**Episode 20 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 20)**

**TOPICS:** The significance of the opening verse of the **Bhagavad Gita**; an analysis of **Dhruthrashtra's** question to **Sanjaya** and what it reveals about his character; and the concept of **Dharmakshetra** (field of righteousness).

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Arjuna Vishada Yoga**, **Dhruthrashtra**, **Sanjaya**, **Arjuna**, **Pandavas**, **Kauravas**, **Dharmakshetra**, **Kurukshetra**, **Veda Vyasa**, **Sattvic**, **Rajasic**, **Tamasic**, **Dharma** (righteousness), **Krishna**

**Jai Srimannarayana!**

**Priya Bhagavad Bandhus,**

The first chapter of **Bhagavad Gita** is known by the title, ‘**Arjuna Vishada Yogaha**’. We already discussed that the 700 verses of **Bhagavad Gita** are split into 18 chapters. Each chapter is named ‘**Yoga**’. The first chapter is named ‘**Arjuna Vishada Yogo Nama pradhamodhyayaha**’. Elders decided to start this chapter with the name of **Dhruthrashtra**. Generally, we start any work or event with the name of God for positivity. However, **Bhagavad Gita** begins with the name **Dhruthrashtra**, who was blind both physically and internally. Let’s start following the same path laid by the Elders. We will begin learning the summaries and key points of all the verses as passed onto us by Elders. This is a class. Do not consider it as a discourse or a speech to entice interest. Realizing that **Bharat** has inherited the greatest source of knowledge, we should all try to at least learn our root scripture, **Bhagavad Gita**.

What is it that our **rushis** (sages) like **Veda Vyasa** established and gave us through these scriptures? As its proud descendants let us try to earn the qualification to learn it or at least grasp its surface level meaning. This is an effort in that direction. Let’s attempt to understand the significance and summary of each verse appropriately. Likewise, let us attempt to find any subtleties within. On the off chance that somebody misinterpreted a couple of words here and there, let us try to understand the correct meaning. It is the aspiration of those who shared it, that we ought not to fall into that dilemma. When learning something, let’s have a clear and complete understanding of it. Primarily, we must learn for our understanding. Secondly, when someone else asks us face-to-face what we know of our great **Bhagavad Gita**, we should be able to speak about it with confidence. Let’s try to learn it with that objective. We start with **Dhruthrashtra** as the first word.

‘**Srimad Bhagavad Gita Pradhamodhyayaha Arjuna Vishada Yogaha**’

For each chapter, its number and name are recited. This is for the first chapter. For the second chapter onwards, we use the word ‘**atha**’, meaning ‘the next one’. Thus, the word ‘**atha**’ is not used for the first chapter.

**Pradhamodhyayaha** followed by the name of the chapter **Arjuna vishada yogaha**. Similarly, we end each chapter with a notation. For the second chapter, we say ‘**atha dwitiyodhyayaha sankhya yogaha**’. Therefore... ‘**Atha**’ is used for the rest of the chapters indicating ‘next one in order’. In the first chapter, the first verse itself is significant. This **sloka** reveals a question from **Dhruthrashtra**.

dhruthrashtra uvacha

Dhruthrashtra called upon Sanjaya and inquired...

dharma kshethre kurukshethre samavetha yuyuthsavaha |

mamakah pandavas chaiva kim akurvatha sanjaya! ||

"Hey **Sanjaya**, they have assembled at **Kurukshetra**, where **dharma** (righteousness) is protected. Why did they assemble? Is it why? Or what did they do?"

yuyuthsavaha samavetha

"With a desire to wage a war."

"Who all assembled?"

mamakah pandavas chaiva

"My people, and Pandavas too."

**Pandavas** are his people. **Duryodhana** and team are also his people. However, he mentioned his people and the **Pandavas** assembled to fight each other.

kim akurvatha sanjaya

"Kim akurvatha, what did they do?"

This is the question. It seems absurd. He doesn’t seem wise in asking this question. He clearly mentioned that they assembled on the battlefield to fight. He then asked “what did they do?” **akurvatha** means ‘did’. **kim akurvatha** means ‘what did they do?’ When people assemble at a war zone, they battle. They don't go for lunch or take a nap. Some people take rest while working. However, there is zero chance to rest or play in a war zone. They need to battle. Wherever we go to accomplish a task, we must be working on the task appropriate to that place. We all know this. A person like **Dhruthrashtra** also must know this.

yuyuthsavaha samavetha

assembled, desiring to fight, both my people and Pandavas.

kim akurvatha

"What did they do, Sanjaya?"

The nature of this question reveals **Dhruthrashtra’s** mean nature. How? He began by asserting that this is a **dharma kshethra**, the place enhancing one’s **buddhi** (intellect). One should understand what ‘enhance’ means. When one joins this place, his innate nature will grow. A **sattvic** (good) person becomes more **sattvic**. A **rajasic** (ego-driven) person becomes more **rajasic**. A **tamasic** (ignorant) person becomes more **tamasic**. “My sons, **Kauravas**, arrived here with a firm intention for battle. Thus, their desire to fight grows multifold.” Then again, **Pandavas** are good-natured and peace-loving people. They have no desire to fight and see bloodshed. They preserve peace. They are of the type ‘when slapped on one cheek, they show the second one as well.’ When they are in this **kshetra**, this nature will be enhanced.

Thus, **Dhruthrashtra** thought that his people would win the kingdom so easily that not a strand of hair on their heads would be lost. That’s because of the nature of the **kshetra**. It is **dharmakshetra**! Thus, what would it, the **kshetra** do? “This place will make **Pandavas** soft-hearted, wanting no bloodshed. They would rather beg if required, and halt the war by any means. This would be the effect of **kshetra** on them. Whereas my people, **Kauravas**, will not back off. Therefore, there is no question of the war beginning. It’s a walkover for **Kauravas**.” This is what **Dhruthrashtra** assumed, and it began exactly the same way.

**Arjuna** did not want to fight. He felt, “What is the use of killing everyone? What is the use of the kingdom after killing those I care for?” “I can’t live ruling a kingdom acquired by bloodshed. I don’t want it.”

ka prithis syath janardana

"Where is the bliss in this? I don't need this any longer."

sreyo bhokthum bhaiksham apiha loke

"Begging is far superior than war- I don't need this."

“Luxurious or not, we don’t need anything. It’s okay for us to live the way we are now.” **Dhruthrashtra** guessed that these thoughts would arise in the minds of **Pandavas** and it was precisely their reaction. **Sri Krishna** was there leading **Pandavas**. He ensured what needed to be done was done. Otherwise, **Kauravas** would have exiled **Pandavas** for another 12 or 13 years to forests. They would have neither given a chance for them to enter the kingdom nor let them live peacefully there.

The first verse begins with ‘**dharma kshethre**’. Then ‘**kuru kshethre**’. King **Kuru** was the progenitor of all assembled. Hence, it is **dharma kshethre**. All are assembled here.

kim akurvata

"What did they do?"

Sounds funny. An inappropriate question when they have assembled to fight a battle - a better question would have been ‘**katham akuruta** - how did they fight?’ When one goes to a dining hall, it makes sense to ask what they had to eat, not what they did. Similarly, **katham akuruta** should be asked, not **kim akurvata**. Here, **Dhruthrashtra's** malevolent expectations are clear. **Pandavas** won’t fight. **Kauravas** will easily win. His malicious mood is uncovered by another word. Let’s discuss in our next session.

**Jai Srimannarayana!**