

The Bhagavad Gita

**Based on HH Sri Raghavendra Teertha's Gita Vivruti
&
Lectures by HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha**

Compiled By
Dr. Giridhar Boray



**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
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The Bhagavad Gita

(Based on HH Sri Raghavendra Teertha's **Gita Vivruti**)

Compiled By

Dr. Giridhar Boray

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HH SRI RAGHAVENDRA TEERTHA SWAMYJI

FOREWORD

The Bhagavad Gita, in spite of being an episode in The Mahabharata, has more to it. The Mahabharata, which is said to date back to 5000 B.C., is still adored and read, not only for its being an epic of enormous proportions but also because it is a tale reflecting the man of all times. If one feels that it is a fictitious story, it has all that a masterpiece demands. If it is considered something beyond and a real tale, it evidences the existence of superior human beings. All the characters in the epic were highly learned and were disciples of Guru Drona, according to the story. They were all human beings, despite the fact that they had the personal interference of God himself in their lives.

This story is an example of the weaknesses that human beings are subject to. Arjuna's doubts in the Bhagavad Gita are the doubts of every man. Like when we are in the line of duty, we are often pulled by fears, doubts, jealousies, weaknesses, nepotism, etc. Arjuna too was vexed of war by his excessive love, respect, and devotion for his elders, relatives, and friends whom he had to fight against.

Here, Arjuna says that he was 'Nara' in every respect. He was a bundle of human weaknesses, despite being physically strong. Krishna's sermon to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita was an attempt to uplift him from his mental discrepancy. In other words, it is a great treatise on 'personality development', a modern buzz word. All the planes of the human mind find mention here. It seeks to address all the ills of man, be they physical, psychological, spiritual, or whatever.

And Arjuna here appears to be a studious disciple, with his coming out with a great many questions, which rather tickle every learned mind. The occasion here was that the Bhagwan himself was the fount of the sermon. Hence Arjuna, the archer that he was here for the moment, was aiming arrows of questions, and those questions were turning out to be real sources of light for all mankind, by the divine grace of Bhagwan Krishna. Arjuna, in fact, had received instructions from Guru Drona and could never be in need of an elaborate instruction. It was only a momentary delusion for

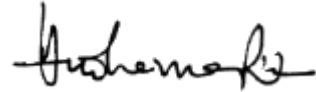
Arjuna, and Krishna arranged that pretext as the stage for giving him the sermon of the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Such human weaknesses are all we are prone to. Hence, 'Bhagavad Gita' is for all of us.

Arjuna was sermonised by Lord Krishna in the middle of the battle. It was one such occasion where sometimes even great and illumined souls could turn ignorant and weak. The 'Bhagavad Gita' was an attempt to alert Arjuna to human acts on a big stage like the Kurukshetra battle. It was like learning while doing or like a good lesson that we usually learn at the height of misery and peril. No wonder that the Bhagavad Gita is a prescribed text in India and elsewhere for students.

Several attempts have been made at various times to explain the spirit of the Gita to man. This one attempt by Dr. Giridhar Boray is born out of his intention to bring the '**Bhagavad Gita**' to the attention of the present day younger generation. It is strengthened in the light of its taking inspiration from the **Gita Vivruti** by HH Sri Raghavendra Teertha and lectures by HH Sri Vidya Sagara Madhava Teertha Swamiji, head of the Sri Madhava Teertha Pontificate and Sree Sameerachar of Tambihalli Math.

The book makes understanding the concepts easier by providing a summary of all the chapters at the beginning as well as at the end of each verse. The book is really a diligent effort offered at the lotus feet of Lord Sri Venkateswara in all humility. A complete study of the whole book without deleting any subtitle is bound to bring to the common man the required spiritual knowledge and also immense satisfaction.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



Executive Officer

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

Tirupati.


श्रीवीररामो विजयते


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Jnana Sagara Madhavaankita
Sri Sri 108 Sri Vidya sagara Madhava Teertharu
Peethadhipatigalu,
SrimanMadhvacharya Moola Mahasamsthana,
SrimanMadhavateerthara Sri Matha,
Madhavapura, Tambihalli, Kolar Taluk
Karnataka

Message of Blessings





महार्चिनं महावीरं दरश्मितं दयानिधिम् ।
 ननुमध्ये लसन्धङ्गं नं नमामि रघूत्तमम् ॥



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A harmonious blend of physics and metaphysics is the accomplishment of Dr. Giridhar Boray's father, Professor Krishnaswamy Rao. As the father, so the son. Giridhar is a computer scientist holding educational degrees from Indian and US universities. His innovations in mobile technology have brought him laurels. He is a prolific inventor in mobile and digital communication technologies, having several patents to his credit. His interest and love for Vedic literature is equally intense. His father was his teacher in this field. He has authored an eBook on The Bhagavad Gita which has had more than 50000 downloads from 90 countries. With his interest in knowing more and more about the Gita he has attended my online classes on the text and was scrupulously taking notes with an interest to translate the holy book into English. He has completed the work.

It is exceedingly difficult to bring out the wholesome spirit of the original text into any translation. His zeal and skill both in the subject and language prove that he is not less competent in doing this job. It is a matter of joy for me that my Gita classes have helped him in this endeavour.

Many Indian youth are alienated from our culture and thinking. However, they are not too negative to come back to their mother culture. English is their friendly medium. Giridhar's book, The Bhagavad Gita the translated version will be especially useful to them.

Dr. Giridhar, I wish, will author many more works with the same zeal.

With best wishes, Narayana


 SRI VIDYA SAGARA MADHAVA TEERTHARU

Guru Vandana – Obeisance to the Teacher

I offer my respectful obeisance to His Holiness Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha Swamiji, pontiff of Sri Madhava Teertha Pontificate in Karnataka, India. His Holiness is the 25th pontiff in the lineage of Sri Madhava Teertha, the 14th century ascetic and philosopher who was a direct disciple of Sri Madhwacharya, the exponent of the Dvaita (theistic dualism) school of Indian philosophy. Vishnu Shastri, a great scholar in the Advaita (theistic monism) school of philosophy of the 13th century came in contact with Sri Madhwacharya, who was reviving the theistic dualism philosophy built on the fundamental premise of a clear difference between the individual soul and the Lord Almighty (the Supreme Soul). Vishnu Shastri was greatly influenced by the divine, scholarly arguments of Sri Madhwacharya and in particular by his commentary on 40 selected hymns of the **Rig Veda**. He became a disciple of Sri Madhwacharya and entered the monastery as Sri Madhava Teertha. He headed the Madhwa Pontificate in the 14th century. He is credited to be the only scholar to have composed a rigorous commentary on all the four **Vedas** based on the concepts of the Dvaita philosophy. He was blessed and gifted with the beautiful idol of Lord Sri Veera Rama by Sri Madhwacharya, and this idol continues to be worshipped to this day by the reigning pontiff.

The reigning pontiff HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha was born on the most auspicious *Ananta Chaturdashi* day of 1932 to very pious parents, in the illustrious lineage of HH Sri Kambaluru Ramachandra Teertha of the glorious Sri Vyasaraja Math. He was named Venkatesha. He was groomed into every aspect of Sri Madhwa's philosophy from his childhood days by his father who was also a great scholar. He had a brilliant academic record, securing a master's degree in Literature followed by a Doctorate in the *Mahabharata* from Karnataka University. He chose teaching as his career and served as Professor and Principal of Government Arts College in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

After retiring from active service, he was invited to be the Principal of Sri Guru Sarvabhowma Samskruta Vidyapeeta at Mantralayam where he served at the divine feet of Sri Raghavendra Swamy. Pleased by his service, within a year, Sri Raghavendra Swamy chose him to lead the pontificate of Sri Madhava Teertha Moola Samsthana math, resulting in an invitation to him by the then pontiff Sri Prasanna Shoora Madhavateertha. He was named Sri Vidyasagara Madhavateertha, and he has been serving the pontificate for over 19 years performing daily worship to the most sacred Sri Veera Rama idol with great devotion and dedication. An erudite scholar with proficiency in many aspects of literature, arts, and mastery over many languages, HH has composed many devotional songs in Kannada which bring out his emotional relationship with the Lord Almighty. HH observes strict austerities for ascetics as laid down by Sri Madhwacharya and is an ideal seer in every sense. Under his stewardship the pontificate has made great strides and attracted many loyal, committed followers.

Due to divine providence, I got the opportunity to attend the daily lectures conducted by His Holiness on **Gita Vivruti** - a commentary on the **Bhagavad Gita** by the 16th century ascetic and philosopher Sri Raghavendra Teertha, which is based on the commentary by Sri Madhwacharya and Sri Jaya Teertha. HH graciously supported and blessed my effort (a feeble though!) to capture in English, the essence of Sri Raghavendra Teertha's **Gita Vivruti** and his lectures which were in Kannada, to benefit a larger audience. I respectfully offer this work to His Holiness as Guru Dakshina and seek his blessings.

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Acknowledgements

The author is greatly indebted to HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha Swamiji, the head of Sri Madhava Teertha pontificate for his detailed teachings on the core concepts of The **Bhagavad Gita** based on the interpretation of Sri Madhwacharya, Sri Jaya Teertha and Sri Raghavendra Teertha. His Holiness delivered his lectures in daily classes spread over 167 days in the middle of the lockdown during the pandemic of 2020. HH reviewed many drafts of this book and offered many corrections to sharpen the message. HH has constantly encouraged and blessed this author in the successful completion of this book. I have also benefitted greatly in my understanding of the **Gita** from the works of great Madhwa seers and scholars such as HH Sri Vidyadeesha Teertha of Palimaru Mutt and Dr. V. Prabhanjanacharya. I am eternally grateful to my late parents Smt. Indira Bai and Sri B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao for inculcating Vaishnavite principles and values in me during my early childhood. This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents.

The author likes to gratefully acknowledge the publications division of Sri Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for undertaking publication of this book.

The author has also benefited greatly from the feedback and comments from fellow classmates Sri Niranjan Rao, Sri D.R. Seetharaman who attended the **Gita** sessions by HH and Sri Sameerachar of Tambihalli Math. I am greatly indebted to my niece Smt. Prabha Venkatesh for her multiple, extensive reviews and comments to improve the grammar, presentation, and readability. Thanks are due to my siblings Smt. Jayashree Satyendra, Sri Gopinath Boray and my friend Sri Krishna Kashyap for proof reading and review comments. I greatly appreciate the efforts by artists Sri Seshagiri and my sister Smt. Pratima Hariprasad for the excellent cover painting. I am also thankful to Sri S.N. Ramesha for typesetting the Sanskrit verses and to Team Vagartha Printers for excellent typesetting, layout etc. And last, but not least, I am thankful to my wife Smt. Sudha, son Sameer, parents in law Smt. Usha and Sri Yadavamoorthy and my extended family for their support and understanding.

November 15, 2022

Giridhar Boray

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Introduction - Background and Battleground

Over centuries, the **Bhagavad Gita** has been considered an important spiritual guidebook and has influenced many thought leaders in human history. The **Gita** is a conversational poem and is part of the great Indian epic the **Mahabharata**, which is a story about the families of two brothers who inherit a kingdom from their father. These cousins are known as the 'Pandavas' and the 'Kauravas'. The Kaurava brothers are 100 in number and the Pandavas are 5. The Kauravas, not wanting to share the kingdom with their cousins, invite them to a game of dice. They use dubious means to defeat the Pandavas and annex their kingdom after winning the wager. As per the rules of the wager, the Pandavas complete their stay outside the kingdom and come back to ask for their fair share of the kingdom so that they can rule with dignity. The Kauravas refuse to honor the agreement and even deny the Pandavas a settlement of 5 villages so that they can live in peace. As the Kauravas refuse to budge even an inch, the Pandavas have no choice but to declare war on them to get back their share of the kingdom. During this period, The Lord who has incarnated as Krishna offers the cousins a choice between His army and Himself. But He makes it clear that He Himself would not be participating in the war. The Kauravas choose His army as Krishna would not be fighting, and the Pandavas are happy to just have Krishna on their side. Krishna takes on the role of charioteer to Arjuna's chariot (Arjuna is the third brother among the five Pandavas).

Before the war starts, the two armies assemble on the battlefield, facing each other. At this point, Arjuna requests Krishna to place his chariot in the middle so that he can get a full view of the warring forces. Since this is a war between cousins, Arjuna sees his cousins, uncles, grandfathers, great grandfathers, nephews, friends, classmates etc. on both sides. He is overcome with emotion and grief at the prospect of bloodshed among his family and friends for the sake of a kingdom. He declares his intention to renounce the war and let the Kauravas keep the kingdom, thus

abdicating his responsibility as a prince and a warrior. It is at this stage that Krishna teaches him the **Gita** which is structured as a series of questions from Arjuna and answers from Krishna. Krishna extols the virtue of performing one's duties regardless of the outcome, and not avoiding prescribed duties which may be difficult and unpleasant. As Krishna starts to talk to Arjuna on the virtues of doing one's work (in this case Arjuna needing to fight a rightful war), Arjuna asks a series of questions on the bigger issues of life, individual souls, the Lord Almighty, the universe, the circle of life etc., for which Krishna provides clear, unambiguous answers. He finally convinces Arjuna that his fears were unfounded and that he should fight to free the Kingdom from the Kauravas and provide a just and compassionate administration to his citizens.

At first a battleground is hardly the place for someone to be preaching philosophy. However, many of the questions that we have in life are about the choices we have to make, especially in challenging times. It is interesting to note that Sanskrit verses lend themselves to multiple meanings and in one interpretation, the battleground in the **Gita** is compared to the human body (and mind), and the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is compared to the constant strife between good and evil thoughts that we encounter daily. The **Gita** is indeed a teaching for all of us, with Arjuna acting as an example of an individual at crossroads, desperately looking for guidance and support.

The **Gita** is one of the most widely read and commented upon spiritual works in human history. There are several excellent books on it in various languages. Given that the original work is in Sanskrit, most of the scholarly commentaries have been in Sanskrit or other Indian languages which are closer to Sanskrit. To read and comprehend many of them, one would need some training in Indian spiritual studies, as many of them liberally use Sanskrit words albeit transliterated in English. It was felt that there is a need to present the key concepts of The **Gita** in plain English for everyday folk, minimizing the use of Sanskrit words. These observations led to the development of this manuscript.

While there are many learned commentaries on the **Gita** written over the centuries, this author has been greatly influenced by the authoritative commentary and lucid explanations of difficult concepts by Sri Madhwacharya, the 12th century ascetic who propounded the philosophy of dualistic theism (concept of difference between the almighty Lord and individual souls at all times and places). Sri Madhwacharya's commentary has been further elaborated and summarized by later day savants such as Sri Padmanabha Teertha (13th Century), Sri Jaya Teertha (13th Century) Sri Vadiraja Teertha (16th Century), Sri Raghavendra Teertha (17th century) and others.

The **Gita** consists of 18 chapters with a total of 701¹ verses in Sanskrit. The **Gita** is part of the great Hindu epic **The Mahabharata** and appears as Chapters 25 to 42, in the Book of Bheeshma in the **Mahabharata**. Most of the verses appear in the *anushtap* meter, where each verse has a total of 32 letters with 8 words in each of the four quadrants. Some verses in the 15th chapter appear in *trishtup* meter with 44 words. As per Sri Raghavendra Teertha [GV], the 18 chapters can be broadly classified into 3 sections with 6 chapters in each section. The first section with chapters 1-6 (280 verses) broadly outlines how one can obtain divine, spiritual knowledge (*jnana upaya*), the second section with chapters 7-12 (209 verses) focuses on devotion and divine, spiritual knowledge (*vijnana*) that leads one to liberation, and the third section consisting of chapters 13-18 (212 verses) elaborates on the concepts in the first two sections. It is also believed that the **Gita** conveys at least 10 different meanings, all of which are consistent with one another. An illustration of multiple meanings in the **Gita** will appear in Chapter 2. It is also said that the **Gita** has 3 major interpretations – historical, psychological, and spiritual.

¹ Some texts of Gita indicate a total of 700 verses (omitting the first verse attributed to Arjuna in Chapter 13)

The Gita and the Number 18

Numbers and numerology play an incredibly significant role in Indian theology. In fact, the study of knowledge is termed '*Sankhya Yoga*', with *Sankhya* meaning 'arithmetic'. The world around us is based on numbers. We are constantly measuring, managing, quantifying all our activities with the aid of numbers. We wake up at a certain time, we work/study for certain hours, we travel a certain distance, we consume some amount of food, we transact with certain currency, we perform activities at a certain time, on a certain day, in a certain month, in a certain year etc. And all these numbers and calculations are based on the position and movement of celestial objects such as the Sun, Moon, stars etc.

The number 18 is very special in the **Gita**. Note that every letter has a numerical equivalent based on the position of that letter in the Sanskrit alphabet which has 16 vowels, 25 consonants and 10 semi vowels. Let us review the numerical equivalent for the word '*jaya*' (meaning victory) which is made up of the letters *ja* (consonant in the 8th position) and *ya* (1st semi vowel). Applying the grammatical rule of reading the numerical representations in reverse order, the word '*jaya*' is represented by number 18. *Jaya* which means victory, signifies the triumph of good over evil as depicted in the **Gita** and its parent epic, **The Mahabharata**. Now let us review the significance of number 18 in the **Gita** with the following facts [SBG]-

1. The **Gita** has 18 chapters.
2. The **Mahabharata** of which the **Gita** is a part, has 18 volumes.
3. The great war of the **Mahabharata** which was the backdrop for the **Gita** was fought over 18 days.
4. The armies consisted of 18 regiments with the Kauravas at 11 and the Pandavas at 7

5. Each regiment consisted of 21870 elephants, 21870 chariots, 65610 horses and 109350 soldiers. Each of these numbers sum up to 18. For example, in case of 21870, $2+1+8+7+0 = 18$
6. Duryodhana in his review of the Pandava army names 18 main leaders
7. Sanjaya names the 18 conches sounded by the 18 Pandava leaders.
8. In the **Gita** chapter 10, the Lord describes His divine manifestation (*Vibhuti Roopa*) in 18 verses (10.21 to 10.38)
9. The Lord Almighty's omnipresence in the universe is described via His 18 forms starting with Hamsa, in **Katha Upanishad** (2.2.2), which is the basis for many concepts in the **Gita**.

Overview of Gita Chapters

The **Gita** has 18 chapters, each of which focusses on a specific topic and at the same time builds upon the topics covered in previous chapters. An enumeration of the chapters and a brief description of the contents of each chapter are as follows:

Section 1: The Path to Divine Knowledge, Chapters 1 – 6 (280 verses)

Chapter 1 (47 verses) - *Arjuna Vishada Yoga* (Arjuna's Distress): This chapter sets the stage for the **Gita**. The two armies of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas were assembled in Kurukshetra, ready to start the war. The proceedings in the war were narrated by Sanjaya, an aide to the blind king Dhritarashtra, father of the Kaurava brothers. Before the start of the war, Arjuna looks at both the armies and realizes that on both sides were many of his near and dear ones such as teachers, cousins, uncles, nephews etc. He develops cold feet at the thought of bloodshed between them. He wonders if he is doing the right thing by waging this war as it would not only lead to bloodshed but also result in

societal degradation. He advances many arguments as to why he should avoid this war and find some other way to lead his life. At the end of this chapter, Arjuna who is grief stricken, is seen sitting still in his chariot after dropping his weapons, confused as to the way forward.

Chapter 2 (72 verses) - *Sankhya Yoga* (The Path of Doctrines): In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's basic questions about the purpose of life and related philosophical concepts. Sensing that Arjuna's reservations about fighting the war were due to his fear of losing his loved ones, the Lord delves into the nature of individual souls, the indestructibility of souls, the relationship between individual souls and the Lord Almighty etc., to remind Arjuna that the Lord gave human forms to individual souls to help them in their spiritual journey, and everyone must play their dutiful role in society. The Lord urges Arjuna not to despair over the hurt that may be caused to his loved ones in the war, as they had taken the side of the evil king Duryodhana. Arjuna had an obligation to fight the just war to protect his citizens. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to focus on performing his prescribed duty of protecting his citizens as an offering to Him and not let his emotions come in the way. Chapter 2 can be considered a summary of the entire **Gita** as it answers Arjuna's (and through Arjuna, everyone's) basic questions about the purpose of life. The remaining chapters serve to expand on the concepts presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 (43 verses) - *Karma Yoga* (The Path of Action): In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions regarding the paths of duty (*karma*) and knowledge (*jnana*). Arjuna wonders if there is a way, he could focus on acquiring knowledge and traverse the path of knowledge (*jnana*) avoiding this dreadful war. The Lord logically answers Arjuna's doubts to convince him that everyone has an obligation to perform their duties to society and as a prince, it was his responsibility to fight the just war to protect his citizens. To perform one's duty, one also needs to be equipped with knowledge and in that sense, one needs to incorporate both *karma* and *jnana* in one's spiritual journey. Based on one's innate

nature, some may be prescribed a path that is dominant in action, and others may be prescribed a path dominant in knowledge. This chapter also has an excellent discussion on the Cyclic Order of the Universe.

Chapter 4 (42 verses) - *Jnana Yoga* (Wisdom in Action): This chapter is predominantly about the spiritual knowledge that a seeker will need to perform prescribed action (*karma*). Knowledge regarding the individual souls, various deities and the attributes of the Lord are explained to instill devotion in a seeker. The Lord explains that He incarnates in this world from time to time to establish virtue and vanquish immorality. Knowledge about the various types of actions – right action, wrong action and non-action are also covered here.

Chapter 5 (29 verses) - *Sanyasa Yoga* (The Path of Renunciation): Renunciation of rewards from actions is termed *sanyasa* and performing prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord is termed *yoga* (action). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions on some fundamental aspects of the two concepts of *sanyasa* and *yoga*. Arjuna's argument was that if renunciation were a better option than action, he could perhaps adopt the life of an ascetic and avoid waging the war. The Lord however describes the characteristics of a renunciant and clarifies that one must incorporate both these paths to achieve self-realization. The Lord reiterates that Arjuna must focus on performing his prescribed duty of waging war to protect his citizens from the evil Kauravas. This chapter also delves into the importance of detachment and self-control.

Chapter 6 (47 verses) – *Atma Samyama Yoga* (The Path of Self Restraint) or *Dhyana Yoga* (The Path of Meditation): *Yoga* (or action) has two components – external and internal. The external component refers to actions performed as part of one's prescribed duties which would be visible to others. The internal component refers to *dhyana* (or meditation). This chapter has a detailed discussion of *dhyana yoga*. Characteristics of a true *yogi* are described. The physical aspect of meditation such as place, physical pose, breath control etc., are also

described. Requirements for moderation in consumption are also discussed. To a question from Arjuna regarding the condition of those who make a sincere attempt but are not able to successfully implement *karma* and *dhyana*, the Lord teaches that no sincere effort is a waste, and such seekers will get additional opportunities to complete their spiritual journey.

Section 2: Divine, Spiritual Knowledge, Chapters 7 – 12 (209 verses)

Chapter 7 (30 verses) - *Jnana Vijnana Yoga* (The Path of Knowledge and Wisdom): The first 6 chapters were broadly concerned with descriptions of the methods and procedures (both external and internal) to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge. The next 6 chapters describe in more detail such divine, spiritual knowledge about the Lord Almighty, which forms the principle message of the **Gita**. In earlier chapters 2 – 6, there were some discussions on the Lord's attributes which were included contextually, but the next 6 chapters provide more exclusive details about the Lord's attributes. Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion of the two types of knowledge – indirect (ordinary knowledge) and direct (special knowledge or wisdom). Indirect knowledge (*jnana*) is that knowledge that is gained from scriptural studies and through teachers. Direct knowledge (*vijnana*) is specialized knowledge about the Lord that one obtains after self-realization. The Lord describes His ownership of everything in the universe and stresses that He is responsible for even the intrinsic attributes of objects. The causes of ignorance, the influence of *maya* (delusion) on living beings, and procedures to overcome *maya* are also discussed. The various types of seekers who are devoted to the Lord are identified. This chapter ends with the Lord stating that one who has proper knowledge about *Adhiyajna* (Lord of Sacrifice) and *Adhyatma* (Prime Self), along with that of *Adhibhoota* (Prime Material) and *Adhidaiva* (Prime Deities), and who thinks of Him during the last moments will eventually reach Him.

Chapter 8 (28 verses) - *Akshara Brahma Yoga* (The Imperishable Lord): This chapter starts with Arjuna asking Krishna 8 questions about the topics indicated towards the end of the previous chapter. Arjuna also enquires about the need for and advantages of remembering the Lord during one's last moments. This chapter also details the journey of a soul after leaving the physical body.

Chapter 9 (34 verses) - *Raja Vidya, Raja Guhya Yoga* (Path of Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Secrets): This chapter continues with the description of some of the important and subtle attributes and activities of the Lord. In that sense, it is Supreme knowledge that is taught here. The Lord uses the term 'secretive' to arouse curiosity in Arjuna (and everyone else). While the Lord has infinite auspicious forms, attributes, activities etc., there are eight activities of the Lord that directly impact living beings. They are – creation (*Srishti*), sustenance (*Stithi*), dissolution (*laya*), regulation (*niyamana*), knowledge (*jnana*), ignorance (*ajnana*), bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*moksha*). Together they are called *Janmadi ashtaka* and they are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 10 (42 verses) - *Vibhooti Yoga* (Divine Manifestations): No one can fully comprehend the Lord's infinite, auspicious attributes. The Lord, who is responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, powers everyone and everything. The Lord answers Arjuna's questions about His manifestations and presence in superior entities. The Lord's special presence among both sentient beings (such as various deities, animals) and inert objects (such as mountains, rivers, stars, weapons) bestows superiority on these entities. Divine manifestations are of two types – direct, where the Lord incarnates in different forms such as Rama, Krishna, Vedavyasa etc., and intrinsic, where the Lord's special presence in some objects gives them superiority over other objects (ex: Meru's superiority among mountains, Ganges's superiority among rivers).

Chapter 11 (55 verses) - *Vishwa Roopa Darshanam* (The Lord's Universal Form): Arjuna, after learning about the Lord's innumerable manifestations, requests the Lord to allow him to see His Universal form and is granted divine vision by Him. Arjuna sees the Lord having the brightness of thousands of suns, pervading the entire world with infinite limbs, faces with no beginning or end etc. The Lord's infinite forms are as real as the universe. This chapter also has a soulful prayer by Arjuna on seeing the Lord's universal form. While the Lord had previously taught Arjuna about His greatness and attributes, the act of physically seeing the Lord's universal form completely solidifies Arjuna's faith in Sri Krishna's teachings.

Chapter 12 (20 verses) - *Bhakti Yoga* (The Path of Devotion): The Lord answers Arjuna's questions comparing the worship of Goddess Mahalakshmi and that of the Lord Almighty Narayana. Worshipping Lord Narayana is an easier way to attain *moksha*, while pleasing Mahalakshmi is difficult. Further, Sri Lakshmi operates under the Lord's control. One should propitiate Sri Lakshmi and other deities that are part of the Lord's entourage for maximum effect. *Bhakti* or devotion is focusing one's mind on the Lord. The Lord teaches other ways of devotion using facilities such as intellect, studying scriptures, performing prescribed duties etc. The last 8 verses describe the characteristics of an ideal devotee who is dear to the Lord.

Section 3: Reiteration of Concepts in Sections 1 and 2, Chapters 13 – 18 (212 verses)

Chapter 13 (35 verses) - *Kshetra Kshetrajna Yoga* (The Field and the Knower of the Field): The first section covers the tools and utilities to acquire Divine knowledge which itself was covered in detail in the second section. This third section expands on some of the critical issues briefly covered in the first two sections. In chapter 7, verse (7.4), the Lord briefly speaks about eight-fold nature which operates under His command and control. This chapter details that field or theatre of

operations and the one who knows them. The interaction between the components of nature (sentient and inert) and living beings are also discussed.

Chapter 14 (27 verses) - *Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (Division of Qualities): This chapter has details on the three qualities of nature (*sattv* – piety, *rajas* – passion, *tamas* – ignorance) which define one's personality. These concepts were introduced in chapter 3 (3.5) and are expanded here. Creation of the universe through sentient Mother Nature is described. The ways in which the three qualities bind a person are also explained. The methods to escape from the clutches of the three qualities are described.

Chapter 15 (20 verses) - *Purushottama Yoga* (Theology of the Supreme Being): This chapter is considered by many to have the core teachings of the **Gita**. The **Bhagavad Gita** has 700 verses spread among 18 chapters. Interestingly, this chapter which has 20 verses has 700 letters (15 verses have 32 letters each and the remaining 5 verses have 44 letters each)! This gives credence to this chapter's importance based on numerology. While the Lord had previously described the components of the universe such as living beings, inert objects, and the Lord Almighty, in this chapter the Lord illustrates the interrelations among them using the example of a banyan tree. In verse 15, the Lord explicitly states His presence in everyone and declares that He is the primary subject matter of the **Vedas**. In verses 16-20, the Lord emphatically describes Himself as the Supreme Being intrinsically different from all other beings, thereby convincingly establishing the philosophy of dualism (*dvaita*) which was propagated by Sri Madhwacharya.

Chapter 16 (24 verses) - *Daivasura Sampat Vibhaga Yoga* (The Divine and the Demoniatic Nature): This chapter delves deep into the types of human nature. In the previous chapters, there were many references to pious and virtuous people with divine nature and to people with demoniac nature. This chapter provides more details on human traits.

These traits typically are intrinsic to an individual. One cannot judge people based on external appearance, position in society etc. The personality traits of people with divine nature and those with demoniac nature are described in detail.

Chapter 17 (28 verses) - *Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (The Threefold Faith): In the previous chapters, especially chapter 14, the nature of individuals influenced by the qualities of *sattv*, *rajas*, *tamas* were stated a number of times. This chapter has more details on the concept of threefold faith with detailed discussion on the impact of these qualities on various issues such as faith, food habits, sacrificial rituals, charitable giving, meditation etc.

Chapter 18 (78 verses) - *Mokshasanyasa Yoga* (Liberation and Renunciation): This chapter starts with a discussion on the subtle differences between renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment of the rewards of labour (*tyaga*). The types of rewards from actions are also discussed. The five prerequisites required for performing activity are identified. Different types of knowledge, action, doers, intellect, determination, and happiness are also discussed. Additional details on the four societal categories of people are provided (this was briefly indicated in (4.13)). The concept of liberation (*moksha*) is discussed in detail in this chapter. The first 55 verses contain a discussion on the topics identified so far. The Lord concludes His sermon in the next 17 verses. Arjuna responds to Lord Krishna's teachings in verse 73. Sanjaya, who has been describing the proceedings of the war and the Lord's glorious expounding of *dharma* (The **Gita**) to Arjuna, euphorically concludes his commentary in the following 5 verses.

Organization of the Book

This book is primarily based on the interpretation of the **Gita** by Sri Raghavendra Swamy (Sri Rayaru) in his pioneering work, **Gita Vivruti**. Vivruti means 'explanation' and in the **Gita Vivruti**, Sri Rayaru has consolidated unique interpretations on the **Gita** by Sri Madhwacharya (in

his works **Gita Bhashya**, **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya**) and commentaries on these two works by Sri Jaya Teertha (**Prameya Deepika** and **Nyaya Deepika**). **Gita Bhashya** is the very first work of Sri Madhwacharya, where he provided a unique interpretation of **the Gita**. In a subsequent work, **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya**, Sri Madhwacharya provides detailed arguments and the scriptural basis for many of the interpretations of **Gita Bhashya**.

This book has 18 main chapters with each chapter corresponding to the relevant chapter in the **Gita**. In each chapter, the book presents the original Sanskrit verse along with a simple translation in English. At the end of the original text, an explanation of key concepts covered in the chapter is provided, based on authentic commentaries on the **Gita** by Sri Raghavendra Teertha (Sri Rayaru) in his work **Gita Vivruti** and on lectures by Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha. At the end of each chapter, a summary of that chapter is provided. The summary section also refers to relevant verses in that chapter for clarity, and this section can be read 'stand-alone' by those readers who want a quick summary of the various chapters. It is hoped that the readers will find this version useful in better understanding the greatest psychological manual ever written – **The Bhagavad Gita**.

Sri Vishnu Teertha from Madinur, a great saint philosopher of the 18th century has identified one verse from each chapter of the **Gita** as a representation of the core tenets of that entire chapter in his work **Bhagavad Gita Saroddhara**. This was done to help devotees who wanted to chant the **Gita** everyday but could not chant all 700 verses. These core verses are highlighted in this book in italics.

This book has 3 annexures. The first annexure contains a section from the epic **Varaha Purana** which describes the glory of **The Gita** and is typically read after completing a reading of **the Gita**. The second annexure has a discussion on the philosophical interpretation of the **Gita** with a sample illustration. The third annexure is about the core tenets of the

philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya and the corresponding verses in the **Gita** that support these tenets.

The last section of this book identifies literature cited in this book. The principal references are the **Gita**, part of the great epic the **Mahabharata** and commentaries on the **Gita** by Sri Madhwacharya, Sri Jaya Teertha and Sri Raghavendra Teertha. The references are indicated by their initials within square brackets. For example, the **Gita Bhashya** is identified as [GB].

àW_nÙm ...- AORdfn` m: Chapter 1 – Arjuna’s Distress

' " b ūcml\$:

> Xd\$Znam|U\$ZEdmgdXnf{dd{O9' 2&
n[an]Jª Jê\$ÍMmZ² JrVnWªdú¶|m' bfv...&&

Benedictory Verse (Gita Bhashya) : Salutations to the Lord and teacher Narayana (Vedavyasa) who is revealed by the **Gita**. He is ever devoid of defects such as dependence and ignorance. He is not limited by time, space, and attributes. (Even though the **Gita** is full of many meanings, only a simple meaning is told here to aid general readers).

> लक्ष्मीZnam|U\$ZEdm n]JªnVnZ²Jê\$Z{n &
HÙ_©! rH\$UJrVn¶|m ^m` nÚP\$W@S|k_² &&

Benedictory Verse (Gita Vivruti) : After saluting Lord Narayana (consort of Lakshmi), Sri Madhwacharya, and other teachers, we are summarizing the concepts from **Gita Bhashya**, **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya** and related commentaries which offer a unique perspective on the **Bhagavad Gita** taught by Lord Sri Krishna.

Chapter Introduction: Sri Vedavyasa composed the great epic **Mahabharata** which contains all the essential teachings from the **Vedas**, and this allows even those who do not have access or eligibility to learn the **Vedas** to gain necessary knowledge to help them in their spiritual journey. The epic **Mahabharata** is spread over 18 volumes and the **Bhagavad Gita** (or **Gita**, in short), is part of *Bheeshma Parva* (or the Book of Bheeshma). The **Mahabharata** is compared to the divine flower *parijata*, and the **Gita** is like the nectar (or essence) of the flower. Sri Raghavendra Teertha (Sri Rayaru) has composed a unique commentary on the **Gita** titled, **Gita Vivruti** [GV] which is a summary of the two commentaries on the **Gita** by

Sri Madhwacharya namely, **Gita Bhashya** [GB] and **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya** [GTN]. The **Gita** has 701 verses spread over 18 chapters. Sri Rayaru has organized these 18 chapters into 3 sections of 6 chapters each. The first section (chapters 1-6) broadly describes the processes and prerequisites required to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge that one would need in one's spiritual journey. The second section (chapters 7-12) describes the nature of the divine, spiritual knowledge and the third section (chapters 13-18) expands on some of the key concepts covered in sections 1 and 2.

The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Arjuna, and Lord Krishna as narrated by Lord Vedavyasa in the epic, **Mahabharata**. The great war between the armies of the Kaurava and Pandava cousins, was witnessed by Sanjaya, the aide of the blind King Dhrutarashtra who was head of the Kaurava dynasty. Sanjaya rushes to Dhrutarashtra soon after the fall of Bheeshma, the commander of the Kaurava army [**Mahabharata**, Bheeshma Parva, Chapter 13]. The stunned Dhrutarashtra wants to know everything that happened on the battlefield from the very beginning. Sanjaya narrates all the events from the beginning of the war. He stays with the king till the end of the war relaying all the events to him. He can do this because Sage Vedavyasa grants him divine vision to remotely view the war and provide him with updates.

All 47 verses in the first chapter and the first 10 verses in the second chapter provide the background and context for Arjuna's apprehensions about the war, and Lord Krishna starts His sermon to Arjuna then onwards.

Dhrutarashtra starts by asking the following question to Sanjaya.

What did my Clan and the Pandavas do in Kurukshetra?

Yāni>Cdm Y-
 Y_ p d oHēj d og_dVm`ir ligd...&
 _m H\$m..nrĒSēlmūpd {H\$ HēdV gĀO` l&& 1 &&

Dhrutarashtra said: O Sanjaya! Assembled at Kuru Kshetra, the designated land for committing righteous acts (Field of Righteousness), what did my clan of Kauravas and Pandavas do? (1.1)

Comments: The first verse in the **Gita** starts with King Dhrutarashtra asking the above question to his aide Sanjaya. The first word here is ‘*Dharma*’ which is one of the names of the Lord Almighty who shoulders (*dharana*) the universe. In that sense, the first verse also acts as a benedictory verse of the **Gita**.

The King begins by asking Sanjaya what happened between his clan (Kauravas) and the Pandavas in Kurukshetra which was known as *Dharma Kshetra* or the ‘Field of Righteousness’. This question reveals the King’s apprehensions. He was convinced that the Pandavas with the guidance of Lord Krishna would be invincible (but Krishna had sworn not to take up arms). On the other hand, Bheeshma was also known to be invincible and so the King hoped against hope that his sons would not be defeated in this war that was being fought in an area known as the ‘Field of Righteousness’. Hence, he was surprised to hear that Bheeshma had fallen.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha Swamiji in his work **Bhagavad Gita Saroddhara** [BGS] identifies this verse as the central piece of chapter 1. After all, chapter 1 sets the context for the entire **Gita**, and it starts with King Dhrutarashtra’s question. The theatre of war is our body, and the armies represent the angelic and demoniac forces inside each of us. The interaction between them is the context for the **Gita**.

Duryodhana’s Apprehension

gD` CdmM Ÿ-

Ñi0MmnmÊSclmZrH§ ì` j§Xiw nY ZñVXm &

AnMm@mngšà` anOmdMZ_~drV²&& 2 &&

Sanjaya said: King Duryodhana, upon seeing the formation of the Pandavas' army, immediately rushed to his teacher Drona, and said as follows. (1.2)

Comments: Sanjaya answers Dhritarashtra's question in the following 9 verses. Sri Sumateendra Teertha in his **Bhava Ratna Kosha** [BRK] draws attention to the use of the word 'tu' as implying Duryodhana's anxiety as soon as he saw the formidable Pandava army ('tu' is normally used to add emphasis). Hence, the Kaurava prince immediately rushes to his teacher Drona. It is interesting to note that Duryodhana approaches his teacher Drona and not the commander of the Kaurava forces, Bheeshma, to give him information about the Pandava army, perhaps to acknowledge the fact that many warriors in the Pandava army were Drona's students.

nī`Vn\$nnĒEānī nUm_nMm̄ ©_hVt M_y 2`&
 ī`TāDpXnī Ū Vd {eī` Ū Yr_Vm && 3 &&

O My Teacher! Look at the formation of the mighty army of Pandavas which has been organized by your clever student Dhrushtadyumna, son of Drupada. (1.3)

Comments: Duryodhana reminds Drona that the formation of the Pandava army has been organized by Dhrushtadyumna, a brilliant warrior who learnt the art of warfare from Drona himself, implying that the Pandavas have a formidable army formation. Duryodhana also refers to the Pandavas' army as mighty, even though his own army was much bigger.

Aī eam_hōdngm^r_nOg_m`qY &
 `w`mZno{danOü DpXü _hmaV... && 4 &&

Yī`HōVü{H\$VnZ...H\$eānOü dr`@mZ`&
 nē{OV²HqV^mOü eā`ü Zanīr d... && 5 &&

युधमन्युः पुरुजित्कुन्तिभोजश्च श्येभ्यः
 युधामन्युश्च द्रुपदश्चैव महाबाहो ॥ १.४ ॥

Possessing heavy weapons are the brave warriors Yuyudhana (Satyaki), Virata, and King Drupada, all *Maharathas*. They are as capable as Bheema and Arjuna. (1.4)

Other brave warriors include Drushtaketu, Chekitana, Kashiraja who are extraordinarily strong, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Shybhya who are superior among men. (1.5)

Yudhamanyu, the brave warrior, Uttamowja, the strong warrior, Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra, and sons of Draupadi are also here. They too are *Maharathas*. (1.6)

Comments: Duryodhana recognizes and names 18 leaders from the Pandava army whom he considers as being comparable to Bheema and Arjuna in valor. They are – Dhrushtadyumna, Satyaki, Virata, Drupada, Drushtaketu, Chekitana, Kashiraja, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, Shybhya, Yudhamanyu, Uttamowja, Abhimanyu and the five sons of Draupadi (Parativindya, Sutasoma, Shrutakeerti, Shataneeka, Shrutakarma). These leaders were termed '*Maharathas*', meaning they were capable of single-handedly fighting 10,000 enemy soldiers. They were experts in the use of both types of weapons – *astra* and *shastra*. Here, *astra* refers to weapons such as arrows that are launched after praying and invoking a deity, and *shastra* refers to arrows that are launched without such invocation.

Interestingly, Duryodhana does not name Krishna who was charioteering Arjuna. This is perhaps due to Krishna's vow that He would not take up arms in the war. Duryodhana probably thought Krishna did not count if He was not fighting. A big miscalculation!

Añ_nH\$ Vw{d{ei:m`oVmZ^Z~nV {ÜOnm_ &
 Zm H\$m__ g|` n` gÄknV\$VmZ^~dr{ Vo&& 7 &&

^dmZ^rî_ü H\$U@ Hñü g{qVÄO`...&
 AceEWm_m{dH\$U@ gm_X{ÎmVWpl M && 8 &&

AÍ`oM ~hd...egm' XW}E` °\$Or{dVm.. &
 ZnZmeóahaUm.gd}` ð{demXm.. && 9 &&

O Drona! Superior among the wise men! Now I will enumerate the great warriors from our side. So, please listen with attention (1.7)

Our side includes yourself, Bheeshma, Karna, Krupa who has won many wars, Ashwatthama, Vikarna and Bhoorishravas, son of Somadatta. (1.8)

Along with them are many warriors ready to sacrifice their lives for my sake. They are all well versed in wars and are armed with heavy weapons. (1.9)

Comments: Duryodhana now names 7 leaders from his side. He indicates that they are all ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Duryodhana is looking at this war purely to justify holding onto the Pandavas' share of the kingdom and believes that everyone in his side is fighting to please him and not for any higher cause. It is interesting to note that while Duryodhana names 18 leaders from the Pandavas, he only rattles 7 names from his side. Further he does not name his brothers such as Dushasana. This points to some doubts in his mind about his brothers' capabilities.

An`m@SVXñ_nH\$ ~b\$^rî_m{^aj V_2&
 n`m@SpEdX_Vfns~b\$^r_m{^aj V_2&& 10 &&

But our army headed by Bheeshma is not strong enough to defeat them. While their army headed by Bheema can defeat us. (1.10)

Comments: After reviewing the two armies, Duryodhana is beginning to have doubts about the capabilities of his army. He knows that his is not a just cause, but as a representation of *Kali*, the evil soul, it is in his nature to adamantly get into a war even when he knows that he is wrong and that his side is not capable of winning. Note that while Dhrushtadyumna is the commander of the Pandavas' army, Duryodhana recognizes that the real leader of the Pandavas is the hugely experienced Bheema.

A`ZfW M gdfw` Wm^mJ_dpñVVm. &&
^rî__dm^aj YVw^dV...gdEd {h && 11 &&

Hence all of you need to position yourselves in your designated spots in the formations and guard Bheeshma, our commander. (1.11)

Comments: Duryodhana is very particular about protecting Bheeshma as he is worried that Bheeshma's fall would discourage his entire army. The fact that he was worried about the safety of Bheeshma who was the most capable warrior in his side is an indication of his fear.

Bugle Calls

Vñ` gDZ` Z²hfªHédÕ...{nVm_h... &&
qghZrKS{dZÜmfj..eJ \$XÜ_màVmndmZ² && 12 &&

To inject confidence in Duryodhana, the very courageous Bheeshma who is the senior most Kaurava, roared like a lion and sounded his conch. (1.12)

Comments: Bheeshma recognizes that Duryodhana is so petrified looking at the strength of the Pandava army that he asks Drona and others to protect him. In fact, it is the duty of Bheeshma, as the commander, to protect the Kaurava army. To instill confidence in Duryodhana and the

other Kauravas, Bheeshma signals his readiness by his lion like roar and the sounding of his conch.

VV...eđ ſü ^ò @ nUdnZH\$Jm_† m..&
ghgpmä` hŷ` ÝV g eāXñVw_lone^dV²V&& 13 &&

Conch-shells, bugles, trumpets, drums, and cow horns were sounded loudly by the Kauravas which resulted in their sound filling the entire space. (1.13)

Comments: Taking a cue from Bheeshma, other Kaurava leaders sounded various organs to signal their readiness and command their troops to get ready. It is interesting to note that while Bheeshma sounds his conch, a musical instrument with spiritual significance which has a pleasant sound, other leaders sound different instruments, many making harsh sounds not in harmony with each other. Perhaps an indication of disharmony and disunity among the Kauravas.

VV...ceVh` j` P@ _h{V ñ` ÝXZopñVVmp&
_mŷd...nmĒSedüpd {Xî` mpELſ mpàXÜ_Vw.&& 14 &&

At this time, Lord Madhava (Krishna) and Arjuna, son of Pandu, who were seated on a magnificent chariot pulled by white horses, sounded their respective divine conch shells. (1.14)

Comments: Lord Krishna and Arjuna sounding their conches while seated in a horse drawn chariot also has a spiritual interpretation. As noted by Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in his GPM, as per the **Upanishads**, the chariot is a representation of the human body. The wandering horses represent the sense organs, and the road travelled represents the objects of sense pleasure. The charioteer (Krishna) represents the intellect, and the leash which controls the horses represents the mind. The charioteer (Krishna) and the passenger (Arjuna) respectively represent the Supreme Soul and the individual soul resident in each body. The conch is shaped like the

primordial symbol ‘Om’ which is the root letter of all scriptures. Hence the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna represents the collective wisdom of scriptures such as the **Vedas**.

nm#nOY` \$öfrH\$enoXoIXÎngYZÄO` ...&
 nmÊS\$XÜ_m_hme\$ \$^r_H\$m@H\$Ka...&& 15 &&

AZIV{dO` \$anOmH@Vrnü no` @Y{Öa...&
 ZH@b...ghXoü gKnf_{UnûnH\$np&& 16 &&

H\$mî` ü na_ödnng...{eI ÊS\$ M_hmaW...&
 Y\$ÜjZno{danOü gnê` {H\$üman@OV...&& 17 &&

ÐhXnoÐmXò mü gd@...n\$WdrnVo&
 gm^Ðü _hm-nhp.e\$ \$XÜ_w.n\$VH\$ n\$VH²&&18 &&

Lord Hrishikesha (Krishna) sounded Panchajanya, Dhananjaya (Arjuna) sounded Devadatta, and valiant Vrukodara (Bheema) sounded Powndra. (1.15)

King Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, sounded Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva sounded Sughosha and Manipushpaka, respectively. (1.16)

The King of Kashi an expert bowman, Shikhandi a great warrior on chariot, Dhrushtadyumna, Virata and Satyaki, unbeaten in a war, all sounded their respective conch shells. (1.17)

Likewise, King Drupada, the son of Draupadi and the strong-armed brave son of Subhadra (Abhimanyu,) all sounded their respective conch shells. (1.18)

Comments: It is interesting to note that while the Kauravas used various instruments to sound their readiness, the Pandavas uniformly sounded their respective conches to the maximum effect to display unity.

g KmfnoYnV@ñiñUnöX` mZ ì` Xna` V²&
Z^ü nWdt Mpd Vw_lbnöì` ZWnK` Z²&& 19 &&

The vibrations from the massive sound of the Pandava warriors' conch shells echoed across the earth and sky, spreading everywhere, and shattered the hearts of King Dhrutarashtra's sons. (1.19)

Comments: The massive, uniform sound from the synchronized sounding of conch shells by the Pandava leaders cut into the Kaurava hearts as if to warn them of their impending defeat and destruction.

AW ì` dmpñWVnZ²XfO%YnV@ñiñZ²H\$ñÜdO...&
àdñmeógånmVoYZñUä` nñESd...&& 20 &&

öfrHñe\$VXm dñS` '²BX_nh _hrnVo&

Looking at King Dhrutarashtra's children who were ready to wage the war, Arjuna, (the one whose chariot bears the flag of Lord Hanuman), just when the time had come to operate the weapons, held up his bow, and spoke to Lord Krishna as follows. (1.20)

Comments: Arjuna wants to take a good look at the armies which consisted of all major, accomplished rulers and warriors of that time. In this verse, a reference is made to the flag of Arjuna's chariot which bears the figure of Lord Hanuman, the great warrior from the **Ramayana**. This indicates that both the Supreme Soul (*paramatma* = Lord Krishna) and the superior soul among all individual souls (*jeevottama* = *vayudeva* = Hanuman) are protecting Arjuna.

Arjuna Inspects the Armies

AO Cdm Y-

gZ` ne^` no_@ oaW\$ñWm` _@A` W && 21 &&

`mclXVnz{Z[aj @h\$` nDpH\$m_nZdpñWVnz`&
H\$_@mgh` nDì` '²Apñ_Z²aUg_ú_o&& 22 &&

`nñ`_mzm²Adj @h\$` EV@ì g_mVm..&
YnV@ññ` Xw_@ò_@o{à` {MH\$F@...&& 23 &&

Arjuna said: O Achyuta! Please position my chariot in between the two armies. I would like to look at those who are assembled here, ready to fight the war, and with whom I will be fighting. (1.21) (1.22)

I would also like to look at those warriors who are here to fight the war to please the evil minded Duryodhana (son of Dhritarashtra). (1.23)

Comments: After Duryodhana’s review of the armies, it is the turn of Arjuna to survey the forces assembled on the battlefield. Arjuna’s review and feelings of apprehension about waging the war form the basis for Sri Krishna’s sermon (Gita).

gD` Cdm &
Ed_@P\$noöfrH@emJ@stH@ez ^mV &
gZ` ne^` no_@ onWm{` EdmaWñm__²&& 24 &&

^rì_DnUà_# V...gdFñM _hr{j Vm_²&
Cdm nmV@ñí` Vnz²g' dVnz²H@e\$Z{V && 25 &&

Sanjaya said: O Bhaarata! (Dhrutarashtra, from the lineage of King Bharata)! Lord Hrishikesha (Krishna), addressed thus by Gudakesha (Arjuna) positioned the grand chariot in between the two armies. (1.24)

Turning the chariot towards Bheeshma, Drona and other kings, Lord Krishna said - O Partha (Arjuna)! Look at all the Kauravas assembled here. (1.25)

Comments: Arjuna is referred to as Gudakesha – the one who has conquered sleep (*gudaka*). Sleep, along with lethargy represents *tamas* (ignorance). Sleep is probably the most difficult state for one to overcome. Thus, anyone who can control sleep is said to have control over sense organs. Hence, Arjuna is most eligible to receive the sermon from the Lord. The Lord is referred to as Hrishikesha, one who has control over everyone’s sense organs and indeed on everyone and everything in the universe.

Vīṁrī` V²pñWVmZ²nmV...{nVZW {nVm_hmZ²&
 AnVmì nZ²_nVbmZ²^ nVZ²nñ mZ²nmñ mZ²gI trVWm&
 ceemZ²güXüp gZ` né^` m(n && 26 &&

VmZ²g_rú` g H\$Vò ...gdmZ²~YyZdpñWVmZ²&
 Hñ` mna` m@dñm{dfrX{PX_~drV²&&27&&

Looking at both the armies, Arjuna sees warriors who were like his father (father figures), father-in-law, grandfathers, uncles, teachers, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and colleagues. (1.26)

Seeing all his relatives assembled there to wage the war, Arjuna (son of Kunti) was overwhelmed by emotion and addressed Sri Krishna with great anxiety. (1.27)

Comments: While Arjuna knew that many of his near and dear ones would be participating in the war, he is overwhelmed when he sees all of

them assembled in one place. Faced with the prospect of many of them dying, regardless of who won the war, Arjuna is overcome with grief and emotion.

Sri Rayaru in GV provides an explanation for the term *vishada* which is used to express Arjuna's emotion. *Vishada* means mental weakness caused by grief, which is a result of delusion, which in turn is caused by the fear of losing loved ones.

Arjuna Develops Cold Feet

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grXpV __ Jmñ(U _ñ \$M n[aeñ` {V &
 dñWñü earao_oam_hfñ Om` Vo%& 29 &&

Arjuna said: O Krishna! I am looking at my relatives and friends gathered here to wage the war. (1.28)

Looking at them, my limbs are weakening, my face is crumpling, my body is trembling, and my hair is bristling. (1.29)

Comments: From this verse, till the end of this chapter is a description of Arjuna's anxiety and fear when faced with the prospect of waging the war which would result in the loss of lives of multitudes of people including many of his near and dear ones. Note that Arjuna begins describing his anxiety to the Lord by addressing Him as Krishna. This has a special significance. Sri Madhwacharya in his **Gita Bhashya** [GB] (5th Chapter), interprets Krishna as '*Lokarakshaka*', the one who controls everyone and everything in the universe. By using this term, Arjuna expresses his faith that Lord Krishna will have a solution to his grief.

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{Z_Îm(Z M nî` m_ {dnarVn(Z HĒed ĳ
Z M I ò mZmî` m_ hĒdmñdOZ_nhdòĳ&& 31 &&

Z H\$m-o{dO` \$H\$U Z M anĀ` \$gñ m(Z M ĳ
qH\$ ZmanĀ` z JmcdYX qH\$ ^mJou{dVz dmĳ&&32&&

My bow (Gandeeva) is slipping from my hands, my skin is burning, I am unable to even stand, and my mind is blurred with delusion. (1.30)

O Keshava! I am seeing many bad omens. I do not see anything good coming out of killing my own people. (1.31)

O Krishna! I do not aspire for victory, kingdom, or happiness. O! Govinda! What use is this kingdom, luxuries, or even living? (1.32)

Comments: Sri Madhwacharya in his Gita Bhashya [GB], interprets the Lord's name Keshava, as the one who inspires even deities Brahma (*ka*) and Rudra (*esha*). Arjuna, by using this term to address the Lord expresses his complete faith that Lord Krishna who inspires even deities Brahma and Rudra, can surely help him. Arjuna's sensing of bad omens reflects his weak mind (If these omens were indeed predicting bad outcomes, he would have lost the war, which did not happen).

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V B_@dpñWVm` ŌoànUnġĒ` ³EdmYZm(Z M ĳ&& 33 &&

AnMmî m_({nVa...nñññVWpd M {nVm_hm.ĳ
_nVbm..ídem..nññ m. í` mbm.gñ~pYZñVWmĳ&& 34 &&

EVnD hYVf ANaf ;ZVn(n _YgyXZ &
 A(n IpnS` anA` n` hVnm.qH\$ Zw_hrH\$Vo&& 35&&

The very people for whom we work hard to provide comfort and luxury are here ready to give up their possessions and even their lives. They are like my father, grandfather, uncle, son, grandson, brother, brother-in-law, teacher, and other relatives. (1.33) (1.34)

O Madhusoodana! Even if they hurt me, I do not want to kill them. I would not kill them even if I could win all three worlds by doing so. Why would I kill them just for some land? (1.35)

Comments: Arjuna is overcome with emotion and states that even if his enemies attacked him when he turned away from war, he would not want to harm them. Even if victory would net him all the three worlds, he would not value them if he had to kill his loved ones. Why then would he wage a war just for some land?

Note that Arjuna addresses Krishna as Madhusoodana. Demons Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of Krishna’s sweat and in that sense are Krishna’s children. As they grew up, they became very evil, and Krishna had no choice but to destroy them. Arjuna indicates here that he does not have such strong will power.

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 nmn_cdnel `Xn_nZ^hEdVnZ^AnVnq` Z... && 36 &&

Vn_mPrhmfcd` \$hYVfYmV@mi nZ^g~mYdmZ^&
 ndOZ\$h H\$WshEdmgul Z...n` m_ _mYd && 37&&

O Janardana! What pleasure do we get by killing the sons of Dhrutarashtra? Killing these vandals (*atayins*) will only result in accumulation of sins. (1.36)

O Madhava! It is not proper for us to kill Dhritarashtra's sons who are our own relatives. How can we achieve happiness by killing our own people? (1.37)

Comments: Arjuna refers to the Kauravas as *atatayina* which means those who have committed one or more of the following six sins – torching others, poisoning others, using weapons against the unprotected, stealing others' land, money, and women. It is the duty of someone in Arjuna's position to destroy those who commit these sins. It is his duty to preserve and protect the innocent in society. While Arjuna is aware that the Kauravas deserve to be punished, he is worried that doing so would result in collateral damage – that is the death of his relatives, elders and teachers which would result in him accumulating sins.

Arjuna Argues Against War

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H\$W\$Z kô_ñ_mf^...nmnKñ_mfPd{V9w_2&
Hb; `H\$V\$Xmf\$`\$anî`{00ZmKZ && 39 &&

Hb; `oàUî`pîV Hb;Y_mf:gZm/Zm.. &
Y_)Zi`Hb;H\$ñZ_2AY_mf{^dE`W && 40 &&

AY_mf^dm^2H\$U àXw`pîV Hb;{ó`... &
órfwXw`gwdmU} Om`VodU@LH\$a... && 41 &&

g\$`H\$anoZaH\$m p Hb;ZmZn\$Hb;ñ` M &
nVpîV {nVamofn\$b{m{ñES`KH\$H\$m m.. && 42 &&

These Kauravas who are greedy for the kingdom have no knowledge of the sins they would accumulate by killing their family members and by betraying their friends. (1.38)

O Janardana! How can we, who understand the perils of destroying families, not be aware of the need to stay away from these sinful acts? (1.39)

With the destruction of the families, traditional familial virtues will perish. When virtuousness declines, unrighteousness will permeate society. (1.40)

O Vaarshneya! The rise of unrighteousness will cause surviving women to stray away from morality. Women devoid of morals result in unholy families. (1.41)

Rise of unholy families will push the lineage of children and grandchildren to hell and departed elders who are deprived of appropriate offerings will also fall into hell. (1.42)

Comments: Arjuna tries to make a case for avoiding the battle by putting forward additional arguments. His initial argument was that the war would result in the loss of many innocent lives, including elders and teachers who were pious and revered. Here he argues that the loss of many men in the war would lead to instability in society and give rise to unholy families. This would result in the loss of compulsory rituals such as offerings to departed elders. Arjuna also says that the Kauravas are blinded by their greed and are unable to see the perils of such a war. But how could the Pandavas who are a lot more knowledgeable about such perils be similarly blinded?

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 ZaHṢ {Z` VṢdmgm^dVrĒ` Zveṽ ṽ 44 &&

Ahno~V_hV²nmnṢHṢVñi`d{gVmd`_²Ṽ
 `XānĀ` gṽ bno^z hYVṣñdOZ_ṽVm..Ṽ 45 &&

`X_m_àVrHṢma_²AeóṣeónmU`...&
 YnVñiṁmaUohY`mVY_oj_o_VaṢ^dV²Ṽ 46 &&

Such sinful deeds by destroyers of families will result in corruption of virtuous classes and decline of virtuous familial traditions. (1.43)

O Janardana! We have heard from elders that people whose virtuous familial traditions are destroyed are sure to fall into hell. (1.44)

Alas! We are about to commit a great sin by killing our own people because of our greed for kingdom and for the sake of happiness. (1.45)

It would be better for me if I relinquished my weapons and offered no resistance while Dhritarashtra's sons kill me in this war. (1.46)

Comments: Arjuna now summarizes his arguments for staying away from the war. Firstly, he would be committing a great sin by killing near and dear ones which included elders and teachers who were pious and revered. Secondly, the loss of millions of men would lead to instability in society due to straying away from traditions related to a class (*jati dharma*) and traditions specific to families (*kula dharma*). In addition, anyone causing these would accrue sins to their departed elders. Arjuna laments that he is about to commit great sins in waging this war, the purpose of which is to gain the kingdom. He is convinced that it is better for him to relinquish his weapons and let the Kauravas kill him as that would prevent him from accruing sins and in fact may lead him to heavens hereafter for his noble act.

As will be seen later, Arjuna fights the war and the Pandavas successfully rule their kingdom for many years. None of Arjuna's fears come true. The evil clan of the Kauravas and their supporters such as the virtuous but guilty Bheeshma and Drona are vanquished, and society does not fall apart. In fact, Bharat enjoys a long, peaceful and prosperous period under Pandavas' rule. The **Gita** clearly suggests that omens do not have any predictive value and chastise superstitious practices. Arjuna's experience of bad omens reflect his weak mental condition which is caused by his excessive attachment to his near and dear ones.

Arjuna Drops His Weapons

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{dgA` geasMm\$enH\$gd¼_mZg...&& 47 &&

Sanjaya said: Having said thus, Arjuna, stricken with deep sorrow in his mind, drops his bow and arrows and sits still in the middle of his chariot. (1.47)

Comments: While Arjuna indicates to Krishna his anxiety and unwillingness to wage war, his relinquishing of his bow and arrows is a signal to his large army that he is not yet ready to start the war. (The army of course could not have heard the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna). This action has led to their enemies drawing their own conclusions which Krishna indicates later.

Summary of Chapter 1

The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna as narrated by Lord Vedavyasa in the epic, **Mahabharata**. The great war between the armies of the Kaurava and the Pandava cousins, was witnessed by Sanjaya, aide of the blind King Dhritarashtra who was head of the Kaurava dynasty. Sanjaya rushes to Dhritarashtra soon after the fall

of Bheeshma, the commander of the Kaurava army. The stunned Dhrutarashtra wants to know everything that happened on the battlefield from the very beginning. Sanjaya narrates all the events from the beginning of the war. He stays with the king till the end of the war relaying all the events to him. He can do this because Sage Vedavyasa grants him divine vision to view the war remotely and provide Dhrutarashtra the updates.

The King starts by asking Sanjaya as to what happened between his clan (the Kauravas) and the Pandavas in Kurukshetra (which is known as Dharma Kshetra or the 'Field of Righteousness') (1.1). This question reveals the King's apprehensions. He is convinced that the Pandavas with the guidance of Lord Krishna would be invincible (but, Krishna has sworn not to touch or take up arms). On the other hand, Bheeshma, the very epitome of justice, was also known to be invincible. The King was therefore hoping against hope that his sons would not be defeated, especially in a war that was being fought in an area known as the Field of Righteousness. So, he was shocked to hear that Bheeshma had fallen. Sanjaya responds, saying that initially Duryodhana looks at the Pandava army and rushes to inform his teacher Dronacharya about its strength. He makes sure to let him know that the army is being led by Dhrishtadyumna, a student of Drona himself. Then he goes on to enumerate other great leaders on the side of the Pandavas. These leaders were termed '*Maharathas*', meaning they were capable of single-handed fighting with 10,000 enemy soldiers. In all, Duryodhana enumerates 18 leaders from the Pandavas' side, other than the five Pandava brothers. Interestingly, he does not recognize Krishna as being a part of the Pandava side. This is because Krishna had vowed not to use any arms in the war. Duryodhana obviously did not realize the invaluable advice and guidance that Krishna would be providing to Arjuna. Ultimately, this miscalculation had led to the Kauravas' defeat. This illustrates the peril of ignoring the Lord who is responsible for everything in this universe, just because one cannot physically see Him. (1.2-1.6). Duryodhana then enumerates the great warriors on his side which included – Dronacharya, Bheeshma, Karna, Krupa, Ashwatthama, Vikarna and Bhoorishravas. However, he did not expect the Pandavas to turn up with a huge, well-organized army. He

knows that in addition to the experienced warriors, the Pandava army also included the 5 young children of Draupadi and each of them was brave and capable. He also knows that while Dhrushtadyumna is the commander of the Pandava army, it is really the invincible Bheema who is their star warrior. Duryodhana is now clearly very perturbed. He wants to ensure that Bheeshma is well protected as he sees Bheeshma as extremely critical to his victory. He asks Dronacharya and others to ensure Bheeshma's safety (1.7-1.11). At this time, sensing Duryodhana's worry, Bheeshma decided to instil confidence in him by loudly roaring like a lion and sounding his conch. Other soldiers in the Kaurava army follow by sounding drums, trumpets, bugles etc, and the collective sound seemed to envelope the entire space. Now it is the turn of the Pandavas. Sri Krishna and Arjuna, while seated in their chariots sound their respective conches followed by other leaders in their army. The collective sound of these conches reverberated across earth and sky and seemed to shatter the hearts of King Dhritarashtra's sons. It is interesting to note that while the Kauravas used various instruments to sound their readiness, the Pandavas uniformly sounded their respective conches for the maximum effect. Lord Krishna and Arjuna sounding their conches while seated in a horse drawn chariot also has a spiritual interpretation. The chariot is a representation of the human body as noted in the **Upanishads**. The horses which pull the chariot represent the sense organs, and the roads travelled represent objects of sense pleasure. The charioteer (Krishna) represents the intellect, and the leash which controls the horses represents the mind. The charioteer (Krishna) and the passenger (Arjuna) represent the Supreme soul and the individual soul resident in each body. The conch is shaped like the primordial symbol 'Om' which is the root letter of all scriptures. Hence the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna represents the collective wisdom of all the scriptures such as the **Vedas** (1.12-1.19). Arjuna requests Krishna to take the chariot to the middle of the battleground so that he can have a good look at both the armies. He recognizes his teachers, cousins, nephews, uncles, grand uncles, children, friends etc., and gets very depressed. He is distressed at the very thought of waging a war where he himself might kill many of his near and dear ones. Arjuna tells Krishna that his body is

trembling, and that he is unable to hold his weapons. He was feeling disoriented and disillusioned. He was further seeing bad omens and felt there was nothing good coming out of this war. He says he does not crave for victory, or a kingdom won after losing so many near and dear ones (1.20-1.39). He reasons that with massive destruction of men, familial values would perish, and unrighteousness would take over society. Arjuna says that such a war has no benefits either here or hereafter. He says he would rather drop his weapons and let the Kauravas kill him rather than be responsible for such a destructive war. Saying thus, Arjuna drops his weapon to the ground and sits in his chariot feeling extremely dejected (1.40-1.47).

The rest of the **Gita** is a sermon from Lord Krishna to Arjuna to help him overcome his distress and doubts. The dropping of weapons by Arjuna is equivalent to one abdicating one's responsibility. At this stage, the following points are worth noting: Duryodhana was also distressed after looking at the Pandavas' army but there is a big difference between the distress of Duryodhana and that of Arjuna. Duryodhana was distressed at the thought of not being able to win the war and thereby usurp the Pandavas share of the kingdom illegally. On the other hand, Arjuna's distress was out of compassion towards his loved ones. Duryodhana shows no such compassion. Arjuna was not afraid of fighting as he had fought many wars before and had won them. But this time it was different. His enemies were people he cared for dearly.

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End of Chapter 1

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Chapter 2 – The Path of Doctrines

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 72 verses is termed *Sankhya Yoga* (The Path of Doctrines). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's basic questions about the purpose of life and other related philosophical concepts. Sensing that Arjuna's reservations about fighting the war were due to his fear of losing his loved ones, the Lord delves into the nature of individual souls, the indestructibility of souls, the relationship between individual souls and Himself. He reminds Arjuna that He gave human forms to individual souls to help them in their spiritual journey and that everyone must play their dutiful role in society. In verses 2.12 to 2.39, the Lord lectures on the nature of individual souls and the Supreme soul (Lord Almighty). In verse 2.39, the Lord tells Arjuna how to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge which is explained in brief in verses 2.45 to 2.51. In these verses, the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma*, that is, performing prescribed duties without expectations. The Lord urges Arjuna not to despair over the hurt that may be caused to his elders and teachers in the war, as they had chosen to support the evil king Duryodhana and reminds Arjuna that he had an obligation to fight this just war to protect his citizens. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to focus on performing his prescribed duty of protecting his citizens as an offering to the Lord Almighty and not let his emotions come in the way. Chapter 2 can be considered the foundational chapter of the entire **Gita** as it answers Arjuna's (and through Arjuna, everyone's) basic questions about the purpose of life. The remaining chapters serve to expand on the concepts presented in this chapter.

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get out of his chariot and wage the just war. It also indicates the need to get into action in pursuance of one's duty. Krishna also refers to Arjuna as *Parantapa* (destroyer of enemies), to remind him that he has waged and won many wars earlier and need not be afraid to fight this war.

Arjuna's Dilemma and Surrender to Krishna

Arjuna said: O Madhusoodana (Annihilator of demon Madhu)! How can I direct my arrows at Bheeshma and Drona who are worthy of worship?
(2.4)

Arjuna said: O Madhusoodana (Annihilator of demon Madhu)! How can I direct my arrows at Bheeshma and Drona who are worthy of worship?
(2.4)

Comments: Arjuna who is overcome with grief and emotion is not able to relate to Krishna's advice and reiterates his position in 5 verses. Arjuna indicates that even if he were to approach the war as a duty, he could not hurl his arrows at Bheeshma and Drona who have taught him much and are worthy of worship.

It is better to live by begging for alms than kill our great teachers. How can one enjoy the luxuries of a kingdom attained by waging a war and spilling the blood of these teachers who are of great eminence?
(2.5)

It is better to live by begging for alms than kill our great teachers. How can one enjoy the luxuries of a kingdom attained by waging a war and spilling the blood of these teachers who are of great eminence?
(2.5)

Comments: Arjuna argues that it is not worth winning the war which would entail killing his elders and teachers who are pious and God fearing, as that would not lead to any joy in this world and would bring difficulties hereafter also. A better option would be to give up fighting and live by begging for alms.

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 `mZed hEdmZ {OO{dfm_nV@dpnVWm..à_vt oYmV@ni`m..&& 6 &&

I do not know which is better, that we win, or they win over us. We do not desire to live by killing the sons of Dhritarashtra who are standing in front of us. (2.6)

Comments: Arjuna argues that if he wins the war by killing the Kauravas, it is in a way equivalent to losing, as the war would also entail the death of many near and dear ones. Arjuna, thus is not able to decide the better option. Prior to this verse, Arjuna seemed to have made up his mind that he would not wage the war, but now after reflecting on Krishna's advice he is weighing both the options.

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 `AN@...n`m{UV\$~{h VV_o{eI`nV@hsemY`_nEdm\$anP`_2&& 7 &&

My natural valor is subdued due to compassion. My mind is conflicted on the issue of duty. I am asking you. Which is the path for ultimate good? I am your disciple. I surrender to you. Please guide me. (2.7)

Comments: Arjuna is clearly conflicted and is not able to make up his mind. He surrenders to Krishna and asks for Krishna's guidance.

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 AdnB`^y`ndgnEZ`D\$anA`sgmUm`{n MmYnE`_2&& 8 &&

Even if I achieve unchallenged ownership of this prosperous world here, and supremacy over the deities in the upper worlds hereafter, I cannot see how I can dispel this grief which is draining my senses. (2.8)

Comments: Here again we see that Arjuna is conflicted. He declares that even if he were to follow his prescribed duties and wage the war to protect the citizens from the evil Kauravas, and even if his actions result in him accruing enough good credits to become the leader of heavens, he would be unable to control his grief over the prospect of losing near and dear ones.

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 Z`nä` h{V JndYX_2CödmVjUt ~^pd h && 9 &&

Sanjaya said: Gudakesha (Arjuna, the one who has conquered sleep), Parantapa (Arjuna - the destroyer of enemies), thus addressed Govinda, (Krishna - the controller of senses). Saying that he would not fight the war (as he is conflicted), he became silent. (2.9)

Comments: Arjuna is referred to as Gudakesha – the one who has conquered sleep. Sleep, along with lethargy represents *tamas* or ignorance. Arjuna has won over these and hence is eligible to receive the sermon from the Lord. Further, Arjuna is termed *Parantapa*, the one who has destroyed enemies in many wars. Sri Rayaru in GV draws attention to the use of the term ‘*ha*’ which indicates surprise. Sanjaya seems to be indicating that it was a surprise to him that Arjuna with such qualities, was in a despondent mood.

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 gZ` me^` no`ö` o{dfxYV{XsdM... && 10 &&

O Dhritarashtra of the Bharata dynasty! Lord Hrishikesha smilingly said the following words to the grief-stricken Arjuna who was in the middle of the armies. (2.10)

Comments: Krishna’s smile is a rhetorical reaction to the inconsistent position that Arjuna had placed himself in.

The Soul is Eternal, The Body is Perishable

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 Aenā` nZŸdenMñĒdšàkndnKñšj ^mfgo&
 JVngzJVngšj ZnZnenMpŸV npĒSVm.. && 11 &&

The Lord said: You are grieving over those who do not deserve sympathy and saying whatever is coming to your mind. Learned ones do not grieve over those who are about to die just as they do not grieve over those living. (2.11)

Comments: Elders and teachers such as Bheeshma and Drona, even though worthy of worship, were on the side of evil and so Arjuna should not have been grieving over their impending death. Krishna uses the word ‘*Prajnaavada*’ which has two meanings – one who says whatever that comes to one’s mind and secondly, one whose words are not acceptable to the wise.

Z Ēdđnh\$Om/wZmg\$Z Ēd\$Z_0OZmfYnm. &
 Z Mpd Z ^{dī`m...gd}d`_V...na_2&& 12 &&

There was no time when neither Me nor you nor any of these kings here did not exist. Even in future there will be no time when any of us will cease to exist. (2.12)

Comments: Krishna goes on to answer three conflicts in Arjuna’s mind which are causing him distress. Is the distress due to a fear of the loss of souls of loved ones? Or is it due to a fear of the loss of their physical bodies? Or is it due to a fear of the loss of their bodies which are equated to their souls?

He answers the first question in this verse where he categorically states that souls are eternal and have no beginning or end. This applies to

Arjuna, to all kings assembled at the warfront (and by extension everyone) and especially to the Lord Almighty, which is indicated using the word ‘*tu*’.

The fact that the Lord is especially eternal is supported by scriptures such as **Katha Upanishad (2.5.13)** which describes the Lord as ‘*nityo nityanam*’ (He is eternal among eternal). While the individual souls are eternal, the Lord’s eternity is superior to that of individual souls. Living beings whose souls are eternal do undergo creation and destruction of their physical bodies (birth and death), but the Lord who has a transcendental body does not experience creation or destruction. Hence, He is said to have superior eternity compared to individual souls. The other two questions are answered in later verses 2.13 and 2.20.

A question that arises at this stage is - how could Arjuna, himself a realized soul as an incarnation of deity Devendra, the king of all deities, harbour such doubts about the nature of the Lord? Sri Madhwacharya answers this question [GTN] by stating that the Lord in the form of Vedavyasa in the great epic **Mahabharata** elaborates the sermon in more detail for the benefit of humanity.

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 VWmXbmVāam(āYuañVÌ Z _w(V V&& 13 V&&

Just as one experiences childhood, youth, and old age, one similarly experiences attainment of another body. So, the wise ones do not grieve over the loss of the physical body. (2.13)

Comments: While the verse 2.12 deals with the issue of a soul’s nature, in this verse the Lord describes the nature of one’s physical body. Just as one goes through changes in the physical body in one’s lifetime, death is inevitable in the end. Hence Arjuna has no reason to grieve over the loss of the physical bodies of his loved ones in a just war.

Attachment Causes Misery

AmJ_nnmf` Zm(ZE` nmVnfV(Vj ñd ^mV && 14&&

Do sense organs and sensory objects cause one to experience cold or heat, happiness, or sadness? No. One experiences temporary happiness or sadness when these are accompanied by attachment. O Bharata! Rid yourself of attachment which is the real reason for happiness or sadness. (2.14)

Comments: If Arjuna's distress is due to him not being able to interact with his near and dear ones after they die in war, the Lord states that such distress is due to attachment. Interaction of sense organs with sensory objects does not in itself cause happiness or sadness. It is only when such interaction is accompanied by attachment to the physical body does one experience happiness or sadness. Krishna uses the example of heat and cold as sensory objects that cause pleasure or misery when they encounter one's skin (the only sense organ that covers one's entire body). A cool breeze in summer may cause pleasure but the same breeze in winter would cause discomfort. The difference is because of one's attachment to the body. Again, when one is asleep one does not feel distress in the presence of an object that would emit an unpleasant sound. However, when that person is awake the same sound would be objectionable. Krishna advises Arjuna to wage the just war and rid himself of attachment to his loved ones which is causing him distress.

`\$h Z i` W` YÉ` Voné f\$néff® &
g_Xw.l gñ \$Yra\$gné_#Édm` H\$énVo&& 15 &&

O Arjuna, Superior among men! One, who is equipoised in happiness or sadness caused due to attachment to sense organs and sense objects, is indeed eligible for liberation. (2.15)

Comments: Arjuna could argue that one way for him to avoid distress would be to avoid waging the war which could result in loss of loved ones. In this case, the issue of attachment does not arise. So, why not avoid the war? Lord Krishna says that waging a just war is Arjuna's duty and the way that Arjuna can avoid distress is by ridding himself of attachment to his near and dear ones. Such an action will also result in Arjuna achieving liberation hereafter.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १६ ॥
 C^` n{n N{i n/VñEdZ` mVîdX{e{^ ... ॥ 16 ॥

No good comes out of bad deeds. Also, there are no bad results from good deeds. The learned seers who have realized the Lord Almighty are convinced of these two facts. (2.16)

Comments: Arjuna has expressed concern that he will incur sins by killing elders and teachers during the war. However, these elders are on the side of evil and it is Arjuna's duty to fight for justice. In this verse, Krishna says that no sin is incurred by performing good deeds.

There is a second meaning to this verse as stated by Sri Rayaru [GV]- Inert nature is not subject to creation and destruction, and hence is eternal. The Lord Almighty is also eternal and indestructible. These two concepts have been traditionally taught by knowledgeable seers.

How can one say that inert matter and the Lord Almighty are eternal, and not subject to creation and dissolution? Sri Rayaru [GV] provides an answer by referring to the first line of this verse where - *asat* refers to prime material nature, *sat* refers to the Lord Almighty, *abhava* refers to *prag abhava* and *pradhwamsa abhava*, and *na vidyate* means 'does not exist'. This means that prime matter and the Lord Almighty do not have the conditions of the above *abhava* twins. Thus, the two entities are said to be eternal.

What are the *abhava* twins? This can be explained with an example. Before a potter creates a pot out of clay, the pot is said to have the condition of prior non-existence (*prag abhava*). When such a pot is destroyed, the pot is in the condition of post non-existence (*pradhwamsa abhava*). The material cause for the creation of the universe is inert nature. The Lord Almighty is the instrumental cause for the creation of the universe. Inert nature and the Lord Almighty are not subject to the conditions of prior non-existence (*prag abhava*) and post non-existence (*pradhwamsa abhava*), and thus are not subject to creation or destruction.

Sri Rayaru [GV] quotes Sri Narahari Teertha [GBBPN] who in his commentary on the **Gita** had an additional interpretation for the use of the word '*api*' (meaning 'also') in this verse. This word when combined with the phrase 'learned seers', implies that the eternality of inert nature and the Lord Almighty is known through the traditional teachings of learned seers and through scriptural evidence from the epic **Vishnu Purana**.

Sri Vishweshwara Teertha in his **Gita Saroddhara** [GS] provides a third interpretation for the first line in this verse by applying the concepts to living beings – the physical body that is subject to birth is not perishable (as it is perishable) and the unborn soul does not perish.

Eternal, Indestructible Soul reflects the Lord

A{dZm(e VwVX{d{Ö `z gd©X\$VV_2%
{dZme_ì` `ñ` mñ` Z H\$üV²H\$V@h@V %& 17 %&

Know that entities that pervade the universe will not perish. No one can cause destruction to the imperishable. (2.17)

Comments: The entities referred to are not subject to decay and hence are imperishable and eternal. These entities include the Lord Almighty, individual souls, space (*avyakrita akasha*) and the letters (the 51 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet). Space is known as *avyakrita akasha* as it

does not undergo transformation during creation or dissolution. It is single, eternal, and self-supporting.

AÍVdÍV B_oXbm{ZÈ` ñ` nP\$u..ear[aU... &
AZm(eZmèà_ò ñ` Vñ_nX²¶jù` ñd ^naV && 18 &&

O Bharata! It is said that the eternal soul's visible physical body is perishable, but the Lord Almighty, the Supreme Soul, is imperishable (not subject to four-way destruction). Hence, fight this war as worship to the indwelling Lord Aprameya, the one who is not limited by space, time, or attributes. (2.18)

Comments: The individual soul is a reflection of the Lord as in a mirror. Some argue that when the mirror which they consider is *upadhi* (the conditioning medium) is destroyed, the reflection no longer exists. Sri Rayaru [GV] explains that the *upadhi* in the example of a reflection in the mirror is the intrinsic body of the individual soul and not the physical body. The intrinsic body (*swaropa deha*) of a soul never perishes. The Lord is eternal, has no blemishes, does not experience decay or destruction of body, as His body is transcendental. The individual soul's intrinsic body is also indestructible, and in that sense, the individual soul is deemed to have some similarity with the Lord. Hence the intrinsic body of the individual soul is the *upadhi* in the example of comparing the Lord and the individual soul to the original and the mirror reflection. Also, if the Lord Almighty and individual souls have similar attributes such as indestructibility, then why should one perform duties as a worship to the Lord? Firstly, the individual soul is dependent on the Lord and secondly, the Lord has special characteristics far and beyond those of individual souls. The Lord pervades everywhere. Sri Rayaru also states [GV] that the Lord is not subject to the fourfold destruction – (i) of the body (as His body is transcendental), (ii) of the soul (as He is eternal), (iii) of attributes (as He is full of infinite auspicious attributes and is devoid of any blemishes) and (iv) of happiness (as He is devoid of misery). He is superior to individual souls and hence is worthy of worship.

EZ\$ d(ImhVna\$ üz\$ _Y` VohV_2`
 C^mqVmqZ {dOmZrVnoZm \$hpfV Z hY` Vo`&& 19 &&

One who thinks that one person has killed another person and the one who thinks that the second person has been killed - neither has true knowledge. No one can kill anyone else, and no one can be killed. (2.19)

Comments: Arjuna's distress is premised on his assumption that he may kill his elders and teachers in the war. However, no one can independently kill someone or get killed by someone. Further, no one experiences destruction of their soul, and the Lord is the only independent entity. Hence, Arjuna's grief is misplaced.

Z Om` Vo{`i VodmH\$Xmq(MPm` \$^f`dm ^{dVmdmZ ^y` ...`
 AOmq(ZE` ...enceVmq` \$namUmZ hY` VohY` _mZoearao`&& 20 &&

The soul is not subject to birth and death; it is eternal. It is not that the soul did not exist earlier and was born. It has no birth as it is eternal, and it is not subject to decay. Even when the physical body is destroyed, the soul does not perish. (2.20)

Comments: This verse has origins in the **Katha Upanishat** and provides the scriptural reference to the concepts in the previous verse.

A second interpretation of this verse is as follows: The Lord does not experience bodily birth and death. All His incarnations such as Rama and Krishna are eternal, and from time to time He manifests Himself and makes Himself visible or invisible. The aspect of the Lord manifesting and making Himself visible is generally termed as His birth.

Many scriptures have references to the Lord being in the womb of His mother (for example Krishna being in the womb of Devaki) before being born. The Lord's existence in the womb is incidental to the storyline

where the Lord continues to exist with infinite auspicious attributes and His condition is not like that of mortals who suffer in their mother’s womb.

dxmfdZm(eZs{ZE` \$` EZ_O_i` ` _2V&
H\$W\$g nief...nmV@H\$ KmV` {V hpV H\$ _2V&& 21V&&

O Partha! One who knows that the soul is eternal, that it does not perish, that it has no birth or death; how can that person cause death to someone and/or kill someone. (2.21)

Comments: The word ‘vinasha’ also means weakness such as hatred which is caused by attachment. The soul does not have these defects intrinsically, but a person gets them due to attachment. A wise person who does not have such defects (*avinashi*) will know the true nature of individual souls and the Supreme Soul and will know that no one can cause death to someone else.

dngng OrUnfZ `Wm{dhm` ZdmZ J# mV Zamenam(U &
VWmearam(U {dhm` OrUnfP Y` mZ g\$ mV ZdmZ Xbr V&& 22 V&&

Just as a person lets go of worn-out old clothes and adorns new clothes, a soul leaves a decaying body and takes on a new body. (2.22)

Comments: In this verse, there is further confirmation on the separation of the soul and the physical body. In verse 2.13, it was stated that a soul experiences transformation in a physical body as a person transitions through childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. However, that was related to the same physical body. In this verse, it is clarified that the same soul will migrate from a decayed body to a new body, just as one discards old, worn-out clothes and replaces them with new, good clothes.

ZzS{N\$XpV eom(U ZzSXh{V nmH\$....V&
Z Mz\$SbX` YE` mmnoZ enf` {V _neV...V&& 23 V&&

Weapons cannot cut the soul, fire cannot burn the soul, water cannot wet the soul and wind cannot parch the soul. (2.23)

Comments: While it was made clear that the intrinsic body of a soul does not decay or get destroyed over time, some can question whether it would be possible to harm or destroy a soul with physical elements such as weapons (made from mining earth), fire, water, wind etc. In this verse it is clarified that it is not possible to harm or destroy a soul by any of these means. Further, as clarified by Sri Rayaru [GV], it is also not possible to destroy a soul through a curse (as in the episode of *Daksha Prajapati* having his head chopped off due to a curse, there was no destruction of his soul).

AAÑbÚnē`_Xmōnē`_²AŠbÚnēnē` Ed M V&
{ZĒ`...gd9V...ñWñÚñMbnē` \$gZñVZ... V&& 24 V&&

The soul cannot be cut, cannot be burnt, cannot be drowned, and cannot be parched. The soul is eternal, atomic in size, and exists under the purview of the immutable, omnipresent Lord (who is known through the **Vedas**). (2.24)

Comments: The previous verse (2.23) refers to a soul's indestructible nature in current time as well as in the past. This verse further clarifies that a soul's indestructible nature applies to future time also.

Ai` °\$nē`_{MYĒ` nē`_²A{dH\$ñ nē`_A` VoV&
Vñ_mXol\${d{XĒdZ\$ZñZññMVñ_hēg V&& 25 V&&

The scriptures say that The Lord cannot be visualized by sense organs, He cannot be comprehended, and He is not subject to decay. Arjuna, knowing this you should focus on performing your duty as an offering to the Lord and quit grieving. (2.25)

Comments: The previous verse indicated that the Lord is omnipresent. If so, and if the Lord is resident in all beings, then why is He not visible? This verse answers this question by stating that no one can comprehend the Lord's attributes and that He is also capable of possessing contradictory attributes.

AW Mz\$ZÈ` OmV\$ZÈ` \$dm_Ý` go_¥_²`
 VWmē{n Ēd\$ _hm-nhnoZz\$enMVw hēg && 26 &&

OmVñ` {h Ywldno_Ē` W@SOY`_¥ñ` M &
 Vñ_nXn[ahm`@W}Z Ēd\$enMVw hēg && 27 &&

O Arjuna (one with strong arms)! When you know that living beings are born and will inevitably die, there is no point in grieving over them. (2.26)

Death is certain for anyone born and likewise rebirth is certain for anyone dead. There is no point in grieving over an issue that has no solution. (2.27)

Comments: The soul does not perish. However, Arjuna could argue that the loss of the physical bodies of dear ones can also cause grief, as he would not be able to see them. Verse 2.27 answers this question by stating that birth and death of physical bodies is inevitable for everyone and there is no point in grieving over this issue that has no solution.

Ai`°\$nXr{Z ^vñZ ì`°\$_Ü`ñZ ^naV &
 Ai`°\$ZYZnñ` d VÌ H\$nn[aXodZm && 28 &&

O Bharata! Living beings get a body between birth and death from inert, material nature and the body will merge back with inert nature after death. Why grieve over such a body? (2.28)

Comments: While it was made clear that everyone experiences birth and death due to their physical bodies, what causes birth and death? This verse reveals that birth and death are caused by interaction with material nature. The physical body is made up of a certain proportion of the five basic elements of nature. When a soul gets a body from material nature it is termed as birth, and when it loses the body and is back to material nature, it is termed as death. A soul that is dependent on the Lord has no control over the process of birth and death. So, it is not worth grieving over such a temporary body.

After conquering the snake Kalinga, Krishna and other yadavas were spending a night in the forest. They were faced with the onset of rapidly approaching forest fire. Lord Krishna extinguished this fire by swallowing it. Saint Sri Vadiraja [RV] describes this incident to explain the fact that all elements of nature emanate from the Lord and submerge back into Him.

Amü` @V²nı` {V H\$üXz_mü` @X²dX{V VWpd Mnı` ... &
 Amü` @fz_ı` ... eUnqV I fidmß` z\$dx Z Mpd H\$üV²&& 29 &&

Some look at the Lord in amazement. Some talk about Him in amazement. Some hear about Him in amazement. No one can completely understand Him even after hearing a lot about Him. (2.29)

Comments: While it was made clear previously that individual souls are not independent, one can ask who they are dependent on. This verse explains that the sole independent entity in the universe is the Lord Almighty. It also answers that there are no other independent entities that can equal the Lord. While many people can claim to know the attributes of the Lord, this verse makes it clear that only some visualize the Lord with amazement. Just as one cannot find any comparison to the sky or the ocean, no one can find any comparison to the Lord. He is truly incomparable. For one to get over grief that may arise from any activity, one must focus on performing one's duty as an offering to the Lord. So, it is important for one to appreciate the true greatness of the Lord.

Xhr {ZÈ`_dÜ` m` \$Xhrogdñ` ^mV &
 Vñ_mV²gdmU ^vñ(Z Z Èd\$enMVw_hñg && 30&&

O Bharata! The soul inside the physical body cannot be destroyed even if the physical body perishes (as it is protected by the Lord). So, there is no need to grieve over anyone. (2.30)

Comments: In verse 2.12, it was stated that the individual souls are also by their nature eternal. How then can one say that they are dependent on the Lord? Sri Rayaru [GV] explains that the Lord protects and controls all bodies that envelope an individual soul, namely – the intrinsic body (*swaropa deha*), the subtle body (*linga deha*) and the gross physical body (*sthoola deha*). This verse thus explains another aspect of the Lord's greatness.

Fighting a Just War is Arjuna's Duty

ñdY_©{n Mndú` Z {dH\$ánVw_hñg &
 Yá`ñÖ` ðmANs mñ' V²j {Ì`ñ` Z {dÚVo&&31&

Knowing that fighting a just war is your duty, there is no need for you to be shaken. For a person hailing from a ruling (*kshatriya*) class, there is no loftier duty than fighting for a just cause. (2.31)

Comments: In verse 1.29, Arjuna had said that he was trembling as he was overcome with grief. In this verse, the Lord responds to that condition. Previously He had declared that Arjuna need not grieve over the loss of near and dear ones as their souls never perish. Now Krishna says that in addition, it is Arjuna's compulsory duty to fight the Kauravas to end their misrule and there is nothing more important than this. Thus, there is absolutely no need for Arjuna to feel weak and helpless.

`ÑĀN> m M m n b \$ ñ d J Ō m a _ n m d V _ 2' &
 g' | Z... j { Ī ` m.. n m V' b ^ Y V o ` Ō _ r Ñ e _ 2' && 32' &&

O Partha! Blessed are those in the *kshatriya* class who get an opportunity to do the right deed by fighting for a just cause. This opens the doors for heavens hereafter. (2.32)

Comments: Not all *kshatriyas* get an opportunity to wage a just war. So, when such an opportunity has been given to Arjuna without any effort (and by the Grace of the Lord), he should embrace the opportunity which would open for him the doors to heavens hereafter.

A W M W ^ E d { _ \$ Y a ' g \$ m \$ Z H \$ a i ` { g &
 V V ... ñ d Y _ ^ H \$ { V ^ M { h E d m n m _ d n b ñ ` { g && 33' &&

In case you decide to relinquish your responsibility to fight for a just cause, you will be guilty of abdicating duty, you will suffer loss of reputation here and accrue sins. (2.33)

Comments: To convince Arjuna that it is a duty, not an option, for him to fight the war, Krishna now indicates the outcome for Arjuna if he does not fight. Arjuna would suffer loss of reputation in this world and accrue sins for abdicating his responsibility, with consequences hereafter.

A H \$ { V ^ M m (n ^ v m Z H \$ W { ^ ĩ ` p / V V e ĩ ` ` m _ 2' &
 g â ^ m (d V ñ ` M m H \$ { V _ @ U n X { V [a A ` V o && 34' &&

Everyone will talk about your loss of reputation and for a worthy person, loss of reputation is more dreadful than death. (2.34)

Comments: Krishna indicates that the negative effect of refusing to fight is permanent loss of reputation. For someone who is revered among professional peers, a loss of reputation can be worse than defeat and death.

^` mKaUnKmaV\$ _\$` YVoEdn\$ _hmaVma. $
 `fngM Ed\$~hp_Vno^fdm` mn` {g brnKd_2&& 35&&

Great warriors will conclude that you ran away from the battlefield as you were afraid to fight. You will be disgraced in front of those who hold you in great esteem. (2.35)

Comments: This verse responds to Arjuna’s argument that his opposition to fighting the war was due to his compassion and not due to fear of losing. Krishna says that Arjuna was held in high esteem as a great warrior based on his winning many battles, and other great warriors can now conclude that Arjuna ran away from the war as he was afraid of facing them. After all, many other participants in this war (on both sides) would also lose their near and dear ones and they had not backed away.

Adm^` dmKnfj ~hZ^d{Xi` pV VdmfhVm. $
 {ZYXVnVd gm_i` ^VVnoXwJ Va\$Zw{H\$’ 2&& 36 &&

Your enemies will talk disparagingly about your valor in many unspeakable ways. What is more dreadful than this? (2.36)

Comments: To further convince Arjuna of the perils of backing away from fighting, Krishna says that in addition to other great warriors assembled there, many enemies of Arjuna whom he had defeated earlier could now conclude and spread the word that Arjuna was incapable of fighting a war. This could be extremely insulting, especially for a *kshatriya*.

hVnodm^`an\$nfj{g ndJ^OEdm^`dm^`mi` go_hr_2$
 Vn_mK(nn>H\$VVo `Om H\$V{Zu` ... && 37 &&

If you fight and die in this battle, you are sure to reach heaven. If you win, you will rule this world. O Son of Kunti! Rise up and fight this battle with strong determination. (2.37)

Comments: In verse 2.6, Arjuna had expressed his doubt about whether it was better for the Pandavas to win the war or for the Kauravas to win. Krishna responds to that doubt here. After discussing the impact on Arjuna's reputation for backing away from a just war, Krishna now goes on to convince him that he is in a win-win situation and has nothing to lose by fighting the war. If Arjuna were to win this war, he would get back the kingdom and reach heavens hereafter for adhering to his duties. If he were to lose the war and die, he would surely reach the heavens for his efforts in fighting the evil. Either way, he wins.

gñ Xw.I og_oH\$cdm^bm^nbm^mO`nO`m`m`
VVno`õm` `Á`ñd Zp\$nmn' dññ` {g && 38 &&

Treat happiness and sadness, profit and loss, victory and defeat with equipoise and fight for justice. You will not be tainted with sin. (2.38)

Comments: In verse 1.36, Arjuna says that he may accrue sins by fighting the war, as that would result in loss of life to many. Krishna answers that point by stating that performing one's prescribed duty as an offering to the Lord will not attract sins and in fact will help accrue positive credit. One must treat with equanimity - happiness and sadness, profit, loss, victory and defeat in all actions and perform them as offerings to the Lord. Arjuna must get over any sadness due to the loss of near and dear ones and focus on performing his duty.

Instrument to Acquire Knowledge

EfmV@{^hVmgn\$`o~(õ`n)opEd_n\$eUw&
~õçm`p\$no``mnmV@H\$_@Y\$ahmñ` {g && 39&&

O Partha! You have been told about the nature of *Sankhya* (knowledge) so far. Now listen to the ways (*yoga*) to achieve that knowledge which will free you from bondage. (2.39)

Comments: From verses 2.12 to 2.38, Krishna gives Arjuna knowledge (*sankhya*) about the Lord and the individual souls. From now on, He teaches Arjuna the methods and procedures of acquiring such knowledge after which Arjuna would be able to perform his prescribed duties with conviction, realize the Lord, get over worldly bondage and achieve the state of eternal bliss (*moksha*). While previous verses discussed the nature of individual souls and briefly, the nature of the Supreme Lord, from now on till the end of Chapter 6, more details about the methods and procedures to learn about the nature of the Lord are provided. Also, so far, Krishna had addressed Arjuna's specific situation, and from now on, the teachings would turn generic in that they would apply to the whole of mankind.

Zhrnq^H\$ ZmenepñV àÈ` dm` mZ {dÚVo&
ñdèn_β` ñ` Y_®` Ìm` Vo_hVno^` m/²&& 40 &&

Even if one falters in the beginning during the learning of this spiritual knowledge, no effort is wasted. Even a little sincere effort will protect one from great peril. (2.40)

Comments: This verse answers the doubts that some may have about the efforts required to achieve spiritual knowledge. Given the significant efforts required, what would happen if one could not complete the task? The Lord states that no effort is wasted. Even if someone starts the process and for some reason gets interrupted, the efforts will yield positive results. Any sincere effort will please the Lord and through His grace one will be able to achieve spiritual awakening.

ì` dgm` mÈ_H\$m~(Öabññ HñéZYXZ &
~hþeml møZYVmü ~Ö` mēi` dgm` Znr ²&& 41 &&

O Scion of the Kuru Dynasty (Arjuna)! There is only one teaching that leads to decisive spiritual knowledge. There are endless teachings that lead the undecided ones to diverse, wrong knowledge. (2.41)

Comments: There are different teachings (often contradictory) about spiritual knowledge. How then does one know the true path? Krishna in this verse categorically states that only true teaching leads to proper divine and spiritual knowledge. This is based on evidence from revered spiritual texts such as the **Vedas** and is realized from following the Vaishnava path which enunciates the supremacy of Lord Vishnu as the supreme of all souls. In the next few verses (from 2.41 to 2.46), the Lord clears any doubts about the true purport of the **Vedas**.

It is interesting to note that the Lord refers to Arjuna as Kurunandana, meaning ‘Scion of the Kuru dynasty who would bring joy to his lineage’, probably implying that most of the descendants of the Kuru dynasty such as Duryodhana and his 99 brothers belong to the type of people who believe in various, wrong teachings. Arjuna is different and can dispel his doubts and regain the spiritual knowledge he had already possessed.

~ m_ n\$npinVn\$dmM\$àdXíÈ` {dn{üV... &&
dXdmKaVm..nmVZmí` XñVr{V dmXZ... && 42 &&

H\$m_nĒ_nZ...ñdJĀamOY_H\$_Q\$bàXm_2&
{H\$ m{def~h|pns^m|pe` 9qv à{V && 43 &&

O Partha! Those with peripheral knowledge of the **Vedas** say that attaining heavens is the only goal of following the **Vedas**, ignoring the lofty goal of liberation (*moksha*). They only focus on temporary worldly riches and pleasures and believe that they are the end goals of conducting Vedic rituals. (2.42) (2.43)

Comments: As the **Vedas** can be interpreted in multiple ways, many focus only on the peripheral interpretation and conclude that the Vedic texts teach only rituals to appease lesser deities, which would result in achieving desired riches and materialistic happiness in this lifetime and enjoying heavenly fruits hereafter. Krishna categorically speaks against this viewpoint and strongly advises that the real purport of the **Vedas** is to help one achieve liberation, the state of everlasting, pure and complete bliss (*Moksha*), and not riches and heavens which are temporary. Using the **Vedas** only to reach the heavens would be like plucking a flower from a tree, without waiting for the flower to fully transform into a fruit (which represents *Moksha*).

^m\pe` @g°\$nZnV` menöVMVgm_2&
 ì` dgm` mE`_H\$m ~{Ö...g_mYmZ {dYr` Vo&& 44 &&

With their minds corrupted with such wrong thinking, they immerse themselves in pursuit of worldly pleasures and will not have the conviction to pursue correct knowledge and the concentration to focus their minds on the Lord. (2.44)

Comments: What is wrong in enjoying the riches achieved by performing Vedic rituals with sincerity? After all these fruits have been earned using legitimate, moral means as enunciated in the **Vedas**. Lord Krishna responds by saying that indulgence in such temporary pleasures will focus their minds only on material issues and their minds will not be able meditate on the Lord. Concentrated meditation is required to gain proper spiritual knowledge.

Vedas – Peripheral and Inner Meanings

Ìjñ` {df` mdXm{Zójñ` no^dnO? &
 {ZÜÜm(ZE` gÎdnWm(Z` n)j_ AnE`_dmZ²&& 45&&

O Arjuna! Peripherally the **Vedas** appear to describe rituals that result in attainment of heavenly and worldly fruits made up of the three attributes. Do not aspire for these. Go beyond dualities (such as pleasure and pain). Focus your mind on the Lord Almighty and leave it to the Lord to help you attain your goals and to help you protect goals already attained. (2.45)

Comments: The Lord continues to teach about the real purport of the **Vedas**. In this verse, the Lord instructs that one should not focus on the peripheral meaning of the **Vedas** that appear to provide details of rituals to help achieve worldly fruits. These fruits and even heavens that one may achieve are borne out of material nature which is a mixture of three attributes – *sat*, *rajas* and *tamas*. As such, these are not permanent, and even if one reaches the heavens, one is bound to fall back to earth after expending merits from good deeds. One should detach oneself from *yoga* (striving for proscribed material entities not already owned) and *kshema* (protecting proscribed material entities already possessed). The real purport of the **Vedas** is to describe the nature of the Lord Almighty. One should focus on the Lord who will help one achieve everlasting bliss (*nirvana*).

~ m d n Z W @ C X n m Z o g d v ... g a B b w n k H \$ % &
V n d n Z ^ g d f w d k f w ~ m = U n ` { d O m Z V ... % & & 4 6 & &

The benefit derived from a small body of water such as a well is better derived from a sumptuous water body such as an ocean. Likewise, benefits derived from following Vedic rituals with proper meaning are surely available for one with special knowledge who has realized the Lord Almighty. (2.46)

Comments: In the previous verses, it was indicated that the real purport of the **Vedas** is in understanding of the Lord and not in transient material benefits including attaining the heavens. It was made clear that one who goes by the peripheral meaning of the **Vedas** and performs rituals only to attain transient material benefits will never achieve everlasting bliss. A

question arises as to whether the seeker who goes by the inner meaning of the **Vedas** and realizes the Lord will be eligible for transient fruits such as the heavens. This verse answers that question through an example. Just as the benefits available from well water are available from a larger body of water such as a lake or an ocean, one who has realized the Lord by proper understanding of the **Vedas** will surely achieve transient benefits such as heavens, even when one is not focused on them.

Sri Raghavendra Swamy in his **Gita Vivruti** [GV] provides an explanation for the words *brahmana* (one who has realized the Lord) and *vijanatha* (one who has special knowledge) where both appear to mean the same thing. Sri Rayaru says that *vijanatha* indicates the one who has *paroksha* (or indirect) knowledge of the Lord and *brahmana* indicates one who has gone a step further and has realized *aparoksha* or direct knowledge of the Lord. In that sense, for one to obtain direct knowledge of the Lord, one must first start by learning the knowledge indirectly (through a qualified teacher, studying Vedic scriptures etc.).

Sri Rayaru provides a second meaning for this verse, by interpreting the Sanskrit terms *samplutodaka* and *udapana* differently. Earlier *samplutodaka* referred to a large body of water (ex: an ocean) and *udapana* referred to a small body of water (ex: well). Sri Rayaru provides a second meaning for these terms. *Samplutodaka* means the ocean that dissolves the universe during the grand dissolution and *udapana* refers to the Lord Almighty who protects the eternal entities in the universe such as souls, time etc. With this interpretation, the verse can also be translated to mean as follows: Whatever advantage (such as *dharma*, *moksha* etc.) is obtained through the Grace of the Lord Almighty who protects everything during the great dissolution of the universe, the same advantage will be accrued by a seeker who has realized the Lord through proper interpretation of the **Vedas**.

Duty is Worship

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 _mH\$ _P\$bhWVpñVog“nñEdH\$_P U && 47 &&

You only have the right to do your duty, and never to its fruits. Never perform your duties with expectations of outcomes. At the same time, never think about relinquishing your duties. (2.47)

Comments: This is probably the most commented upon verse in the **Gita**. It answers the question as to the purpose of performing ones' prescribed duties when there is no guarantee of getting expected results. Even if someone does not see any immediate material benefits from performing ones' prescribed duties, such actions will please the Lord. They will result in one obtaining true knowledge about the Lord and eventually achieving everlasting bliss. This is implied in the first line of this verse. Another question that one can raise is the purpose of someone performing any action at all, as earlier in verse 2.45, it was stated that one should always focus ones mind on the Lord. The second line of this verse answers this question by stating that in addition to focusing the mind on the Lord, one must perform prescribed duties; otherwise, one will accrue sins due to relinquishing of duties. In addition to the philosophical reasons, we can all appreciate the fact that for a society to function smoothly, every one of us must play our assigned roles with diligence and sincerity. Such activities, especially when performed as an offering to the Lord, will help us receive the Lord's grace to help us in our spiritual journey. Lord Krishna is instructing Arjuna here that he should not shirk from his prescribed duty of fighting for a just cause, just because he is uncomfortable with the thought of losing his loved ones.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides a second meaning for this verse. He translates the phrase '*karma phala hetu*' (the entity responsible to grant fruits for actions) as the Lord Almighty, as He alone can grant someone the fruits. As per verse 2.45, one should not consider oneself identical to the

Lord as the Lord is supreme and He alone can grant one's wishes. The second interpretation of this verse is as follows: Arjuna! Individual souls can only perform prescribed duties. They do not have the ability to obtain the fruits by themselves. That ability is only with the Lord. Individual souls are quite different and are subservient to the Lord and hence one should never consider oneself as the Lord.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides convincing responses to many other deep, philosophical questions in his interpretation of this verse. Following is the summary:

- Even those who have already realized the Lord have to keep performing duties.
- For one who has already realized the Lord, any additional credit from performing duties will result in buoyant happiness in *moksha* (the level of bliss in *moksha* is dependent on the innate capabilities of souls, but additional credits will result in buoyant happiness, just like when milk boils over, the amount of milk does not change but the milk exhibits more buoyancy)
- No one is exempt from performing one's prescribed duties
- While this verse indicates that one should not perform duties with an expectation of the outcome, it is not prohibited for someone to perform activities with loftier expectations of spiritual knowledge and the Lord's Grace. One should avoid expectations of temporary, transient, material fruits.
- Although phrases such as '*swarga kamo yajeta*' prescribe rituals for fulfilment of mundane desires, the scriptures do not mandate such actions for fulfilment of desires.
- Major distinction between individual beings and the Lord in the context of duties and fruits:
 - Individual Beings: Have responsibility to perform duties. Cannot grant wishes.
 - Lord Almighty: Has no prescribed responsibility. Can grant wishes.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ४८ ॥
 O Dhyanajaya! On your spiritual path (yoga), perform duties without attachments and expectations of results. The real yoga is performing one's duties without expectations and with equanimity. (2.48)

O Dhyanajaya! On your spiritual path (*yoga*), perform duties without attachments and expectations of results. The real *yoga* is performing one's duties without expectations and with equanimity. (2.48)

Comments: From verses 2.48 onwards, the Lord provides more details on the concept of *nishkama karma* (performing prescribed duties without expectations). In the previous verse 2.47, the Lord instructs Arjuna never to think of relinquishing prescribed duties. This verse responds to the question as to how one should perform prescribed duties. *Yoga* is having no expectations of results from duties performed *and* being equanimous to positive or negative outcomes. These are not two separate definitions of *yoga*.

Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha has provided a detailed description of a *yogi* identified in this verse as –

(i) one whose mind and intellect are transfixed at the feet of the Lord with the knowledge of the Lord's omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.

(ii) one who engages in actions without attachment to the act itself or the fruits of such actions.

(iii) one who engages in all activities only to please the Lord and as a service to the Lord.

(iv) one who, knowing fully well that everything is at the will and command of the Lord, accepts success or failure with equanimity.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ४९ ॥
 O Dhyanajaya! On your spiritual path (yoga), perform duties without attachments and expectations of results. The real yoga is performing one's duties without expectations and with equanimity. (2.49)

O Dhananjaya! Performing duties with expectation of the outcome is very inferior to the task of attaining divine spiritual knowledge. Wretched are those whose motive is fruit of the action. Focus your mind on spiritual knowledge. (2.49)

Comments: In 2.46, it was indicated that one should avoid performing Vedic rituals for temporary gains but instead focus on the inner meaning of **the Vedas** to attain proper spiritual knowledge. In that sense, performing duties with expectation of material outcome is inferior to the task of attaining divine knowledge. This verse answers the question as to the reason for this distinction. One who is focused only on activities yielding temporary gains will realize sooner or later that such gains will not last and will start feeling miserable. Hence there is no point in performing activities with such expectations.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides an alternate interpretation for the second half of this verse in response to a question as to whether someone who has already attained spiritual knowledge can consider himself as one with the Lord. By interpreting the phrase *phala hetava* (the one who grants wishes) as referring to the Lord, Sri Rayaru says that even those who have attained spiritual knowledge will not claim identity with the Lord as such a claim would lead to unending misery.

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Vñ_nÚnm` `ñ`ñd`nd...H\$@ñH\$peb_2&& 50&&

One who has realized the Lord Almighty will be rid of the consequences of good or bad deeds. Therefore, focus on performing your duties with the goal of achieving divine, spiritual knowledge. This is the best path. (2.50)

Comments: In the previous verse 2.49, it was indicated that activities performed with expectations of material gains are inferior to the activities pursued in attaining divine knowledge.

That technique which steers one clear of worldly entanglement and ushers one towards the transcendental is 'skill in action' (*karmasu kauśalam*). In this verse, some of the special advantages of these superior activities are outlined. It is indicated that one who has realized the Lord will be rid of the consequences of good and bad deeds which is the essential last step in achieving *moksha*. A question that would arise naturally is about the reason for consequences of even good deeds to be nullified. Sri Rayaru in GV provides an answer. Good deeds are of two kinds – first one that leads to more clarity on divine knowledge and more exuberant happiness in *moksha* (*ishta punya*), and second ones (*anishta punya*) that do not. Credits from good deeds of the second kind must be used up in this world (in current or future births) while credits from the first kind of good deed will be carried forward till one achieves *moksha*. The Lord categorically states that among all activities, those that lead to attainment of divine knowledge are supreme.

Sri Rayaru [GV] provides a second interpretation for the second half of this verse. One can ask the question - If one feels that one can put in all required efforts to attain spiritual knowledge (which is the goal for achieving *moksha*), why should one perform activities without expectations on material outcomes? Sri Rayaru answers saying that only activities that are performed for the sole purpose of pleasing the Lord and obtaining divine knowledge will lead to *moksha*.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha Swamiji in his **Gita Saroddhara** [BGS] indicates that this verse reflects the summary of entire chapter 2. This is very appropriate as in this chapter Arjuna in verses 2.4 to 2.8 had expressed the conflict in his mind about his course of action and requested Krishna for guidance. Krishna categorically states in this verse that one needs to perform ones prescribed duty with the goal of achieving divine, spiritual knowledge and that Arjuna needs to engage himself in fighting this holy war to protect his citizens.

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 OY_~ÝY{d{Z_P\$m..nX\$JÀNÝE` Zm` _²&& 51 &&

The wise who have learnt about the supremacy of the Lord Almighty, dedicate the fruits of their labour to the Lord and acquire direct, divine knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). They escape the cycle of births and deaths and reach the state of eternal bliss. (2.51)

Comments: In this verse, the Lord provides additional benefits of obtaining proper spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana* = direct, divine knowledge) which results in attaining *moksha*. One who reaches *moksha* will not only be devoid of sadness or blemishes but will also permanently escape the cycle of births and deaths. Lord Krishna is emphasizing the permanence of *moksha* as opposed to the transitory benefits of heavens. Sri Rayaru in GV explains the reason for interpreting the word ‘*manīṣiṇaḥ*’ as the one with direct, divine knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). The word ‘*manīṣi*’ means incredibly special knowledge, and direct divine knowledge certainly qualifies for this description.

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 VXmJÝVmf{g {ZdX\$| nV`î` ñ` I Wñ` M && 52 &&

Once your mind is cleansed of ignorant viewpoints, you will derive full benefits from the teachings you have heard so far and the teachings you will hear in future. (2.52)

Comments: Lord Krishna answers the question as to how and when one will be able to properly understand teachings delivered so far and the teachings yet to be delivered. One must first cleanse one’s mind of ignorant viewpoints which will then allow one’s mind to grasp the teachings properly.

I P\$V{dà{VnÞmVo` WmñWmñ` {V {Zübm&
 g_mYndMbm~(ÖñVXm` nV`_dnñ` {g && 53 &&

Once you develop conviction in spiritual teachings, your mind will become steadfast. At that time, you will be able to follow the path of divine knowledge. (2.53)

Comments: In 2.52, it was indicated that one must rid oneself of ignorant viewpoints. In this verse, the questions about what ignorant viewpoints really are and how one could be rid of them are answered. Ignorant viewpoints are those that are not supported by authentic scriptures such as the **Vedas**. Ones who have developed strong conviction about teachings from scriptures such as the **Vedas** will be able to rid themselves of ignorant viewpoints without any doubt. They will then be ready to focus their minds on the Lord which will lead to eternal bliss through the grace of the Lord.

Sri Rayaru [GV] provides a second interpretation of this verse based on Sri Madhwacharya's commentary in GTN where the phrase '*shruti vipratipanna*' is interpreted alternately as '*shruti visheshena pratipanna*' to mean – one with the right viewpoint based on authentic scriptures (*shruti*). Based on this, the verse can be interpreted to mean the following – The one who has realized the Lord based on proper understanding of the **Vedas** will have one's mind firmly placed on the Lord and will eventually attain *moksha* through the Lord's grace.

Equanimity and Mental Tranquility

AO CdmM

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pñVVYr...qH\$ à^mfV {H\$_ngrV dOV {H\$' 2' 54&&

Arjuna said: O Keshava! What are the characteristics of a person who has developed unwavering conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge (*Stita Prajna*)? How does that person talk or sit or walk (in other words, why does that person need to engage in any activity)? (2.54)

Comments: This is perhaps one of the most widely quoted verse from the **Gita**. After listening to the Lord's teachings about the need for one to perform prescribed duties without expectations, focusing the mind on the Lord and related topics, Arjuna is now curious to know the characteristics of a person who has developed unwavering conviction (tranquil mind) in divine knowledge. It is interesting that he uses the term '*bhasha*' to mean characteristics instead of the more common word '*lakshana*'. Arjuna, by using the term '*samadhi*' (state of complete mental concentration on the Lord), has himself defined a characteristic (*lakshana*) of a person with deep conviction in divine knowledge. By using the word '*bhasha*', Arjuna is enquiring about the characteristic of such a person when that person is out of *samadhi* and is engaged in normal day to day activities. References to talking, sitting, walking etc., in this verse here imply normal day today activities. In other words, Arjuna wants to know how the person with firm resolve performs day to day activities (when not in state of *samadhi*).

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides a second interpretation for this verse as follows: Why does one who has achieved divine knowledge need to perform activities such as talking, sitting, walking etc.? Here the word '*kim*' is used to mean 'why'. In that sense it is a rhetorical question. Why should someone who has already achieved the state of *samadhi* and has developed unwavering conviction in the Lord indulge in any mundane, day to day worldly activities?

The Lord responds to Arjuna's questions in the remaining verses of this chapter which undoubtedly form the core teachings of the **Gita**.

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àOhrqV ` XmH\$m_nz²gdnZ²nmW©_ZmJvz²&

Anē_Ÿ` dmeĒ_ZmVwi>.pñVVàkñVXnā` Vo&& 55 &&

The Lord said: O Partha! One who has conquered mental blemishes such as desire and has focused mind on the Lord Almighty will achieve mental tranquility by the grace of the Lord. (2.55)

Comments: The Lord answers Arjuna's question 2.54, from 2.55 onwards till the end of this chapter. For the rhetorical question in the second line of 2.54, the Lord answers in verse 2.69. While desire is mentioned as a blemish that one needs to conquer, this also applies to other blemishes such as greed, anger, hatred etc. Note that desire here refers to worldly desires and not lofty desires such as achieving divine knowledge. Sri Rayaru [GV] explains the special reason for the use of the word 'manogatan' (mental) in this verse. Blemishes such as desire, greed, anger etc., originate in the mind. That being the case, what is the reason for using the qualifier 'mental' in 'mental blemishes'? The divine knowledge that one would attain by the grace of the Lord also manifests in the same mind. For the same mind to attain divine knowledge, it is necessary to be rid of worldly blemishes. It is to drive home the fact that divine knowledge also resides in the same mind that the qualifier 'mental' is used in this verse.

In verse 2.39, the Lord started out saying that He would teach the path (*yoga*) to obtain divine knowledge. However, in this verse, He is teaching the characteristics of a *yogi* who has already attained divine knowledge. How can this be reconciled? Sri Rayaru [GV] states that for a seeker interested in traversing the path towards divine knowledge, it is important to learn about the characteristics of *yogis* who have already successfully traversed that path.

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drVamJ^`H&W...pñWVYr_@ZéA`Vo&& 56 &&

One whose mind is not depressed by distress or elated by happiness and who is devoid of desires or anger, or fear is known as steadfast in consciousness. (2.56)

Comments: In the next 3 verses, the Lord provides more details on the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In 2.55, worldly desire was mentioned as example of a blemish. Here that concept is extended to include other blemishes such as obsession, fear, and anger.

ॐ ...gdPmZ{^ñZbnVÎm/2ànb` eVmeV_2i
Zm^ZYX{V Z Úfi>Vñ` àkmà{V{òV/m&& 57 &&

One with deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnani*) will not have attachment in all dealings and will neither rejoice over pleasure nor experience hatred during distress. (2.57)

Comments: The reason for this equanimity in both pleasure and discomfort in such a person is the lack of attachment to worldly issues.

The previous verse 2.56 identified the absence of anger as one of the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility and this verse indicates the absence of hatred during distress as another characteristic. Sri Jaya Teertha in his PD clarifies that there is no repetition here as the absence of hatred in 2.57 refers to all situations (due to the use of the word *sarvatrāg*) including those where there may be reasons for such hatred.

ॐ XmgfbaVoMmî \$H\$_m" mZrd gde...
BpYĐ` mUrpYĐ` mVjā` ñVñ` àkmà{V{òV/m&& 58&&

A person of steady wisdom can easily withdraw sense organs away from objects of senses just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs at will. (2.58)

Comments: A person with mental tranquility can control sense organs from indulging in objects of sensory pleasures such as sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. The image of the tortoise which withdraws its limbs at will is used to signify the ease with which such a person is able to control sense organs.

{df`m{d{ZdVVo{Zanhmañ` Xqhz...&
agdO`agmß`ñ`na\$Ñi0%{ZdVVo&& 59 &&

By fasting, one can reduce the ability of one's body to consume and digest food, but not the cravings to indulge in tasty food. Those cravings can only be diminished by realizing the Lord Almighty. (2.59)

Comments: The next 3 verses are about sense control. By practicing self-discipline such as fasting, one experiences reduced power in the five sense organs of perception such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. However, the craving experienced by the mind to indulge in sense pleasures does not diminish. This can only happen when one experiences a vision of Lord Almighty.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides an alternate meaning to this verse by interpreting the word '*rasa varjam*' to mean desires in objects of all sensory pleasures except taste. This means that by fasting one may experience loss of desire in the objects of sense pleasures such as sound, form, smell, and touch but not in the sense object of taste. This can only be overcome when one experiences a vision of Lord Almighty. This interpretation is also consistent with practical experience as when one ages and loses power and interest in seeing, listening, hearing etc., the desire to taste good food never goes away. In summary, a seeker should strive to achieve control over all sense organs and mind.

`VVmø{n H\$YVò niefñ` {dn{üV...&
hpYÉ`m(U à_mVr{Z hapV àg^\$_Z...&& 60 &&

O Son of Kunti! It is the nature of sense organs to get attracted to sense pleasures. Despite many efforts, even learned ones experience their sense organs swaying strongly. (2.60)

Comments: If one can understand that one needs to control one's sense organs from indulging in sense pleasures (discipline in consumption -

pratyahara) and focus one's minds on attaining spiritual knowledge, one may be able to conquer their sense organs. In that case why should one undertake difficult activities such as fasting - *nirahara* etc.? This verse answers this question by stating that sense organs are extremely strong and can exert control on the minds of even learned ones. It is the nature of sense organs to cause turbulence in one's mind. Hence, one must undertake difficult rituals such as fasting on special days etc., in addition to spiritual studies and try to overcome the influence of sense organs on one's mind.

The sense organs and the mind are inert objects. A question then arises as to how these inert objects can exert such control over each other. One must remember that the sense organs, while inert, are activated by the Lord resident in every soul based on the innate nature of that soul. So, it is the responsibility of the individual soul to try and control the activities of the sense organs.

VmZ gdnU g\$ à` `P\$ AmgrV _Ena...&
deo(h `ñ` p'Đ` n(U Vñ` àkmà{V{òVm&& 61&&

One should control one's sense organs from indulgence with a firm conviction on the supremacy of the Lord. Such a person will indeed attain divine knowledge, (2.61)

Comments: From previous discussions, it appears that one needs to control one's sense organs to attain divine, spiritual knowledge. However, it also appears that one needs to have possessed such divine, spiritual knowledge to be permanently free from the control of sense organs. This appears to be a circular argument and hence is logically untenable (*anyonyashraya dosha*). How can this be reconciled? Sri Rayaru [GV] points to this verse for the answer. One must try and control one's sense organs while at the same time focus mind on the Supreme Lord. This will allow the mind to move towards concentrated meditation (*dhyana*) which allows one to undertake difficult sense control tasks such as strict fasting,

and eventually conquer the sense organs. Such a person is now ready to absorb divine, spiritual knowledge paving the way for *moksha*.

Sri Rayaru [GV] clarifies that for one to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*), in addition to achieving full control over the sense organs, a seeker also needs to conquer emotions such as desire, hatred etc., as described later in verse 2.64.

Dangers in Sensual Indulgence

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g` nV`gOm` VoH\$m...H\$m_nV`H\$mVme{^Om` Vo`&& 62&&

H\$mVnK^d{V gâ_nh...g\$ nhmV`ñ_#V{d^«...`&
ñ_#V^emK~(ÖZme~(ÖZmeK`àUí` {V `&& 63&&

One who keeps contemplating on sense pleasures develops an attachment and obsession with them, which leads to desire in experiencing such pleasures. This desire in turn leads to anger in the event of not being able to satisfy these desires. Anger leads to delusion and clouds one's mind about right and wrong. This delusion leads one to forget injunctions against forbidden activities. This forgetfulness in turn leads to failure in intellectual judgement. Loss of intellect results in one's downfall. (2.62) (2.63)

Comments: In verse 2.63, it was stated that one should focus ones mind on the Lord while striving to achieve self-control to conquer the sense organs. In verses 2.62, 2.63, 2.64, the Lord outlines the chain reaction that would ensue from loss of self-control and the emotional impact of attachment/aversion or likes/dislikes (*raga/dvesha*) leading to ones downfall (and eventual fall into hell). Understanding of this chain reaction will help one to develop equanimity in likes and dislikes.

The chain reaction is as follows: contemplation on sense pleasures -> obsession -> desire -> anger -> delusion -> forgetfulness -> loss of

intellect -> destruction. Forgetfulness could be of two types. One would be forgetting knowledge about avoiding activities prohibited in the scriptures and the other would be to forget societal norms such as not usurping properties owned by others. As indicated in 2.56, one who has realized the Lord will have conquered these emotions, but a seeker on the spiritual path will have to strive to control these emotions, or else he/she will experience the state indicated in the chain reaction. The primary cause of the chain reaction is the inability to manage *raga*, and *dvesha*. This aspect is further explained in the next verse.

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 Anē_dī` {dYò nē_m àgnK_{YJAN:V && 64 &&

àgnKogd&w.l mZnshn(Zañ` nmOm` Vo&
 àgpM/gmøme~(Ö...n` @{Vò:V && 65 &&

One, whose sense organs are under control and are not perturbed by the effects of likes/dislikes, attachment/hatred, will partake in just enough sense indulgence for physical health and, through self-control will experience peace of mind. (2.64),

One whose mind is at peace will quickly absorb divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). Then, such a person will be rid of all miseries. This concept is well known through the scriptures. (2.65)

Comments: These two verses indicate the benefits one would accrue by controlling the emotions of likes and dislikes. The benefits are – victory over sense organs and mental peace. In 2.61, it was indicated that one who has conquered sense organs will attain direct, divine (*aparoksha*) knowledge. However, sense control itself will not directly lead to attainment of divine knowledge. Sense control leads to mental peace allowing one to practice concentrated meditation. This leads to attaining direct, divine knowledge. So the immediate advantage of self-control is mental peace which eventually leads to direct, divine knowledge in a serial

manner. It is also clarified that one who has achieved control over sense organs can indulge in sense activities just enough to maintain physical wellbeing. In verse 2.59, it was indicated that one would need to undertake difficult tasks such as fasting to achieve self-control. Here it is clarified that one does not need to completely avoid consuming foods as one has to ensure physical wellbeing. It is possible to indulge in activities such as consuming minimum amount of required food while still exerting control over the sense organs.

In summary, the sequence of events that would unfold from achieving self-control are as follows: Self-control (over sense organs) -> mental peace -> concentrated meditation -> divine knowledge -> elimination of sadness (due to evisceration of sins) -> liberation.

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Z Mm^nd` V...enVaenñ` Hñ...gñ _?&& 66 &&

One who does not have control over the mind cannot absorb spiritual knowledge. Such a person also cannot meditate peacefully. How can one achieve liberation without meditation? How can one enjoy bliss without liberation? (2.66)

Comments: The next two verses describe the perils of not being able to control one's mind. If one can achieve divine, spiritual knowledge through scriptural studies and analysis, why would one need to control ones mind? This verse answers by stating that one who does not control the mind will not be able to practice concentrated meditation without which one will not be able to absorb difficult concepts in the scriptures. Also, in this verse it is stated that one who does not achieve liberation (*moksha*) cannot enjoy bliss. One can question the reason for explicitly stating that eternal bliss can only be enjoyed by those in *moksha*. It must be noted that in 2.65, it was stated that when one is liberated, one will be rid of unhappiness. This verse clarifies that in *moksha* not only will one be rid of misery, but one will also enjoy pure bliss.

BpYÉ` mUnsh MaVns` Y_ZmZ(dYr` VoR
 VXñ` ha{V àknšdmì Zne{ dná^{g && 67 &&

The mind which follows sense organs that go after sense pleasures will be swayed just like a ship gets swayed in an ocean by strong winds. This leads to loss of intellectual judgement and also knowledge derived through studies. (2.67)

Comments: This verse makes it very clear that even one who has learnt a lot through study of scriptures and contemplation of scriptural concepts will not be able to benefit from such knowledge if one is unable to control the mind and the sense organs. Mere acquisition of scriptural knowledge without exercising control over the senses and the mind amounts to just book knowledge. The mind is easily swayed. If sense organs pursue sense pleasures, the mind will follow them and will sway just like a boat in an ocean and loses direction when faced with strong winds.

The example of a ship getting swayed by strong winds brings to memory an episode in the life of Sri Madhwacharya. Acharya was once meditating on the seashore near Udupi when he saw a ship caught in a violent storm. The people on the ship were crying for help. Acharya waved his holy fabric (*kavi shati*) towards the ship, at which the ship immediately stabilized on the waters and came safely ashore. The travelers on the ship who were rescued by Acharya were very grateful and offered him precious gems on board the ship, but Acharya was content with just a lump of sandstone (*gopi chandana*) that was used to tie the ship's mast. Inside the sandstone was a beautiful idol of Sri Krishna which was worshipped by Goddess Rukmini and Lord Brahma. Sri Madhwacharya carried that idol and installed it in Udupi where it can be seen even today! We can see the relevance of using the example of a ship swaying in the ocean in this verse considering this episode. Our body is like a ship that we are using to cross the ocean of *samsara*. Inside our body, Lord Krishna resides in our hearts just like the idol of Sri Krishna was inside the sandstone. Just as the

travelers on the ship did not know the value of the sandstone piece which had the idol of Sri Krishna in it, we too do not appreciate the presence of the Lord in our hearts. Just as the travelers on the ship faced violent turbulence due to strong winds, we also feel great perturbation in our minds due to strong swaying of our sense organs. The travelers saw Sri Madhwacharya and cried for help. Acharya rescued them immediately. Similarly, if we turn to Sri Madhwacharya (an incarnation of Sri Vayudeva) asking for help in traversing this ocean of *samsara*, he will rescue us and land us safely in *moksha*.

Vñ_nÚñ`_hm-nhmo{ZJkrVmZ gd@...&
BpYĐ`nUrpYĐ`nWjà`ñVñ`àkmà{V{òVm&& 68&&

O Mahabaho (Arjuna, one with strong arms)! One who controls the sense organs from straying towards sense objects will attain deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge. (2.68)

Comments: In the 4 verses, starting from verse 2.55 to 2.58, the Lord described the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In the 9 verses from 2.59 to 2.67, questions about the nature of such a person were answered. This verse is a concluding summary of the above 9 verses. The sequence of stages for such a person to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge are sense-control -> peace of mind -> mental concentration -> spiritual study and contemplation -> conviction in knowledge -> concentrated meditation -> divine, spiritual knowledge.

Characteristics of a Realized Soul

`m{Zemgd@VnZnñ`nOmJ{V@g\$ _r &
`ñ`nOmJ{V^y/mZ gm{Zemñí`Vno_w.o.&& 69 &&

On the issue of spiritual knowledge where everyone is in the dark, a realized soul is wide awake (and aware) and on worldly issues on which everyone is wide awake (and fully engaged), the realized soul stays in the dark. (2.69)

Comments: In this verse the Lord is comparing the interests and knowledge of a normal worldly person and a realized person. Most people immersed in daily, worldly affairs are completely in the dark and have no interest in learning about the attributes of the Lord, whereas a realized soul is very much alert, awake, and aware of the attributes of the Lord. Conversely, while most people are focused on worldly matters, indulging in sense pleasure, a realized person stays in the dark (has no interest in such matters).

A realized soul is completely immersed in the Lord and has no interest at all in worldly matters. A question then arises about deities such as Indra, Surya, Agni etc., who are realized souls but have an active role in worldly matters as they activate the sense organs of living beings. If, as realized souls, they avoid taking interest in worldly matters, how can the world function? Sri Rayaru [GV] answers this question by stating that the nature of a realized soul referred to in this verse does not apply to deities. It applies to souls who have achieved self-realization but are not part of the group of deities who have specific roles.

Amñi ©mU' Mbà(Vò\$g_@_m...à{depV `UV²`
 VUV²H\$m_m`šà{depV gd}g empV_nbZnV Z H\$m_H\$m_r && 70 &&

Just as an ocean does not rise with constant inflow of water and continues to take in rivers, one who is able to absorb worldly matters without getting attached is destined for liberation. One who is always focused on chasing desires can never achieve peace. (2.70)

Comments: It was stated in verse 2.69 that a realized person has no interest in worldly matters. However, there are instances of such people indulging in sense activities such as eating, hearing, seeing etc. This verse explains this apparent contradiction by clarifying that just as an ocean does not rise with the inflow of river waters, a realized person who indulges in sense activities, purely to maintain physical wellbeing, does not get attached to such consumption.

{dhm` H\$m_mZ` ...gdmZ`nW`nJa{V {Z..ññh...&
 {Z_©m{ZahfH\$m...g emV_{YJAN\$V && 71 &&

One who is rid of ego and arrogance and who performs worldly activities without desires will achieve peace and eternal bliss. (2.71)

Comments: In the previous verse, it was stated that a seeker must exercise sense control and partake in consumption activities only to maintain physical wellbeing. In this verse, it is further clarified that even when partaking in such consumption, one should do so with detachment and with firm conviction that one does not have any ownership or independence in action with regard to consumables and consumption.

Efm~m:r pñW{V...nmWZn\$ãñ` {d_ñ{V &
 pñWEdmñ` m_YVH\$mbo{n ~« {ZdmE_AN\$V && 72 &&

O Partha! This is the character of one who has deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge. Such a person will not experience misery in worldly matters and in due course will reach the Lord's abode. (2.72)

Comments: In verses 2.55 to 2.69, the Lord explains the characteristics of a realized soul in response to Arjuna's query in verse 2.54. This verse is a conclusion of that discussion. Sri Rayaru clarifies in GV that a realized soul will reach the Lord's abode only after getting rid of the effects of good and bad deeds (*prarabdha karma*). Sri Rayaru further clarifies that the reference to Brahma here is related to the Lord (*Para Brahma*) and not to the four-faced deity Brahma, based on the use of the qualifier *nirvana* (meaning one without material body = Lord Almighty as *vana = bana* refers to material body).

Summary of Chapter 2

With the context for the teachings in the **Gita** established in Chapter 1, the actual sermon of Lord Krishna to Arjuna (and through Arjuna to the

rest of humanity) begins in Chapter 2. Seeing Arjuna in a pitiable condition not wanting to wage the war, Krishna asks Arjuna why he wants to avoid performing his prescribed duties and thereby risk losing respect in society. Such an abdication of responsibility is not worthy of a great prince like Arjuna who had a stellar reputation for fighting for justice all his life (2.2-2.3). Arjuna, who so far wanted to avoid war out of compassion and attachment to his kith and kin, now reasons that Bheeshma, Drona and others are not mere family members and teachers whom he holds in very high esteem. They are also worthy of worship. However, Krishna's questioning opens some doubts in his mind, and he informs Krishna that his mind is conflicted, and he is unsure about the path forward. He surrenders to Krishna, requests to be considered as a student and given guidance (2.4-2.8). Given that Arjuna's doubts are deep rooted, Lord Krishna proceeds to deliver a very detailed sermon to him covering all aspects of life such as the relationship between the Lord and individual souls, responsibilities of everyone in society, concept of devotion to the Lord, transient nature of life, cycle of births and deaths and many more topics which prove to be a summary of critical teachings from all scriptures such as the **Vedas** and great epics such as the **Ramayana**, the **Mahabharata** etc (2.11-2.71).

At this stage, one can expect several questions as to the context and content of the **Gita**. Firstly, why would Krishna get into great details about life, the universe, the relationship between the Lord and individual souls and such spiritual issues when all that was needed was some timely, practical advice to Arjuna to get on with fighting the war. The reason Krishna had to get into such great details is that Arjuna had developed deep rooted doubts about his duties and responsibilities, and he had to be convinced about the need to perform his duties without getting excessively attached to his near and dear ones. Secondly, one would wonder if the battlefield was the right venue for such heavy philosophical discourse which should normally occur in a serene, quiet environment. Again, it is normal for many to seek guidance when they come to a crossroad and are about to implement actions with grave repercussions. These are the very times when one needs proper spiritual guidance. Some would question as to

how such a lengthy sermon can be delivered when millions of soldiers are about to start a war. Krishna's conversation with Arjuna runs quickly as Arjuna is an evolved soul and absorbs the concepts very quickly. Finally, some wonder how Arjuna who is known as an incarnation of deity Indra could be ignorant and develop such fundamental doubts about his duties and responsibilities. At the end of Krishna's teachings, Arjuna responds saying that by Krishna's grace, his doubts have been cleared, his memory is back, and he is clear about his duties and responsibilities (18.73). The fact that his memory was back, implies that Arjuna had proper knowledge about his duties earlier but for some reason his mind was covered with delusion. It was the Lord's Divine Will that Arjuna would undergo temporary loss of memory to set the stage for his doubts and questions, which then gave Him an opportunity to use Arjuna as an instrument to teach the **Gita** to all of the mankind. Lord Krishna then advances many powerful reasons for Arjuna to stop worrying about the harm the war could cause to his loved ones. Firstly, his elders and teachers such as Bheeshma and Drona were not worthy of grieving for as they had supported Duryodhana, the evil king, whose army had to be destroyed to establish order and righteousness. Despite their good nature, these elders were blind to Duryodhana's evil intentions and hence were not deserving of sympathy (2.11). Secondly, if Arjuna was worried that these elders would be permanently destroyed, Krishna reminds him that the body and the soul are separate, and that their souls would live on. Further, based on the good deeds they had performed, they would achieve heaven. So, it was unnecessary to grieve over them (2.12). Thirdly, just as a body undergoes various stages in life such as childhood, youth, old age etc, death is also a natural stage for everybody. As such, these elders would die one day or the other, and no amount of grieving could prevent that (2.13). Fourthly, just as one does not grieve about throwing out old, worn-out clothes as they are replaced by new, good clothes, one should not grieve over a worn-out body that will eventually be replaced by a new one (2.22). Basically, Krishna teaches Arjuna that he must perform his rightful duties and any excuses coming in the way are untenable.

Verses 2.20 to 2.24 give us a description of the nature of individual souls which are indestructible, and have no beginning or end etc. As opposed to individual souls, the nature of the Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty) is briefly described in verses 2.17, 2.25 and 2.29. The Lord who pervades everywhere, is eternal, and does not experience destruction of the body (as His body is transcendental), and is full of auspicious attributes and is devoid of any blemishes. He is superior to individual souls and hence is worthy of worship. One should perform ones prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord without expectations. This paves the way for one's liberation. Coming to the practical aspects of Arjuna's decision to relinquish arms, the Lord emphasizes the need for Arjuna to perform his prescribed duties, as for a *kshatriya*, there is no loftier duty than waging a just war. Arjuna has been handed a great opportunity to perform his duty and he should not waste this chance. If he were to withdraw from war, purely out of compassion to near and dear ones, nothing would prevent his enemies from concluding that Arjuna was afraid to fight, and they could question his valor. Finally, Krishna tells Arjuna that he has nothing to lose by waging the war. If he wins, he gets to rule the kingdom and eventually goes to heaven hereafter for diligently performing his duty. If he loses and dies, he will attain heavens for his conviction and efforts (2.31-2.37). From verses 2.12 to 2.38, Krishna imparts Arjuna knowledge (*sankhya*) about the Lord and individual souls. From verse 2.39 onwards, He teaches Arjuna the methods and procedure (*yoga*) for acquiring such knowledge after which Arjuna would be able to perform his prescribed duties with conviction, realize the Lord, get over worldly bondage and achieve the state of eternal bliss (*moksha*). In verses 2.42 -2.45, the Lord teaches Arjuna the real purport of the **Vedas** - that one should focus on the deeper meanings and not get carried away by peripheral meanings. The real purport of the **Vedas** is divine, spiritual knowledge of Lord Almighty. In verses 2.45-2.51, the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma*, that is performing prescribed duties without expectations. Specifically, in verse 2.50, the Lord categorically states that the best path for one to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge is for one to focus on performing one's assigned duties as an offering to the Lord without expectations on the outcome (*nishkama*

karma). Such a realized soul would be rid of the consequences of good and bad deeds and would be eligible for liberation. Among all activities, those that lead to attainment of divine knowledge is supreme. In verses 2.52 and 2.53, it is stated that in order to absorb proper teachings, one needs to cleanse one's mind of conflicting, ignorant, and inconsistent viewpoints not based on scriptural truths. In verse 2.54, Arjuna asks Krishna about the characteristics of a person with such a tranquil mind. In the 4 verses, starting from verse 2.55 to 2.58, the Lord describes the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In the 9 verses from 2.59 to 2.67, questions about the nature of such a person are answered. The Lord concludes the sermon in Chapter 2 by stating in 2.72 that such a person will not experience worldly miseries and in due course will reach His abode.

॥ वृत्तं नो मम ॥

End of Chapter 2

V/r` n@U` m` ... - H\$_ qnoJ...

Chapter 3 – The Path of Action

Chapter Introduction: This Chapter of 43 verses is termed *Karma Yoga* (The Path of Action). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions regarding the paths of duty (*karma*) and knowledge (*jnana*). Arjuna wonders if there was a way, he could focus on acquiring knowledge (*jnana*) and avoid participating in the war. The Lord answers all Arjuna's doubts logically to convince him that everyone has an obligation to perform his duties to society, and as a *kshatriya* prince it was Arjuna's responsibility to fight the just war to protect his citizens. To perform one's duty, one also needs to be equipped with knowledge and in that sense, one needs to incorporate both *karma* and *jnana* in their spiritual journey. Based on one's innate nature, some may be prescribed a path that is dominant in action and others may be prescribed a path dominant in knowledge. This chapter also has an excellent discussion on the Cyclic Order of the Universe. In the previous chapter, in verses 2.12 to 2.30, the Lord lectured on the nature of individual souls and the Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty). In verse 2.39, the Lord tells Arjuna how to acquire spiritual knowledge which would guide one to perform right actions. In the verses 2.45 to 2.51, the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma* (performing prescribed duties without expectations) which would liberate one from bondage. In this chapter, that concept is expanded in response to Arjuna's questions that appear in verses 3.1 and 3.2. Thus, chapter 3 is an appropriate follow up to chapter 2.

Which is Better – Action or Knowledge?

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 V`X`h`\$`d`X`{`Z`{`U`E`` `z`l`o`m`e`h`_`n`B`Z`i`m`_`2`&&`2`&&

Arjuna said: O Janardana! O Keshava! If you opine that knowledge is superior to action, then why are you pushing me to wage this dreadful war? (3.1)

My mind is confused with this dual talk of superiority between knowledge and action. Please tell me with certainty the correct way which will lead me to the right path. (3.2)

Comments: Sri Rayaru in GV makes a reference to verse 2.49 which spoke about the supremacy of the path of knowledge over the path of action. However, in other verses such as 2.37, Krishna exhorts Arjuna to follow the path of action by waging the just war as that was Arjuna's prescribed duty. Arjuna is now questioning as to which is the superior path. He wonders whether he should renounce everything, become an ascetic and follow the path of knowledge which would lead him to liberation.

Jnana Yogis and Karma Yogis

l`r`^`J`d`n`Z`o`d`n`M`&
 b`n`h`\$`q`n`_`Z`2`{`U`{`d`Y`m`{`Z`ö`k`n`n`m`à`n`P`\$`m`_``m`e`Z`K`&
 k`n`Z`_`m`o`z`g`r`\$`>`m`Z`n`\$`H`\$`_`©`m`o`z`_``n`q`J`Z`m`_`2`&&`3`&&

The Lord said: O Anagha (Arjuna, the one without sins)! As explained before, in this world there are two paths towards liberation depending on one's innate nature, talent, and situation. Kings such as Janaka (*karma yogi*) achieved liberation by sincerely ruling their kingdoms (path of action), and sages such as Sanaka (*jnana yogi*) achieved liberation by learning, teaching, and spreading spiritual knowledge to others (path of knowledge). (3.3)

Comments: Lord Krishna clarifies that there are two main paths to liberation, based on one's innate nature, ability, and eligibility. Arjuna, as a ruler, belongs to the *karma yogi* class and hence he should perform his prescribed duty of waging this war to protect his citizens. This answers Arjuna's question in 3.1. It is further clarified in GV that everyone must follow both the path of knowledge and the path of action. However, in *jnana yogis*, knowledge is predominant and hence they should follow the path of knowledge and in the process also follow necessary activities (path of action). Likewise, for *karma yogis* such as Arjuna, the path of action (war, in this case) is the superior path and traversing that path also requires a certain amount of knowledge (path of knowledge). As such, *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* refer to the aspect of action or knowledge that is predominant in a person's nature. This also means that everyone of us should introspect within ourselves as to the proper path for us to follow, depending on our innate nature, talent, interest, and ability. For one who sincerely prays to the Lord, the path will become clear.

Action (Karma) is Mandatory for Everyone

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

One cannot escape bondage from actions just by relinquishing actions. Also, one cannot directly achieve liberation only by performing duties without expectations (*nishkama karma*). (3.4)

Comments: Krishna instructs Arjuna not to avoid performing prescribed duties. There are three reasons that Arjuna could have for avoiding duties: (a) Once liberated (in *moksha*), there are no compulsions on duties, so in preparation, it may be best to avoid actions (and focus on knowledge) in this world itself; (b) focus on activities might bind one in worldly life and lead to expectations; and, (c) some scriptures say that action comes in the way of attaining *moksha*, based on the phrase –

‘*karmana badhyate jantuhu*’ (one gets bound by activity – in other words, actions come in the way of liberation).

Lord Krishna responds to the reasoning in ‘a’ by using the word *purusha* in this verse which stands for one with a physical body (gross or subtle). The physical body is designed for performing actions. Hence, the existence of the body contradicts the reasoning in ‘a’. The use of the word *purusha* also implies that one has gone through many births. Just because, one decides not to perform any actions in this birth, it does not mean that they did not perform activities in prior births. So, does it mean that one can never achieve liberation? This argument makes the reasoning in ‘b’ untenable. Actions performed with expectations on outcomes do come in the way of *moksha*. This does not apply to all actions, especially actions performed without expectations. Hence, reasoning in ‘c’ is also invalid. Even *nishkama karma* does not, by itself directly lead to *moksha*. This type of action leads to purity in mind which allows one to absorb spiritual studies, eventually paving the way for liberation.

So, the path to liberation is to avoid activities with expectations and perform prescribed activities -> mental peace -> detachment from worldly objects -> concentrated listening, reflection, meditation on the Lord Almighty -> divine knowledge -> liberation. The process involved in these steps are clarified in the following verses.

Z {h H\$[üV²j U_{n Om/Vr(VöÈ` H\$ P\$V²è
 H\$ñ 70÷de...H\$ ©gd©àH\$VO;J@;.. && 5 &&

One cannot survive for a single second without performing any action. Under the influence of the Lord, everyone is always performing some action or the other due to interaction with material nature. (3.5)

Comments: This verse further clarifies the real meaning of the scriptural phrase ‘*karmana badhyate jantuhu*’ (one gets bound by activity – in other words, activity comes in the way of liberation). Some may use this

phrase to avoid doing any activity. The Lord clarifies that it is impossible for any living being to survive without activity. Even breathing is an activity. Even realized souls, as long as they are alive, will keep performing activities as ordained by the independent Lord Almighty, based on interaction with material nature.

H\$ pŷĐ` m(U g\$ á` ` AnñVo_Zgmñ_aZ²`
 BpŷĐ` nVñZ²{d_ŷñ_m{I` nVñna...g CÀ` Vo&& 6`&&
 `pñĒdpŷĐ` m(U _Zgm{Z` á` nra^V@OZ`
 H\$ pŷĐ` ;.H\$_©m}_²Ag°\$.g {d{eî` Vo&& 7` &&

One who controls actions of sense organs in pursuing sense objects, but still craves mentally for these objects is an ignorant hypocrite. (3.6)

O Arjuna! The better path for one is to perform prescribed duties using the sense organs of action (hands etc.), while controlling the sense organs of perception (eyes, ears etc.) through the mind. (3.7)

Comments: One can understand that one must perform some activities for the sake of physical well-being, and it is impossible to avoid all activities. But why not avoid other activities such as performing rituals etc.? The Lord answers this question by stating that one must perform prescribed activities such as performing rituals. This is elaborated in later verses. The point being made is that mere performing of activities will not bind someone and come in the way of liberation. It is the mental condition with which one performs action that would bind a person.

{Z` V\$Hñé H\$_Ēd\$H\$_Ā` m` nñ÷H\$_Ē...`
 eara` m`ñ{n M VoZ` à{gŌçXH\$_Ē...` && 8` &&

You should perform your duties prescribed by society based on your innate nature and talent. Acting on your duties is far superior to

relinquishing duties. One cannot traverse the journey of life without performing prescribed duties. (3.8)

Comments: If it is the mind that comes in the way of one's attaining liberation, and duty is also mandatory, what type of duty should one perform? The answer is – one must perform duties prescribed to one's profession based on one's innate nature, talent, and training. After all, one must perform duties for livelihood in a society.

knVnH\$ _Umf` I bnH\$e` \$H\$ _eYYZ... &
 VXW^aH\$ _H\$Vô _P\$g" ...g_nMa && 9 &&

O Son of Kunti! Only that action that is not performed as an offering to the Lord will bind one. Perform your duties as an offering to the Lord and it will liberate you. (3.9).

Comments: This verse provides more clarifications on spiritual texts that outwardly seem to indicate that activities will bind and come in the way of liberation. Building on the argument in verse 3.8 that one has to keep performing some activity or the other at least to sustain life, this verse states that the spiritual text quoted in the comments section of 3.5 refers only to those activities that are not performed as an offering to Lord Almighty. The word *yagna* used here refers to Lord Vishnu, as the root word *gna* means knowledge, and Lord Vishnu is omniscient (all knowing). Activities that are performed as an offering to the Lord will not bind anyone and in fact, will lead one to liberation.

Cyclic Order of the Universe

gh` km..àOm..g%0%nmnmM àOm(V... &
 AZZ àg(dî` Ud_²Ef dmpñEdi>H\$M_YH\$ && 10 &&

At the time of creation, Prajapati Brahma created humans and also the sacrificial methods for propitiating deities controlling nature. He

addressed the people thus - by performing these sacrifices you will achieve your desires and these deities will fulfil your desires. (3.10)

Comments: In the four verses from 3.10 to 3.13, the Lord describes the concept of *yagna* (ritual sacrifice) that came into existence at the time of creation of humans. Every aspect of this universe including the elements of nature, the parts of a human body etc., are activated by deities who have been given that power by the Lord Almighty. One must perform ritual sacrifices to propitiate the deities, who, when pleased will fulfill the desires of the citizenry. The concept of *arthavada* is utilized here to convey the importance of performing *yagna*. *Arthavada* is a logical construct that simultaneously uses praise (*stuti*) and admonition (*ninda*) in conveying a concept. Those who perform the prescribed rituals earn the grace of the deities and those who consume riches without sharing them are admonished.

XolmZ²^mcl`VmZz VoXolm^mcl`YVwcl...&
nañnaš^mcl`YV...I ò ...na_dmbñ`W && 11 &&

You should continue to worship deities who are the controlling entities for the forces of nature and when pleased with your sacrifices, they will bestow blessings on you. You will prosper from this mutual affection. (3.11)

Comments: This verse indicates the mutual admiration between the deities who are pleased by ritual sacrifices and the citizenry that performs these sacrifices.

Bi:ñZ²^mclmZ²{h dnoXolmXmñ`YVo`k^mclVm..&
VxñmZàXm`p`no`no^P\$ñVz Ed g...&& 12 &&

Deities pleased with your propitiation will fulfil your desires. One who selfishly consumes such fruits earned, without donating back, is indeed a thief. (3.12)

Comments: Those who selfishly consume everything earned from ritual sacrifices without sharing them are admonished as being equivalent to thieves. This strongly worded verse is meant to encourage one to adopt the concept of sharing, which is a foundational pillar of every civilized society.

¶k{ei}æZ...gYVno_À`YVogd{H\$pe~fj..&
^ÀOVovoEdK\$nmnm`onMYÉ`nĒ_H\$naUnV^2&& 13&&

Those, who perform sacrifices to propitiate the deities using riches bestowed on them by the deities and consume only what is left, will be rid of bondage. Those who selfishly consume everything themselves will accumulate sins. (3.13)

Comments: Those who use the riches gained through ritual sacrifices to perform activities as an offering to the Lord Almighty, will not only please the deities but will also move towards liberation. Excessive, selfish consumption of riches earned without giving back to society leads to one's downfall.

APmX^2^dpYV ^YmZ nOP nXpGâ^d...&
`kmX^2^d{V nOP m`k...H\$_g_Ød...&& 14 &&

H\$_@~mØd\$(d{Ø ~mj ag_Ød_2&
Vñ_mV^2gdØV\$~{ZĒ`\$`koà{V{ØV_2&& 15 &&

Living entities come into being through the food chain (rice). Rice grows because of rain and Sun. Vedic sacrifices (to propitiate deities) result in timely rains. The Lord Almighty is responsible for all the activities. The Lord manifests from Vedic hymns and Vedic sacrifices performed by humans. (3.14) (3.15)

Comments: These 2 verses describe the Cyclic Order of the Universe to convey the importance of *yagna* (Vedic sacrifices) that one needs to perform. This cyclic order ensures orderly functioning of the universe and if broken, will result in chaos and anarchy due to the imbalances. Living beings come into physical existence through the food chain, which is represented by rice. Rain (governed by the deity Parjanya – Sun) causes rice to grow. Parjanya, when pleased by the *yagna* performed by the citizenry causes rain. Human beings invoke the Lord Almighty through Vedic hymns (as the Lord is known through the **Vedas**) and the Lord powers humans to perform their prescribed duties (*karma*) and propitiate the deities through *yagna*. This cycle is represented as follows: Rice -> Humans -> Vedic Prayers -> Lord's Grace -> Prescribed duties -> Ritual sacrifices -> Offering to Deities (Parjanya) -> Rain -> Rice.

Yagna, the concept of offering to deities through ritual sacrifices is an especially important aspect of Hindu philosophy and its meaning is described in later verses.

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AKmì {apYD` nam_no_nk\$nmV©g Ord{V && 16 &&

One who does not respect and follow this cycle of life is leading a wasteful life. Such people are interested only in pursuing sense pleasures, and they lead a sinful life. (3.16)

Comments: The Lord teaches that everyone must play his role in the circle of life to ensure proper functioning of the cyclic order of the universe. This order is an interaction amongst its constituent parts namely, the individual souls, the inert matter (material nature) and the Lord Almighty. Even from practical experience, we all know that there is a specific order in nature that one must follow. We witness every day the perils of deviating from this order in terms of global warming, excessive rains, floods, earthquakes, pandemics etc. The **Gita** teaches that everyone must understand their role in the universe and not waste their lifetime by

senselessly pursuing sense pleasures constantly. Some can point out to the instances where even after performing the stipulated *yagna*, one does not see the effects such as rains, sumptuous harvest etc., and question the validity of these claims. One must note that mechanically performing these rituals will not yield results and they must be accompanied with sincerity in purpose and most importantly, as an offering to the Supreme Lord.

At this stage, one may ask a question as to the applicability of these rituals to the population other than married householders, such as students (*brahmachari*), those who have retired from active life (*vanprasthi*) and ascetics (*sanyasis*). After all, not everyone would have access to all material utilities that would be required to perform these rituals. Sri Rayaru [GV] clarifies that *yagna* has different meanings based on one's stage in life. For example, for *brahmcharis*, serving their teachers (*guru*) is the stipulated *yagna*. For ascetics who have renounced all material utilities, *yagna* refers to mental (*manasika*) and vocal (*vachaka*) sacrifices. Studying, teaching, and lecturing about the scriptures is the stipulated *yagna* for ascetics. For *vanaprasthis*, performing activities without hurting any living organism constitutes *yagna*. In other words, *yagna* is mandatory for everyone, but the stipulated activity depends on one's stage in life. Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha indicated the example of some saints who, in addition to *jnana yagna* (sacrifice through knowledge), *dhyana yagna* (sacrifice through meditation), etc., practice the *yagna* of writing poetry on the greatness of the Lord Almighty. For them, poetry (*kavana*) and singing in praise of the Lord is *savana* (*yagna*).

Actions Do Not Bind One Focused on the Lord

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 अथैकं श्रुत्वा भगवत्पुत्रोऽपि ॥१७॥

One who is elated by visualizing the Lord, who is contented in pleasing the Lord, who is happily immersed in the Lord has indeed

achieved the state of ultimate consciousness. There is no prescribed duty or responsibility for such a being. (3.17)

Comments: In verses 3.4, 3.10 etc., the requirements for performing one's stipulated duties were described. Previously, it was pointed out that ascetics perform mental and vocal *yagna* by way of studying, teaching, and lecturing as everyone must perform their assigned duties. A question that arises then is about the case of those who while meditating have reached the state of ultimate consciousness (*asamprajnata samadhi*). In this state they would not even be aware of their surroundings, and they would be fully immersed in the Lord. This verse states that one who is completely immersed in the Lord and has reached the state of ultimate consciousness will by God's grace be fully contented and has no obligations to perform any activities. Such a person will not have interest in any matter other than the Lord.

Zp Vñ` H\$Vz mWm) ZnH\$Vz b H\$üZ &
Z Mmñ` gd°yfwH\$üXWP nml ` ... && 18 &&

There is nothing to be gained by such a person by performing duties and nothing will be lost by non-performance of duties. Such a person has no need to depend on elders, teachers for any benefit (as that person has realized the Lord). (3.18)

Comments: Everyone has an obligation to perform prescribed duties many of which must be performed at specified times. Is it necessary for one to wake up a person who is in the state of ultimate consciousness to allow that person to perform prescribed duties at specified times? Sri Rayaru in GV answers by stating that, as per this verse, such a person has no such obligations. Further, that person does not have to wake up from the state of deep meditation and ultimate consciousness even to greet elders, teachers etc., as no further benefits will be derived. Such a person has already realized the Lord and hence has no obligation to perform duties.

Vñ_mKg°\$.gVV\$H\$m`^H\$_g_nMa &
 Ag°\$mønMaZ²H\$_na_nBZnV nēf... && 19 &&

Only those who have realized the Lord are exempt from obligation to perform duties. But you must perform your prescribed duties without getting attached to the outcome. One who focusses on performing duties without expecting results is sure to reach the Lord's abode. (3.19)

Comments: Those who have reached the state of ultimate consciousness, have realized the Lord and those who are already liberated have no obligations to perform any duties. But Arjuna must perform his prescribed duty to enable him to move towards the Lord's abode.

Arjuna Must Perform His Duties and Fight the Just War

H\$_Ud {h gfg{Õ_²AmñWVmOZH\$K` ... &
 bñH\$g\$Jh_dñf(n gñí` Z²H\$V@hñg && 20 &&

Wise emperors such as Janaka achieved salvation through their honest discharge of prescribed duties. You (Arjuna) should perform your duties for the sake of society. (3.20)

Comments: Wise emperors such as Janaka have already achieved divine, spiritual knowledge and are destined to reach the Lord's abode. If so, why did they continue to perform duties? This verse answers by stating that even such people would experience deeper levels of bliss in *moksha* on account of additional duties performed. In addition, they performed duties to set an example to the masses. Likewise, Arjuna needs to focus on duties as he is considered a role model to his citizens. While, attaining *nirvana* requires one to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge, such knowledge accrues only when someone performs prescribed duties without expectations. In that sense the relationship between duty and knowledge is like the one between a yoke and the shoulders of a person using that yoke