The following text is a compilation of the single issues of a regular newsletter by e-mail, composed by Dr. Pathikonda Viswambara Nath. It includes the original slokas of the Gita as well as the transliteration, translation and commentaries by Dr. Nath.

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OM SAHA NAVAVATU SAHA NAU BHUNAKTU
SAHA VEERYAM KARAVAVAHAII
TEJASWI NAVADHEETAMASTU
MAA VID VISHAVAHAII

May He protect us both (the teacher and the pupil)
May He cause us both to enjoy (the Supreme)
May we both exert together (to discover the true inner meaning of the scriptures)
May our studies be thorough and fruitful.
May we never misunderstand each other.

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The Gita is in the form of dialogue between Krishna, the preceptor and the disciple Arjuna. Sanjaya, the narrator to King Dhritarashtra, intercepts now and then with a comment of his own. There are a total of 18 chapters with 701 verses (slokas.) Each of the chapters has a title and the title ends with the word “Yoga”.

The word “Yoga” is derived from the word “Yuj” which means “Unite.” Study of every chapter assists the seeker to unite with the Lord and hence the use of the word “Yoga.”

The seeker is he/she who is looking for attaining the union with the “Parabrahman” and experience the “Eternal Bliss.” In Sanskrit the name for the word “seeker” is “Sadhaka”. The efforts of the sadhaka is known as “Sadhana”.

To undertake the task, the seeker must have “Faith” and “Devotion” in the subject, the teacher and “Parabrahman.”
CHAPTER 1

ARJUNA VISHADA YOGA

Vishada - Despondency.

The first chapter is about the despondency of Arjuna on encountering the enemy forces in the battlefield. Arjuna as such was a great and well respected warrior who had won many laurels. The thought of death of so many soldiers and heroes in the battle and his own role in that made him loose heart. He lost the will to fight and was prepared to let wicked Duryodhana and his brothers rule the kingdom. He forgot he was fighting for his brothers in the battle of “righteousness.” He was confused and unclear of the right course of action. Instead of turning his back and leaving the battlefield, he decided to take the guidance of Sri Krishna, the charioteer, on the right path of action to take.

His grief and surrender to the Lord brought out the “Srimad Bhagavadgita” to the mankind. The Gita as the “Light of Knowledge” has given a great number of people including Arjuna himself, the first recipient of the teaching, the opportunity to attain union with the “Parabrahman.”

In life, at times, we go through extreme phases of both grief and happiness. The state of happiness unfortunately makes the “ego” strong and we feel proud of achieving the success. On the other hand, when we encounter grief, we tend to turn to God as the final resort for help. In this way, the state of grief does help one to remember the God and this in turn helps in attaining “Liberation.” Hence, it is correct to say that “Grief” also helps in uniting with the God.

Sloka 1:

Dhritatrashtra Uvacha:

DHARMA KSHETRE KURU KSHETRE SAMA VETA YUYUTSAVAHA
MAMAKAHA PANDAVAS CHAIVA KIMA KURVATA SANJAYA.

Having assembled together on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, desirous of fighting the battle, O Sanjaya, what did the sons of Pandu and also “my people” do?

Dharma Kshetre :field of righteousness.
Kuru Kshetre: the place where the battle took place: ie: Kurukshetra.
Yuyutsavaha: desirous of fighting.

This sloka is very important and we must understand the meaning properly. In this instance, it is the field of Kurukshetra that is referred to. As we move along, when we come to the 13th chapter, we will be shifting the scene to the mind within.

Books for reference:
MAHABHARATA - by Smt Kamala Subramaniam,
Executive secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Munshi Marg, Mumbai 400 007

"Dhritarashtra spoke:"
Emperor Dhritarashtra, blind father of Kauravas is ready to receive the narration by Sanjaya of the events on the battlefield. Sanjaya was given the special powers to actually visualise the events on the battlefield by sage poet Bhagawan Veda Vyasa. As a matter of speaking we can look upon Sanjaya as the battlefield reporter giving first hand information to his king.

1) Dhritarashtra was not entitled to hold on to the throne as per the rules prevailing in those days. Because of blind love to his son, he decided to hold on to the kingdom that was not rightfully his. In a similar way, we, the common men/women of this world, are holding on to the physical body which is not actually ours.

2) Each one of us is made up of: the “Soul”, the “Energy” within and the “Physical body” that envelops the “Soul within.”

We cannot live even for a second without the energy which is the “Life Principle.” We all have got attached to the physical body and it is the “Ego” that makes us do it.

“Kshetra”, the field referred to is the “Physical body.” We should look upon this body as the “kingdom” ruled by the “King within” which is the “Parabrahman,” by the “Soul” which is part of the Parabrahman.

Instead of letting the “King” rule, we are letting “Ego” hold on to the body and dictate terms.

We are holding on to the field, because of the “Ego” and something which is not rightfully ours. In this sense, we are all “Dhritarashtras” and we are getting the narration from Sanjaya.

2) Dharma: it is the “Law of the being.” There are a number of definitions to this word. As we go through the Gita, we will take up the different meanings.

“Dharma is that principle without which, the being has no existence.”

The fire has so many qualities. The essential quality of it is “Burn.” It burns.

We can draw a picture of the fire. When we touch the picture, we do not feel the heat and it does not burn.

The real fire, on the contrary is hot and it burns. In the absence of the heat, the fire is “dead.” It is said to be alive, when it exhibits the property of “burning.”

We, the humans, are alive because of the “Energy” within. In its absence the physical body is certified “Dead” by the experts. So, our dharma has to be the dharma of the soul and not dharma of the ego.

What is dharma of the soul?

We all attribute so many qualities to God and look for Him to help us in distress. We tend to say: “God, why don’t you come down and help me out of this distress.”

If, the power inside us is the God, our dharma has to be dharma of the “Soul.” We should be showing divinity in all our actions. Our true dharma is therefore “Universal welfare.”

Dharma should be looked upon as “acts of righteousness” at the three levels of:

Moral
Social
Spiritual.

Moral actions are our “Dharma.”
Social Dharma is actions according to the law of the land. We must obey the laws of any place where we live. If not, we are considered to have broken the law of the land and must be prepared to face the consequences.

Spiritually, it is the law of the Lord. Acts according to the scriptures for the welfare of life on this universe is dharma.

Few points to ponder over:
Dhritarashtra was the uncle of the Pandavas (who had lost their father) and father of the Kauravas. On the death of Pandu, father of the Pandavas, he had a moral duty and spiritual duty to care for the Pandavas. Unfortunately, he does not consider the Pandavas as his own. He deprives them of their rightful inheritance of the throne.

In this sloka, he uses the word “Mamakaha” - “My People.” Referring to his 100 sons. He refers to the Pandavas, as “children of Pandu.”
He asks the question: “What did Pandavas do and what did “my people” do?”

Sri Shankaracharya compares the attitude of Dhritarashtra to that of a stone in the water. The stone remains in the water but the water does not enter into the stone. Sanjaya offered and gave advice to Dhritarashtra on spiritual and moral dharma. The words of advice did not penetrate the mind of the king.

**Sloka 2**

SANJAYA UVACHA:

DRISHTVA TU PANDAVANNEKAM VYUDHAM DURYODHANAS TADA
ACHARYAM UPASANGAMYA RAJA VACHANAM ABRAVIT

Sanjaya said:

Having seen the Pandava army arranged in a battle order, King Duryodhana approaching the teacher Dronacharya spoke these words.

Sanjaya starts his narration with Duryodhana as he is the son of Dhritarashtra. He says that Duryodhana went to the teacher Dronacharya and spoke to him first.

We need to analyse the psychology behind his actions. To do so we need to know a little about the important warriors on the side of the Kauravas.

1) Bhishma, the grandsire, was the commander-in-chief. One would expect Duryodhana to approach Bhishma first. But he did not do so. Why?

Bhishma was the eldest of the family and a master warrior. He was the recipient of a rare boon from his father Shantanu. He could depart from the world when he wanted to and the time of death will be under his control. The Sanskrit word for it is “Itcha Marana”.

Bhishma loved the Pandavas and Arjuna was his favourite great grand-son. Yet, because of the promise to his father Shantanu that he would always protect the throne of Hastinapura (capital of Kauravas), he had no option but to fight for Emperor Dhritarashtra.
Duryodhana was frightened of Bhishma. He dare not speak to him. He knew that he would only get rebuke from Bhishma. So, he went to the next best, ie: Teacher Drona.

2) Dronacharya: He was the teacher for both Kauravas and the Pandavas. He was appointed by Dhritarashtra to teach the young Kauravas and Pandavas the art of warfare using the various weapons of those days. Arjuna was his favourite student. Still, as he was under the employment of Dhritarashtra, he had no option but to fight against the Pandavas. Duryodhana could build up the courage and talk to him because he was literally speaking, an employee of the Kauravas. He wanted to remind his teacher that partiality to the Pandavas does not work. He looked forward to hear words of reassurance from Drona that there would be no partiality to the Pandavas.

Sloka 3

PASYAITAAM PANDU PUTRANAAM ACHARYAM MAHATEEM CHAMOOM VYUDHAM DRUPADA PUTRENAA TAVA SHISHYENA DHEEMATA

O teacher, behold the great Pandava army, formed in the battle order by the son of Drupada, your wise disciple.

Duryodhana is trying his best to rouse the pent up anger in his teacher Drona against king Drupada, father of Droupadi, wife of the Pandava brothers. He is specifically pointing the enemy armed forces arrayed skilfully in the battle order under the control of Dhrishtadyumna, son of Drupada.

Here it is essential that the reader should know the background for this request by Duryodhana.

Drona and Drupada both learnt under the same teacher in their younger days and were good friends. Drupada was in line to become the king after his return and Drona, a poor Brahmin, had to go back to his little hut. On the day of parting from the gurukula ashrama, Drupada gives an open invitation for Drona to come for help/assistance at any time in future.

Few years later, Drona’s wife, unable to live the life of poverty, reminds Drona of the promise by his friend Drupada. Drona makes a trip to the court of Drupada with a view to get some help.

Unfortunately, Drupada chooses not to recognise his old friend and insults him in the open court. Unable to bear the insult, Drona returns home empty handed.

Circumstances changed for the better in the next few years and Drona became the teacher for the Pandavas and Kauravas. Arjuna becomes the best and favourite pupil of his teacher.

One day, Drona commands Arjuna to catch Drupada and fetch him to his hut. Arjuna, a great warrior by that time, fulfils the command by his teacher. He defeats Drupada, ties him to a rope and brings him to the presence of Drona.

This time, it was the turn of Drupada to beg of mercy from Drona. Instead of being merciful, Drona reminds Drupada of the insult at the court, kicks him and sets him free.

Unable to bear this insult, Drupada takes a vow to get a son who will avenge insult to his father. Conducting special penances he manages to get a son and that son was Dhrishtadhyumna, the commander-in-chief of the Pandava army.
Dhrishtadhyumna, surprisingly was also a student in his early days of Drona. (In days gone by, the Brahmin teachers followed a code of practice. They would not refuse to accept any student who wanted to learn.)

Duryodhana who knew this side of Drona’s past life history, used this opportunity to name Drupada and Dhrishtadyumna and increase the flow of adrenaline in his teacher Drona. This way, he hoped that despite the presence of the favourite pupil Arjuna in the opposite camp, Drona would use all his skills to defeat the Pandavas.

Sloka 4, 5 and 6

**ATRA SHOORA MAHESHASA BHEEMARJUNA SAMA YUDHIHI YUYUDHANO VIRATASHCA DRUPADASHCHA MAHARATAHA**

**DHRSHTAKETUS CHEKITANANHA KASHI RAJASCHA VEERYVAN PURUJIT KUNITBHOJASCHA SHAIBHYASCHA NARA PUNGAVHA**

**YUDHAMANYUSCHA VIKREANTAHA UTTAMAUJASCHAVEERYVAAN SOUBHADOR’ DROUPADEYASCHA SARVA EVA MAHARATAHA.**

In the Pandava army, there are heroes and mighty archers equal to Bhima and Arjuna. they are Yuyudhana, Virata, Drupada, of the first order of warriors. Drishtaketu, Cekitana, the valiant king of Kasi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, Saibya, the best of men, the strong Yudhamanyu, (Satyaki), valiant Uttamouja, Abhimanyu, the son of Subhadra and Arjuna, and the sons of Droupadi, all of them divisional commanders.

Herein are the names of the warriors of repute in the Pandava army. Duryodhana is giving those names to his teacher Drona. He puts some adjectives like valiant, best of men, strong in front of some warriors.

All these were given the title of “Maharati.” “Maharati” is he who can fight single handed with 10000 archers. He is also a master in the use of various weapons of warfare.

Sloka 7

**ASMAKAM TO VISHISHTAYE TANNIBODHA DWIJOTTAMA NAYAKA MAMA SAINYASYA SAMJNARTHAM TAAN BRAVEEMI TE’**

O best of twice born, now, I will recall to you, for your information, the names of those who are most distinguished amongst ourselves, the leaders of our army.

Duryodhana continues his discussion with his teacher Drona and reiterates the names of the great warriors on the side of his Kaurava army. He addresses Drona as “best among twice born.” Drona was brahmin by birth. The brahmin have a tradition of “sacred thread ceremony” about the age of 7-11yrs. After the child passes through the infancy and learns the alphabets and early childhood and comes out of playful moods, it is time for initiation into the higher studies. It was also the arrangements for the kshatriya (warrior group of men/women) and vysya (business class) men in the community.
The Hindu philosophy stresses that every individual is ignorant at birth irrespective of the caste he/she is born into. To let the individual into society to act according to the dharma needs initiation into the spiritual education.

The first common entry for all is “entry into the material world (ignorance).” The entry after the ceremony is “entry into the world of knowledge.” This initiation into spiritual education is considered to be “second birth” for the individual. Drona is therefore addressed as “best among the twice born.”

There is another subtle hint Duryodhana is throwing at his master. Even though Drona was a great warrior, he was a brahmin by birth. Brahmins generally are not warriors and not physically strong to take part in the battle. Duryodhana was a tactical warrior. He knew how to get the adrenaline flow in his master. By stressing that Drona was a brahmin (timid) and by giving names of great warriors on his side, Duryodhana is making Drona get madly angry.

Sloka 8 and 9

BHAVAN BHEESHMASCHA KARNASCHA KRIPIASCHA SAMATINJAYAHA
ASHWATHAMA VIKARNASCHA SOUMADATIS TATHAIVA CHA

ANYE CHA BAHAVAHA SHOORAH MADARTHE TYAKTA JEEVITAH
NANA SHAASTRA PRAHARANAHA SARVE YUDDHA VISHOORADAH

Yourself, Bhishma and Karna, also Kripa the victorious in war, Ashwathama, Vikarna and also the son of Somadatta, as also many other heroes who are prepared to give up their lives for my sake, armed with various weapons and missiles, all well-skilled in battle.

This is the list of main warriors on the side of Kauravas. It is not as though Drona did not know anybody. If we read the Mahabharata we will know more about these great skilled warriors. While naming the warriors it is interesting to note that Duryodhana places the name of Drona first, ahead of Bhishma the commander-in-chief. It is possible that Duryodhana realised that he had gone too far and used the word “Brahmana” by addressing Drona as “twice born.”

Sloka 10

APARYAPTAM TADASMAKAM BALAM BHEESHMABHI RAKSHITAM
PARYAPTAM TVIDM YETESHAM BALAM BHEEMABHI RAKSHITAM

This army of ours defended by Bhishma, is inadequate. Whereas that army of our enemies defended by Bhima is quite adequate.

The two words “Aparyaptam and Paryaptam” have been given contradictory meanings by the dictionarians. Therefore, there are two versions of explanations for this verse.

The first meaning is:
Aparyaptam: unlimited
Paryaptam: limited
Accordingly, the verse reads as follows:

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This army of ours defended by Bhishma is unlimited and the army of theirs defended by Bhima is limited.

The Kaurava army had 11 battalions and the Pandava army had 7 battalions. It is therefore natural to gloat about the large size of the army and Duryodhana is doing the same.

Second meaning:
Aparyaptam: incomplete, inefficient, insufficient
Paryaptam: complete, efficient, sufficient
This army of ours defended by Bhishma is inefficient and the army of theirs defended by Bhima is efficient.

Mahatma Gandhi has given this second explanation to this sloka.

It is interesting to note that Duryodhana says “Army defended by Bhima.” Drishtadyumna was the commander-in-chief for the Pandavas but still Duryodhana considers that Bhima is in charge. Why? The most important person Duryodhana was frightened was Bhima. Bhima was his sworn enemy.

During the game of dice that was played which decided the fate of the Pandavas, Duryodhana with the help of cunning Shakuni cheats Dharmaraya (Yudhistira). He makes him gamble one after another of his possessions, then his own brothers and finally his wife Droupadi. Like adding salt to the open wound, he lets his own brother Dushasana derobe Droupadi in the open assembly.

Bhima who was bound by the laws of the game to be subservient to Duryodhana could not bear the insult any longer. In front of the large assembly, he takes a solemn oath to kill all the brothers of Duryodhana and drink the blood of Dushasana. This oath had made Duryodhana frightened of Bhima. Hence the importance Duryodhana attaches to the presence of Bhima in the opposite camp.

Sloka 11
AYANESHU CHA SARVESHU YATHABHAGAM AVASTHITAAHA.
BHEESHMAM EVABHIRAKSHANTU BHAVANTAHA SARVA EVA HI

Therefore, do you all, standing firmly in your respective positions, in the divisions, guard Bhishma alone.

One can see the tone of a command from Duryodhana to his guru. True, Duryodhana, the heir apparent to the throne had everybody at his command including his own guru. During the battle, he has the highest authority.

Having said that, there is what is called as “humility.” The fact that Drona was fighting for the Kauravas should have been sufficient for him. He did not show “humility and reverence” to his elder statesman and guru.

Why is he asking everyone to guard Bhishma alone?
We should recollect the life of Bhishma in his younger days. Bhishma’s father Shantanu had fallen madly in love with Satyavati, the fisher woman. Satyavati’s father, a clever person, had realised that Bhishma would be the heir to the throne after Shantanu. The children born out of wedlock of Satyavati to Shantanu would not inherit the throne. He therefore objects to his daughter marrying the king.
Shantanu was torn between the duty to Bhishma, the son of his first wife Ganga and his infatuation towards the fisher woman. He showed signs of depression for a long time.

Bhishma came to know of the dilemma his father was facing. He therefore brings Satyavati to his father and takes a solemn oath that he would not demand the throne. Instead, he would let the child born from Satyavati to ascend the throne and protect the kingdom at any cost. He swears to be a bachelor for life and be subservient to the throne.

For the sacrifice he made, father Shantanu blesses his son and bestows on him a rare boon. The boon was that death will not approach Bhishma, but Bhishma can decide where and when he wanted to leave his mortal body.

The war of righteousness was to be fought to the bitter end. It was victory or death to either armies. By cleverly making Bhishma, the commander-in-chief Duryodhana had already won the tactical battle. Bhishma would not die in the war and so Pandavas could not win.

Even though Bhishma could not be killed, it was possible that he could be mortally wounded and may have to retire from the war. As long as Bhishma was holding the fort, the Pandavas had no chance to win.

It was therefore imperative that Bhishma was not going to be injured. Hence the command, not a request by Duryodhana to Dronacharya to guard “Bhishma alone.”

Sloka 12

TASYA SANJANAYAN HARSHAM KURUVRIDDHAHA PITAMAHAAHA SIMHANADAM VINADYOCHAIH SHANKAM DADMÖU PRATAPAVAN

In order to embolden Duryodhana, Bhishma, the mighty grandsire, the oldest of the Kurus, now raised a lions’ roar and blew his conche.

It was the policy in ancient times to blow the conche during the war at the beginning of each day. It was the signal to start fighting. The honour of blowing the conche usually went to the eldest statesman on either side. No soldier dared to use his weapon before this ritual.

Bhishma being the eldest of the race of Kurus was therefore given the honour to blow his conche.

It is interesting to note that Dornacharya did not give any reply to Duryodhana. He just went on his duty to fight for the Kauravas. Why did he do so?

He knew that Duryodhana was a spoilt prince and so did not merit a reply. Drona was on the side of Kauravas not by choice but because of sense of duty to the employer. He took the option of not replying to the prince.

Sloka 13

TATAH SHANKASCHA BHERYAISCHA PANAVANAKA GOMUKAHA SAHASAIVABHYA HANYANTA SA SHABDA TUMULO’BHAVAT

(When Bhishma blew the conch) all the other warriors blew their conches, trumpets, drums and horns. The sound filled all sides and was tremendous.
As was the custom in those days, all the leaders of various sections in the vast army carried their conchs with them and blew them after Bhishma did the honours first.
There were others who carried the trumpets and horns instead of the conchs. The two armies together had 18 great divisions and the sound by the war drums, trumpets and conchs filled the air on all the sides. This, the poet describes as “tremendous.”

Then, seated in the magnificent chariot, yoked with white horses, Krishna and Arjuna blew their divine conches.

One has to imagine the majesty of Lord Krishna, taking up the role of charioteer, bringing the chariot with Arjuna on to the centre of the battlefield. Any chariot with the Lord will be majestic to look at and be divine. In this instance, divinity was enhanced as the chariot belonged to the Lord of Fire and the horses were the property of Chitrangada, the king of Gandharvas (celestial divinities.). The chariot was a gift to Arjuna from the Lord of Fire. Arjuna, during the period of exile in the forest with his brothers, had assisted the Lord of Fire in destroying the Khandava forest and the gift was in return for the services rendered. The chariot and the horses were gifted with special magical powers. They could move from one position in the battlefield to another by flying over any obstacle and reach the selected spot within seconds. Arjuna could therefore be in any position within seconds.

The horses, the poet describes as “white horses.” One can interpret the colour white as representing “Dharma” symbolising “Purity.” As the Lord himself was the charioteer whatever that is under His control has to represent “Purity.”

Madhava:

One of the names given to Lord Krishna is Madhava. Each of the number of names given to the Hindu deities does carry a special meaning and represent a divine quality.
Madhava is one of the names of Lord Vishnu and Sri Krishna is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Madhava means “husband of wealth.” Goddess Lakshmi, symbolising the wealth is the consort of Lord Vishnu. Poet Vyasa, by using the word Madhava is letting us know that the Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi had showered her grace on the Pandavas. There was no way the Pandavas could be defeated. By their victory over the Kauravas, they would rule over the kingdom. “Rajya” in Sanskrit means “Kingdom.” “Rajya Laksmi”, one of the eight names of Goddess Lakshmi is appropriate in this context.

The word “Vijaya” in Sanskrit means “Victory.” Another name given to Goddess Lakshmi is “Vijaya Lakshmi.” (the Goddess of victory.) By using the word “Madhava” the poet is assuring that the Pandavas will achieve victory and regain the kingdom.

Lord Krishna was given the honour to blow this conch first for the Pandavas. Arjuna was the next in line to blow his conch and others followed later.
Hrishikesha blew the Panchajanya, and Dhananjaya blew Devadatta, and Vrikodhara the doer of terrible deeds, blew the great conch Paundra. King Yudhistira, son of Kunti blew Ananatavijayam, Nakula and Sahadeva blew Sughosha and Manipushpaka; The king of Kasi, an excellent archer; Sikhandi, the mighty commander Drishtadyumna, Virata and the unconquered Satyakai; Drupada, the sons of Droupadi, Abhimanyu, the mighty armed, all blew their respective conchs.

The main warriors from the Pandava army who were given the honour of blowing their respective conch are mentioned in the four verses. Let us analyse few words in these slokas.

Hrishikesha: another name for Lord Krishna. It means “he who is the ruler over the mind and the senses.” Sri Krishna did not conduct any actions on impulse.

Dhananjaya: it is another name for Arjuna. It means “conqueror of wealth.” Arjuna went round the country and won over many rulers and amassed a number of regions for his brother Yudhistira. By his battle skills, he expanded his brother’s kingdom.

Vrikodhara: this word refers to Bheema. It is said that he carried fire in his stomach and could consume anything. Duryodhana once drowned Bhima in the river and a number of snakes bit him. None of the poison from the bites affected him and he came back alive and strong. Duryodhana, at another time gave poison in disguise but it did not kill Bhima. Hence, he is called “Vrikodhara.”

Panchajanyam: it is the name of Krishna’s conch. Krishna was taught by the Guru “Sandipa.” The guru asked Krishna to get his son back. The story goes on to say that in this task, Krishna had to kill the demon Panchajanya. The conch was made by the bones of the demon.

Sloka 19

The tumultuous sounds of the Pandava army filling all sides reverberated through the earth and sky and the sound from all the warrior instruments brought in a sense of fear in the heart of the Kaurava army.
The Pandavas has 7 massive battalions of soldiers. A number of great warriors starting from Lord Krishna sounded their instruments. This sound was too loud and frightening to hear. Apart from a handful, the Kaurava army, though fighting for Dhritarashtra, respected the Pandavas. They were aware of the powers of Krishna and the Pandava brothers. To hear the sound that signalled the beginning of the great war, brought a feeling of terror for them.

Sloka 20

ATHA VYAVASTITAAN DRISHTVA DHARTRA RASHTRAN KAPIDWAJAHA
PRAVRTTE SHASTRA SMPAAATE DHANUR UDYAMYA PANDAVAHA
HRISHIKESHAM TADAVAKYAM IDAM AHA MAHEEPATE

Then, O ruler of the earth, seeing Dhritarashtra’s host being positioned and the fighting about to commence, Pandava, whose ensign badge is Hanuman, lifting his bow spoke the following words to Krishna.

In the present war, Dhritarashtra’s hosts should be taken as the grand sire Bhishma and the rest of the Kaurava army. Bhishma had arranged a formation with his army and the warriors had taken up their respective positions.

Arjuna, the master warrior in the Pandava army was brought to the middle of the two opposing forces in the chariot driven by Krishna. He was eager to take up the final task of regaining the lost kingdom.

The ensign badge on the chariot had the picture of Hanuman. This has some significance and we should learn about the same.

1) Hanuman represents the path of “Bhakti.” His bhakti or devotion is only to Lord Rama.

During the period of exile, Bhima had an occasion to fulfil Droupadi’s wish. She had accidentally come across an unusual flower in the forest and fell for it. She pleads with Bhima to get the flower for her.

Bhima went on a mission to find that flower. On the way, in the narrow path, there sat an old monkey which obstructed the path. Bhima arrogantly orders the monkey to move out of his way. The monkey replies that he is old and weak and has no physical strength to move an inch. He pleads Bhima to lift him physically and place him out of the path. Bhima finds that with the massive physical strength he had, he could not even lift the tail of the monkey an inch off the ground.

He then requests the monkey to pardon him for the arrogant behaviour. The monkey in turn reveals his true identity of Hanuman. Hanuman is considered to be the son of Lord Wind. Bhima is also considered to be the son of the Lord Wind. Thus, the two were really brothers.

Hanuman blesses Bhima and promises to help the Pandavas. He would represent himself on the flag of the Pandavas on the chariot driven by Lord Krishna. Thus comes the situation when the flag on Arjuna’s chariot gets the picture of Hanuman.

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2) Hanuman is considered to be the eternal servant of Lord Rama. For him there exists only one God and he is no other than Lord Rama.

He knew the identity of Krishna as his beloved Lord Rama. We therefore have another episode that proves that Krishna is the “Avatara” of Vishnu. Lord Rama from Treta Yuga, had reincarnated as Krishna in Dwapara Yuga.

3) Hanuman represents Bhakti. The Pandavas led by Arjuna, had the flag with Hanuman on the chariot. It signifies that the Pandavas engaged in war had followed the path of Bhakti.

**Sloka 21 and 22**

**ARJUNA UVACHA**

**SENAYOR UBHAYOR MADHYE RATHAM STHAPAYA ME’CHYUTA**
**YAVAD ETAN NIREEKSHYEHAM YODDHU KAMAAN AVASTHITAAN**

**KAIR MAYA SAHA YODDHAVYAM ASMIN RANA SAMUDYAME**

Arjuna said:

Place my chariot, O Achyuta, between the two armies so that I may behold the war-minded that stand here, with whom I must wage this war.

*Achyuta* refers to Krishna. It is one of the 1008 names attributable to Him. The word “Achyuta” means, “The one who does not fall.”

The three states of spiritual evolution of humans is said to be:

- Tamasic --- lazy, indolence, ignorant state.
- Rajasic --- active, passionate, selfish state.
- Satvic --- pure state.

We are supposed to lift ourselves from the lower state of “Tamas to Rajas”. We should then rise from “Rajas to Satva.”

Having succeeded in climbing up the spiritual ladder, even though one reaches the higher state of “Satva”, there develops a sense of pride in having reached the state of “Satva.” It is like getting a higher degree like “Masters” in one’s studies.

Unfortunately, human mind being what it is, sense of “Pride” takes over. We start looking down upon the ones below us. This sense of pride eventually leads to the downfall again from the spiritual heights reached.

The only ones who can climb up even further than “Satva” are those who manage to drop the “Ego” and merge with the “Supreme.” This state is called “Suddha Satva.”

Having become one with the “Supreme”, there is no further drop from the spiritual heights reached. Such an individual looses his own identity and becomes the “Supreme” by becoming one with it.

This state is the state of “Achyuta”. - “He, who does not fall.”
The Lord never falls down from the state of “Supreme Purusha”.

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One can also see that from this sloka onwards, Arjuna uses the word “my”, “I” many number of times. This demonstrates the power of “Ego” in him.

Sloka 23

YOTSYAMANAN AVEKSE'HAM YA ETETRA SAMAGATAHA
DHARTRA RASHTRASYA DURBUDDHER YUDDHE PRIYA CHIKEERSHAVAHA

I will see those warriors assembled here for the fight, wishing to please the evil minded Duryodhana.

Recollecting the story of the great epic, the Mahabharata, of which the Bhagavadgita is a part of, we should remember that the war was between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

The Pandavas fought for the just cause to get the proper share of the kingdom. Duryodhana with support from his maternal uncle Shakuni and friend Karna had persuaded his blind father, Emperor Dhritarashtra to declare the war against the Pandavas.

Those were the days, 5000yrs ago, when each kingdom had its allies and vassals. In case of war, the allies and the vassals pledged their army to their superior, the king. On that basis, the Pandavas had a total army that equalled seven battalions and the Kauravas, 11 battalions. The leaders of the various sections in the battalions would fight to die for their king.

Arjuna states that he wanted to see the warriors assembled to fight for the enemy Duryodhana. He uses the adjunctive "evil minded" in reference to Duryodhana. It was true that Duryodhana was evil minded. He devised so many evil plans to kill the Pandava brothers. When the attempts failed, he devised plans to snatch their kingdom by unjust means. He stooped down to the level of insulting Droupadi in the open assembly. Arjuna's blood was boiling and he could not wait for the war to begin.

Those who were on the side of Kauravas could be divided into respected elders like the grandsire Bhishma, guru Dronacharya, family priest Kripacharya and others. Bhishma fought for the Kauravas because of the solemn promise he had given to his father (see explanation provided with Sloka 11). Dronacharya and Kripacharya were the employees of Dhritarashtra and had solemn duty to fight for their employer. The allies and vassals automatically had to fight for the Kauravas.

All these could not be called "evil minded". The fact they fought for unrighteousness, they did not deserve any mercy from the Pandavas. The Pandava brothers and their allies were roaring to face the enemy and kill them.

Arjuna had entered the battle scene with this frame of mind and hence the request for placing the chariot at the most suitable spot so that he could see the assembled enemy forces and get the adrenaline flowing.

SANJAYA UVACHA

Sloka 24 and 25

YEVAUKTO HRISHIKESHO GUDAKESHENA BHARATA
SENAYOR UBHAYOR MADHYE STHAPAYITVA RATHOTTAMAM

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BHEESHMA DRONA PRAMUKHATAHA SARVESHAM CHA MAHEEKSHITAAM
UVACHA PARTHA PASCHAITAN SAMAVETAAN KURUN ITI

Sanjaya said:

Thus addressed by Arjuna, Lord Krishna placed the noble chariot in the middle of the armies, and in front of Bhishma, Drona and all other prominent kings. He said, O Arjuna, behold the Kauravas gathered together.

Note that Sanjaya, the war reporter/correspondent uses the words "thus addressed" and not "thus commanded". After all, the charioteer of Arjuna was not ordinary employee but the Lord himself. Arjuna could never command Krishna, his charioteer.

Lord Krishna, obeys the request by the warrior on His chariot. He is fulfilling the request by Arjuna and placed the chariot at a suitable spot which would provide Arjuna with a good view of all the senior warriors on the side of the Kauravas.

There are three words to note from these slokas: "Hrishikesha", "Gudakesha." and "Partha." Let us look at the meaning of these words:

"Hrishikesha": "Hrishika" means "senses" and "Esa means Lord." "Lord over the senses" is "The Lord Himself". In this context it refers to Lord Krishna.

"Gudakesha" means "Conqueror over sleep." As we know sleep is a tamasic quality. Arjuna is receiving the "Great spiritual lesson", his mind needs to be constantly awake and alert to every word spoken. Krishna imparted the Gita to Arjuna because he had this special quality while listening to the highest spiritual teaching.

"Partha": it is another name for "Arjuna." Arjuna was the son of "Pritha" and hence he got the name. "Pritha" is another name for his mother Kunti.

Sura was a Yadava king and he had a daughter by name Pritha. He had a cousin Kuntibhoja who was childless and requested to adopt Pritha. Sura obliged with the request and gave Pritha to Kuntibhoja. As she was adopted by Kuntibhoja, Pritha got the name "Kunti." Kunti was given the job of looking after the guests who visited the country. One of the guests she looked after was the sage "Durvasa." Pleased by her services, the sage gave her a special boon. He gave her six special mantras. Recitation of each of the mantra would bring the deity of the mantra to her and he would bless her with a child. The five Pandava brothers and Karna came to be considered as her children by the special deities of those mantras.

There is a Sanskrit word "Parthiva" which means "made of clay." The word "Pritha" relates to this word "Parthiva." Clay is perishable and our body made of the five gross elements is perishable. Our body is therefore "mortal" which means "perishable."

The sacred text is from the "Imperishable Lord Krishna" to "Arjuna who is a mortal." Arjuna is representative for all of us, the mortals.
There, Arjuna saw father, grandfather, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, companions, fathers-in-law and friends in both the armies.

Seeing all those relations, standing arrayed in the battle, Arjuna thus spoke sorrowfully, filled with deep pity.

We should remember that the great war was a consequence of acts of "adharma" by Duryodhana. Sri Krishna, the Divine Incarnate, sided the Pandavas. To avoid the bloodshed in the battle, He took personally the responsibility of reconciliation. When all the efforts at a peaceful negotiations failed, the war was declared by the Lord Himself.

Those were the days of rule by the royalty who kept a tight rein over their territory. War with the ruler over the adjoining territory to expand the kingdom was not considered wrong. Democracy as we know now with leaders elected by the public was not in vogue.

The kshatriya race were born warriors. They were geared to accept that taking part in a righteous war was considered as heroic. They believed that winning the war would give control over new territory and dying in the battle would confer entry into heaven.

Unfortunately, Arjuna who entered with a positive frame of mind to win back the territory (which belonged to his brother rightfully) is seen to be entering into a state of mental crisis. Change of attitude can be seen in the following verses. Instead of being a stout lion hearted Kshatriya, he becomes a soft hearted week individual. He entered the battle as a well acclaimed hero. His attitude is that of a kinsman looking at the arrayed army in terms of personal relationship.

It was not really an act of discrimination but an act of ignorance on his part. This unfortunately, is the downfall of an individual from spiritual heights achieved by gaining knowledge. It is the gateway to the fall and degradation.

He pitied all the relations who had entered the battlefield on either side.

The word to note is "Kripa". It means "Pity."

"Pity" as such is a noble quality in the spiritual path. Expressing pity and forgetting "Dharma" cannot be termed as "noble quality." Arjuna was exactly in this frame of mind. It was "mental weakness" born out of "ignorance."

Just like we go to the physician to get cured of the bodily illness, we need to go to the "Spiritual physician" to cleanse the mind of the "ignorance."

After letting Arjuna express his sorrow, Sri Krishna gives the "Spiritual medicine" which is the sacred text "Srimad Bhagavadgita", courtesy of Sage Poet Veda Vyasa..
Slokas 28, 29 and 30

Arjuna Uvacha

DRISHTVEMAM SWAJANAM KRISHNA YUYUTSUM SAMUPASTITAM SEEDANTI MAMA GATRANI MUKHAM CHA PARISHUSHYATI VEPATUSCHA SARIRE' ME' ROMAHAARSHASCHA JAYATE GANDEEVAM SRAMSATE HASTAA TVAK CHAIVA PARIDAHYATE NA CHA SHAKNOMY AVASTHATUM BHRAMATEEYATA CHA ME' MANAHA

Arjuna said:

O Krishna, seeing these, my own kinsmen gathered, eager to fight, my limbs fail, my tongue is dried up, my body trembles, my skin is burning all over and my hair stands on end, and even my mind is whirling. My Gandiva is slipping from my hand. I cannot stand up.

Note that Arjuna has used the word "my" nine times in these three slokas.

From medical point of view, as a man of depression approaches his psychologist, the words used by Arjuna express his "weakness, despair and sorrowful state." The psychoanalyst would say that the patient is showing symptoms of "Anxiety Neurosis."

Arjuna is showing signs of "self pity."

Arjuna's weapon of action was "Gandeeva." It was the magical bow presented to him by the Gandharvas. It had the power of a thousand bows and came with two inexhaustible quivers. No other weapon could damage it. (After the departure of Krishna from the physical world at the end of His Avatara, it is said that the bow lost its magical powers.)

Symbolically, "Gandiva slipping from the hand" means that Arjuna lost the power to hold the weapon. This was the result of "mental weakness". Whatever the strength of the individual may be, during moments of mental weakness like depression, the body suddenly loses all the physical strength. We lose the strength to hold on to the tool of action in our life and fail to conduct the ordained duties.

Why did a great warrior like Arjuna suddenly develop this symptom, especially on the battlefield, the first day of the most important battle of his life?

One can say that Arjuna developed the symptoms of depression because he saw his "personal relationship" of the warriors assembled. This made him lose the "knowledge of right action." As we have discussed before, he had given his full support to brother Yudhistira to fight the "war of righteousness". As a Kshatriya warrior of repute, he had only one duty to perform and it was "to assist his brother in uprooting the evil." Towards this he had the support and blessings of the Lord Himself.

What he said to Krishna shows his "Ignorance."

The remedy for the ignorance is "Atma Jnana". Arjuna had to realise the true identity of individuals including himself. The knowledge of the "Self" would clear the veil of "Maya" and the spiritual seeker can get the mental strength to fight the "ignorance".

Sage poet, Bhagawan Veda Vyasa is referring to all the "Arjuna's of the world" and helping them to clear the "spiritual ignorance." What we are going to get in the chapters to come is the "Knowledge of the true Self" in each of us.
Let us offer our prayers to the Lord and request Him to lead us in the spiritual journey in search of the "Eternal Bliss".

Sloka 31

NIMITTANI CHA PASHYAMI VIPAREETANI KESHAVA
NA CHA SHREYON UPASHYAMI HATVA SVAJANAM AHAVE'

O Krishna, I see many ill omens. I do not understand what good could come in killing my kinsmen in the battle.

In states of hysteria, instead of the reasoning capacity ruling over the thoughts arising in the mind, the mind neglects the advice given by the reasoning capacity (intellect). Arjuna's mind, (because of his family relationship of the warriors assembled) was looking at each leader assembled in terms of personal relationship.

His intellect would be telling the mind that the leading warriors assembled on the opposite camp were siding with adharma.

But, Arjuna's mind became stronger and intellect got weaker (the junior worker in an office, second in command decides to neglect his senior officer, first-in-command.)

Because of this mental state, Arjuna starts seeing ill omens. (It is interesting to note that even in those days, 5000yrs ago, people believed in ill omens.)

The junior (mind) who took charge neglected the senior's (intellect) advice. He took a wrong decision and interpreted the dharma wrongly.

The feelings felt by Arjuna were subjective and not objective. His intellect got clouded. It is like the brilliant light of the sun hidden by the dark clouds. Because the mind got weaker the organs of action lost their strength and the Gandeeva slipped from his hands. He could not even remain standing. Mental weakness got reflected as physical weakness.

Sloka 32, 33 and 34

NA KANKCHE VIJAYAM KRISHNA NA CHA RAJYAM SUKHANI CHA
KIM NO RAJYENA GOVINDA KIM BHOGAIRJEEVITENA VAA

YESHAMARTHE KANKSCHITAM NO RAJYAM BHOGAHA SUKHANI CHA
TA IMEVASTHITA YUDDHE PRANAMS TYAKTVA DHANANI CHA

ACHARYAHA PITARAHPUTRAS TATHAIWA CHA PITAMAHAHA
MATULAIASHVASHURAHAPOUTRAHSHYALAIHASAMBANDHIHATATATHA

O Krishna, I do not desire victory or kingdom, or pleasures. Of what avail is this kingdom to us? Of what avail is the enjoyment or even life itself to us?
Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyment and pleasures stand here ready for the battle, having renounced their wealth and life.

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

Note the words "desires, enjoyments, pleasures," used by Arjuna. "For whose sake we desire kingdom and enjoyment" he says. Duryodhana, his cousin on the opposite side was definitely fighting to keep his kingdom, not share it with cousins and desirous of enjoying the bounties from the war.

It is common knowledge that most of us would like to share and enjoy the benefits of our action with our close family and friends. In the beginning, the royal family of king Dhritarashtra was beaming with sounds of merriment from the Pandavas and the Kauravas. As children they were playing together in and around the palace. Arjuna did come to the battlefield to win or die. The thought of losing so many family members in the war had not occurred to him so far. Suddenly, it dawned on him that the palace would be like "crematorium grounds" with no sounds of happiness shared by the family members.

Certainly Arjuna was on a higher pedestal. He wanted to enjoy the results with all the various members of the family and other relatives. The war was between the two cousins who lived together but fighting to get rid of the other side. Hence all those leaders assembled are all family members only.

The fault, as far as we can see at this juncture is "Arjuna's desire for the fruits of actions." The idea of sharing it with family is laudable. As we proceed with the rest of the Gita we will come to understand that we have to fight the battle of life as a sacred duty and not be looking for the results of the actions.

Arjuna is showing signs of renunciation. It is not enough. Single pointed concentration during discharge of duties is essential to get the best results. The aim of the Pandavas was to accept the guidance from the Lord Himself, fight the injustice and protect the citizens of the kingdom from those who ruled against the injunctions of the scriptures. Arjuna, the highly trained warrior should have showed signs of "concentration" on the task ahead.

By using the words expressing renunciation of enjoying the pleasures to be accrued by winning the war, Arjuna can be seen actually ready to receive the most precious knowledge from Sri Krishna. The Lord is going to impart the "Atma Jnana", the knowledge of one's true Self.

Sloka 35

ETAN NA HANTUM ITCHAAAMI GHNATO'PI MADHUSUDHANA
API TRAILOKYA RAJYASYA HETOH KIM NU MAHEEKRUTE

O Madhusudhana, I do not wish to kill them, though they may kill me, even for the sake of dominion over all the three worlds, much less for a fragment of this earth.

Madhusudhana: destroyer of the demon Madhu. It is another name referring to Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu. In puranic mythology, Brahma is represented as Light and Madhu as Darkness. Madhu seeks continually to destroy Brahma, the Light and was finally destroyed by Vishnu.

By using the word "I" and "me" Arjuna is still referring to his physical body. As a kshatriya he had the right to fight for his kingdom. The kshatriya was brought up from childhood to realise that it was the duty of every member of his race to be prepared to fight when needed. Death during the battle was
considered an honour equal to winning the battle. At the same time he should be ready to kill the enemy during the battle. Killing the enemy in the battle was not considered to be an act of sin.

In the present situation, his mental disposition makes him say that he is ready to disarm and not bothered if the enemy kills him. He was ready to let Duryodhana take over the kingdom and rule the land.

The philosophy says that our actions are due to our thought imprints of the past. In this instance, Arjuna had a strong bank of thought imprint in his mind to kill the wicked cousin Duryodhana and his brothers. If he decided not to fight, the past thought imprints would not disappear by magic. They would still be stored in his memory bank. They would have to manifest at a later date. In other words, by not fighting Arjuna would only be postponing the inevitable and has to be born again to clear those thought imprints.

Arjuna was ignorant of the "vasanas and the art to extinguish them from the mind." As we go through the Gita we will find an answer to the question of "how to get rid of the vasanas." Even a learned gentleman and a great warrior like Arjuna succumbed to the weakness of the mind. Luckily he had Krishna the Lord Himself to guide him in the right path.

We are lucky and blessed to have the philosophy of the Gita in front of us to help us to overcome the ignorance.

Sloka 36

NIHATYA DHARTRARASHTRAN NAH KA PREETIHI SYAJ JANARDHANA PAPAM EVA STRAYED ASMAN HATVAITAAN ATATAYINAHA

What pleasure can be ours, O Janardana, by killing these sons of Dhritarashtra. Sin alone will be our gain by killing these felons.

Arjuna evidently is aware of "results of actions conducted." Any action brings in its result that can be either due for a reward or deserves punishment. In the present situation he is faced with the actions that involve killing the soldiers including some members of one's own family. Analysing from the "mental plane" he is concluding that by killing his own cousins he would have committed an act of sin and so deserves punishment. Punishment does hurt and is not a pleasurable experience. So he puts in a question: "what pleasure can be ours"?

His next statement is "Sin alone will be our gain by killing these felons."

If we can understand the true meaning of the word "felon" we can see that his statement is wrong. As a member of the ruling caste, he has to know the law of the land. In those days "Manu Dharma Sastra" was the basis for ruling the land. Let us look at who is a "felon" according to Manu.

A felon is he who has committed one of the following five heinous crimes:

1. Sets fire to another person's house with an intention of killing the inmates.
2. Poisons an individual with an intention to kill.
3. Falls on an individual with a sword to kill.
4. Steals unlawfully the wealth of another person.
5. Steals the wife of another person.

Manu categorically states in his "Dharma Sastra" that the penalty for a felon is "Death." Irrespective of
who the felon is, he should have to be killed.

Arjuna accepts that the Kauravas had committed not one but all the above five crimes. The verdict of the jury should be anonymous: "they are the felons."

Having said that, he should then pass the verdict of "death." When one has followed the law of the land in the conduct of an action, then he is said to have not committed a sinful act. The judge would not have committed a sin by passing death sentence to a criminal whose crime was proved beyond reasonable doubt.

Here, Arjuna says that by killing the "felons", the Kauravas, he would have committed a sin and so would be punished. He is confused and his verdict is wrong.

It would be helpful if we look at the meaning of the word "Janardana". This is another of the names for Lord Krishna.

The word means "giver of rewards." He is considered as one of the 24 Avataras of Lord Vishnu. As Janardana, Vishnu takes the form of planets and gives fruits of consequences for actions of men/women on the earth.

From the point of view of mankind, the planets are divinities and spiritual element predominates in them. They bestow benefits to the life on the earth by their configuration. They are considered as "celestial wanderers." On the contrary, we, part of life on this earth have predominance of "life element" in us. Majority of us by our actions cannot be considered as "divine elements on earth." The basis of horoscope according to the Hindu tradition is determined by the position of the planets at the time of birth of the individual.

Sloka 37

TASMAN NARHA VAYAM HANTUM DHARTRA RASHTRAN SVABHANDAVAN SWAJANAM HI KATHAM HATVA SUKHINAH SYAMA MADHAVA

O Madhava, therefore we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra who are our relations. How can we be happy by killing our own people?

Arjuna on his part has so far expressed his distress. Here, he is giving his final opinion. "Therefore we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra", he says.

Like a scholar he proceeds and puts forward the question: "How can we be happy killing our own people?"

It shows his ignorance about the Vedas and his duty to the society. He did not learn the Vedas completely and is passing judgement on the subject he is not qualified. He has not understood the principle of "Karma."

Through the medium of Arjuna, we are going to be taught in the subsequent chapters the fine arts of conducting our actions.

If we conduct work as "duty" most of the misconceptions will disappear and the results will be beneficial for us and the society.
We have a duty to the "God outside" and to the "God inside."

The "God outside" is the society and the various forms of life in the universe. The "God inside" is the "Atman" within us.

We cannot live for a second without the presence of the Atman inside and without the society and the various forms of life. We live a life of co-operation for mutual benefit.

In the present context of the battle of righteousness, there is no question of "killing our own people" and experiencing "happiness". Arjuna should be looking at what is beneficial to the subjects in their land. He is already confident of success in the battle but feels that the happiness of victory is not worth the sorrow in losing the kith and kin. These are the words of a confused man. He needs treatment that can clear the ignorance.

Sloka 38 and 39

YADYAPYTE NA PASHYANTI LOBHOPA HATACHETASAHA
KULA KSHAYA KRITAM DOSHAM MITRADROHE' CHA PATAKAM.
KATHAM NA JNEYAM ASMABHIHI PAPAD ASMAN NIVARTITUM
KULA KSHAYA KRITAM DOSHAM PRAPASHYADBHIR JANARDHANA.

O Krishna, though these men whose minds are overpowered by greed, see no evil in their destruction of families and the sin in hostility to friend, why do not we realise the evil of self-destruction and turn away from the path of sin?

> Kula kshaya: destruction of family.

Arjuna is now talking about the "Destruction of the family". What is the family?

In childhood, the parents are the family. The parents have a duty to look after their children and to see that the children become useful members of the society. In some instances it is not just useful member of the society but also a respected member of the society.

As the child grows into an adult, the roles gradually change and the child as an adult has a duty to look after the parents.

As one climbs up ladder, the responsibility also increases.

The responsibility as a teacher is to all the children in the class. For the head master it is for the entire school. Department of education is for all the children/students.

One can say that the family gets wider and bigger.

Arjuna held a higher position and he could not just look at his immediate family and cousins as his and his responsibility is only for them. Really speaking his responsibility is first to the subjects in his brother's kingdom. Not fulfilling one's responsibility to the subjects is a sin.

Arjuna has to change his idea of the family.

If he fails in his role, he will be causing destruction of the subjects in their territory.

> Sin in hostility to a friend:
In the war of righteousness the matter of friend does not arise. Arjuna had to be 100% hostile to the soldiers in the opposite camp.

Sloka 40, 41 and 42

KULAKSHAYE PRANASHYANTI KULADHARMA SANATANAH
DHARME NASHTE KULAM KRITSNAM ADHARMO'BHIBHAVATYUCHA

ADHARMABHIBHAVAAAT KRISHNA PRADUSHYANTI KULASTRIYAH
STREESHU DRISHTVASU VARSHNEYA JAYATE VARNA SANKARAH

SANKARO' NARAKAYAIVA KULAGHNANAM KULASYA CHA
PATANTI PITARO HYESHAAM LUPTA PINDODAKA KRIYAH

O Krishna, when the family is destroyed, immemorial religious rites and rituals perish, when these perish, they fall into a state of impiety. By impiety, the women of the family become corrupt. When women become corrupt, the purity of the caste is polluted by confusion and admixture. Caste pollution leads to hell for both the family and the slayers of the family. The dead forefathers fall form the higher realms of existence being deprived of the rites of sraddha and tarpana.

Arjuna is indirectly giving us some information on the family system of the days gone bye. We have to understand that the family was the unit and families together formed the society. The elders in the family conducted various religious rites and rituals. These were passed on from generation to generation. The entire family took part in the rituals conducted with family and friends. The children as they grow up continue the same tradition. If not for the traditions, the religion would be dead by now. (We need to understand the intellectual meaning and significance of many of the rituals conducted. If not they become actions of blind faith and the present generation of youngsters loose interest and sometimes turn against the religion itself.)

> When the family is destroyed:
The men in the olden days were the breadwinners and the women were responsible for bringing up the children. There were no universities and teaching institutions like what we have now. The Brahmin and Kshatriya children went to the Gurukula ashrama to learn the Vedas and Upanisads. The children from the Vysya (business) community learnt the trade by observing and assisting their father. The art was passed from generation to generation and kept alive by this method.

In those days there were wars frequently between the adjoining kingdoms. The men went as soldiers to protect their country. War as we know leads to a number of catastrophes.

Death of the soldiers in the war is unavoidable. The death of the soldier would mean death of the breadwinner for that family. This means destruction of the families' infrastructure. Hence the statement "when the family is destroyed."

Without the men, the religious rites come to a halt.

The children would have no one to control their actions. They would take part in acts of crime and sin.

> The women in the family become corrupt:
There are mainly two reasons for this to happen. 1) The women not having the financial support would become pray to unscrupulous men who take advantage of the situation. 2) The invading soldiers would conduct sinful acts on the helpless widows.

This brings about the pollution of the caste. The method of transmitting the skills from father to son comes to a halt. There would ensue a major confusion in the society. The assault from foreign soldiers brings about admixture of various castes.

As this destroys the society the learned elders use strong words like: "Caste pollution leads to hell for both the family and the slayers of the family." In the name of hell and suffering in hell, they wanted the men and women not to undertake sinful acts that bring destruction of the entire society.

One of the Hindu customs is conduct of religious rites (sraddha) to the departed forefathers of the family. Sraddha and tarpuna are supplementary rites to the funeral ceremony performed in honour of the deceased elder/elders. It includes offering a cake of rice to the immediate three generations of the deceased. The subtle bodies of the forefathers would come down and partake the cake offered. Through the medium of the cake, the merits collected by the living family members are passed on the deceased elders. This would assist them in their final union with "Brahman".

Failure to conduct the sraddha would prevent the deceased from attaining the moksha. They would fall down from the heights of spiritual progress achieved.

**Slokas 43-45**

DOSHAIR ETAIHI KULAGHNANAAM VARNA SANKARA KARAKAIHI
UTSADYANTE JATI DHARMAHA KULADHARMAS CHA SHASHVATAHA

UTSANNA KULA DHARMANAAM MANUSHYANAAM JANARDHANA
NARAKE' NIYATAM VASO BHAVATITI ANUSHUSRUMA

AHO BATA MAHAT PAPAM KARTUM VYVASITA VAYAM
YAD RAJYA SUKHA LOBHENA HANTUM SVAJANAM UDYATAHA

O Krishna, by these evil deeds of the destroyers of the family who can cause caste pollution, the eternal laws of race and family perish.

Men whose sacred rites and rituals are destroyed are compelled to inherit hell for an unknown period. Thus have we heard, O Janardana.

Oh, see, we have engaged in committing a heinous sin, as we are ready to kill our own kinsmen just for the sake of the pleasures of the sovereignty.

One can see that the caste system of "Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra" was in vogue in those days. We can also imply that roles and duties were allotted to men of different castes. The society lived in harmony when each individual family unit carried on its duties.

As a consequence of war, (which we discussed in the previous slokas) several men, the bread-winners of family loose their lives. This causes havoc to the remaining family members of that unit. Arjuna refers to his cousins Kauravas who would have destroyed the family and cause caste pollution. By taking part in the war, the Pandavas would also be responsible for the problems the society would face "post-war."

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The routine religious rites in a number of families would come to a halt. With this the eternal laws of family perish. When a large number of families are destroyed, the race would soon perish.

To stop this catastrophe, the learned elders brought out the idea of "heaven and hell." Those that caused destruction of family and thereby destroy the religion, they said, would end up in hell. They also said that it would be a very long period in hell. Hell is to be considered as a place of suffering.

Arjuna was taught this in his gurukula ashrama and by the elders in their family.

He expresses the fact to Krishna that by taking part in the war, the Pandavas would suffer the same fate as the Kauravas.

According to him, there is no difference between Pandavas and Kauravas in the aim of the war. Both were fighting to get sovereignty of the land. Whoever wins the war would still have to face life in hell for the sin committed.

"Family dharma" in this context means "code of conduct" as prescribed by the sastras and which is beneficial to the family and the society by the members of each family unit.

Sloka 46

YADI MAM APRATIKARAM ASHASTRAM SHASTRAPANAYAHA
DHARTRA RASHTRA RANO' HANYUS TAN ME' KSHEMATARAM BHAVET.

If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons in hand, slay me in the battle, unresisting and unarmed, that would be better (beneficial) for me.

Having decided not to fight, Arjuna is trying to justify the decision. He is looking at the end result of his decision not to fight. He is misreading the word "Kshema." He is looking at the fruits of action.

By running away from the battle and not killing the respected elders and teachers he thought there would be merit points for him. It shows his ignorance of the sastras.

He is wrong also to think of the "fruits of action." The rest of the Gita is about actions and the spirit of conducting the same.

Through the medium of Arjuna, the Lord is going to correct our mistakes in understanding of the sacred philosophy.

Sloka 47

SANJAYA UVACHA

YEVAMUKTVARJUNAH SAMKHYE RATHOPASTHA UPAVISHAT
VISRUJYA SASHARAM CHAPAM SHOKAM SAMVIGNHA MANASAHA

Having spoken in this manner, Arjuna, distressed with sorrow, dropped his bow and arrows and sat on the seat of his chariot.
What has Arjuna done so far and why did he do what he did?

Arjuna expressed the symptoms of depression in greater detail. He was fortunate and blessed with the presence of the greatest teacher in the form of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna was the charioteer. It was not coincidence that Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer. He was aware of this situation developing and he knew that for the welfare of humanity in general there was a dire need to make the philosophy of "Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Dhyana" clear to those who were desirous to know. The war between the cousins was the most appropriate moment for lighting the knowledge of wisdom.

Arjuna as a patient who suddenly felt extremely depressed just before undertaking the major battle in his life, decided that he needed the help of a psychoanalyst. Sri Krishna, we can say is the world's first "Psychoanalyst" we know of. True to the profession, He listened to all the symptoms the patient came up with and did not interrupt him in the middle with probing questions.

The dropping of the bow and arrows expresses his mental weakness. The body of the great warrior lost its physical strength due to "grief." The grief was due to the ignorance of the sastras. Sastras are meant for the welfare of the mankind and the universe.

Each one of us has a god ordained duty to conduct in this world and has the presence of the God inside to guide us in the discharge of our duties to God and the society. We must not let the "ego" blind us to this reality.

The God is there constantly to bestow His grace and we must know how to approach Him and receive the grace.

ITI SRIMAD BHAGAWADGITAS UPANISADTSU BRAHMA VIDYAYAM YOGA SASTRE SRI KIRISHNARJUNA SAMVADE ARJUNA VISHADA YOGO NAMA PRATHAMODHYAYAHA.

Thus is designated the first chapter "Arjuna Vishada Yoga"of the Bhagavadgita which is a Upanisad, Brahma Vidya (knowledge of the Brahman) and Yoga Sastra (science of Yoga) and which is in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.