

CHAPTER 1

|| *DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA* ||

Om! I salute you, O Primal Lord, propounded by the *Vedas*; glory to you, who are known only to yourself, O Supreme Self. O Lord, you are *Shri Ganesha*, who illumines all things and minds. So I, disciple of *Nivritti*, say, please give me your attention. His (*Shri Ganesha's*) attractive form represents all the *Vedas*; his superb body exhibits their faultless diction. His limbs represent the *Smritis*, his gestures their styles; his handsome aspect represents their exquisite meaning. His jeweled ornaments represent the eighteen *Puranas*, the jewels set in gold being their doctrines set in poetry (1-5). His coloured robe constitutes their superb diction, its fine glossy thread standing for their poetical style. The jingling bells in the girdle around his waist represent the poetical and dramatic compositions. If you observe keenly, you will find in them all many doctrines set in poetry like gems in gold. The silken garment round the waist of *Ganesha* represents *Vyasa's* intelligence; and its shining borders denote the pure flashes of that intelligence.

His six hands suggest six philosophical systems, and the things held in them indicate their differing doctrines (6-10). The axe denotes the *Nyaya* logic, the goad the *Vaisheshika* creed; and the sweet juicy *modaka* (an Indian sweet) shows to advantage the *Vedanta* doctrine. The tooth in his hand, which is naturally broken, indicates the refutation by the *Vartikakara* (*Kumarilabhata*) of the Buddhist doctrine. It follows that his lotus-hand represents the *Sankhya* law of causation, while the safety-sign of the remaining hand establishes the pre-eminence of dharma. The straight trunk of *Ganesha* represents the pure thought conducive to the supreme joy of final beatitude. His straight white teeth denote the philosophical dialogues, while his half-open eyes represent the eye of wisdom (11-15). His ears look to me as the *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta* schools; and the sages, like bees taste the *ambrosial* ichor of knowledge from his temples. His temples, shining with the corals in the form of doctrines of the *Dvaita* and *Advaita* schools, are close on his elephant-head. And the sweet-smelling and beautiful flowers on his forehead denote the ten *Upanishads* full of wisdom. The first letter *a* represent his feet, the letter *u* his big tummy, and the letter *m* his circular head, the foremost among limbs all these three letters are united in the sacred syllable *Om*, which encompasses all spiritual knowledge. I salute *Shri Ganesh*, the primal seed of the world through the grace of my *Guru Nivritti* (16-20).

I now bow to the goddess of learning who, with her novel graceful speech and mastery of arts and skills, holds the world spellbound.

My worthy *Guru* seated in my heart has helped me to cross the flood of existence, and because of him I take special interest in discriminating knowledge. As the antimony applied to the eye extends a person's vision and the hidden treasure reveals itself to him wherever he casts his eye, or one who has the philosopher's stone in hand gains all desires, so by the grace of my *Guru Nivritti* all my desires are fulfilled. Therefore a wise person should serve his *Guru* and accomplish his object, even as by watering the trees at the base, its branches and leaves become fresh (21-25) or by a dip in the sea one acquires the merit of bathing at all holy places, or by a sip of nectar one enjoys

the taste of all juices. So again and again I salute my *Guru*, who has fulfilled all my desires.

Now listen to a profound tale (*Mahabharata*), the source of all arts and entertainments, the marvelous garden of trees in the form of discriminating thoughts - nay it is the source of joy, being the treasure-house of doctrines and the overfull ocean of nine *ambrosial* sentiments. Or one may say that it is the primal adobe become manifest, the origin of all lores and the dwelling-place of all sciences (26-30). It is the refuge of all the religions, the cynosure of holy men and the treasure-chest of the lovely gems of goddess of learning. It seems that in the form of various stories the goddess of speech became manifest to the worlds by revealing herself to the high-minded *Vyasa*. This tale is, therefore, the queen of poetry and the source of respect, which literary works command; and from this tale the sentiments (*rasas*) have received their poetical flavour. From this tale onwards literary works became less arid and doubly sweet. Because the literary art became more erudite, spiritual knowledge became more agreeable and the fortunate state of happiness became perfect (31-35). Because of it, sweet things became sweeter, the erotic sentiment more elegant, and what is proper became popular and acceptable. Because of it, literary art became skilled, and merit especially powerful, as a result of which *Janamejaya* easily got rid of his sin (of *Brahmin-slaughter*).

A brief reflection will show that in this work, excellence became especially elegant, and virtues have received the brilliance of righteousness. Just as the three worlds are lit up by the sun's light, so this world has become illumined by the intelligence of *Vyasa*. Even as seeds sown in a fertile field grow luxuriantly by themselves, so all subjects have attained excellence in the *Bharata* (36-40). Just as a person becomes cultured by staying in a city, so all subjects have become illuminated by the work of *Vyasa*. Just as in youth, a tender bloom of beauty spreads over the body of a maiden, or with the advent of spring, the gardens become flush with blossoms, or the ordinary gold bars look beautiful when turned into ornaments, so this tale has become elegant in the flowery style of *Vyasa*, and probably because of this, historical works have resorted to it (41-45). In order to secure fame various *Puranas*, assuming a humble posture, have become incorporated in it in the form of anecdotes. Nothing exists in all the three worlds, which is not found in the *Mahabharata*; and so it is said that every tale in the three worlds is the leftover of *Vyasa*. This mellifluous tale, which is the source of the highest truth, was narrated by *Vaishampayana* to King *Janamejaya*. This tale is the best without an equal, holy and incomparable, the home of auspiciousness; now listen further.

Now like pollen in a lotus, there is a discourse, which was given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna (46-50) or *Vyasa's* intelligence, after churning the sea of the *Vedas*, verily obtained this incomparable butter. When he heated this butter on the fire of knowledge with discrimination, it became the sweet-smelling *ghee*. Men of dispassion seek it, the saints constantly enjoy it, and the adepts rejoice in it with the conviction 'I am Brahman'. It is heard eagerly by the devotees and is highly esteemed in the three worlds. It is told in the *Bhishmaparva* in the course of narration. It is called the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *Brahma* and *Ishvara* sing its praise, and sages such as *Sanaka* practice it with reverence (51-55). Even as chicks of *chakora* birds gently sip the nectar drops of moon-light, so should the audience enjoy this tale with a gentle mind. One should tell the *Gita* without words, enjoy it without the knowledge of senses, and grasp its doctrine before it is spoken. Just as the bees pick the pollen without the lotus buds knowing it, that is the way to understand this text. Or just as without leaving its place, the blue lotus plant knows how to embrace the moon when it rises and enjoy its love (56-60), so only a person whose mind has become steady and profound can delve into

the secret of this *Gita*. Therefore all of you saints who are fit to hear *Gita* in the company of Arjuna, may kindly give your attention to what I say.

O hearers, I have taken this liberty with some familiarity, as I know that you are broad-minded. The parents naturally like the lisping words of the child; and so need I, whom you have accepted and called your own, beg you to forgive my many lapses (61-65)? But I have made a bloomer in that I have wished to grasp the meaning of the *Gita* and on top of it entreated you to give your attention to me. Without realising that this task is beyond my capacity, I have made bold to undertake it. But what is a glow-worm before the sun? I hear that a lapwing tried to empty the sea to save her chicks, so ignorant that I am, I have set out to do this difficult task. If a person wishes to clasp the sky, he has to be bigger than the sky; so all this seems like an impossible task to me. When *Lord Shiva* was expatiating on the greatness of the *Gita*, his spouse *Bhavani* questioned him in wonderment (66-70). *Lord Shiva* said, "O goddess, like your figure which no one can fathom, this doctrine of the *Gita* appears ever new when one thinks of it." While the ocean of the *Vedas* sprang from the snoring of the Supreme Lord, He told this scripture that is *Gita* in person. This *Gita* is so profound that it confounded even the *Vedas*. How then can a dull-witted person like me attempt to explain it? How can one hold within one's grasp this boundless text or hold candle to its light? Or how can a midge hold the heavens within its fist?

But I am blessed with the support of one, and because of him I can speak with confidence. I, *Jnanadeva*, say that my *Guru* is favourably disposed to me (71-75). O saints, though I am ignorant and indiscriminating, the lamp of your kindness shines bright, iron turns into gold with the touch of the philosopher's stone and a dead person is revived by the power of nectar. When the Goddess of learning is pleased, she can bestow speech on the dumb. This is not a marvel, but the result of the inherent power in the object. How can anyone whose mother is the wish-yielding cow, ever be in want? I have undertaken to compose this work with my Master's blessings. Please make good my shortcomings if any and ignore my superfluities (76-80). I shall speak if you give me power to speak, even as the puppet can move only on the strength of the string. In a way I am favoured, instructed and decorated by holy men like you in a marvelous way. Then his *Guru* said, "Enough, you don't have to tell us all this. Be quick and give your thought to the work in hand." After hearing these words, *Jnanadeva*, disciple of *Nivritti*, joyfully said, "Now listen leisurely to what I say."

Dhritarashtra said:

1. *In the holy plain of Kurukshetra have gathered eager for battle, mine and Pandu's sons; what did they do, O Sanjaya?*

Dhritarashtra, blinded by his filial affection, asked *Sanjaya*, "Tell me the news of *Kurukshetra* (81-85). To that Holy Land, *Pandu's* sons and mine have gone in order to wage a war; what they have been doing all this while, tell me all very quickly."

Sanjaya said:

2. *Seeing the army of the Pandavas arrayed in battle, King Duryodhana approached his teacher (Drona) and said these words:*
3. *Behold this vast army of the Pandavas, O teacher, arrayed by the son of Drupada, (Dhrishtadyumna),*

thy clever pupil.

At that time, *Sanjaya* said, the *Pandava* army had gone berserk as if the Death-god had opened his jaws at the time of dissolution. Now that the compact army of the *Pandavas* is surging forward like spurting poison, who can control it? Or like the submarine fire fanned by the squall of dissolution, drying up the seas and reaching up to the sky, so the irresistible *Pandava* army, organised into different arrays, looked dreadful (86-90). *Duryodhana* held the *Pandava* army in contempt in the same way as the lion thinks nothing much of a herd of elephants. He then approached *Dronacharya* and said to him, "Please see how this army of the *Pandavas* is surging forward. Its different arrays look like walking forts and they have been organised by the clever son of *Drupada* (*Dhrishtadyumna*), who has been instructed by you in the art of war. Look how cleverly he has arrayed this vast army here (91-95).

4. *Here are valiant bowmen, peers of Bhima and Arjuna in battle, Yuyudhana (Satyaki), Virata and Drupada, a mighty warrior.*

Besides there are here great warriors skilled in the art of weaponry and well-versed in the duties of a warrior. They are peers of *Bhima* and *Arjuna* in strength, daring and valour. I shall tell you their names on this occasion. Here is the great warrior *Satyaki*, *Virata* is here too, as also *Drupada*, the great car-warrior.

5. *Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the heroic king of Kashi, Purujit Kuntibhoja and Shaibya, foremost among men,*
6. *And Yudhamanyu the strong, Uttamauja the brave, Subhadra's boy and Draupadi's sons, great warriors all.*

Look at *Chekitana*, *Dhrishtaketu*, the heroic *Kashiraja*, *Uttamauja* and *Shaibya*, the Lord of kings. Here is *Kuntibhoja*, *Yudhamanyu*, King *Purujit* and others, see them all (96-100). Here is *Abhimanyu*, who gladdens the heart of *Subhadra*, a second *Arjuna*; look at him, so said *Duryodhana* to *Drona*. Besides here are the sons of *Draupadi*, and other car-warriors, countless in number, have also gathered here.

7. *Know further, O noblest of the twice-born, the captains of my army, the more distinguished among us; these I name to you for your information.*
8. *Your good self, Bhishma and Karna and Kripa, ever victorious in battle, Ashvatthama and Vikarna and also Bhurishrava, son of Somadatta.*

Now I shall take this occasion to tell you the names of prominent warriors in our army. I shall briefly mention only a few of them, those that are chief among us, including yourself. Here are *Bhishma*, son of *Ganga*, like unto the sun in lustre and valour, and *Karna*, who is to the enemies like a lion to the elephants (101-105). If either of them were to so resolve, he could destroy the world. And *Kripacharya* here alone is able to perform that task. Here is heroic *Vikarna* and over there is *Ashvatthama*, of whom even the god of death ever stands in awe. Here are son of *Somadatta*, *Bhurishrava*, ever victorious in war,

9. *And there are many other heroes, ever ready to risk their lives for my sake, armed with many kinds of weapons, all of them skilled in warfare.*

and many other warriors whose valour even God *Brahma* cannot fathom, they are skilled in the science of arms and missiles, why say more! all missiles became current in the world from them only. They are full of valour and peerless in the world and they have espoused my cause with all their heart. Just as a faithful wife thinks only of her husband and none else, these warriors think of me to be their all. They are such great and good loyal servants that they care less for their lives in the execution of their task. Skillful in warfare, they are renowned for their feats of war; why say all this? The warriors' code came into vogue from them only. So there are all-round warriors in our army too. How can one count them?

10. *Unlimited is the army of ours, guarded by Bhishma; limited is this army of theirs, guarded by Bhima.*

We have also entrusted the office of the General to *Bhishma*, foremost among veterans, world-conqueror and mighty warrior (111-115). Backed by his prowess, the army looks like a fortress, before which even the three worlds look small. As if the impervious sea has received the help of sub-marine fire, or the world destroying fire is aided by a hurricane, our army has as its General *Bhishma*, the son of *Ganga*. Who then can resist it? This *Pandava* army is too small in comparison with ours as stated before. Moreover this bumptious *Bhima* has become their general. After saying this, he stopped talking (116-120).

11. *Taking up your respective positions on all fronts, all of you support Bhishma alone from all sides.*

Then he addressed his officers thus: "Keep the army under you in a state of readiness. Those who are the captains of the army units should remain in the front and distribute the tasks among the car-warriors. They should keep their units under control and remain near *Bhishma*." Then he said to *Drona*, "You should oversee all this. You should support *Bhishma* alone and hold him in my place. For now our army entirely depends upon him."

12. *In order to cheer him up, the aged Kuru Lord, his valiant grandsire, roared aloud like a lion and blew the conch.*

Hearing this address of the King, the General was overjoyed, and he gave out the lion's roar (121-105). This war-cry resounded in both armies with such force, that the echo which arose could not be contained. His heroic nature being excited by that echo, *Bhishma* blew his divine conch. The two sounds mingled, deafening the three worlds, and it seemed as if the sky would come down with a crash. The heavens thundered and the seas swelled upwards, and the moving and stationary things became stirred up and shaken. The hills and caves resounded with that great noise, and war drums began to beat in both armies (126-130).

13. *Conches and kettledrums, drums, tabors and horns blared forth all of a sudden, and the noise became tumultuous.*

The sound of all the musical instruments was so harsh and terrific, that it seemed like the end of the world even to the brave. Kettledrums, tabors, conches, cymbals and trumpets blared forth, followed by a terrible war-cry of the great warriors. Some patted their arms and challenged others with frenzy, and the rutting elephants could not be controlled. What can one say about the cowards? They were scattered like saw-dust. Even the god of death withdrew from the fray in panic. Some breathed their last standing; others who were brave had locked-jaw; and

even warriors of proved merit started shaking with fright (131-135). Hearing the strange blare of martial music even god *Brahma* became agitated; and the other gods thought that the end of the world had come now.

14. *Then standing in a mighty chariot with white horses yoked thereto, Krishna and Arjuna blew their conches Divine.*
15. *Krishna blew the Panchajanya, Arjuna the Devadatta, and the wolf-bellied Bhima of terrible deeds blew his mighty conch Paundra.*
16. *Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, blew the conch Anantavijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva blew their conches, Sughosha and Manipushpaka.*

While the heaven was thus in turmoil, see what happened in the *Pandava* army. Arjuna arrived there in a chariot, which was the basis of victory and the seat of heroic lustre, and to which were yoked four horses as swift as the eagles. The chariot looked superb like the *Meru* mountain with wings, and because of it all the ten quarters were filled with brightness. How can one describe the merits of this chariot, of which the Lord of *Vaikuntha* (*Vishnu*) was the charioteer (136-140)? *Hanuman*, who was God *Shankara* incarnate, was seated on his flag-staff and Lord Krishna was driving his chariot. See how wondrous are the ways of the Lord; because of his love for his devotee, he worked as the charioteer of Partha. Keeping his page behind him, he took the frontal position and with great ease blew his conch *Panchajanya*. His blowing of the conch made a rumbling sound; and as the stars are bedimmed by the rising sun, in that sound was lost the din made by the martial music of *Kaurava* army (141-145).

Then Arjuna blew his conch *Devadatta*, making a resounding sound. When these two sounds mingled, it seemed as if the universe was being blown to smithereens. Then *Bhima* too got excited like the god of death in fury and blew his great conch *Paundra*. When it emitted a deep roaring sound like a cloud at world-dissolution, *Yudhishtira* blew his conch *Anantavijaya*. Then *Nakula* blew his conch *Sughosha* and *Sahadeva* *Manipushpaka*, as a result of which even the god of death became panic-stricken (146-150).

17. *And the king of Kashi, the great bowman and Sikhandi, the great warrior Dhrishtadyumna and Virata and unvanquished Satyaki,*
18. *And Drupada and Draupadi's sons from all sides, O king, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra blew the conches separately.*
19. *That noise pierced the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons, resounding tumultuously throughout the heavens and earth.*

Many kings who had gathered there, *Drupada* son of *Draupadi*, the mighty-armed king of *Kashi*, Arjuna's son, invincible *Satyaki*, prince *Dhrishtadyumna* and *Shikhandi*, as also great kings like *Virata* and other chief captains blew their conches. Hearing that strident sound both *Shesha* and the tortoise thought of throwing off the burden of earth they carried. Then all the three worlds began to rock, *Meru* and *Mandara* mountains began to reel and the waters of the seas surged upwards to mount *Kailasa* (151-155). It seemed as if the earth would tumble down, the sky would shake and the stars would come down in a scatter. Then there was a clamour in *Satyaloka* that the earth was sinking and gods would be without support. The

sun stood still in daytime, and as if the dissolution had come, there was weeping and wailing in all the three worlds. Astonished by this, Lord Krishna feared that the world would come to an end and so he put a stop to that strange tumult.

By this the world was saved, else its end had arrived, when Krishna and others started blowing their big conches (156-160). Although the noise subsided, but its echo, which still lingered, routed the whole army of the *Kauravas*. As a lion tears a herd of elephants with ease, so the sound of the conches rent the hearts of the *Kauravas*. When they heard this sound, they readily lost courage and cautioned one another to remain alert and watchful.

20. *The ape-bannered Arjuna saw Dhritarashtra's sons in battle array, and when the flight of missiles was about to start, he lifted his bow.*

There the heroic car-warriors, full of valour, who were present, again brought their army units under control. Then they marched forward with such preparation and vehemence that the three worlds became panic-stricken (161-165). The archers there sent such a volley of arrows that they seemed like the uncontrollable clouds of deluge. Arjuna saw them with great satisfaction and cast his glance hurriedly at both the armies. When he saw the *Kauravas* ready for battle, he lifted his bow with great ease.

21. *And he uttered, O King, these words to Krishna, "Please place my chariot, O Krishna, between two armies",*

At that time Arjuna said, "O Lord, please take our chariot quickly and place it in the midst of the two armies",

22. *Whilst I behold these men standing eager for battle, and know with whom I have to fight in this business of war,*

23. *and whilst I survey those who have gathered here with intent to fight and who are keen to please in battle Dhritarashtra's perverse son (Duryodhana).*

So that I can see all the warriors who have come here to fight (166-170). For although all warriors have gathered here, I must know with whom I have to fight. These *Kauravas* are, generally speaking, wicked and itching for fight; they are without valour, but they have a burning desire to fight. They have a zest for fight, but they lack staying power." Saying this to the king, *Sanjaya* continued.

24. *Krishna, so addressed by Arjuna, O Bharata, placed the best of the chariots between the two armies,*

25. *In front of Bhishma, Drona and all kings and said, "O Partha, behold these Kurus assembled here."*

26. *Arjuna saw there standing, uncles, grand-uncles, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and companions,*

27. *As also fathers-in-law and friends in both armies. When Arjuna saw all these kinsmen standing there,*

Listen, O King, When Arjuna spoke thus, Lord Krishna placed the chariot between the two armies, where stood *Bhishma*, *Drona*, kinsmen and other kings (171-175). When the chariot came to a halt, Arjuna saw the *Kaurava* army and was greatly agitated. Then he said, "Lord!

these are our teachers, relations and elders," which astounded Lord Krishna for a moment. Then he said to himself, "Does anyone know what Arjuna has in his mind, but it is something strange." Being the inner controller of all beings, he certainly knew what was in his mind, but he kept quiet at that time.

Arjuna saw there his uncles, grand-uncles, teachers and cousins (176-180). He saw gathered there his relations, friends, sons and others, his well-wishers, fathers-in-law, kinsmen and companions and grandsons. He saw there all those whom he had helped and protected in adverse times; in short, he saw all his kinsmen, old and young, come there to fight.

28. *And overcome with great compassion, he spoke thus in sorrow;*

At that time his mind was troubled and pity filled his heart. His heroic spirit, taking offence at this conduct, deserted him (181-185), even as a lady coming from a noble family and endowed with beauty and virtue, does not tolerate a rival in her affection, or as a passionate person neglects his wife, being infatuated by another woman, and like one demented runs undeservedly after her, or as an ascetic, dazzled by the acquisition of miraculous powers, does not remember his dispassion. Such was the state of Arjuna, when he lost his manliness and yielded his heart to compassion. Look, even as the exorcist who makes a slip is overpowered by the ghost, that great archer was overcome by delusion (186-190). So he lost his natural courage and his heart bled with pity, even as the moon-stone melts at the touch of moon-light. In this way Arjuna became bewildered by his excessive affection and addressed Lord Krishna thus, in great dejection.

29. *Seeing these kinsmen here, O Krishna, bent on fighting, my limbs become feeble, my mouth goes dry; there is tremour in my body, and my hair stands on end.*

30. *The Gandiva bow has slipped from my hand, my skin burns all over; I am not able to stand firm, and my mind seems to reel.*

"Lord, when I look at this crowd, I see only my kinsmen there. True, they are all poised for battle; but will it be proper for us to fight with them?" The thought, bewilders me and has unhinged my mind (191-195). See, my body is trembling, my mouth is parched, and languor has overtaken my limbs. The hair on my body bristles, my mind is agitated; and the *Gandiva* has slipped from my sluggish hand. I do not know when it dropped; my mind is so clouded by delusion." *Sanjaya* said that it is odd that pity should so unusually affect his heart, which is as hard as the adamant, harsh and truculent. He, who had conquered *Lord Shiva* and destroyed *Nivatakavacha* demons, was so overpowered by compassion in a moment (196-200). When the bee, which can bore into any dry wood, is caught in a flower bud, it would rather lose its life than tear it open; so the tender ties of kinship are difficult to break. This is the *Maya* of the Supreme God which even *Brahma* cannot cross. It confused the mind of Arjuna, so said *Sanjaya* to the king. After seeing his kinsmen there, Arjuna lost all zest for war. One does not know how this pity entered his mind. Then he said to Krishna, "Lord, let us not tarry here (201-205). When I see that I have to kill all these relatives, my mind becomes disturbed and I start raving."

31. *And I see omens that are adverse, O Krishna, nor do I foresee any good in killing our men in battle.*

If I have to slay the *Kauravas*, then why not *Yudhishtira* and others? These *Kauravas* are also

our kinsmen, therefore, O Lord, let this war go to blazes. I do not like it. What do we achieve by committing this grievous sin? I foresee that this war will end in disaster, but its prevention will tend to our benefit.

32. *I long not for victory, O Krishna, nor for kingdom nor for happiness. Of what use is a kingdom to us, or enjoyments or life itself?*
33. *They, for whose sake we desire a kingdom, joys and happiness, are standing poised for battle and ready to lose their lives and wealth.*
34. *Yonder are our teachers, fathers, sons and grand-fathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsmen.*

I do not particularly fancy a victory of this kind. Of what use is a kingdom gained in this way (206-210)? If we have to kill all of them to enjoy pleasures, burn those pleasures, so said Partha. Rather than enjoy such pleasures, we shall gladly suffer misery of any kind and even risk our lives for them. To slay them and enjoy the pleasures of a kingdom, my mind cannot conceive of such a thing even in a dream. If we have to think of our elders with animus, why should we come to birth, and for whom should we live? When a family longs for a son, do they expect of him that he should utterly destroy his kith and kin (211-215)? How could we think of being as hard and adamant? Rather we should do whatever good we can offer for them. We should let them enjoy whatever we earn; in fact we should devote our entire lives in their cause. We should conquer all kings up to the limits of the quarters to please them. But it is the irony of fate that all our relations have come here to fight forsaking their wives, children and wealth, and committing their lives to the charge of missiles (216-220). How shall I kill them? How shall I wound my own heart? Don't you know who they are? Yonder are *Bhishma* and *Drona*, who have placed us under many obligations. Here we have brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, maternal uncles, cousins, sons and grandsons and other relations. Listen, everyone of them is closely related to us; we shall be committing sin, even if we talk of killing them.

35. *These I do not wish to slay, even if they were to kill us. O Krishna, for the kingdom of the three worlds, let alone the earth.*

Even if they were to cause harm to us or slay us, we would not think of attacking them (221-225). Even if we were to get the uncontested kingdom of the three worlds, I would not commit this foul act. If we commit this act today, how shall we retain the respect of others? Tell me, O Krishna, shall we be able to see your face thereafter?

36. *What joy shall be ours, O Krishna, by killing the Kauravas? Sin alone will dog us, if we slay these aggressors.*

If I were to slay these kinsmen, I shall be a hotbed of sins, and lose your company which we now have. If we cause the destruction of the family, we shall incur many sins. When and where shall we see you then? If the garden is engulfed in a big fire, the *cuckoo* will not tarry there even for a moment (226- 230). Or if the *chakora* bird sees that the lake is full of slime, it will abandon the lake and go away. Likewise, O Lord, if my merit becomes exhausted, you will beguile us and not greet us with affection.

37. *Therefore, we ought not to kill the Kauravas along with their kinsmen. Indeed, how can we be happy, O Krishna, by slaying our own people?*

Therefore, I will not take up the weapon in this war. This deed appears to me improper in every way. If we lose you, O Krishna, what will remain with us? Our hearts will burst with sorrow, if you will leave us. Arjuna said, "So this thing is not likely to come about that we should slay the *Kauravas* and enjoy ourselves (231-235)."

38. *Even if they do not perceive, with minds overcome by greed, evil in the destruction of the family or sin in the betrayal of friends,*
39. *Why should we not think it fit to turn away from this sin, when we see clearly, O Krishna, the wrong in the destruction of the family?*

Even if the *Kauravas* infatuated by pride, have come to fight us, we must see wherein lies our well-being. How can we slay our kith and kin? How can we drink poison knowing it to be so? If by chance, we come across a lion in our way, the advantage lies in avoiding it. If we throw away light and resort to a dark well, what benefit, O Lord, do we derive thereby? If we cannot keep away from fire facing us, it will engulf us and burn us in a moment (236-240). How do we conduct ourselves, when we know fully that the sin of kin-slaughter will affect us? On that occasion Arjuna said, Lord listen to me. I shall explain how gruesome this sin is.

40. *With the ruin of the family, its ancient customs decline. When these customs perish, immorality overtakes the entire family.*

Just as the fire, kindled by rubbing one stick with another, burns all wood, so if men belonging to the same clan kill one another, then that horrible sin destroys the whole clan through malice. As a result of this sin, family customs languish and thereby immorality, finds a home in the clan (241-245).

41. *When immorality prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become wanton; with the corruption of women, there arises intermingling of castes.*

Then all thought of right and wrong, or moral conduct, of what one should do and should not do, is lost, even as a person who throws away the lamp in his hand and walks in the dark, trips on a straight road. So with the destruction of the family its customs cease and then what can be his lot other than sin? When the senses start acting willfully without self restraint, then even women of good families become unchaste. Then the higher castes unite with the lower castes, and with the mingling of castes the caste duties perish (246-250). Just as the crows pounce upon the food kept on the cross-road, so all sins rush at that family.

42. *And this mingling of castes leads the family and its destroyers to hell; for their forefathers fall from heaven, being deprived of their rice-balls and water.*

Then both the family and its wreckers go to hell. While the family grows it becomes degraded, and its forefathers fall from heaven. If no one performs the obligatory and periodical rites, who will offer water and seasamum seeds to the deceased? How can the ancestors then remain in heaven? They too come back to the family (251-256). Just as the poison of a snake-bite

at the nail instantly goes to the head, so the sin of kin-slaughter envelops the whole family, right from its founder.

43. *By the sins of those who destroy the family by the intermingling of castes, the long-standing caste duties and family customs get destroyed.*
44. *For men, O Krishna, whose family customs get destroyed their place is ever fixed in hell, so we have heard.*
45. *Alas! What a grievous sin we have resolved to commit, in that, from the greed for the joys of a kingdom, we are ready to kill our kinsmen.*

O Lord, listen; another grievous sin arises from this kin-slaughter. Contact with this family also vitiates public life. Just as a fire in an inner chamber of the house flares up and burns the other parts also, so everyone who comes in contact with this family, gets affected by it, and because of these sins he suffers a horrible life in hell (256-260). When a person goes to hell, he finds no respite even at the end of the world, so total is his downfall from the destruction of the family. O Lord, you have been hearing my chatter, but it does not seem to trouble you. Why have you made your heart as hard as an adamant? This body for which we expect royal pleasures is ephemeral. Knowing this, should we not avoid this sin of kin-slaughter? Have I not committed enough sin by looking at these elders with the intention of killing them?

46. *Even if in this battle the Kauravas wielding weapons in their hands were to kill me unresisting and unarmed, that would be far better for me.*

Rather than live like this, it is better to lay down the weapons and suffer the attacks of the *Kauravas* (261-265). It would be far better to meet death in this way. I do not at all like the idea of committing the sin of kin-slaughter. When Arjuna saw his kinsmen on the battle-field, he said that to enjoy a kingdom by killing them would be like hell.

47. *Thus spoke Arjuna on the battle-field and sat in the chariot seat, laying down his bow and arrows, his heart filled with sorrow.*

Sanjaya said to *Dhritarashtra*, "Listen, O King, Arjuna spoke thus on that occasion on the field of battle. He became very agitated and overcome by violent grief he jumped down from the chariot. Even as a deposed prince becomes the object of scorn, or the sun in eclipse (literally, swallowed by demon *Rahu*) becomes lack-lustre (266-270), or an ascetic tempted by miraculous powers goes astray and overcome by desire becomes wretched, so Arjuna seemed overwhelmed by excessive grief after he dismounted from the chariot. Then, O King, he threw down his bow and arrows, and his eyes were filled with copious tears. After seeing Arjuna so overwhelmed with grief, the Lord of *Vaikuntha* will impart to him wisdom. It is a joy to listen to the story, which will come next in great detail, so said *Jnanadeva*, disciple of *Nivrutti* (271-275).

