**Episode 19 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 19)**

**TOPICS:** The importance of understanding **dharma** and the nature of God through **Shastra** (scriptures); why **Dhruthrashtra** was unable to comprehend the **Bhagavad Gita** despite hearing it; and how to properly practice spiritual and virtuous acts.

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Sanjaya**, **Dhruthrashtra**, **Gita Jayanti**, **Arjuna**, **Sri Krishna**, **Dharma** (righteous conduct), **Shastra** (scripture), **Tattva** (eternal truth), **Kosala**, **Mithila**, **Kuru**, **Panchala**, **Thamas** (dullness/ignorance), **Ramayana**, **Sita**, **Hanuman**, **Vedanta**, **Upanishad**, **Pundram** (vertical mark), **Mantram** (sacred chant), **Ekadasi**, **Prasadam** (sanctified food)

**Jai Srimannarayana!**

**Priya Bhagavad Bandhus,**

**Sanjaya** narrated **Bhagavad Gita** to **Dhruthrashtra**. It gradually spread across the world, reaching us. **Sanjaya** narrated it on **sukla ekadasi**, the 11th day, in **Margasirsha** month. Therefore, everyone graciously celebrates this as **Gita Jayanti**. However, **Bhagavad Gita** was actually born on the first of the month. We discussed this earlier. It was during the last moments of **Amavasya**, no moon day, in **Karthik** Month. **Margasirsha** had just began. **Sri Krishna** conversed with **Arjuna** on the battlefield. We have described how it happened.

**Arjuna** understood what **Sri Krishna** explained, but, when **Sanjaya** explained the same, the foolish **Dhruthrashtra** did not understand. Hence, **Bhagavad Ramanuja** refers to **Dhruthrashtra** as **sarvatmana andhaha**, blind in every sense. He is not only visually impaired, but also lacks the ability to comprehend. Some people may be visually blind but they have a heart that works well, and makes them respond accordingly. **Dhruthrashtra** was also blind from within. He could not understand what was correct despite advice from many well-wishers. **Sanjaya** clearly stated to **Dhruthrashtra**, “Your children cannot win the war,” yet, he didn’t grasp this.

There is a saying…

**ingitha jnaha kosalascha, prekshitha jnastu maidhilaha, ardhoktha kuru panchalaha…**

ingitha jnaha kosalasha

Those from the Kosala, belonging to the Sri Rama dynasty, can understand one’s thoughts based on his/her behavior. Hence, Sri Ramachandra was able to understand Mother Sita based on her actions, and accordingly, advised her after the coronation ceremony.

prekshitha jnastu maidhilaha

People from Mithila, hailing from Mother Sita’s homeland, can understand one’s intention by noticing facial expressions. Mother Sita looked at Sri Rama and understood his intent - He expected Her to offer the pearl necklace to someone. She asked who it should be. Sri Rama gave the qualities of the deserving one. She understood and gracefully offered it to Hanuman. They are called ‘prekshi thagnis’, those who understand by looking at the other person. People from Kosala understand the intent of a person by their ingitha (behavior). People from Mithila do so by prekshitha (seeing).

People from **Kuru** and **Panchala** are **ardhokthaha** - they understand intent when one verbally explains half of it. They need not be told everything verbally.

purnokthyapi nadakshinaha

People living below the Vindhya Mountains, i.e. all of us in the southern states, don’t understand even after explaining the entire situation. Perhaps people from North India might have composed this to tease the people of Telugu states. Actually, people from Telugu states are very intelligent and clever.

Keeping this aside...

**Dhruthrashtra** did not understand anything even after **Sanjaya** thoroughly explained everything. Hence, they jokingly say **Dhruthrashtra** may have been friends with people from Telugu states. He asked **Sanjaya**, “How did you understand **tattvam** so well?” **Sanjaya** replied, “**sastrath vedmi janardhanam**.”

He understands God as the proposer of **shastra** (scriptures) or only through **shastra**. It means God’s nature can be understood only through **shastra**. If we want to understand God, it is possible only through **shastra**. We cannot speculate his qualities through our own perception, or physical senses. It’s not possible. It’s also wrong to declare, “I will accept only when I see visually and when I feel with my senses.” **Sanjaya** said, “**sastrath vedmi janardhanam**.”

**Shastra** instructs what is good for us, and we should behave accordingly, not via our own judgement, even if it feels right. **Shastra** defines boundaries and limits. It says what to do and what to avoid. If it says to do something to some extent, do only that much. We should not conclude with our judgement, “the more the better”. Do not do as you wish, do only as much instructed. We should not try to do more than what’s required.

In **Vedas**, for each **seva** (service), there is a requirement to chant a particular **mantra** from one point to another. It's not allowed to shorten or lengthen it even when incomplete in such instances. These are like passwords. They don’t work when adding additional characters. I.e., the password contains 5 numbers, but if you enter 9 numbers, it won’t respond and simply gets rejected. There is a **mantra** to chant while applying **pundram** (the vertical body mark) to Lord, ‘**vishno rarataamasi vishnoh’**... even though the **mantra** is incomplete. The full **mantra** continues, “**vishnoraratamasi vishnoh prushtamathe vishnossaini petrestho vishnossyurasi vishnoh…**” We may ask, “why not chant the entire **mantra**? Isn’t it good to chant the entire **mantra**?” Irrelevant if good or not, we must chant only the part required for a given task. Just because we know the entire **mantra**, it does not mean that you chant it in this instance. Perhaps the entire **mantra** has applicability in some other instance.

This is **shastra**. Hence, even when practicing **dharma**, we must follow instructions in **shastra**. **Sanjaya** says, “**Maharaja**, that’s what I practice. I have trust in God. You may follow **dharma** as well, however...”

Also, when it comes to purity of heart, people say that it need not be shown, it is all internal. No, we must take **shastra** as the reference here as well. We need to attain internal purity in the way recommended by **shastra**, not in our own way. One may argue, “I used sanitizer for 20 mins or 2 hours.” How long is not important, it is enough to simply follow the recommended guidelines in this instance.

**sastrath vedmi janardhanam**

We discussed, **bhakti** means love. Even when expressing love, we should express it to the extent defined in **shastra**. Just because you love someone, it does not mean that you go beyond defined limits. That is **shastra**, one that defines/instructs. Hence, with matters related to God, soul and senses, (which are not seen with the naked eye) we should never say “I will do as I wish”.

What then?

**sastrath vedmi janardhanam**

Learn what **shastra** teaches about how to use and regulate the senses. Practice it. Learn what **shastra** says about how to channel the **manas** (inner heart). Implement it. Learn what **shastra** says about the nature of love and how it works. Implement it. Learn what **shastra** says about **dharma**. Implement it.

Hence, Mother **Sita** says to **Sri Rama**, “Where did these rules come from and what are they?”

**kharsaithva yadhividhi prapyathe nipunaihe dharmaha**

She means, “Dear **Ramachandra**, good deeds and righteous activities do not result from what we do.”

niyamaihi thaisthaihi kharsaithva yadhividhi.

Whatever boundaries shastra has set for each activity, stay within it. I.e., fasting is recommended on ekadasi. It is wrong not to wash your face because you might accidentally get water into your mouth. Shastra says even on the day of ekadasi, one must perform all daily activities like cleansing oneself, showering, sandhya vandanam and worshipping God. In the process, one must take tirtham and prasadam (sanctified water and food offered in service of God). One must take food as prasadam, not to satiate the tongue or hunger. If one eats only to satiate hunger, no matter what day it is, it becomes a sinful act. It is purified food offered to God and therefore to be offered to God within you. If this limit is crossed, the fast breaks.

niyamaihi thaisthaihi kharas:ithva.

There are rules dictating limits for any activity, only to that extent one must practice.

One must not go beyond and above these defined rules.

dharmah prapyathe

Wise people following this will attain dharma.

na sukha: labyathe: sukham.

People who think that limitless luxury brings happiness, are wrong.

Mother **Sita** explicitly stated this to **Sri Rama** during their **Panchavati** forest days when offering protection to the sages. **Sanjaya** says “As I have faith in **shastra**, I tried to listen to **Sri Krishna** and understand what He was saying in the order prescribed by **shastra**.” “That’s why, Hey **Maharaja**, I could listen to what **Sri Krishna** preached and convey this to you exactly as it is.” The **Bhagavad Gita** with a question from **Dhruthrashtra** who has lost both his physical and internal vision. That is how **Bhagavad Gita** starts. Let’s understand why we must also begin with the same, and continue forward.

**Jai Srimannarayana!**