

I. The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

Summary of First Discourse

The great Mahabharata war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas took place on the holy plain of Kurukshetra. After the failure of Lord Krishna's peace mission, when He Himself went to Hastinapura as the emissary of the Pandavas, there was no other alternative for the Pandavas but to engage in war for their rightful share of the kingdom.

All the famous warriors from both sides had assembled on the battlefield. Tents and wagons, weapons and machines, chariots and animals covered the vast plain.

Lord Krishna arrived on the scene in a magnificent chariot yoked by white horses. He was to act as the charioteer of Arjuna, one of the Pandava princes.

The din of hundreds of conches, blaring forth suddenly, announced the commencement of the battle. Arjuna blew his conch "Devadatta", while Bhima, his brother, sounded the "Paundra". All the other great warriors blew their respective conches.

As the two armies were arrayed, ready for battle, Arjuna requested Krishna to place his chariot between them so that he might survey his opponents. He was bewildered by the scene before him, for he beheld on both sides, fathers and grandfathers, teachers and uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, relatives and comrades.

Confusion reigned in Arjuna's mind. Should he participate in this terrible carnage? Was it proper to destroy one's relatives for the sake of a kingdom and some pleasures? Would it not be much better for him to surrender everything in favour of his enemies and retire in peace? As these thoughts rushed into his mind, a feeling of despondency overtook Arjuna. He had no enthusiasm to engage in this battle. Letting his bow slip from his hands, Arjuna could do nothing but turn to Lord Krishna for guidance and enlightenment.

Dhritaraashtra Uvaacha:

*Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavah;
Maamakaah paandavaashchaiva kim akurvata sanjaya.*

Dhritarashtra said:

1. What did the sons of Pandu and also my people do when they had assembled together, eager for battle on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, O Sanjaya?

Sanjaya Uvaacha:

*Drishtwaa tu paandavaaneekam vyudham duryodhanastadaa;
Aachaaryam upasamgamyaa raajaa vachanam abraveet.*

Sanjaya said:

2. Having seen the army of the Pandavas drawn up in battle array, King Duryodhana then approached his teacher (Drona) and spoke these words:

*Pashyaitaam paanduputraanaam aachaarya mahateem chamoom;
Vyoodhaam drupadaputrena tava shishyena dheemataa.*

3. “Behold, O Teacher, this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed by the son of Drupada, thy wise disciple!

*Atra shoora maheshwaasaa bheemaarjunasamaa yudhi;
Yuyudhaano viraatashcha drupadashcha mahaarathah.*

4. “Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhima and Arjuna, Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada, of the great car (mighty warriors),

*Dhrishtaketush chekitaanah kaashiraajashcha veeryavaan;
Purujit kuntibhojashcha shaibyaashcha narapungavah.*

5. “Drishtaketu, Chekitana and the valiant king of Kasi, Purujit, and Kuntibhoja and Saibya, the best of men,

*Yudhaamanyushcha vikraanta uttamaaujaashcha veeryavaan;
Saubhadro draupadeyaashcha sarva eva mahaarathaah.*

6. “The strong Yudhamanyu and the brave Uttamaaujas, the son of Subhadra (Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna), and the sons of Draupadi, all of great chariots (great heroes).

*Asmaakam tu vishishta ye taan nibodha dwijottama;
Naayakaah mama sainyasya samjnaartham taan braveemi te.*

7. “Know also, O best among the twice-born, the names of those who are the most distinguished amongst ourselves, the leaders of my army! These I name to thee for thy information.

*Bhavaan bheeshmashcha karnashcha kripashcha samitinjayah;
Ashwatthamaa vikarnashcha saumadattis tathaiva cha.*

8. “Thyself and Bhishma, and Karna and Kripa, the victorious in war; Asvatthama, Vikarna, and Jayadratha, the son of Somadatta.

*Anye cha bahavah shoora madarthe tyaktajeevitaah;
Naanaashastrapraharanaah sarve yuddhavishhaaradaah.*

9. “And also many other heroes who have given up their lives for my sake, armed with various weapons and missiles, all well skilled in battle.

*Aparyaptam tad asmaakam balam bheeshmaabhirakshitam;
Paryaptam twidam eteshaam balam bheemaabhirakshitam.*

10. “This army of ours marshalled by Bhishma is insufficient, whereas their army, marshalled by Bhima, is sufficient.

*Ayaneshu cha sarveshu yathaabhaagam avasthitaah;
Bheeshmam evaabhirakshantu bhavantah sarva eva hi.*

11. “Therefore, do ye all, stationed in your respective positions in the several divisions of the army, protect Bhishma alone”.

*Tasya sanjanayan harsham kuruvriddhah pitaamahah;
Simhanaadam vinadyocchaih shankham dadhmau prataapavaan.*

12. His glorious grandsire (Bhishma), the eldest of the Kauravas, in order to cheer Duryodhana, now roared like a lion and blew his conch.

*Tatah shankhaashcha bheryashcha panavaanakagomukhaah;
Sahasaivaabhyahanyanta sa shabdastumulo’bhavat.*

13. Then (following Bhishma), conches and kettle-drums, tabors, drums and cow-horns blared forth quite suddenly (from the side of the Kauravas); and the sound was tremendous.

*Tatah shvetair hayair yukte mahati syandane sthitau;
Maadhavah paandavashchaiva divyau shankhau pradadhmatuh.*

14. Then also, Madhava (Krishna), and the son of Pandu (Arjuna), seated in their magnificent chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches.

*Paanchajanyam hrisheekesho devadattam dhananjayah;
Paundram dadhmau mahaashankham bheemakarmaa vrikodarah.*

15. Hrishikesa blew the “Panchajanya” and Arjuna blew the “Devadatta”, and Bhima, the doer of terrible deeds, blew the great conch, “Paundra”.

*Anantavijayam raajaa kunteeputro yudhishtirah;
Nakulah sahadevashcha sughoshamanipushpakau.*

16. Yudhisthira, the son of Kunti, blew the “Anantavijaya”; and Sahadeva and Nakula blew the “Manipushpaka” and “Sughosha” conches.

*Kaashyashcha parameshwaasah shikhandee cha mahaarathah;
Dhrishtadyumno viraatashcha saatyakishchaaparaajitah.*

17. The king of Kasi, an excellent archer, Sikhandi, the mighty car-warrior, Dhristadyumna and Virata and Satyaki, the unconquered,

*Drupado draupadeyaashcha sarvashah prithiveepate;
Saubhadrashcha mahaabaahuh shankhaan dadhmuh prithak prithak.*

18. Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the Earth, and the son of Subhadra, the mighty-armed, all blew their respective conches!

*Sa ghosho dhaartaraashtraanaam hridayaani vyadaarayate;
Nabhashcha prithiveem chaiva tumulo vyanunaadayan.*

19. The tumultuous sound rent the hearts of Dhritarashtra’s party, making both heaven and earth resound.

*Atha vyavasthitaan drishtvaa dhaartaraashtraan kapidhwajah;
Pravritte shastrasampaate dhanurudyamya paandavah.
Hrisheekesham tadaa vaakyamidamaaha maheepate;*

20. Then, seeing all the people of Dhritarashtra's party standing arrayed and the discharge of weapons about to begin, Arjuna, the son of Pandu, whose ensign was that of a monkey, took up his bow and said the following to Krishna, O Lord of the Earth!

Arjuna Uvaacha:

*Senayor ubhayormadhye ratham sthaapaya me'chyuta.
Yaavad etaan nireekshe'ham yoddhukaamaan avasthitaan;
Kair mayaa saha yoddhavyam asmin ranasamudyame.*

Arjuna said:

21-22. In the middle of the two armies, place my chariot, O Krishna, so that I may behold those who stand here, desirous to fight, and know with whom I must fight when the battle begins.

*Yotsyamaanaan avekshe'ham ya ete'tra samaagataah;
Dhaartaraashtrasya durbuddher yuddhe priyachikeershavah.*

23. For I desire to observe those who are assembled here to fight, wishing to please in battle Duryodhana, the evil-minded.

Sanjaya Uvaacha:

*Evamukto hrisheekesho gudaakeshena bhaarata;
Senayor ubhayormadhye sthaapayitwaa rathottamam.*

Sanjaya said:

24. Being thus addressed by Arjuna, Lord Krishna, having stationed that best of chariots, O Dhritarashtra, in the midst of the two armies,

*Bheeshmadronapramukhatah sarveshaam cha maheekshitaam;
Uvaacha paartha pashyitaan samavetaan kuroon iti.*

25. In front of Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the earth, said: "O Arjuna, behold now all these Kurus gathered together!"

*Tatraapashyat sthitaan paarthah pitrin atha pitaamahaan;
Aachaaryaan maatulaan bhraatrun putraan pautraan sakheemstathaa.*

26. Then Arjuna beheld there stationed, grandfathers and fathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and friends, too.

*Shvashuraan suhridashchaiva senayorubhayorapi;
Taan sameekshya sa kaunteyah sarvaan bandhoon avasthitaan.
Kripayaa parayaa'vishto visheedannidam abraveet;*

27. (He saw) fathers-in-law and friends also in both armies. The son of Kunti-Arjuna-seeing all these kinsmen standing arrayed, spoke thus sorrowfully, filled with deep pity.

Arjuna Uvaacha:

Drishtwemam swajanam krishna yuyutsum samupasthitam.

Arjuna said:

28. Seeing these, my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed, eager to fight,

*Seedanti mama gaatraani mukham cha parishushyati;
Vepathushcha shareere me romaharshashcha jaayate.*

29. My limbs fail and my mouth is parched up, my body quivers and my hairs stand on end!

*Gaandeevam sramsate hastaat twak chaiva paridahyate;
Na cha shaknomyavasthaatum bhramateeva cha me manah.*

30. The (bow) “Gandiva” slips from my hand and my skin burns all over; I am unable even to stand, my mind is reeling, as it were.

*Nimittaani cha pashyaami vipareetaani keshava;
Na cha shreyo’nupashyaami hatwaa swajanam aahave.*

31. And I see adverse omens, O Kesava! I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle.

*Na kaangkshe vijayam krishna na cha raajyam sukhaani cha;
Kim no raajyena govinda kim bhogair jeevitena vaa.*

32. For I desire neither victory, O Krishna, nor pleasures nor kingdoms! Of what avail is a dominion to us, O Krishna, or pleasures or even life?

*Yeshaam arthe kaangkshitam no raajyam bhogaah sukhaani cha;
Ta ime’vasthita yuddhe praanaamstyaktwaa dhanaani cha.*

33. Those for whose sake we desire kingdoms, enjoyments and pleasures, stand here in battle, having renounced life and wealth.

*Aachaaryaah pitarah putraastathaiva cha pitaamahaah;
Maatulaah shwashuraah pautraah shyaalaah sambandhinas tathaa.*

34. Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, grandsons, fathers-in-law, maternal uncles, brothers-in-law and relatives,–

*Etaan na hantum icchaami ghnato’pi madhusoodana;
Api trailokya raajyasya hetoh kim nu maheekrite.*

35. These I do not wish to kill, though they kill me, O Krishna, even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds, leave alone killing them for the sake of the earth!

*Nihatya dhaartaraashtraan nah kaa preetih syaaj janaardana;
Paapam evaashrayed asmaan hatwaitaan aatataayinah.*

36. By killing these sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasure can be ours, O Janardana? Only sin will accrue by killing these felons.

*Tasmaan naarhaa vayam hantum dhaartaraashtraan swabaandhavaan;
Swajanam hi katham hatwaa sukhinah syaama maadhava.*

37. Therefore, we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our relatives; for, how can we be happy by killing our own people, O Madhava (Krishna)?

*Yadyapyete na pashyanti lobhopahatachetasah;
Kulakshayakritam dosham mitradrohe cha paatakam.*

38. Though they, with intelligence overpowered by greed, see no evil in the destruction of families, and no sin in hostility to friends,

*Katham na jneyam asmaabhih paapaad asmaan nivartitum;
Kulakshayakritam dosham prapashyadbhir janaardana.*

39. Why should not we, who clearly see evil in the destruction of a family, learn to turn away from this sin, O Janardana (Krishna)?

COMMENTARY: Ignorance of the law is no excuse and wanton sinful conduct is a crime unworthy of knowledgeable people.

*Kulakshaye pranashyanti kuladharmaah sanaatanaah;
Dharme nashte kulam kritsnam adharmo'bhibhavatyuta.*

40. In the destruction of a family, the immemorial religious rites of that family perish; on the destruction of spirituality, impiety overcomes the whole family.

COMMENTARY: Dharma pertains to the duties and ceremonies practised by the family in accordance with scriptural injunctions.

*Adharmaabhibhavaat krishna pradushyanti kulastriyah;
Streeshu dushtaasu vaarshneya jaayate varnasankarah.*

41. By prevalence of impiety, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt and, women becoming corrupted, O Varsneya (descendant of Vrishni), there arises intermingling of castes!

*Sankaro narakaayaiva kulaghnaanaam kulasya cha;
Patanti pitaro hyeshaam luptapindodakakriyaah.*

42. Confusion of castes leads to hell the slayers of the family, for their forefathers fall, deprived of the offerings of rice-ball and water.

*Doshair etaih kulaghnaanaam varnasankarakarakaih;
Utsadyante jaatidharmaah kuladharmaashcha shaashwataah.*

43. By these evil deeds of the destroyers of the family, which cause confusion of castes, the eternal religious rites of the caste and the family are destroyed.

*Utsannakuladharmaanaam manushyaanaam janaardana;
Narake'niyatam vaaso bhavateetyanushushruma.*

44. We have heard, O Janardana, that inevitable is the dwelling for an unknown period in hell for those men in whose families the religious practices have been destroyed!

*Aho bata mahat paapam kartum vyavasitaa vayam;
Yadraajya sukhlobhena hantum swajanam udyataah.*

45. Alas! We are involved in a great sin in that we are prepared to kill our kinsmen through greed for the pleasures of a kingdom.

*Yadi maam aprateekaaram ashastram shastrapaanayah;
Dhaartaraashtraa rane hanyus tanme kshemataram bhavet.*

46. If the sons of Dhritarashtra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in battle, unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me.

Sanjaya Uvaacha:

*Evamuktwaarjunah sankhye rathopastha upaavishat;
Visrija sasharam chaapam shokasamvignamaanasah.*

Sanjaya said:

47. Having thus spoken in the midst of the battlefield, Arjuna, casting away his bow and arrow, sat down on the seat of the chariot with his mind overwhelmed with sorrow.

Hari Om Tat Sat

*Iti Srimad Bhagavadgeetaasooapanishatsu Brahnavidyaayaam
Yogashaastre Sri Krishnaarjunasamvaade
Arjunavishaadayogo Naama Prathamodhyaayah.*

Thus in the *Upanishads* of the glorious *Bhagavad Gita*, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the first discourse entitled:

“The Yoga Of the Despondency of Arjuna”
