

Pandava Gita

Free Rendering into English

By
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[Translator's Note: *The Pandava Gita is a collection of exquisitely beautiful verses from different sources. It is a stotra, a hymn meant for devotional recitation and as a stotra it is rarely surpassed in Sanskrit literature full of splendid hymns. The hymn's approach to God is of 'sharanagati', total surrender. In translating, I have taken minor liberties with the language for improving its readability in English. I have, though, taken care to see that the meaning or tone of the verses has in no way been altered.*

Each of the words used for God/Vishnu/Krishna here has meanings deeper than what appears on the surface. For instance, the word Krishna is explained etymologically as 'that which/he who attracts' and spiritually as our nature as sat-chid-ananda, existence-consciousness-bliss, which draws us towards it constantly and makes us flow towards our source, converting each us into a Radha. Radha is the word 'dhara' [dhaaraa] written in the reverse order [ra-dha – dha-ra] and dhara means a current. Radha is therefore the current that flows backward, towards its own source and Krishna is God who turns us towards our origin, and makes our consciousness flow towards its source, God within us, and not towards the objects of the senses in the outside world. Similarly, Vishnu etymologically means the 'pervading one' and spiritually it means the all-pervading reality, consciousness that is beyond time and space, awareness that fills our waking, dream and sleep states and is yet beyond them all. In this free rendering, however, only the surface meanings have been used.]

1

Homage

Homage to the great devotees of God. I bow down to Prahlada, Narada, Parashara, Pundareeka, Vyasa, Ambareesha, Shuka, Shaunaka and Bheeshmaka; to Rukmangada, Arjuna, Vasishtha, Vibheeshana and others like them.

2

Lomaharshana said:

Devout repetition of the name of Yudhishtira increases virtue; constant repetition of the name of Vrikodara¹ destroys sin; enemies perish when Dhananjaya's² name is repeated; and when the names of the sons of Madri³ are repeated, illnesses do not afflict you.

3

Brahma said:

Those men who are free from desire, know the transcendental and the non-transcendental, and constantly remember Narayana, the guru of the gods, they, their

consciousness cleansed of impurities through meditation, no more drink milk from their mother's breasts.

4

Indra said:

Among the men of earth, there is a man renowned as a thief, famous by the name Narayana. Just think of him and that very instant he steals in its entirety the copious wealth of sins collected over several births.

5

Yudhishtira said:

Dark as a cloud, dressed in yellow silk, with the footprint of Sage Bhrigu on his heart, his chest shining with the Kaustubha jewel, his large eyes like the lotus flower, the one who can be approached through merit alone, that Vishnu, the one lord of all worlds, to him I bow down.

6

Bheeshma said:

The lord who, assuming the form of the wild boar, raised up by the tip of his horns the earth that was drowned in the waters of deluge along with all stationary and moving things, may that self-born God, the lord of all universes, be pleased with me.

7

Arjuna said:

Unthinkable, unmanifest, endless, imperishable, the glorious lord of everything, that from whom everything is born, the one cause of the universe, the one who manifests the three world by his thoughts, that Hari I surrender to, the goal of great souls.

8

Nakula said:

If I were to go into lower births dragged down by the ropes of time, if I were to be born as a bird or an insect without a kula⁴, even if I were to be born a hundred times as a worm, Oh lord, this is my heart's constant prayer: May I, in all those births, have unshakeable devotion to Keshava in my heart.

9

Sahadeva said:

Salutations even to those who bow down to that sacred incarnation as the wild boar, to Vishnu of unparalleled brilliance! Salutations again and again!

10

Kunti said:

Lord of the Senses, Krishna, this is my prayer to you. As I go from birth and to birth and am born into different species as decided by my karmas, in each of those births may I have unshakeable devotion to you.

11

Madri said:

Those whose hearts revel in Krishna, those who constantly remember Krishna, those who think of him as they go to bed at night and again when they wake up, they, in whatever different bodies they are, enter Krishna and become one with him, just as offerings made into the sacrificial fire accompanied by mantras enter and become one with fire.

12

Draupadi said:

In insects, in birds, in wild beasts, and among demons, ghouls or men, wherever I am born, as whatever I am born, this is the blessing that I seek from you, oh Keshava! In every one of those births, may I have unswerving, unshakeable devotion to you and to you alone.

13

Subhadra said:

A single act of prostrating before Krishna is equal to taking the ritual bath at the end of ten ashwamedha sacrifices and earning merit from them all. In fact, the one who performs ten sacrifices is born again, but the one who prostrates before Krishna has no more births.

14

Abhimanyu said:

Govinda, Oh Govinda, Oh Hari, Oh Destroyer of Mura; Govinda, Oh Govinda, Oh Mukunda, Krishna; Govinda, Oh Govinda, Oh Wielder of the Discuss; Govinda, Oh Govinda, my salutations to you again and again, forever!

15

Dhrishtadyumna said:

Oh Rama, Oh Narayana, Vasudeva, Govinda, Oh Dweller of Vaikuntha; Oh Mukunda, Oh Krishna, Keshava, Oh Lord without Beginning or End; Oh Nrisimha, Oh Vishnu! Protect me! Save me! For, Oh lord, I have been bitten by the serpent of samsara, of worldliness.

16

Satyaki said:

Oh Lord Beyond Knowing, Oh Hari, Oh Vishnu, Krishna, Damodara; Oh Achyuta, Govinda, Oh Beginningless and Endless One, Lord of all! Oh Vasudeva! May these salutations be to you!

17

Uddhava said:

The man who gives up Krishna and worships other gods is a fool for certain; for, afflicted by thirst, he digs a well on the banks of the Ganga!

18

Dhaumya said:

Oh Krishna, Oh Destroyer of Evil Men! On the banks of rivers and of ponds, while sitting or lying down, in the day or at night, if I have done even small little acts of merit as I understood them, Oh Lord, may those deeds please you!

19

Sanjaya said:

Struck by calamity, dejected and despondent, shattered, scared, trapped in front of a tiger or in other terrible plights, let people just repeat the name of Narayana, and they will be free from sorrow, and happy.

20

Akrura said:

I am but a slave of the slave of Narayana. Men have no lord other than you, nor has the universe another lord. And for that reason, I consider myself the most blessed of men in the world.

21

Virata said:

Those devotees of Vasudeva, the serene ones with minds resting in him, may I be a slave of the slave of them in birth after birth.

22

Bheeshma said:

When times are contrary to me, when relatives and friends have left me, in such times, Oh Krishna, lover of those who take refuge in you, show mercy to me and protect me!

23

Drona said:

Of the demons who have been killed by the wielder of the discuss, Oh Janardana, Oh Lord of the Three Worlds, each and every one has gone to the sacred world of Vishnu after his death. Even your anger, Oh Lord, is blessing!

24

Kripa said:

This, Oh Destroyer of Madhu and Kaitabha, is the only blessing that I pray for in this birth: Remember me, Oh Lord of the Universe, as the servant of your servant!

25

Ashwatthama said:

Oh Govinda, Oh Keshava, Oh Janardana, Vasudeva, Oh Lord of the Universe, Supreme Universal Being! Oh Destroyer of Madhu, Lord with Infinite Forms, Oh Padmanabha, Oh Purushottama! Give me the honour of servitude to you! Oh Narayana, Oh Achyuta, Oh Nrisinha! Salutations to you again and again!

26

Karna said:

I speak of none other than you; nor do I hear or think of anyone else! I remember no one else, nor do I meditate upon or depend on anyone else! In devotion, in deep

reverence, I constantly meditate upon your lotus feet. Oh Shrinivasa, Oh Purushottama, make me your servant!

27

Dhritarashtra said:

Salutations to you! Salutations to the one who became Vamana, to Narayana of boundless valour, to the wielder of the bow sharga, of the wheel, the sword and mace! Salutations to that supreme being!

28

Gandhari said:

You alone are my mother, you alone my father; you alone are my kinsman, you alone my friend; you alone are my knowledge, you alone my wealth! You are everything to me, Oh Lord of Lords, you alone!

29

Drupada said:

Oh Lord of Sacrifices, Oh Govinda, Oh Madhava, Ananta, Keshava, Krishna, Vishnu, Hrishiksha, Oh Vasudeva! Salutations to you!

30

Jayadratha said:

Salutations to Lord Krishna, to the Supreme Brahman, to the Lord with Boundless Power! Salutations to the Lord of Yoga! Salutations to the One who is Yoga Itself! I have surrendered myself to you, Oh Lord, and I seek refuge in you!

31

Vikarna said:

Salutations to Krishna, son of Vasudeva, the delighter of Devaki, the child of the cowherd Nanda, to Govinda! Salutations again and again!

32

Virata said:

Salutations to Lord worshipped by the Brahmins, to the well-wisher of Brahmins and cows! Salutations to the Benefactor of the World, to Krishna, to Govinda! Salutations again and again!

33

Shalya said:

The wearer of yellow garments, Lord who is beautiful like the hemp flower; those who bow down to this Govinda, will no more come to know any fear.

34

Balarama said:

Oh Krishna, Oh Krishna, Merciful One! Become you the refuge of the helpless ones who are deep in the ocean of samsara! Oh Purushottama, Oh Lord, be pleased!

35

Krishna said:

Oh Krishna! Oh Krishna! Oh Krishna! Those who remember me thus every day, them I pull out from hell, even as a lotus flower is pulled out from water.

36

Krishna said:

Lifting my hands up in the air, I make this promise: those men who call out to me by saying Oh Mukunda, Oh Narasimha, Janardana; those embodied beings who repeat my name every day, whether in death or in war, I give them all whatever they wish for, even if they be worthless as rocks or chunks of timber!

37

Ishwara said:

Oh son, say Narayana just once, and it is like bathing in the Ganga and all the other sacred waters for the endless period of three kalpas!

38

Soota said:

It is there that the sacred Ganga flows, there the holy Yamuna, the Godavari and the Saraswati! Every single teertha⁵ is to be found there where the exalted story of the Never-faltering God, Achyuta, is being narrated!

39

Yama said:

As the man is being roasted in hell, I, lord of the world of the dead, ask him one question: "Why didn't you worship Lord Keshava, the destroyer of afflictions?"

40

Narada said:

When devotion to Krishna is born in the hearts of men, remember, it is as a result of his sins being destroyed through austerities, devotions and meditations practiced over a thousand previous births.

41-42

Prahlada said:

Oh lord, this is my prayer to you: as I wander from birth to birth in different species, in each one of them, oh Achyuta, may I have unshakeable devotion in you. The unswerving love that the ignorant have for sensual pleasures, may I have the same steadfast love for you! May that love never leave my heart! May I remember you constantly!

43

Vishwamitra said:

What use is charity, what use bathing in sacred waters? What use is performing austerities, what use sacrifices? What use are these to the man who regularly meditates on Lord Narayana with a mind that never swerves from him?

44

Jamadagni said:

Every day is a festival, every single day auspicious, to those in whose heart dwells the auspicious lord, Hari, the abode of all that is good.

45

Bharadwaja said:

Those in whose heart stays Lord Janardana of the hue of the blue lotus, profits are theirs forever, victory is theirs forever, and there is never a chance of their ever failing.

46

Gautama said:

Giving a hundred thousand cows in charity, bathing in Kashi at every eclipse, living in Prayag or elsewhere on the banks of the Ganga for a full kalpa⁶, performing ten thousand sacrifices, giving in charity a mountain of gold – all these yield no more than just remembering the name of Govinda, the Lord, does.

47-48

Agni

Remember Govinda at every bath, repeat his name constantly, meditate upon him perpetually, and sing his name continuously. The three-syllabled name of Govinda is the Supreme Brahman, those three syllables are the highest. And for that reason, whoever takes that name, qualifies to be born into the world of Brahman, to realize the Ultimate Truth.

49

Veda Vyasa said:

The lord Achyuta is the wishing tree Kalpavriksha that grants you all your wishes. The lord Ananta is the wishing cow Kamadhenu that gives you whatever you ask for. The lord Govinda is the thought gem Chintamani that yields its possessor all desires. Think continuously, therefore, of the name of Hari.

50

Indra said:

Victory! Victory to the lord who is the son of Devaki! Victory! Victory to Krishna, the brightest lamp of the Vrishnis! Victory! Victory to the soft-limbed one of the hue of the dark cloud! Victory! Victory to Mukunda, who reduced the load on the earth!

51

Pippalayana said:

Salutations to Hari, the great teacher! Salutations to the one who incarnated as Nrisimha! Salutations to the one whose emblem is the eagle Garuda! Salutations to the one who is the medicine for the disease called samsara, who ends the three types of afflictions⁷! Salutations to Krishna, who frees us from every disease and every affliction whether it is born of the scorpion, the snake, fire, water and so forth.

52

Avihotra said:

Oh Krishna! May the royal swan of my mind enter the nest of your lotus feet today itself! How will I be able to remember you when my breath leaves my body, as afflicted I will

be then by the three problems born of phlegm, air and bile, and my throat choked by these?

53

Vidura said:

The one thing that supports my life is the name of Hari! His name alone is life to me! In the dark age of Kali, there is no refuge other than that! Indeed there is no refuge other than that!

54

Vasistha said:

The man whose tongue utters the blessed name of Krishna, a million terrible sins of his are burnt to ashes in an instant!

55

Arundhati said:

Salutations to Krishna, son of Vasudeva! To Hari, the supreme self! Salutations to the destroyer of the sins of those who prostrate before him! Salutations to Govinda again and again!

56

Kashyapa said:

Just remember Krishna and the cage of sin that holds us prisoner shatters into a hundred pieces like a mountain struck by lightning!

57-58

Duryodhana

I know what is right but I am not able to practice it; I know what is wrong and I am not able to keep away from it. I act as I am directed to by some mysterious power that is seated in my heart. I am but a machine, Oh Madhusoodana! As I am a machine, so you are the one who runs this machine. Please forgive the faults of this machine! Please do not blame me for what I do!

59

Bhrigu said:

Your name is enough, Govinda! Your name is a hundred times more than you! With its mere utterance, you bless the devotee with the eight-limbed yoga and give liberation to him!

60

Lomasha said:

I bow down to the lotus feet of Narayana! I worship Narayana constantly I repeat the pure name of Narayana! I remember the changeless essence of Narayana!

61

Shaunaka said:

By whose mere remembrance constant devotion is born in one's heart, devotion that gives you everything that is good, that eternal, unborn Person, that Hari, I take refuge in.

62

Garga said:

Here is a great wonder! The name of Narayana exists, people have their tongues under their control; and yet people fall into the terrible hell!

63

Dalbhya said:

What use are the many mantras to the man devoted to Janardna, when the mantra 'namo narayanaya' that grants every desire exists?

64

Vaishampayana said:

This is my belief: Where there is Krishna, the lord of the yoga; where there is the bow-wielding Partha; there exists prosperity, victory, glory, steadfast justice.

65

Agni said:

Hari takes away the sins even of the wicked man who remembers him. Doesn't fire burn even when touched unintentionally?

66

Parameshwara said:

The man who has uttered the two syllables of Hari even once has already kept ready a retinue to escort him to liberation.

67

Pulastya said:

Oh tongue! Knower of the essence of rasa,⁸ always fond of sweetness! Drink you continuously the nectar called Narayana.

68

Vyasa said:

This is the truth! This is the truth! This is the truth! This alone is the truth and nothing but the pure truth! There is no scripture superior to the Vedas and there is no God higher than Keshava.

69

Dhanvantari said:

I speak the truth, and the truth alone! All diseases are destroyed by the medicine of the utterance of the names Achyuta, Ananta, Govinda!

70

Markandeya said:

How is it possible that you do not think even briefly of Vasudeva, the guru of the whole world, who grants heaven, who grants liberation, who grants happiness?

71

Agastya said:

Wherever embodied beings think of Vishnu for a moment or even for half a moment, that is where the sacred teertha of Kurukshetra is, that is where Prayag is, and that is where the holy Naimisha is!

72

Vamadeva said:

Let a mortal think of Vishnu for a moment or even for half a moment and he gets what he desires for a million, million, million years!

73

Shuka said:

Having churned all the scriptures, thought about them again and again, I see this one truth emerging from it all: the lord Narayana is to be meditated upon constantly.

74

Mahadeva said:

When the body has turned old and decrepit, when it has been afflicted by diseases, the medicine is the water of the Ganga and the physician, Lord Narayana, Hari.

75

Shaunaka said:

Let me tell you this: If the devotees of Vishnu worry about food and clothing, they are doing it without any need. The lord Vishnu sustains the whole universe; is he going to neglect his own devotees?

76

Sanatkumara said:

The wielder of the conch and the mace, whose vehicle is the eagle Garuda, may that Vishnu, holding his conch, discus, mace and lotus, be pleased with me!

77-82

Phalashruti

[The Benefits]

Thus the gods beginning with Brahma and the great seers rich in austerities sing the praise of the best of the celestials, the glorious Narayana.

This hymn, sacred, merit-filled, yielder of a long life, destroyer of every sin in its entirety, eliminator of nightmares, was thus sung by the Pandavas.

The one who reads this after getting up in the morning and having become clean and pure, his mind fixed on the lord, attains the result of giving a hundred thousand cows in charity with accompanying rituals done as prescribed.

The one who recites this song too attains the same result; freed from all sins, he attains to the world of Vishnu.

The Ganga, the Gita, the Gayatri, Govinda, Garudadhvaja – the one who is with these five, all beginning with 'g', is never born again.

The one who reads every day this Gita, or even one verse or half a verse of this, is freed from all sins and he goes straight to the heaven of Vishnu.

Om Tat Sat!

¹ Bheema

² Arjuna

³ Nakula and Sahadeva

⁴ Clan, family; also caste

⁵ Sacred place for ritual purificatory baths

⁶ A kalpa is practically an endless amount of time. It is a day of Brahma and equal to one thousand yugas or four thousand, three hundred and twenty million years.

⁷ Adhyatmika, born of oneself; adhibhautika, born of the world made of the five elements; adhidaivika, born of divine reasons

⁸ taste, spiritual bliss