

Bhagavad Gita (BG) Reading
Points: 50

Directions: Read and answer questions at end of reading. The main idea or theme here is that this is part of a talk between Arjuna, who is a warrior leader and his chariot driver Krishna, who is actually the Hindu god Vishnu. It occurs just prior to a great battle.

Translated by Ramanand Prasad and taken from <http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/gita.htm>

Chapter 1: Arjuna's Dilemma

Dhritaraashtra said: O Sanjaya, assembled in the holy field of Kurukshetra and eager to fight, what did my people and the Paandavas do? (1.01)

Sanjaya said: Seeing the battle formation of the Paandava's army, King Duryodhana approached his guru, Drona, and spoke these words: (1.02)

O master, behold this mighty army of the sons of Paandu, arranged in battle formation by your talented disciple, the son of Drupada. (1.03)

There are many heroes and mighty archers equal to Bheema and Arjuna in war such as Yuyudhaana and Viraata; and the great warrior, Drupada; (1.04)

Dhrishtaketu, Chekitaana, and the heroic King of Kaashi; Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and the great man Saibya; (1.05)

The valiant Yudhaamanyu, the formidable Uttamauja, the son of Subhadraa, and the sons of Draupadi; all of them are great warriors. (1.06)

Also know, O best among the twice born, the distinguished ones on our side. I name the commanders of my army for your information. (1.07)

Yourself, Bheeshma, Karna, and the victorious Kripa; Ashvatthaamaa, Vikarna, and the son of Somadatta. (1.08)

And many other heroes who have risked their lives for me. They are armed with various weapons, and all are skilled in warfare. (1.09)

Our army, commanded by Bheeshma, is invincible; while their army, protected by Bheema, is easy to conquer. (1.10)

Therefore all of you, occupying your respective positions on all fronts, protect Bheeshma only. (1.11)

The mighty Bheeshma, the eldest man of the Kuru dynasty, roared as a lion and blew his conch loudly bringing joy to Duryodhana. (1.12)

After that, conches, kettledrums, cymbals, drums, and trumpets were sounded together. The commotion was tremendous. (1.13)

Then Lord Krishna and Arjuna, seated in a grand chariot yoked with white horses, blew their celestial conches. (1.14)

Krishna blew His conch, Paanchajanya; Arjuna blew his conch, Devadatta; and Bheema, the doer of formidable deeds, blew (his) big conch, Paundra. (1.15)

The son of Kunti, King Yudhishtira, blew (his conch) Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew Sughosha and Manipushpaka conches, respectively. (1.16)

The King of Kaashi, the mighty archer; Shikhandi, the great warrior; Dhristadyumna, Viraata, and the invincible Saatyaki; (1.17)

King Drupada, and the sons of Draupadi; the mighty son of Subhadraa; all of them blew their respective conches, O lord of the earth. (1.18)

The tumultuous uproar, resounding through earth and sky, tore the hearts of the Kauravas. (1.19)

Seeing the sons of Dhritaraashtra standing; and the war about to begin; Arjuna, whose banner bore the emblem of Hanumana, took up his bow; and (1.20)

Spoke these words to Lord Krishna: O Lord, (please) stop my chariot between the two armies until I behold those who stand here eager for battle and with whom I must engage in this act of war. (1.21-22)

I wish to see those who are willing to serve the evil-minded son of Dhritaraashtra by assembling here to fight the battle. (1.23)

Sanjaya said: O King, Lord Krishna, as requested by Arjuna, placed the best of all the chariots in the midst of the two armies; (1.24)

Facing Bheeshma, Drona, and all other Kings; and said to Arjuna: Behold these assembled Kurus! (1.25)

There Arjuna saw his uncles, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and comrades. (1.26)

Seeing fathers-in-law, all those kinsmen, and other dear ones standing in the ranks of the two armies, (1.27)

Arjuna was overcome with great compassion and sorrowfully said: O Krishna, seeing my kinsmen standing with a desire to fight, (1.28)

My limbs fail and my mouth becomes dry. My body quivers and my hairs stand on end. (1.29)

The bow, Gaandeeva, slips from my hand and my skin intensely burns. My head turns, I am unable to stand steady and, O Krishna, I see bad omens. I see no use of killing my kinsmen in battle. (1.30-31)

I desire neither victory nor pleasure nor kingdom, O Krishna. What is the use of the kingdom, or enjoyment, or even life, O Krishna? (1.32)

Because all those, for whom we desire kingdom, enjoyments, and pleasures, are standing here for the battle, giving up their lives and wealth. (1.33)

Teachers, uncles, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other relatives. (1.34)

I do not wish to kill them, who are also about to kill, even for the sovereignty of the three worlds, let alone for this earthly kingdom, O Krishna. (1.35)

O Lord Krishna, what pleasure shall we find in killing the sons of Dhritaraashtra? Upon killing these felons we shall incur sin only. (1.36)

Therefore, we should not kill our brothers, the sons of Dhritaraashtra. How can we be happy after killing our kinsmen, O Krishna? (1.37)

Though they, blinded by greed, do not see evil in the destruction of the family, or sin in being treacherous to friends. (1.38)

Why shouldn't we, who clearly see evil in the destruction of the family, think about turning away from this sin, O Krishna? (1.39)

With the destruction of the family, the eternal family traditions are destroyed, and immorality prevails due to the destruction of family traditions. (1.40)

And when immorality prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupted; when women are corrupted, social problems arise. (1.41)

This brings the family and the slayers of the family to hell, because the spirits of their ancestors are degraded when deprived of ceremonial offerings of rice-ball and water. (1.42)

The everlasting qualities of Varna and family traditions of those who destroy their family are ruined by the sinful act of illegitimacy. (1.43) (*Note: Varna means color, or the make up and the hue of mind; a social division or order of society such as caste in India.*)

We have been told, O Krishna, that people whose family traditions are destroyed necessarily dwell in hell for a long time. (1.44)

Alas! We are ready to commit a great sin by striving to slay our kinsmen because of greed for the pleasures of the kingdom. (1.45)

It would be far better for me if the sons of Dhritaraashtra should kill me with their weapons in battle while I am unarmed and unresisting. (1.46)

Sanjaya said: Having said this in the battle field and casting aside his bow and arrow, Arjuna sat down on the seat of the chariot with his mind overwhelmed with sorrow. (1.47)

Chapter 2: Transcendental Knowledge

Sanjaya said: Lord Krishna spoke these words to Arjuna whose eyes were tearful and downcast, and who was overwhelmed with compassion and despair. (2.01)

The Supreme Lord said: How has the dejection come to you at this juncture? This is not fit for an Aryan (or the people of noble mind and deeds). It is disgraceful, and it does not lead one to heaven, O Arjuna. (2.02)

Do not become a coward, O Arjuna, because it does not befit you. Shake off this weakness of your heart and get up (for the battle), O Arjuna. (2.03)

Arjuna said: How shall I strike Bheeshma and Drona, who are worthy of my worship, with arrows in battle, O Krishna? (2.04)

It would be better, indeed, to live on alms in this world than to slay these noble gurus, because, by killing them I would enjoy wealth and pleasures stained with (theirs) blood. (2.05)

Neither do we know which alternative (to beg or to kill) is better for us, nor do we know whether we shall conquer them or they will conquer us. We should not even wish to live after killing the sons of Dhritaraashtra who are standing in front of us. (2.06)

My heart is overcome by the weakness of pity, and my mind is confused about Dharma. I request You to tell me, decisively, what is better for me. I am Your disciple. Teach me who has taken refuge in You. (2.07) (*Dharma may be defined as the eternal law governing, upholding, and supporting the creation and the world order. It also means*

duty, righteousness, ideal conduct, moral principles, and truth. Adharma is an antonym to Dharma. Expert guidance should be sought during the moment of crisis.)

I do not perceive that gaining an unrivaled and prosperous kingdom on this earth, or even lordship over the gods will remove the sorrow that is drying up my senses. (2.08)

Sanjaya said: O King, after speaking like this to Lord Krishna, the mighty Arjuna said to Krishna: I shall not fight, and became silent. (2.09)

O King, Lord Krishna, as if smiling, spoke these words to the despondent Arjuna in the midst of the two armies. (2.10)

The Supreme Lord said: You grieve for those who are not worthy of grief, and yet speak the words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. (2.11)

There was never a time when I, you, or these kings did not exist; nor shall we ever cease to exist in the future. (2.12)

Just as the Atma acquires a childhood body, a youth body, and an old age body during this life, similarly Atma acquires another body after death. The wise are not deluded by this. (2.13) *(Atma or Atman means consciousness, spirit, soul, self, the source of life and the cosmic power behind the body-mind complex. Just as our body exists in space, similarly our thoughts, intellect, emotions, and psyche exist in Atma, the space of consciousness. Atma cannot be perceived by the senses, because, the senses abide in Atma.)*

The contacts of the senses with the sense objects give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, and pain and pleasure.

They are transitory and impermanent. Therefore, (learn to) endure them, O Arjuna. (2.14)

Because the calm person, who is not afflicted by these feelings and is steady in pain and pleasure, becomes fit for immortality, O Arjuna. (2.15)

There is no nonexistence of the Sat (or Atma) and no existence of the Asat. The reality of these two is indeed certainly seen by the seers of truth. (2.16) *(Sat exists at all times -- past, present, and future. Atma is called Sat. Asat is a notion that does not exist at all (like the horn of a rabbit, or the water in a mirage). The one that has a beginning and an end is neither Sat nor Asat. The body is neither Sat nor Asat, or both Sat and Asat, because, it has a temporary existence. Mithya is the one that appears Sat at first sight, but is really Asat. Body, like the universe or Jagat, is called Mithya.)*

Know That, by which all this (universe) is pervaded, to be indestructible. No one can destroy the indestructible (Atma). (2.17)

Bodies of the eternal, imperishable, and incomprehensible soul are said to be perishable. Therefore, fight, O Arjuna. (2.18)

The one who thinks that Atma is a slayer, and the one who thinks that Atma is slain, both are ignorant, because Atma neither slays nor is slain. (2.19)

The Atma is neither born nor does it die at any time, nor having been it will cease to exist again. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Atma is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (2.20)

O Arjuna, how can a person who knows that the Atma is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and imperishable, kill anyone or cause anyone to be killed? (2.21)

Just as a person puts on new garments after discarding the old ones, similarly Atma acquires new bodies after casting away the old bodies. (2.22)

Weapons do not cut this Atma, fire does not burn it, water does not make it wet, and the wind does not make it dry. (2.23)

This Atma cannot be cut, burned, wetted, or dried up. It is eternal, all pervading, unchanging, immovable, and primeval. (2.24)

The Atma is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable, and unchanging. Knowing this Atma as such you should not grieve. (2.25)

If you think that this (body) takes birth and dies perpetually, even then, O Arjuna, you should not grieve like this. (2.26)

Because, death is certain for the one who is born, and birth is certain for the one who dies. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable. (2.27)

All beings, O Arjuna, are unmanifest before birth and after death. They are manifest between the birth and the death only. What is there to grieve about? (2.28)

Some look upon this Atma as a wonder, another describes it as wonderful, and others hear of it as a wonder. Even after hearing about it no one actually knows it. (2.29)

O Arjuna, the Atma that dwells in the body of all (beings) is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you should not mourn for any body. (2.30)

Considering also your duty as a warrior you should not waver. Because there is nothing more auspicious for a warrior than a righteous war. (2.31)

Only the fortunate warriors, O Arjuna, get such an opportunity for an unsought war that is like an open door to heaven. (2.32)

If you will not fight this righteous war, then you will fail in your duty, lose your reputation, and incur sin. (2.33)

People will talk about your disgrace forever. To the honored, dishonor is worse than death. (2.34)

The great warriors will think that you have retreated from the battle out of fear. Those who have greatly esteemed you will lose respect for you. (2.35)

Your enemies will speak many unmentionable words and scorn your ability. What could be more painful than this? (2.36)

You will go to heaven if killed, or you will enjoy the earth if victorious. Therefore, get up with a determination to fight, O Arjuna. (2.37)

Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike, engage yourself in your duty. By doing your duty this way you will not incur sin. (2.38)

The wisdom of Saamkhya (or the knowledge of the Self) has been imparted to you, O Arjuna. Now listen to the wisdom of Karma-yoga endowed with which you will free yourself from the bondage of Karma. (2.39)

In Karma-yoga no effort is ever lost, and there is no harm. Even a little practice of this discipline protects one from great fear (of birth and death). (2.40) (*Karma-yoga is also referred to as Nishkaama Karma-yoga, Seva, selfless service, Buddhi yoga, yoga of work, science of proper action, and yoga of equanimity. A Karma-yogi works for the Lord as a matter of duty without a selfish desire for the fruits of work, or any attachment to results. The word Karma also means duty, action, deeds, work, or the results of past deeds.*)

Those who are resolute have only one thought (of Self-realization), but the thoughts of the irresolute are endless and many-branched, O Arjuna. (2.41)

The unwise who delight in flowery words (or the chanting of the Vedas without understanding the real meaning) stress Karma-Kaanda, the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas, O Arjuna, and say that there is nothing else (except material enjoyment). (2.42)

They prescribe various specific rites for the attainment of pleasure and power to those who are full of desires, and hold the attainment of heaven as the highest goal of life. The rebirth is their fruit of action. (2.43)

The resolute determination (of Self-realization) is not formed in the minds of those who are attached to pleasure and power; and whose discernment is obscured by such (ritualistic) activities. (2.44)

The Vedas deal with the three states or Gunas of mind. Become free from dualities, be ever balanced and unconcerned with the thoughts of acquisition and preservation. Rise above the three Gunas, and be Self-conscious, O Arjuna. (2.45) (*Guna means the quality, state, or the property of mind, matter, and the nature. Refer to Chapter 14 for more details on Gunas.*)

To a Self-realized person the Vedas are as useful as a reservoir of water when there is flood water available everywhere. (2.46)

You have Adhikaara over your respective duty only, but no control or claim over the results. The fruits of work should not be your motive. You should never be inactive. (2.47) (*The word Adhikaara means ability and privilege, prerogative, jurisdiction, discretion, right, preference, choice, rightful claim, authority, control.*)

Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning (worry and) attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. The equanimity of mind is called Karma-yoga. (2.48)

Work done with selfish motives is inferior by far to the selfless service or Karma-yoga. Therefore be a Karma-yogi, O Arjuna. Those who seek (to enjoy) the fruits of their work are verily unhappy (because one has no control over the results). (2.49)

A Karma-yogi gets freedom from both vice and virtue in this life itself. Therefore, strive for Karma-yoga. Working to the best of one's abilities without getting attached to the fruits of work is called (Nishkaama) Karma-yoga. (2.50) Wise Karma-yogis, possessed with mental poise by renouncing the attachment to the fruits of work, are indeed freed from the bondage of rebirth and attain the blissful divine state. (2.51)

When your intellect will completely pierce the veil of delusion, then you will become indifferent to what has been heard and what is to be heard (from the scriptures). (2.52)

When your intellect, that is confused by the conflicting opinions and the ritualistic doctrine of the Vedas, shall stay steady and firm with the Self, then you shall attain Self-realization. (2.53)

Arjuna said: O Krishna, what is the mark of a person whose Prajna is steady and merged in superconscious state? How does a person of steady Prajna speak? How does such a person sit and walk? (2.54) (*Prajna means consciousness, mind, intellect, judgment, discrimination, and wisdom.*)

The Supreme Lord said: When one is completely free from all desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self by the (joy of) Self, then one is called a person of steady Prajna, O Arjuna. (2.55)

A person whose mind is unperturbed by sorrow, who does not crave pleasures, and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger; such a person is called a sage of steady Prajna. (2.56)

Those who are not attached to anything, who are neither elated by getting desired results nor troubled by undesired results, their Prajna is deemed steady. (2.57)

When one can completely withdraw (or restrain) the senses from the sense objects as a tortoise withdraws its limbs (into the shell), then the Prajna of such a person is considered steady. (2.58)

The desire for sensual pleasures fades away if one abstains from sense enjoyment, but the craving (for sense enjoyment) remains. The craving also disappears from the one who has seen (or known) the Supreme. (2.59)

Restless senses, O Arjuna, forcibly carry away the mind of even a wise person striving for perfection. (2.60)

Having brought the senses under control, one should fix one's mind on the Self. One's Prajna becomes steady whose senses are under control. (2.61)

One develops attachment to sense objects by thinking about sense objects. Desire for sense objects comes from attachment to sense objects, and anger comes from unfulfilled desires. (2.62)

Delusion arises from anger. The mind is bewildered by delusion. Reasoning is destroyed when the mind is bewildered. One falls down (from the right path) when reasoning is destroyed. (2.63)

A disciplined person, enjoying sense objects with senses that are under control and free from likes and dislikes, attains tranquillity. (2.64)

All sorrows are destroyed upon attainment of tranquillity. The intellect of such a tranquil person soon becomes completely steady. (2.65)

There is neither Self-knowledge nor Self-perception to those whose senses are not under control. Without Self-perception there is no peace; and without peace there can be no happiness. (2.66)

The mind, when controlled by the roving senses, steals away the Prajna as a storm takes away a boat on the sea from its destination, the spiritual shore. (2.67)

Therefore, O Arjuna, one's Prajna becomes steady whose senses are completely withdrawn from the sense objects. (2.68)

A yogi is aware of the thing (or Atma) about which others are unaware. A sage who sees is unaware of the experience (of sense objects) about which others are aware. (2.69)

One attains peace in whose mind all desires enter without creating any disturbance, as river waters enter the full ocean without creating a disturbance. One who desires material objects is never peaceful. (2.70)

One who abandons all desires and becomes free from longing and the feeling of 'I' and 'my' attains peace. (2.71)

O Arjuna, this is the Braahmee or superconscious state. Attaining this (state), one is no longer deluded. Gaining this state, even at the end of one's life, a person attains oneness with the Supreme. (2.72)

1. Do some research on the Gita. Here are some web sites which may or may prove helpful (You make the call):

http://www.iskcon.org/sastra/f_bg.html

<http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/>

<http://www.asitis.com/>

<http://www.krsna.com/gita/main/book/chapters/c1/texts/t1/index0.htm>

You may also want to check ency sites etc to see what info they may have. The excerpt above is part of a longer work called Mahabharata and you may want to search for that also. Once you have completed your research write a short summary on the whole BG- tell me what it is about.

2. Why was Arjuna not want to fight, what doubts does he have? Explain.
3. How does Krishna persuade Arjuna to fight? What is his reasoning?
4. How does the BG fit with the system of Varnas? Explain.
5. What is the attraction of the BG (Look at the amazing number of web sites for example)? Examine this attraction in particular on India.
6. How would a Buddhist respond to Arjuna's problem or concerns?
7. You must be able to describe and analyze an author's POV (point of view). What is the pov here and how could it help you in understanding Indian culture? Explain.