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Krishna's Rhetorical Argumentation in *The Bhagavadgita*

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**Letter of Recommendation**

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This research work entitled “Krishna’s Rhetorical Argumentation in *The Bhagavadgita*” submitted to the Central Department of English in Tribhuvan University by Gatha Rijal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Krishna’s Rhetorical Argumentation in *The Bhagavadgita*” submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work, and I have made due acknowledgement to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The results presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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Gatha Rijal

Date:

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## **Abstract**

*In the battlefield of Kurukshetra, seeing his relatives lined up in battle against each other, Arjuna decides to withdraw from the battle. He does not want the glory smeared with the blood of his loved ones. So, he asks Krishna for guidance regarding his duty and wonders what could possibly give him happiness even if he wins the battle by killing his own people. Through The Bhagavadgita, Krishna convinces Arjuna to rejoin the battle by answering his queries and dispelling his dilemma. This research studies this persuasion through the lens of rhetorical analysis and argues that it is Krishna's logical appeals backed by his ethos that changes Arjuna's pathos from hesitancy to willingness and convince him to take part in the war. It is because Arjuna has seen Krishna live the life of action without attachment that he preaches to Arjuna that his arguments find their mark in Arjuna's mind and convince him to take part in the war. The findings suggest that all the elements of Krishna's arguments: the context, audience, appeals, the structure, style and media work together to persuade Arjuna to rejoin the battle but primarily, it is the relationship that Krishna shares with Arjuna that makes him ready and open to receive Krishna's message. Thus this research concludes that Krishna succeeds in persuading Arjuna to live the life of action without attachment because Arjuna has seen Krishna do that and knows that it is possible.*

**Keywords:** Self-realization, duty, action, attachment, renunciation

## Table of Contents

Chapter I: Arjuna's Dilemma	1
Chapter II: Rhetorical Analysis of <i>The Bhagavadgita</i>	16
What does Krishna say to Arjuna	17
Why does Krishna choose Arjuna?	20
How is Arjuna?	21
Audience	24
Pathos: Emotional Appeals	26
Logos: Logical Appeal	30
Ethos: How Does Krishna Establish His Divinity for Arjuna's Sake?	35
Context	38
Purpose	42
Whose Interests does it Serve/ Who Gains or Loses by it?	45
Structure of the Argument	47
Media Used	50
How Language and Style Work to Persuade	51
Effectiveness: How Well do all the Components Work Together to Persuade	55
Chapter III: Reflection on Arjuna's Realization	61
Works Cited	

## Chapter I: Arjuna's Dilemma

Arjuna lets his weapons fall from his hands on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra just before the war begins between the Pandava and the Kaurava army. He sees no point in killing his own teachers and relatives. He relates his condition to Krishna, his cousin who is functioning as his charioteer during the battle. Among his complaints, there are two questions of note. One, "How can we be happy, O Madhava, if we kill our own people?" (Radhakrishnan 103). Another, "What will drive away this sorrow which dries up my senses even if I should attain rich and unrivalled kingdom on earth or even the sovereignty of the gods?" (114). During his monologue he confesses, "My very being is stricken . . . with my mind bewildered about my duty, I ask thee. . . I am Thy pupil, teach me . . ." (113). What we can derive from these questions and Arjuna's request to Krishna is that Arjuna is not yet a seeker in the path of enlightenment, nor is he asking Krishna how he can have Self-realization, he is just a man who is unhappy at this moment in his life with his duty and wants to know, like any ordinary person, what he should do and how he can get rid of this sorrow that has overwhelmed him at the most crucial moment of his life.

Previous researchers and commentators have labeled Arjuna's hesitation at Kurukṣetra as "compassion" (Radhakrishnan), "weakness of his mind" , "a serious nervous condition" (Ranganathananda), "delusion", "grief", "sorrow," and "fear" (Prabhupada). He has been called "depressed", someone "overwhelmed with pity" (Vivekananda) and even "despondent" (Sridhar Swami). This research argues that Arjuna refuses to fight not because he is scared or despondent or distressed but because he is unhappy with his duty. His hesitation is not a result of weakness or pity but one of discontentment with his lot as a warrior, having to kill his own relatives.

Arjuna is not unwilling to kill Duryodhana and his brothers. He is only unwilling to “strike” Bhishma and Drona who are “worthy of worship” to him (111). He is not a man afraid of killing people. He is only reluctant to “slay” his “honored teachers” (112). He wants to remain “unresisting and unarmed” because he is worried that once he takes up his arm, he will kill them all – “fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons and grandsons, companions” and “also fathers-in-law and friends” whom he sees lined up in battle when Krishna draws his chariot at the middle of the battlefield (99). This study argues that this is not the hesitancy of a weak warrior but of the one who knows his skill and worth in this war because this is the same Arjuna who has already been involved in battle with Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, Karna and Duryodhana when their army came to steal away the cows from King Virata when the Pandavas were in hiding there. Arjuna had valiantly defeated them. He was not hesitant then to test his skills against these same “honored teachers” who were “worthy of worship” to him. Even in the messages sent through the messengers before the war started, while Yudhisthira’s messages had been for peace and reconciliation, Arjuna and Bhima always advocated for war and defeating the Kauravas. What changed in Arjuna just before the war and made him give up his arms is the training he received from different Gods during his stay in the heaven (Ganguly). This Arjuna post his stay in heaven has received the *dibyastras* from the gods and knows that he can kill the entire war force arrayed there in an instant. He received *pashupatastra* from Lord Shiva, thunderbolt from Indra, *yama danda* from Lord Yama, *varuna pasam* from Lord Varuna and *kuberastra* from Lord Kubera (Ganguly). Hence, Arjuna’s reluctance is born not out of weakness but out of the knowledge of his own strength. As he tells Krishna, he does not want to enjoy in “the world delights” which will be “smeared with blood” of his relatives (112).

The commentators on *The Bhagavadgita* so far have taken every word from Krishna as something coming out of the mouth of a divine being. However, to Arjuna, at the beginning of *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna is not a god but a friend, his cousin. His questions before Krishna shows his divine form are not addressed to a god but to his comrade. He is not seeking answers from God but complaining to his friend about his state, about his inability or hesitancy to kill his own people. In this vein, this research explores how Krishna removes Arjuna's discontentment, what answers he gives to Arjuna and the effectiveness of these answers to persuade a reluctant Arjuna to return to battle by conducting a rhetorical analysis of Krishna's conversation with Arjuna.

### **Critical Summary of the Text**

*The Bhagavadgita*, also known as the "Song of the Lord" mainly consists of the dialogues between Krishna and Arjuna when Arjuna refuses to partake in the war between the Kaurava and the Pandava army and calls it a "sin" to kill his own people at the battlefield of Kuruksetra. After losing everything they owned at a game of dice to their cousin Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas and completing their twelve years of retirement to the forest and a year of living in "incognito" as per the condition set on the game, the Pandavas wanted to claim back their rightful kingdom. But Duryodhana would not even give them "needlepoint of land" without a war (Devdutt Pattanaik 50). So both the armies line up in battle at Kuruksetra, Arjuna leading the Pandava army and Lord Krishna guiding both Arjuna and his battle horses.

Compiled under the Bhisma Parva of the epic *Mahabharata*, but usually read as an independent text, the teachings of *The Bhagavadgita* have been believed to "contain the essence of Vedic wisdom, the keystone of Hinduism" (Pattanaik 2). So to

look at *The Bhagavadgita* as a mere collection of persuasive arguments made by Krishna to Arjuna or a manual for happiness would be a very narrow study of the text and thus a misinterpreted folly - because Krishna is not just speaking to Arjuna through this text, nor is this text limited to persuading Arjuna to return to the war again. The message goes way beyond the context of the battlefield.

In most of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, he has given these speeches, these books of knowledge: Lord Kapila and his philosophy of Sankhya to his mother, Lord Ram and his Ram Gita to his brother Laxmana. The tradition continues in Dwapara Yuga as well with Krishna and his Bhagavad Gita and Anu Gita to Arjuna and Hamsa Gita to Uddhava. Arjuna, like Lord Vishnu's other audiences is just a medium for God's message of Self-realization to flow even though that is not what Arjuna directly enquires about.

This version of Gita imparts the knowledge of Karma, Bhakti and Gyana yoga – the three major paths to self-realization. It clarifies what true renunciation is in terms of action without attachment. While covering broad concepts like God and the World, the course of cosmic evolution, the nature of Godlike and the demoniac mind, it also tells us the kind of food we should eat, the kind of behavior we should adopt, the kind of life we should live, the kind of lifestyle we should follow in order to realize our Supreme Self - which is the only purpose of our human birth. And this is the guidance that Arjuna receives – to fulfill his purpose on the earth – as a warrior of the single most skill in any battlefield.

Regarding the importance of *The Bhagavadgita*, Bhuchandra Baidya notes:

One may wonder, “What is the mystery of the Gita that has such a miraculous power?” The answer may be found in the colophon given at the end of each of the discourses of the original, Sanskrit Gita. First of all, the literal meaning of

the Bhagavd Gita is the “Song of God, “and hence, it is the Song Supreme. The Gita contains the essence of all the Upanishads, and hence, it is the gem of the Upanishads. The Gita speaks of God and shows the way of attaining Him, and hence, it is the Knowledge of God. The Gita shows the system that links the Self with the Supreme Self, and hence, it is called the Science of Yoga. (20)

Baidya, synthesizes the importance of Gita as a whole, but what is its importance to Arjuna? During the course of the conversation, Arjuna goes through a profound transformation. His vision is changed and he returns to battle having conquered the doubts that made him let go of his weapon.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Arjuna is the greatest warrior of his time. When Jayadratha, the King of Sindhu, after intense penance asks Lord Shiva for a boon to defeat the Pandavas, Lord Shiva tells him that it would work for the other four Pandava brothers except Arjuna because Arjuna is invincible (Ganguli). Arjuna spent seven years in the heaven learning different weapons of the gods and received many *divyastras* upon his successful completion of the trainings and tasks. So much is dependent upon his fighting. When asked by Yudhistira, his elder brother, how long it would take him to kill the enemy force and win the war, he declares that he can finish the war within the “twinkling of an eye” with the Pashupastra he received from Lord Shiva (Ganguli). But then, Arjuna feels this reluctance to join the war. Let us consider what is really at stake if Arjuna does not take up his arms. Arjuna is the center pillar of the war. Without him there is no chance for the Pandavas to win and they must win because they are fighting not for a petty family feud but for justice. It is a *dharma yuddha*. His

whole life, Arjuna has been preparing for this war. Even the gods have been preparing him for this and if he gives up, he fails his life's purpose.

Therefore, this research studies this persuasion by Lord Krishna which is of such importance. How does a god convince a mortal being to discharge his duty to the world and most importantly, to himself when he is dejected and dispirited with what he has to do?

### **Research Questions**

Primarily, this research seeks the answers to the following questions:

- a) How does Krishna shape his arguments to persuade a reluctant Arjuna to take up his arms again at Kurukshetra?
- b) What rhetorical strategies can we detect in Krishna's arguments and how effective are they in convincing Arjuna to return back to the battle?

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research work is to study what Lord Krishna says to Arjuna and how he says them. It aims to explore the secrets of Lord Krishna's rhetorical strategy.

Secondary Objectives:

- a) To critically examine the ways in which Krishna frames his arguments and persuades Arjuna to join the battle again.
- b) To analyze the purpose of Krishna's arguments and their effectiveness.
- c) To evaluate the rhetorical elements in Krishna's arguments: the logical, ethical, emotional appeals, evidences, purpose, audience, context, shape, structure, and the style of the arguments.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

- a) There are numerous translations of *The Bhagavadgita* in the English language. Although this research consults various versions of *The Bhagavadgita*, the citations have been primarily made from S. Radhakrishnan's translation. Similarly, for the *Mahabharata*, this research consults the translations by Kisari Mohan Ganguli.
- b) Although *The Bhagavadgita* covers a broad range of topics, this research is limited to studying the persuasive dimension of Krishna's answers to Arjuna. It does not engage in other debates surrounding *The Bhagavadgita*: whether it was a part of the *Mahabharata* or not, who authored it, the historicity of the text and its characters, if Krishna was a god or not and the like.

### **Significance of the Study**

Unlike the spiritual scholarship that regards *The Bhagavadgita* as a handbook for enlightenment, this research approaches *The Bhagavadgita* from the side of a layman, like Arjuna, who just wants to know why he is not happy when he is at the brink of the biggest battle of his life. This study does not argue that *The Bhagavadgita* does not show us the path to Self-realization. It undoubtedly does. What this study believes is that the questions Arjuna poses at Krishna regarding what could take away the grief that clouds his mind and how could he be happy when his duty creates conflict in his heart is one that any person wants answered in day to day life. This research explores how Krishna answers these questions and the strategies he employs to convince Arjuna to return to the battlefield. The aim is not to see if Krishna employs the strategies laid out by western rhetorical analysis in his arguments. That would be another folly to try to limit his statements to a prescribed notion of study. What this research really does is to identify the rhetorical elements that can be found

in Krishna's arguments and understand his rhetorical secrets. Given the popularity and importance of *The Bhagavadgita*, if this research fulfills its aim, would not that be wonderful? – To be able to unravel the secrets of a god's way of arguing and employing them to be better speakers and human beings?

### **Methodology**

Andrea Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz define rhetorical analysis as “a close reading of a text to find how and whether it works to persuade” (104). It involves examining “how well the components of an argument work together to persuade or move an audience” (104). Since this research aimed to critically examine how Krishna's arguments persuade Arjuna to return to battle, rhetorical analysis seemed like the best tool of study. For this, I consulted two books: *Rhetorical Analysis: A Brief Guide for Writers* by Mark Garrett Longaker and Jeffrey Walker and *Everything is an Argument* by Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz.

Longaker and Walker define rhetoric as “the study and the practice of persuasion” (2). Rhetorical analysis for them “is the study of persuasion in order to understand how people have been and can be persuasive” (3). They concede that “it would be an overstatement to say that everything is rhetorical, but it seems reasonable to posit that every part of human interaction has a rhetorical dimension” (3). This research moves forward with these assumptions in the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. Since Krishna is presenting his arguments to convince a reluctant Arjuna to return to war, it is safe to presume that a certain amount of persuasion is involved, at least on Krishna's part.

While conducting a rhetorical analysis, Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz suggest critically assessing the “strategies the piece employs to move your heart, win your trust and change your mind - and why it does or does not do so” (104). That is exactly

what this research does: it explores how Krishna's arguments move Arjuna's heart, win his trust and change his mind to take up his arms again.

During my study, I critically examine the claims Krishna makes, the evidences he uses to support them, any counter arguments that he anticipates, the structure and style of the arguments, the purpose, audience and the *kairos* of *The Bhagavadgita* within the epic *Mahabharata*, as well as its ethical, logical and emotional appeals.

For this, I consulted a number of sources including books, journals, articles, critical analysis regarding *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna, Arjuna and the *Mahabharata*. So this research is a textual analysis.

### **Literature Review**

The first English translation of *The Bhagavadgita* was published in 1785 A.D. by Charles Wilkins. In which he asks excuse of the readers for his insufficiency to "remove the veil of mystery" from the text by saying that "the text is but imperfectly understood by the most learned Brahmans of the present times; and that, small as the work may appear, it has had more comments than the Revelations" (25). That was the case in 1785 AD, two hundred and thirty seven years later, the number of commentaries has obviously increased. Since I am studying how Lord Krishna says what he says, among this sea of available literature, this literature review has limited itself with a few selected commentaries on the message of *The Bhagavadgita*.

In his preface for the translation, Wilkins states "it seems as if the principal design of these dialogues was to unite all the prevailing modes of worship of those days; and, by setting up the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, in opposition to idolatrous sacrifices, and the worship of images, to undermine the tenets inculcated by the Vedas" (24). Wilkins goes beyond the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna

and sees Gita as presenting a unified front for all the various forms of worship present among the Hindus of the then India.

S. Radhakrishnan might have an answer to Wilkins' assumptions. He agrees that *The Bhagavadgita* "represents not any sect of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality . . ." (12). He believes, Lord Krishna distils and accommodates diverging factions, such as: "the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upanishad teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhagavata theism and tender piety, the Samkhya dualism and the Yoga meditation" and "draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unity" (13). Radhakrishnan gladly mentions how Lord Krishna weaves together all these different paths to self-realization to convey that they all lead to the same destination.

However, Bal Gangadhar Tilak is dissatisfied with the argument that "the same Gita supports all the various cults" (18). For him, the Gita is "essentially a treatise on Right or Proper Action" which he claims is the Karma-Yoga. He argues, "The original Gita did not preach the Philosophy of Renunciation but of Energism (Karma-Yoga); and that possibly, the single word 'yoga' used in the Gita had been used to mean Karma-Yoga (xliv). He accuses Sankaracharya for the misinterpretation of *The Bhagavadgita* by making it carry the message of renunciation. He believes that the commentators before Sankaracharya had the message of "Action" combined with "Spiritual Realisation" but the *Samkarabhasya* changed that line of thought giving precedence to Jyana Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo agrees that "undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of works", but of "works motivated by devotion" and which "culminate in spiritual realization" (27). He further elaborates "that which the Gita teaches is not a human but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of

duty or conduct for a self-less performance of the divine will working through our nature". *The Bhagavadgita*, for Sri Aurobindo, is not a book of "practical ethics" but "of the spiritual life" (28). There is no doubt that *The Bhagavadgita* addresses our spiritual needs rather than the moral ones.

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi regards the battle of Mahabharata, not as a physical one but a psychological one. He describes it as a "duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind" (13). He believes *The Bhagavadgita* lays out the best way to reach self-realization, which is the renunciation of fruits of action: "Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit. Be detached and work. Have no desire for reward and work" (15). Like Tilak, Gandhi also lays an emphasis on the Karma Yoga and being action oriented.

Swami Vivekananda does not find any need to declare any one message as the one propounded by *The Bhagavadgita*. He is of the opinion that all these arguments are "the outcome of the necessity of the human soul" and "they are all here to satisfy the hankering and thirst of different classes of human minds" (1065). Swami Vivekananda views the author of *The Bhagavadgita* as a harmonizer who selected the best messages from all the factions of the time and weaved them into one body of knowledge.

Dilip Bose puts forth a leftist analysis of *The Bhagavadgita* and commends its role in acting as "a call to action" to wake up a sleeping nation to fight against the British rule. However, he counteracts by adding that *The Bhagavadgita* acted as a "double-edged sword" because of its "social conservative aspect" in ignoring the issues of class and caste in the then politics of the nation. He presents the example of Khudiram who "mounted the gallows with a copy of Gita in his hand" and argues, "The early nationalist leaders in utilizing Gita to rouse national consciousness against

alien rule overlooked the strong Hindu revivalist character with which they were imprinting our national movement” (37). He further accuses that post the movement of Independence, *The Bhagavadgita* was used to help “dampen the class ardour and intensity of the class struggle” (45). He concedes that Swami Vivekananda never accepted the caste division but both Gandhi and Tilak did not oppose the status quo.

D.D. Kosambi and B. R. Ambedkar are two other ardent critics of *The Bhagavadgita* and its validation of the caste system. Kosambi places the study of *The Bhagavadgita* by “outstanding thinkers” like Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and B. G. Tilak at one hand and the teachings of “poet-teachers from the common people” like Kabir, Tukarama, Jayadeva and Caitanya on the other hand and argues that saints like Kabir, Tukarama, Jayadeva and Caitanya “did very well without the *Gita*”. They did not require the foundation of *The Bhagavadgita* to express their devotion to Krishna and Vishnu. However, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tilak needed *The Bhagavadgita* because “they all belonged to the leisured class of what, for lack of a better term, may be called Hindus” (201). Kosambi advances, “Practically anything can be read into the *Gita* by a determined person, without denying the validity of a class system” (202). Gandhi, Tilak and Aurobindo did just this, according to Kosambi. They adopted and presented *The Bhagavadgita* as a foundational religious text to validate the caste system.

Similarly, B. R. Ambedkar proclaims that it is pointless to search for *The Bhagavadgita*’s message as it is not a “gospel”. He expands, it “is neither a book of religion nor a treatise on philosophy”, rather it “defend[s] certain dogmas of religion on philosophic grounds” (361). In other words, “It uses philosophy to defend religion”. Ambedkar regards Buddhism as revolution and thus associates *The Bhagavadgita* with counter-revolution as he argues that *The Bhagavadgita* was

written to counter the three main revolutionary teachings of Buddhism. One, *The Bhagavadgita*, justifies “war and killing in war” against the Buddhist principle of non-violence. Second, it upholds the “Chaturvarna”, or the caste-system against Buddha’s preaching against Chaturvarna (363). Third, it advocates for karma yoga, which Ambedkar argues is in fact just “*Karma kanda*”, “the performance of the observances, such as Yajnas as a way to salvation” and Buddha had “condemned the Karma kanda and the Yajnas . . . on the ground of *Himsa* or violence” and “also on the ground that the motive behind them was a selfish desire to obtain bonus”. Ambedkar challenges that *The Bhagavadgita* does not pre-date Buddhism and was written much later to validate these defenses.

*The Bhagavadgita* is a text. It is the interpretation of the text that attempts at unearthing its messages. As such, I believe that both Kosambi and Ambedkar are reacting to the interpretation that Hindu scholars have thus rendered to *The Bhagavadgita*, using it as a tool to defend the class system which has crippled a large population of the society treating them as sub-humans. Kosambi and Ambedkar’s outrage comes out of this hurt and humiliation against these interpretations and the book’s use as a tool to validate oppression.

In similar vein to Ambedkar, Devdutta Pattanaik also insists that *The Bhagavadgita* does not hand out “judgment” or “commandments”. What Krishna does is “he simply explains the architecture of the world” (31). Pattanaik states that *The Bhagavadgita* “has much to do with relationships” (9). To him, gyana, karma and bhakti yoga are “three paths to establish relationships” and these three are interlinked with each other: “There can be no bhakta who does not do or understand. There can be no gyani who does not do or feel. There can be no karmi who does not feel or understand”. For Pattanaik, “A yogi” is one who “simultaneously does, feels and

understands” (194). Separating himself from earlier commentators, who focused on self-realization in their interpretation of the Gita, Pattanaik asks us to consider the subjective dimension of any text and thus emphasize understanding over judgment.

From my study of the available literature, I have come to the understanding that the depth of *The Bhagavadgita* is so profound that no matter whom or how many times one dips their bucket, they will unfailing come up with something new. The message of *The Bhagavadgita* is so broad and giving in its nature that it will provide people with whatever they want to extract. As a result, the spiritual scholars and commentators prove it as a manual for Self-realization, each attempting to validate their own chosen path of *jyana*, *karma* and *bhakti*. The nationalist can use it as a clarion call to action. The entrepreneurs can find treasure full of management lessons and everybody can come across a verse or more to soothe them during times of ethical, moral or other difficulties. In this vein, this research approaches *The Bhagavadgita* with the tools of rhetorical analysis to study Krishna’s argumentative style.

### **Operational Definition of the Key Terms**

**Bhakti Marga:** It advocates that devotion is the path to Self-realization.

**Brahman:** Brahman is the ultimate reality upon which this world exists. It is the source and aim of all life forms.

**Dharma:** Dharma is the divine law that governs all life. It is what makes anything the way it is. For example, fire is fire because it burns. Its dharma is burning.

**Gunas:** Gunas refer to the qualities of an element. There are three gunas, according to the Hindu belief system: *sattva* (purity), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (dullness).

**Jiva:** Jiva is the individual soul, a living entity which is a part of the Supreme soul.

**Jyani:** A jyani is a person who has realized his self as the supreme Brahman.

**Jyana Marga:** It advocates that knowledge is the path to Self-realization.

**Karma Marga:** It advocates that action is the path to Self-realization.

**Self:** Self is the essence of being. It is the awareness, consciousness, bliss beyond language, thought and sensory perception.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation has been divided into three sections: Introduction, Textual Analysis and Conclusion. The Introduction chapter introduces the thesis, provides a brief critical summary of *The Bhagavadgita*, specifies the research questions and objectives, and mentions the delimitation, significance and the methodology of the study. It also contains a literature review and operational definitions of the key terms. The Textual Analysis section contains the critical and analytical study of *The Bhagavadgita* through the lens of rhetorical analysis. The last section contains the main findings and concluding remarks followed by suggestions for further lines of research.

## Chapter II: Rhetorical Analysis of *The Bhagavadgita*

The first thing that Krishna tells Arjuna when he lets go of his bow and arrow and announces that he is not going to fight is, “Whence has come to thee this stain (this dejection) of spirit in this hour of crisis? It is unknown to men of noble mind (not cherished by the Aryans); it does not lead to heaven; (on earth) it causes disgrace, O Arjuna” (*The Bhagavadgita* 2.2). And adds in the next verse, “Yield not to this unmanliness, O Partha (Arjuna), for it does not become thee. Cast off this petty faintheartedness and arise, O Oppressor of the foes (Arjuna)” (2.3). Most commentaries on *The Bhagavadgita* begin from here. From how Krishna recognizes Arjuna’s “weakness”, “faint-heartedness” and scolds him to be manly, to man up!

But what we need to consider is that Krishna does not just start scolding Arjuna as soon as Arjuna gives up his arms. Krishna says these things to Arjuna only when Arjuna says, “Far better would it be for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and unarmed” (1.46) This is what Krishna is responding to - this “unmanliness” - this desire to be killed - this self-destruction that Arjuna is willing upon himself. Taking up Krishna’s words, most commentators call Arjuna all kinds of names. But if we look at the end of *The Bhagavadgita*, we can see that Krishna does not ask Arjuna if his unmanliness or faintheartedness has been cured. Rather, he enquires, “. . . has thy distraction (of thought) caused by ignorance been dispelled?” (Radhakrishnan 451). Taking up these points, this research begins with the argument that Arjuna hesitates not because he was scared or weak as the commentators so far have argued but because he knows his own strength.

Arjuna is not the only warrior fighting from the Pandava side. There are hundreds of other honed warriors who could kill Drona and Bhisma during the battle.

So why does Arjuna think that if he lets go of his arms, they will all survive? Because he knows that he is the only fighter capable of defeating them in battle. If Arjuna was scared of anything, it was his duty. He was afraid of being the one to kill his own people – the people he loved – his teachers – his grandfather, his maternal uncle.

Bhisma raised the Pandavas like a father, he was always there to protect and guide them. And Drona was his teacher – the person who made Arjuna the warrior he is. So how is he going to live after killing his father figures? What would it mean to a fatherless child to kill those who have treated him as a son? These are the men through whom he has known what a father's love feels like. So just the thought of being the cause of their deaths makes his "limbs quail" (100). That is why he keeps insisting on family laws during his conversation with Krishna. He is worried how he is going to be happy again with this guilt edged in his heart. Will that be his life? His fate? To live his gift as his curse – hating himself – hating the warrior that he is for the rest of his life? How is he to let go of this despair – this fate he has been condemned with - that of becoming his family's killer?

This is Arjuna's dilemma: he knows what he has to do, what he is going to do but he does not want to. That is why he says: I have no desire to kill them. So he asks Krishna, what can take away this sorrow, what can bring happiness and peace in his life again once he has done what he has been chosen to do and obliterated the enemy force that also includes his loved ones. *The Bhagavadgita* is Krishna's answer to these questions.

### **What does Krishna Say to Arjuna**

Krishna answers Arjuna by saying, you grieve for those you should not. "Wise men" do not grieve for the living or the dead. We have all always been here: "Never was there a time when I was not, nor thou, nor these lords of men, nor will there ever

be a time hereafter when we all shall cease to be” (2.12). The soul does not die, just as a body passes through childhood and old age, so does it pass to another body. The soul is “indestructible”. It neither slays nor is slayed. It is “unborn”, “eternal”, “primeval”, “indestructible”, “imperishable” (121). So fight and do your duty. Give up the sense of “I”, act without attachment to the fruits of action and reach the sorrowless state. But even if you think that the self gets born and dies, repeatedly, then don’t worry, because that way everything that is born will die and everything that dies, will be born again. So heed your duty. You are a Kshetriya, war is your life. So fight. If you don’t fight, that is sinful, if you long to escape your duty, that is sinful. If you will leave all these armies gathered here in your support who depend upon you and run away, that will be sinful. Further, people will disgrace you. They will say that you were afraid and tarnish your name with cowardice. Don’t worry about pain and pleasure. They come and go so treat them alike and fight; this way, you won’t incur any sin. Fight and don’t worry about the result. You may kill and you may not kill, Death is not in your hands. Renounce this feeling of “I am the doer” and surrender everything to me.

If *The Bhagavadgita* is to be summarized in one word, then that word would be renunciation. Krishna asks Arjuna to renounce the fruits of action, to renounce the attachment to the reward and result of any and every action. Arjuna’s decision not to fight, hesitant of killing his loved ones, has also sprung from his attachment to the fruits of action, it is not renunciation as Arjuna thinks. So Krishna is asking Arjuna to renounce these attachments. He tells Arjuna that renunciation is of three types: sattvika, rajasik and tamasik. And among these sattvika renunciation is the best. Sattvika renunciation is when you do work but give up the attachment and fruit of the action. Krishna explains, such a person neither hates “disagreeable work” nor is

attached to “agreeable work”. For Arjuna, killing Drona and Bhishma is disagreeable work but defeating Duryodhana and his brothers and regaining the kingdom is agreeable work. So Krishna is suggesting Arjuna to give up both of these attachments to the result of the battle. Krishna insists that action cannot be “entirely relinquished”. So Arjuna has to fight. He has to kill in battle. But the worry and guilt that he might kill his respected elders as well as the anticipation of victory, these he can renounce.

Arjuna is worrying that he will become a family killer. That he will be carrying out the action of killing. But Krishna assures him everyone is the Self, not the body, the Self neither kills, nor is killed. Rather, there are five other causes of action: the seat of action (the body), the agent (the ego), the instruments (sense organs), the effort and the presiding divinity (18.13). The ego that Arjuna identifies as “I” is also only one of the causes of action. So if Arjuna realizes that he also is the Self (Brahman), who is eternally stable and never carries out any action, only then will he become free from the unhappiness he has inflicted upon himself thinking that he is going to kill his elders. The Absolute reality does not act. Nor does it think that it is going to feel guilty after killing people. It is the thought free state. So Krishna tells Arjuna: Be free from the notion of “I”. If you stop identifying yourself with this “I”, then you are free. The Supreme Self is ever free. Realize yourself as this Supreme Reality that neither kills nor is killed.

Krishna explains that action, its factors and its fruits are made up of the three gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas. So as per the action, the consequences follow. But the Self is beyond the Gunas. So strive towards realizing the Self. If a man is devoted to his own duties, he will easily attain perfection. “One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one’s own nature” but if you run away from your duty, then you will surely incur sin (436). So do your duty. According to the Varna system, the

Kshatriyas have Rajasik and Sattvika qualities. “Heroism”, “boldness”, “firmness”, “dexterity”, “not turning away from the enemy (not fleeing from the battle)”, “generosity” and “lordliness” are his natural duties (433). Laying aside likes and dislikes, being free from the notion of “mine”, ego, power, arrogance, desire and anger, with a tranquil mind, neither grieving nor desiring, by devotion, taking refuge in Lord Krishna, by offering work and its fruits to God, by ever fixing the mind in God, Arjuna can attain his Supreme Self and be liberated from the cycle of birth and death, the “*bhavachakra*”.

However, if Arjuna refuses to fight and leaves the battlefield, even then his nature will compel him to return and fight. Will Arjuna really be able to watch his kith and kin being brutally slaughtered by the enemy? Will he be able to bear the burden of that abandonment? Surely not, so he will return, compelled by his nature of being the protector of his family. So why argue? Why give up? Krishna reassures him that God lives in our heart. All we need to do is take refuge there and surrender all our actions to God. Through his divine form, Krishna shows Arjuna, even if he does not kill them, they have already been killed by Krishna. So he suggests Arjuna to become God’s instrument and ends his teaching by asking Arjuna to reflect on these things, and then make up his mind about what to do next.

Now that we have figured out what Krishna says to Arjuna, let us explore how Krishna says what he says. But before that let us study who Arjuna is. And why Krishna chose him as his disciple at the battlefield.

### **Why does Krishna Choose Arjuna?**

Bhuchandra Baidya wonders why Krishna chose Arjuna and not Yudhistira, “the righteous” or Bhima – “the strong and firm” (32). He believes Arjuna was “bold and brave to perform his duty; he was also sensitive enough to fall in conflict and

despondency. Moreover, he had an inquisitive mind, desirous of seeking the spiritual light that guides him in times of confusion, conflict and crisis . So “Arjuna typified the humankind in general of all ages” (33-34). So he was the perfect man to receive Krishna’s message.

In this vein, Sri Aurobindo claims Arjuna “is the type of the struggling human soul who has not yet received the knowledge, but has grown fit to receive it by action in the world in a close companionship and an increasing nearness to the higher and divine Self in humanity” (17). Osho also argues that Arjuna “does not know the divine but deep down there is an unknown longing within him to reach the divine. This is the reason why he enquires and asks all these questions; this is the reason why he is so inquisitive. Whoever asks questions in life, whoever enquires, whoever feels contended - to those people the divine can manifest” (52-53). Baidya, Aurobindo and Osho, all see Arjuna as a curious, conflicted human in whom the spark of knowing the divine has ignited and that makes him the perfect disciple for Krishna. Now let us see if what they say about Arjuna is correct and if he progresses as they assume him to do.

### **How is Arjuna?**

The day of the battle, Yudhisthira, Arjuna’s eldest brother, worries how they could possibly defeat such a huge army. But Arjuna is confident that victory is theirs and he reassures his elder brother. As he enters the battlefield, when he asks Krishna to take him to the center of the battlefield, we can sense that he is not meekly asking Krishna - it is the command of a warrior to his charioteer. We notice no fear, no hesitancy. Even when he lets go of his bow and arrow, Arjuna does not say that he cannot fight, rather he declares he will not fight. To quote his exact words, once he has seen who is present at the battlefield, he says, “These, I would not consent to

kill...” because he is confident that he will be able to kill them (Radhakrishnan 102). This is what he does not want to be responsible for - the death of his family.

Until the day of the battle, he sees Krishna as his companion – even when Krishna says that he gave the same knowledge to Vivasvat and Vivasvat transferred it to Manu, Manu to Ikshvaku – he does not believe him. He wonders how his cousin could have imparted any knowledge to Vivasvat when he was just a few years older than Arjuna himself. At the beginning of *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna is very much human to him, not a god. He questions Krishna at every stage. He does not take anything from Krishna as granted because he is not listening to a god’s sermon. He is in conversation with his friend, his cousin.

When Krishna says only a jynai can be eternally blissful, he asks – how is this jyani, what he does, how he sits. Then he asks, if knowledge is superior then why do you force me to action? To which, Krishna answers: “act without attachment, do your duty”. Arjuna associates action with either being good or bad so it is difficult for him to comprehend how not having attachment with the fruits of an action exempts one from its consequences. What about bad karma then? So instead he asks, “What impels man to do evil? To which he receives the answer: Desire, anger and passion. When Krishna asks him to renounce these, he asks, “Which is better: renunciation or yoga?” Krishna answers: Both take you to the same goal, just renounce the expectation for any result.

In this vein, Arjuna’s next question is “How to control this mind and attain the nature of equality?” Krishna calmly replies: through “self control” and “indifference to passion”. Now Arjuna is worried, what happens to the one who fails? We can notice that Arjuna is getting deeper into the journey. Krishna reassures him that such a

person will be born again and will continue from where he left off. So there is no need to worry, just practice.

Then Arjuna asks, what is that Brahman that you keep referring to. By this point, we can notice that Arjuna's thirst for the divine has increased. When Krishna replies that Brahman is "the indestructible, the Supreme (higher than all else)" and I am that Brahman, Arjuna wants to see Krishna's divine form (268). Only when Krishna shows his divine form does Arjuna fully accept him as divine and acknowledges Krishna as the "Imperishable, the Supreme to be realized" (327). Then his question shifts to "How may I know you?". As the critics claim, Arjuna is inquisitive and Krishna fires his desire to know the divine, gradually with every step, with every question.

Aurobindo believes that "Arjuna is the man of action and not of knowledge, the fighter, never the seer or the thinker." So his thoughts are not "of a philosophical or even of a deeply reflective mind or a spiritual temperament". Rather, they are of "the practical or the pragmatic man" (19). So he has to see it for himself in order to believe that Krishna is a god. But even after seeing Krishna's divine form, his questions continue, though they have also evolved by now. After seeing Krishna's divine form, he asks, who has the "greater knowledge of yoga" – Those who worship you or your "Imperishable and the Unmanifested form" because now he has seen them both (344). To this Krishna replies, "Both come to me" – although it is much easier for those who worship me in this form.

When Krishna speaks of the *gunas*, Arjuna asks: How is the person who has gone beyond the three *gunas*? Maybe Krishna's answer and the methods seem too difficult for him to follow, so Arjuna asks, what about those who neglect scriptures but are full of faith? To which Krishna answers, faith and desireless action are the two

keys, nothing else matters. When Krishna keeps insisting on renouncing the fruits of action, Arjuna asks the difference between the real nature of renunciation and abandonment. Krishna informs him again that renunciation is the giving up of the result of all actions. By the time Krishna finishes answering all the questions posed by Arjuna, Arjuna has gone through a transformation. He is no longer agitated, instead he can see the necessity of the war and understand his role in it.

### **Audience**

Although it might seem an easy answer to say that Arjuna is the audience of *The Bhagavadgita* since Krishna is in conversation with Arjuna but the answer to the question who is the audience of *The Bhagavadgita* is not an easy one.

*The Bhagavadgita* does not begin with the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. It begins with Sanjay and Dhritarashtra. Devdutt Pattanaik argues, “We never actually hear what Krishna told Arjuna. We simply overhear what Sanjaya transmitted faithfully to the blind king Dhritarashtra in the comforts of the palace, having witnessed all that occurred on the distant battlefield, thanks to his telepathic sight” (4). This is true.

The story goes like this: Veda Vyasa, the compiler of *Mahabharata* asked Dhritarashtra, the blind king, if he wished so he could grant him the vision that would allow him to see what was happening at the battlefield. Dhritarashtra refuses saying all his life he has been blind and now he does not want the sight just to see his sons dying at the battlefield but he does want to know what happens there. So Vyasa bestows the boon to Sanjaya, his minister, who relates the happenings to Dhritarashtra. It is this conversation that we overhear. It is Vyasa, the compiler who relates to us - the audience of the text version of *The Bhagavadgita* what Sanjay relates to Dhritarashtra about what Krishna tells Arjuna. So there are at least three

layers of audience: the primary audience being Arjuna, the secondary being Dhritarashtra and Vyasa and the tertiary being the readers of the text.

We may argue that *The Bhagavadgita* being a song sung by Krishna to Arjuna, we the readers of the text do not qualify as its audience. But critics disagree. They argue that *The Bhagavadgita* was not sung only for Arjuna's benefit but for all the spiritual aspirants, down the ages. Baidya contends "... the Gita was not meant just for changing one Arjuna at a certain point in the human history, in a war fought sometime ago at some corner of the globe. The Gita is the song of life that guides the entire humankind in resolving all sorts of conflicts and complications" (33). There are also those who argue that *The Bhagavadgita* was inserted into the epic in order to reconcile the conflicting Hindu sects under one umbrella.

Longaker and Walker identify three types of audience for a rhetorical situation: the addressee, the intended audience and the actual readers (17). If that is the case then, Arjuna is Krishna's addressee. Sanjaya and Vyasa are the direct audiences as they overhear the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. For Vyasa, Dhritarashtra is the intended audience within *Mahabharata* and those diverging sects of Hinduism are the implied audience of the epic and anybody else, who reads the book, including us, is the actual audience.

Pattnaik argues that although all these different layers of audiences are hearing Krishna's words, they are receiving it at their own convenience: "Krishna and Sanjaya may speak exactly the same words, but while Krishna knows what he is talking about, Sanjaya does not. Krishna is the source, while Sanjaya is merely a transmitter. Likewise, what Sanjaya hears is different from what Arjuna hears and what Dhritarashtra hears". Pattnaik clarifies, "Sanjaya hears the words, but does not bother with the meaning. Arjuna is a seeker and so he decodes what he hears to find a

solution to his problem. Dhritarashtra is not interested in what Krishna has to say. While Arjuna asks many questions and clarifications, ensuring the ‘discourse’ is a ‘conversation’, Dhritarashtra remains silent throughout” (5). As Pattanaik argues, Arjuna is a willing audience. He wants his problems solved. He does not want to fight but he also does not want to leave the battlefield. He is confused regarding what he is supposed to do. But he wants to know. He wants to understand and calm his agitated mind. So Krishna’s words have an impact upon him because he is willing to receive the guidance Krishna is providing him.

### **Pathos: Emotional Appeals**

One important aspect of Krishna’s rhetoric is that Krishna is an excellent listener. He does not intervene during Arjuna's monologue. He lets him say all that he wants to say, to “air his grievances” so that Arjuna would be able to listen to him later with a “calm” and “untroubled mind” (Baidya 28). Krishna gives him that respect - the respect Arjuna deserves as a human being and a warrior who has found himself at a moment of utter crisis at the most important moment of his life. Throughout Arjuna’s outburst and even throughout the whole text, Krishna never belittles Arjuna’s feelings or questions. He responds to them all with a calm demeanor. Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz assert “respect is crucial in arguments that invoke audiences who don’t agree on critical issues or who may not have thought carefully about the issues presented”. (108) They also claim that one way of “establishing credibility with an audience” is by giving them respect. So by respecting and valuing Arjuna’s feelings, Krishna appeals to his emotional self - the human self that feels safe to express whatever he is going through to a companion.

When Arjuna lets go of his weapons and declares that it would be “far better” if Duryodhana and his brothers “should slay” him while he “remained unresisting and

unharméd”, Krishna scolds Arjuna by asking where did this weakness come from? This is an “un-aryan” like thing, a “disgrace”, an “impotence of a warrior’s spirit”. This might seem contrary to what we just said about Krishna respecting Arjuna but Radhakrishnan believes that Krishna is appealing to Arjuna’s “sense of honor and martial tradition” through this rebuke (111). Throughout *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna frequently addresses himself to the warrior self of Arjuna.

When Krishna warns Arjuna that “the great warriors” will think that he has “abstained from battle through fear”, those who had “highly esteemed” him will “make light” of him, he does appeal to Arjuna’s identity as a Kshetriya warrior. But Krishna is not saying these things just to any ordinary man of arms, rather he is appealing to a famed warrior – a warrior who has gained much applause in the battlefields. So he asks what will people say if you flee? Because that is how people are going to see your hesitancy - as cowardice. Krishna reminds Arjuna that “for one who has been honored, ill fame is worse than death” (128). These words, that evoke a sense of shame, are there to appeal to Arjuna’s pathos.

When Krishna informs Arjuna that “Whatever the great one does is closely followed by the rest” and adds “Arjuna you are a great one”, he is again using an emotional appeal to reach Arjuna’s valor. When he declares, “A Ksatriya’s happiness consists not in domestic pleasures and comfort but in fighting for the right” and also insists “there exists no greater good for a Ksatriya than a battle enjoined by duty”, Krishna is trying to touch upon Arjuna’s racial pride and the honor of a Kshatriya hero (127). Baidya believes that through these statements Krishna is appealing to Arjuna’s sense of class-duty as well (41). Arjuna asked Krishna to clear the dilemma regarding his duty so Krishna is using both logical as well as emotional appeals while answering his questions.

Similarly, when Krishna tells Arjuna that if you are killed, you will get heaven meant for heroes, Ranganathananda argues that Krishna is appealing “to all heroic sentiments in a human being” (156). We can also notice that Krishna is appealing to Arjuna’s desire to go to heaven - the desire that is deeply implanted into Hindu children - the highest they can think of as a reward for all the good they do in their lives. These appeals to Arjuna’s religious beliefs continue as Arjuna asks if it would not be a sin to kill one’s own family. Krishna appeals to Arjuna’s idea of the sin and the sacred. He tells him that it will not incur sin to do one’s duty but if Arjuna rejects it and wants to follow someone else’s duty, then that would be sinful.

Throughout the text, Arjuna’s cross questions are indications that Krishna’s words are having an effect upon him. When Arjuna asks what happens to a yogi, who strays from his path, we can safely assume that Arjuna has thought himself of a yogi and is worrying he may not be able to follow a yogi’s path to the full. These doubts are common among any person on the path to the divine.

At the end, when Krishna asks if Arjuna’s doubts are dispelled and advises him to do as he pleases, Krishna gives Arjuna the choice, the freedom to act. He doesn’t impose anything upon him. This way he appeals to Arjuna emotionally. But this appeal also works on a logic level – respecting Arjuna as a man of logic, capable of drawing his own conclusions and making his own decisions.

When we look at how Lord Krishna addresses Arjuna, we find the use of the following terms: O Partha (son of Prithu, another name of Kunti), O Arjuna, O Oppressor of the foes, O Son of Kunti, O Bharata, O Chief of men, O Mighty-armed, O Joy of the Kurus, O Winner of Wealth, O Blameless One, O Best of Bharata, O Scourge of the foe, O Best of Kurus, O Pandava, O Lord of the Bharatas, O Conqueror of the foe, O Best of embodied beings, O Gudakesa”. Most of these terms

have been used to appeal to the warrior inside Arjuna. Some, to a loved one, a younger sibling or cousin. Through these terms used frequently throughout the text, we can observe how Krishna is appealing to the sense of a conqueror, a victor, a warrior of the Bharata clan who if he runs away from the field will not only tarnish his own reputation but also the name of his clan, of his forefathers. This way Krishna appeals to his sense of duty, not just towards the warrior present at the battlefield but also to the ancestors who gave him his blood. Krishna indirectly questions, “What about their name, their sacrifices? Will you let your foolishness tarnish that as well? Think. What about your sons? How will the world see them, then”? So Krishna is appealing to Arjuna to be true to his blood - the blood of his ancestors and the blood he will pass on to his descendants.

But more than these appeals to Arjuna’s valor, Krishna persuades Arjuna through the appeal to his primal human thirst for happiness. Death is both the cause of happiness and sorrow for a warrior. What makes a Kshetriya sad is failing to be a protector, failing to save his loved ones from death. What makes him happy is also death - killing the enemies and gaining glory, but fate has brought Arjuna at this crossroads where his glory will be smeared with the blood of his own family. So he wants to escape who he is - who he fears he is destined to be.

Krishna soothes Arjuna by showing him that he is not who he thinks he is. He appeals to Arjuna’s belief that he is more than a warrior. When what gives a warrior fails to give him that happiness - makes him wary of that same happiness, he begins the journey of looking at himself as being more than who he believes himself to be. He starts questioning his very being: was this why he was born, trained his whole life - to become the curse of his whole clan. If not - because he senses that he is more - he longs to know what he is - who he is. *The Bhagavadgita* is an answer to this question

that everyone of us has - who are we other than whom we appear to be? - Because all of us sense that we are more than this body or mind and this instinct that we have - this spiritual, divine longing that guides us - this is what Krishna appeals to - not just Arjuna's emotional or logical or ethical self but the very seed of our being. Krishna persuades Arjuna through the appeal to every soul's longing for the Super soul.

Longaker and Walker insist, "pathos –desire, fear, anger, love and so on moves a person to take action" (452). In Arjuna's case, it is his fear of becoming the killer of his family that withdraws him from the battlefield. Krishna's assurances remove this fear and move Arjuna enough to rejoin the fight.

### **Logos: Logical Appeal**

Longaker and Walker explain that the logos or the logical arguments are "the reasoning itself". They are the "reasons for accepting the rhetor's claims – the logical relationships among claim and reason (s); and the audience's presuppositions" (47). So on what presuppositions of Arjuna does Krishna develop his arguments? Krishna builds his arguments upon the foundation of Arjuna's pre-supposition regarding God, Brahman, sin, heaven and other spiritual concepts. Arjuna is not unfamiliar to the concept of Brahman or liberation. He might never have given them much thought or thought of himself as a seeker on the path. But he has heard of Janaka. He was raised by wise men like Bhisma and Vidura; the first half of his childhood was spent in the forest among *rishis* and spiritual seekers. In fact, he is the son of God Indra. So the seed of longing for the divine that is planted in every human heart must have received enough nourishment throughout the years to sprout a bit more in Arjuna.

The following paragraphs present an analysis of a few logical appeals of Krishna. In *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna is asking Arjuna not to grieve. So he begins his argument with the datum: "Wise men do not grieve for the dead or the living"

(2.11). So do not grieve (claim). For this claim, he produces the warrant: We should follow what wise men do. Here Krishna anticipates Arjuna's rebuttal so he says, "Even if thou thinkest that the Self is perpetually born and perpetually dies, even then, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), thou shouldst not grieve (2.26). And replies to this rebuttal by saying, "For to the one that is born death is certain and certain is birth for the one that has died (2.27). And concludes by repeating the claim along with the reason: "Therefore for what is unavoidable, thou shouldst not grieve (2.27). The reason being, "The dweller in the body of everyone, O Bharata (Arjuna), is eternal and can never be slain. Therefore thou shouldst not grieve for any creature (2.30).

Another argument of Krishna is that Arjuna should act without attachment. So he says, ". . . without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, (claim). The reason as well as datum for this claim is "for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment (3.19). The warrant being: We should always strive for what is highest. Here Krishna produces the example of Janaka as evidence and insists, "It was even by works that Janaka and others attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works also with a view to the maintenance of the world (3.20). He explains why work should be done without attachment but only for the sake of the maintenance of the world: "Whatever a great man does, the same is done by others as well. Whatever standard he sets, the world follows" (3.21).

Krishna further strengthens his argument by adding: "There is not for me, O Partha (Arjuna), any work in the three worlds which has to be done nor anything to be obtained which has not been obtained; yet I am engaged in work (3.22). Here Krishna is bringing his ethos as evidence for Arjuna to support his claim. He provides the reason, "For, if ever I did not engage in work unwearied, O Partha (Arjuna), men in every way follow my path" (3.23). Krishna continues, "If I should cease to work,

these worlds would fall in ruin, and I should be the creator of disordered life and destroy these people” (3.24). Here too anticipating that Arjuna might rebut by asking if both learned and the unlearned men work, then what is the difference between them, Krishna states, “As the unlearned act from attachment to their work, so should the learned also act, O Bharata (Arjuna), but without any attachment, with the desire to maintain the world-order” (3.25). He elaborates by saying, “While all kinds of work are done by the modes of nature, he whose soul is bewildered by the self-sense thinks ‘I am the doer’. (2.27) “But he who knows the true character of the two distinctions (of the soul) from the modes of nature and their works, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), understanding that it is the modes which are acting on the modes, does not get attached” (3.28). Therefore, he asks Arjuna to fight by “Resigning all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness fixed in the Self, being free from desire and egoism, fight, delivered from thy fever” (2.30).

However, fighting is what Arjuna does not want to do. So Krishna frames his next argument regarding duty in this way: He begins with the datum “. . . there exists no greater good for a Ksatriya than a battle enjoined by duty” (3.31). The warrant being: Duty is something that should be carried out - that should not be abandoned at any cost if you want to be happy. Krishna elaborates, “Happy are Ksatriyas, O Partha (Arjuna), for whom such a war comes of its own accord as an open door to heaven. (3.32). The reason being: “A Ksatriya’s happiness consists not in domestic pleasures and comfort but in fighting for the right” (3.32). Then Krishna makes two other claims. One: “But if you doest not this lawful battle, then thou wilt fail thy duty and glory and will incur sin” (3.33). Another: “Besides, men will ever recount thy ill fame and for one who has been honored, ill fame is worse than death” (3.34). The reason being: “The great warriors will think that thou hast abstained from battle through fear

and they by whom thou wast highly esteemed will make light of thee” (3.35). Also, “Many unseemly words will be uttered by thy enemies, slandering thy strength. Could anything be sadder than that?” (3.36). So “Either slain thou shalt go to heaven; or victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth”. Here too Krishna concludes by repeating his claim: “Therefore arise, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), resolved to fight” (3.37).

Regarding Arjuna’s question relating to happiness, Krishna argues that unending bliss can only be obtained if one has realized his Self. For this his datum and claim are: “When the soul is no longer attached to external contacts (objects) one finds the happiness that is in the Self. Such a one who is self-controlled in Yoga on God (Brahma) enjoys undying bliss” (5.21). The warrant being: bliss is desirable. The reason he provides for Arjuna to believe his statement is: “Whatever pleasures are born of contacts (with objects) are only sources of sorrow, they have a beginning and an end, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), no wise man delights in them” (5.22). But “He who is able to resist the rush of desire and anger, even here before he gives up his body, he is a yogin, he is the happy man” (5.23). Krishna further explains, “He who finds his happiness within, his joy within and likewise his light only within, that yogin becomes divine and attains to the beatitude of God (brahmanirvana)” (5.24). So be a Self-realized yogi and attain bliss (claim).

“Yoga” is a term that has been emphasized frequently in *The Bhagavadgita*. Now let us look at what Krishna has to say regarding this term. He begins with the datum: “When the disciplined mind is established in the Self alone, liberated from all desires, then is he said to be harmonized (in yoga)” (6.18). And argues: “Let that be known by the name of yoga, this disconnection from union with pain. This yoga should be practiced with determination, with heart undismayed” (6.23). Krishna then explains, how this practice should be done: “Let him gain little by little tranquility by

means of reason controlled by steadiness and having fixed the mind on the Self, let him not think of anything (else)” (6.25). The reason being: “For supreme happiness comes to the yogin whose mind is peaceful, whose passions are at rest, who is stainless and has become one with God” (6.25).

While studying Krishna’s arguments, we find that sometimes we can clearly identify the elements of an argument: the datum, claim, warrant, backing, rebuttal, evidence, response. But most of the times, Krishna just presents claims and reasons for accepting those claims. Although his arguments do move on a logical pattern from one verse to another, following a sequence of claim and reason, most of the times they are presented as a non-negotiable, transcendental truth. Similarly, his arguments on duty, happiness, Brahma, Self are co-related: one argument supporting and building up on another and they strengthen Krishna’s ethos as the knower of Truth. Arjuna accepts these co-relations and his arguments. Thus Krishna’s logos strengthen his ethos too.

Similarly, through his logical arguments, Krishna demonstrates to Arjuna that his worries are groundless and thus changes Arjuna’s emotions – this pathos. Krishna is ultimately asking Arjuna to let go of his fear and bewilderment and to fight. Arjuna is worried that he is going to kill people who are his family. So even if he wins the war, he won’t be happy. Krishna removes these delusions through his arguments that the body dies but the soul neither kills nor dies and any happiness that is not rooted in the Self is fleeting. Arjuna accepts these answers and comments at the end that his delusions have been removed. So Krishna’s words, his reasoning, succeed in changing how Arjuna feels.

### **Ethos: How does Krishna Establish his Divinity for Arjuna's Sake?**

To show Arjuna that Krishna is not the only one living a life of action and being one with the divine, he brings the example of Janaka, the idol of a householder: “It was even by works that Janaka and others attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works also with a view to the maintenance of the world” (3.20). By bringing the example of Janaka, Krishna shows Arjuna that he need not renounce the world, just needs to give up the sense of doership to live happily and peacefully. He just needs to fight without worrying about its consequences.

Arjuna thinks of Krishna as his friend, as his cousin so it takes some time for him to accept Krishna as a god. When Krishna tells Arjuna that he taught the same thing to Vivasvat, Arjuna does not believe him, so he questions how Krishna could have been born before Vivasvat. To which Krishna answers that they both have been born many times in the past, he remembers them all but Arjuna does not. This is the first time Krishna mentions that he is no ordinary human. In fact when he passes this information to Arjuna that he had taught this same thing to Vivasvat and Vivaswat to Manu, Krishna is also revealing himself as the source of Knowledge itself. Then, step by step Krishna reveals more of himself.

He mentions that he is the Brahman for the first time, when he says, “Though (I am) unborn, and My self (is) imperishable, though (I am) the lord of all creatures, yet establishing Myself in My own nature, I come into (empiric) being through My power (maya)” (4.6). Then, he tells Arjuna that whenever there is an increase of adharna, he manifests himself again and again to protect dharma. That is the reason for his birth this time as well.

Then comes the overwhelming revelation. He tells Arjuna that he is the “origin of all this world and its dissolution as well” (252). “There is nothing whatever

that is higher than I". He says that from "the taste in the waters", to "the light in the moon and the sun", he is in everything: "the syllable Aum", "the sound in ether", "manhood in men", "the pure fragrance in earth", "brightness in fire", "the life in all existences and the austerity in ascetics", "the eternal seed of all existences", "the intelligence of the intelligent", "the splendor of the splendid", "the strength of the strong" (253-254). Later when he tells Arjuna that he is "the imperishable source of all beings", he explains how he pervades everything. He is "the ritual action", "the sacrifice", "the ancestral oblation", "the medicinal herb", "the (sacred) hymn, "the melted butter", "the fire" and "the offering", "the father of this world, the mother, the supporter and the grandsire", "the object of knowledge, the purifier", "the syllable Aum, the rk, the sama and the yajus", "the goal, the upholder, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend", "the origin and the dissolution, the ground, the resting place and the imperishable seed", "immortality and also death", "being as well as non-being", "the enjoyer and lord of all sacrifices" (291). Krishna tells Arjuna that nobody really knows him, "neither the hosts of gods nor the great sages", he is the Supreme Reality, the goal of human birth.

From these revelations onward, Arjuna starts seeing Krishna as divine. He relents "Thou art the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Abode and the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal, Divine Person, the First of the gods, the Unborn, the All-pervading" (10.12). He brings the references of Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa but still puts Krishna's word higher than their claim when he says, "and Thou thyself dearest it to me / I hold as true, all this that thou sayest to me" (308). Then he asks, "How may I know thee"? From here on, Arjuna not just accepts Krishna as a god but also as the goal he needs to pursue. Krishna replies that he is at the heart of all beings, from the Adityas to the Maruts, stars, moons, Vedas, Gods, Rudras, Yakshas,

Raksasas, Vasus, mountains, priests, war generals, lakes, trees, seers, gandarvas, sages, horses, elephants, men, weapons, cows, progenitors, snakes, nagas, ancestors, water creatures, Titans, calculators, bests, birds, purifiers, warriors, fishes, sciences, letters, compounds, hymns, meters, months, seasons, in everything.

Then Arjuna wishes to see Krishna's divine form. Krishna comes to him as time itself (331). When Arjuna sees Krishna's divine form, he gets scared. This fear in Arjuna reveals to us that this is the moment when Arjuna realizes that Krishna is more than what he has so far believed him to be. He believed Krishna when he told Arjuna that he is God. But when Arjuna observes and comprehends the meaning of what it entails to be God, he trembles with fear. From here on, Krishna's ethical appeal as God and thus the speaker of these wise sayings gets stronger.

Radhakrishnan strongly believes that Krishna "represents the Visnu aspect of the Supreme". He elaborates, "the Gita is interested in the process of redeeming the world. So the aspect of Visnu is emphasized ... Visnu is the great pervader, from vis, to pervade. He is the internal controller who pervades the whole universe" (20). Radhakrishnan traces the etymology of the term and claims it comes from "vis, to enter". He quotes *Taittiriya Upanishad* that says: "Having created that world he afterwards entered into it". Further he elaborates on Krishna's name: "He who attracts all or arouses devotion in all is Krsna" (21). If so, then no wonder that by the end of *The Bhagavadgita*, Arjuna becomes Krishna's devotee. However, we should not forget that Arjuna is not a gullible audience. Despite Krishna's grand revelations and declarations, Arjuna questions him at every step and makes him give satisfying answers.

We have studied how Krishna established himself as a divine figure for Arjuna, but let us also consider how Krishna's persona might have affected Arjuna's

decision to return to war. Krishna is a person Arjuna knows and trusts. He has played with him, ate with him, slept with him. As his friend and cousin, he has no reason to believe that Krishna would not have his best-interest in mind. Even if Krishna had not been a god, he is someone Arjuna listens to. Even before acknowledging Krishna as a divine person, Arjuna had been attentive and receptive towards Krishna's speech. The very reason Arjuna asks Krishna his initial questions regarding happiness and sorrow and his duty is because he sees Krishna as a person capable of guiding him. He trusts Krishna's good judgment. Through his responses to Arjuna's query regarding Brahman, yoga, god, world, creation, cosmic evolution, soul, field and the fielder, the three gunas, Krishna conveys that he is knowledgeable about these concepts. Through his divine form, Krishna proves that he is not just an authority but The Authority regarding the matter of spiritual life.

Longaker and Walker state "For the ancient Greeks, an ethical appeal was understood as an effort to inhabit a moral character that others should recognize, admire, and imitate" (234). Arjuna has seen Krishna live his life as a householder yet unattached. So he knows that Krishna has lived the life he is asking Arjuna to follow. Thus, Krishna's ethical appeal works best because he embodies what he imparts.

### **Context**

Krishna's Gita would not have come into existence if the war at Kurukshetra could have been avoided. However, the war was not the only factor. The main thing that prompted *The Bhagavadgita* was Arjuna's hesitancy at the battlefield. It was the *kairos* for Krishna's rhetoric.

Baidya argues, "The pandava had no chance of winning the war unless Arjuna stood forth firmly... This was the backdrop against which Shree Krishna delivered the discourse of the Gita – with a view to reviving Arjuna's drooping spirit and dragging

him back to war...” (18). He elaborates, “Arjuna was known for his calm – concentration – focus on the target, now when he sees his target – he withdraws... struck by the horror of being a killer of his brethren” (29). He maintains, “With his vision blurred by attachment, Arjuna lost sight of his duty” (30). Baidya goes on to add that “Possibly, his confidence was shaken” and he “wasn’t sure of victory” (32). There have been numerous commentaries regarding Arjuna’s weakness. However what all these commentators including Baidya fail to acknowledge is that Arjuna is still in the chariot. He has not yet left the battlefield. He knows that he has to fight. Previous commentators make it as if Arjuna had run away and then consulted Krishna but Arjuna is still there, in the chariot, asking for guidance regarding his “dharma”, often translated as duty. We will return back to Arjuna and his hesitancy but let us first look at this inevitable war that forms the context of *The Bhagavadgita*.

The war at Kurukshetra is often referred to as the “*dharma yuddha*” because it is considered as a war for justice. Bhusan Aryal objects to this rhetoric of a “just war”. He argues that “This form of rhetoric presents wars at the last recourse by associating them with some noble ideas, in which the human cost of such wars is touted as a necessary sacrifice for the restoration of order and normalcy”. What troubles Aryal the most is “At the core of this ‘required and just war’ rhetoric lies the idea that fighters should detach themselves from their feelings so that they can kill their fellow human beings robotically, without themselves being harmed emotionally by the experience in the process”. He objects, “The ideology of Kshatriya Dharma and its modern descendants may celebrate the bravery of such detached work, but such heroism comes at the cost of humanity” (154). As Krishna asks Arjuna to fight but not worry about the consequences, Aryal’s concerns do seem valid to some extent.

Robert Merton also agrees that “the doctrine that “war is the will of God” can be disastrous if it is not handled with extreme care”. However, he clarifies that “The Gita is not a justification of war, nor does it propound a war-making mystique ... Arjuna has an instinctive repugnance for war, and that is the chief reason why war is chosen as the example of the most repellent kind of duty. The Gita is saying that even in what appears to be most “unspiritual” one can act with pure intentions and thus be guided by Krishna consciousness” (Harmonist). Merton’s analysis rings true because Arjuna’s distress at the battlefield arises from the very fact that he does not want to do what he knows he has to do. These distinctions between good and bad, sin and sacred, mine and thine is what Arjuna needs to go beyond if he wants to experience eternal bliss.

Bimal Krishna Matilal responds that there is “no easy answer” to the question if the war at Kurukshetra is “an example of this kind of 'just war' ?” (93). He clarifies:

I find it impossible to agree with those who wish to interpret the battle in the Epic as an allegory of the battle between good and evil. All we can say is that the Pāndava side was the 'preferred' side, preferred by the author or authors and readers alike, while the Kaurava side was not so. There was greatness on both sides, both tried to maintain a set of moral principals and projects, a set of values and virtues. And there were many evil acts perpetrated by both sides, both stooped to meanness, to devious and devilish strategies, to conquer. But perhaps one side was more abrasive and more arrogant than the other. And if we put the immoral acts and wickedness of both sides, the Pāndavas and the Kauravas, on the weighing scales, it may be that the latter will not be heavier than the former, except perhaps for a couple of greatly grotesque, grossly unjust acts by Duryodhana. The world in fact cannot be divided into black and

white, but it contains only innumerable shades of grey. The epic represents the world exactly as such— paradoxically there is more realism in the epic than some of our present-day realistic novels. (94)

As Matilal argues, there is no such thing as an absolute good or an absolute evil. War is a terrible business that promises much but takes away even more.

Matilal comes to the conclusion that “If the Mahābhārata imparts a moral lesson, it emphasizes again and again, the ever-elusive character, the unresolved ambiguity of the concept of dharma” (94). He thinks the reason for that is because “The exact nature of dharma has remained ever elusive, for it was never spelled out fully” (106). Verily, Dharma is a difficult word to understand and demystify. It has been interpreted often as duty, religion, law and morality, to list a few translations.

J.P. Sudha traces the meaning of this ever-elusive term Dharma.

“Etymologically, the Sanskrit word dharma is derived from the root dhr which means 'to hold, have or maintain'. The dharma of a thing may, therefore, be described as that form or power which makes it what it is and prevents it from becoming something different... What keeps the whole universe in order and everything in its proper place is dharma” (359). Thus “It cannot be identified with observance of scriptural injunctions and the performance of ritual alone”. Sudha develops the concept of dharma as “that which leads us to ultimate knowledge through complete devotion to God”. However, Sudha warns that “dharma is not something fixed and static, one and the same for all things and persons and at all times, but is subject to growth and varies from person to person, group to group and age to age” (361). Suda concludes, “Whatever helps the evolving soul to cultivate qualities which bring it nearer and nearer to God and finally enables it to realise oneness with Divinity is its dharma ; and whatever obstructs and retards this process of self-realisation or God realization is

adharna” (365-366). Krishna keeps insisting Arjuna to perform his *swadharna*, his duty even when it feels distasteful to him because it is the same path that will lead him to the divine. Following this definition, can we view Arjuna’s hesitancy at the battlefield regarding his Kshetriya dharma also as a part of his dharma as it has brought him closer to Krishna and the knowledge of the divine within his own self?

Arjuna’s “discontentment” regarding his dharma is the context of *The Bhagavadgita* and it is also the way to God as laid out by Krishna. If Arjuna had been happy and satisfied with life he would never have ventured upon this path. He would not have been eager to receive what Krishna had to say. There must have been numerous moments in their lives when Krishna could have given Arjuna the message he gives him here. But Arjuna had never before been in that state of discontentment - ready and open to find out more about himself. The moment of crisis made him receptive not just to listen to what Krishna had to say but also to heed his advice.

### **Purpose**

Continuing the conversation on “dharma” and a “just war”, Romila Thappar “accuses Krishna of suggesting unethical ways of defeating the Kauravas” and argues, “Uneasiness with Krishna's argument may have led to the best-known interpolation into the epic, the Bhagvad-Gita” (1832). She cites Kosambi who argues, “As a late interpolation, the Bhagvad-Gita was intended to reiterate the varna-ashrama dharma, the social code of caste society which had been challenged by Buddhist, Jain, and other thinkers (described by the Brahmanas as heterodox) who did not concede its validity as a social norm” (1832). She also notes “a curious reversal”: “in earlier events the lack of ethics was characteristic of Kaurava actions, but during the war the Pandavas act deceitfully” (1831). And suggests an interesting reading of the epic:

According to lineage rules, neither the Kauravas nor the Pandavas are eligible to rule, since neither group is of the Puru bloodline. The last of the Puru line was Bhishma, who is referred to in the epic as the pitamaha, the paternal grandfather, but only out of respect, since he was not actually the grandfather of the contestants. He had forsworn marriage and children so that the succession would pass through his brothers' sons, but they died early and childless. Bhishma arranged for Vyasa, the ostensible author of the epic, to impregnate the two widows, who each bore a son. But even this supposed continuity was marred by the sons' physical disabilities, which disqualified them from ruling. Consequently, the succession went to the next generation to be contested by the two sets of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Technically, they are not of the bloodline, and the battle may have little to do with succession in the Puru lineage. It is a feud between two families who were stitched onto the lineage and fight for territorial control. (1832)

Thappar's argument makes us wonder if obliteration of this "illegitimate" clan was the reason behind Krishna's incarnation as well. Parshuram, Lord Vishnu's another avatar is credited for wiping out the Kshetriya population from the earth, twenty one times. Even this time, before Krishna's birth, Mother Earth had requested God Vishnu to lessen her burden. Krishna also mentions in his conversation with Arjuna that whenever evil prevails, he reincarnates himself to wipe out adharma. Kshetriyas are the defenders of the weak but when they turn oppressors, who is to meet them with justice. If we look at Krishna's own clan, the Yadavas, they also die fighting each other following a curse laid upon Krishna. In the light of these facts, Thappar's claims regarding the lapse in ethics from both the Pandavas and the Kauravas do make us ponder on this aspect of Krishna's leela.

There is also another story regarding Nara and Narayana, “the twin sages, avatars of Vishnu” who want to defeat the demon who has one thousand armours (Pattanaik 47). In their previous births, these two sages, “while one meditated, the other fought, taking turns to acquire the power and to destroy the armour. By the time they had destroyed all but one of the thousand armours, the world came to an end. But the world was reborn; the asura was reborn as Karna, Nara as Arjuna and Narayana as Krishna”. So they were on the same chariot to kill Karna even though Arjuna forgot who he was and Krishna remembered. Their pair is often portrayed as the *jivatman* and the *paramatman* and believed that Krishna sung *The Bhagavadgita* to Arjuna to reawaken his forgotten self.

Alf Hildebeitel argues that “On their single chariot, Arjuna and Krsna are repeatedly referred to as "the two Krsnas" (4). He brings up the allegory of the chariot frequently used in the Vedic and Upanisadic texts and claims, that the chariot:

has been recognized as a kind of double allegory. In the chariot of the body, the jiva (Arjuna) learns from God (Krsna Paramatman) the nature of the self (atman) amid the converging forces of daivic (Pandava) and asuric (Kaurava) realms. Or, in the chariot of the body, Krsna as buddhi restrains the lower self (senses/ horses, etc.) to enable Arjuna to realize the higher self. (22)

As Hildebeitel proposes, there is no doubt that the purpose of *The Bhagavadgita* had been to show Arjuna the path to self-realization.

Ranganathananda reiterates the voice of the karma yogis and argues that *The Bhagavadgita* came into existence because “Sri Krishna finds the need for a new philosophy of practical Vedanta, which he develops himself, based upon a man or woman at work, seeking also spiritual realization while continuing to work” (112). He

strongly believes that Krishna's message is especially for the householders, represented by Arjuna.

Was *The Bhagavadgita* recited solely for Arjuna or was it later interpolated into the text of Mahabharata will always remain up for debate but what we can be sure of is that the purpose of *The Bhagavadgita* ultimately, is to lay out the way to God for any human who wants to tread on that path.

### **Whose Interests does it Serve/ Who Gains or Loses by it?**

Bhuchandra Baidya argues that "Duryodhana had lost the war even before it commenced". The Kaurava army "lacked unity". There were only three warriors on their side who had the "power equal or even capable of defeating Arjuna in the battle" – Bhishma, Drona and Karna. Bhishma and Drona had reluctantly stood to battle because their loyalty to the crown did not permit them to cross to the other side. Bhishma and Drona were "undoubtedly unbeatable warriors of that time" but both of them were "defeated by their own conscience" (25). Bhishma had taken the vow of defending the throne of Hastinapur to his last breath. He had also declared that he would not kill the Pandavas. Drona was on "the payroll of the palace so he was being true to his salt". But he loved Arjuna as a son – he was his best pupil. Karna had also promised Kunti to target only Arjuna and spare the other four. Further, Bhishma had tactfully sidelined Karna by provoking him to say that he would stay out of the battlefield as long as Bhishma would stand undefeated (24). Besides, "not a single warrior of the Kaurava side was convinced that the Pandavas had done wrong to the Kauravas". But "every warrior" in the Pandava army was "determined to sacrifice his life fighting for the right cause" (25). So their victory was certain and Arjuna had no need for worry.

As Baidya claims, Arjuna had no cause for worry regarding the outcome of the battle. He had Krishna by his side. He himself had made the choice between Krishna's army and Krishna himself. When Bhishma made the first call to battle, it was Krishna who responded from the Pandava side. Goddess Durga had blessed him before the war and assured him of victory. Lord Hanuman was there seated on his flag. If Arjuna had no cause for worry then why was he worried and why was *The Bhagavadgita* sung at the battlefield? Who gained from its recitation?

Osho argues, "A battle that is fought half-heartedly is a lost battle . . ." (48). So Krishna's discourse was for the benefit of reviving Arjuna, the most skilled of warriors and the single most weapon in the Pandava arsenal to rejoin the fight. As Krishna claims, Arjuna is an instrument at the hand of God. So he wants this instrument to function at its best. Krishna did not lift up a single weapon and yet he is the factor behind the Pandava army's victory. Would the Pandavas have won the war if Krishna had not been by their side? Obviously not. But our concern here is, would the Pandavas have won the war if *The Bhagavadgita* had not been recited? In order to be able to answer this question, we also need to answer, would Arjuna have fought with the same zeal and enthusiasm as he did if he had not heard what Krishna said to him? Certainly not. Because we can notice the difference between the Arjuna who decides not to fight and the Arjuna who decides to take up his arms again.

*The Bhagavadgita* transforms Arjuna's outlook of himself, of Krishna, of the war and the world. If before the dialogue, Arjuna was reassured that his cousin is by his side, now he knows that he is supported by God himself. If before their conversation, he was doubtful whether he was doing the right thing or not, he now knows for sure that this is what he is meant to do. So it is *The Bhagavadgita* that tilts the balance on the Pandava side by enthusing Arjuna with certainty. This is how

Krishna enables a reluctant Arjuna to perform his duty towards himself and towards the world.

### **Structure of the Argument**

*The Bhagavadgita* does not start from the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. It starts with Sanjay and Dhritarashtra and yet it separates the majority of the conversation between the two since Sanjay receives the divine vision and the portion of *The Bhagavadgita* into two separate chapters. What purpose does it serve Vyasa to exclude the story of Sanjay receiving the divine eyesight but include what Dhitrarastra and Duryodhan say at the beginning of the battle?

It helps him to show the difference between the two armies. Dhritarastra and Arjuna both are deluded by what they refer to as “me” and “mine” but while Dhritashtra and Duryodhana see the Pandavas as the enemy force, Arjuna has a hard time accepting those fighting from the Kaurava side as his enemy because he considers them his own. This sense of “who I am” and “what is mine” is what Arjuna has to let go of in order to get rid of his distress.

Barbara Stoler Miller argues, the conversation between Sanjay and Dhritarastra “functions like a dramatic prologue, setting the scene of the Gita and preparing the audience to listen to Arjuna’s dialogue with Krishna” (6). As Miller points out, *The Bhagavadgita*, as a matter of fact, does unfold like a drama. It starts with exposition where Sanjay relates what is happening in the battlefield to Dhritarashtra. The blowing of conches and the introduction of the heroes from both the armies sets the scene for war. Arjun’s hesitancy and giving up of his arms creates rising complications. There is uncertainty and tension regarding Arjuna’s role in the upcoming battle when Arjun goes on asking questions. He does not seem convinced by Krishna’s answers. The climax comes with Krishna showing his divine form to

Arjuna. Then, they start tying up loose ends with Arjuna's remaining questions. And finally comes resolution with Arjuna's acceptance of Krishna's message and decision to return to the battle.

Pattanaik detects many modern techniques of communication in *The Bhagavadgita*: "First, Arjuna's problem is presented (Chapter 1), and then Krishna's solution (Chapter 2 to 18) is offered. Krishna begins by telling Arjuna what he will reveal (chapter 2); he then elaborates on what he promised to tell (chapters 3 to 17); and finally, he repeats what he has told (Chapter 18)" (2). Barbara Stoler Miller provides the reason for the non-linear structure of Krishna's message. She argues, "Krishna develops his ideas in improvisational ways, not in linear arguments that lead to immediate resolution" because Krishna wants to "explore the paradoxical interconnectedness of disciplined action and freedom" (8).

However, Geoffery Ashton finds a trace of the Upanishads in Krishna's structure. He argues that Krishna "deliberately" provides "incomplete" answers in the initial phase "in order to elicit from Arjuna investigation into the nature of liberation". He claims the "dialogic structure of the *Gī-tā* closely parallels that of a number of Upanishadic parables wherein a student with aspirations for moksa approaches his teacher, only to be repeatedly turned away with answers whose incompleteness serves to actually stimulate the student's desire for further understanding (7). We do notice that as Arjuna's understanding of the spiritual world widens, so does the nature of his questions.

Chidbhavananda explores the science behind the composition of *The Bhagavadgita*. He argues, "God in His absolute state is beyond the "ken of mind and speech. He is indefinable. But when He is immanent in the universe, He is denoted as *Sat-cit-anandam* - Existence, Knowledge, Bliss" (56). Chidbhavananda argues that

the chapters in *The Bhagavadgita* follow the theme of these terms: “the first six chapters of the Gita are devoted to the elucidation of Sat or Existence aspect of the Reality... Chapters seven to twelve of the Bhagavad Gita are devoted to the definition of God, and the cultivation of devotion . . . Chapters thirteen to eighteen of the Gita delineate the path of Knowledge (58-60).

He further argues that “The Bhagavad Gita is from beginning to end a grand commentary on the sublime statement - Thou art That”. He asserts “all the great scriptures of the world . . . directly or indirectly . . . are all exponents of the mahavakyam, the Sentence Sublime . . . regarded as the most sacred among inspired utterances” that “proclaim the relationship between God and man”. “The Vedas contain four such proclamations. The most popular one among them is ‘Tat tvam asi’ - Thou art that - That you are not alien to God is the purport of this sublime sentence”:

There are eighteen chapters in the Gita. They are conventionally called the Three Sixes, the trisatkam. The first six chapters elucidate the word thou in the mahavakyam... Chapters seven to twelve form the second satkam. This portion deals with the word That indicating God or the Ultimate Reality. What is called Nature is none other than that Reality contacted through the senses and the intellect...The third satkam contains the last six chapters. The predicate art gets explained in this portion. The inviolable relationship between the Cosmic Reality and the individual soul is well established in this part of the book...Giving equal weight to all the three is another speciality of the Gita. Indeed it seems that this book has been divinely planned solely for the purpose of the exposition of the mahavakyam. (42)

Going by Chidvavananda’s interpretation, Krishna structures his rhetoric in such a way as to influence Arjuna’s understanding of the Self, Brahman and the path to Self-

realization. If what he suggests is true then the logic behind the composition of *The Bhagavdgita* is beyond the comprehension of an ordinary human mind.

Arjuna wants to know what will drive away his distress and possibly give him happiness even if he wins the war. Krishna begins by telling Arjuna that he is worrying in vain. Then he tells Arjuna that true happiness can only be achieved once we reach the sorrow-less state by realizing our Self as the Brahman. Then he lays out the different paths through which Arjuna can achieve this goal. Krishna sets the structure of his arguments in such a way that Arjuna can follow what Krishna says in a logical order without being overwhelmed by the sea of knowledge he receives.

### **Media Used**

Krishna informs Arjuna that the “wisdom” he is relaying to Arjuna is “more secret than all secrets” (Radhakrishnan 445). To convey this secret message, Krishna chooses the most convenient media for the task: a one-on-one conversation. He is not a spiritual messiah giving a sermon to a large number of audience. He is speaking to Arjuna as a friend in order to help him figure out a way out of his crisis. The medium of secrecy functions at two levels. At one level, Arjuna’s secret, his unwillingness is only known by his confidante, Krishna and at another, Krishna gives him the wisdom that he would not just divulge to any other passing by. He makes Arjuna feel worthy of the secret he is passing on. Even the divine form he reveals is only for Arjuna’s eyes to behold. Krishna also makes Arjuna feel safe to be seen as helpless just before the war begins. Would Arjuna have been as free to lay down the burdens of his heart even with his own brothers? It is a difficult question to answer. Arjuna and Krishna have this understanding between the two of them. Even amid the chaos of the upcoming war, they can speak with each other, secretly, yet freely, mindful that the other will listen to what he has to say.

I don't think Krishna's message would have been as effective if Krishna's audience had been a large number of people or even a small group of people that also included Arjuna. Arjuna receives Krishna's message with such willingness because Krishna chooses the medium of one-on-one conversation to soothe a man in crisis, a man in conflict with himself. That is why even the readers of the text find *The Bhagavadgita* more accessible than other scriptures because it feels like guidance designed especially for their benefit.

### **How Language and Style Work to Persuade**

*The Bhagavadgita* is a song. It is taken as the song of God. But Barbara Stoler Miller thinks that this interpretation is "misleading" because "it is not a lyric but a philosophical poem, composed in the form of a dialogue..." (1). Given that *The Bhagavadgita* is one of the representational texts of Hinduism, indeed, perceiving it as a simple religious song or a mere collection of verses would be a great mistake.

Longaker and Walker list "clarity, correctness, appropriateness and distinction" as the virtues of style (138). By clarity they mean, the speech needs to have directness with precise, familiar language that is also accessible. It needs to be economic, avoiding fillers, and clumsy sentences. There needs to be vividness and compact, emphatic sentence structures. Krishna's sentences are clear and concise. He says exactly what he wants to convey and nothing more. Here is an example of Krishna's response to Arjuna regarding his query concerning happiness:

"When the soul is no longer attached to external contacts (objects) one finds the happiness that is in the Self. Such a one who is Self-controlled in Yoga on God (Brahma) enjoys undying bliss". (5.21)

Regarding Arjuna's query about being free of sorrow, Krishna answers:

“Whatever pleasures are born of contacts (with objects) are only sources of sorrow, they have a beginning and an end, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), no wise man delights in them.” (5.22)

“He who finds his happiness within, his joy within and likewise his light only within, that yogin becomes divine and attains to the beatitude of God (brahmanirvana)”. (5.24)

“For supreme happiness comes to the yogin whose mind is peaceful, whose passions are at rest, who is stainless and has become one with God”. (6.27)

“Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata (Arjuna). By His grace shalt thou obtain supreme peace and eternal abode.” (18.62)

Regarding Arjuna’s question about his duty, Krishna answers:

“Better is one’s own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one’s own nature”. (18.47)

“One should not give up the work suited to one’s nature, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), though it maybe defective...” (18.48)

As these verses demonstrate, Krishna’s sentences are short but precise. They convey exactly what Arjuna wants to know. They do not diverge into lengthy discussions and yet provide answers that spring forth from The Truth.

Krishna also repeats his main messages time and again to remind Arjuna what is most important among this sea of knowledge that he imparts. Longaker and Walker argue that repetition “generally leaves a larger psychological imprint” (106). They elaborate, “By dwelling on the same point, the rhetor compels the audience to think about it for a longer time and therefore gives the basic idea more presence in their thought” (111). Krishna also repeats his messages regarding duty, attachment, eternal

bliss and renunciation again and again in different styles. He also repeats the rhetoric of detachment with the repetition of words and phrases like “give up”, “relinquish”, “renounce”, “abandon”, “be free from”. These verbs that urge Arjuna to take action, become more persuasive when Krishna conveys these to Arjuna with the tone of instruction.

We can also detect parallelism, especially at the end of the sentences. For example:

“Thou grievest for those whom thou shouldst not grieve for, yet thou speakest words about wisdom. Wise men do not grieve for the dead or for the living”. (2.11)

“As the soul passes in this body through childhood, youth and age, even so is its taking on of another body. The sage is not perplexed by this”. (2.13)

“Of the non-existent there is no coming to be; of the existent there is no ceasing to be. The conclusion about these two has been perceived by the seers of truth”. (2.16)

As in the above verses, Krishna uses these keywords like “wise men”, “seers of truth”, “man of knowledge”, “man of learning”, “sage”, “jyani”, “yogin”, “holy men” in verses like these to set an example for Arjuna to strive for and to reinforce his key messages.

Krishna’s choice of diction is also noteworthy. He contrasts mutually exclusive terms such as joy and sorrow, agreeable and disagreeable action, pain and pleasure, knowledge and ignorance, right and wrong, poison and nectar. By opposing these terms and presenting one as negative, Krishna asserts another quality as something to aspire for.

Krishna’s delivery style is grand, truly like that of God. He speaks with calm and yet full of authority. We can detect no aporia or paradox. The sentences are short

yet direct, unadorned and uncomplicated. Many of Krishna's arguments consist of a claim and its main supporting reason that is persuasive on its own. Here are a few examples:

“Even if thou thinkest that the Self is perpetually born and perpetually dies, even then, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), thou shouldst not grieve”. (2.26)

“For to the one that is born death is certain and certain is birth for the one that has died. Therefore for what is unavoidable, thou shouldst not grieve”. (2.27)

“It is said that these bodies of the eternal embodied (soul) which is indestructible and incomprehensible come to an end. Therefore fight, O Bharata (Arjuna)”. (2.11)

“The dweller in the body of everyone, O Bharata (Arjuna), is eternal and can never be slain. Therefore thou shouldst not grieve for any creature”. (2.30)

“To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction”. (2.47)

These sentences that urge Arjuna to take action, when come with Krishna's grand style, increase the degree and intensity of persuasiveness. Longaker and Walker argue that generally a grand style cannot be sustained for long but Krishna does this throughout the eighteen chapters. Arjuna has no choice regarding Krishna's charm.

Though Krishna's sentences are simple and direct, they are also symbolic. In fact, the war, the battlefield, the chariot, Krishna and Arjuna, other participants, everything associated with Gita can be studied symbolically, but even when we regard it just as a conversation between a god and a man in crisis, the sentences bear the aim of conveying a message and guiding a man out of his distress. Krishna does this in such a way that by the end of the conversation, Arjuna receives it as a gift. We should also not forget that Arjuna wants to fight. He wants to defeat the army and gain the

glory due him. But he does not want to do it at the cost of his elder's blood. Thus, he asks Krishna for guidance regarding his duty. Krishna also has to perform many roles during this exchange. He needs to console his friend, persuade the most able of fighters to take up his arms again and also guide his disciple towards Self-realization. Krishna fulfills all these duties adopting the language and style befitting each of these roles.

**Effectiveness: How Well do all the Components Work Together to Persuade**

Baidya considers *The Bhagavadgita* to have been effective in transforming Arjuna as it “changed the way Arjuna looked at his role in the war”. Baidya concludes, “The Gita removed his confusion, resolved his doubts and ended his hour of grief”. As by the end, “Arjuna stood forth at peace with himself; he became ready to fight the battle as a way of fulfilling his duty” (19). At the end of *The Bhagavadgita* when Krishna asks him to decide what he wants to do, Arjuna replies that his “delusion” has been “destroyed” and his “doubts” have been “dispelled” so he is ready to “act according to” Krishna’s “word”. Considering this reply, and Arjuna’s return to war, we can confidently agree that Krishna was successful in convincing Arjuna to take up his arms again at the battlefield of Kurukshetra. However, whether or not Arjuna was able to comprehend all that Krishna said to him during the recitation of *The Bhagavadgita* is still up for debate.

At the end of the eighth chapter, Krishna informs Arjuna that the soul goes to the same destination on which it is set at the last moment of its life. So he suggests Arjuna to focus on God day and night and develop practice for the moment of death. He urges Arjuna to take refuge in him and reassures him by saying, “Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils” (18. 66). But we all know that after his death, Arjuna goes to hell. Does this

mean that he did not surrender mind, body and spirit to Krishna at the time of his death? It seems not.

Aurobindo interprets Krishna's assurance to Arjuna in the following vein, ". . . I repeat the absolute assurance, the infallible promise that I will lead thee to Myself through and beyond all sorrow and evil. Whatever difficulties and perplexities arise, be sure of this that I am leading thee to a complete divine life in the universal and an immortal existence in the transcendent Spirit" (603). Now the question arises, does Krishna fulfill this promise he made to his beloved friend? Considering the fact that Arjuna goes to hell, this promise seems to have failed but Arjuna's story does not end there. We should also acknowledge that after spending his time in hell, Arjuna does go back to heaven. So yes! Krishna does seem to have fulfilled his promise to Arjuna.

Chidbhananda argues "The greatest contribution that an Incarnation of God makes to the world is His life and career. He is necessarily a man with a message". But "His deeds and exploits, even more than His utterances deliver that message in unmistakable terms". "Through the force of His character He exerts an abiding influence on those who come in contact with Him. His demeanour under varying circumstances teaches humanity more eloquently than His declamation if any". So "the greatest "commentary" on the Gita is the life of the author" itself (45). He suggests, if we are measuring *The Bhagavadgita's* effectiveness, we have to study if Krishna lived the life he preached to Arjuna and asserts, "The life that Sri Krishna lived is the most sublime embodiment of Vedantic principles... He preached nothing but what He put into practice all through His life" (46). Krishna did live the life of a Kshetriya householder, fulfilling his duty towards his parents, community as well as his wives as he suggests Arjuna to do. Given that he accepts the curses laid upon him by Gandhari and Rishi Durvasa with a smile on his face and does not try to escape the

death that comes looking for him, he does seem to have lived his message of remaining unaffected by pain and pleasure during any situation.

Scott R. Stroud puts forward a different argumentation. He proposes, the rhetoric of *The Bhagavadgita* should not be measured with the same scale used to gauge the rhetoric of persuasion. Stroud argues, “The practice of rhetoric is often conceived of as persuasion” (146). Persuasion has a negative connotation, often implying, “deception”, “control”, “influence”, “power”, “domination of others”, “making others do what you want them to do” and “changing them to your will” (148). However, *The Bhagavadgita* provides an altogether “alternate ontological orientation” based on the philosophy of interconnectedness where the speakers do not consider themselves apart from their audience.

Stroud explains, “If one sees himself or herself in the audience, then there are reasons to treat the audience with kindness, empathy, and consideration. . . . Instead of making content understandable . . . speakers should craft and deliver their message with the intention of recognizing their humanity in their audience and in appealing to that noble quality”. He assumes that Krishna, the god is speaking to Krishna the human he sees in Arjuna.

Blending the message of *The Bhagavadgita* with its rhetorical style, Scott maintains, “You have the Right to action but not to its result: The important issue for the practice of rhetoric then becomes the possibility of how one participates in communicative interaction without extreme concern for their goals, effectiveness, and teleological ends”. (154) Now the question is: Does Krishna do this as well? Is Krishna persuading Arjuna without the expectation of any result? No, he is not. He wants Arjuna to return to the fight. But does he worry about the result and compel

Arjuna to do as he wants him to do? This also, he does not. He lays out his arguments but gives Arjuna enough respect to let him make his own decision.

If we measure *The Bhagavadgita's* effectiveness on the basis of Arjuna's enlightenment then we will have to consider that it fails on its promise because Arjuna does not get enlightened. Despite the detailed steps to Self-realization laid out by Krishna, Arjuna does not realize his Self as God or Brahman. In fact he does not even fully trust Krishna when Krishna urges him to kill Karna, his sworn enemy. He hesitates and doubts Krishna's wisdom time and again during the war. Arjuna's reaction to the death of his son, Abhimanyu – does not seem like that of a Yogi. He grieves so much for Abhimanyu that Krishna takes him to heaven to meet his dead son who then refuses to acknowledge him. Arjuna's reaction is heartbreaking. When he returns back to the battlefield, he sets on revenge upon the Kauravas who killed his son. Revenge or vengeance surely was not the message of Gita. He forgets what Krishna taught him and even ventures to ask Krishna again for the message once the battle is over.

Was Arjuna's liberation the main aim behind imparting *The Bhagavadgita*? We may never be sure of the answer. But even if it was, Self-realization is not something that Krishna could have handed down to Arjuna. Arjuna had to do this on his own. So it would be unfair to measure the effectiveness of Krishna's rhetorical argumentation based on Arjuna's lack of effort towards Self-realization.

However, what we can be sure of is Krishna's expectation from Arjuna during the war. Krishna wanted Arjuna to participate in the war and be the hero he was meant to be. So if we evaluate *The Bhagavadgita's* effectiveness based on whether Krishna was able to persuade Arjuna to return to the battlefield or not, then yes,

Krishna and his words were indeed effective in changing Arjuna's hesitancy to willingness.

The conclusion that we can draw from the study of these elements of Krishna's arguments is that the context of *The Bhagavadgita*, the appeals Krishna uses, the way he structures his arguments, the manner in which he delivers his message, the language he uses to address Arjuna, the relationship that Arjuna and Krishna share, all come together to help Krishna persuade Arjuna to return to the battle. Arjuna's hesitancy at the battlefield creates the *kairos* for Krishna's message. Krishna's emotional appeals evoke the warrior in Arjuna and give fire to the soul's longing for the Super soul. Krishna's detailed reasoning and his insistence at the end that Arjuna should think on all the things that Krishna has told him so far and decide on his own what he wants to do next appeal to the logical side of Arjuna. It gives him the choice and freedom to think and act as a man of reason. Similarly, the way Krishna structures his arguments help Arjuna calm down his agitated mind and follow what Krishna is saying. The medium of one-on-one conversation makes it easier for Krishna to reassure Arjuna and reach his heart. The grand style Krishna uses and the techniques of repetition and parallelism, his short, precise verses help Arjuna understand Krishna's messages. However, if Arjuna had not had the trust he had in Krishna, and seen Krishna live the life he preaches Arjuna to follow then Arjuna may not have been as willing and open to believe Krishna's words of wisdom. Further, the reason Arjuna does not run away from the battle field and rather sits there on the chariot is because he believes and trusts that Krishna can guide him at his hour of crisis.

Thus, it is Krishna's *logos*, combined with his *ethos* that is the key to his success. Krishna's self presentation establishes him as someone worthy of Arjuna's

trust, his reasoning show Arjuna that what he perceives to be the cause of his emotional distress is faulty: there is no need for him to worry about killing anybody. And Krishna's handling of Arjuna's emotions, converting them from fear of his duty to realizing the necessity of his role in the war is what motivates Arjuna to take action.

### Chapter III: Reflection on Arjuna's Realization

Arjuna is conflicted regarding his duty at the battlefield of Kurukshetra. He knows that he has to fight and kill the warriors from the opposing army for the Pandava side to win the war. But he does not want to raise his arms against his teacher and elders fighting from the Kaurava side. He only sees sorrow and guilt as the aftermath of this battle for which he has been preparing his whole life. So he asks Krishna for guidance. He wonders if he can ever experience happiness again even if he ensures victory by killing those whom he considers his own family. *The Bhagavadgita* is Krishna's answer to these questions and doubts Arjuna expresses in front of him.

Krishna tells Arjuna to perform his duty, renouncing his attachment towards the fruit of any action. In this case, he wants Arjuna to fight the battle but renounce his worry regarding the fate of the warriors present there. Their fate has already been decided by Krishna so Arjuna need not worry about them. Krishna reminds him that a wise man has no aversion to disagreeable action and no attachment to agreeable action. So he asks Arjuna to do his duties according to his nature, being the same in pain and pleasure. Krishna reassures him that one does not incur sin when he performs the duty ordained by his own nature. So Arjuna need not worry about killing Bhishma and Drona. He asks Arjuna to stop differentiating between his friends and foes. He tells him that whoever sees Krishna everywhere and sees all in Krishna abiding in all beings and all beings in him, is a truly liberated one. So he urges Arjuna to give up all his worries and perform his duty at the battlefield. Arjuna is not easily convinced. He asks questions after questions. Krishna answers them all and by the end of their conversation, Arjuna remarks that his delusions have been dispelled and he is ready to do as Krishna advises him.

Given that Arjuna willingly returns to the battle, this study comes to the conclusion that Krishna's rhetorical argumentation successfully persuades Arjuna to take up his arms again. It was not an easy task but Krishna's rhetorical strategies: the appeals he uses, the way he structures his arguments, the way he delivers his claims, the language he uses to address Arjuna, the relationship between Arjuna and Krishna, all work in favor to help Krishna persuade Arjuna to take up his arms again. However, it is Krishna's ethos, that adds credibility to his logos and changes Arjuna's pathos from bewilderment and discontentment to realization and assurance and inspire him to take action.

To conclude, Krishna persuades Arjuna as a friend, as a cousin, as a god and as the Supreme reality itself. He consoles Arjuna, he scolds Arjuna, he threatens Arjuna, he requests Arjuna. He persuades Arjuna by appealing to him as the progeny of the great Bharata clan. He appeals to Arjuna's heart, mind, and his ethics as a warrior. He persuades him by appealing to his belief that he is more than a warrior - through the appeal to his basic human thirst for happiness. He enthuses him with confidence. He makes Arjuna feel worthy of Self-realization and persuades him by appealing to the very seed of his being: by giving fire to every soul's longing for the Super soul. But more than all these, through his divine form, he shows Arjuna what is possible in this human birth. He shows how action and renouncement can go hand in hand through the life Krishna himself lives. And since Arjuna has seen Krishna live this life he asks Arjuna to follow, Krishna persuades Arjuna through his logical arguments, backed by his ethos, inspiring trust on him and changing Arjuna's pathos of unwillingness and bewilderment to willingness and reassurance.

*The Bhagavadgita* is a mine full of treasures for academic researchers. Students of literature will find many things to study ranging from critical discourse

analysis, concepts of agency and ethics, its poetical nuances, to its environmental dimensions. However, if I had to select just one topic for further research then I would suggest the study of the theatrical aspect of *The Bhagavadgita*. As mentioned earlier, the structure of this text unfolds like a drama. So it would be interesting to study *The Bhagavadgita* from the lens of Performance Studies.

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