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Dharmakshetre Kurukshetra

Men who do not have purity of mind cannot acquire knowledge of their real self. Only those with pure hearts can realise the true nature of the Self. I am declaring the truth as it exists.

In Kurukshetra which is a *Dharmakshetra*, or sacred region, a place which has been the seat of holy sacrifices, the two armies were arrayed for battle. Forgetting the supremacy of the Divine principle and giving full play to his ego, Duryodhana unfurled the banner of war. In order to please Duryodhana, Bhishma blew his conch. Taking it as the signal for war, the armies sounded their war drums.

Krishna and Arjuna also blew their conches on the other side. The great roar of battle, proceeding from the soldiers on the side of the Pandavas, rent the skies.

Responding to Arjuna's request, Krishna stationed his chariot in the middle of the two armies. The chariot appeared so terrifying to the Kaurava soldiers, that they felt as if the war-horses galloped on their hearts. Beholding his grandfather Bhishma, his *guru* Dronacharya and his friends and relations and thinking of the bonds of affection between him and the people on the other side of the battlefield, Arjuna felt despondent. His head reeled, his limbs trembled and the *Gandiva* slipped from his hand. "Oh, Krishna!" he cried, "I am forced to wage this terrible battle against those friends and relations with whom I should have been living in happiness and harmony. My mind rebels against this prospect. The cause for this is neither the fear of death nor the need to kill my kinsmen. The *Sruthis* have declared that the destruction wrought by war may lead women away from the path of virtue and bring about social disorder. It would be far better to beg and live on alms than to fight for a kingdom and be responsible for this great sin and repent later."

Thus the great hero Arjuna entered into a state of despair. His dejection proceeded from his concern for the preservation of *dharma* and his anxiety to strictly obey God's command. *Dharma*, which is concerned with the welfare of all, should override the dictates of *mamakara* (attachment), which confines itself to the interests of one's kith and kin. The *dharma* that relates to societal well-being should be held higher than man's duty to a few and, therefore, should not be sacrificed

for the latter. The attachment one has for one's relations may be compared to the clouds that suddenly gather in the sky and disappear in no time. *Dharma*, however, is that which sustains this earth. Thus, Arjuna felt dejected out of his anxiety to protect *dharma* and adhere to God's injunction as indicated in the *Sruthis*. Had Arjuna merely felt sorry for his kinsmen, it might have been only *Vishada* or dejection; but since he felt agonised for the sake of the protection of *dharma* and obeying the word of God, his mental state is described as *vishada yoga* or "the *yoga* of righteous despair."

Generally, the ego develops in men as a result of attachment and desire. *Moha* (delusion) is the result of *abhimana* (egoistic feeling), *mamakara*, and *ahamkara* (conceit). The worldly relationships proceed from these evil tendencies. Krishna advised Arjuna not to pay attention to mundane bonds and added that those who kill and those who are killed are only His instruments. Arjuna was a medium used by Him to teach a lesson to all mankind.

"I have chosen you as My instrument," Krishna said. "You are a representative of mankind. Divine dispensation is the root cause of all; acts of God are for the promotion and preservation of *dharma*. Arjuna, you have not been able to understand My nature. For the protection of *dharma* in the *Thretha Yuga*, I killed Vali and gave his kingdom to his brother Sugriva; I destroyed Ravana and gave Lanka to Vibhishana without laying

any claims to it. So also, though I had sovereign power and could have ruled over Ayodhya, I went to the forest in obedience to my father's wish to fulfil the pledge I gave to my father and to prove that the rulers of the lkshvaku clan never deviate from their word of honour.

"Whatever I undertake is designed to promote the welfare of the world. If I do not undertake action, the Universe would come to a standstill. Having killed Kamsa who was unfair, unjust and proud, I gave the kingdom to his father Ugrasena. Similarly, I destroyed wicked rulers like Jarasandha and Dantavakra and gave away their kingdoms to the nearest of their kin. I did not retain anything for Myself. All this was done only for the protection of *dharma*. From age to age, I have been working without respite even for a minute for the preservation of *dharma*. I remain just a spectator without any personal motive. In every age, whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness raised its hood, I incarnated Myself. For the protection of the virtuous and for the destruction of evil and for the restoration of *Dharma*, I manifest Myself from age to age."

Hearing these words of Krishna, Arjuna said in all humility, "I shall do as you ordain." Then Krishna said soothingly and lovingly, "Follow me with folded hands and proceed to obtain the permission of Bhishma, your grandfather." The Pandavas were given to following Krishna's words without questioning. Leaving his footwear and crown, Arjuna walked behind

Krishna with folded hands. Dharmaja, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva watched this sight and realising that Arjuna was walking behind Krishna to some purpose, they too set their crowns down, removed their shoes, folded their hands and walked behind Krishna. The Kauravas looked at this scene and shouted for joy, thinking that the five brothers were frightened by the mighty commanders on the Kaurava side and had come to surrender.

God's inexplicable ways are known only to Him. Whatever God says, does or thinks, appears to be strange. But God's actions are never contrary to the canons of *dharma*. There will be great felicity if one adopts the attitude of unquestioning obedience. That day, the Pandavas enjoyed the fruits of such obedience. The Pandavas, preceded by Krishna, approached Bhishma who was standing in front of them and prayed thus, "Grandfather! We lost our father in our childhood and you have nourished us since then with tender care. Though you are our grandfather, we may say that you are more than a father to us. By a terrible turn of events we are unfortunately constrained to fight against you, whom we regard as our father. Without your sanction, we have no right to commence the battle. So please grant us your permission."

Bhishma shed tears of profound joy when he looked at the Pandavas, who had chosen to observe the rules of *dharma* even in a moment of dreadful crisis.

Stroking their heads tenderly, the grandsire said, "May victory be yours!"

The brothers then proceeded to their *guru*, Dronacharya and sought his blessings. Appreciating their righteous conduct, Dronacharya also blessed them with victory. Thus, we see that Krishna had pointed out the ideal path, bringing to the Pandavas victory even before the war had begun.

In fact, Sanjaya who was conveying to Dhritharashtra all the details relating to the war said as much to the blind king. *San* means good, *jaya* means to gain victory. So the name of Sanjaya denotes that he has gained a good and righteous victory. Of pure heart and pious disposition, Sanjaya had contributed to the well-being of the world through holy and disinterested actions. When the blind king Dhritharashtra asked, "O Sanjaya! Can you tell me how my sons are doing on the battlefield and in what state they will return home?", the wise Sanjaya unhesitatingly replied, "Where Krishna the *Yogeswara* works in conjunction with Partha wielding the *Gandiva*, there will lie victory, prosperity, glory and felicity."

Yogeswara is one whose deeds are unselfish, who works for the welfare of the world and who embodies the spirit of sacrifice. The attributes of purity, permanence and bliss are applicable to Divinity. So, God has been described as having eight qualities. He is absolute, immaculate, ancient, eternal, spotless, wise,

unfettered and untainted. The devotee who takes shelter at the feet of such Divinity shall be ever victorious.

The parents are the source of persons born in the world. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Kurukshetra, and Dharmakshetra are described as the parents. It is called Kurukshetra because it belongs to the offspring of Kuru. It is called Dharmakshetra because it belongs to those who follow the path of *Dharma*. This is found in some books written upon the *Gita* and it is also described by people who teach the *Gita*. Kurukshetra and Dharmakshetra are like husband and wife who bestowed upon the world the highest good.

There is also another interpretation. This body is the *kshetra* or field and childhood, during which man is pure and selfless, is Dharmakshetra. As man grows in years, desires, evil qualities and evil thoughts enter the body and the body becomes Kurukshetra. The inner significance lies in the fact that Dharmakshetra and Kurukshetra both exist in our *hridayakshetra* (heart). By cultivating good conduct and good thoughts, we can live in "childhood" throughout our lives and thereby live in Dharmakshetra.

Kshetra means a field; *dharmakshetra* denotes the "field" of righteousness. *Kuru* means to do, and *kurukshetra* denotes the field of activities. What should we do? We should do good deeds, live righteous lives and follow the path of *dharma*. We should make *dharma*

the basis of our lives. We should try to develop *hridaya dharma* which relates to the welfare of all beings. The ignorant Dhritharashtra asked what battle raged between his sons and the Pandavas on the arena of Dharmakshetra or Kurukshetra. *Mamakah* means "my own," that is, attachment arising from *Rajasic* qualities which Dhritharashtra had. "Dhritharashtra" is one who claims as his own that which does not belong to him. Dhritharashtra claims as his own the body which really does not belong to him. The body, the mind and the intellect are different from our real self. We are all Dhritharashtras when we regard this body as the reality. We all say, "this is my body", "my mind", "my senses", and so on, but "who am I?" is a pertinent question. If we enquire, we get the answer that we are not the body or the mind or the senses or the inward tendencies or the ego.

We are Parthas, the sons of *Prithvi*, when we have untainted minds, when we show boundless love and when we fully surrender to the Lord. We should cultivate *abhimana* (attachment) towards the *Atma* and not our bodies. Partha is one who has *abhimana* toward his *Atma*; Dhritharashtra is one who has *abhimana* toward his body. The manifestation of the *Vishwavirata Swarupa* does not show that God dwells in every object, but rather demonstrates that all things exist in Him. Therefore, we should direct our vision inwards and see the spark of the Divine that we are and not be engrossed in external pursuits.

In the *Vedas*, Divinity is compared to a flash of lightning amidst the blue clouds. Divinity exists like a flash of lightning in our own spinal column between the ninth and the twelfth vertebrae. It is present as a “line” in the *sushumna nadi*. *Gita* is the form of God and is comparable to the flash of lightning. (In Telugu, *Gita* also means a line). It is of no use if we simply read the 700 verses without comprehending the inner significance. Only when we contemplate, comprehend and meditate upon the splendour of Divinity, can we understand the real meaning of the *Gita*.

On the eve of the battle, Krishna taught Arjuna several lessons which were framed in words. Vyasa elaborated the words of God, expanding them into 700 verses. From tomorrow, we shall consider and try to understand the actual words spoken to Arjuna by Krishna in order to transform him. Those words which flowed from the lips of Krishna are of paramount importance for us. The scholars who write commentaries have tried to bring down the Divine to their own level. It is not proper to bring down God to our level. Instead, we should try and elevate ourselves to the level of God. Rather than saying that God is this table, stick, stone or dust, it is ennobling to regard the table, the stone and the dust as God Himself. You may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. I hope that during the course of this month, the students will listen to the very words spoken by Lord Krishna and strive to rise to a higher level by understanding His inspiring words.