



भगवत् गीता
Bhagvad Gita
Chapter 1
Volume 4

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः । मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किं अकुर्वत सञ्जय ॥	1-1
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Dhritarashtra asks Sanjaya:

"O! Sanjaya, in That Holy Place - the Kurushetra battlefield, my people, my sons and their supporters, and also the Pandavas and their supporters, gathered together, eager to fight. What did they do?"

In reply to Dhritarashtra's enquiry, Sanjaya reports faithfully, the extraordinary dialogue between Arjuna and Sri Krishna, which took place in the battlefield, just prior to the onset of hostilities. This report takes the form of 700 verses, divided into eighteen chapters. In this first chapter, Sanjaya starts his report, recalling the context of that event.

The Kaurava army, headed by Duryodana, and the Pandava army, headed by Arjuna, with Sri Krishna by his side, have now entered into the Kurushetra battlefield; they are held facing each other in martial array on either side of the line of control.

In terms of size, the Kaurava army is far bigger, consisting of eleven Divisions; compared to the Pandava army, consisting only of seven Divisions. Bhishma is the Commander in Chief of the Kaurava army, with Drona as the Second in Command. Drupada, Virata, Drishtadyumna, Sikandi, Satyaki, Chekitana, and Bhima are the Divisional commanders of the Pandava army, with Drishtadyumna as the Commander in Chief.

The armies are in full alert, ready for the battle, awaiting a signal from their army-heads and respective commanders. That is the situation at this moment.

Duryodana takes the first action. He takes a good look at the Pandava army, and reacts



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visibly with uncontrollable jealousy, anger, and fear. It is this reaction which is the starting point of Sanjaya's report.

सञ्जय उवाच

दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा ।
आचार्यं उपसंगम्य राजा वचनं अब्रवीत् ॥

1-2

Sanjaya said:

Having seen well, the army of the Pandavas stationed in battle-array, then the king Duryodana approached the Teacher, Drona and spoke to him these words.

The guilty-conscious Duryodana, driven by greed and vanity had no guts to go to Bhishma; he showed his anger to Drona who was no more than a paid servant, subject to his command.

Sanjaya now quotes, the words of Duryodana, exactly as he said to Drona.

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणां आचार्य महतीं चमूम् ।
व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता ॥

1-3

O! Teacher, please see - see for yourself this mighty army of the Pandavas, arrayed by your talented disciple, the son of Drupada, namely Dhrishtadyumna.

Duryodana is in a perturbed state of mind; he flings words of contempt and anger towards Drona. Duryodana wants to make Drona feel angry over himself, for having taught the military arts to the Pandavas, and also Dhrishtadyumna, who are now standing before him as enemies.

Pointing out towards the Pandava army, Duryodana continues:

अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुन समा युधि
युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः ॥

1-4

धृष्टकेतुः चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान् ।
पुरुजित् कुन्तिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुङ्गवः ॥

1-5

युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान् ।
सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः ॥

1-6

In his anxiety, Duryodana tries to educate Drona on the strength of the enemy forces. He



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says: अत्र - There, in the army of the Pandavas, there are many men of great valour (शूराः), who are mighty archers (महेश्वासाः), who are equal to Bhima and Arjuna in the battlefield (भीमार्जुन समा युधि). They are for example:

युयुधान - Which is another name for Satyaki a disciple of Arjuna;

विराट - The king of Matsya in whose court the Pandavas spent their incognito life for a year;

द्रुपद - The king of Panchala - father of Draupadi;

धृष्टकेतु - The son of Sisupala - King of Chedi and also many other well-known warriors such as चेकितान (the Yadava hero), काशिराज (the King of Kasi), पुरुजित् and कुन्तिभोज, (the brothers of कुन्ति), सौभद्र (which is another name for Abhimanyu), and द्रौपदेयाः (the sons of Draupadi) - all these are great Generals (महार्थाः) - chariot warriors.

On the other hand - Duryodana continues:

अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान्निबोध द्विजोत्तम ।
नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान् ब्रवीमि ते ॥

1-7

द्विजोत्तम - "O! Best among Brahmins - you must also know who are our distinguished Chiefs (विशिष्टाः), - the leaders of My army (मम सैन्यस्य) - I name them for your information.

Drona certainly knows the Generals in the Duryodana army; but Duryodana has lost his balance of mind; he is perturbed; he is overcome by fear; and he is already losing his confidence.

By addressing Drona, the Second in command, of his army, as द्विजोत्तम, Duryodana reminds Drona that he is only a Brahmin - fit to be a Teacher alright - but his capacity in actual warfare is yet to be proved. As if to dispel fear from Drona's mind and even more, to give some confidence to himself, Duryodana names a few of the mighty warriors on his own side - Duryodana says:

भवान् भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिञ्जयः ।
अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सौमदन्तिस्तथैव च ॥

1-8

Of course, your venerable self (भवान्), Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, ever victorious Ashvattama and also Vikarna, and Saumadatti;



अन्ये च बहवः शूराः मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः ।

नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः ॥

1-9

There are also many other heroes who are well skilled in warfare, and equipped with manifold weapons and who are ready to lay down their lives for my sake (मदर्थे त्यक्त जीविताः). Even though this is the case, still, I feel:

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितं ।

पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम् ॥

1-10

- our army, even though marshalled by (the great) Bhishma, is अपर्याप्तं - means unwieldy, indisciplined and hence insufficient for achieving our victory; on the other hand, their army – the Pandava army- even though marshaled (only) by Bhima, is पर्याप्तं – meaning – compact, well disciplined and hence sufficient for achieving their victory.

Thus Duryodana has already lost confidence in the ability of his army to bring him victory because, he knows that Bhishma has divided loyalty; he fights on his side because of obligations; Bhishma supports the righteousness of the Pandavas and he has taken a vow not to kill any of them. On the other hand, Bhima, whose physical strength has always been a terror for Duryodana is naturally and fully committed to Pandava victory; he fights with full force and has taken a vow to kill Duryodana. Duryodana is really afraid of Bhima and he depends on Bhishma alone for his own protection.

Therefore, Duryodana now gives an order to Drona:

अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागं अवस्थिताः ।

भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्तः सर्व एव हि ॥

1-11

हि यस्मात् – because of this reason – because of the importance of Bhishma to our victory – all of you – including yourself – must remain firmly in your assigned places in all parts of the army formation and protect Bhishma by all means.

As long as Bhishma is there, we cannot be defeated. Therefore, Bhishma's safety is all-important for our victory. Therefore,

भीष्मं एव अभिरक्षन्तु - be on duty to protect Bhishma at all times.



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By these words, with fear and anxiety in his mind, Duryodana gives his signal to start the war with a stern order to Drona and through Drona to all his army commanders to stand firmly on guard of Bhishma at all times.

Thus Duryodana has taken the lead for his own inevitable ultimate destruction. It appears as if that Bhishma fighting on the side of Duryodana is only to prove that no power on earth can bring victory to अधर्म – improper actions of any kind.

Drona does not react to the words of Duryodana; but Bhishma does.

Bhishma recognizes that the time for reconciliation is past; this is now time for inevitable action. Therefore, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Duryodana army, he acts immediately.

तस्य सञ्जनयन् हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः ।
सिंहनादं चिनद्योच्चैः शङ्खं दध्मौ प्रतापवान् ॥ 1-12

Trying to uplift Duryodana from the plane of restlessness born of fear and guilty consciousness the eldest among the Kaurava family, the mighty and the glorious Bhishma, blew his conch (शङ्खं दध्मौ) and raised a lion's roar (सिंहनादं). By this action, Bhishma formally committed the first symbolic act of aggression in the battle field on behalf of the Duryodana army.

ततः शङ्खाश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः ।
सहस्रैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दः तुमुलः अभवत् ॥ 1-13

Then, following the action of Bhishma, the entire Duryodana army signaled its readiness for the battle by blowing conches and cowhorns and beating the various kinds of drums, tabors, trumpets etc. – all these different sounds blared forth immediately and simultaneously from the different quarters of the Duryodana army and the resulting noise (शब्द) was tremendous, confusing and frightening.

Thus the entire Duryodana army formally declared its readiness for war and implicitly called for the customary reciprocal action from the side of the Pandava army.

Sanjaya now describes the response from the Pandava side.

ततः श्वेतैः हयैः युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ ।
माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः ॥ 1-14



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First let us see the word meaning of this verse.

ततः Then – which means - after the noise from the Duryodana army had subsided, then

श्वेतैः हयैः युक्ते - yoked ready for action by the white horses

महति - big and magnificent

स्यन्दने = रथे in the chariot

स्थितौ - firmly and comfortably seated.

Therefore, श्वेतैः हयैः युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ means - Remaining firmly and comfortably seated in the big and magnificent chariot yoked ready for action by the white horses.

माधवः Madhava – Sri Krishna

पाण्डवः च - and the पाण्डुपुत्र – Arjuna

दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः - blew their respective divine conches with great enthusiasm.

Then, after the noise from the Duryodana army had subsided, then, Sri Krishna and Arjuna responded from the Pandava side – how?

Remaining firmly and comfortably seated in the big and magnificent chariot, yoked, ready for action by white horses, Sri Krishna and Arjuna, one after the other, in that order, blew their respective divine conches with great enthusiasm.

That is the word-meaning of this verse.

ततः श्वेतैः हयैः युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ ।

माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः ॥

This is a very significant verse in भगवत् गीता. Let us now take a few minutes and reflect on this verse briefly.

This is the first verse in the भगवत् गीता which brings, Sri Krishna and Arjuna into the picture; as such with this verse we enter into The भगवत् गीता as the Upanishad. But there is a necessary prerequisite for us to be able to enter into the भगवत् गीता as the Upanishad.

All the noise in us must first subside; ततः- then, and then only, one will be able to enter into the भगवत् गीता Upanishad.

What is the noise in us?



Various kinds of passions, hatred, greed, anger and the consequent fear, anxiety, conflict and confusion – all these constitute the noise (शब्द) in us; when this noise naturally subsides, then ततः, we can enter into the भगवत् गीता उपनिषत् – which is our धर्म क्षेत्र – The Holy Place of action.

How do we make the noise subside before we enter in this धर्म क्षेत्र?

Every kind of ईश्वर पूजा and भजन् we do, prior to Scripture Reading, serves to calm down the agitations in us to make us become fit for entry into this धर्म क्षेत्र. As soon as we enter into this धर्म क्षेत्र, what do we see?

श्वेतैः हयैः युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ माधवः पाण्डवः च

We see Sri Krishna and Arjuna seated firmly and comfortably in the great and magnificent chariot, with Sri Krishna holding the reins of the white horses yoked to the chariot ready for action. In order to understand and appreciate these words, we must recall here briefly these three verses from कठोपनिषत् – which we will see in detail later.

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ 3-3

इन्द्रियाणि हयान् आहुः विषयान् तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्म इन्द्रिय मनो युक्तं भोक्ता इति आहुः मनीषिणः ॥ 3-4

यस्तु विज्ञानवान् भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्य इन्द्रियाणि चर्यानि सत् अश्वाः इव सारथेः ॥ 3-6

Please understand one's शरीर – one's body-mind-intellect complex – in this manner:

One's शरीर – is the chariot

One's senses are the horses

One's mind is the rein of control

One's intellect is the driver of the chariot

The आत्मा – The परमेश्वर – one's प्रत्यग आत्मा – one's innermost consciousness is the Master of the chariot.



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By virtue of one's आत्म ज्ञानं – self knowledge – when one has a mind totally under control with a clarity of vision of one's identity with आत्मा – the परमेश्वर – at all times, then, one's senses are indeed controllable, like the trained and disciplined horses of a charioteer – so says कठोपनिषत्. Therefore, in terms of कठोपनिषत्

श्वेतैः हयैः “White horses” means सत् इन्द्रियाणि – all organs of perception and action permeated and enveloped by सत् बुद्धि – ईश्वर ज्ञानं – God-consciousness – the functions of all senses flowing towards, and emptying into the ocean of God-consciousness.

Because of such सत् बुद्धि, all organs of perception and action, are available only for ईश्वर कर्म, serving the will of परमेश्वर – which makes this body a धर्म क्षेत्र – a कर्म क्षेत्र – a Holy place for actions.

In Vedantic language, श्वेत – the color white – is a pointer word for Purity, Propriety and Proficiency – this does not mean that anything which is white is pure, proper or proficient. “White horses” simply means, sense organs whose only function is to tread the path of धर्म, most efficiently, leading to मोक्ष – Absolute Freedom, Fulfillment and Happiness.

As soon as we enter into the धर्म क्षेत्र of भगवत् गीता, what we see is, that the Driver of the chariot and the Master of the Chariot are ONE and the SAME, namely Sri Krishna – which means that we immediately recognize the जीव-ब्रह्म ऐक्यं – the identity of जीव and ईश्वर. Further,

महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ We see Sri Krishna and Arjuna स्थितौ – seated firmly and comfortably in the chariot because there is no restlessness, fear or anxiety in धर्म क्षेत्र; महति स्यन्दने in the big and magnificent chariot; this body chariot is big and magnificent – not because of its size – but because of its extraordinary potential capability to rise to divine and infinite dimensions.

माधवः Sri Krishna is referred here as माधव which means, लक्ष्मी नाथः – The Lord of all Prosperity.

In the context here, लक्ष्मी is राज्यलक्ष्मी – and that includes prosperity, success and happiness for everybody in the land.



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With Sri Krishna by his side, the राज्यलक्ष्मी for Arjuna – which means, Pandava Victory is assured.

पाण्डवः च Arjuna is referred here as पाण्डव – which means, Arjuna, the man of upright action, inspired and strengthened by धर्म, भीम, नकुल and सहदेव – moral power, physical strength, total absence of selfishness and ever present God-consciousness, at all times. That is the kind of अर्जुन sitting behind Sri Krishna – ever ready for action.

Further, what do we see in धर्म क्षेत्र?

दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः Sri Krishna and Arjuna blew their Divine conches with great enthusiasm and one feels spontaneously uplifted by their sounds.

We may note here that the response from the Pandava side is – First from Sri Krishna and then from Arjuna – which reveals that the action from the Pandava side is a धर्म कर्म – ईश्वर कर्म.

Earlier, referring to the action of Bhishma, Sanjaya said "शङ्खं दध्मौ " – he blew the conche, now referring to the actions of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, Sanjaya says, "दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः" They blew their Divine conches with great enthusiasm.

Now what is the source of the Divinity, Greatness and Enthusiasm on the Pandava side? The source is the Action Itself – because it is धर्म कर्म – ईश्वर कर्म – Proper action. Proper action is Divine and Great by its very nature; the resulting joy and enthusiasm is inherent in the divinity of the action itself.

Such Divinity in action always leads to prosperity, success and happiness.

It is with this message, Sanjaya leads us into the भगवत् गीता – The Upanishad. Sanjaya repeats this message again in the concluding verse of the भगवत् गीता in Chapter 18:

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीः विजयो भूतिः ध्रुवा नीर्तिमतिर्मम ॥

Wherever is Sri Krishna – the योगेश्वर – wherever is Arjuna – the man of upright action – inseparably together, THERE IS Prosperity, Success, Happiness, Order and Stability – That is certain.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

With this unqualified assurance from Sanjaya – our innermost consciousness – let us now seek the Grace of Sri Krishna and enter the Temple of भगवत् गीता Upanishad with folded hands on this auspicious day, and enjoy our presence in this धर्म क्षेत्र - in this कर्म क्षेत्र – through a moment of Blissful Silence.

We will continue next time.