

|| Sri:mathe Ra:ma:nuja:ya Namaha ||

GI:THA:MRUTHAM
Sweet Nectar of Sri:mad Bhagavad Gi:tha

Chapter 1 - Arjuna Visha:da Yo:gaha

Translation of HH Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji's Telugu Commentary



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Notation

Telugu	Hindi	English	Telugu	Hindi	English
అ	अ	a	ట	ट	ta
ఆ	आ	a:	त्त	त्त	tta
ఇ	इ	i	त	त	tta
ఈ	ई	i:	द	द	da
ఉ	उ	u	ढ	ढ	dda
ఊ	ऊ	u:	ण	ण	dha
ఋ	ऋ	ru	३	३	na
ౠ	ॠ	ru:	త	त	tha
అ	अलु	lu	त्त	त्त	ththa
ఆ	अलू	lu:	थ	थ	ttha
ఎ		e	३	द	da
ఏ	ए	e:	३	ढ	dda
ఐ	ऐ	ai	३	ध	dha
ఒ		o	३	न	na
ఓ	ओ	o:	३	प	pa
ఔ	औ	au/ow	३	फ	pha
అం	अं	am	३	ब	ba
అః	अः	aha	३	भ	bha
క	क	ka	३	म	ma
ఖ	ख	kha	३	य	ya
గ	ग	ga	३	र	ra
ఘ	घ	gha	३	ल	la
ఙ	ङ	nga	३	व	va
చ	च	cha	३	श	sa
ఛ	छ	chcha	३	ष	sha
• ఛ	॥	} chha	३	स	sa
• ఛ	छ		३	ह	ha
జ	ज	ja	३	ळ	la
ఝ	झ	jha	३		rra
ఞ	ञ	ini	३	क्ष	ksha
			३		Jna

• This letter comes only in the middle of the word

• • This letter comes in the beginning/middle of the word

☞ Pronunciation of both these letters is almost similar



Introduction

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Sri:mad Bhagavad Gi:tha is humanity's divine gift, the quintessence of the *Vedas* made accessible to all.. It is a timeless source of wisdom, offering essential life lessons and teachings for all of humankind. Within *Vedic* literature, there exist two great *Ithiha:sas*, a category of texts comprising historical narratives or epic literature that blend history with moral and philosophical teaching. One *ithiha:sa* is sage *Va:lmi:ki's Sri Ra:ma:yanam*, and the other is *Ve:da Vya:sa Bhagava:n's Sri:mad Maha:bha:ratham*. The priceless gem that is *Sri:mad Bhagavad Gi:tha* is embedded within this second *ithiha:sa*, *Sri:mad Maha:bha:ratham*.

When we talk about history, we refer to the record of factual, past events that help us understand our present and shape our future. Whether we call it history in English or *ithiha:sa* in Sanskrit, it serves as a valuable reservoir of knowledge. Countless sages and scholars have further enriched our heritage through *Vedic* literature, known as *pura:na:s*, meaning literature that remains ever fresh, with narratives relevant to every age. *pura:na* signifies something ancient yet ever relevant, offering timeless principles such as speaking the truth, practising righteousness, and honouring one's parents. These universal values never change, though the methods of conveying them may vary.



Vedas, Puranas and Ithiha:sas are the boundless source of knowledge

To convey these principles effectively to individuals with varying perspectives and levels of understanding, different forms of narratives are employed. For young children, simple stories about animals such as cows, goats, birds, and rabbits are shared. Children delight in hearing these familiar animal names, and such stories often evoke laughter and happiness. As children grow



older, they begin to appreciate somewhat more complex narratives, while still deriving the same pleasure from storytelling.

However, the same stories may not resonate with adults, for whom storytelling must adapt in form and depth. Hence, it becomes essential to convey the underlying moral principles in a manner suited to their maturity and understanding. This flexibility allows the same principles to be conveyed differently to different audiences, depending on their capacity to grasp them. This adaptability is what makes these narratives both ancient and ever fresh, timeless in essence yet renewed with every telling. They ensure that wisdom remains accessible to all, regardless of age or understanding.

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Essence of the Epics

Thus the *Vedas* lay out rules, ethics, and guidelines for the overall welfare of the human race. Circumstances and characters might change with time but the underlying principles always remain the same. *Pura:anas* expound on these universal principles.

Maha:bha:ratham and *Ra:ma:yanam* are not *pura:nic* texts but are historic texts or *Ithiha:sa:s* which record events precisely and chronologically and have been made known to the human race through the power of austerity of the sages who wrote them.

In *Ra:ma:yanam*, the four-headed *Bramha:* appeared before *Va:lmi:ki* and relayed the entire epic.

Bramha: declared, “*hasitham bha:shitham chaiva gathir ya: yath cha che:shtitham thath sarvam dharmavi:rye:na yattha:vath samprapasyasi*”, that Sage *Va:lmi:ki* would be privy to not only the deeds but also the inner intentions and thoughts of all the characters in *Ra:ma:yanam*. He blessed him to write the historic epic with this divinely blessed insight.

Maha:bha:ratham has a different background. It was narrated by Sage *Vaisampa:yana* as a form of teaching to the mighty king *Janame:jaya* who was overwhelmed by anger. This epic was written to show the king how destructive anger can be.

Sage *Vaisampa:yana* showed how anger consumes and destroys everything, just like fire. *Duryo:dhana* and the other *kauravas* fell prey to anger and paved the way for destruction not only of themselves but of their entire clan.



Hence, *Ithiha:sa:s* are texts that explain how our forefathers fought their inner demons and transcended them successfully and how those who didn't were ultimately destroyed.

pa:ndavas also possessed great anger but it was channelled correctly. This is what the *kauravas* lacked. The anger of *kauravas* was compounded by selfishness, while for *pa:ndavas*, anger led them to increased love for *Bhagava:n*. Hence, *pa:ndavas* were ready to obey *Bhagava:n* while the *kauravas* were not ready to heed anyone's advice.

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It is natural for us to experience anger and desire. *ithiha:sas* teach us how to channel anger and desire in a way that benefits us and society. *Ve:da Vya:sa* has gifted mankind with *Maha:bha:ratham*, which is verily the gem of *itiha:sa:s*, to demonstrate the defects and consequences of unrestrained anger. The *Maha:bha:ratha* consists of one lakh of verses. Appended to it as its concluding section is the *Harivamsam*, comprising twenty-five thousand verses. Together, they form a monumental work of approximately one lakh and twenty-five thousand verses.

It is not practically possible for us to absorb the entire *Bha:ratham* to the extent that we may be able to implement the learnings in our lives. Hence, *Sri Krushna* appeared to give us the essence of the *Maha:bha:ratham* along with the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. All of Lord *Na:ra:ya:na*'s appearances have ardently aimed at making these truths known to us. All His appearances had distinct messages.

For example, in the *Va:mana avatha:ra*, through seeking alms from King *Bali*, Lord conveyed that mere contact with His feet helps one transcend the world. For the benefit of *ji:vas* that *Va:mana* made sure to encompass the entire earth and the skies while measuring their expanse with His feet. In *Ra:ma:yanam*, *Ahalya* regained her initial form, upon contact with Lord *Ra:ma*'s feet. Similarly, Lord's feet help us recognize and remember our true nature and re-identify ourselves so that we may return to a state of bliss.

Sri Ra:ma roamed vast expanse of lands under the pretext of the search for *Si:tha*. However, some *ji:vas* still escaped contact with the Lord's feet hence were born again. Like a mother concerned for the wellbeing of her children, Lord *Na:ra:ya:na* appeared yet another time as *Sri Krushna* for our deliverance. However, should we not be ready to receive the message?

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The Search for a Disciple



Sri Krishna contemplating the ideal disciple

In the *Sri Krishna avatha:ra*, the Supreme Lord prepares us to listen, teaches us the right way to ask questions and imparts the knowledge. The great teachings He delivered in this *avatha:ra* are embodied in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. We must strive to listen to, understand and practise these teachings. They are the divine guidance bestowed upon humanity through *Sri Krishna*'s grace.

Sri Krishna gave guidance to *Arjuna*. This is what the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* essentially offers us. It is revered as the 'Fifth Veda' because it conveys the essence of all the *Vedas*. Although *Vedas* are believed to be infinite, Sage *Vya:sa* structured and compiled them into 1131 branches. However, today, only nine of those branches remain. Studying them entirely is beyond our capacity, but we should strive to understand their essence. That essence which we can understand and practise, is the divine message of *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. To receive it, one must be worthy. Just hearing is not enough; one must practise the teachings.

Since His childhood, *Sri Krishna* made many attempts to impart these teachings. However, the individuals He came across were either good at listening or adept at practising, but never both. *Sri Krishna* would freely share wisdom in *Go:kul*, and the children were very good listeners but were not capable of practising His teachings.

He eventually moved to *Matthura*. There, during the *Dva:para Yuga*, He sought to teach the kings the path to true greatness. Among them were great personalities such as



Bhi:shma and *Dro:na*. They knew how to practise righteousness, but they were not prepared to listen and learn from Him. The perfect student is one who both listens to the teachings and lives by them, and *Krushna* was in search of such a student. After about 70 years of searching, He found that student in *Arjuna*. Through *Arjuna*, He delivered the timeless message of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* to the world.

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Those who question the worthiness of the *Maha:bha:ratha* wondered, 'Is the scripture worth its weight in gold?' - No. It's not the weight of the book but the wisdom it imparts that our ancestors always revered.

In it are embedded two gems - one is the *Sri:mad Bhagavad Gi:tha*, and the other is the *Sri Vishnu Sahasrana:ma Stho:thram*. *Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stho:thram* consists of verses with thousand divine names of the Supreme. The *Bhagavad Gi:tha* with seven hundred verses, encompasses every guideline necessary for an ideal human life.

Only hearing the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is not enough, right? Just as *Arjuna*, who heard it, was amazed. So are we, at the creation of such a masterpiece of a manual for human life. After *Sri Krushna*'s teachings were imparted, *Arjuna*, in turn, said, 'I will follow your words.' So should we!

Internalizing the Divine Knowledge

To follow a teaching, the imparted knowledge must be established firmly and internalised. To internalise is to allow it to sink into the heart and not let the teachings stop at the level of the mind. At the purely mental level, there are potential pitfalls of the truth being lost, with doubts or delusion. We are human after all, aren't we? Other creatures do something when told to do so and refrain from doing something when prohibited. It's only with the human mind that the opposite happens. It's therefore of primary importance that the teachings are absorbed into one's heart, beyond the mind.

After sinking into the heart, the teachings must be firmly established as the truth through the process of constant *mananam*, contemplation. One must be ready mentally for the process of *mananam*. The constant contemplation and eventual establishment of the teachings paves the way towards their practical implementation.

Listening to the teachings, inculcating the teachings firmly in one's heart, and following the teachings are the three necessary steps that one must be qualified to follow. Among *pa:ndavas*, only *Arjuna*, the middle one with two elder and two



younger brothers, fully possessed these qualities. *Sri Krushna* chose him as His most worthy listener and, through him, revealed the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* to the world.

Mental strength is of utmost importance. The fruit of physical and material strength cannot benefit an individual if he has no mental strength. Therefore, the main qualification to receive all spiritual knowledge is mental strength. *Mundaka Upanishad* (3.2.4). “*na:yam a:thma: balahi:ne:na labhyaha:*”, what is worth knowing can never be known by the mentally weak.

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So, we require a strong mind and heart. This is called the firmness of intention. *Sri Krushna* preaches to *Arjuna* “*hrudaya daurbalyam thyakthvo:ththishta*”, weakness of heart is worthless and to be cast aside and that *Arjuna* must rise to action. *Arjuna* was qualified to receive this teaching hence *Krushna* chose him to be the recipient of the knowledge.

In general, one must never impart valuable knowledge nor give something of value to anyone who doesn't explicitly want it, desire it, recognize its true value, and ask for it. Giving unsolicited knowledge is misconstrued as madness and won't be taken in the right spirit or as a sign of goodwill. It can be compared to a person who stands at the intersection of four roads and guides people on where to go with no one asking him for directions. Wouldn't such a person seem to be a bit off?

“*na:prushtah kasyachith bru:ya:th*”, say the *sa:sthras*. Therefore, *Sri Krushna* orchestrated a situation where *Arjuna* was bound to turn to Him for guidance, and He was able to give the teachings of *Bhagavad Gi:tha* for the world, since these teachings are timeless, can be followed regardless of the era and are of *dha:rmic* value. Therefore, this is the best among the best of all spiritual texts.

Spiritual knowledge must not make one shun one's worldly responsibilities and cut off from worldly ties and family in the name of *vaira:gyam*, detachment. Such, so called knowledge, is poison. If the providing of spiritual knowledge makes one shirk one's duties, such knowledge is not acceptable. Spiritual knowledge must make one carry out one's duties perfectly. Practice of spiritual teachings must not be with haste and impatience but with mindfulness and clarity.

Bhagavad Gi:tha is one such text that prepares a person to practise its teachings to their meaningful goal. *Arjuna* is the disciple through whom *Sri Krushna* made these teachings available for mankind.



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“*paro:pade:sa ve:la:ya:m sarve: vya:sa para:sara:ha*” When imparting wisdom to others, we become *Vya:sas* and *Para:saras*. However, when it’s time to practice, we lose those tracks.

Bhagavad Gi:tha is basically a manual that teaches us how to practise the right principles. *Arjuna* knew the principles theoretically, but was unable to practise them, by sitting idle in his chariot at the time of war. *Sri: Krushna*’s message of the *Gi:tha* transformed *Arjuna*’s attitude from this initial state to one where he was sure of his intention to fight “*stthitho:smi gatha sande:haha*”.

Spiritual knowledge makes one ready to implement the following changes - distancing oneself from undesirable afflictions or addictions and drawing one closer to the wholesome. *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, the text of 700 verses, can achieve both of these ends.

Withdrawing the Battlefield Senses

Sri Krushna probably delivered the message of the *Gi:tha* to *Arjuna* over 3 to 4 hours, surrounded by 18 *akshauhinis*, battalions, with many weapons, instruments, warriors, and animals. What were they doing at this time? Were they quiet spectators? Listeners? Or did they cause noisy interruptions? If so, wouldn’t they have drowned out the voices of *Sri Krushna* and *Arjuna*? How could the two have conversed then? These are natural questions to the reader.

In reality, *Sri Krushna* is *Yoge:swara*, in possession of many powers. He uses *yo:gic* power to forcefully withdraw the senses of everyone else but *Arjuna*. Everyone and everything on the battlefield, except for *Arjuna*, were rendered still by *Sri Krushna*. The power to listen was given only to *Arjuna* at that time.

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Ve:da Vya:sa had offered the power for *Dhruthara:shtra* to be a spectator of the war with remote vision. Having never witnessed the happy times, *Dhruthara:shtra* did not want to be able to watch a gory war. He suggested that his trusted minister *Sanjaya* be offered this power instead. *Sanjaya* was given the powers of distant vision and hearing by *Ve:da Vya:sa*. *Sanjaya* was able to relay the happenings of the war field verbatim to *Dhruthara:shtra*.



Thus we have received *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, a text that confers upon the reader discrimination and turns him into a practitioner of *dharma*. To be a practitioner, one must repeatedly contemplate upon the teaching. To master the content of a subject, a student must repeatedly study it, so that it's possible to apply it.

It is recommended to contemplate upon the *G:itha* everyday to inculcate the interest to practise a teaching, even if it's not possible to implement it right away. It is our duty to study *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

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Bhagavad Gi:tha is a boon given to mankind by Lord *Sri Krushna* Himself. *Arjuna* received it as the representative of the human race. It is important to analyse the content of a message rather than the one who delivers the message. There are several speculations on whether *Sri Krushna* was a man or God or a mere cowherd boy. *Ni:thi Sa:sthra* says "*bala:dapi subha:shitham*", irrespective of the status or age of the messenger, a worthy message needs to be accepted and practised.

No one has denounced the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* thus far. People from all races, nationalities, believers and non-believers alike have studied this text, and interpreted it according to their psychological and philosophical leanings, and have acknowledged the superiority of this text.

Duty to Stop Wrongdoing



Crossroads of dharma and adharma



It is appropriate to spread knowledge about the path of probity, while it is necessary to stop or at least attempt to stop any wrongdoing. If all attempts fail, one must at least leave the place where the wrongdoing occurs. By doing so, one demonstrates through one's conduct a clear disassociation from the wrongdoing.

When *Duryo:dhana* and his allies tried to strip *Draupadi* publicly, she prayed to *Sri Krushna*, "*raksha ma:m sarana:gatha:m*". It was her surrender to *Sri Krushna* that saved her from humiliation. *Parama:thma* noted with much anguish that *Bhi:shma*, *Dro:na*, and *Karna* lamely watched this act of debasement being perpetrated against *Draupadi*, as did her five warrior husbands. These individuals had the power to stop it but did not. Hence *Bhi:shma* died a prolonged and painful death, after having spent a month on a bed of arrows and slowly bled out. *Dro:na:cha:rya* also died a horrific death on the battlefield as did *Karna*. *kauravas*, who were all mute spectators of the scene, had gory deaths during the *Kurukshe:thra* war.

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pa:ndavas, who were also mute spectators to this act of debasement were equal recipients of the wrath of *Krushna*. However, *Krushna* did not destroy them as that would render His devotee *Draupadi* a widow. So, *pa:ndavas* merely faced some troubles and obstacles in the war. Indeed, *Krushna* would have been pleased had *pa:ndavas* stopped the disrobing of *Draupadi*.

Krushna had the power to propagate the path of right action through His command and also had the authority to get everyone to implement His command. He therefore took it upon Himself to right the wrongs that *kauravas* inflicted on the world. This is the quality of a righteous person - let's for a second consider him to be one amongst us, and not *Parama:thma*. He exhibited the qualities of a truly learned man by teaching the right path of action to *Arjuna* and getting *Arjuna* to follow His teachings on the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra*.

In a healthy society, the learned and scholarly must impart values and righteousness. This is also true of households where irrespective of one's status, his wisdom gives him the right to correct the members of the family. Modern societies, and more commonly in metros or cities, are plagued with a sense of indifference. Indifference to the wrongs being committed by a neighbour or a family member is indeed dangerous.

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Sri Krushna could have easily been indifferent to the plight of his relatives and been steeped in the enjoyment of his wealth, companions, and possessions. He could have



happily washed his hands off the war and his role as a charioteer when *Arjuna* refused to fight. Had *Sri Krushna* shirked his duty at this opportunity, the human race would have been steeped further in darkness. Instead, He took it upon Himself to show the path of righteousness to a society that's plagued with negativity and indifference.

A Manual for Practical Living



Sacred book radiating scenes of duty

Bhagavad Gi:tha is a text that makes its readers execute their duties in day to day living. It is a text that is meant to be implemented practically, and is not a purely theoretical philosophical treatise that provides intellectual entertainment.

Ve:da:ntic texts that are meant to be obeyed and implemented are called *sa:sthra*. It originates from the word *sa:sanam* which means order. Just as a citizen abides by the rules and guidelines laid out by the ruling government in a country, one is to adhere to the *sa:sthras*, the essence of which is given in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

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Arjuna did not claim to have attained detachment from worldly activities thus forfeiting all action but instead surrendered thus to *Sri Krushna* at the end of *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, "*karishye: vachanam thava*", I will do as you say. *Parama:thma*'s promise in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is that if the *ji:va:thma* lives righteously in present life, as per the code of conduct laid out for him in the *sa:sthras*, his afterlife will be taken care of by the Supreme. All species, but the human one, have no conception of afterlife, and live



perfectly in the current world. Human beings on the other hand abuse and exploit other beings in their present lives, their sights being set on the afterlife. This is unacceptable.

If we are supposed to behave in a way that is beneficial to other beings, should this be based on our intellectual understanding, or our knowledge? Our relatively short life spans are insufficient to understand, in totality, what benefits mankind. Moreover, what is beneficial to one may not be so to the other.

At times, what causes pain and misery in the short term, benefits one in the long term, just like a painful medical treatment ultimately benefits the patient. Such circumstances are called '*sre:yas*'. On the battlefield, *Arjuna* hesitated to inflict pain upon his friends and family members who stood before him as his opponents.

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Sri: Krushna urged *Arjuna* to let go of his attachment to his bodily relations and perform his duty by punishing the wrongdoers. One may wonder, is it befitting of *Parama:thma* to spur one towards violence?

When a criminal is incarcerated, the hope is for him to shift towards better ways when he rejoins society upon the completion of his sentence. Similarly, *Sri: Krushna* urged *Arjuna* towards the path of *sre:yas*, i.e., what ultimately benefits the human race in the long term.

Sa:sthra contains instructions meant for the benefit of mankind. Instead of analysing the *sa:sthra* with our limited intelligence, we must obey the dictates of *Sri Krushna* who has conveyed the contents of the *sa:sthra* in *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. These dictates do not urge one towards indifference or negligence of their worldly duties, rather, they guide us to work towards the benefit of all beings through Self realisation.

The greatest path of righteousness is to allow one's humanness to shine through, and to coexist with other species. There is no need to explicitly hanker after divinity, nor to succumb to one's base animal instincts. Indeed, *de:vathas* seek the person who can perfectly execute his role as a human being.

There are several examples of individuals who have lived true to their stations in life that were recipients to the favours of *de:vathas* whenever they encountered obstacles in their paths. These stories are mentioned in the *Upanishads*. *Sri: Krushna* sought out *Arjuna* and not the other way around.



Arjuna was called *Guda:ke:sa*. *Guda* can mean sleep or laziness. *Arjuna* was one who had conquered both of these, hence had acquired the name.

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Sri Krushna, on the other hand, is *Hrushik:sa* which means controller of the senses of all beings. Thus, He is able to control the senses and movement of all the beings on the battlefield while delivering the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

Conquering over sloth and sleep, and with restraint in worldly matters, we may be able to perfectly execute our duties. Understanding of philosophical principles ensures a knowledge of *Veda:ntha*. Thus, one may be able to walk the righteous path of *dharma*. *Sri Krushna* sought to impart this understanding to *Arjuna* who was already *guda:ke:sa*, to spur him towards the path of *Dharma*.

Sorrow arises when one strays from the path of *dharma*, righteousness, to the path of *arttha*, material acquisition. *sa:sthras* and *veda:ntha* texts do not denounce wealth and material abundance, but denounce greed and craving for it.

The great sage of the 14th century *Ve:da:ntha De:sika* turned down an offer from his contemporary, Sage *Vidya:ranya*, to have a position of authority in the empire's court. Thus *De:sika* followed the path of *dharma*.

King *Ja:nasruthi* was an exceptionally charitable person who gained a great radiance due to his abundant acts of charity. Magnanimous as he was, he also had a huge ego. This king was familiar with the language of the birds. To teach him a lesson, the *de:vathas*, *Indra* and *Agni* appeared in the form of birds and flew about the tree under which the king was resting. The first bird exclaimed, "Watch out! There is a great radiance below the tree... we might get burnt up in the flames if we fly over it", to which the other bird dismissively said, "Oh! That's nothing, I know of a greater radiance elsewhere." The king then realised that he wasn't the greatest of all donors, and there was indeed someone better.

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When we encounter those with greater talents, we should accept them as examples, rather than get jealous of them. When we encounter those with fewer resources or capabilities than us, we should help them advance, just as a doctor would a patient, instead of poking fun at them.



King *Ja:nasruthi* realised that the said person, *Raikva*, was a mere cart-puller and sought to understand what the latter's source of radiance was. The king was eager to possess whatever the cart-puller possessed so that he could acquire similar radiance. He tried to woo him with messages of gifts of wealth, positions, and even his own daughter's hand in marriage. The cart-puller firmly refused all these favours. Finally, the king himself went to meet him. When the cart-puller refused to meet him, the king cried in sorrow and frustration. Finally, seeing the king's misery, the cart-puller relented, met him and imparted teachings about the principles of the *Upanishad*, thus correcting the king's thinking.

What we must understand from this story is that when seeking protection in wealth, fame, positions of power, and possessions, one is sure to stray from the righteous path, and sorrow will ensue. When one loses the taste for worldly wealth and has no sense of possessiveness over it, he inculcates *ma:navathvam*, which is the essence of being human, wanting auspiciousness for the world at large and winning over *asu:ya*, jealousy towards others. This frees one from the need to beg, perform, or impress those in positions of power. Further, the script is flipped - wealthy people seek his blessings and money and fame inevitably becomes available to him.

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It is said that wealth, fame, and positions are like beautiful butterflies that look attractive and breezily flitting around the gardens. We feel like catching them. However, when we chase them in the garden, we might trip over stones or thorny bushes and hurt ourselves. The butterflies may fly away from the garden. If, on the other hand, we focus on maintaining a beautiful garden, these butterflies generally fly to us and perch themselves on our backs and shoulders on their own, giving us pleasure and happiness. Enjoying material benefits is not necessarily wrong but to hanker after them perceiving them to be the ultimate goal, is. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* teaches us that one must pursue one's duties and not get deterred by obstacles or pleasurable distractions.

Bhagavad Gi:tha is not merely a text on *bhakthi* and *ve:da:ntha*. Had it been a text on *bhakthi* alone, Chapters 9 and 12 would have sufficed. In the *Uddhava Gi:tha*, *Uddhava* expounded on the nature of *bhakthi* to the *Go:pikas*, to love, desire, serve, and worship God alone, and that nothing else should be desired. However, *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is a text that expounds on the duty of a human being. It is a manual on how to channel one's tendencies towards executing one's duties. Thus, it is also a practical text of *veda:ntha*.



Sorrow and grief are natural. The *Bhagavad Gi:tha* guides us to rise from sorrow to victory. Desire for fame and reputation is all but natural.

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Bhagavad Gi:tha helps one deal with the desire, channel it appropriately, embrace one's humanness, and verily experience divinity within while practising it. Every word in the *G:itha* is a precious gem.

Arjuna qualified to be the recipient of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* since he had the eagerness to receive the teaching and the determination to implement it. No other quality is more important. *Arjuna's* molding into being a worthy recipient requires some background though. *pa:ndavas*, although righteous, were never really ready to receive teachings or further their knowledge on *dharma* through advice from others. To orchestrate a situation where this was possible, *Sri Krushna* gently inspired *dharmara:ja* to conduct *Ra:jasu:ya ya:gam*. *Sri Krushna* delegated roles and responsibilities for the ceremony and accepted a few Himself.

On the day of the ceremony which had a widespread attendance, a doubt arose as to who should receive the *agra pu:ja* i.e. offerings of highest reverence. Since *Bhi:shma* was the senior most, he was consulted. *Bhi:shma* embarked on a beautiful discourse that expounded on the wondrous qualities of one who is fit for this honour of worship. He illustrated the qualities of the Supreme in *paramapadam* and how He descends and appears in *vyu:ha* form. He pointed to the large-eyed *Sri Krushna*, their very relative, as *parama:thma* in *vibhava* form. This greatly pleased *Sri Krushna*.

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After receiving homage at the *agra pu:ja*, *Sri Krushna* was eager to share His wisdom, thus fulfilling the purpose of His appearance. However, eager as everyone was to worship Him, they weren't ready to listen to His message.

It is said that wealth and wholesomeness of thought are largely incompatible with one another. One who amasses much wealth generally faces a deterioration in the thought process unless there is a driving force supremely powerful such as *Sri*



Krushna. *Dharmara:ja* himself never considered inviting *Sri Krushna* to the game of dice against the *Kauravas*. Nor did *Sakuni*, who was one of the elders in the family. The outcome of the event, which *Sri Krushna* never intended to attend uninvited, would have been different had He been present. Finally, when *pa:ndavas* lost all their wealth in the game of dice and *Draupadi* was on the verge of losing her honour, she surrendered to the *Bhagava:n*. Then, He appeared as her saviour. *Draupadi* was relieved that her status of *pathivoratha*, a wife with chaste devotion, was not defiled. Yet, she was not really ready to listen to *Sri Krushna*'s words of wisdom.

Sri Krushna decided that only if *pa:ndavas* were to lose their kingdom and wealth would they be mentally attuned to receive wisdom from Him. Hence the 12-year exile, having lost all their material possessions.....

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When *pa:ndavas* were in exile in the forests, *Sri Krushna* waited for them to be ready to listen to Him. When they didn't, He inspired *Duryo:dhana* to send the great sage *Durva:sa* and his 300 disciples to the hermitage of *pa:ndavas*. *pa:ndavas* lived off the food generated from the vessel *Akshaya Pa:thra*, gifted by *Su:rya De:vatha*. during their exile. The vessel generated food only from sunrise to sunset. When *Durva:sa* and his disciples reached the hermitage at around dusk, *Dharmara:ja* invited them to bathe and partake in dinner, unaware that *Draupadi* had consumed the final meal offered by the *Akshaya Pa:thra*. While the sage and his retinue were bathing, *Draupadi* fretted at their imminent return and the consequences that *pa:ndavas* would have to face due to this careless blunder. Yet again, she intensely prayed to *Sri Krushna* to save her from the potential wrath of the sage.

When *Sri Krushna* appeared at the hermitage, He requested to be served some food. *Draupadi* explained that the lack of food was the very reason for her desperate cry of help to Him. *Sri Krushna* asked her to look carefully at the *Akshaya Pa:thra* and asked to be served even a mere morsel of food stuck to it. When she did, *Sri Krushna* willed satiety and contentment upon all the beings of the world. As a result, Sage *Durva:sa* and his 300 disciples, feeling unexpectedly satiated, decided to retrace their steps after bathing and did not visit the hermitage for the meal. Thus, *Draupadi* and *pa:ndavas* were saved.

However, as is common, the Supreme was forgotten as soon as they were granted this relief. They neglected to seek advice on how to avoid making reckless promises to people, which was the entire reason for them to be in this situation.



At the end of the exile, *Sri Krushna* played the role of the negotiator between *pa:ndavas* and the *kauravas*. While the intention of each of *pa:ndavas* was a message of peace, *Draupadi's* was the one with a continued sense of vendetta. When the *Kauravas* attempted to violate her honour in the court, *Draupadi* swore that she would tie her tresses only when *Duryo:dhana's* thigh is broken and *Dussa:sana's* chest is torn. Till then, she would remain with her hair left untied, since this was symbolic of inauspiciousness for a woman in those times. *Sri Krushna* convinced her that the purpose of His role as a negotiator is to ensure that her desire to tie her hair up again some day is granted. In fact *Sri Krushna* instigated the war between *pa:ndavas* and *Kauravas*. Had *Sri Krushna*, the Supreme, willed it, He could have prevented the war from happening.

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Instead, *Sri Krushna* promised thus to *Draupadi*,

dyauh pathe:th prutthivi: si:rye:th himava:n sakali: bhave:th |
sushye:th tho:ya nidhihi krushna na me: mo:gham vacho: bhave:th |

Hey *Krushne!* (*Draupadi!*) The heavens may fall, the earth may disintegrate, the mountains may split, the oceans may dry up, but I assure you My words will stand.

Sri Krushna assures *Draupadi* that she will be avenged. His intention was clearly to hinder, not facilitate, the negotiation between *pa:ndavas* and *kauravas*. Thus, *Sri Krushna* willed and orchestrated the situation in the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra* to impart the teachings of *Bhagavad Gi:tha* to *Arjuna* so that the wisdom ultimately benefits the human race. This is the crown jewel of all the *Veda:ntha* scriptures.

When *Sri Krushna* visited the *Kauravas*, *Duryo:dhana* extended a warm welcome to Him. He made sure that arrangements for *Sri Krushna's* meals were made at *Bhi:shma's* and *Dro:na's* homes, since the former was the grandfather of *pa:ndavas* and *Kauravas* and the latter their *Guru*. *Duryo:dhana* went to great lengths to make sure that *Sri Krushna* felt welcome and taken care of. However, *Sri Krushna* only partook of meals at *Vidura's* home. *Vidura*, poor as he was, offered *Sri Krushna* only fruit or in fact, in excitement, only fruit peel. Yet, in front of *Duryo:dhana*, *Sri Krushna* sang praises of the sumptuous meal at *Vidura's* house. Incensed, *Duryo:dhana* rebuked *Sri Krushna* thus "O large lotus eyed one! How did you neglect to notice all of us eager to welcome you, and what made you go to *Vidura's* house, ignoring the rest of us?"



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Sri Krushna expressed that *Duryo:dhana's* offerings lacked *ruchi*, taste and *suchi*, hygiene. The taste in an offering is the love with which it is made. The hygiene in a preparation is the lack of selfishness with which it is made. *Sri Krushna* pointed out that they were also enemies. It is neither customary nor appropriate for an enemy to be offered meals or partake of them. These hostile words of *Sri Krushna* bear proof to the fact that He was in no way intending a peaceful negotiation. A deeply hurt *Duryo:dhana* pointed out that the enmity only existed between *pa:ndavas* and *Kauravas* and as far as *Sri Krushna* was concerned, He was neutral to both parties. To this, *Sri Krushna* replied that *pa:ndavas* are essentially His pancha *pra:na*, life forces. Wanting to eliminate them is equivalent to wanting to eliminate His very life force. How can *Duryo:dhana* have any love towards *Sri Krushna* while wanting to eliminate His life force? Isn't that laughable, pointed out *Sri Krushna*.

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Duryo:dhana was a man who would have arrogantly condescended to grant the *pa:ndavas* their small demands. However, with the hurt that *Sri Krushna's* words caused him, he refused to oblige *pa:ndavas* who were ready to make do with 5 kingdoms, 5 cities, 5 villages, a village with 5 streets, or a mere home with 5 rooms, or just a piece of land that would span the dimensions of a pin. Thus, *Sri Krushna* foiled the negotiation and the war was confirmed.

Arjuna and *Duryo:dhana* had arrived at *Sri Krushna's* residence to seek resources for the war. They arrived while *Sri Krushna* was resting. *Arjuna* sat waiting at *Bhagava:n's* feet while *Duryo:dhana* sat near His head. So, naturally, when *Sri Krushna* awoke He saw *Arjuna* first and he was therefore given the chance to place his request first. *Sri Krushna* stated that he can either provide an army of 10,000 soldiers or Himself as only a consultant, without wielding any weaponry. *Duryo:dhana* dearly hoped that *Arjuna* would not choose the army of 10,000. *Duryo:dhana* did not, for a moment, believe that he would require *Sri Krushna's* consultation. He already had senior members on his team that he could consult, *Dro:na*, *Bhi:shma*, and so on. Much to *Duryo:dhana's* relief, *Arjuna* chose to have *Sri Krushna* on the side of *pa:ndavas*.

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Arjuna, who was previously a man interested in multiplying wealth and kingdoms, had a change in attitude and turned to *Sri Krushna* solely for Him. It is not easy for a



devotee to ask *Bhagava:n* only for His grace, rather than any other worldly gains. A devotee who has the strength and advancement to do so, attains *Bhagava:n* as well as the worldly and material gains. Devotees normally limit what they can attain by seeking specific outcomes from *Bhagava:n*, and they may attain only those, if they qualify.

Sri Krushna was supremely elated to hear *Arjuna's* request, to the extent that the Supreme *Bhagava:n*, Master of the entire universe, agreed to be *Arjuna's* charioteer. *Bhagava:n* gives Himself entirely to the devotee who bows down in surrender to Him. *Arjuna* who had a positive experience with *Sri Krushna* as a charioteer in the past, requests Him to play the same role during the *Kurukshethra* war.

Thus, *Sri Krushna* orchestrated a situation where he delivered the text of *Bhagavad Gi:tha* to help *Arjuna* gain victory in the battlefield, and all of us to gain victory in our daily struggles. This scripture helps one overcome sorrow and carry out prescribed duties in life.

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Sri Krushna molded *Arjuna* to be a very good listener. A good listener must have humility and willingness to absorb what's being told. This requires a higher quotient of *saththva*, the quality of purity, in a person. Our philosophical texts have stated that, of the three modes of nature, when one mode is dominant, the other two are suppressed.

We may be able to recognize the operative modes behind the feelings that arise in us. Pleasantness, health, and bliss are caused by a dominating *saththva* mode. Desire, anger, selfishness, and ego are caused by *rajas*, the mode of passion. Fatigue, lethargy, and sleep are caused by *thamas*, the mode of ignorance.

It is difficult and rare to have *saththva* as the dominating mode, especially in modern life. Therefore, *saththva* must be carefully nurtured and inculcated through conscious effort. Great souls try to bring out *saththva* in others.

Since *Arjuna* already had a higher quotient of *saththva* in him, *Sri Krushna* tried to further suppress the other two modes to make him the perfect recipient of a 700-verse-long treatise.

A true well wisher continues to advise and guide the other person in the right direction and never gives up doing so. This is why *Sri Krushna* delivered 700 verses of the message of the *Gi:tha* to *Arjuna*, till he finally said, "*karishye: vachanam thava*", I will do as You say. At this point, *Arjuna's* mode of *saththva* became dominant, after having listened to the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* almost in its entirety.



To reap a similar benefit, we need to understand the meaning of the *slo:kas*, the sequence in which they were delivered, and how they will benefit us in our daily lives, while also being aware of situations that might deter us.

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Verse 1

The very first *slo:ka* of Bhagavad *Gi:tha* starts with *Dhruthara:shtra uva:cha*. *Dhruthara:shtra* was blind, not only physically but also spiritually. He could be entirely blamed for the anger and *rajas* in *Duryo:dhana* to have gone unchecked. Out of deluded attachment to *Duryo:dhana*, *Dhruthara:shtra* was never able to reprimand the latter's ways either during childhood or adulthood. Any attempts were frequently met with blackmails of suicide or angry outbursts from *Duryo:dhana*. However, *Duryo:dhana* was like the barking dog that never bites. If only *Dhruthara:shtra* had raised his voice to match *Duryo:dhana's*, he could have controlled his son.

In reality, *Dhruthara:shtra* was an individual who was well-versed in *dharma*. When *Sri Krushna* visited the court of the *kauravas* for negotiation the evil foursome was going to bind Him and *bhagava:n* showed his Universal Form! He granted only *Dhruthara:shtra* the vision to behold the Universal Form, with the hope that *Dhruthara:shtra* might at least then stop his sons from any further evil. After the divine sight of *Sri Krushna's* Universal Form, *Dhruthara:shtra* wanted to see nothing further in the material world and returned the gift of sight to *Sri Krushna*.

However, his heart was closed. *Dhruthara:shtra* was thus internally blind, and that stopped him from doing the right thing even after having received the gift of vision.

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Upon *pa:ndavas* victory in the war, *Dhruthara:shtra* wanted to hug *Bhi:ma* under the pretext of expressing his love. *Bhi:ma* thought that *Dhruthara:shtra's* intention was genuine but *Sri Krushna* understood his real motives, and placed a statue of *Bhi:ma* instead. *Dhruthara:shtra* hugged the statue so tightly that it shattered into pieces. Such was his physical strength, despite being in ripe old age. However, he was deluded with spiritual blindness. *Dhruthara:shtra* thus stands for the ignorance and darkness in every individual and *Bhagavad Gi:tha* starts with his name.



The first question posed by *Dhruthara:shtra* to *Sanjaya* comprises the first *slo:ka* of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

dhruthara:shtra uva:cha

dharma kshe:thre: kurukshe:thre: samave:tha: yuyuthsavaha |
ma:maka:h pa:ndava:s chaiva kim akurvatha sanjaya! | 1.1

Dhruthra:shtra asked *Sanjaya*, “Having gathered on the sacred field of *Kurukshe:thra*, what are my sons and the sons of *Pa:ndu* doing?

This question strikes us as preposterous and *Dhruthara:shtra*’s petty-mindedness is on display in this verse. He wondered if *pa:ndavas*, having succumbed to their true nature of being peace-loving, and to the influence of *Kurukshe:thra*, which was a land of righteous action, had called off the war.

Kurukshe:thra was a place that spurred one towards righteous action and was capable of doing so even with *kauravas*. It was a place where one’s inner tendencies, be it aggressiveness, love or righteousness, were multiplied multifold. Therefore, to understand the situation on the battlefield, it is important to understand the states of mind of the key characters involved.

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The Three Modes of Nature



Three gunas as cosmic spirals

Nature is capable of causing both states of peace and restlessness in a person through the modes of *saththva*, *rajas*, and *thamas*. From *saththva* arises bliss, from *rajas* desire, and from *thamas* lethargy. *saththva* is ideally the dominant mode since it is the most conducive towards the constant remembrance of *the Supreme*, and the world is best seen through the 'lens' of *saththva*. In the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, Arjuna stands for *saththva*, *Duryo:dhana* for *rajas*, and *Dhruthara:shtra* for *thamas*. The *Bhagavad Gi:tha* contains teachings for all the three categories of individuals with the aforementioned qualities.

The *G:itha* begins with the mention of *Dhruthara:shtra* as symbolic of life beginning in darkness. One progresses from the *tha:masic* state of inner blindness and ignorance to the *ra:jasic* state of harbouring desires solely for oneself, and eventually to the *sa:ththvic* state of aiming for the welfare of society.

Sanjaya's Wisdom and Purity



Sanjaya narrating to Dhruthara:shtra

In the beginning of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, *Dhruthara:shtra*'s question was posed to *Sanjaya*, a wise person. They were both classmates but were at very different levels of knowledge, therefore *Sanjaya* played the role of the deliverer of the message while *Dhruthara:shtra* received it in this circumstance. *Dhruthara:shtra* once asked *Sanjaya* why there were differences in the levels of their knowledge.

ma:ya:m na se:ve: bhadram the: na vruttha: dharmam a:chare:th |
suddha-bha:vam gatho: bhakthya: sa:sthra:d ve:dmi jana:rdanam | |



Sanjaya explained that he never performed acts of charity for ostentation, was not deceitful, never sought refuge in *ma:ya*, illusion, and never performed wasteful rituals. He emphasised on his inner purity, belief in *Bhagava:n*, and constant remembrance of the *sa:sthras*. His lack of deceit led to his inner purity, which in turn led to wholesome action. Righteous action originates from one's belief in scriptures which in turn increases one's belief in and devotion towards *Bhagava:n*. Thus, *Sanjaya* was able to view the world through the 'lens' of devotion to the Supreme. He was able to see the world for what it actually is. He stated that *Dhruthara:shtra* did not overcome the first hurdle of deceit so could not progress to the subsequent stages and was thus in a state of inner blindness.

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Dhruthara:shtra's Preposterous Question

The preposterousness of *Dhruthara:shtra's* initial question to *Sanjaya* is noteworthy. "kim akurvatha?" - "what are they doing?" Isn't it more appropriate to inquire of a person who has visited a restaurant what he ate rather than what he was doing? Obviously he was eating, for that is the sole purpose of visiting a restaurant. Shouldn't it have been obvious to *Dhruthara:shtra* that *pa:ndavas* and *kauravas* are engaged in a bloody war?

Dhruthara:shtra wondered if the *Kurukshe:thra* battlefield, due to its ability to multiply one's innate tendencies, was able to do that for the *satththva* in *pa:ndavas* and the *rajas* in *kauravas*. It's clear from his question that he had hoped *pa:ndavas* would forfeit the kingdom and demur from the war, and the *kauravas* could greedily snatch this windfall without putting up a fight for it. After all, *Dhruthara:shtra* would have been elated at that outcome and surprisingly even considered it a possibility despite knowing that *Sri Krushna*, whose true nature he was aware of, was guiding *pa:ndava:s*.

Furthermore, that he referred to the hundred *kauravas* as *ma:maka:h*, my people, implies that he considered the *pa:ndavas* to be outsiders. This narrow-mindedness is indicative of the *thamas* in *Dhruthara:shtra*.

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Consequences of Unrighteous Attachment



Fallen crowns, grieving king

all hundred of them were annihilated in the war. *pa:ndavas* whom he considered to be outsiders, but whom *Sri Krushna* accepted as His own, thrived and gained victory. The essential message here is that one must behave and act in such a manner that he is taken under the wing of a righteous person. All efforts must be made to distance oneself from the unrighteous. This is one of the morals learned from *Maha:bha:ratha*. *Sri Krushna* in fact denounced *kauravas* as enemies as He declared to *Duryo:dhana* -

dvishadannam na bho:kthavyam dvishantham naiva bho:jaye:th, One should not partake of an enemy's food nor feed an enemy.

kauravas had a battalion of 11 *akshauhini*s, battalions, while the *pa:ndavas* had 7. Besides, the most senior and reputable warriors and *Guru:s* were present on the *kauravas'* side. Yet, victory favoured *pa:ndavas* due to their *sa:ththvic* nature. Qualities and tendencies are not immediately obvious to the eye but are latently lurking around inside us, causing tangible results and events when triggered. It is important to suppress *thamas*, ignorance with the guidance of preceptors and seers.

Dhruthara:shtra did turn to *Sanjaya* who played the role of the seer here. *Sanjaya* delivered the gist of his message in the last *slo:ka* of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

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yathra yo:ge:svarah krushno: yathra pa:rttho: dhanurdharaha |



thathra sri:r vijayo: bhu:thihi dhruva: ni:thir mathir mama | | 18.78

Wherever there is *Sri Krushna*, the Lord of all Yoga, and wherever there is *Arjuna*, the best archer, there will always certainly be unending opulence, victory, prosperity and righteousness. Of this I am certain.

Sanjaya's Ultimate Reply

690 *slo:kas* after *Dhruthara:shtra's* initial inquiry in the first *slo:ka*. *Sanjaya* made an attempt to deliver the precise truth to *Dhruthara:shtra* who was so steeped in *thamas* that he made no attempt to call a ceasefire or correct *Duryo:dhana*. Thus he is the one directly responsible for the destruction of *kauravas*.

Individuals who have *thamas* dominating are not prepared to recognize the truth and change course. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is a scripture that shows one the path from darkness to light by prescribing a *dha:rmic* course of action. While *dharma* does not seem to have immediate benefits, it is for one's ultimate welfare. The symbolism of beginning with *Dhruthara:shtra's* question is to indicate this journey from ignorance to the path of *dharma*. While all of us have the three modes of nature and latent tendencies which may manifest as *sa:ththvic* thoughts, *ra:jasic* anger and desire, and *tha:masic* lapse of reason and logic, we must be able to channel these tendencies appropriately into the path of *dharma* to overcome them.

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Verse 2

There are three types of people. Those who misunderstand their bad qualities as good, those who recognize them and try to correct themselves, and those who refuse to even acknowledge them. The third type are blind to their own shortcomings, like *Dhruthara:shtra*

In response to *Dhruthara:shtra's* initial question, *Sanjaya* tried to expose *Duryo:dhana's* vulnerability in the hope that *Dhruthara:shtra* would ask the *Kauravas* to retreat and avoid causing their own downfall.

sanjaya uva:cha

*drushtwa: thu pa:ndava:ni:kam vyu:dhham duryo:dha:nas thada: |
a:cha:ryam upasangamya ra:ja: vachanam abravi:th | | 1.2*



Sanjaya, referring to “*pa:ndava:ni:kam vyu:dham*”, the formations of the army of *pa:ndava:s*, describes the discipline with which *pa:ndavas* arranged themselves in an array. Witnessing such orderliness created feelings of insecurity in *Duryo:dhana*, although their battalions were less in number than his and he approached his guru *Dro:na:charya*.

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It is natural to turn to one’s *Guru* at times like these, which is what *Duryo:dhana* also did. What is important is the manner in which one approaches the *Guru*. While narrating this *Sanjaya*, refers to *Duryo:dhana* as *ra:ja*, the king. That is how *Duryo:dhana* approached his guru.... as a King!

Everything that *Duryo:dhana* saw around him, *pa:ndava:s*, *kauravas*, and his *guru* himself, caused insecurity and sadness in him. *Duryo:dhana*’s sorrow was out of selfishness, while that of *Arjuna* was out of a misplaced concern for his kith and kin. If only *Duryo:dhana* had taken a moment to notice the size and quality of his own army, he might have felt a sense of contentment and confidence. Since his dominant quality was *rajas*, he was more focussed on the opponent, and jealousy burnt inside him like a fire. People with dominant *rajas* lose sight of the fact that *Bhagava:n* gives each one of us a fair share.

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However, *Duryo:dhana*, filled with passion, refused to acknowledge the stalwarts such as *Bhi:shma* and *Dro:na* on his side. He refused to acknowledge the strengths of his own army.

Sa:sthra instructs one to approach the *guru* during times of sorrow, but with the proper attitude. Here, *Sanjaya* relates how *Duryo:dhana* viewed *Dro:na* with an eye of suspicion. *Duryo:dhana*’s words to *Dro:na* betray his mistrust of his *guru*. He was convinced that *Dro:na* secretly sided with *pa:ndavas*. Thus, *Duryo:dhana*’s sorrow and negative thoughts drove him further into delusion. *Arjuna*’s sorrow, on the other hand, made his enmity towards his relatives take a back seat, while his heart melted due to his *saththva*, and love for his kin came forward. Sorrow has different effects on people, depending on their dominant inner qualities.

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Delusion and Insecure Rule

sorrow betrayed his state of delusion. For the 12 years that *Duryo:dhana* ruled as king, he operated with perpetual insecurity and harboured a sense of inadequacy. Out of fear that his people would perceive him as an unfit or cruel king, he performed acts of charity and doled out several empty promises. This is another quality of *rajas*, that makes one promise and donate over his capacity purely for the sake of ostentation. Thus, the 12 years of rule contributed to heightening *Duryo:dhana's* delusion. Due to the inherent defects in these thoughts, the acts of charity that he performed didn't contribute to his betterment.

In reality, *Duryo:dhana* had highly capable, wise, and experienced counsellors on his side. However, his state of mind was not conducive to heeding their precious advice.

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Verse 3

The *Upanishads* guide us on how to approach a *guru*. *Mundaka Upanishad* declares, *thasmai sa vidva:n upasanna:ya samyak prasa:ntha chiththa:ya samanvitha:ya*, that one must approach the *guru* with calm, even-mindedness. *Duryo:dhana* was however obsessed by the desire to possess everything. His mind was agitated with insecurity and suspicion that both *Bhi:shma* and *Dro:na* secretly favoured the *Pa:ndavas*. He did not have the humility to get feedback or advice from *Dro:na* but approached him as a king, thus prompting *Sanjaya* to report, *ra:ja: vachanam abravi:th*. His *rajas* manifested as an egoistic attitude of 'telling' the *guru* instead of receiving his *guru Dro:na's* guidance and instruction.

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Duryo:dhana harboured such suspicions ever since *Dro:na* and *Bhi:shma* had sworn not to kill the *Pa:ndavas*. *Duryo:dhana* resented that these warriors whom he sheltered and fed were being insubordinate towards him and were taking undue measures to get him to change his ways. *Duryo:dhana* failed to recognize that they had a genuine desire to change him for his own well-being. *Sanjaya* reported to *Dhruthara:shtra* that a very perturbed looking *Duryo:dhana* addressed *Dro:na* thus -

pasyaitha:m pa:ndu puthra:na:m a:cha:rya! mahathi:m chamu:m |
vyu:dhha:m drupada puthre:na thava sishye:na dhi:matha: || 1.3



He ordered *Dro:na* to behold *pa:ndavas'* army along with its general, *Drupada's* son. It is noteworthy that he didn't refer to *Drushtadyumna* by his name, but rather as *Drupada's* son, and as *Dro:na's* student. In this verse, he also elaborated that *Drushtadyumna* exhibited superior intelligence. This is an indirect insult to his *guru*, suggesting that the disciple outshone the *guru*. It is all right to praise the *guru* in the presence of the disciple but not the other way around. *Duryo:dhana* did this intentionally to hurt *Dro:na*.

Bhi:shma and *Dro:na* endured many of *Duryo:dhana's* verbal insults since they had sworn to safeguard the throne of the *Kuru* dynasty. The occupant of the throne was of less relevance than the throne itself.

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State of Fear



Duryo:dhana's anxiety on the battlefield

There is a saying: *bhi:thasya nu:nam bhayaka:ri sarvam* — for one who is in a state of fear, everything appears threatening. This is the condition of *rajas* clouded by *thamas*. *Duryo:dhana*, at this moment, is caught in such panic. Yet he remembered an important principle: when in distress, one must approach one's *Guru*. Accordingly, he went to *Dro:na*.



However, because his mind was agitated by *rajas* and obscured by *thamas*, instead of receiving *Dro:na*'s guidance with humility, *Duryo:dhana* turned accusatory. In his delusion, he imagined that *Dro:na* was secretly favoring *pa:ndavas* and working to ensure *Duryo:dhana*'s defeat. With this false belief, he began to insult and belittle his own teacher.

He particularly wounded *Dro:na*'s feelings through sarcasm — reminding him that he had accepted *Drupada*'s son, *Dhrushtadyumna*, as his disciple, and mockingly suggesting that *Dhrushtadyumna*'s valor was proof of *Dro:na*'s misplaced loyalty.

Purpose of *Dhrushtadyumna*'s Birth

In the past, *Drupada* had sought redemption for being insulted by *Dro:na* and performed a sacrifice for which, as a boon, he was granted two children *Draupadi* and *Drushtadyumna*. The purpose of *Drushtadyumna*'s birth was to kill *Dro:na*. *Duryo:dhana* pointed out in this verse that *Dro:na* was well-aware of this, yet accepted *Drushtadyumna* under his wing and trained him in the very warfare that would lead to his own destruction. In other words, *Duryo:dhana* is saying that *Dro:na* was not wise to take *Drushtadyumna* as his disciple. The *Upanishads* have declared that a qualified and honourable *guru* must deliver knowledge to an eligible student who approaches him with humility. We know of the *guru* of the *asuras*, *Sukra:cha:rya*, giving the knowledge of *sanji:vani: manthras* to *Kacha*, the son of *de:vaguru*, *Bruhaspathi*.

Duryo:dhana found *Dro:na*'s acceptance of *Drushtadyumna* as his disciple, foolhardy on his part. He viewed everyone and everything through the lens of fear and insecurity and blamed *Dro:na* for his naivety. This is a *ra:jasic* quality backed by *thamas*. Just when *Dro:na*'s anger against *Drupada* might have started receding, *Duryo:dhana*, in this verse, rekindled it by mentioning the name of his *guru*'s nemesis.

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Qualities of a Perfect Guru

A perfect *guru* is one capable of making a 'nobody' into a great person, worthy of worship by everyone, just like a sculptor can bring out the beauty in an object and cause awe in people's hearts. While *Duryo:dhana* recognized this quality in *Dro:na* by quoting the examples of *E:kalavya* and *Drushtadyumna*, he resented the fact that he himself has not benefited in similar ways. In reality, *Dro:na* had never shown favouritism towards any particular student. Just like the sun's rays reflect differently in every medium, each of *Dro:na*'s students were able to grasp the teachings to



different extents. *Duryo:dhana's* heart was filled with jealousy and resentment due to his *ra:jasic* nature. This effectively blocked the *guru's* teachings from entering his mind and heart.

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Verses 4-10

rajas tends to make a person cruel towards everyone around him, family, friends, and well-wishers alike. Thus, *Duryo:dhana* was in a state of eternal conflict. *rajas* makes a person selfish, and sorrow doesn't cleanse such a person's heart. Even when steeped in sorrow, *Duryo:dhana* was calculative of how he can 'milk' the maximum out of his preceptor and everyone else. At this point, *Duryo:dhana* was intimidated by the array of the enemy's army and its commander in chief, *Drushtadyumna*, and was thoroughly resentful of *Dro:na's* perceived favouritism towards *pa:ndavas*.

He continued,

athra su:ra: mahe:shwa:sa:ha bhi:ma:rjuna sama: yudhi |
yuyudha:no: vira:tas cha drupadas cha maha:rattha:ha | | 1.4

He named every warrior in sight. This indicated that he failed to take stock of his own resources and had not yet recognized the warriors on his own side.

A *sa:ththvic* person acts in a manner that is in accordance with the needs of the future as well as the learnings from the past. A *ra:jasic* person looks ahead and wants to do things in haste, paying no heed to the past. A *tha:masic* person is ever mulling over the past and about how much he has lost out.

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Duryo:dhana's rajas also prevented him from heeding the advice of others and, further, made him boss over them. Such a *ra:jasic* quality leads to perpetual misery and struggle. In *Duryo:dhana's* eyes, all the warriors on the enemy front looked as mighty as *Arjuna* and *Bhi:ma*. He named *Vira:ta* and *Drupada* in this verse. *Pa:ndavas* might have had immense strength, but *Duryo:dhana's* insecurity made him perceive each and everyone on the enemy front, as supremely powerful warriors, who were out to harm him in particular.



He feared *Arjuna's* skill in the science of warfare. *Bhi:ma*, who had sworn to break *Duryo:dhana's* thigh, tear *Dussa:sana's* chest, and crush all *kauravas*, struck fear in *Duryo:dhana's* heart.

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Duryo:dhana went on to count 23 of the warriors in the 4th, 5th and 6th verses -

athra su:ra: mahe:shwa:sa:ha bhi:ma:rjuna sama: yudhi |
yuyudha:no: vira:tas cha drupadas cha maha:rattha:ha | | 1.4

dhrushtake:thus che:kitha:nah ka:si:ra:jas cha vi:ryava:n |
purujith kunthi bho:jas cha saibyas cha narapungavaha | | 1.5

yudha:manyus cha vikra:ntaha, uththamauja:s cha vi:ryava:n |
saubhadro: draupade:ya:s cha sarva e:va maha:rattha:ha | | 1.6

Under the category of *maha:ratthas*, great warriors, he included the children of *pa:ndava:s*, *upa pa:ndava:s*, who were barely out of their adolescence. There are three grades of warriors - *ratthas*, *arttharatthas* and *maha:ratthas*. *maha:ratthas* are of the highest grade and skill. It is not known if all of these individuals that *duryo:dhana* named in this verse belonged to that class, but his insecurity certainly made him perceive them that way.

A good warrior is supposed to recognize the strengths of his own as well as the enemy's army. *Duryo:dhana* however had neglected to mention his own people, and had gone all out in praising the opponent. This is as inappropriate as a man respecting women of the society but abandoning his own wife and mother, or as someone following the righteous order of the world while rebelling against the code of conduct laid down by his own country. *Duryo:dhana's* pride and ego had led him to show no solidarity towards his own army and people.

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Downplaying His Own Army



Duryo:dhana approaching Dro:na

On his own side, *Duryo:dhana* could muster the names of a mere seven. In an attempt to downplay the greatness of his own army and thus insult his Guru *Dro:na*, he continued -

asma:kam thu visishta: ye: tha:n nibo:dha dwijo:ththama! |
na:yaka: mama sainyasya samjna:rttham tha:n bravi:mi the: || 1.7

Duryo:dhana went on to name them, beginning with *Dro:na*, addressing his Guru as *bhava:n*, you-

bhava:n bhi:shmas cha karnas cha krupas cha samithinjayaha |
aswattha:ma: vikarnas cha saumadaththis thatthaiva cha || 1.8

7 is considered to be inauspicious, especially in the Telugu language since seven and cry are homonyms, *e:du*. In fact, *Duryo:dhana* did woo several great warriors over to his side. One such example was *Salya* who initially preferred to be on the side of *pa:ndava:s*. Why was *Salya* not mentioned in this list? And how about the others that *Duryo:dhana* wooed? Almost, as if *Dro:na* might have gestured to ask if there are really only seven warriors that are noteworthy, *Duryo:dhana* followed up in the next verse -

anye: cha bahavas su:ra:ha madartthe: thyaktha ji:vitha:ha |
na:na: sasthra praharana:ha sarve: yuddha visa:rada:ha || 1.9

Duryo:dhana refrained from naming all the great warriors in his army, but instead referred to them as *anye: cha*, "and the others." He mentioned that they were skilled in warfare and had arrived at the battlefield, having given up their lives for his sake.



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Indeed this was an inauspicious utterance. *Duryo:dhana* could have said that the warriors were ready to give their lives up for him, but to say that they have already let go of their lives? Besides, though he recognized their skill in warfare, he also felt convinced that their deaths were imminent?

The Mirror of Reflection

Bhagavad Gi:tha is like a mirror that clearly shows us our defects, without additions or edits. It is our responsibility to use this scripture to take stock of our current states and better ourselves.

Contentment is a rare quality. Ambition is acceptable as long as *Bhagava:n* is accepted as the refuge and as the One who grants all righteous wishes of the seeker. *Arjuna* desired the kingdom and welfare of everyone and turned to *Sri Krushna*. *Duryo:dhana* went against the word of *Sri Krushna*, defied his *Guru*, degraded his family and army and eventually caused his own and their destruction.

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In Chapter 11, when *Sri Krushna* revealed His Universal Form, He advised *Arjuna*, *mayaivaithe: nihatha:h pu:rvam e:va nimiththa ma:thram bhava savyasa:chin*. *Sri Krushna* willed destruction of *kauravas* the day they debased *Draupadi* publicly. *Arjuna* was merely an instrument to kill *kauravas* who were effectively already destroyed by *Sri Krushna*. *Sri Krushna* willed that *Arjuna* enjoy the glory and praise of a warrior so that *Bhagava:n*'s devotee, *Draupadi*, was pleased. It's possible that *Duryo:dhana* instinctively perceived the doom awaiting his side of the battlefield and pronounced his warriors as already having left their lives behind for his sake.

Duryo:dhana mentions that his warriors were well-versed in the use of a variety of different weapons, *na:na: sasthra praharana:ha*, but this is not really a qualification. A jack of all trades, and master of none is one who is not well-respected. One who can go into intricate depths of a particular subject is more respected for his expertise. Breadth isn't the key, depth of knowledge and skill are.

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True Expertise in Warfare

pa:ndavas were each masters in the skilled use of a particular weapon. *Arjuna* was invincible while wielding the bow and arrow, *Nakula* the sword, *Bhi:ma* the mace, and *Dharmara:ja* the spear. *Duryo:dhana* pointed out here that his army has a general knowledge of all weapons, betraying his dissatisfaction at their lack of expertise in any one of them.

aparya:ptham thad asma:kam balam bhi:shma:bhirakshitham |
parya:ptham thwidam e:the:sha:m balam bhi:ma:bhi:rakshitham | | 1.10

Duryo:dhana referred to his army as being under the protection of *Bhi:shma*. He felt that this army was slowly slipping away from him and would soon abandon him. He seemed to underestimate the prowess of *Bhi:shma*, a valorous warrior, who even *Sri Krushna* had failed to take down on Day 11 of the *Kurukshe:thra* war. On that day, *Sri Krushna* witnessed the efficiency with which *Bhi:shma* destroyed *pa:ndavas* and also noted the lukewarm retaliation from *Arjuna*. Infuriated, *Sri Krushna* who had previously vowed not to use a single weapon during this war, deployed His *Sudarsana* against *Bhi:shma* and pounced on him. *Bhi:shma* was elated at this and addressed *Sri Krushna* in the following *sthuthi*,

sva nigamam apaha:ya math prathijna:m
rutham adhikarthum avaplutho ratthasthaha /
dhrutha ratthacharano:bhyaya:chchaladguruhu
haririva hanthum ibham gatho:ththari:yaḥa // Sri:mad Bha:gavatham-1.9.37

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Bhi:shma stated that as long as he held his bow, *Sri Krushna* would not be able to harm him. However if *Sri Krushna* commanded *Bhi:shma* to lay down his bow, he would do so and willingly get slayed by *Bhagava:n*.

Bhi:shma had taken an oath to provoke *Sri Krushna* into wielding a weapon despite *Bhagava:n*'s oath. *Bhi:shma* avowed this on the day when an elated *Duryo:dhana* reported to him that he had acquired an army of 10,000 while *Arjuna* merely chose *Sri Krushna* over strength in numbers. When *Bhi:shma*, who knew that *Sri Krushna*'s prowess could outdo any number of soldiers, rebuked him for this choice, *Duryo:dhana* relayed *Sri Krushna*'s oath of not wielding any weapon but only playing the role of a consultant. *Duryo:dhana* felt that they had no dearth of senior members who are able to give solid advice on the side of *kauravas*. *Bhi:shma* sympathised with *Duryo:dhana* for his naivete and then took a vow to make *Sri Krushna* violate His oath.



Bhagava:n does not ever want to see His devotees lose or get humiliated. He is ready to face insults in the bargain for their sake. Hence, *Sri Krushna* went back on His word so that *Bhi:shma* may fulfil his oath.

Once, when *Duryo:dhana* alleged that *Bhi:shma* had loyalty towards *pa:ndavas*. *Bhi:shma* repudiated him thus - *saktho:ham dhanushe:ke:na nihanthum sarva pa:ndava:n*.

Usually, warriors carry backup weapons while heading to a war just in case their primary weapons get damaged during the war.

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Bhi:shma declared that he could finish off *pa:ndavas* and *Sri Krushna* with a single bow and with absolutely no backup. After all, this was the mighty *Bhi:shma* who had challenged and won against his *Guru Parasura:ma*. However, *Bhi:shma* had no desire to challenge *Sri Krushna* and wanted no part of such a victory.

Duryo:dhana stated in verse 10, *aparya:ptham thad asma:kam balam bhi:shma:bhirakshitham*, his large army seemed mostly powerless, while *parya:ptham thwidam e:the:sha:m balam bhi:ma:bhirakshitham*, the enemy's side appeared intimidating. By using *idam*, here, *Duryo:dhana* imagined that the opponent was quickly advancing towards them in an intimidating fashion.

Duryo:dhana stated that his army was under the protection of the general *Bhi:shma*; however, he did not say the same for the enemy. Instead of stating that they were under the protection of their general *Drushtadyumna*, he mentioned *Bhi:ma*'s name. *Bhi:ma* was irrelevant in this context. In situations of negotiation or diplomacy between warring factions or countries, only members of the same rank meet with each other. A general meets with another general, a minister with another minister. Therefore, stating the name of an individual other than the general in this verse was inappropriate. *Duryo:dhana* could have still chosen to use the name of *Dharmara:ja*, the eldest one, or *Arjuna*, the greatest warrior, or *Sri Krushna*, who was the One running the entire show. His choosing to mention *Bhi:ma* here betrayed his cowardice and fear and that he has lost all sensibility.

Bhagavad Gi:tha helps us recognize our own defects and work at bettering them through the portrayal of these characters. Where our qualities seem similar to the characters on the side of evil, we must actively work towards eliminating them.

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We must also try to emulate the qualities of the characters on the side of the good.



Chapter 1 of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* presents to us three types of people- those with no discrimination as represented by *Dhruthara:shtra*, the arrogant as represented by *Duryo:dhana*, and those who yearn to better themselves as represented by *Arjuna*. Those filled with pride and arrogance are of a suspicious nature and are filled with insecurity with regard to all situations and all people.

In reality, there is nothing that *Bhagava:n* has created which is bad. Every situation that is presented to us can be used either to better ourselves or for our own downfall. Poison in the right quantities can be a medicine while rice in inappropriate quantities can lead to one's death.

Thus *Duryo:dhana* confided in his *Guru* the day before the beginning of the *Kurukshe:thra* war. *Bhi:shma* vowed not to fight against his grandsons, *pa:ndava:s*. *Duryo:dhana* was forced to comply with *Bhi:shma*'s wish and yet retain him on the side of *kauravas*. On *Sakuni*'s advice to keep *Bhi:shma* as the general despite his vow, *Duryo:dhana*, with *Karna* and the others on his side, decided to wage war against *pa:ndavas*.

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Bhi:ma's Fearsome Oath



Bhi:ma with raised mace taking his oath

On the side of *pa:ndavas* the only oath taken was by *Bhi:ma* to single handedly annihilate *kauravas*, tear open *Dussa:sana*'s chest, drink his blood, and break *Duryo:dhana*'s thigh with his mace,



suyo:ghanam imam pa:pam hantha:smi gadaya: yudhi |
sirah pa:de:na cha:sya:ham adhishta:sya:mi bhu:thale: | | M.B. Sabha parvam -2.99.28
vakshah su:rasya nirva:sya parushasya dura:thmanaha |
dussa:sanasya rudhiram pa:sya:mi mrugara:diva | | M.B. Sabha parvam -2.99.29

It's against *Dharma* of warfare to hurt one's thigh, but it was *Bhi:ma's* righteous duty to fulfill his vow.

Duryo:dhana contrasted *Bhi:shma* who had vowed not to hurt *pa:ndava:s*, against *Bhi:ma* who had taken an oath to ensure a horrific end to *kauravas*. He concluded that his army was *aparya:ptham*, unfit and inept, while the enemy's was *parya:ptham*, sufficiently capable. *Dhruthara:shtra* silently listened to everything *Sanjaya* relayed. However his son did not share this positive quality, because he did not even pause a moment to listen to what his *Guru Dro:na* might have had to say. This is characteristic of one who does not seek to improve himself.

Verses 11-19

Furthermore, *Duryo:dhana* had the gall to issue the following order :

ayane:shu: cha sarve:shu yattha: bha:gam avastthitha:ha |
bhi:shmam e:va:bhi: rakshanthu bhavanthas sarva e:va hi | | 1.11

The *Guru* is the one that must issue orders to the student but things seemed to be reversed in this situation. *Duryo:dhana*, in his anger, had lost all discretion .

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kruddhah pa:pam na kurya:th kaha kruddho: hanya:d guru:n api |
kruddhah parushaya: va:cha: naras sa:dhu:n adhikshipe:th | | Sundarakanda-55.4

One who is angry knows not how to behave with one's *guru*, mother, or father.

Verse 11 underlined the narcissism of *Duryo:dhana* as a leader wanting to be at the forefront of everything else. Through his portrayal of *Duryo:dhana*, *Ve:da Vya:sa* illustrates the pitfalls of being a person who wants to hog all credit and visibility.

From afar, *Bhi:shma* had been noticing the dialog between his grandson *Duryo:dhana* and *Dro:na*. He could sense that *Duryo:dhana's* strength was faltering and could sense that he felt demotivated and weak. While *Bhi:shma's* heart filled with compassion at the compromised state of *Duryo:dhana*, he was also increasingly worried that *Dro:na* might react in anger to everything that was being said to him.



Bhi:shma, although of a ripe age, had great prowess and wanted to induce some spirited energy into the obviously demotivated *Duryo:dhana*. He issued a loud war cry and blew his conch in response to *Duryo:dhana*'s words acknowledging his position as the king. *Sanjaya* thus reports -

thasya sanjanayan harsham kuru vruddhah pitha:mahaha |
simha na:dam vinadyo:chchaihi sankham dadhmau pratha:pava:n | | 1.12

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It is customary for the general of an army to issue a war cry to indicate readiness to begin fighting. While *pa:ndavas* were in no haste to do so, since *Bhi:shma* blew his conch, as is customary, the rest of the army of *kauravas* followed suit.

thathas sankha:s cha bhe:ryas cha panava:naka go:mukha:ha |
sahasai va:bhya hanyantha sa sabdas thumulo:bhavath | | 1.13

However, since all of *kauravas* blew their conches, played their kettledrums, and a variety of other instruments at the very same time, the resulting sound was cacophonous and thunderous and resonated across the skies. The undisciplined nature of *Duryo:dhana*, the leader, resulted in a similar behaviour amongst his people. The way the *Kauravas* issued war cries illustrates their lack of restraint and coordination.

In contrast, *pa:ndavas* had sought refuge in *Sri Krushna*. Keeping aside the matter of *Sri Krushna* verily being *Bhagava:n*, He was of great discipline and of a methodical nature. We observe this being played out in the way the army of *pa:ndavas* were lined up systematically in order.

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Pa:ndavas Respond With Discipline



Five brothers in formation

It was the duty of *Pa:ndavas* to respond to the war cries from *kauravas*. Although *Drushtadyumna* was the general of the army, he never perceived himself to be the one in control. The entire army deferred to *Sri Krushna* to blow his conch first.

thatha swethair hayair yukthe: mahathi syandane: sthithau |
ma:dhavah pa:ndavas chaiva divyau sankhau pradadhmathuhu || 1.14

In this verse, *Sanjaya* describes a beautiful chariot drawn by white horses, in which there are *Ma:dhava* and *Arjuna*. *Ma:dhava* blew His divine conch. Usually when warriors with high energy hear war cries, it arouses feelings of elation in them. But the sound of *Sri Krushna*'s conch struck fear in the hearts of *kauravas*. We don't know if *kauravas* had names for their conches, but *Sanjaya* outlines the names of the conches of *pa:ndava:s*. Even in modern times, we tend to name our homes, vehicles, and even pens that are dear to us. Similarly, *pa:ndavas* named their conches.

pa:nchajanyam hrushi:ke:so: de:vadaththam dhananjayaha |
paundram dadhmau maha:sankham bhimakarma: vruko:daraha || 1.15

Sanjaya listed the names of their conches in verse 15 and also referred to *Sri Krushna* as *Hrushi:ke:sa*, a name that bears much relevance to this chapter, the meaning of which we shall address later. To be noted is the fact that the order in which conches were blown, reflected the hierarchy of the warriors' statuses and was also in sequence. This



was in stark contrast to the display from *kauravas*. After *Sri Krushna* blew the *pa:nchajanyam*, *Arjuna* blew his conch *De:vadaththam*.

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Sounds of the Conches



Sri: Krushna, Arjuna and Bhi:ma blowing conches

Bhi:ma, referred to as *vruko:dara*, a wolf. He was likened to a wolf due to a voracious appetite and strong digestion. Due to his digestive abilities, all the food that *Bhi:ma* ate got converted to strength. His conch was called *paundram*. Nothing that *Bhi:ma* possessed was soft and gentle and his conch was also accordingly sturdy and emanated a strong sound.

anantha vijayam ra:ja: kunthi:puthro: yudhishtiraha |
nakulas sahade:vas cha sugho:sha manipushpakau || 1.16

Dharmara:ja, was a *sa:ththvic* man, soft and patient in his ways. He blew his conch, *Anantha Vijayam* only after *Bhi:ma* did. *Nakula* then blew his conch, *Sugho:sham* and *Sahade:va* the *Manipushpakam*. *Sahade:va*, being the youngest, was also probably the most luxurious and might have had pearls adorning his conch.

The sound of every conch represented the warrior's nature and their names arose from the qualifications of their owners. For example, *Sri Krushna's* conch was named *pa:nchajanyam* because He had slayed the demon *pa:nchajanya* and taken possession of his conch.



Warriors were identified and recognized from the sounds of their conches. For example, *Rukmini De:vi* recognized the *pa:ndhajanya* and expected *Sri Krushna's* arrival at her wedding scene. During the incognito phase of their exile, *Arjuna* was recognized by the sound of his conch *De:vadaththa*.

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pa:ndavas blew their conches in sequence and with their sounds emanating from different directions, their coordinates were made known to *kauravas*. *Sanjaya* then recounted the names of the other great warriors who followed *pa:ndava* brothers in blowing their conches -

ka:syas cha parame:shwa:saha sikhandi: cha maha:ratthaha |
dhrushtadyumno: vira:tas cha sa:thyakis cha:para:jithaha || 1.17

drupado: draupade:ya:s cha sarvathah prutthivi:pathe: |
saubhadras cha maha:ba:huhu sankha:n dadhmuh prutthak prutthak || 1.18

The great warriors *Sikhandi*, *Drushtadyumna*, *Vira:ta*, *Drupada*, *Sa:thyaki* etc., sounded their conches *prutthak prutthak*, separately and in sequence. They did this to demonstrate their discipline and gradually build up the fear in *kauravas* to a crescendo. Such a display was possible because they had *Sri Krushna* on their side.

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Impact on *Kauravas*

of conches sequentially by *pa:ndava:s*, probably also stirred feelings of inadequacy and jealousy in *kaurava's*. Although outnumbered, *pa:ndava:s'* strategy of blowing their conches in sequence caused so much fear in the hearts of *kauravas* that their hearts were shattered as declared by *Sanjaya* to *Dhruthara:shtra* -

sa gho:sho: dha:rthara:shtra:na:m
hrudaya:ni vyada:rayath |
nabhas cha prutthivi:m chaiva
thumulo:py anuna:dayan || 19

Dhruthara:shtra, being blind in his ways, didn't hasten, even then, to have his sons retreat from the war.



A question that might arise is - why did the sound of *pa:ndava:s'* conches not strike fear amongst themselves? When we see or hear something we love, the love only compounds. Herein lies the answer to that question.

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Weapons as Divine Ornaments



Divine weapons on lotus petals

On the other hand, when we see or hear something associated with someone abhorred, it causes agitation. Since *kauravas* were against *Sri Krushna*, every conch that was sounded by *pa:ndavas* reminded them of Him, and caused them much distress. The very same sounds caused happiness and comfort in the hearts of *pa:ndava:s*.

The weapons held by *Srimanna:ra:yana* such as the conch and discus and the bow and arrow of *Ra:ma* are beheld by devotees, as decorative accessories that help protect the beauty of the *Bhagava:n*. These weapons aren't viewed as a means of destruction. However, the weapons cause fear and insecurity in non-believers of *Srimanna:ra:yana*, as they did in the demon *Ma:ri:cha*.

In ancient times, jewels were worn to safeguard the eyes, nose, neck, hips, waist, feet, and so on, not to flaunt them or to be ostentatious about one's wealth. It's a shame that in modern times, the prevalent belief is that flaunting one's body increases one's appeal. Adorning a tilak on one's forehead is also to protect one from the potentially harmful gaze of people.

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Verse 14 - a deeper look

Re-visiting *slo:ka* 14, this is the essence of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. Understanding this verse amounts to understanding the text in its entirety -

thattha *sve:thair* hayair yukthe:
mahathi syandane: sthithau |
ma:dhava pa:*ndavas* chaiva
divyau sankhau pradadhmathuhu || 14

Sanjaya describes the chariot drawn by white horses in which *Ma:dhava* and *Arjuna* are situated just as they were about to blow their conches. *Sanjaya* did not describe the other chariots on the battlefield. It is worth analysing why.

The *Upanishads* and *Sa:sthras* teach us deep, spiritual truths. Subtle as the messages are, they are not immediately evident to the casual reader. Usually, engagement with the text happens through the storyline and plot, by which morals are imparted to the seeker. With further study and rumination, the subtler messages are obtained only by those who perform a deeper analysis.

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There are key 'password' -like phrases sprinkled throughout the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* and they unlock greater meanings. One such key phrase is in Chapter 1 *Slo:ka* 14, *sve:thair hayair yukthe:*, yoked to white horses.

The *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is the essence of all *Ve:das* which were classified by *Ve:da Vya:sa* into the *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sa:ma*, and *Attharvana Ve:da*. Under the *Yajur Ve:da* are *Krushna Yajur Ve:da* and *Sukla Yajur Ve:da*. Every *Ve:da* has thousands of branches and sub-branches.

Our sense organs relay information to us through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Since the strength of our sense organs falter with age and disease, they are not a reliable source of information and cannot be treated as the ultimate source of knowledge. These are known as *prathyaksha prama:na* in Sanskrit. The word *aksha* means organ or *indriya* and *prathi* indicates what's in front. We possess another sense organ within us - *manas*, the mind. It is through our minds that we make inferences and draw conclusions about an occurrence based on another.

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These are called *anuma:na prama:na* and are imperfect tools of knowledge as well. We don't always draw the right conclusions. For instance, we may mistake the morning mist to be smoke indicative of a fire.

The Ultimate Source of Knowledge



Vedas as rivers from divine source

The *Ve:das* acts as a *prama:na*, means of knowledge that transcends what our senses and inferences offer. Modern scientific theories have managed to some extent, to explain the 'how' of many wonders, but not the 'why', such as -- Why do the abundant and crashing waves suddenly recede? Why do we see a halo around the moon? What makes the winds blow? Why does the sperm from a male that enters a female cause life to grow in her body? Why do tiny seeds give rise to tall and magnificent trees?

Ve:das have the answers, both the 'how' and the 'why' to many such questions. *Ve:das* are known to be *apaurushe:yam*, not authored by man. *Ve:das* are the 'white horses' we must be yoked to.

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Purusha is the *ji:va* or soul that inhabits *puri*, the body. It could be the body of a man or of a woman. Works written by purushas are *paurushe:yam* and have the following inherent defects (1) a case of mistaken identification on various issues termed as *bhra:nthi* (2) inability to recognize aspects of an issue correctly, *prama:da* (3)



exaggeration or distortion of facts *vipralambha* (4) the inability to sufficiently express experiential entities such as anger, happiness, or the taste of sweetness *asakthatha*. The *Ve:das* are devoid of these defects. The word *O:m* which consists of three syllables A+U+M can be likened to the seed of a tree. The seed has, in a latent form, the entire tree, its wondrous flowers, fruit, leaves and so on.

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Creation and Dissolution

Similarly, everything that we witness in the manifest world as well as the *Ve:das* themselves are present in a latent form in the seed *O:m*. They have been systematically synthesised from *O:m* during the process of creation. During *pralaya*, the time of dissolution, the physical world dissolves into the *Ve:da:s*, the *Ve:das* dissolve into the three *mantras* or utterances i.e. *Bhu:h*, *Bhuvah* and *Suvah*. The utterances get absorbed into the three syllables of the *O:m*. The syllables of the *O:m* then dissolve into a single letter 'a', denoting the Supreme Lord, and this marks the dissolution of the entire universe.

During *srushti*, creation, the reverse happens. From 'a', *O:m* emanates, the three syllables out of which the utterances *Bhu:h*, *Bhuvah* and *Suvah* are synthesised. From every utterance, the *Ga:yathri Manthra* is formed. Out of every alphabet in the *Ga:yathri*, the *Ve:das* are formed out of which the entire universe is manifested.

The name of an object is merely a sound meant to identify it, but doesn't convey what the object truly is. The *Ve:das* have infinite numbers of sounds that are identified with different objects. The process of dissolution and creation is similar for both sounds as well as the objects.

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Just as a tree sheds leaves, dies, is burnt down, and is eventually converted to coal, the material universe is susceptible to a process of dissolution where it gets absorbed into water which then transforms into fire. Fire transforms to wind which in turn transforms to ether. Beyond ether, matter transcends into *avyaktha*, an unmanifest or abstract state. From the unmanifest or abstract, it enters, *akshara*, an indestructible and unalterable state. Further to this, matter then enters *mahath*, a state of magnificence. The state of *akshara*, indestructibility unites with *thamas*, darkness, which then gets absorbed into the state of *para thaththvam*, supremacy.



thamah pare: de:ve: e:ki: bhavathi, all the dissolved material objects that are in the form of thamas become inseparable with the Supreme, while not unifying and becoming one with it - thus declare the *Cha:ndo:gya* and other *Upanishads*. In this state, there remains only the single sound 'a'. This, the ultimate reality, which holds the entire existence is called *a:vara*. The process of creation starts with genesis from this *bi:ja*, seed state. It is impossible to decipher the contents of *para* until the process of creation begins and its contents which have been present in latent form begin to manifest.

Sri Krushna has declared in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* that during *pralaya*, all objects dissolve unto him and during *srushti*, all manifestation begins from Him. *Na:ra:yana*, the Ultimate Reality, is what remains when nothing can be seen, and nothing can be heard. What motivates the Supreme to begin the process of creation? There is certainly no one else around when the entire universe is in a latent state of *para*. However, *Bhagava:n* has a quality of compassion and consideration which is due to His eternal divine consort, Mother Lakshmi, the Universal Mother, who prompts *Bhagava:n* to create the beings that are held within Him so that they may be able to relieve themselves of their Karma. Just like a mother convinces the father not to punish their errant children, Mother Lakshmi prompts the creation of the universe.

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Mother Lakshmi can't bear witnessing the suffering of *ji:vas* and *Bhagava:n* can't bear witnessing the suffering of the Universal Mother. Therefore, *Bhagava:n* blesses the nameless formless *ji:vas* with forms, such as celestial beings (*de:vatha:s*), human (*manushya*), beings that move horizontally (*thiryak*), and beings that are stationary (*stha:vara*).

Bhagava:n's actions are prompted by the gracious Universal Mother, hence He is called *Ma:dhava*. The *Ve:das* do not name *Bhagava:n* since naming Him is impossible but states that He is the one who is always with Mother Lakshmi. Thus, *Purusha Su:ktha* names *Bhagava:n* as the cause of the entire universe, the thousand headed one, *sahasra si:rsha purusha*. *Sri Krushna* is an appearance of *Sri:man:na:ra:yana* and revealed his *Vira:t ru:pa*, Universal Form thus confirming what's stated in the *Ve:da:s*. In Chapter 15 of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, *Sri Krushna* declares *ve:daischa sarvair aham e:va ve:dyaha*. Thus, *Sri: Krushna*, the very personification of the *Ve:da:s*, imparts the teachings to *Arjuna* on the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra*, and helps him execute his duties.

The essence of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is verily that when we place the entire burden and responsibility in the hands of *Bhagava:n*, victory is ensured and we may live our lives fearlessly. This is conveyed metaphorically in Chapter 1 *Slo:ka* 14.

The *slo:ka* describes a chariot drawn by four white horses. There are also two adjectives used in this verse. Why was the colour of horses described as, *swe:thair hayair*, of what



relevance is the colour of the horses on a battlefield? An adjective *mahathi*, meaning glorious, is used to describe such a chariot. In this chariot are situated two individuals.

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Symbolism of the Chariot



Chariot metaphor with Om

hayam is the entity that runs something. *Ve:das* which directs one's intellect is *hayam*. *Ve:das* are pure and devoid of the defects of distortion, exaggeration, and inexpressibility of experiences. White is the symbol of purity. The four white horses in this verse represent the four *Ve:das* which are of utmost purity.

O:mka:ra bestows upon an individual many intellectual capabilities and is the essence of the four *Ve:da:s*.

The chariot mentioned in this verse, *Nandagho:sha*, is one that guarantees victory to the riders. *Arjuna* was blessed with this chariot from the burning *Kha:ndava* forest. *Nanda* is one who confers happiness and *gho:sha* is one who cries aloud.

There was a *bra:mhin* who lost his children as soon as his wife gave birth. He pleaded to *Arjuna* for help. *Arjuna* promised that he would help the *bra:hmin* man or give up his life if he failed. *Arjuna* had the habit of going all out while giving his word since he was confident of *Sri: Krushna*'s ability to step in to make things go right. When the *bra:hmin*'s wife was pregnant, *Arjuna* created a cage with his arrows to protect her child. However, the child was lost as soon as born.

Just as *Arjuna* was going to enter a sacrificial fire, in accordance with his word, *Sri: Krushna* came along to take *Arjuna* on the *Nandagho:sha* chariot to a celestial place. He



stopped the chariot there. *Sri: Krushna* stated that *Arjuna* could not go further and must wait in the chariot. The *Bhagava:n* retrieved the seven other babies and returned. *Arjuna* was deeply impressed with the chariot and *Sri: Krushna*'s charioteering skills. It can be imagined that *Sri: Krushna* rode tens of thousands of miles within the span of a day, from sunrise to the point that he returned with the seven lost babies. Even rockets of modern times burn away when they go faster than a certain velocity. Indeed it was *Vaikuntam* or *Paramapadam* that *Sri: Krushna* took *Arjuna* to in *Nandagho:sha*, and this incident is recounted in *Maha:bha:ratha*.

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Meaning of the O:mka:ra



Sacred Om creating the cosmos

Just as the *Nandagho:sha* protected its riders through all the worlds, *O:m* protects those in this, higher and nether worlds. There are different types of *ji:va:s*. There are those like us, *baddha:s*, who are bound by *karma*. Some others who have gained liberation are called *muktha:s*. There are yet another type of *ji:vas* who are in the eternal presence *Bhagava:n*, and they are termed *nithyasu:ri:s*. *O:m* protects all *ji:va:s*, containing as it does, the entirety of the *Ve:da:s*. There are many theories and debates on the significance of *Ve:da:s*, but we will try to explain what *Ve:da Vya:sa* expounds. *O:m* (AUM) consists of 3 syllables A+U+M. 'A' represents the eternally causeless being *Parama:thma*, who is the cause of everything else. According to *Pa:nini*'s *Su:thras* in Sanskrit Grammar, *a ithi bhagavatho: na:ra:yanasya pratthama abhida:nam*, *Nara:yana* is the same as 'A', the cause of all beings.



'M' represents the *ji:va*, the result of *Srimanna:ra:yana*'s *sankalpa* . *Sa:nkhya Sa:sthra* describes the body which houses the *ji:va* as having 24 entities. The *ji:va* is essential to the body, without which it is a corpse, so the *ji:va* is the 25th entity. The body has 5 elements - earth, fire, water, air, and ether. They have associated qualities i.e. smell for earth, taste for water, form for fire, touch for air, sound for ether. The body has 5 *jna:ne:ndriyas* to recognize these 5 elements, and to apply the elements into action, there are 5 *karme:ndriya:s*. The 21st entity is *manas*, the mind, the 22nd is *buddhi*, the intellect, the 23rd is *aham thaththva*, the Ego, and the 24th is *mu:la prakruthi*, primordial Nature, the root cause. All of these constitute the body.

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Each of the 25 entities are represented by 25 letters, classified in groups of 5. The 25th alphabet *ma ka:ra* represents the *ji:va*. 'ma' is an onomatopoeic word used to represent the *ji:va*. Sanskrit has several such onomatopoeic words where the sounds of the syllables are meant to convey the nature of the entity that they describe. For example, ether is represented by 'ka', air by 'ga' to stand for *gachchathi* which means that it is in eternal movement. *ma* stands for knowledge *man-jna:ne*, *man* - *avabo:dhane*.. Of the 25 constituents of the body, only the *ji:va* has knowledge and is sentient. *Ji:va* is what makes the body feel and experience and gives it the knowledge to use its faculties.

'u' represents the relationship between *parama:thma* and *ji:va*. The *ji:va* only belongs to *Srimanna:ra:yana* who in turn guides and runs the *ji:va* in the appropriate path. *Srimanna:ra:yana* and the *ji:va* are as inseparable as the lamp and its light and the flower and its fragrance.

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'u' in *O:m* represents the eternal connection between *Srimanna:ra:yana* and *ji:va*. In *slo:ka* 14 *Sri: Krushna* is referred to as *Ma:dhava* which means the spouse of Lakshmi. The *Purusha Su:ktha* declares *Srimanna:ra:yana* as the *Lakshmi:pathi*. *Sri:man* means one who is with Sri. The *ji:va* is represented as the *pra:jnavan*, the one who has knowledge. *Sri: Krushna* and *Arjuna* have the close relationship of brothers-in-law and represent the intimacy between the *parama:thma* and the *ji:va*. They are in the *nandagho:sha* chariot which represents the *O:m*. Both the *parama:thma* and *ji:va* are of equal importance, just as both the syllables 'A' and 'M' are equally essential to the *O:m*. The conches held by *Ma:dhava* and *Arjuna* represent these syllables.

Upanishads compare the *O:m* to a conch, and also to a bow in some other places. In the latter occurrences of the comparison, the *ji:va* is likened with an arrow, *pranavo:*



dhanuhu, saro:hya:thma:. *Ma:dhava* and *Arjuna* sound their conches to declare their inseparable relationship. We need to recognize the inseparability, as well as the significance of the *parama:thma* and *ji:va*.

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Relationship between *ji:va:thma* and *Parama:thma*

Ve:da is an eternal and transcendental sound. The essence of all *Ve:das* is contained in *O:m*. When *O:m* is treated as a single syllable, it represents *parama:thma* within Whom are *ji:vas* and insentient matter. Such a treatment of *O:m* is called *samhitha:kruthi*.

When split, *O:m* contains three syllables. 'A' which stands for *parama:thma*, 'M' that represents the *ji:va*, and 'U' the irrevocable relationship between the two. This treatment is known as 'asamhitha:ka:ram'.

The *Sa:sthra* provides prescriptions on how to enunciate the *O:m*. The time taken to pronounce the syllable of *O:m* is called '*ma:thra:ka:lam*'. Pronouncing the *O;m* with one, two, or three such *ma:thra:ka:lam*, time units have different meanings.

It is our duty as *ji:va* to understand the *O:m*. We do not operate independently and have not landed this birth and body by choice. Every effect has a cause. We have come to be, due to a cause that goes beyond our birth parents. The cause that runs everything in Nature is *parama:thma*. *O:m* familiarises us with *parama:thma* and enlightens us on why we have been given these bodies, to consume our past *karma*. *parama:thma* has Supreme unlimited knowledge. *parama:thma* helps the *ji:va* by bestowing a limited part of this knowledge and running the show for the embodied *ji:va*. It is unknown since when this relationship, between the *ji:va* and *parama:thma*, began. *Sa:sthras* do not have any answer for this, but it is stated that out of His Divine Mercy and utmost sympathy, the *parama:thma* helps the *ji:va*.

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a:thma is that which pervades. The *ji:va* is also a knowledgeable entity that pervades the body entirely. It is the principle of *ji:va* that renders every part of the body aware, conscious, and sentient. While a *ji:va* housed in one body cannot control the *ji:va* housed in another one, *parama:thma*, the One who pervades and permeates everything and everywhere, has total control over all *ji:va:s*.

The sound *O:m* communicates the innate nature of and intimate relationship between *parama:thma* and *ji:va*. It is expounded upon in *slo:ka* 14 by *Ve:da Vya:sa*. One must examine why *Sri: Krushna* is referred to as *Ma:dhava* in this *slo:ka*. Why not *Go:vinda*?



Ma:dhava means husband of Lakshmi i.e. *Sri:manna:ra:yana*. *Na:ra:ya:na* and Lakshmi are not individuals but are Principles that pervade the universe. *Na:ra:ya:na* is the Supreme Principle, the *thatthva*, which is all pervading and sustaining. Since all names and forms that exist, belong to Him, He is the source of all.

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The world can be recognized by the Principle of *na:ra:yana thatthvam* that pervades it. We recognize *parama:thma* by His quality of love and sympathy for all beings. Only such a *Na:ra:yana* is worshipped. In Sanskrit, 'lakshma' is 'auspicious sign'. Lakshmi, the ever-accompanying spouse of *Na:ra:yana* is the personification of His love and sympathy. So the principle within and all around is *Lakshmi Narayana thatthvam*. The couple is also called *dhava - m:adhava*. The relationship of a husband and wife goes beyond all other relationships in this world. A husband and wife ideally put their partner's needs before their own. In a family, the wife provides compassion and empathy while the husband provides structure and discipline. When either of these two essential facets go missing, such a family is sure to meet its downfall.

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The Ninefold Relationship



Na:ra:yana with ji:va:thma flame

The entire creation is dependent on such a relationship between *dhava* and *ma:dhava*. The knowledge that *ji:va* possesses must make him want to know *parama:thma* better.



Such a *ji:va*, represented by 'M' in the *O:m*, is called 'pa:ndava'. *Jna:na*, knowledge, must make one want to progress towards *para jna:na*, Supreme Knowledge, but not knowledge about insentient entities of nature. In fact, the *sa:sthras* declare, the only true knowledge is that about *parama:thma*. This *parama:thma* is represented by 'a' in *O:m*.

To know someone better, we must love them, and the love is established based on a relationship. This relationship between *a:thma* and *parama:thma* is represented by 'u'. Thus, we are able to even give our lives up for those we love, such as our parents, siblings, and so on. The *sa:sthras* and Chapter 9 of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* spell out the following relationships that exist between the *parama:thma* and *ji:va*

(a) *pitha* - *parama:thma* is the Father, the cause of the entire universe and we are His children (b) *rakshaka* - *parama:thma* is the protector of all beings and the only One who can truly protect us by giving us what we need and freeing us of what we do not need.

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(c) *se:shi* - He is the substratum or basis of all sentient beings and insentient objects and pervades each one of them in an inseparable way

(d) *bhartha* - He is the supporter of all beings equally, like a husband supports his wife and takes care of her

(e) *jne:ya* - He is the object of a *ji:va*'s knowledge. The knowledge that a *ji:va* possesses makes him restless and gives movement. The ultimate goal of this knowledge and all movement and effort of the *ji:va* needs to be towards *parama:thma*.

(f) *swa:mi* - He is the owner of all insentient objects and sentient beings

(g) *a:dha:ram* and *a:dhe:yam* - There are countless galaxies and celestial bodies in this universe, which are in constant motion, and do not collide with one another. *parama:thma* is the basis of this divine order.

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(h) *a:thma* - He is the indweller within each one of us, and we cannot operate independent of Him.

(i) *bho:ktha* - He is the one who experiences and enjoys everything. He is the reason that we have a feeling of fullness or satiety after eating or drinking anything. Without His acceptance not a drop of water can enter our bodies.

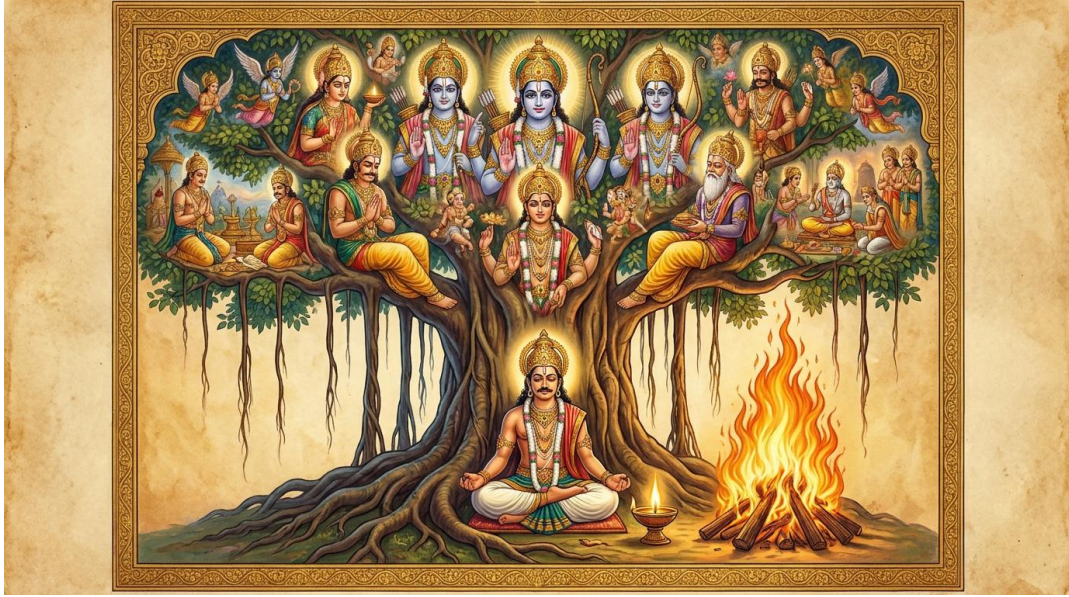


Given the intimate ninefold relation that exists between *parama:thma* and *ji:va*, we are able to love Him very deeply and dearly, once firm belief is established in the relationship. Like we pine for our loved ones, even for those who may not be blood relations, out of firm belief in a connection or relationship with them, we will be able to feel the same way, and even more, for *parama:thma*. If we firmly believe in the connection and love Him dearly, He will surely protect us. *Arjuna* had such a firm belief, therefore became the recipient of *Sri: Krushna*'s protection. This eternally mutual relationship is represented by 'U' in *O:m*.

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Such a relation between *parama:thma* and *ji:va* has been expounded beautifully using *dvi vachanam*, the grammatical feature denoting the dual number, in the *slo:ka* 14.

Establishing Firm Faith



Devotee under banyan tree

It is difficult to establish firm belief in something we claim to know. For example, we claim that *Bhagava:n* is everywhere but are apprehensive about entering a dark room for fear of some danger. At that moment, our belief in *Bhagava:n* has reduced just a bit. There are many other such instances.

Once, *Dro:na* taught all his students a simple Sanskrit lesson "*kro:dham thyaja*", abandon your anger. The next day, he quizzed the eldest of his students *Dharmara:ja* on the lesson to which the latter replied that he did not learn the lesson. *Dro:na* was taken aback since it was a simple four syllable lesson. *Bhi:ma* was able to repeat the



lesson perfectly but *Dharmara:ja* still insisted that he did not learn it well enough to repeat it. *Arjuna* was able to perfectly repeat the lesson as well, and *Dharmara:ja* still failed to do so.

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Duryo:dhana and the 99 other brothers of *Dharmara:ja* were also able to repeat the simple lesson perfectly, but *Dharmara:ja* was still unable to. An infuriated *Dro:na* whacked *Dharmara:ja* and finally the latter declared that he learnt the lesson “*kro:dhm thyaja*”. For *Dharmara:ja* to know if he had truly learnt the lesson, he wanted to be in a situation where he conquered his anger. Thus, he would know if he truly understood the lesson, and not just the words superficially. Since he felt no anger towards *Dro:na* and the slap caused no uprising or rebellion against his teacher, he knew for sure that he had learnt the lesson. The *Guru*, on the other hand, only knew the words superficially.

Many of us only believe in *Bhagava:n* superficially. When we visit a temple, we perform various rites and rituals to the deity there but if we firmly believe in *Bhagava:n*'s presence in the deity, we would have a genuine conversation with Him, inquiring about His comfort and so on.

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Would we not inquire if He had eaten well, if He had slept well, if the priest is taking good care of Him? However, we even offer food very half-heartedly to *Bhagava:n*. If even a piece of fruit goes missing in the dozen that we take for offering, we would stop worshipping such a *Bhagava:n*.

By understanding and believing in the message of *O:m* we understand our relationship with *Bhagava:n* and the ways in which He can protect us. *Arjuna* had no counter-weapon for many of the weapons that were aimed towards him during the battle of *Kurukshe:thra*. Yet, *Sri: Krushna* protected *Arjuna*, and stood in the way of any harm. He even changed day to night to protect *Arjuna*'s lineage. He blessed *Arjuna* with materialistic pleasures like status, wealth, and family as well as other-worldly gains such as a place in heaven. All of this was because of *Arjuna*'s faith in *Sri: Krushna*, the *parama:thma*.

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Many people believe in a God who extricates us from circumstances of the world and places us in a different dimension. However, what we truly require *Bhagava:n* to do is



to keep us happy in our current circumstances. Since leaving this world is inevitable, we should be graced by Him to reach the sort of place, spoken of in the *Ve:da:s*, where tribulations of the nether worlds do not give us sorrow. as. *Sri: Krushna* declares towards the end of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* “*ma:m e:kam saranam vraja*” which essentially encapsulates the essence of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, that if we surrender to *parama:thma*, He will take the responsibility upon Himself. He assures us that He will ‘free’ us, not just for our happiness but also His own.

Symbolism of the Divine Chariot

In *slo:ka* 14, the chariot is figuratively symbolising *O:m*, which represents the eternal connection that a *ji:va* has with *parama:thma*. The white horses represent the *Ve:da:s*. The words *Ma:dhava* and *Pa:ndava* are specifically used for *Krushna* and *Arjuna*. Then the conches are blown sequentially. Each word has its own meaning. Sanskrit is a wonderful language that when learnt properly, can be used to decode secrets. The word ‘attha’ is used to represent whenever a new section begins.

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“*thu antha attha a:di*” says the *Amarako:sa* on ‘attha’, which is a section demarcator. Upon the usage of ‘attha’, a new theme or section begins.

Verses 20-24

Thus far, we have witnessed the sadness of *Dhruthara:shtra* who asks *Sanjaya* to relay the incidents of the battlefield and the sorrow of *Duryo:dhana* who turns to his *Guru Dro:na*. *Duryo:dhana*’s sorrow intensifies when the *Pa:ndavas* sound their conches. The natural next step must be the shooting of arrows which the soldiers seemed poised to do. However, strangely, *Arjuna*, an adept warrior who knew perfectly well the positions of all the warriors on his own and the enemy’s side, asks to be taken to a spot where he may behold their positions, and this marks the beginning of a new section.

attha vyavastthitha:n drushtwa: dha:rthara:shtra:n kapidhwajaha |
pravrutthe: sashtra sampathe: dhanur udyamya pa:ndavaha | | 1.20

hrushi:ke:sam thada: va:kyam idam a:ha mahi:pathe: ! | 21

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It's possible that *Arjuna* lifted his bow to shoot his first arrow but just as he was going to, he had a sudden desire to have his chariot between the two armies. There he beheld the sight of the warriors, ready as they were to fight. *Arjuna* had as much arrogance and ego as *Duryo:dhana* but was different from the latter since he never threw his weight around *Guru:s* and elders and was ready to heed their advice. *Arjuna's* ego is evident from the order he threw at his charioteer *Sri: Krushna*. Even modern day rickshaw drivers may not tolerate such a tone from their customers. *Arjuna*, a mere *ji:va*, knowing the *parama:thma* status of *Sri: Krushna*, issued such an order. This is rooted in the ignorance and ego of the *ji:va*.

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Parama:thma's Compassion and Descent

The *ji:va* occupies a small space within a room. Many such rooms constitute a home, which is a part of a neighbourhood, then a city, a state, a country, the continent, and the planet. The planet is part of a Solar System that's a part of a galaxy. This entire creation is called 'anda'. The *parama:thma*, purely through His *Sankalpa*, Divine Will, has emanated countless such *anda:s*. As the *upanishads* declare, *thad aikshatha bahunya:m praja:ye:ye:thi*"

Due to the surge of His overflowing mercy and compassion, the *parama:thma* descended amongst *ji:vas* in human form to help guide them. He adopted the human form so that we may feel a sense of love and familiarity towards Him. *Arjuna* knew all of this yet issued the order to *Sri: Krushna* in verse 21. We will see in verse 24 how perfectly *Sri: Krushna* follows the orders. Indeed, if we believe in *parama:thma*, He would come to us, be in our vicinity and do as we bid Him to do, verily like a servant would.

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Observing the Enemy Forces



Chariot between two armies

Sri: Krushna is called 'Hrushi:ke:sa' which has a very important meaning in Chapter 1. *Arjuna* explains that he needs to be aware of the positions of all the warriors on his side so he may call upon their help when needed :

ya:vad e:tha:n niri:kshe:ham yo:ddhuka:ma:n avastthitha:n |
kair maya: saha yo:ddhavyam asmin rana samudyame: || 22

He also explains that he needs to note the positions of the enemies so he may be able to attack them:

yo:thsyama:na:n ave:kshe:ham ya e:the:thra sama:gatha:ha |
dha:rtha ra:shtrasya durbuddhe:he yuddhe: priya chiki:rshavaha || 1.23

He refers to the enemy's side, which also had good and just people but were in support of *Dhruthara:shtra's* son, a person of clouded intellect. Anyone who supports an evil minded person is also referred to as such. Hence they are all referred to as 'durbuddhe:' in *slo:ka* 23.

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In *slo:ka* 24, *Sanjaya* elucidates how perfectly *Sri: Krushna* carries out *Arjuna* orders.



sanjaya uva:cha

e:vam uktho: hrushi:ke:so: guda:ke:se:na bha:ratha! |

se:nayo:r ubhayo:r madhye: sttha:payithwa: rattho:ththamam || 1.24

He calls *Arjuna*, ‘Guda:ke:sa’ and says that he called *Sri: Krushna* ‘Hrushi:ke:sa’ here. *Amarako:sa* says, “*nidra:lasye: guda:ka: sya:th*”, *Guda:ke:sa* is one who has conquered sleep. *Sanjaya* has chosen this *vise:shanam*, an adjective, for *Arjuna* to show that he is the perfect recipient for the message of the *Gi:tha* that is imminent. *Arjuna* has conquered fatigue, tiredness, and all his senses.

‘Hrushi:ke:sa’ stems from the word *hrushi:kam*, indriya or sense organ. Sense organs register external objects and cause the *ji:va* to experience *harsha*, delight.

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Controller of the Senses

We may think that we control our sense organs but don’t they fail us one day? Eyesight and hearing grows weaker, our limbs may stop functioning and we may lose taste. *Parama:thma* controls the sense organs. *Parama:thma* is also able to control the movement, inhalation, exhalation and every aspect of all *ji:va:s*. One *ji:va* has only limited control over his own senses and none over that of another .

Poised as the warriors were to begin the war, how was it possible that *Sri: Krushna* and *Arjuna* could engage in a dialogue in the middle of the battlefield?

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Freezing Time for *Gi:tha*

twiddle their thumbs or go to sleep when the 700 *shloka* long *Bhagavad Gi:tha* took place for about 2-3 hours? Wouldn’t they have been impatient to start fighting? Wouldn’t the elephants have trumpeted, horses neighed, and wouldn’t the voices of *Sri: Krushna* and *Arjuna* been drowned by the clanking of swords? Yet they heard each other perfectly well, and so did *Sanjaya* who was relaying the scene to *Dhruthara:shtra*. How was this possible? The answer to this lies in referring to *Sri: Krushna* as ‘Hrushi:ke:sa’ repeatedly in Chapter 1. *Sri: Krushna* controlled everyone’s senses so that all of Nature came to a standstill when the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* was on-going. He first started with controlling *Arjuna*’s senses, but planting a desire in him to be positioned between the two armies. He also created another calamitous desire in *Arjuna*, which we will learn about in the next section.

Jai *Srimanna:ra:yana:*



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Verses 25-27

Bhagavad Gi:tha is a great scripture that demonstrates *Bhagava:n*'s Supreme power and man's relatively limited prowess. People have varying degrees of arrogance and overconfidence in their own abilities. *Arjuna* was no exception to this. Yet *Sri: Krushna* mentally prepared *Arjuna* to be the recipient of this message so that it ultimately benefits humankind. *Arjuna* had the instinct to act based on instruction, had the mental confusion that led him to question his actions before the war, and such a combination made him the perfect candidate. *Sri: Krushna* didn't choose *Bhi:shma* to hear the message since he was already knowledgeable and wouldn't have been ready to listen. The *Go:pikas* wouldn't have been the right candidates as they wouldn't have known how to implement the instruction. *Dharmara:ja* was a peaceful and patient person who wasn't very action oriented and would have lacked the impulse to act on *Sri: Krushna*'s instructions. Furthermore, *Dharmara:ja* had clarity in his mind on waging war which *Arjuna* lacked.

Ve:da Vya:sa confirms that the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* ultimately benefits humankind. *Arjuna* had beseeched *Sri: Krushna* to accept him as a student.

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Arjuna Forgets the Message



Arjuna confused in palace after war



Yet, at the end of the war when they returned home, *Arjuna* demanded that *Sri: Krushna* carry out his duty as a charioteer and hold the door open while he alighted from the chariot! What a change in attitude of *Arjuna* before and after the *Gi:tho:pade:sam*! There was a day when *Sri: Krushna*, many years after the *Kurukshe:thra* war, decided to test *Arjuna* on the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* while they were together at *Dva:raka*. When asked to repeat any one of his favourite *slo:kas*, *Arjuna* was not able to chant even a single one. Indeed, the entire message of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* had evaporated from *Arjuna*'s mind, since he received the message through one ear and surely released it from the other! Isn't there a Telugu saying "*chadavakamundu ka:karaka:ya, chadivina tharuva:tha ki:karaka:ya*"? , meaning that education has no real bearing on one's attitude and behavior. Perhaps hearing the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* prompted him to fight the war, out of fear of the Universal Form that he beheld, but with that stopped any effect it had on *Arjuna*.

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The Protector Achyutha

Sri: Krushna, although frustrated with *Arjuna*, did not express his anger since he did not want to cause pain to his sister *Draupadi*, who was *Arjuna*'s wife. Therefore he gave the essence of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* once again to *Arjuna* at the time, in the *Maha:bha:ratha*. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is like an umbrella that protects us from torrential rains or like a floatation device that saves us from a deluge of sorrows and dangers that the age of Kali is fraught with. *Sri: Krushna* wanted to deliver the message, using *Arjuna* as an instrument, to humankind that is drowning in the sorrow of the Age of Kali. *Sri: Krushna* is also called 'Achyutha' since he has bestowed on us this message as a form of protection. 'chyutha' is one who lets slip, and He is called 'Achyutha' since He never lets his devotees slip away or fall into the wrong path, not even for a second.

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Removing Devotees Pride

Therefore, *Arjuna* refers to *Sri: Krushna* as 'Achyutha' in the *slo:ka* where he commands his charioteer to take him between the two armies. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* makes it known how effectively, and with what immediacy *Sri: Krushna* is there for his devotees. When *Durva:sa* Maharshi visited the *Pa:ndavas* during their exile, along with his 300 students, *Draupadi* panicked as it was past sunset and her *akshaya pa:thra* could not generate any food to feed the guests. When she called upon *Sri: Krushna*, He appeared before her and asked her to double check the *akshaya pa:thra* since there might be at least a morsel stuck to it. *Draupadi* probably perceived this as a slight, since she might have prided herself on how well she was able to wash dishes. Isn't this a skill as well? We also come across people who wash dishes in such a way that all the left-overs are well preserved. *Sri: Krushna* wanted to rid her of this pride as well. Thus, He also tries to rid devotees of whatever little pride they have in their skills and abilities, like a gardener prunes the uneven ends of plants.

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Draupadi did find a morsel, which *Sri: Krushna* ate. In the satisfaction He found in the morsel consumed, *Sri: Krushna* willed that everyone become satiated. At that moment, *Durva:sa* decided that he no longer desired to eat and returned without paying a visit to *Draupadi's* home for a meal, thus saving her in the nick of the moment. In reality, *Draupadi* might have been meticulous in cleaning the dishes, however, the morsel of food appeared in response to *Sri: Krushna's* bidding when He asked her to look for it. Similarly, when *Arjuna* wanted to be placed between the factions, his intention was to make strategic evaluations on how to play offence and defence. *Sanjaya* beautifully shows how *Sri: Krushna*, who is 'Hrushi:ke:sa' brought about a change in *Arjuna's* thought in this verse :

bhi:shma dro:na pramukhathaha sarve:sha:m cha mahi:kshi:tha:m |
uva:cha pa:rttha! pasyaitha:n samave:tha:n kuru:n ithi | | 1.25

Actually, the job of a charioteer is not one that requires excellence or has room for one to demonstrate much skill. In fact, because of the way that the warrior and charioteer are positioned in a chariot, there's no chance for them to engage in conversation either.



Moreover, not everyone plays fair so the warrior must be continuously alert and on the watch for arrows heading towards him in all directions. He can't be inattentive for even a second so cannot chat with his charioteer.

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The Divine Charioteer



Sri: Krushna as supreme charioteer

The warrior would indicate with his feet to the charioteer the direction in which he must be taken. If tapped with the left foot, the chariot is steered left, right for right, and when tapped with both feet, front. *Sri: Krushna*, who is also called 'Pa:rtthasa:ratthi' felt no embarrassment at playing this role for his devotee and had no qualms with the entire world witnessing this astounding scene. Similarly, He played the role of a messenger when he carried a letter on behalf of the *Pa:ndavas* to the *Kauravas* during the negotiation. Therefore *Sri: Krushna* is also called 'pa:ndava du:tha'.

In *slo:ka* 25, *Sri: Krushna* commands *Arjuna* thus "*pa:rttha! pasyaitha:n samave:tha:n kuru:n ithi*", behold your Kuru relatives here, *Pa:rttha*. At this point, *Arjuna* started seeing his relatives differently. Just like a magician makes us believe we see and feel many things that are not truly happening, *Sri: Krushna*, who is also called a *ma:ya:vi*, magician, made *Arjuna* feel a whole host of feelings as soon as He used the word 'pasya', see. *Arjuna* started seeing things very differently at this point.



A Shift in Perspective

Ma:ya is also *prakruthi*, Nature, which is under the control of *parama:thma* therefore He is named *ma:ya:vi*. Upon the command *pasya*, behold, *Arjuna* who had previously called the enemies *durbuddhi*, one with flawed intellect, now has had a sudden shift in perspective :

thathra:pasyath stthitha:n pa:rtthaha pithru:n attha pitha:maha:n |
a:cha:rya:n ma:thula:n bhrathru:n puthra:n pauthra:n sakhi:m sthattha: || 1. 26

swasura:n suhrudas chaiva se:nayo:r ubhayo:r api: || 1.27

He sees preceptors, fathers, uncles, brothers, sons, nephews, and friends on the enemy's side. How appropriate is this i.e. for a warrior to have these notions on the battlefield? Did he not know of their relations to him up until this point? *Sri: Krushna* caused this sudden shift in perspective.

Verse 28

The *Upanishads* say “*karmana: kani:ya:ne:sha hye:vainam sa:dhukarma ka:rayathi tham*”, when one is interested in bettering oneself, *parama:thma* makes it happen by driving one's thoughts and actions in the right path. On the flip side, when one loses sight of right and wrong and pays no heed to the other's advice, *parama:thma* ensures his downfall by making him do wrong things even further “*yamanva:nune:shathye:sha e:vainamasa:dhukarma ka:rayathi tham yame:bhyo: lo:ke:bhyo:*”. *Parama:thma* is not like a cowherd that obviously drives in one way or another, but does it subtly by inducing changes in our intellect.

“*yam thu rakshithum ichhhanthi buddhya: samyo:jayanthi tham*” - *Sri: Krushna* sends people good advice through various channels. He did the same for both *Arjuna* and *Duryo:dhana*. The difference between them is that *Arjuna* heeded the advice while *Duryo:dhana* did not due to his evil nature. Here, *Arjuna* responds to “*thathra:pasyath stthitha:n*” and views the enemy front in a different light and his heart fills with mercy. Just like a coin has a value and form, we have values, our bodies, and relationships. It is important to preserve our values. *Duryo:dhana* did not attempt to do this while



Arjuna saw his relatives from every angle and perspective, as prompted by *Sri: Krushna* “*pasya e:tha:n samave:tha:n kuru:n*”. *Arjuna*’s heart which was previously filled with hatred, reacting to the enmity with his relatives, was now filled with mercy and compassion, in reaction to the bonds that he had formed with them. The question is - are both these viewpoints appropriate?

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People feel *visha:da*, sorrow, either when they lose something that they love or gain something that they don’t desire. In this case, *Arjuna*’s sorrow is due to the likely loss of his relatives in the impending war. The gain of kingly comforts would be unwelcome to him while living in utter loneliness.

“*mardana:th gunavardhanam*”, it is during times of sorrow that one is ready to listen to and think about what’s beyond the mundane. With everything going in *Arjuna*’s favour till now, he was never forced to analyse what’s of true value. We see that when they lose their loved ones, people read *Garuda Pura:nam* which expounds death, the state of the soul, heaven, and hell. They are less likely to read or hear these works at other times. When we lose someone that we love, we realise that something more powerful is at play, that rendered our efforts, medicines, and treatments ineffective. It is at times of sorrow that the heart melts and is most pliable to receive deep truths and wisdom that get ingrained in a form of a *bi:ja*, seed.

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The seed is likely to bear fruit when an appropriate circumstance arises in the individual’s life. *Arjuna* was a valorous warrior. He earned the weapons like the *Pa:supathi* out of his sheer effort and hardwork. He had been waiting for an opportunity to demonstrate his skill and valour for a long time. The stage is set for him to do so in the *Kurukshe:thra* battlefield. However, he was plagued by an untimely emotion of mercy and compassion towards the enemy. *Sri: Krushna* is the cause for this. The rule goes, “*na aprushtaha kasyachith bru:ya:th*”, one is to impart wisdom only when asked.

Sri: Krushna has been waiting for *Arjuna* to ask for the message of *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. Time was ticking and the war was about to begin. *Sri: Krushna* hastened to alter *Arjuna*’s perspective, to create a situation ripe for Him to deliver the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, the very purpose of His Incarnation.

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When *Arjuna* was in the guise of *Bruhanna:l*, he played the role of a charioteer to *Uththara Kuma:ra*. *Uththara Kuma:ra* wanted to flee from the war, struck with fear when he saw the horses neigh, charging elephants, and ferociously fighting soldiers.



He expressed his dismay at how the true scene at the battlefield was so different from the sculptures of the war that decorated his palace. *Arjuna* then taught him bravery and sent him to fight. But *Arjuna* wasn't such a coward. It did not befit a warrior of his pedigree to feel sympathy. Untimely sympathy amounts to cowardice. Just like joviality in a situation that requires seriousness is highly inappropriate. *Arjuna's* enmity towards the *Kauravas* had receded in his mind and their familial connection had come to the forefront, and this was because of *Sri: Krushna* shining the light differently on the characters arrayed on the battlefield, causing *Arjuna* to feel many new emotions.

tha:n sami:kshya sa kaunthe:yaha sarva:n bandhu:n avastthitha:n |
krupaya: paraya:vishto: vishi:dan idam abravi:th | | 1.28

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Sri: Krushna also rendered the others on the battlefield immobile and unable to experience any emotion at the same time. *Arjuna* had done something similar when he used the *sammo:hana asthram* during the war between *Uththara Kuma:ra* and the *Kauravas*.

Both *Duryo:dhana* and *Arjuna* have pride and ego. *Duryo:dhana's* ego prompted him to issue an order to his *Guru Dro:na* and retreat without hearing any advice in return. *Arjuna* had similarly issued an order to *Arjuna* to take the chariot between the armies but he was ready to take advice and instruction on how to behave. This is due to *Arjuna's sa:ththvik* nature.

Visha:da, sorrow, causes three things to happen

(a) the heart that is hardened softens and allows a new knowledge or emotion to dissolve.

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(b) it makes the heart move or flow from its initial stance

(c) it changes the nature of the heart entirely. "*gathi visarana avasa:daneshu*" is the description given to the 'shad' root of 'visha:da' in Sanskrit.

Sorrow makes one seek out someone, either good or bad. Since *Duryo:dhana* sought *Dhruthara:shtra*, the blindness and delusion led to his destruction. *Arjuna* and the *Pa:ndavas* sought *Sri: Krushna* and this led to their upliftment.

Arjuna's senses had been under the spell of *Sri: Krushna* immediately from the verse where it is said "*pa:nchajanyam hrushi:ke:sam*". The last time that *Arjuna* spoke to *Krushna*, he called the enemies 'durbuddhe:'. Let's see how his words have altered since then, having been overcome by a sudden wave of compassion and sympathy for the enemy.



It is customary that people look for omens and signs before embarking on an important undertaking. Cats, Brahmins, and sneezes are all given special meanings.

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Verses 29-31

Bhagava:n is a grand orchestrator of events and sends us omens to indicate the imminence of either auspicious or undesirable happenings. We are not to hate the omens themselves but treat them as indications of what is to come, and perform corrective actions accordingly. *Arjuna* similarly saw omens and signs,

ve:patthus cha sari:re: me: ro:maharshas cha ja:yathe: || 1.29
ga:ndi:vam sramsathe: hastha:th thwak chaiva paridahyathe: |
na cha sakno:mi avasttha:thum bhramathi:va cha me: manaha || 1.30

Arjuna confessed here that as he gazed upon his kith and kin in the enemy frontlines, his body gave way and his senses had become weak.

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His mouth had dried up and his body was burning feverishly. He had goosebumps, not the kind when one feels elated but the kind one might feel during times of utter terror. He felt weak and dizzy and his limbs had given up. He could no longer stand and his bow, the *Ga:ndi:va* has fallen. This bow was very dear to *Arjuna*. When *Dharmara:ja* once spoke ill of the *Ga:ndi:va*, *Arjuna* was about to attack him. He had to do a 1-year *pra:yaschiththam*, corrective action to erase the sin of attacking his elder brother. With an unsteady mind and faltering spirit, he addressed *Sri: Krushna* thus,

nimittha:ni cha pasya:mi vipari:tha:ni ke:sava! |
na cha sre:yo:nupasya:mi hathwa: swajanam a:have: || 1.31

In referring to *Sri: Krushna* as *Ke:sava*, *Arjuna* intended to convey his disbelief at what he was feeling, when the very Cause of all creation and destruction was right there with him.

Arjuna referred to *Sri: Krushna* as *Ke:sava* here. ‘ka’ refers to the four-faced *Brahma* and ‘i:sa’ to *Rudra*. During *Sri: Krushna*’s *Kaila:sa Ya:thra*, *Rudra* said the following :

“*thrayah ke:sina ithya:di sruthau dharmaikamu:lake: |*
ko: bramhe:thi sama:khya:thaha i:so:ham sarvade:hina:m |
a:va:m thava:m sa sambhu:thau thasma:th ke:sava na:mav:an! |
ithi harivamse: vya:sa munina: praki:rthana:th |”



“Do you know why your name is *Ke:sava*? *Brahma* is ‘ka’, and the controller of all beings is ‘i:sa’. Both of us reside in Your body, O *Krushna*, and we manifest in the world through You, hence Your name is *Ke:sava*!”

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Arjuna was in disbelief that he encountered bad omens when the Cause of all creation and destruction was right there with him, forgetting that these omens could not harm him in the presence of *Sri: Krushna*. He declared, “*na cha sro:yo:nupasya:mi hathva: svajanam a:have:*” , that he did not foresee any good coming from killing his kith and kin and that he did not want to enjoy any material fruit from such a victory.

Arjuna who had misjudged his position as independent from *Sri: Krushna* had returned to his real state of subjugation to the word of the Supreme *Bhagava:n*, due to his sorrow. We will explore what sorrow does to a person through the example of *Arjuna* in the upcoming verses.

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Verse 32-42

Just as one does not enjoy coconut pulp along with the shell, the heart needs to be pure and softened to accept teachings. *Arjuna*’s heart had, till this point, been filled with the dust of *rajas*, causing ego, pride, and ostentation in him. *Sri: Krushna* has begun the cleansing act in *Arjuna*’s heart, by causing him sorrow. In his sorrow, however, *Arjuna* betrayed his confusion in Verse 31 “*hathva: svajanama:have:*”. He wanted to forego the benefits of winning the war against his relatives.

While it is not righteous to kill outside of a war, ending lives within a battlefield is in adherence to *Dharma*. Overcome by sympathy, *Arjuna* betrayed his ignorance,

na ka:nkshe: vijayam Krushna! na cha ra:gyam sukhani cha |
kim no: ra:jye:na go:vinda! kim bho:gair ji:vithe:na va: | | 1.32

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Arjuna no longer wanted to fight a war and gain material benefits from such a victory. He expressed in Verse 32 that if he were to kill everyone in this war, there would be no people left to rule over. With no one around, whom would he share his material abundance with. Is such a life of loneliness worth living? Was there a point of opulence with no near and dear ones to share it with?

Arjuna’s mistaken notion here was that he needed to fight the war to win over the kingdom or something material, while the true purpose of the war is to right the



wrong and establish *Dharma*. Just like a doctor needs to carry out a surgical procedure without feeling guilty for cutting open a patient's body, this war needs to be fought to right the wrongdoings..

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A doctor amputates a limb to save the rest of the body. The patient is his primary focus, not the fees or the benefits he gets from performing the procedure. His duty is to use his education and training to save the patient. Similarly, *Arjuna* was supposed to use his training in the craft of warfare to save the land from the evil rulers who were spreading sins and wrongdoing. His primary focus should have been to eradicate evil entirely from the land, not the material benefits he would reap from doing so. In fact, he would also be doing the *Kauravas* a favour by destroying them in the war as anyone who dies fighting a righteous war is bound to reach higher worlds. *Sri: Krushna* reminds *Arjuna* of this duty and corrects his wrong perspective.

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Like *Arjuna*, many of us embrace sympathy at inappropriate times and fail to do our duty. This is borne from ego. Out of ego, *Arjuna* denounces the fruit of the war thus, “*kim bho:gaih ji:vithe:na va: kim no: ra:jye:na go:vinda*”. Both our lives and material experiences are given to us by *parama:thma*. When we adopt a cow, don't we decide how much to feed it and how to take care of it? Similarly, the *parama:thma* decides what it is that we ought to enjoy and gifts us accordingly. It is not in our place to refuse abundance that comes from *Parama:thma*. Moreover, *Arjuna* may decide to give away the kingdom won from the war, but his primary duty was to fight the war and eradicate evil. Furthermore, *Arjuna* declared,

ye:sha:m artthe: ka:nkshitham no: ra:jyam bho:ga:s sukha:ni cha |
tha ime:vastthitha: yuddhe: pra:na:ms thyakthwa: dhana:ni cha | | 1.33

Arjuna expressed that those with whom he ought to enjoy the kingdom have gathered here, having given up their lives. Why is he worried about killing those who have already given up their lives? Interestingly, he uses the word *thyakthwa:*, having given up instead of using *thyakthum*, in order to give up.

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Even *Duryo:dhana* had used the very same expression to describe his army at the beginning of the chapter. Both *Arjuna* and *Duryo:dhana* were filled with arrogance, it seems.



When *Vibhi:shana* failed to change *Ra:vana*'s ways, he abandoned Lanka to seek refuge in *Ra:ma*. Upon defeating *Ra:vana*, *Ra:ma* gifted the kingdom of Lanka to *Vibhi:shana* since he proved his eligibility by trying his very best to change *Ra:vana* and abandoning him when he failed. *Arjuna*'s attitude should have been the same; to try his best to change *Duryo:dhana*'s ways or eradicate his rule altogether. The people of *Duryo:dhana*'s kingdom were suffering and getting harmed under his rule. It was both *Arjuna*'s right and duty to protect them. What happens to the kingdom is secondary. His ego however filled his mind with all kinds of doubts. His elder brother, *Dharmara:ja* also had many warm feelings for *Duryo:dhana*, but had no doubt whatsoever that he would need to fight the war.

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The *Pa:ndavas* had rights to the kingdom, just as much as the *Kauravas* did. After serving their exile, *Dharmara:ja* tried various peaceful methods to earn their share back, but they went in vain. He therefore conceded to a war being the natural and righteous solution. *Dharmara:ja* had great love for his younger cousin *Duryo:dhana*. When a Gandharva named Chithrarattha once defeated *Duryo:dhana* and captured him, all the *Pa:ndavas* except for *Dharmara:ja* rejoiced at this. *Dharmara:ja* however chided them saying that the 105 of them (100 *Kauravas*, 5 *Pa:ndava:s*) must remain united against outsiders irrespective of conflicts that might exist amongst them. He convinced them to save *Duryo:dhana*. Yudhishtira earned his name as *Dharmara:ja* because he heard, ingrained, and practised *Dharma* which he learned from his *Guru*. *Arjuna* attended the very same classes but we are not sure if he was dozing or chatting with his neighbour, because we see him plagued with all kinds of doubts on the battlefield. *Dharmara:ja* was ready to fight the war as a righteous solution and outcome to past events and efforts. *Arjuna*, on the other hand, had feelings of sympathy and love that were highly inappropriate for the situation.

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As inappropriate as a doctor refusing to perform surgery on his patient out of sympathy. "*Kshatha:th thra:yathe: ithi kshathriyaha*", a *kshathriya* is one who saves people from their troublemakers who may even be their own kith and kin. *Ra:ma* says in the *Ra:ma:yana* "*kshathriyaih dha:ryathe: cha:po na a:rtha sabdo: bhave:d ithi*". Why are rulers conferred authority? A real ruler or leader is one who rids his people of their troubles, not one who looks to milk the maximum out of his subjects.

Arjuna's knowledge and vision was however clouded by sympathy. This was borne out of the murk of false identification and ego that was in his heart. Since *Sri: Krushna* is *Hrushike:sa*, he was going to create a stirring in *Arjuna*'s heart to rid it of the murk, so that pure knowledge can radiate. Gazing upon his opponents, *Arjuna* said,



*a:cha:rya:h pitharah puthra:ha thatthaiva cha pitha:maha:ha |
ma:thula:s swasura:h pauthra:ha syala:s sambandhinas thattha: | | 1.34*

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All *Arjuna* was able to see was his family on all sides - uncles, cousins, grandparents, friends, nephews.

*e:tha:n na hanthum ichha:mi ghnatho:pi madhusu:dana! |
api thrailo:kya ra:gyasya he:tho:h kinnu mahi:kruthe: | | 1.35*

In this verse, *Arjuna* referred to *Sri: Krushna* as *Madhusu:dana*, the killer of the *ra:kshasa* *Madhu*. This was *Arjuna*'s way of taking a dig at *Sri: Krushna*, implying that while He killed enemies and *ra:kshasa:s*, He expected *Arjuna* to kill his very own family. Was *Sri: Krushna* to blame here? Wasn't it the *Pa:ndavas* and *Kauravas* that decided to go to war? Didn't *Arjuna* ask *Sri: Krushna* to place the chariot between the armies?

Arjuna steadily began showing his ignorance, "*e:tha:nna hanthum iccha:mi*", that he was ready to die at their hands. They may bear the sin of destroying him but he did not want to fight them.

When under the influence of any extreme emotion such as anger, attachment induced by love, and sympathy one is said to lose all reason. Anger can lead to destruction, love to loss of identity, and sympathy can change one from foe to ally. Sympathy with good intentions is wholesome but when borne out of ignorance and false ego, it is not beneficial to anyone.

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Arjuna wanted nothing to do with ruling the three worlds, leave alone this Earth, by killing his family.

*nihathya dha:rthara:shtra:n naha ka: pri:thi: sya:th jana:rdana! |
pa:pame:v a:sraye:d asma:n hathwaitha:n a:thatha:yinaha | | 1. 36*

Fear of Incurring Sin

Arjuna took another dig at *Sri: Krushna*, referring to Him as '*Jana:rdana*', the slayer of enemies. In contrast, *Arjuna* found himself in a situation where he was forced to slay his family. He called the *Kauravas* '*a:thatha:yinaha*', those who commit 6 types of sins. He declared that their destination was hell in any case, and killing them would send



him to the very same hell. Thus, *Arjuna* revealed his sense of doership and enjoyership of the fruit of the war. *Sri: Krushna* systematically rid him of this false ego.

The *Dharma Sa:sthra* declares that such sinners must be killed immediately upon sight “*a:thatha:yinam a:ya:ntam hanya:d e:va avicha:rayan*”. This is the definition given for ‘*a:thatha:yinaha*’ -

“*agnido: garadas chaiva sastro:nmaththo: dhana:pahaha |
kshethra da:ra haras chetha:n shadvidha:n a:thatha:yinaha*”

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Such a criminal commits the following offences -

- (a) ‘*agnidaha*’ i.e. sets someone’s house on fire. The *Kauravas* lured the *Pa:ndavas* into a house and set it on fire
- (b) ‘*garadaha*’ i.e. one who poisons someone’s food. The *Kauravas* tried to poison Bhima’s food
- (c) ‘*sastro:nmaththaha*’ i.e. one who holds potent and poisonous weapons capable of large scale destruction while being incapable and unqualified to put them to good use. We also see, in modern politics, that peaceful nations regulate the development and deployment of nuclear weapons by other countries which are likely to cause mass destruction to the world.
- (d) ‘*dhana:pahaha*’ one who steals wealth
- (e) ‘*kshe:thra da:ra harasche:tha:n*’ one who grabs another’s wealth or wife

Although the *Pa:ndavas* lost in the game of dice they need not have mutely spectated *Draupadi* getting stripped publicly. As per the rules of *Dharma*, they could have slayed the *Kauravas*. They had gathered now to war against the above misdoings spelt out by the *Dharma Sa:sthra*, all of which had been perpetrated by the *Kauravas*. How appropriate was it for them to retreat from the war at this time, at the nick of the moment? Wouldn’t the world not have labelled them as ‘cowards’ if they did?

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“*pa:pame:va a:sraye:th asma:n*”, declared *Arjuna*. Overcome with sorrow, an egoistic person speaks inappropriately, without considering the circumstance or the recipient of his words. Thus, *Arjuna* had deteriorated to the same state as *Duryo:dhana*, unable to seek or heed to reason and advice from others, and making decisions beyond their authority.

*thasmath na:rha: vayam hanthum dha:rtha ra:shtra:n saba:ndhava:n |
swajanam hi kattham hathwa: sukhinas sya:ma ma:dhava! | | 1.37*



'thasma:th', therefore, due to the aforementioned reasons, *Arjuna* decided that it wouldn't befit them to kill the relatives, and that the *Pa:ndavas* would incur sin if they did so. In reality, *Arjuna* didn't have an accurate idea of sin or heaven or hell which were merely formulations in his mind. This wasn't for him to decide either, as the general, *Dharmara:ja*, and the rest were ready to fight.

yadyapye:the: na pasyanthi lo:bho:pahatha che:thasaha |
kulakshaya krutham do:sham mithradro:he: cha pa:thakam | | 1. 38

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Arjuna concluded that the *Kauravas* lack the purity and softness of heart to see the evilness of their ways, and they have been blinded by ego. Thus, *Arjuna* took a moral high stand and positioned himself as someone with the wisdom and purity of heart . Out of his ignorance, he also preached to *Sri: Krushna* Himself, that they must not engage in a war since they are not similarly blinded.

In reality, the only greedy person on the side of the *Kauravas* was *Duryo:dhana* as neither did he enjoy wealth nor did he allow others to.

Sri: Krushna had remained silent all along, allowing *Arjuna* to express his fears on how the clan and the entire world would deteriorate if the family split into warring factions on the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra*.

People are born with certain abilities and follow practices in accordance with their families and upbringing. Accordingly, they have a certain set of duties and responsibilities in the world.

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A goldsmith's family has been trained for ages to mould jewellery out of gold. Similarly, religious and worldly activities must be carried out in accordance with one's family, clan, and race i.e. 'dharma'. An action in accordance with *dharma* if though not yielding immediate reward, is for the greater long term good. If the *dharma* of a race is to wage a righteous war, it must be done despite the resultant loss of lives from such a war. *Arjuna* pointed out that the war would lead to the destruction of the clan and would amount to betrayal of his friends and well-wishers. Due to his misplaced sympathy he failed to realise that the *Kauravas* perpetrated the betrayal to start with. They had promised land to the *Pa:ndavas* upon their return from the 13-year long exile. However they went back on that promise.

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kattham na jne:yam asma:bhihi pa:pa:d asma:n nivarthithum |
kulakshaya krutham do:sham prapasyadbhir jana:rdana! | | 1.39

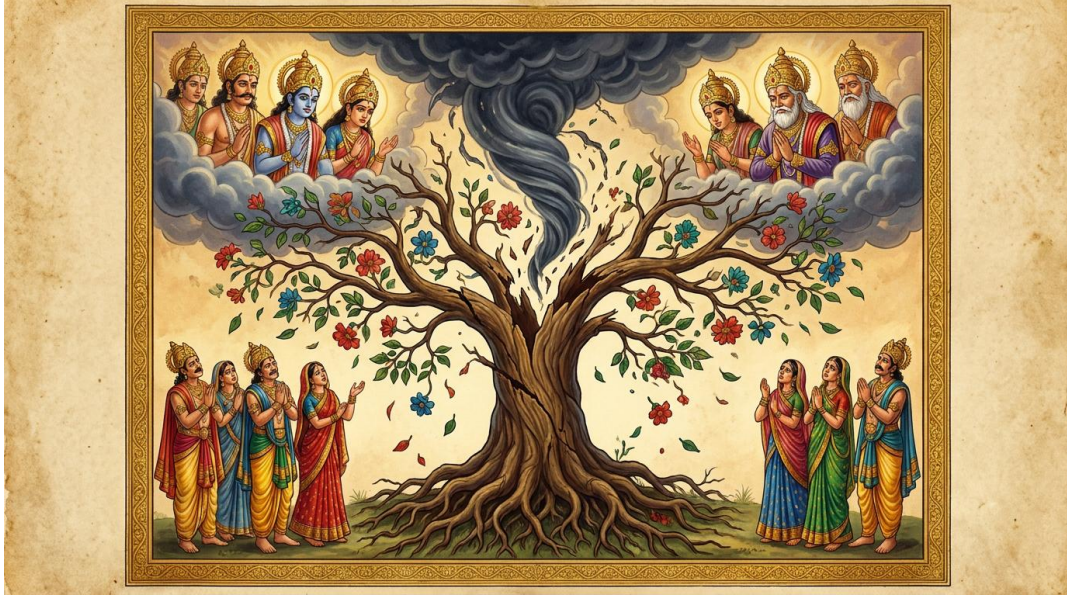


Arjuna declared “*asma:bhihi pa:pa:d asma:th nivarthithum*”, i.e. “why should we, who know righteousness, resort to destroying our own clan”. By using the word ‘we’, he put himself and *Sri: Krushna* in the same cadre. *Arjuna* was no coward like *Uththarakuma:ra* but misplaced sympathy had made him lose all reason. Out of a moral high stand that was false and born out of his ego, he refused to destroy the enemy. *Ra:vana* also did not want to kill *Si:tha* out of deep affinity for her. His affinity was born out of lust which was not in accordance with *dharma*. Had the desire been in accordance with *dharma*, *Ra:vana*’s love would have been wholesome. Similarly, *Arjuna*’s sympathy with the wrong side made him classify an action of *dharma* as the opposite,

kulakshaye: pranasyanthi kuladharmas sana:thana:ha |
dharme: nashte kulam kruthsnam adharmo:bhibhavathy utha || 1.40

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Destruction of Family Dharma



Family tree uprooted

Arjuna pointed out the path of *dharma* and *adharma* that lies ahead before them. *dharma*, an upward climb, requires guides and preceptors and few venture on that path. *adharma*, on the other hand, is an easy path that's much treaded upon but leads to a spiral, rapid downfall. “*kulakshaye: pranasyanthi*”, *Arjuna* spelt out his concern here, that in engaging in the war, he’d destroy the elders who would, otherwise be responsible for guiding the entire clan towards the timeless path of *dharma*. In doing



so, he would be responsible for making the path of *dharma* disappear from view, forcing humankind to tread upon the path of *adharma*. To be noted, *Arjuna* used the word ‘*pranasyanthi*’, totally disappear, instead of the word ‘*adarsanam*’, hard to see. He concluded that his engagement in the war would be responsible for forcing humankind into *adharma*. Out of ignorance, *Arjuna* failed to realise that it is becoming to destroy a wrongdoer whether he is righteous or otherwise.

adharma:bhibhava:th Krushna! pradushyanthi kulasthriyaha |
sthri:shu dushta:su va:rshne:ya! ja:yathe: varna sankaraha || 1.41

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Impact on Women and Society

The war would kill all men and society would be filled with women, old people, and children. With the primary breadwinners killed, women would have to do their best to feed their family. A woman is normally a lot less selfish and capable of going to greater lengths to provide for her family. Selfish and unrighteous people might exploit women and show them false hopes in return for practices and actions that are not in accordance with *dharma*. They might convince women to resort to unwholesome means to provide for their families, in the event that their husbands are no longer around to carry out that duty.

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The responsibility of the betterment of a family lies with a woman. Women have the magnanimity to share the learnings from their experiences with their spouse, children, siblings, and parents. When a man gains some knowledge, he uses it solely for his own improvement. Women having dealt with a variety of characters within the family fold have an experiential wisdom on what is the righteous course of action. The sage *A:pasthambhuda* had concluded at the end of his works on *dharma* that if one were to have any doubts on the *dharma* course of action even after reading his works, one must consult the women at home on what to do. The family is a unit of the society. *Arjuna* hence stated “*sthri:shu dushta:su va:rshne:ya ja:yathe: varna sankaraha*” that once a woman falls on the wrong path, so does the entire race.

sankaro: naraka:yaiva kulaghna:na:m kulasya cha |
pathanthi pitharo: hye:sha:m luptha pindo:daka kriya:ha || 1. 42



Fall of the Ancestors

Arjuna showed his concern about those in the *pithru lo:ka*, ancestral world, in this verse. Their sustenance is obtained from the '*pinda*' and '*shra:ddha*' procedures done by qualified people. If unqualified people perform these rituals and procedures, it brings the souls from the ancestral world down to the bottom.

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Arjuna wanted no part of war that would cause misery to himself, to everyone around him, and to the souls in the ancestral world. Thus his sympathy, grief, and sorrow manifested through his words which showed that he had some knowledge of certain concepts. He was aware of race, the righteous conduct that befits different races and clans, of higher worlds such as the ancestral world, and of how some souls reached those worlds. From what he said thus far, it is also clear that he was aware of the practices such as *pinda* and *shra:ddha* that were offered to souls in the higher world. However, there seemed to be a lack of clarity or preciseness in his knowledge of these concepts. Furthermore, he seemed to be unaware of what the *Ve:das* had to say about the body, the *jiva:thma*, and the *parama:thma*.

When we read the first chapter, we may have various questions crop up in our minds about these concepts as well. We may wonder if the said ancestral worlds truly exist or were they mere figments of someone's imagination. Do the rituals prescribed in the *Ve:das* actually feed and communicate with the souls in the ancestral world. Some of these things may not make logical sense to us. However, the *sa:sthras* are a set of injunctions commanding us on what is to be done and what is not to be done. They also prescribe various remedial measures if the prohibited path is treaded upon or the recommended path is avoided. The *sa:sthras* provide no explanation or reasoning for these prescriptions and injunctions. If we decide to only follow practices that we can rationalise with, that would be flawed on our part. Our ancient sages have sought to explain the *sa:sthras* through their intuition and wisdom. We shall seek to gain further understanding of the same.

Jai *Srimanna:ra:yana*!

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Verses 43-47

Chapter 1 of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* introduces the concept of *ja:thi* or *varna*, breed or classification. Every being is born with innate and unchangeable characteristics that are part of its inherent nature. This is known as *ja:thi*. A mustard seed can never be changed into a cumin seed, even though how it tastes can be changed by adding



various other spices and ingredients to it. Similarly, humans of similar inherent characteristics belong to the same *ja:thi* or *varna*, which may be used interchangeably. Every sect is further classified into *kula*, *race*, based on how people behave and what type of practices they follow. Within a race of people, leaders emerge and lay down rules and codify the tastes and behaviours of people, thus forming *mata* or religions. Therefore, *ja:thi*, *kula*, and *matha*, *breed*, *race*, and religion, although used interchangeably, have subtle differences in the meaning.

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While one's *ja:thi*, *breed*, can never be changed, one may attempt to change their *kula*, *race*, and the *dharma* that is to be followed as per one's *dharma*. If one earns the skills and qualifications necessary to switch races it may be done. This is much like switching between jobs, sectors, or unions. One's race dictates the means they use to earn a livelihood and what type of practices they follow. If one's skills and tendencies are not aligned with a race that they are already part of, they may find an alternate race that is in better alignment. This leads to their own benefit and to the benefit of those others. On the flip side, if one were in a race that is in utter misalignment to their tendencies and qualifications, it leads to everyone's downfall, including that of the individual themselves.

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As one changes their livelihood, their responsibilities also increase. We see examples of this in history. *Dro:na:charya*, born a *Bra:hmin*, could not sustain himself through *Ve:dic* practices. So, he forayed into the line of administration and warfare. Similarly, *Po:thana* engaged in business related activity since study and literature was not able to sustain him. With this change in livelihood, also comes a steady decline in skill. A child that grows up in a farmer's family gets repeated exposure to and thus gains skill in farming practices. Someone who gets into the line of farming later in life can never do it quite as well nor can delegate or manage farmers well enough as he might lack the expertise and experience needed to know what it takes to plough a field. It's unfortunate that modern society craves white collar jobs and skill based professions have become things of the past. Thus, with the change in one's livelihood and race, there has been a decline in the overall ability of society to engage in a profession.

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One must honour their own livelihood and race. Living in accordance with this is '*kula dharma*'. When one does not conform to '*kula dharma*', their practices become ineffective. Some charlatans may try to sell black magic, manthras, or other wrong practices giving the public false hopes of making their practices more effective. When



women and vulnerable pockets of society fall prey to such charlatans, such a society becomes hellish to live in. We hear about how women are by far the worst affected in war struck societies. *Arjuna* showed his concern and grief about such a possibility back then. With ineffective ritualistic practices being done for souls in the ancestral world, those souls are made to fall into such a hellish world as well.

We base the belief of the existence of higher worlds on *dharma sa:sthras*. Our probes and satellites have not been able to investigate the existence of worlds and life beyond the farthest reaches of the cosmos.

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Rituals for Departed Souls

Until we can disprove the existence of higher worlds, let us accept what the *dharma sa:sthras* say about them. These texts talk about hell, ancestral worlds, and heavens. These are meant for souls to experience joy and sorrow. The practices of those who live in this physical world reaches those in the higher worlds. Every other species except for humans experience a steady improvement in the state of their being. Plants and animals live as per their *dharma*. Humans, on the other hand, resort to deceit and selfishness, and forget about the greater good, leading to the decline of their state.

As part of practising our *dharma*, we are indebted to our parents who have given us this body. To show our gratitude towards our parents, we must offer pinda (rice and water) to those departed souls. This needs to be done as a necessity even if it's hard and unpleasant like drinking a bitter concoction or climbing a steep mountain.

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It is customary for individuals to get sceptical about the rituals and practices that are meant for departed souls. "How do we know where the dead have gone?", "How are we to know that feeding a cow or a crow is equivalent to feeding the departed soul?", they might want to rationalise. As per the *dharma sa:sthra*, the departed souls are fed when we feed cows or crows in the physical world through procedural *mantras*. The procedures must be adhered to without one's editions, additions, or analysis.

While using a postal service, we deliver our letters into a post box. The letter ultimately reaches the recipient. Did the post box have magical powers? Did the postman have any knowledge of the contents of the letter or of the recipient? Imagine that we aren't pleased with the appearance of the post box, and create our own box, decorate it with sandalwood and flowers, and place it at home since the walk to the government endorsed postbox is too long and inconvenient. Would dropping our



letters into our own post boxes get them delivered? No! Similarly, we don't need to analyse how pleasing the cows and crows are, to our aesthetic or rational senses.

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Just like telegrams send messages through sounds and characters, our *manthras* are carried over to the higher worlds through the powers of nature. When we play a MP3 file that's stored on the microchip on our computers, sounds emanate due to the ASCII characters being decoded. If we meddle with the ASCII code and add even a single slash or asterisk, the file gets ruptured and the audio is not played. Similarly, manthras are not to be altered.

One may wonder if the rituals of pinda are wasteful for departed souls that have attained mukti or have been reincarnated into other births. If the souls have gained mukthi, they do not require any such rituals, however, our offerings are not wasted as they reach the other souls in the ancestral world. If the departed soul has reincarnated into another body, the offerings help them in their new lives and births. If no one is a recipient to these rituals, it returns as a blessing. Therefore, these practices never go to waste.

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Thus *Arjuna* exhibited his interest in and knowledge of *Dharma Sa:sthras* to *Sri: Krushna*.

Furthermore, he continued,

do:shair e:thaih kulaghna:na:m varnasankara ka:rakaihi |
uthsa:dyanthe: ja:thidharma:ha kuladharmas cha saswatha:ha || 1.43

Arjuna expressed his concern that those who partake in the war would be responsible for the downfall of society and will likely go to hell for this reason.

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uthsanna kuladharmas:na:m manushyas:na:m jana:rdana! |
narake: niyatham va:so: bhavathi:thy anususruma || 1.44

Timeless Nature of Dharma

sorrow had intensified by now. He had lost sight of the truth which is - *Sri: Krushna*'s goal is the establishment of *dharma* and obliteration of those who stand in the way. The *Bhagava:n*'s goal was not to help *Arjuna* win a kingdom. *Arjuna* was merely a tool



for *Sri: Krushna*, like a scalpel in the hand of a surgeon. He was supposed to have no preferences for the outcome, just like a knife cuts wherever it is used. *Arjuna's* instrumental role was to restore *dharma*, which is 'sana:thana', ageless and timeless. People often misunderstand 'sana:thana' to mean 'old'. However, this word is explained in Sanskrit as "*sada: asthi sana:thana*", something which is always there. Like the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we tread upon. Individuals may experience these elements differently and in varied quantities, but the elements remain unchanged.

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Similarly, the *dharma* remains timeless and constant while the capabilities and qualifications of those who practise the *dharma* might change. *Sri: Krushna's* goal was to protect the timeless *dharma*. "*dharmasya prabhur achyutaha*", is said in *Sri: Vishnu Sahasrana:mam*.

dharma consists of a commonly agreed upon set of dictates that are for the greater good of society. The practices of *dharma* originate from ancient times, "*a:cha:raprabhavo: dharmaha*" it is said about *dharma* practices.

Bhagava:n ensures the protection and propagation of *dharma*. Even if society reaches a state where *dharma* is not practised, the knowledge still remains, in seed-like form. They cause trees of knowledge to grow at appropriate times, one planted.

Unaware of *Sri: Krushna's* goal, *Arjuna* voiced the opinion that they were sinning by partaking in the war.

aho: batha! mahathpa:pam karthum vyavasitha: vayam |
yad ra:gyasukha lo:bhe:na hanthum swajanam udyatha:ha || 1.45

Arjuna used '*vayam*' instead of '*aham*', putting himself and *Sri: Krushna* under the same category. This was a great flaw on his part.

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The *Pa:ndava:s* were accustomed to hardships, having spent twelve years in exile in the forest, and one year in incognito. They had no interest whatsoever in winning a kingdom or property from the *Kauravas* and would have been just as happy continuing to live in the forest. However, they stood at the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra*, primed to fight, due to the wrongful means by which the *Kauravas* seized what rightfully belonged to the *Pa:ndava:s*. *Sri: Krushna's* goal was to right the wrong.

Almost as though *Sri: Krushna* said to *Arjuna* "do you really think the *Kauravas*, ready as they are to tear you apart, are going to let you go if you want to declare a ceasefire now?", *Arjuna* asserted,



*yadi ma:m aprathi:ka:ram asasthram sasthrapa:nayaha |
dha:rthara:shtra: rane: hanyuhu than me: kshematharam bhave:th | | 1.46*

Arjuna was ready to die unarmed at the hands of the enemies, the *Kauravas*. Just like a thief is punished, not out of personal hatred for the thief, but to prevent such wrongful actions from continuing, and so that society is not damaged, the *Kauravas* who wrongfully seized the *Pa:ndava:s'* property deserved punishment. *Arjuna* had lost sight of this.

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The punishment needs to be proportionate to the magnitude of the wrongdoing. Ancient monarchs and kings were expected to have such a sense of justice. We have now reached such a downtrodden state, that it is considered inhumane to punish or issue a death sentence on those who perpetrate the greatest crimes, such as burning someone alive.

Sri: Krushna had such a sense of justice however *Arjuna* was stubborn to not partake in any form of attack or offensive against the enemy, with his declaration “*aprathi:ka:ram asasthram*”. He was not even eager to defend himself against their attacks. *Sri: Krushna* tried convincing *Arjuna* that the enemies were similar to mosquitoes, further angered by attempts to swat them or further strengthened by repellents used against them. They were only likely to attack with heightened force.

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Arjuna concluded that it would be more wholesome for him to passively receive blows from *Dhruthara:shtra's* side “*dha:rthara:shtra: rane: hanyuhu than me: kshematharam bhave:th*”. *Sri: Krushna* was listening in amazement. *Arjuna* used the word ‘*kshe:matharam*’, which in Sanskrit indicates the comparative degree (*kshe:mam*, *kshe:matharam*, *kshe:mathamam* being the three degrees of comparison). At this point, it is necessary to recount a story.

Story of the Competitor

There was once a successful businessman who ran a shop. However, someone else opened a business in close competition with him. The businessman closely tracked the activities and strategies of the competition. He heard one day that the competition closed shop. The businessman was convinced that everything that his competitor did was for profit. He learnt that the competitor was meditating under a tree so the businessman followed suit. After a few days, *Bhagava:n* appeared in front of the



competitor. The competitor questioned *Bhagava:n* if His first appearance was here or with the businessman. *Bhagava:n* convinced the competitor that since he was the first one to begin the meditation, he was granted the first sight of *Bhagava:n*. The competitor requested *Bhagava:n* to appear in front of the businessman and ask him why he was also meditating under the same tree.

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Bhagava:n holds high standards for His devotees only until He makes an appearance before them after which He magnanimously grants everything that He is asked for. So *Bhagava:n* fulfilled the competitor's request and went to the businessman to ask him what he wanted. The business confirmed his suspicion that *Bhagava:n* indeed appeared in front of the competitor first. The businessman asked *Bhagava:n* to go back to the competitor, grant his desire and give the businessman double of that. *Bhagava:n* did as requested and appeared once again in front of the competitor and reported the businessman's request. The competitor thought hard about what he could wish for that would destroy the businessman's profit. So he asked *Bhagava:n* to remove one of his eyes, so that this would result in the businessman losing both of his eyes.

Arjuna's negative attitude seemed similar to that of the competitor in this story. He did not want to fight, and he did not want the enemy to have the privilege of fighting a war of *dharma*. One might wonder if *Arjuna* was resentful of the *Kauravas* reaching the similar abode of heaven, having died on the battlefield of *Kurukshe:thra*, fighting a noble war, after everything they put the *Pa:ndava:s* through. *Arjuna's* attitude seems like he did not want the *Kauravas* to experience the glory of the war.

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The rules of *dha:rmic* warfare dictate that someone who flees the scene of the war, or is unarmed or surrenders is not to be attacked. Not adhering to the rules of *dha:rmic* warfare ensures that one reaches hell. *Arjuna* much rather would have *Kauravas* engage in unrighteous war, leading them to hell, *kshe:matharam*, than fighting a righteous war with them and have both parties go to heaven, *kshe:mam*. Even if the *Kauravas* did not attack the *Pa:ndava:s*, *Arjuna* was ready to let them enjoy the kingdom, and was perfectly fine with returning to the forest, were they not accustomed to hardship anyway? *Arjuna's* attitude was as ridiculous as a doctor who would not amputate a patient's infected limb out of sympathy. Wouldn't the doctor be committing the horrific sin of allowing the infection to spread to the rest of the patient's body? *Arjuna's* duty here was to eradicate the evil at the source before its influence spread far and wide.

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Arjuna had forgotten that what he perceived to be better or 'kshe:matharam' would in fact lead him to hell since he was refusing to perform his duty. *Sanjaya*, in seeming astonishment, declared,

sanjaya uva:cha

e:vam ukthwa:rjunas sankhye: rattho:pasttha upa:visath |
visrujya sasaram cha:pam so:ka samvigna ma:nasaha || 1. 47

Arjuna Abandons His Weapons



Arjuna in despair, bow fallen

Arjuna , most unceremoniously, dropped his bow and arrow, and plonked down in the chariot, ashen-faced and looking clearly shattered.

One's duty whether at the workplace, or at the sacrificial fire, is to follow the directives of the superior. Any losses or gains from doing the assignment go to the superior, not the employee. It was *Sri: Krushna* who wanted to establish *dharma* here, and *Arjuna's* role was to just do as told. However, *Arjuna*, out of his free will misunderstood the concepts of *dharma* and was going against *Sri: Krushna's* directive. One can imagine how this might have angered *Sri: Krushna*.

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To recap, both *Duryo:dhana* and *Arjuna* felt sorrow, but *Duryo:dhana's* was out of cowardice and lack of confidence in his own abilities. *Arjuna's* sorrow was out of confidence in his abilities to destroy the enemy if he chose to. His sorrow was based on misplaced sympathy and a feeling of affinity, friendliness, and empathy to people whom he considered to be family but were in fact his enemies, and who did not



reciprocate his feelings, and were spreading evil. Thus he lost sight of *dharma*. Luckily for *Arjuna*, however, he was ready to heed *Sri: Krushna*'s advice. *Duryo:dhana*, steeped in sorrow, lacked this quality when he approached *Dro:na:cha:rya*. Thus, we get to hear *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, as *Sri: Krushna* brings *Arjuna* back to the correct path of *dharma*.

Thus, the first chapter is called *Arjuna Visha:da Yoga*. The first step towards the betterment and evolution of an individual is sorrow or *Visha:da*. Ancient sages have expanded upon why this is the case, which we will consider in the upcoming pages.

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Bhagavad Gi:tha - a text of *Sa:sthra*

The *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, in total 18 chapters, are divided into 3 parts of 6 chapters each. Each part is called a *shatka*. The first *shatka*, 6 chapters, talks about the *ji:va*. We use the terms *ji:va* and *a:thma* interchangeably. It is the knowledgeable entity that inhabits the body and pervades every bit of it, in fact, *a:thma* means 'to pervade'. The external body that comprises the five elements arose due to our individual *karmas*, causing differences between all of us. Within each of us the *a:thma* that is the same for all. The *parama:thma* helps the *ji:va* operate within the body. The *ji:va* enlivens the senses. Even if sense organs fail, the *ji:va:thma* remembers the experience of having used those *indriya:s*, senses, because of the *jna:ne:ndriya:s*. Once the *a:thma* leaves the body, all records of past experiences and remembrances from the sense organs are lost. The first *shatka* of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* explains why the *ji:va* has appeared, its properties, and purpose in this birth.

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The next *shatka*, chapters 6-12 expand on the *parama:thma*, His auspicious qualities, and how we are to worship Him. For about the first ten chapters, *Sri: Krushna* did all the talking and *Arjuna* was listening, but we can't tell for sure if he was truly grasping the teachings. In Chapter 11, when *Sri: Krushna* revealed his Universal Form, a shaken *Arjuna* pleaded with the *Bhagava:n* to revert to His original and pleasant demeanour and also promised that he would do as told - which was fighting the war. After reverting to His original form, *Sri: Krushna* spoke about how easy it is to love Him in Chapter 12.

Every chapter was laid out by *Sri: Krushna* for *Arjuna* as a *sa:dhana* or *upa:yam*, tool. These are guidelines instrumental in helping us reach our goals. The opposite of *upa:yam* is *apa:yam*, what deters one from the goal and misleads them.

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The *Ve:da:s* expand on means by which *parama:thma* is obtained but not in a way that's immediately accessible to us. *Sri: Krushna* incarnated just to lay out these means as 'yo:ga' in every chapter of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. The root of 'yo:ga' is 'yuk', to sit with oneself. The word 'yo:ga' has many meanings. It means to be ready, to be deserving, whatever is done being seated is also *yo:ga*, as well as *a:thma sa:ksha:thka:ram*. In the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, the word *yo:ga* mainly refers to *upa:yam*, tool or means of attainment. At the end of every chapter, there is a line "*o:m thath sath ithi bhagavad gi:tha:su upanishathsu bramha vidya:ya:m yo:ga sa:sthre: sri: krushna:rjuna samva:de ...*" This text has three qualifiers.

- (a) *Yo:ga Sa:sthra*. A text that gives injunctions on how to attain *parama:thma*. Something that commands also can punish when one does not follow the commandment. The first chapter is *Arjuna Visha:da Yo:ga*. Sorrow or *Visha:da* is the first step towards attainment since it helps one get rid of the inner murk of selfishness, false identification, arrogance, and ego. This is a necessary step before attempting to absorb higher truths.

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Sorrow makes all inner defects regurgitate and get released. Even though *Arjuna*, *Dhruthara:shtra*, and *Duryo:dhana* felt sorrow, this chapter is called *Arjuna Visha:da Yo:ga*. At the end of every chapter, it is referred to as a conversation between *Sri: Krushna* and *Arjuna*. We will shortly see why this is the case.

(b) *Brahma vidya*

(c) *Upanishad*



True Meaning of Happiness



Two paths - transient vs eternal

Everyone seeks happiness but to do so through transient worldly means. The true meaning of *a:nanda*, happiness, is explained in *Thaiththiri:ya Upanishad* in *A:nandavalli* section.

In adolescence or childhood, there is insufficient knowledge of true happiness. In middle and old age, even though there is knowledge, the body lacks the strength to pursue it. It's between ages 25-35 that one can be most effective on the path to attain true happiness.

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According to the *Taiththiri:ya Upanishad*, human happiness is the ability to feel a huge appetite, digest various types of food, have wealth, power, and loving relationships. It is very difficult to attain this type of happiness as we don't see the coexistence of all favourable circumstances as a loving family, status, wealth, and health in a person's life. If hypothetically such a happy person existed, if we are able to assemble 100 such people, and squeeze the happiness out of 100 such people, that is the happiness of a *gandharva*. The happiness of *gandharva:s* amounts to that of a *karma de:vatha*. If we repeat the process with 100 *karma de:vatha:s*, it gives the happiness of *a:ja:na de:vatha*. As we continue the process, we gradually get the happiness experienced by a *de:va* *gandharva*, *de:vatha*, Indra, Bruhaspathi, and Chathurmukha *Brahma*. If we were to extract the essence of the happiness felt by 100 such Chathurmukha *Brahma:s* would we get *Brahma:nandam*? No.

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The magnitude of such happiness is immeasurable. The *Upanishads* have thus tried to define pure happiness. Such happiness is a property of *parama:thma* who is the only One that can give us lasting bliss. All other worldly happiness is just a temporary relief to a sorrowful or troublesome situation. Consumption of food and drink is meant to re-fuel the body, and not an experience of true happiness. The body is a wonderful machine with five elements. The outer sheath is of the earth element, the softness of which is due to heat and water. Inside the body, sounds are produced and there is empty space. When any one element depletes, the alarm signals of the body sound, making one hungry or thirsty.

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The need for water indicates the increase in the fire element in the body. The body's alarms go off since an increase in heat is not healthy. This shows up as thirst. When the earth element depletes the feeling of craving for this element to be refilled shows up as hunger. We cannot literally eat earth, so we consume foods which grow from the ground. As is customary to the human race, we tend to pollute everything that is pure so we add a bunch of ingredients to the vegetables and consume them. We do everything we can to spoil pure milk and give those coffees and teas fancy names, don't we?

Thus, we fulfil the needs of our senses, so that they can continue to operate well, and call that happiness. All we are doing is responding to the alarms these senses give out when they are under the threat of malfunctioning.

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sukha, happiness, corresponds to the body and *a:nanda*, bliss, is that of the *ji:va:thma*. *a:nanda* can only come from *parama:thma*. If we turn to *prakruthi*, Nature, which is insentient and is *achetana*, has no knowledge, we only derive qualities of *saththva*, *rajas*, and *thamas*. We cannot derive *a:nanda* from Nature. *a:nanda* can only come from *che:thana*, knowledge and intelligence. *parama:thma* is called '*rasaghanah*', the pure essence of *a:nanda*. The *ji:vatma* gets illuminated with intelligence when the quality of *che:thana* is not suppressed but instead nurtured in us.

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The *Upanishads* compare *parama:thma* to sweet candy or rock salt. Mixing these ingredients into our food changes and enhances its taste altogether. Similarly, the more the *ji:va:thma* mixes with and immerses itself in the thought of the *parama:thma*, the more it gets illuminated with Bliss. This is just an example, however, and shouldn't be taken literally. Rock salt or sweet candy are insentient objects and reduce in



quantity with more use, but the bliss of *parama:thma* remains intact irrespective of how many *jiva:thma:s* drink off the spring of His Bliss.

Like water flows, and air blows, the inherent nature of the *ji:va:thma* is to chase the knowledge and bliss of the *parama:thma*. Any knowledge that does not illuminate the *ji:va* with the bliss of *parama:thma* is futile.

Performing pooja rituals, *mantras*, going on pilgrimages, and so on increase the feeling of association with *parama:thma*, but may not help achieve the inner feeling of *ji:vathma* being immersed in the bliss of *parama:thma*.

One must not however discard these practices. In reality, when the *ji:va* is immersed in *parama:thma*, this will be made apparent by the person's behaviour. The light of a lamp or the fragrance of a flower can never be obstructed or hidden.

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True love manifests itself through both word and action. A mother generally loves her children, and this shows through both her words and actions, not mere lip service. She would jump to protect her children, despite the harm and loss it might cause her, not passively watch her children getting hurt or give them instructions from a distance on how to save themselves. Such behaviour shows that there is no true love.

Similarly, our *bhakthi* towards *parama:thma* would naturally get exhibited in various ways. Our ancient sages have firmly instructed that we must continue to practise religious rituals even if the inner feeling of alignment with or immersion in *parama:thma* is not felt. With time, and with consistent practice, this feeling will get inculcated. The method to inculcate this feeling is constant remembrance of the names of *parama:thma*, meditation on His form, nature, and qualities, continuous recollection that the *ji:va* is part of that *parama:thma*, while living in peace and harmony with Nature and one's surroundings. The focus needs to be *parama:thma*, not the insentient Nature. Focusing on *prakruthi* leads to misery and sorrow.

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The soul's search for happiness has been since time immemorial. The *Upanishads* and all of *parama:thma's* incarnations have been to instruct embodied souls on how to access *nithya:nanda*, permanent bliss. Such bliss is *maha:nanda*, supreme, pure bliss. Since the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* also details the procedures and means to attain such Bliss, it would be fitting to call the text *Brahma Vidya* and *Upanishad*. Everything in Nature is constantly changing, the form, nature, smell, texture and colour of every living and non-living being is susceptible to change. Accordingly, the reactions and emotions they trigger in us constantly change. Change is innate to nature, just as flow is to water.

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Duty and Detachment

Therefore, it would be incorrect to rely on objects of Nature for lasting bliss, either due to their change or due to the changing reactions they cause in us. Yet, we need to interact in the ever changing world since we are of Nature. The food, water, and air that provide us sustenance, the ground we walk on, the bodies that we inhabit are of Nature. It would be foolish to claim that we have nothing to do with an ever changing world. Therefore, the key lies in interacting with the world with the type of attitude an employee of a bank would have towards the deposits and withdrawals made at the bank. He is neither elated at deposits nor saddened by the withdrawals since the money is not his. He does not refuse to transact with the money either. Doing so, or on the flip side, stealing the money, both would get him fired. With doing his duty, he is able to earn a salary and support himself and his family happily.

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The body is like the cash counter, the *ji:va* like the employee, and the people and various other experiences are like the cash withdrawals and deposits here. The point of the cash counter is to transact with the cash, not merely to sit idly. Similarly, as long as we inhabit the bodies, we need to carefully and intentionally interact with others, and undergo experiences, remaining mindful that the body is an *upa:yam*, tool, and not the end or *upe:yam*, goal. To cite another example, imagine buying a beautiful car and not using it lest its tires get worn away. Imagine wiping such a car everyday, gloating over how beautiful it is, and then walking to work. What's the point of such a beautiful car? Furthermore, imagine buying a car beyond one's means and skipping meals to repay the loan on that car. Going to great lengths to secure and care for one's body and external experiences alone is a similar type of foolishness.

If we approach our experiences as embodied souls with a combination of dutifulness and detachment as would an exemplary employee at a company, our steady progress as *ji:va:thma:s* is possible, just like such an employee would get promoted. Thus we may progress from *manushya*, human, to *deva* and finally attain *parama:thma*. Yet, we keep repeating the old patterns and fall back in the wheel of *samsa:ra*.

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The body is to be used as a means to attain lasting happiness and *Sri: Krushna* appeared in the world to instruct *ji:va:s* on how to do this. It is our duty to understand how to do this, being embodied as *ji:va:s*. The purpose of the *Ve:da:s* is not to isolate one from society, make one shirk their duties, or negate the world and its experiences. The means to happiness prescribed in the *Ve:da:s* helps one live in harmony with others.



Thaiththiri:ya Upanishad says, “[raso: vai saha rasaghye:va:yam labdhva: a:nandi: bhavathi](#)”, we crave happiness that is original and pure. The smell of original sandalwood is called ‘sugandhi’, but the smell of fake sandalwood, albeit pleasant, is merely ‘sugandham’.

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Just like the sandalwood that possesses the *sugandha*, aromatic odour, is known as *sugandhi*, when a *ji:va* possesses *a:nanda*, bliss, he is called *a:nandi*, the blissful one. Such bliss is from *parama:thma* who is also referred to as *Brahma*. *Brahma* means ‘big’ or ‘great’. Since this word has no prefix, *Brahma* here refers to the largest entity in every possible facet and aspect. *Brahma* is the one that grows and also confers expansion and growth upon *ji:va:s*. By recognizing this quality of *Brahma*, the *ji:va* derives bliss. As far as worldly interactions go, the *ji:va* needs to filter and distil the experiences and sense objects artfully.

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This process of purifying our experiences is done through the power of thought. The first type of thought is to make an offering of all of our experiences to *parama:thma*, just as we would with a piece of fruit at the altar. With this offering, everything is purified. Secondly, we should perceive that everything that we consume through any of our senses is an offering to the *parama:thma* within us and is only done to keep the machinery of the body going.

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We need to put every experience, beginning from inhaling to consumption of sweets through this process of transformation with our thoughts. Thus, the body is prepared and transformed and is made into a befitting instrument in the quest for Eternal Bliss. Just like molten iron is transformed into sophisticated surgical instruments, the body and mind need to go through much transformation. We should not use them as is, at the instinctive level without the said filtering. In each chapter, *Sri: Krushna* offers a different means by which this transformation can be achieved. We have already seen that chapter 1 is *Arjuna Visha:da Yo:gaha*, the second is *Sa:nkhya Yo:gaha*, the third *Karma Yo:gaha*, fourth *Jna:na Yo:gaha*, sixth *A:thma Samyama Yo:gaha*, eighth [Akshara parabramha yo:gaha](#) is [sa:dhana](#), [Purushoththama pra:pthi Yo:gaha](#) and so on. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* not only teaches but commands us on how to use these tools, hence is called *Yo:gaha Sa:sthram*. We will delve deeper into why *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is also called *Upanishad* and *Brahma Vidya* in the upcoming section.



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Arjuna Visha:da Yoga

Importance of Spiritual Knowledge

Bhagavad Gi:tha contains the essence of all spiritual, scientific, and worldly knowledge. This text verily contains the essence of all *Upanishad*. Several ancient sages have written commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. They were generally less focused on the story line and more on the spiritual content. These sages saw everything in Nature as a vehicle for *parama:thma*, be it a body of an animal or a plant. They perceived every element of Nature to be a *de:vatha*, *Agni*, *Va:yu* etc. Thus, they inculcated a sense of purity in their perception.

The stories in ancient scriptures do not need to be analysed as such, however, their deeper meaning that is capable of bestowing on us true knowledge needs to be the focus. Scriptures were never used purely for entertainment and story-telling purposes but always came with a sizable dose of spirituality. That being said, the commentaries were not dry and dense and lacking in lightness. The ancient sages always mixed the story-telling artfully with the spirituality, rendering content that gave the reader much joy and light-heartedness. The *nava rasa*, 9 attitudes are the right means for one to attain joy.

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For instance, we come across comedy in the *Ra:ma:yana* in scenes involving Kumbhakarna and *Su:rpanakha*. After getting her nose and ears cut by Lakshmana, *Su:rpanakha* goes running to *Ra:vana* and describes the brothers, despite her pain, as men of great strength and attractiveness. This strikes us as a bit amusing. For life to be wholesome, it is essential to recognize the *parama:thma* behind comedy, fear, romance, anger, and other emotions. Only engaging in emotions, losing sight of their basis would lead to downfall in one's life.

There was a highly educated man who went boating. As is customary with people that have many degrees and qualifications, this man loved to talk. He quizzed the *boatman* on why a piece of stone sank but the boat was able to stay afloat. The *boatman* didn't know, he didn't study Physics, the poor guy!

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The educated man looked up and saw grey clouds forming in the sky. He quizzed the *boatman* on how clouds were formed, which the latter didn't know either. So he gave a lecture on the process of evaporation and condensation. The educated man declared



the *boatman's* life wasted, indeed he didn't know the principles behind his very livelihood. The *boatman* felt very humiliated.

Shortly after, it started raining heavily, accompanied by thunder and lightning. The *boatman* asked the educated man if he knew how to swim, because they had gone too far into water, and his old boat wouldn't survive the 6-7 mile back to the banks in this turbulent weather. Alas, the educated man couldn't swim. The *boatman* laughed and said that he knew this one skill that was essential for his livelihood. The educated man, despite the extent of his theoretical knowledge, didn't have this practical skill for saving his own life.

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Spiritual knowledge has a similar significance in our lives. Without spiritual knowledge, and a sound foundation on the *ji:va's* purpose, and the way to live in accordance with higher truths, other specialisations and know-hows are wasted. While there is no need to demean or trivialise other bodies of knowledge, they need to be built on a sound foundation of spiritual knowledge. This is why children are made to learn various *slo:kas* like *Krushnasathakam*, *Ra:masathakam*, and so on.

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The foundation of spiritual knowledge is relevant to the human species alone. Animals and birds live in harmony with Nature. They don't transform or modify what is originally offered by Nature. Humans have the intelligence to do this.

A human being can be likened to a computer. The visible portions -flesh, bones, muscle, and so on - are the hardware and the knowledge that the human possesses is the software. The software is usually much more expensive than the chassis and parts of a computer. Like the hardware of a computer can't create but can be used to analyse, the human *ji:va* can use his knowledge to become an ever *a:nandi*, blissful soul.

Take the example of a man who goes to a railway station to board a train for an intended destination. Upon reaching the platform, he finds that there is a large crowd waiting to board the same train. At the next platform, he sees an empty train. He thinks it might be much more pleasant to be in that train, and crosses over, boards the train and relaxes. The train starts moving.

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The foolish man's time, energy, and money have thus been wasted. Similarly, *ji:va:s* need to use their bodies in accordance with the desired destination of eternal bliss. The practices must be followed methodically and systematically, even though hard, to prime the body towards such a worthy destination.



There is no guarantee whatsoever that the *ji:va* is conferred with the same human condition and birth again. There is every chance of more degenerate conditions occurring in future births. To prevent this, and to ensure progress in the state of the *ji:va:thma*, the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is an instruction manual.

The title *Bhagavad Gi:tha* can be translated as ‘Song of Bhagava:n’. Talking at length on a topic is hard for the speaker, as well as as for the listener. Songs are always well received by individuals of all ages. “*Sisur ve:ththi pasur ve:ththi ve:ththi ga:narasam phanihi*”

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Even plants and animals get healthier with the sound of music. They yield better fruit or higher quantities of milk. *Bhagava:n* has therefore given us this divine song called *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

This text is also called *Upanishad*. ‘Upanishad’ can be split as ‘upa - nishidya’, when a qualified student sits close to his *Guru* and acquires all the knowledge relevant to his external and internal conditions. The qualification for such a student is his eagerness to learn. Spiritual truths must not be taught to someone who is uninterested or does not have the ability to digest it.

The first part of *Ve:da:s* dealing with the *karma* of the body, and the practices needed to attain happiness in this and other worlds is called ‘pu:rva bha:gam’ or ‘karma bha:gam’. The second part of the *Ve:da:s* instructs on how the *ji:va* can attain the highest bliss and is called ‘jna:na bha:gam’ or ‘uththara bha:gam’. Upanishads are the essence of the *Ve:da:s*.

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Upanishad can also be split as ‘upa’, near ‘ni’, completely, and ‘shad’, to obliterate. *Upanishads* blast away at our ignorance, blow it to bits, and wash it away with the waters of self-knowledge. *Arjuna* asked *Sri: Krushna* since when did *ji:va* have this ignorance. With no attempt to time it, *Sri: Krushna* replied that the ignorance is ‘ana:di’ i.e. beginningless. *Shad* is a root word which, in Sanskrit, also means ‘to attain’. The *Upanishads* rid those who seek refuge in them of ignorance and replace it with the right knowledge.

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Yet another meaning of the word *shad* is ‘to mix’. *Upanishads* contain *upa:de:yam*, teachings that help the *ji:va* attain and get ‘mixed’ into the bliss of *parama:thma*. These have been concisely summarised by *Sri: Krushna* in the 700 *slo:kas* of the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.



When children are enrolled in school, they have little interest in studies. Through a well-crafted syllabus, the level of engagement and involvement of children is increased in their studies. Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* lays out a plan for those of us, who are merely interested in the material enjoyments of life, to get gradually more involved in the spiritual aspects so that we get ultimately propelled to attain the Bliss of *parama:thma*.

Duryo:dhana's elders once quizzed him, worried at his lack of moral compass, whether he knew what was and was not righteous. *Duryo:dhana* affirmed his knowledge of *Dharma* however stated that he had no interest in practising it.

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Nor was he inclined to discontinue the practices of a *Dharma*. "*Ja:na:mi dharmam na cha me: pravrutthihi, Ja:na:myadharmam na cha me: nivrutthihi*". We are in a similar state as *Duryo:dhana*. The *Upanishads* help move us from this state towards *parama:thma*.

The purpose of *Veda:ntha* is not to pronounce the world as substanceless, transient, meaningless, useless, and to be disposed of. Such theories are referred to in Telugu as 'metta veda:nthamu'. The point of *Veda:ntha* is to tell a person about himself, the purpose of his birth, and how to live to achieve his purpose.

'Ve:da' means 'to be known' and 'antham' can mean the end, beautiful, or goal. *Veda:ntham* can be interpreted as the part of the *Ve:da:s* towards the end, or the most beautiful part of the *Ve:da:s* or that which contains the goal of all *Ve:da:s*.

Not all knowledge is beautiful. *Veda:ntha* is beautiful because it leads us to the bliss of *parama:thma*.

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'antham' can also mean the ultimate. *Veda:ntham* thus has knowledge knowing which nothing else remains to be known. The following questions are answered in the *Upanishads* (1) Who am I ? (2) Who is driving me? (3) Why is He driving me, what is the fruit of attaining Him? (4) What are the means by which He may be obtained? (5) What are the obstacles on my path to obtain Him and how can I get rid of them?

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parama:thma is the source of all knowledge. *parama:thma* bestows on us this knowledge from all around. For example, the rivers are the source of all water. It's from the rivers that water evaporates, forms clouds, and falls as rain. It's from the rivers that water is fed through pipes to the taps in our homes. The energy of the water reduces as it flows through the different avenues and reaches the final destination. The energy of water is very high in rivers, but not so in the glass which we are about to drink from. Similarly with the quality of the presence of *parama:thma*.



When we see someone who is clothed, we can infer that there is a body behind those clothes. Behind the body is a *ji:va*, and behind the *ji:va* is *parama:thma*. However, there are so many obstacles for us to recognize *parama:thma* in every being, such as its appearance, qualities, and behaviour.

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The *Pu:rva Bha:gam* of the *Ve:da:s* prescribes *karma*, practices to appease *de:vatha:s*, and talks about the Supreme *parama:thma* behind the *ji:va* of these *de:vatha:s*. Although this path ultimately leads to *parama:thma*, it is a very drawn out procedure and many who set out on this path may not sustain until they ultimately reach *parama:thma*. *Upanishads*, or *Veda:ntha*, zoom into the aspect of *parama:thma*, giving a direct experience and understanding of *parama:thma*, as though He is right near us i.e. ‘upa’ + ‘nishanna’, sitting right near us. Thus, these texts provide an intimate working knowledge of the form and nature of *parama:thma* in a direct manner.

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Every name used in the text of *Bhagavad Gi:tha* is meaningful. Nowadays, we give names to books and movies that are least indicative of their content. That’s not the case with the great scripture *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. In fact, *Sri: Krushna* exhibits his various emotions in a song, beginning with sadness at *Arjuna*’s defeatist attitude till elation when *Arjuna* began to show signs of realisation, thus the name.

Meaning of Brahma Vidya

The next name for this text is ‘Brahma Vidya’. We have already seen that *Brahma* is one which grows and makes the other grow. *Vidya* is the tool by which *Brahma* can be obtained. *Brahma* can mean the body, which grows in form and shape. *Brahma* can mean Nature. *Sri: Krushna* declares down the line in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha* “*mama yonir mahad bramha*”, “I am the source and root of this ever changing Nature”. *Ji:va* is also called *Brahma*, *Sri: Krushna* says “*aksharam bramha paramam*”. The *ji:va* grows with knowledge, and also makes the body it inhabits grow.

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parama:thma who is the most magnificent of all and also confers expansion is called *Bramha*. The word *Bramha* is best used for *parama:thma* than for any of the other aforementioned entities.

For instance, we call *Sri:manna:ra:ya:na* by the name *Bhagava:n*. ‘Bhagava’ means one who has the following six auspicious qualities : (1) *Jna:na* - knowledge (2) *Sakthi* - power (3) *Bala* - strength (4) *Aiswarya* - prosperity (5) *Vi:rya* - bravery (6) *The:jas* -



sovereignty. 'an' means to be devoid of. *Sri:manna:ra:ya:na* is thus devoid of bad qualities and possesses auspicious qualities.

However, we also refer to many sages as *Bhagava:n*, for example *Va:lmi:ki Bhagava:n*, *Ve:da Vya:sa Bhagava:n* and so on. This is because any one of those six qualities are dominant in these individuals.

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With increase in their talent or skill, they may be referred to as *Bhagava:n* in the field of their specialisation. This is only because some of *Bhagava:n*'s greatness has manifested in these individuals. This does not mean that they are really *Bhagava:ns*. When referring to sages and saints, we must never call them 'Bhagava:n' alone i.e. their name must always be present as a prefix such as 'Va:lmi:ki Bhagava:n' and so on. Only *paramam parama:thma* can be called *Bhagava:n*.

In the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*, when others speak, their names are mentioned. For instance 'Arjuna uva:cha', 'Sanjaya uva:cha', etc. When *Sri: Krushna* speaks, it is said 'Bhagava:n uva:cha', not 'Sri: Krushna uva:cha'.

Similarly, the word *Brahma* can only be used for that *parama:thma* who is responsible for the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the entire universe.

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Brahma Vidya gives us knowledge about that Divine Supreme that transcends everything and everyone, which is the greatest and which has the capability to confer splendour to *ji:va:s*. Bhrugu once asked his father Varuna about *Brahma*. How does one recognize *Brahma*, how does one contemplate on *Brahma*? Varuna replied

"yatho va: ima:ni bhu:tha:ni ja:yanthe: | ye:na ja:tha:ni ji:vanthi | yath prayanthi abhisamvisanthi | thad vijna:sasva | thad bramhe:thi | sa thapo:thapyatha | sa thapas thapthva: ||

yatho va: ima:ni bhu:tha:ni ja:yanthe, that from which all *ji:va:s* originate

ye:na ja:tha:ni ji:vanthi, by whom the existence of these beings is possible

yath prayanthi abhisamvisanthi, to whom all beings return upon dissolution

Brahma is the source of Creation, Sustenance, and Dissolution of all beings. There are 32 *Brahma Vidyas* in the *Upanishads* which are succinctly presented in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*.

The entire existence is a wheel of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. *Ji:va:s* crave freedom from this wheel of existence. They cannot break free by their own will and volition. The *Brahma Vidya* provides tools for them to do so.

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When we ride a ferris wheel, we may hate the ride, but we cannot jump out of it, nor can we pray to the compartment that we are seated in to stop the ride. Our only resort would be to try to communicate with the operator of the ferris wheel so that he may help us safely alight from the ride. *Brahma* is like the operator of the ferris wheel with the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe under His command. *Po:thana's* poem "*evvaniche: janinchu jagamu*" also expounds on these aspects of *Brahma*.

The 32 *Brahma Vidyas* are *Upa:sana Kriyas* or methods of worship that are to be carried out with love and care towards *Brahma*. *Bhagavad Gi:tha* expands on these methods of worship so it is called *Brahma Vidya*.

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Humans exhibit one of the three modes of Nature predominantly i.e. *saththva*, *rajas*, or *thamas*. *Arjuna's* dominant quality was *saththva*. Hence his sorrow led to the betterment of the entire race. *Duryo:dhana*, being dominated by *rajas*, was cowardly and suspicious of his own people. *Dhruthara:stra* was *tha:masic* and blinded by ignorance. "*satha:nttha:h ku:pam pravisanthi*", if one follows a blind person, one stumbles. Hence, the first chapter is named after the sorrow of *Arjuna*, as *Arjuna Visha:da Yo:gaha*, and not after the sorrow that the other two protagonists exhibited.

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Duryo:dhana had the attitude of wanting to fight for wealth, while *Dhruthara:shtra* assumed that the good-natured *Pa:ndava:s* would not fight. He assumed that the kingdom would be the *Kauravas'* to take and rule for another 12-13 years without any effort. This is the epitome of *thamas*.

Arjuna's sorrow led him to get concerned about betterment of those in this and higher worlds. We may also use such *sa:ththvik* sorrow as a tool for the progress of our *ji:va:thma*.

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Conclusion

Sanathkuma:ra had opened up a new school and had advertised that he was looking for students. Much to his surprise, Sage *Na:rada* came to the school to learn even though he knew enough to be a teacher. He knew all the *Ve:da:s*, *Siksha*, *Vya:karana* and *A:gama*. However, he knew only the *manthra:s* by heart and wasn't fully aware of their meanings. Sage *Na:rada* said, "*manthravide:va:smi na:thmavith sruthahye:va me:*", that he knew nothing about the *a:thma* and wanted to learn more about it. When



Sana:thkumara, feigning innocence, inquired why Sage *Nara:da* was eager to learn about the *a:thma*, Sage *Na:rada* replied “*tharathi so:kham a:thmavith*”, the knowledge of *a:thma* helps one cross the deep and ominous waters of sorrow.

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This shows us that sorrow is a necessary predecessor to knowledge of *a:thma*. Sorrow occurs when one is impeded from getting what he wants or obtains what is undesirable. People may claim that they love others, their possessions, or money, but the truth of the matter is that they love themselves the most. They are ready to spend any amount of money to save their own lives. They are ready to let go of any relations that they don't deem to be beneficial for them.

The general belief is that a mother's love is supreme and runs even deeper than the love between a man and woman. However, we see this on a decline these days, with women prioritising their self-image and beauty over children. They have stopped breast feeding their children as a result. This vanity has spread even to *Bha:rath* from western nations.

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During youth or times of good health and success, one may identify oneself with beauty, strength, wealth, status, and prosperity. When one becomes old, diseased, and decrepit, he wants freedom from the very same body that previously gave him intense pride and pleasure. Even individuals with some spiritual advancement often seek freedom from their bodies. Thus, people are able to realise their separateness from their bodies, especially during times of hardship.

The people surrounding a dead body say “he has passed away”. Even those with no belief in the soul say this, meaning that there was something inside the body that enlivened it, which is not in the body any more.

People love their souls the most, and want to rid themselves of even their bodies, if they cause them trouble.

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During times of sadness, one fondly recollects happy times of the past and longs for this once again. He goes as far as to say “I wish I die so that I may gain some happiness”. Although such words are spoken out of ignorance, they come from a place of sincerity and knowledge of an original self that the person once experienced. This original self is the *a:thma*, the experience of which one craves once again. He wants to rid himself of the obstacles on his path stopping him from the pure original happiness he once felt. *a:thma vidya* or knowledge of the *a:thma* helps one attain such bliss eternally. Knowing that sorrow is the first step towards this attainment, one can



embrace sadness and not feel eager to rid themselves of it. This sorrow makes one realise the pettiness of bodily pursuits and the worthiness of the inner soul.

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There was a king named [Rahugana](#) who wanted to learn *Ve:da:ntha*. The *Upanishads* say “*vijna:na:rttham Gurume:va abhigachche:th*”, that one must seek out a *Guru* for knowledge. So the king went to the forest where he had heard there was a great saint. Being a king, he set out on a palanquin to the forest, to learn *Veda:ntha* from the saint. One of his attendants carrying the palanquin got injured. The rest of the three attendants looked for a replacement in the nearby town. They found a well-fed looking man under a tree and called out to him. The man didn’t respond. So they went near him to get his attention. The man, seemingly spaced out, was looking into the distance. The annoyed attendants dragged the man by his neck and made him carry the palanquin.

They continued on the journey. The king felt the unsteady sway of the palanquin and yelled at his attendants to walk steadily. They replied that the new guy, unaccustomed to carrying a palanquin, caused the disruption to their rhythm. Expecting to see a thin and frail man, the king peeked out to see a well-fed robust newcomer in his retinue. Thoroughly annoyed, the king addressed the new guy, and inquired with words dripping with sarcasm, if he had lost a few pounds or aged a few years because of carrying the palanquin for a few minutes and if that was why he was swaying madly. Much to the king’s chagrin, the man quizzically looked at him and asked, surprised, “Carrying you ? I am not doing anything of that sort.”

The king said “You fool! Not only are you not good at this job, but you also speak a bunch of nonsense!”

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The man replied, “The ground carries the feet, the feet carry the legs, the legs the waist, the waist the chest, the chest the neck, the neck the head, the head the palanquin in which you are seated. There is no connection between you and me”.

The enraged king jumped out of the palanquin and thundered, “Do you know who I am?! I am the King [Rahugana](#) and you speak to me this way!”, he said pointing to his chest.

The man replied, “Are you your chest? You point to your chest saying that that’s you. Are you your hand? You use your hand to point”.

Hearing this, the king slapped his own head in frustration.

The man continued, “Are you your head? You slap your head thus!”.

The king’s frustration heightened and he stomped his foot on the ground.

The man inquired, “Oh, are you your foot?”.



When the king had no reply to any of these queries, the man asked “Which one of these things are you? If you are none of these things, who are you?”

The king was saddened that he didn’t have the wisdom to give this man an answer.

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The man laughed and said, “*ko: hamithyathranipuno: bhu:thva: chinthaya pa:rtthiva!*”, “you sought a lesson on *Veda:ntha* when you know nothing about yourself!”.

The king fell on the man’s feet and inquired if he was the wise sage that he was originally seeking. The man replied that his name was Jada Bharatha and proceeded to give the King *Rahugana* all the knowledge of *a:thma*.

Thus, the king’s sorrow and worry led him to gain knowledge. The phase of gaining knowledge is usually preceded by a realisation of the greatness of what one is missing by not knowing the *a:thma*, an intense sorrow due to this, and yearning for the knowledge of the soul.

Arjuna was very confident of his worldly success, which *Duryo:dhana* and his father lacked. But *Arjuna* felt intense apprehension at the state of the souls in this and higher worlds, if he proceeded to kill all of his relatives.

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As a ruler, his emotions were misplaced. *Dharmara:ja* was well aware of his rights and had no doubts that he had to fight for his property and kingdom. There is no sin in self-defence.

We frequently encounter situations that cause inner conflict in us, leaving us wondering if we must let go, or fight for our rights, and for what rightfully belongs to us. The righteous thing to do is to stop the perpetrator from robbing us of what is rightfully ours, so that they don’t repeat the crime against someone else, and so that no one else repeats the same mistake with us.

Don’t we celebrate the independence day of nations and hail freedom fighters? It is our duty to protect our land, property, and country against unrighteous attempts to grab or invade them. Such defence should not be viewed as violence.

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This concludes *Arjuna Visha:da Yo:gaha*. The second chapter is *Sa:nhkya Yo:gaha*. *Arjuna*’s sorrow continued even in the second chapter. It is customary for people to feel sorrowful for different reasons. Every sorrow seems more insurmountable than what was previously experienced. A person also feels that no one else in the world probably experiences as much sorrow as he does. The same thing happened with *Arjuna* as his sorrow escalated to new levels. *Ve:da Vya:sa* demarcated a new chapter since *Arjuna*



began to wonder how he would be able to hurt his dear grandfather *Bhi:shma* and *Guru Dro:na*.

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In Chapter 1, we only hear *Sri: Krushna* say “*pasya!*” to *Arjuna*. In Chapter 2, *Sri: Krushna* starts His teaching with “*kuthasthva: kasmalam idam*” and continues to try to rid *Arjuna* of his sorrow till Chapter 18 Verse 66 where the *Bhagava:n* says “*ma: suchaha*”.

“*ajna:ha sukham a:ra:dhyaha sukhatharam a:ra:dhyathe vise:shajna:ha*” - It is possible to make a totally ignorant or a fully knowledgeable person happy. “*jna:na:lavā durvidagdham naram brahma:pi na ranjayathi*” It is impossible, even for the four-headed *Bramha*, to make a person with half-baked knowledge happy. Such people also tend to be obstinate.

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Arjuna was in a similar position of having half-baked knowledge. He spoke as though he knew everything about righteousness. He was in no position to realise his lack of knowledge. So *Sri: Krushna* needed to go on for 18 chapters to teach *Arjuna*. By Chapter 10, *Arjuna* seemed convinced but not totally, so *Sri: Krushna* reveals His Universal Form in Chapter 11. Yet, *Arjuna* needed convincing for 7 more chapters!

Take the case of *Yudhishtira*. He had love and respect for his elders and relatives. Yet, he faced no inner conflict in regard to the war. Hence he is called ‘*stthira*’ or firm, and had complete knowledge of *dharma*. *Arjuna*, on the other hand, was plagued with doubts and was second guessing his initial decision to war with the *Kauravas*.

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Dharmara:ja had instructed *Bhi:ma* to save *Duryo:dhana* from a *Gandharva* who had captured and kidnapped him. He chastised the elated *Pa:ndava:s*, saying that their family should not suffer at the hands of anyone outside of the family, irrespective of the equation the five *Pa:ndava:s* shared with the hundred *Kauravas*. Such was the quality of *Yudhishtira*’s *dharma*, yet he was at the battlefield ready to fight the righteous war.

As *Arjuna*’s sorrow totally obliterates his sense of justice and reasoning, we will see how his sorrow gained specificity and intensity in Chapter 2 and how *Sri: Krushna* began to rid him of his doubts.

o:m thath sath ithi sri:mad bhagavadgi:tha:su upanishathsu brahma vidya:ya:m yo:gasa:sthre: sri: krushna:arjuna samva:de: arjunavisha:da yo:go



na:ma pratthamo:dhya:yaha

Jai Srimanna:ra:yaana

