

## A Psychoanalytic Study of Arjuna Vishada Yoga

Aparna Vyas\*

Dr. Kiran Dammani\*\*

**Abstract** - The present research article highlights the dysfunctional psychological state of Arjuna when he finds himself in the battlefield of Kurukshetra in front of his brothers, nephews, grandfather, guru, relatives, friends and many others close to his heart. The outer battle of Kurukshetra awakens the inner battle of Arjuna and he finds himself stuck between his duty and attachment. This moral dilemma dominated his conscience and clouded his vision followed by grief and sorrow. On the other hand, Duryodhana constantly put emotional pressure on his guru Dronacharya to make him win the battle. Dhrithrashtra is not only physically blind but he becomes emotionally and morally blind too in the selfish love and affection of his son Duryodhana. Lord Krishna, the charioteer, friend and counselor of Arjuna is a patient listener and an observer of Arjuna's distorted mental and emotional state. The modern parallel characters are present everywhere in some role. The question is as it is-What Arjun should do? The Arjuna may be a parent, teacher, friend, relative, student etc. The situations may be different but the moral dilemma and pain in taking difficult decisions against people to whom an individual's feel attach is same. The leader should not be hard or soft but he should be able to see his own thoughts and decisions without any bias and attachment.

**Keyword** - Emotions, duty, attachment, moral dilemma, decision, consciousness, ethical, anxiety, purpose

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**Introduction** - The great philosophical and spiritual text Shrimad Bhagwad Gita forms a part of Bhisma Parv of Mahabharata comprised of eighteen chapters with seven hundred verses. It starts with a mental battle of Arjuna raised due to moral confusion, attachment, feeling of guilt and helplessness due to decision paralysis and unwillingness to fight against his own brothers, guru, grandfather, relatives, family and friends. Lord Krishna who played the role of his charioteer becomes his mentor, redirect and rationalize Arjuna's clouded thinking in the form of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita to unfold the path of duty, right action, imperishable truth, self-awareness, critical analysis, decision making, supreme knowledge, and devotion through Jnana Yoga, Karm Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is a philosophical and spiritual inquiry that serves as a universal guide for ethical and moral conduct of an individual. The researcher studied many text to explore and analyse the personalities of Dhritrashtra, Duryodhana, Arjuna and Lord Krishna. A number of researches are found from philosophical and spiritual point of view. The researcher tried to investigate the connection between the personalities of the characters to the present contemporary people playing different roles in similar circumstances. Compassion and kindness shouldn't overlap the duty towards society and nation. Sometimes a CEO has to make decision for the welfare of company carrying the cost of emotions of his most senior employee. The teacher has to make judgement against his favourite student and the head of the family has to stand against his family to uphold the values and to fulfil his duties. The most important word in the Arjuna Vishada Yoga that hits Arjuna's emotions was "Swajan" means my people. If an archer like Arjuna who was very skilled, emotionally intelligent, capable, courageous and honest becomes confused and feeble then it's very obvious for the ordinary people to get indulge in the materialistic relations to protect their personal self and make wrong choices. Shrimad Bhagwad Gita directs an individual towards constant

reflection, introspection and refinement of own thoughts to gain clarity before reaching to the conclusion.

### Psychoanalysis of Dhritrashtra

Shrimad Bhagwad Gita begins with a feeling of yours and mine as stated by Dhritrashtra in the first verse:

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच  
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।  
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय ॥ १ ॥

Dhritrashtra had a feeling of my son and Pandu's son although Pandu's son was also like his own sons. Being the king, he should have a broad perspective, realizing the principle of "Vasudev Kutumbkam" to fulfill the higher purpose of life with a sense of dutifulness above all worldly attachments. Dhritrashtra was not only physically impaired but he becomes blind at moral and emotional level too. This reveals his biasness and unethical attachment for his son Duryodhana. His uncontrolled eagerness to know about the scenario of battlefield indicates his anxiety and fear aroused due to the unconscious guilt of doing wrong to Pandavas. Being king he could intervene but he presented himself very helpless to give power to Duryodhana's determination.

**Dhritrashtra in present contemporary scenario:** Due to attachment, narrow thinking and selfishness, people becomes morally blind and forget the higher purpose of life. Battling for unethical victory only brings fear, hopelessness, resentment and frustration. Today, people ignore victims finding in difficult situations to protect their personal relations and biasness. There is an overdependence on external opinions instead of developing an independent judgement that leads to poor decision-making and negative leadership. Like Dhritrashtra, internally modern individual understands what is ethically right? But

due to narrow self, personal attachment, feeling of yours and mine, fear and lack of courage to stand with truth results in Mahabharata.

### **Mental State of Duryodhana**

In verse 3 of chapter 1, Duryodhana becomes anxious by seeing the formation of Pandavas' army and in a sarcastic manner, he said to Dronacharya -This huge army is headed by your own disciple, Dhristadumnya the son of king Drupad. Indirectly, he was overpowering and disrespecting his guru by forecasting unconscious defeat.

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणामाचार्य महतीं चमूम् ।

व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता ॥ ३ ॥

Duryodhana told Guru Dronacharya that you only had trained him and see his well-equipped and powerful army. Somewhere, he had an inferiority complex and insecurity that's why he did SWOT (Strength, weakness, opportunity and threats) analysis of both the armies and counted his warriors ready to sacrifice their lives in the battle. He constantly put emotional pressure on his guru Dron and Bhishma to support him well. It indicates that internally he was scared of losing the battle. Duryodhana was much dependent on grandsire Bheeshma as he knew that his grandsire has a blessing of choosing his death at his own will. He wanted to take advantage of this boon and placed all generals of army around Bheeshma.

**Duryodhana in modern context:** In the modern era, people have complex personality with excessive ambition, envy and lust for power. In Kaluga, his many characteristics resonate with those people who are narcissist, insecure, impulsive and aggressive. People like Duryodhana lacks self-reflection, jealous, manipulable and creates trouble in others life. The characters like Duryodhana believes that privilege and power are their birth rights. A guru should favor him only as he is his disciple. Sometimes, due to envy and inferiority complex individual force elders

to favor their wrong acts. Unhealthy and negative feedback due to personal interest may spoil the relations of people. Sometimes the scenario looks like a person like Duryodhana misuse power but deep-down being elders Bheeshma and Dronacharya don't use their actual authority and that results the war between kaurav and pandav.

### Arjuna's Moral Dilemma

Arjuna, the courageous warrior had an acute anxiety and emotional turmoil by finding himself against his own teachers, brothers, relatives, and friends. In shloka 1.28-29, Arjuna's psychological state is very clearly mentioned.

अर्जुन उवाच |  
दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् |1.28  
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति |  
वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते |1.29

He becomes physiologically weak exhibiting trembling and dryness of mouth. He was stuck under multiple identities like dutiful warrior, obedient disciple and a compassionate human being. He rationalizes his thinking by presenting arguments of social disorder, safety concerns of women, moral corruption and lack of guidance due to loss of lives of their elders. He had an emotional overload suffering as moral injury. Awareness of despaired emotional state is the milestone in cultivating mental resilience. He was confused and anguished but later on, his despondency became the foundation of deep consciousness towards his duties and self-transformation. Being a warrior, his first duty was towards nation and society to uphold justice and truth. But he tried to avoid battle as he became attached with his emotions. He presents many arguments to escape from his actual mental state by wearing the cloth of fake wisdom. The actual wisdom lies in making ethical decision for righteousness and societal harmony.

**Arjuna in modern context:** Individuals face similar crisis while making ethical decisions carrying the cost of the emotions and attachment related with their relatives, friends, teachers, students and family. In the contemporary perspective, modern individual perpetually seek purpose of their life struggling hard between moral dilemma of to be and not to be. People understand the significance of seeking guidance, professional support and mentorship from elders and teachers to take correct decision at each step of life. Self-awareness and expression of emotions, fear, guilt and grief are much needed for the well-being. Like Arjuna, critical thinking and analysis of situation is must before reaching to any conclusion. Each one has to travel a journey from confusion to wisdom carrying values and understanding broader perspective of life. Uncomfortable truths must be accepted with open heart even though it demands the sacrifice of prestige, position and societal image as well. Escape from the conflicting situation may bring temporary relief but actual renunciation happens when someone gets clarity and understand his existence as a human being. One must understand the difference between peace and avoidance. Sometimes a leader avoids difficult decisions not to gain peace but to escape from taking correct decision that cost his own relations. That leader may be a managing director, general manager, parent, teacher, head of any institute or whoever has the responsibility and power to make correct decision as per circumstances.

### **Lord Krishna's Patient Mental State**

Lord Krishna emerges as a stable mentor, attentive listener and an impactful counselor with patience, acceptance and creates psychological room to bring Arjuna's hidden emotional conflicts to the conscious level. Bhagwan becomes empathetic and allows Arjuna to express his emotional turmoil and didn't interrupt at all. He listens without being judgmental and with emotional stability. He remains silent, calm and composed and doesn't deliver any philosophical

teachings instead he reveals significant emotional regulation and self-control. Lord Krishna plays the role of a catalyst between Arjuna's despaired mental state and self-realization. He helps Arjuna in self-discovery by listening mindfully and become a silent observer. In the role of a charioteer, he symbolizes service and guidance rather than ownership as an elder. He chooses to be empathetic and facilitator in his leadership role.

**Lord Krishna's characteristics in modern scenario:** Teachers should be a patient listener, compassionate, unbiased and a safeguard to mental health of students. Whenever a student undergoes difficult circumstances, teachers should be able to identify their Arjuna and at the same Duryodhana too and treat accordingly. In the role of a counselor, teacher or guidance provider, one should not impose decision but tries to understand the psychological needs of an individual. Like Krishna one must welcome inquiries, confusion and expression of emotions for reflective thinking. Guidance has to be tailored as per needs, mental state and personality of the person. Patient listening without being judgmental is the duty of a teacher to encourage emotional regulation of a student. Seeking wisdom constantly ideates the example of lifelong learning. It satiates the intellectual curiosity and serves purpose of life beyond lower expectations.

### **Conclusion**

The Arjuna's despair presents the most profound state of human beings with an intense emotional drain, cognitive dissonance and decision paralysis. The moral dilemma and guilt happen to those who are not wrong but it is felt by the sensitive people and despondency is the foundation of deep awareness towards duty and the welfare of mankind and nation which fulfills the meaningful and higher purpose of life. Deep down the chapter one also reflects that identifying emotional distress, expressing conflicts and role confusion are

necessary steps towards mental resilience and performing our duties. Instead of hiding inner conflict, one should have a courage to state it clearly in front of the person from whom guidance is needed whether he/she is parent or teacher or anyone who is trustworthy. Arjuna surrendered completely before Krishna to seek guidance; it shows that he has a complete trust and respect for Krishna. The ideal student must have the characteristics like trust, respectfulness, devotion, discipline, dedication and kindness like Arjuna. One shouldn't have any doubt for the teacher and teacher should also like lord Krishna only having empathy, patience, honesty, compassion and leadership. Empathetic Equanimity and decision making under pressure are the key learnings of Arjuna Vishada Yoga. Lord Krishna views Arjuna's mental state with empathy and Arjuna stated clearly about his physiological state and mental distress. He decided to inquire about his own thoughts and put off his bow gandiv and seated at the back in chariot. One should seek clarity under stress and confusion and not to take any decision at the moment is the best decision. Micro awareness of emotions and thoughts are the key factors in moving towards responsible decisions and making professional choices. The mental battle was going on in all the characters means a war begins in mind first and then it comes to the battlefield. If a clarity is visioned over confusion, duty authorize attachment (Moha), ethics keep aside irrational emotions then each one can become Arjuna in his/her role.

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*\*Research Scholar, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya Indore*

*\*\*Principal-SGS B.Ed. College Indore*