

The Main Characters of the Gita

The Bhagavad Gita takes place on a battlefield. On one side are the mighty forces of the Pandava family, who represent the forces of light, and on the other side are the equally powerful forces of the Kaurava family, who represent the forces of darkness. The battle scene is an analogy of the inner battle of one who enters the spiritual path. As Arjuna is about to wage a war that will destroy the world as he has known it, so too must we, as the new seeker overcome the resistance of the old way of life for the new one that awaits us.

The first twenty verses of the Gita describe a battle scene with an array of characters: kings, generals, and warriors poised for combat. This scene and these characters are representative of aspects of the ignorance that binds us. The battle scene described here is an analogy for the battle in consciousness. The battle is between the forces that cling to the old life—the world of mind and senses—and the forces that transcend these, the forces of light, love, and truth. The following is a list of the key characters and what they represent.

Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer. His role is only to guide the chariot, not to fight. He represents the Divine on earth, the spiritual teacher who guides us. He represents the grace, that mysterious unseen force, that brings to us the situations of life that are the opportunities to transform ourselves. Krishna represents the Supreme on earth, the Divine in human form.

Arjuna is a warrior and friend to Krishna. He represents the awakened (awakening?) seeker who actually fights the battle of transformation. It is the seeker that fights the battle. This is the battle of Gita, to overcome the inner and outer qualities that prevent our spiritual progress.

Sanjaya narrates the Gita and represents the inner conscience that can see the truth even when it does not want to be seen, the power of discerning introspection.

The Field of Kuru is the battlefield where the story of Gita takes place. It represents the field of action, where we work out this struggle of manifesting spirit in our lives.

The Kaurava Family represents the forces of ignorance and darkness that limit the consciousness to the old life. Loyalty, idealism, ethics, and morality are all seemingly noble qualities but attachment to these binds the mature soul to the world of mind and senses, of friends, family, society, and culture. They operate from the lower vital and subconscious aspects of the mind, the lower sense mind. The qualities that are represented are as follows.

Dhritashtra, the blind king, represents blind attachment and the surface mind, the superficial self only concerned with the other world and its own desires, habits, and attachments.

Duryodhana represents the seat of desire driven-ego; the seat of the lower self; the most formidable opponent to the transformation process.

Drona represents misplaced loyalty; one who has compromised his higher self for material security; one who acts out of habit and fear.

Kripa represents ethics and morality, right and wrong, sin and virtue. He stands for the rules of conduct that are based on dogma and fear.

Karna represents idealism based on mind and ego. Ideas are mental concepts that prevent us from knowing truth.

The Pandava Family symbolize the forces of light. They are representative of a mature and positive human system capable of discerning between what is true and what is false; a system whose attributes include a developed psychic, an inspired vital, a discriminating intellect, a pure heart and a healthy body. Arjuna is one of five Pandava brothers. They represent the qualities that support us on the spiritual path. They are introduced in verses fourteen through sixteen.

Arjuna represents the ideal man of his time; open and with discriminating intelligence and divine self-control.

Yudhishthira represents the developed psychic nature; the developed psychic man with divine calmness.

Bhima represents the inspired higher vital centered in the heart.

Sahadeva represents the intuitive nature and hidden intuition.

Nakula represents the pure and strong physical nature of man.

The entry into the spiritual path is not an easy one for most of us. It starts by throwing our lives into turmoil and anguish. The tendency is very strong to run away but this would be an error. If we don't run away and if we stay the course, what arises is the aspiration to find out what is happening to us. This throws us into a quest for something—what that is, we do not fully know at this point. It is this quest that takes us to the next step in the journey.