣṭhira. Please discover where it came from and bring others so that we may take them back to our hermitage in Kāmyaka."

Draupadī looked at Bhīma with her dark eyes, which were covered with long, curling lashes. Feeling her gaze upon him, Bhīma felt commanded. He was overjoyed at the opportunity to do something for her pleasure. She had suffered so much over the past years. The gentle princess was not suited to forest life, and she still felt the agony of the insults she had suffered in Hastināpura. Now she suffered even more due to Arjuna's absence. He had always been her favorite among the Pāṇḍavas. Bhīma said, "It will be done. O blessed lady, you will see me return with an armful of these golden flowers."

Bhīma faced the wind and began to climb the mountain. He traveled swiftly, resembling a furious elephant crashing through the forest. All creatures fled away in fear as he raced ahead, thinking only of Draupadī.

...

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

He heard a loud noise just ahead of him. The sound echoed all around the mountain and made Bhīma's hair stand on end. He ran forward to see what could have made such a noise and he found a huge monkey lying across the path, lashing the ground with his long tail and making the earth tremble. The monkey was effulgent and resembled a blazing hill of copper. He had broad shoulders and a slender waist. His face shone like the full moon, and behind his thin lips, Bhīma could see sharp, pearl-white teeth.

Seeing him obstructing his path like a hill, Bhīma roared at him. The monkey, however, did not seem impressed. He slowly opened his reddish eyes and looked lazily at Bhīma. "Why have you awakened me? I am ill and deserve your kindness. Indeed, as a human you should know the codes of religion and show kindness to all lower creatures. O hero, it seems you do not know virtue because you have come here forcefully, destroying animals on your way. Who are you? Where are you going? Do you not know that you cannot proceed further? This path leads to heaven and men cannot access it. Only those who are successful in ascetic practices can go to the celestial regions. Therefore, give up your quest and turn back. Or rest here awhile first and partake of the sweet fruits and cool water. O foremost of men, do not try to force your way past and thus die for nothing."

Intrigued, Bhīma responded politely. "Who are you, O respectable one? Why are you in the form of a monkey? I myself belong to the royal order. I am a descendent of Kuru and the son of King Pāṇḍu, and I was born in the Lunar dynasty from the union of Kuntī and Vāyu. My name is Bhīma."

"I am simply a monkey. I shall not allow you to pass. Turn back now. Do not meet with destruction."

Bhīma felt his anger rising. Who was this ape? "O monkey, I do not ask that you give me permission, nor am I interested to hear your thoughts about my destruction. Stand aside. Do not experience grief at my hands."

The monkey, still speaking in a lazy voice, said, "I am ill and cannot move. If you must pass me, then step over my body."

Bhīma shook his head. "How can I step over you when I know that the all-pervading Supersoul, the Lord of all, resides in your heart as he does in the hearts of every being? I cannot disregard him."

Bhīma looked closely at the monkey and he thought of the great Hanumān, Lord Rāma's devoted servant. Could this be him? But that monkey had lived in a long past age. How could he still be alive? That would mean he was now almost a million years old. No, it was impossible. Bhīma continued, "Had I not been aware of the Supersoul I would have leapt over you as well as the entire mountain, even as Hanumān leapt across the ocean."

The monkey turned toward Bhīma and opened his eyes wide. "Who is this Hanumān who leapt over the ocean? Tell me if you can."

"He was my brother, begotten by the wind-god and endowed with intelligence and strength. He was the best of monkeys and he is celebrated in the Rāmāyana. For the sake of Rāma's wife, Sitā, he leapt a hundred yojanas over the sea to Lanka. I am equal to him in strength and prowess and am thus able to chastise you. Arise, O monkey, and give way. Otherwise, I shall send you to Yamarāja's abode."

The monkey remained calm. "I have grown old and cannot move. Please move my tail and make your way past."

Bhīma moved toward the monkey. This was surely not Hanumān, for Hanumān's power was limitless. This monkey was simply some insolent and powerless being who deserved to be punished for obstructing his path and refusing to move. Perhaps he was even a Rākṣasa assuming a disguise and waiting for a chance to attack. Bhīma decided to take him by the tail and whirl him around till he died. The Pāṇḍava bent over and carelessly

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

King, after looking at the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra drawn in military array, Arjuna then spoke to Lord Kṛṣṇa these words.

The battle was just about to begin. It is understood from the above statement that the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra were more or less disheartened by the unexpected arrangement of military force by the Pāṇḍavas, who were guided by the direct instructions of Lord Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield. The emblem of Hanumān on the flag of Arjuna is another sign of victory because Hanumān cooperated with Lord Rāma in the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, and Lord Rāma emerged victorious. Now both Rāma and Hanumān were present on the chariot of Arjuna to help him. Lord Kṛṣṇa is Rāma Himself, and wherever Lord Rāma is, His eternal servitor Hanumān and His eternal consort Sītā, the goddess of fortune, are present. Therefore, Arjuna had no cause to fear any

took hold of the monkey's tail with his left hand. To his surprise, he found that he could not budge the tail.

Placing both hands firmly around the monkey's tail, Bhīma pulled hard. Still it could not be moved. Bhīma struggled with all his strength. His face was contracted, he was covered with perspiration, and his eyes rolled. Despite his efforts, however, Bhīma could not shift it at all. The Pāṇḍava realized that this was not an ordinary monkey or even a demon as he had supposed. Bowing his head in shame, he stood before the creature with joined palms and said, "Forgive me my harsh words. Are you a Siddha, a Gandharva, or a god? I am curious. Who are you in the shape of a monkey? I seek your refuge and ask you in the mood of a disciple. If it is no secret, then be pleased to tell me."

The monkey sat up. "O chastiser of enemies, as you are curious I shall tell you. Know me to be the son of that life of the universe, Vāyu, born in the womb of Keshari. I am the monkey named Hanumān whom you mentioned earlier."

...

Hanumān then told Bhīma to go back to his brothers. Bhīma explained that he first had to find the source of the thousand-petalled lotuses and Hanumān showed him the way to the forest where they grew. "There is the path which leads to the Saugandhika forest, and there you will see Kuvera's gardens, which are guarded by the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas. In a great lake lie the flowers which you seek for your wife."

Hanumān came forward and embraced Bhīma with affection. He briefly instructed him in the science of kingship and then said, "O Bhīma, having once again come in contact with a human I have felt in my mind the presence of my Lord Rāma, who is Viṣṇu incarnate and who is the blazing sun to the lotus, Sītā, and to the darkness called Rāvaṇa. Therefore, I wish to give you a boon. Ask of me whatever you desire. If you wish, I shall go to Hastināpura and kill Dhṛtarāṣṭra's insignificant sons and grind their city to powder. Or, I can bind Duryodhana and bring him here. Tell me, what can I do for you?"

Bhīma replied that he felt assured of success if Hanumān would simply lend his support and blessings. Even his presence on the battlefield would guarantee victory. Hanumān replied, "When you rush forward for the fight, sending forth lion-like roars, I will add my roars to yours. Remaining on the flagstaff of Arjuna's chariot, I will strike fear into the hearts of your foes by my terrific yells" (Dharma, 1999, p 273-9).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

enemies whatsoever. And above all, the Lord of the senses, Lord Kṛṣṇa, was personally present to give him direction. Thus, all good counsel was available to Arjuna in the matter of executing the battle. In such auspicious conditions, arranged by the Lord for His eternal devotee, lay the signs of assured victory.

TEXTS 21-22

अर्जुन उवाच

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत ।
यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान् ॥ २१ ॥
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन्नणसमुद्यमे ॥ २२ ॥

arjuna uvāca
senayor ubhayor madhye
ratham sthāpaya me 'cyuta
yāvad etān nirikṣe 'ham
yoddhu-kāmān avasthitān
kair mayā saha yoddhavyam
asmin raṇa-samudyame

arjunaḥ uvāca—Arjuna said; *senayoḥ*—of the armies; *ubhayoḥ*—both; *madhye*—between; *ratham*—the chariot; *sthāpaya*—please keep; *me*—my; *acyuta*—O infallible one; *yāvat*—as long as; *etān*—all these; *nirikṣe*—may look upon; *aham*—I; *yoddhu*—*kāmān*—desiring to fight; *avasthitān*—arrayed on the battlefield; *kaiḥ*—with whom; *mayā*—by me; *saha*—together; *yoddhavyam*—have to fight; *asmin*—in this; *raṇa*—strife; *samudyame*—in the attempt.

Arjuna said: O infallible one, please draw my chariot between the two armies so that I may see those present here, who desire to fight, and with whom I must contend in this great trial of arms.

Although Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, out of His causeless mercy He was engaged in the service of His friend. He never fails in His affection for His devotees, and thus He is addressed herein as infallible. As charioteer, He had to carry out the orders of Arjuna, and since He did not hesitate to do so, He is addressed as infallible. Although He had accepted the

Comment [jh22]: Kṛṣṇa (Acyuta) has agreed to act as Arjuna's charioteer, and He unhesitatingly carries out Arjuna's orders. Kṛṣṇa enjoys serving His devotees (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

position of a charioteer for His devotee, His supreme position was not challenged. In all circumstances, He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hṛṣīkeśa, the Lord of the total senses. The relationship between the Lord and His servitor is very sweet and transcendental. The servitor is always ready to render service to the Lord, and, similarly, the Lord is always seeking an opportunity to render some service to the devotee. He takes greater pleasure in His pure devotee's assuming the advantageous position of ordering Him than He does in being the giver of orders. Since He is master, everyone is under His orders, and no one is above Him to order Him. But when He finds that a pure devotee is ordering Him, He obtains transcendental pleasure, although He is the infallible master in all circumstances.

As a pure devotee of the Lord, Arjuna had no desire to fight with his cousins and brothers, but he was forced to come onto the battlefield by the obstinacy of Duryodhana, who was never agreeable to any peaceful negotiation. Therefore, he was very anxious to see who the leading persons present on the battlefield were. Although there was no question of a peacemaking endeavor on the battlefield, he wanted to see them again, and to see how much they were bent upon demanding an unwanted war.

TEXT 23

योत्स्यमानानवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागताः ।
धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षवः ॥ २३ ॥

yotsyamānān avekṣe 'ham
ya ete 'tra samāgatāḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheḥ
yuddhe priya-cikīrṣavaḥ

yotsyamānān—those who will be fighting; avekṣe—let me see; aham—I; ye—who; ete—those; atra—here; samāgatāḥ—assembled; dhārtarāṣṭrasya—for the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; durbuddheḥ—evil—minded; yuddhe—in the fight; priya—well; cikīrṣavaḥ—wishing.

Let me see those who have come here to fight, wishing to please the evil-minded son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

Comment [jh23]: Arjuna wants a closer look at Duryodhana's army (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

It was an open secret that Duryodhana wanted to usurp the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas by evil plans, in collaboration with his father, Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Therefore, all persons who had joined the side of Duryodhana must have been birds of the same feather. Arjuna wanted to see them on the battlefield before the fight was begun, just to learn who they were, but he had no intention of proposing peace negotiations with them. It was also a fact that he wanted to see them to make an estimate of the strength which he had to face, although he was quite confident of victory because Kṛṣṇa was sitting by his side.

TEXT 24

सञ्जय उवाच
एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो गुडाकेशेन भारत ।
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये स्थापयित्वा रथोत्तमम् ॥ २४ ॥

sañjaya uvāca
evam ukto hṛṣīkeśo
guḍākeśena bhārata
senayor ubhayor madhye
sthāpayitvā rathottamam

sañjayaḥ uvāca—Sañjaya said; *evam*—thus; *uktaḥ*—addressed; *hṛṣīkeśaḥ*—Lord Kṛṣṇa; *guḍākeśena*—by Arjuna; *bhārata*—O descendant of Bharata; *senayoḥ*—of the armies; *ubhayoḥ*—both; *madhye*—in the midst; *sthāpayitvā*—placing; *ratha*—*uttamam*—the finest chariot.

Sañjaya said: O descendant of Bharata, having thus been addressed by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa drew up the fine chariot in the midst of the armies of both parties.

In this verse Arjuna is referred to as Guḍākeśa⁴². *Guḍākā* means sleep, and one who conquers sleep is called *guḍākeśa*. Sleep also means ignorance. So Arjuna conquered both sleep and ignorance because of his friendship with Kṛṣṇa. As a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he could not forget Kṛṣṇa even for a moment, because that is the nature of a devotee. Either in waking or in sleep, a devotee of the Lord can never be free from thinking of Kṛṣṇa's name, form,

⁴² Guḍākeśa: "The full haired one" (Schweig, 2007)

Comment [jh24]:

a. Arjuna (Guḍākeśa) can conquer sleep and ignorance by always remembering Kṛṣṇa
b. Kṛṣṇa (Hṛṣīkeśa) understands Arjuna's purpose (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

qualities and pastimes. Thus a devotee of Kṛṣṇa can conquer both sleep and ignorance simply by thinking of Kṛṣṇa constantly. This is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or *samādhi*. As Hṛṣīkeśa, or the director of the senses and mind of every living entity, Kṛṣṇa could understand Arjuna's purpose in placing the chariot in the midst of the armies. Thus He did so, and spoke as follows.

TEXT 25

भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखतः सर्वेषां च महीक्षिताम् ।
उवाच पार्थ पश्यैतान्समवेतान्कुरुनिति ॥ २५ ॥

bhīṣma-droṇa-pramukhataḥ
sarveṣāṃ ca mahī-kṣitām
uvāca pārtha paśyaitān
samavetān kurūn iti

bhīṣma—Grandfather Bhīṣma; *droṇa*—the teacher Droṇa; *pramukhataḥ*—in front of; *sarveṣāṃ*—all; *ca*—also; *mahī-kṣitām*—chiefs of the world; *uvāca*—said; *pārtha*—O son of Pṛthā; *paśya*—just behold; *etān*—all of them; *samavetān*—assembled; *kurūn*—the members of the Kuru dynasty; *iti*—thus.

In the presence of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the other chieftains of the world, the Lord said, "Just behold, Pārtha, all the Kurus assembled here."

As the Supersoul of all living entities, Lord Kṛṣṇa could understand what was going on in the mind of Arjuna. The use of the word Hṛṣīkeśa in this connection indicates that He knew everything. And the word Pārtha, or the son of Kuntī, or Pṛthā, is also similarly significant in reference to Arjuna. As a friend, He wanted to inform Arjuna that because Arjuna was the son of Pṛthā, the sister of His own father Vasudeva, He had agreed to be the charioteer of Arjuna. Now what did Kṛṣṇa mean when He told Arjuna to "behold the Kurus"? Did Arjuna want to stop there and not fight? Kṛṣṇa never expected such things from the son of His aunt Pṛthā. The mind of Arjuna was thus predicted by the Lord in friendly joking.

TEXT 26

तत्रापश्यत्स्थितान्यार्थः पितृनथ पितामहान् ।

Comment [jh25]: Understanding Arjuna's mind and eager to speak the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa's fuels Arjuna's confusion by pointing out all his family members (Goswami J., 1986).

Comment [jh26]: Arjuna's observes all his family members and friends (Goswami J., 1986).

आचार्यान्मातुलान्भ्रातृन्पुत्रान्पौत्रान्सखींस्तथा ।
श्वशुरान्सुहृदश्चैव सेनयोरुभयोरपि ॥ २६ ॥

*tatrāpaśyat sthitān pārthaḥ
pitṛn atha pitāmahān
ācāryān mātulān bhrātṛn
putrān pautrān sakhīms tathā
śvaśurān suhṛdaś caiva
senayor ubhayor api*

tatra—there; *apaśyat*—he could see; *sthitān*—standing; *pārthaḥ*—Arjuna; *pitṛn*—fathers; *atha*—also; *pitāmahān*—grandfathers; *ācāryān*—teachers; *mātulān*—maternal uncles; *bhrātṛn*—brothers; *putrān*—sons; *pautrān*—grandsons; *sakhīn*—friends; *tathā*—too; *śvaśurān*—fathers-in-law; *suhṛdaḥ*—well-wishers; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *senayoḥ*—of the armies; *ubhayoḥ*—of both parties; *api*—including.

There Arjuna could see, within the midst of the armies of both parties, his fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and also his fathers-in-law and well-wishers.

On the battlefield Arjuna could see all kinds of relatives. He could see persons like Bhūriśravā, who were his father's contemporaries, grandfathers Bhīṣma and Somadatta, teachers like Droṇācārya and Kṛpācārya, maternal uncles like Śalya and Śakuni, brothers like Duryodhana, sons like Lakṣmaṇa, friends like Aśvatthāmā, well-wishers like Kṛtavarmā, etc. He could see also the armies which contained many of his friends.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

TEXT 27

तान्समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेयः सर्वान्बन्धूनवस्थितान् ।
कृपया परयाविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत् ॥ २७ ॥

tān samikṣya sa kaunteyaḥ
sarvān bandhūn avasthitān
kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo
viṣīdann idam abravīt

Begins section 2:
Arjuna's doubts

tān—all of them; samikṣya—after seeing; saḥ—he; kaunteyaḥ—the son of Kuntī; sarvān—all kinds of; bandhūn—relatives; avasthitān—situated; kṛpayā—by compassion; parayā—of a high grade; āviṣṭaḥ—overwhelmed; viṣīdan—while lamenting; idam—thus; abravīt—spoke.

When the son of Kuntī, Arjuna, saw all these different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion and spoke thus.

TEXT 28

अर्जुन उवाच
दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ।
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति ॥ २८ ॥

arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭvemaṁ sva-janaṁ kṛṣṇa
yuyuṭsum samupasthitam
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi
mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati

Doubt #1:
Compassion

arjunaḥ uvāca—Arjuna said; dṛṣṭvā—after seeing; imam—all these; sva-janam—kinsmen; kṛṣṇa—O Kṛṣṇa; yuyuṭsum—all in a fighting spirit; samupasthitam—present; sīdanti—are quivering; mama—my; gātrāṇi—limbs of the body; mukham—mouth; ca—also; pariśuṣyati—is drying up.

Arjuna said: My dear Kṛṣṇa⁴³, seeing my friends and relatives present before me

⁴³ Madhusūdana Sarasvatī comments that the use of the name Kṛṣṇa here indicates that Arjuna is calling

Comment [jh27]:

a. Arjuna becomes overwhelmed with compassion for all his relatives and friends who will soon die in battle.
b. Arjuna is naturally compassionate due to his softheartedness as a devotee (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

in such a fighting spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up.

Any man who has genuine devotion to the Lord has all the good qualities which are found in godly persons or in the demigods, whereas the nondevotee, however advanced he may be in material qualifications by education and culture, lacks in godly qualities. As such, Arjuna, just after seeing his kinsmen, friends and relatives on the battlefield, was at once overwhelmed by compassion for them who had so decided to fight amongst themselves. As far as his soldiers were concerned, he was sympathetic from the beginning, but he felt compassion even for the soldiers of the opposite party, foreseeing their imminent death. And while he was so thinking, the limbs of his body began to quiver, and his mouth became dry. He was more or less astonished to see their fighting spirit. Practically the whole community, all blood relatives of Arjuna, had come to fight with him. This overwhelmed a kind devotee like Arjuna. Although it is not mentioned here, still one can easily imagine that not only were Arjuna's bodily limbs quivering and his mouth drying up, but he was also crying out of compassion. Such symptoms in Arjuna were not due to weakness but to his softheartedness, a characteristic of a pure devotee of the Lord. It is said therefore:

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
mano-rathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*

"One who has unflinching devotion for the Personality of Godhead has all the good qualities of the demigods. But one who is not a devotee of the Lord has only material qualifications that are of little value. This is because he is hovering on the mental plane and is certain to be attracted by the glaring material energy." (SB 5.18.12)

TEXT 29

वेपथुश्च शरीरं मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ।

Comment [jh28]: Arjuna's compassion mixed with his material attachment to family members causes him overwhelming fear (Goswami J., 1986).

upon Kṛṣṇa as "the one who has the power to remove the sorrow of his devotees... being of the nature of eternal bliss" (Tripurari, 2001).

गाण्डीवं संसते हस्तात्त्वक्चैव परिदह्यते ॥ २९ ॥

*vepathuś ca śarīre me
roma-harṣaś ca jāyate
gāṇḍivam sraṁsate hastāt
tvak caiva paridahyate*

vepathuḥ—trembling of the body; *ca*—also; *śarīre*—on the body; *me*—my; *roma-harṣaḥ*—standing of hair on end; *ca*—also; *jāyate*—is taking place; *gāṇḍivam*—the bow of Arjuna; *sraṁsate*—is slipping; *hastāt*—from the hand; *tvak*—skin; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *paridahyate*—is burning.

My whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow Gāṇḍīva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning.

There are two kinds of trembling of the body, and two kinds of standings of the hair on end. Such phenomena occur either in great spiritual ecstasy or out of great fear under material conditions. There is no fear in transcendental realization. Arjuna's symptoms in this situation are out of material fear—namely, loss of life. This is evident from other symptoms also; he became so impatient that his famous bow Gāṇḍīva was slipping from his hands, and, because his heart was burning within him, he was feeling a burning sensation of the skin. All these are due to a material conception of life.

TEXT 30

न च शक्नोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः ।
निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव ॥ ३० ॥

*na ca śaknomy avasthātum
bhramatīva ca me manaḥ
nimittāni ca paśyāmi
viparītāni keśava*

na—nor; *ca*—also; *śaknomy*—am I able; *avasthātum*—to stay; *bhramati*—forgetting; *iva*—as; *ca*—and; *me*—my; *manaḥ*—mind; *nimittāni*—causes; *ca*—also; *paśyāmi*—I see; *viparītāni*—just the opposite; *keśava*—O killer of the

Comment [jh29]: _

a. Due to attachment for his material well-being, which the battle is about to destroy, Arjuna loses all composure.
b. Every materially attached person occasionally experiences similar dilemmas. Such situations are meant to impel the conditioned souls (Goswami J., 1986).

demon Keśī (Kṛṣṇa).

I am now unable to stand here any longer. I am forgetting myself, and my mind is reeling. I see only causes of misfortune, O Kṛṣṇa, killer of the Keśī demon.

Due to his impatience, Arjuna was unable to stay on the battlefield, and he was forgetting himself on account of this weakness of his mind. Excessive attachment for material things puts a man in such a bewildering condition of existence. *Bhayaṃ dvitīyābhīniveśataḥ syāt* (SB 11.2.37): such fearfulness and loss of mental equilibrium take place in persons who are too affected by material conditions. Arjuna envisioned only painful reverses in the battlefield—he would not be happy even by gaining victory over the foe. The words *nimittāni viparītāni* are significant. When a man sees only frustration in his expectations, he thinks, "Why am I here?" Everyone is interested in himself and his own welfare. No one is interested in the Supreme Self. Arjuna is showing ignorance of his real self-interest by Kṛṣṇa's will. One's real self-interest lies in Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. The conditioned soul forgets this, and therefore suffers material pains. Arjuna thought that his victory in the battle would only be a cause of lamentation for him.

TEXT 31

न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे ।
न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ॥ ३१ ॥

na ca śreyo 'nupaśyāmi
hatvā sva-janam āhave
na kāṅkṣe vijayaṃ kṛṣṇa
na ca rājyaṃ sukhāni ca

Doubt #2:
Enjoyment

na—nor; ca—also; śreyaḥ—good; anupaśyāmi—do I foresee; hatvā—by killing; sva—janam—own kinsmen; āhave—in the fight; na—nor; kāṅkṣe—do I desire; vijayam—victory; kṛṣṇa—O Kṛṣṇa; na—nor; ca—also; rājyam—kingdom; sukhāni—happiness thereof; ca—also.

I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Kṛṣṇa, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom, or happiness.

Comment [jh30]:

a. Arjuna's attachment for bodily relations cloud even his moral (what to speak of spiritual) discrimination.
b. Since he sees no good resulting from the battle, Arjuna loses all enthusiasm to participate (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Without knowing that one's self-interest is in Viṣṇu (or Kṛṣṇa), conditioned souls are attracted by bodily relationships, hoping to be happy in such situations. In such a blind conception of life, they forget even the causes of material happiness. Arjuna appears to have even forgotten the moral codes for a *kṣatriya*. It is said that two kinds of men, namely the *kṣatriya* who dies directly in front of the battlefield under Kṛṣṇa's personal orders and the person in the renounced order of life who is absolutely devoted to spiritual culture, are eligible to enter into the sun globe, which is so powerful and dazzling. Arjuna is reluctant even to kill his enemies, let alone his relatives. He thinks that by killing his kinsmen there would be no happiness in his life, and therefore he is not willing to fight, just as a person who does not feel hunger is not inclined to cook. He has now decided to go into the forest and live a secluded life in frustration. But as a *kṣatriya*, he requires a kingdom for his subsistence, because the *kṣatriyas* cannot engage themselves in any other occupation. But Arjuna has no kingdom. Arjuna's sole opportunity for gaining a kingdom lies in fighting with his cousins and brothers and reclaiming the kingdom inherited from his father, which he does not like to do. Therefore he considers himself fit to go to the forest to live a secluded life of frustration.

TEXTS 32-35

किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा ।
येषामर्थे काङ्क्षितं नो राज्यं भोगाः सुखानि च ॥ ३२ ॥
त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च ।
आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः ॥ ३३ ॥
मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः सम्बन्धिनस्तथा ।
एतान्न हन्तुमिच्छामि घ्नतोऽपि मधुसूदन ॥ ३४ ॥
अपि त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः किं नु महीकृते ।
निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्नः का प्रीतिः स्यान्नार्दन ॥ ३५ ॥

*kiṁ no rājyena govinda
kiṁ bhogair jīvitena vā
yeṣām arthe kāṅkṣitaṁ no
rājyaṁ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca
ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe*

Comment [jh31]: _

a. Arjuna addresses Kṛṣṇa as Govinda because he wants Him to please his senses as order supplier. But this is a misunderstanding. One must try to please the sense of Govinda only then can one be fully satisfied.

b. Arjuna sees his family members and their threatened future, but he fails to consider Kṛṣṇa's plans in the events taking place (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*prāṇāms tyaktvā dhanāni ca
ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrāḥ
tathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ
śyālāḥ sambandhinas tathā
etān na hantum icchāmi
ghnato 'pi madhusūdana
api trailokya-rājyasya
hetoḥ kim nu mahī-kṛte
nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrān naḥ
kā prītiḥ syāj janārdana*

kim—what use; *naḥ*—to us; *rājyena*—is the kingdom; *govinda*—O Kṛṣṇa; *kim*—what; *bhogaiḥ*—enjoyment; *jīvitena*—living; *vā*—either; *yeṣāṃ*—of whom; *arthe*—for the sake; *kāṅkṣitam*—is desired; *naḥ*—by us; *rājyam*—kingdom; *bhogāḥ*—material enjoyment; *sukhāni*—all happiness; *ca*—also; *te*—all of them; *ime*—these; *avasthitāḥ*—situated; *yuddhe*—on this battlefield; *prāṇān*—lives; *tyaktvā*—giving up; *dhanāni*—riches; *ca*—also; *ācāryāḥ*—teachers; *pitarāḥ*—fathers; *putrāḥ*—sons; *tathā*—as well as; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—also; *pitāmahāḥ*—grandfathers; *mātulāḥ*—maternal uncles; *śvaśurāḥ*—fathers-in-law; *pautrāḥ*—grandsons; *śyālāḥ*—brothers-in-law; *sambandhinaḥ*—relatives; *tathā*—as well as; *etān*—all these; *na*—never; *hantum*—to kill; *icchāmi*—do I wish; *ghnataḥ*—being killed; *api*—even; *madhusūdana*—O killer of the demon Madhu (Kṛṣṇa); *api*—even if; *trai-lokya*—of the three worlds; *rājyasya*—for the kingdom; *hetoḥ*—in exchange; *kim nu*—what to speak of; *mahī-kṛte*—for the sake of the earth; *nihatya*—by killing; *dhārtarāṣṭrān*—the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *naḥ*—our; *kā*—what; *prītiḥ*—pleasure; *syāt*—will there be; *janārdana*—O maintainer of all living entities⁴⁴.

O Govinda, of what avail to us are a kingdom, happiness or even life itself when all those for whom we may desire them are now arrayed on this battlefield? O Madhusūdana⁴⁵, when teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles,

⁴⁴ Janārdana: Name of Krishna meaning “one who inspires human beings.” (Schweig, 2007)

⁴⁵ Madhusūdana: “Slayer of the demon Madhu,” a well-known name for Krishna. Arjuna’s use of this name suggests, “You slay demons, but even you don’t slay persons whom you love and respect.” (Schweig, 2007)

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives are ready to give up their lives and properties and are standing before me, why should I wish to kill them, even though they might otherwise kill me? O maintainer of all living entities, I am not prepared to fight with them even in exchange for the three worlds, let alone this earth. What pleasure will we derive from killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra?

Arjuna has addressed Lord Kṛṣṇa as Govinda because Kṛṣṇa is the object of all pleasures for cows and the senses. By using this significant word, Arjuna indicates that Kṛṣṇa should understand what will satisfy Arjuna's senses. But Govinda is not meant for satisfying our senses. If we try to satisfy the senses of Govinda, however, then automatically our own senses are satisfied. Materially, everyone wants to satisfy his senses, and he wants God to be the order supplier for such satisfaction. The Lord will satisfy the senses of the living entities as much as they deserve, but not to the extent that they may covet. But when one takes the opposite way—namely, when one tries to satisfy the senses of Govinda without desiring to satisfy one's own senses—then by the grace of Govinda all desires of the living entity are satisfied. Arjuna's deep affection for community and family members is exhibited here partly due to his natural compassion for them. He is therefore not prepared to fight. Everyone wants to show his opulence to friends and relatives, but Arjuna fears that all his relatives and friends will be killed on the battlefield and he will be unable to share his opulence after victory. This is a typical calculation of material life. The transcendental life, however, is different. Since a devotee wants to satisfy the desires of the Lord, he can, Lord willing, accept all kinds of opulence for the service of the Lord, and if the Lord is not willing, he should not accept a farthing. Arjuna did not want to kill his relatives, and if there were any need to kill them, he desired that Kṛṣṇa kill them personally. At this point he did not know that Kṛṣṇa had already killed them before their coming into the battlefield and that he was only to become an instrument for Kṛṣṇa. This fact is disclosed in following chapters. As a natural devotee of the Lord, Arjuna did not like to retaliate against his miscreant cousins and brothers, but it was the Lord's plan that they should all be killed. The devotee of the Lord does not retaliate against the wrongdoer, but the Lord does not tolerate any mischief done to the devotee by the miscreants. The Lord can excuse a person on His own account, but He excuses no one who has done harm to His devotees.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Therefore the Lord was determined to kill the miscreants, although Arjuna wanted to excuse them.

TEXT 36

पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान् हत्वैतानाततायिनः ।
तस्मान्नाहं वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान्सबान्धवान् ।
स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनः स्याम माधव ॥ ३६ ॥

*pāpam evāśrayed asmān
hatvaitān ātatāyinaḥ
tasmān nārḥā vayaṁ hantum
dhārtarāṣṭrān sa-bāndhavān
sva-janaṁ hi katham hatvā
sukhinaḥ syāma mādharma*

Doubt #3:
Fear of sin

pāpam—vices; *eva*—certainly; *āśrayet*—must come upon; *asmān*—us; *hatvā*—by killing; *etān*—all these; *ātatāyinaḥ*—aggressors; *tasmāt*—therefore; *na*—never; *arhāḥ*—deserving; *vayaṁ*—we; *hantum*—to kill; *dhārtarāṣṭrān*—the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *sa-bāndhavān*—along with friends; *sva-janam*—kinsmen; *hi*—certainly; *katham*—how; *hatvā*—by killing; *sukhinaḥ*—happy; *syāma*—will we become; *mādharma*—O Kṛṣṇa, husband of the goddess of fortune.

Sin⁴⁶ will overcome us if we slay such aggressors. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and our friends. What should we gain, O Kṛṣṇa, husband of the goddess of fortune, and how could we be happy by killing our own kinsmen?

According to Vedic injunctions there are six kinds of aggressors: (1) a poison giver, (2) one who sets fire to the house, (3) one who attacks with

⁴⁶ Misfortune: Translates *pāpa*, often rendered as “sin,” which carries too much of the narrower Christian sense. I have chosen to translate as “misfortune” or “trouble,” indicating both the unfortunate things that can befall a person as well as something unfortunate that a person has caused. The word *pāpa* means anything disturbing that creates conflict internally and externally, an impediment in one’s spiritual evolution causing effects that impeded one’s progress. The word *sin* has a much narrower application that carries a particular Christian sense not present in the Sanskrit word *pāpa*. (Schweig, 2007)

Comment [jh32]:

- Discuss the six kinds of aggressors who deserve to be killed.
- Arjuna regards killing relatives as sinful and therefore prefers to forgive them in spite of their aggression, but *kṣatriyas* should not display that kind of saintliness.
- Discuss Arjuna’s addressing Kṛṣṇa as Mādharma (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

deadly weapons, (4) one who plunders riches, (5) one who occupies another's land, and (6) one who kidnaps a wife. Such aggressors are at once to be killed, and no sin is incurred by killing such aggressors. Such killing of aggressors is quite befitting any ordinary man, but Arjuna was not an ordinary person. He was saintly by character, and therefore he wanted to deal with them in saintliness. This kind of saintliness, however, is not for a *kṣatriya*. Although a responsible man in the administration of a state is required to be saintly, he should not be cowardly. For example, Lord Rāma was so saintly that people even now are anxious to live in the kingdom of Lord Rāma (*rāma-rājya*), but Lord Rāma never showed any cowardice. Rāvaṇa was an aggressor against Rāma because Rāvaṇa kidnapped Rāma's wife, Sītā, but Lord Rāma gave him sufficient lessons, unparalleled in the history of the world. In Arjuna's case, however, one should consider the special type of aggressors, namely his own grandfather, own teacher, friends, sons, grandsons, etc. Because of them, Arjuna thought that he should not take the severe steps necessary against ordinary aggressors. Besides that, saintly persons are advised to forgive. Such injunctions for saintly persons are more important than any political emergency. Arjuna considered that rather than kill his own kinsmen for political reasons, it would be better to forgive them on grounds of religion and saintly behavior. He did not, therefore, consider such killing profitable simply for the matter of temporary bodily happiness. After all, kingdoms and pleasures derived therefrom are not permanent, so why should he risk his life and eternal salvation by killing his own kinsmen? Arjuna's addressing of Kṛṣṇa as "Mādhava," or the husband of the goddess of fortune, is also significant in this connection. He wanted to point out to Kṛṣṇa that, as husband of the goddess of fortune, He should not induce Arjuna to take up a matter which would ultimately bring about misfortune. Kṛṣṇa, however, never brings misfortune to anyone, to say nothing of His devotees.

TEXTS 37-38

यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम् ॥ ३७ ॥
कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम् ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्विर्जनार्दन ॥ ३८ ॥

Comment [jh33]: Although Duryodhana and his men might not see the affects of their actions, Arjuna considers it sinful to take part in a war which will destroy the entire dynasty (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*yady apy ete na paśyanti
lobhopahata-cetasah
kula-kṣaya-kṛtam doṣam
mitra-drohe ca pātakam*

*katham na jñeyam asmābhiḥ
pāpād asmān nivartitum
kula-kṣaya-kṛtam doṣam
prapaśyadbhir janārdana*

yadi—if; *api*—even; *ete*—they; *na*—do not; *paśyanti*—see; *lobha*—by greed; *upahata*—overpowered; *cetasah*—their hearts; *kula-kṣaya*—in killing the family; *kṛtam*—done; *doṣam*—fault; *mitra-drohe*—in quarreling with friends; *ca*—also; *pātakam*—sinful reactions; *katham*—why; *na*—should not; *jñeyam*—be known; *asmābhiḥ*—by us; *pāpāt*—from sins; *asmāt*—these; *nivartitum*—to cease; *kula-kṣaya*—in the destruction of a dynasty; *kṛtam*—done; *doṣam*—crime; *prapaśyadbhiḥ*—by those who can see; *janārdana*—O Kṛṣṇa.

O Janārdana, although these men, their hearts overtaken by greed, see no fault in killing one's family or quarreling with friends, why should we, who can see the crime in destroying a family, engage in these acts of sin?

A *kṣatriya* is not supposed to refuse to battle or gamble when he is so invited by some rival party. Under such an obligation, Arjuna could not refuse to fight, because he had been challenged by the party of Duryodhana. In this connection, Arjuna considered that the other party might be blind to the effects of such a challenge. Arjuna, however, could see the evil consequences and could not accept the challenge. Obligation is actually binding when the effect is good, but when the effect is otherwise, then no one can be bound. Considering all these pros and cons, Arjuna decided not to fight.

TEXT 39

**कुलक्षये प्रणश्यन्ति कुलधर्माः सनातनाः ।
धर्मे नष्टे कुलं कृत्स्नमधर्मोऽभिभवत्युत ॥ ३९ ॥**

*kula-kṣaye praṇaśyanti
kula-dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ*

Comment [jh34]: Arjuna fears that with the older family members gone, coming generations will develop irreligious habits (Goswami J., 1986).

Doubt #4:
Destruction of
family tradition

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

*dharme naṣṭe kulam kṛtsnam
adharmo 'bhibhavaty uta*

kula-kṣaye—in destroying the family; *praṇaśyanti*—become vanquished; *kula-dharmāḥ*—the family traditions; *sanātanāḥ*—eternal; *dharme*—religion; *naṣṭe*—being destroyed; *kulam*—family; *kṛtsnam*—whole; *adharmāḥ*—irreligion; *abhibhavati*—transforms; *uta*—it is said.

With the destruction of the dynasty, the eternal family tradition is vanquished, and thus the rest of the family becomes involved in irreligion.

In the system of the *varṇāśrama* institution there are many principles of religious traditions to help members of the family grow properly and attain spiritual values. The elder members are responsible for such purifying processes in the family, beginning from birth to death. But on the death of the elder members, such family traditions of purification may stop, and the remaining younger family members may develop irreligious habits and thereby lose their chance for spiritual salvation. Therefore, for no purpose should the elder members of the family be slain.

TEXT 40

**अधर्माभिभवात्कृष्ण प्रदुष्यन्ति कुलस्त्रियः ।
स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु वार्ष्णेय जायते वर्णसङ्करः ॥ ४० ॥**

*adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa
praduṣyanti kula-striyaḥ
strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya
jāyate varṇa-saṅkaraḥ*

adharmā—irreligion; *abhibhavāt*—having become predominant; *kṛṣṇa*—O Kṛṣṇa; *praduṣyanti*—become polluted; *kula-striyaḥ*—family ladies; *strīṣu*—by the womanhood; *duṣṭāsu*—being so polluted; *vārṣṇeya*—O descendant of Vṛṣṇi; *jāyate*—comes into being; *varṇa-saṅkaraḥ*—unwanted progeny.

When irreligion is prominent in the family, O Kṛṣṇa, the women of the family become polluted, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vṛṣṇi, comes unwanted progeny.

Comment [jh35]:

a. Arjuna considers that due to irreligion in the family, the women will lose their chastity, and this will lead to a proliferation of unwanted children.
b. "Good population in human society is the basic principle for peace, prosperity, and spiritual progress in life... such population depends on the chastity and faithfulness of its womanhood" (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Good population in human society is the basic principle for peace, prosperity and spiritual progress in life. The *varṇāśrama* religion's principles were so designed that the good population would prevail in society for the general spiritual progress of state and community. Such population depends on the chastity and faithfulness of its womanhood. As children are very prone to be misled, women are similarly very prone to degradation. Therefore, both children and women require protection by the elder members of the family. By being engaged in various religious practices, women will not be misled into adultery. According to Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, women are generally not very intelligent and therefore not trustworthy. So the different family traditions of religious activities should always engage them, and thus their chastity and devotion will give birth to a good population eligible for participating in the *varṇāśrama* system. On the failure of such *varṇāśrama-dharma*, naturally the women become free to act and mix with men, and thus adultery is indulged in at the risk of unwanted population. Irresponsible men also provoke adultery in society, and thus unwanted children flood the human race at the risk of war and pestilence.

TEXT 41

सङ्करो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च ।
पतन्ति पितरो ह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः ॥ ४१ ॥

saṅkaro narakāyaiva
kula-ghnānām kulasya ca
patanti pitaro hy eṣām
luṭṭa-piṇḍodaka-kriyāḥ

saṅkaraḥ—such unwanted children; *narakāya*—make for hellish life; *eva*—certainly; *kula*—*ghnānām*—for those who are killers of the family; *kulasya*—for the family; *ca*—also; *patanti*—fall down; *pitaraḥ*—forefathers; *hi*—certainly; *eṣām*—of them; *luṭṭa*—stopped; *piṇḍa*—of offerings of food; *udaka*—and water; *kriyāḥ*—performances.

An increase of unwanted population certainly causes hellish life both for the family and for those who destroy the family tradition. The ancestors of such corrupt families fall down, because the performances for offering them food and

Comment [jh36]:

a. Arjuna thinks that with an increase of unwanted children, family traditions (such as offerings of *prasādam* to the ancestors) will stop. And so the whole family—past, present, and future—will be cast into hellish life.
b. By serving Kṛṣṇa, one automatically fulfills all obligations to one's forefathers (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

water are entirely stopped.

According to the rules and regulations of fruitive activities, there is a need to offer periodical food and water to the forefathers of the family. This offering is performed by worship of Viṣṇu, because eating the remnants of food offered to Viṣṇu can deliver one from all kinds of sinful actions. Sometimes the forefathers may be suffering from various types of sinful reactions, and sometimes some of them cannot even acquire a gross material body and are forced to remain in subtle bodies as ghosts. Thus, when remnants of *prasādam* food are offered to forefathers by descendants, the forefathers are released from ghostly or other kinds of miserable life. Such help rendered to forefathers is a family tradition, and those who are not in devotional life are required to perform such rituals. One who is engaged in the devotional life is not required to perform such actions. Simply by performing devotional service, one can deliver hundreds and thousands of forefathers from all kinds of misery. It is stated in the *Bhāgavatam* (11.5.41):

*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam*

"Anyone who has taken shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, the giver of liberation, giving up all kinds of obligation, and has taken to the path in all seriousness, owes neither duties nor obligations to the demigods, sages, general living entities, family members, humankind or forefathers." Such obligations are automatically fulfilled by performance of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

TEXT 42

**दोषैरेतैः कुलघ्नानां वर्णसङ्करकारकैः ।
उत्साद्यन्ते जातिधर्माः कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वताः ॥ ४२ ॥**

*doṣair etaiḥ kula-ghnānām
varṇa-saṅkara-kāraakaiḥ
utsādyante jāti-dharmāḥ*

Comment [jh37]: Leaders of society who fail to preserve or establish *sanātana-dharma* should expect chaos in their societies (Goswami J., 1986).

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

kula-dharmās ca śāśvatāḥ

doṣaiḥ—by such faults; *etaiḥ*—all these; *kula-ghnānām*—of the destroyers of the family; *varṇa-saṅkara*⁴⁷—of unwanted children; *kāraṅkaiḥ*—which are causes; *utsādyante*—are devastated; *jāti-dharmāḥ*—community projects; *kula-dharmāḥ*—family traditions; *ca*—also; *śāśvatāḥ*—eternal.

By the evil deeds of those who destroy the family tradition and thus give rise to unwanted children, all kinds of community projects and family welfare activities are devastated.

Community projects for the four orders of human society, combined with family welfare activities, as they are set forth by the institution of *sanātana-dharma*, or *varṇāśrama-dharma*, are designed to enable the human being to attain his ultimate salvation. Therefore, the breaking of the *sanātana-dharma* tradition by irresponsible leaders of society brings about chaos in that society, and consequently people forget the aim of life-Viṣṇu. Such leaders are called blind, and persons who follow such leaders are sure to be led into chaos.

TEXT 43

उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां मनुष्याणां जनार्दन ।
नरके नियतं वासो भवतीत्यनुशुश्रुम ॥ ४३ ॥

utsanna-kula-dharmāṇām
manuṣyāṇām janārdana
narake niyatam vāso
bhavatīty anuśuśruma

utsanna—spoiled; *kula*—*dharmāṇām*—of those who have the family traditions; *manuṣyāṇām*—of such men; *janārdana*—O Kṛṣṇa; *narake*—in hell; *niyatam*—always; *vāsaḥ*—residence; *bhavati*—it so becomes; *iti*—thus; *anuśuśruma*—I have heard by disciplic succession.

O Kṛṣṇa, maintainer of the people, I have heard by disciplic succession that those whose family traditions are destroyed dwell always in hell.

Comment [jh38]: Arjuna intelligently refers to scriptural authorities to justify his conclusions about the sinful nature of his participation in the battle (Goswami J., 1986).

⁴⁷ Sometimes taken as “confusion of caste” (Schweig, 2007)

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

Arjuna bases his argument not on his own personal experience, but on what he has heard from the authorities. That is the way of receiving real knowledge. One cannot reach the real point of factual knowledge without being helped by the right person who is already established in that knowledge. There is a system in the *varṇāśrama* institution by which before death one has to undergo the process of atonement for his sinful activities. One who is always engaged in sinful activities must utilize the process of atonement called the *prāyaścitta*. Without doing so, one surely will be transferred to hellish planets to undergo miserable lives as the result of sinful activities.

TEXT 44

अहो बत महत्पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम् ।
यद्राज्यमुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यताः ॥ ४४ ॥

*aho bata mahat pāpam
kartum vyavasitā vayam
yad rājya-sukha-lobhena
hantum sva-janam udyatāḥ*

aho—alas; *bata*—how strange it is; *mahat*—great; *pāpam*—sins; *kartum*—to perform; *vyavasitāḥ*—have decided; *vayam*—we; *yad*—because; *rājya-sukha-lobhena*—driven by greed for royal happiness; *hantum*—to kill; *sva-janam*—kinsmen; *udyatāḥ*—trying.

Alas, how strange it is that we are preparing to commit greatly sinful acts. Driven by the desire to enjoy royal happiness, we are intent on killing our own kinsmen.

Driven by selfish motives, one may be inclined to such sinful acts as the killing of one's own brother, father or mother. There are many such instances in the history of the world. But Arjuna, being a saintly devotee of the Lord, is always conscious of moral principles and therefore takes care to avoid such activities.

TEXT 45

यदि मामप्रतीकारमशस्त्रं शस्त्रपाणयः ।

Comment [jh39]: He is convinced that the war is sinful, and therefore he decides not fight, even if the opposing soldiers attack him (Goswami J., 1986).

धार्तराष्ट्रा रणे हन्युस्तन्मे क्षेमतरं भवेत् ॥ ४५ ॥

yadi mām apratikāram
aśastram śastra-pāṇayaḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus
tan me kṣemataram bhavet

yadi—even if; mām—me; apratikāram—without being resistant; aśastram—without being fully equipped; śastra-pāṇayaḥ—those with weapons in hand; dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ—the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; raṇe—on the battlefield; hanyuḥ—may kill; tat—that; me—for me; kṣema-taram—better; bhavet—would be.

Better for me if the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield.

It is the custom—according to kṣatriya fighting principles—that an unarmed and unwilling foe should not be attacked. Arjuna, however, decided that even if attacked by the enemy in such an awkward position, he would not fight. He did not consider how much the other party was bent upon fighting. All these symptoms are due to soft-heartedness resulting from his being a great devotee of the Lord.

TEXT 46

सञ्जय उवाच

एवमुक्त्वाऽर्जुनः संख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत् ।
विमुञ्च्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्नमानसः ॥ ४६ ॥

sañjaya uvāca
evam uktvārjunaḥ saṅkhye
rathopastha upāviśat
visṛjya sa-śaram cāpam
śoka-saṁvigna-mānasaḥ

sañjayaḥ uvāca—Sañjaya said; evam—thus; uktvā—saying; arjunaḥ—Arjuna; saṅkhye—in the battlefield; ratha—of the chariot; upasthe—on the seat; upāviśat—sat down again; visṛjya—putting aside; sa-śaram—along with

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Chapter 1

arrows; *cāpam*—the bow; *śoka*—by lamentation; *saṁvigna*—distressed; *mānasaḥ*—within the mind.

Sañjaya said: Arjuna, having thus spoken on the battlefield, cast aside his bow and arrows and sat down on the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with grief.

While observing the situation of his enemy, Arjuna stood up on the chariot, but he was so afflicted with lamentation that he sat down again, setting aside his bow and arrows. Such a kind and soft-hearted person, in the devotional service of the Lord, is fit to receive self-knowledge.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta Purports to the First Chapter of the Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā in the matter of Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

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