**Episode 21 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 21)**

**TOPICS:** The profound significance of **Kurukshetra** as a **Dharmakshetra** (field of righteousness), its connection to ancient kings and sages, and an analysis of **Dhruthrashtra's** veiled intent in the opening verse of the **Bhagavad Gita**.

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Kurukshetra**, **Dharmakshetra**, **Dhruthrashtra**, **Sanjaya**, **King Kuru**, **Parasurama**, **Samantha Panchakam**, **Dadhichi**, **Indra**, **Pithru Devatas** (ancestors), **Dharma** (righteousness), **Sathra Yagna**, **Amavasya**, **Pandavas**, **Kauravas**

**Jai Srimannarayana!**

**Priya Bhagavadbandhus,**

Let's understand a few interesting facts from chapter 1, verse 1 of **Bhagavad Gita**.

We begin reciting **Bhagavad Gita** with the name of **Dhruthrashtra**, who is blind in every way (physically and internally).1 We will understand why later.

**Dhruthrashtra** asked **Sanjaya**, “**Pandavas** and **Kauravas** gathered on the battlefield to fight each other. What did they do?”

As is known, people go to a battlefield to fight.

However, **Dhruthrashtra** did not ask how **Pandavas** or **Kauravas** were doing, nor what each one was doing. However, he asked what they were all doing on the whole.

His intention was to know if the righteous nature in **Pandavas** grew, and the selfish nature in **Kauravas** grew. Consequently, he wanted to know if **Pandavas** sacrificed the kingdom and opted for exile, resulting in **Kauravas** regaining their glory, power and kingdom without struggle. This was the ulterior selfish motive of **Dhruthrashtra**.

Therefore, his question to **Sanjaya** was...

kim akurvatha

what did they do?

The thought of asking such a question must have originated from the effect of the battlefield, **Kurukshetra**. To describe how **Kurukshetra** was he used a great adjective for the place, in the beginning of his question.

dharmakshethre

this place is the abode of righteousness.

What is the greatness of **Kurukshetra**?

Why did it become **Dharmakshetra**, the land of righteousness? This is something we need to understand.

King **Kuru** was the main root ancestor of both **Pandavas** and **Kauravas**.2 He was born to **Samvarana** and **Thapathi**.3

During his time, **Kuru** had ploughed this land with an intention that whoever takes birth here should attain heaven. He did not want anyone born on his land to go to hell. Such was his magnanimity. If rulers are this broad-minded, their citizens are truly blessed. They need not wait for any heaven; they will be happy here itself.

However, we are all aware of our rulers and their apathy these days.

In the bygone days, King **Kuru** looked after his subjects with such generosity. So, he ploughed the entire land. By ploughing, he made the land and the nation more prosperous. Hence the name, **Kurukshetra**.

While **Kuru** was at it, **Indra** forbade him many times, as it would increase the inhabitants in heaven. This will cut down facilities and cause inconvenience to the inhabitants of heaven making it hard to manage.

With utmost belief in **Veda** and with great persistence, King **Kuru** went ahead with ploughing the land. Witnessing the undying will of **Kuru**, **Indra** blessed him with a boon.

“Whoever leaves the body here with an empty stomach (**nirahara**) will attain heaven.”

Not only this, since this land is vast, when there comes a need to fight a battle here, all the warriors who die in the battle here will also attain heaven.

Due to **Indra's** boon, **Kurukshetra** became **Dharmakshetra**, the land of righteousness.

There is another historical episode that speaks about the profound importance of this land.

We have all heard of **Parasurama** or **Bhargavarama**. The implacable person that he was, he held **Parasu**, the axe. Wielding it on his back, he walked the entire earth. He is named **Trisaptakruthvaha**, meaning he walked the entire earth 21 times. Why?

To find and behead the rulers who demeaned **Vedic** practices, or those who belittle the pious people learning **Vedas**. Beheading them was his mission. So great was **Bhargavarama**. He was aggressive and did not tolerate immoral attitudes in anyone. .

He walked 21 times around the earth to uproot unjust rulers and those who are against **Vedas**, practiced bad deeds. By this mission, he expunged those who caused suffering to mother earth. In this process, he created 5 lakes containing the blood of the tyrannous rulers of mother earth. He named them **Samantha Panchakam**. He created this as an offering to **pithru devathas**, forefathers... for the love of his father, a saint who lost his life due to a despot known as **Kartha Viryarjuna**. To alleviate his fury and to free the rest of the earth from such faults, not only did he kill **Kartha Viryarjuna** but he created the **Samantha Panchakam** from the blood of such rulers.

He was a great person for having offered **tharpanas**, gratitudinal offerings and thus provided peace to his ancestors. The **kshetram’s** significance lies in its ability to satisfying the ancestors.

What does this mean? If our ancestors are happy, then our activities in this current birth go smoothly.

Sometimes, we put in all the effort and follow the right processes. Yet we do not attain success in our work. It looks as if success is round the corner, but it doesnʼt happen. We reach close but it is elusive at the last moment. This is something that most people experience many times in their life. We are not aware of why this happens. According to the scriptures, this happens because our attitude towards ancestors was not justified.

If we can please our ancestors, by offering **tharpanas**, offerings or performing **havan**, fire sacrifice, we can then get past the obstacles in achieving our goals. It can be business, education or any other endeavor. Maybe your child is well educated and beautiful but somehow not able to find a suitable match for marriage. Such problems can be resolved when one clears the fault of not honoring ancestors.

When these offerings are made to ancestors in a land like **Kurukshetra**, they become much more fruitful. This is why many great sages and saints have chosen **Kurukshetra** to perform **dhirgha sathra yagam**, which can last a year or longer.

Some **yagas** are performed for half a day, a day or two or three or five or nine or eleven days. Some are performed for as long as a year. If a **yajna** crosses one year, it is termed as ‘**dhirgha sathra yagam**’. Such **yajnas** are performed with many participants, both donors and doers. Such **yajnas** are termed **sathra yajnas**. If it lasts a long time, it is termed **dhirgha sathram**.

Many people performed **dhirgha sathra yagas** in **Kurukshetra**. Hence, **Kurukshetra** became the land of righteousness.4

There is one more reason why **Kurukshetra** has powerful energy. In ancient times, there lived a great saint called **Dadhichi**.5 **Dadhichi** was known for his sacrifice.6 **Indra** and **devathas** (God’s administrative force) requested **Dadhichi**, “Please give us your backbone so we could use it as a weapon to win against our enemies. For our sake, donate your spinal cord”. Reflecting on how the world would benefit through them, **Dadhichi** not only convinced his pregnant wife, but also arranged his own pyre for the ultimate sacrifice.

He sacrificed his body, so his spinal cord could be used as a weapon to fight evil. All the other bones from his body were made as weapons to support **devathas**, God's administrative force. So that they could fight the evil forces, much like the present day pandemic COVID-19. It was troubling the whole world; a vaccine was needed to destroy it. That vaccine was the great sage **Dadhichi’s** spinal cord. We don't have a perfect solution yet, but **devathas** obtained their vaccine through **Dadhichi** to fight their evil.

Such was **Dadhichi’s** benevolence; he sacrificed himself for the well-being of the world.7

We all heard of **Ramanujacharya**. History tells us that he was willing to accept permanent hell as a result of sharing the sacred **manthra** which begets liberation to humanity. Even later after many ages, such sages remained an inspiration for **Ramanujacharya**.

Before **Dadhichi** sacrificed himself per **Indra’s** request, he did not forget to appease his ancestors. He made a wish to **devathas** to conjoin all rivers to this **Kurukshetra** to perform sacred rites. With the precious waters from these rivers, he made offerings to his ancestors on **amavasya**, no moon day of the lunar cycle.

Henceforth, to this day, **Kurukshetra** remains the favored destination for making offerings to our ancestors on **amavasya**. It is also the destination for scientists to observe solar and lunar eclipses.

Hence, **Kurukshetra** became the celestial destination where many rivers converge and where people make offerings to their ancestors on **amavasya**.8 This is why **Kurukshetra** is named **sannithi**, confluence of many rivers, where the greatest of events occurred.

Knowing the importance and the effect of this land, they decided to have the war here. Because of this, **Pandavas** and **Kauravas** waged war in **Kurukshetra**.9

Scriptures established that anyone who leaves the body here, due to any cause, will surely attain the heavenly abode.

Thus, **Dhruthrashtra** thought his sons, **Kauravas**, would regain the reign of **Kuru** Kingdom, and **Pandavas** would opt for exile.

kim akurvatha sanjaya

in addition, Dhruthrashtra had another ulterior motive in mind.

It is evident in the words he used. What are those words?

Let's discuss further.

**Jai Srimannarayana!**