**Episode 15 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 15)**

**TOPIC:** What is an Upanishad? Why is Bhagavad Gita also called an Upanishad?

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Upanishad**, **Vedas**, **Karma**, **Moksha** (liberation), **Brahma Tattvam** (supreme reality), **Narayana**, **Devatas** (divine energies), **Guru**, **Ramunajacharya**, **Yoga Shastra**, **Arjuna**, **Arjuna Vishada Yoga**, **Karma Yoga**, **Sankhya Yoga**, **Jiva** (soul), **Atma** (soul), **Atma-sakshatkaram** (self-realization)

**Jai Srimannarayana!**

**Priya Bhagavad Bandhus,**

**Vedas** are divine knowledge necessary for humans.1 **Veda** translates to, “that which teaches, enlightens.” **Veda** is the topmost instruction imparting essential knowledge across all aspects. The specific parts of the **Vedas** containing teachings that can uplift us and release us from **karmic** bondage are together termed as **upa-nishad**.

In general, each **Veda** contains a small portion of **Upanishad**. **Veda** is a treasure trove of knowledge accessible as 1131 distinct branches. These 1131 branches are categorized into four distinct sections – **Rig**, **Yajus**, **Sama**, and **Atharva**. In each branch, the essential philosophical aspect of its teachings is known as **Upanishad**.2 **Upanishad** is that which depicts necessary knowledge directly, rather than through indirect methods.

Humans have intelligence, higher than that of other living beings.3 Thus, humans have the ability to ponder over certain questions. 'Who am I, where did I come from, why did I come, what is my destination, how do I reach it, what do I do there?' **Veda** is knowledge intended to put this innate human ability into action. Since one lives in this body, **Vedas** also provide necessary knowledge to support the needs of the body during one’s journey.

The part of **Vedas** providing knowledge of worldly aspects is separated and is named **Purva Bhaga**. Since we need a healthy body to achieve anything, this **Purva Bhaga** shows how to fulfill bodily needs. This is the former part of **Vedas**. After leading life in this manner for some time, questions arise. ‘Is this the extent of life – constantly working to fulfill material needs?’ ‘Who is within the body experiencing all of this? Who am I?’ When this curiosity is aroused, when the question ‘how did I arrive here?’ is evoked… …when one starts searching for answers to ‘who am I, how did I arrive, who brought me, what is my destination, what do I do there’… …then he makes an effort to learn **Uttara Bhaga** of **Vedas**. **Uttara Bhaga**, the latter part of **Vedas**, contain most of what is found in **Upanishads**.

**Upanishads** shed light on two aspects. First, the places one attains after leaving this body. Second, the state of complete release from **karmic** bondage. Once embodied, we reside in the body for some time. It is the same for everyone. Since all of us arrived with a set departure date from these bodies, we must leave at some point. Immediately after leaving this body, a new body is prepared. **Karmic** records force us back into different bodies. Until our **karmic** load is exhausted, new bodies are generated. When one is liberated from that **karmic** bondage, what is the destination? How does one reach there? **Upanishads** detail such aspects.4

They discuss **Brahma Tattvam**, the supreme eternal truth.5 That **Brahma Tattvam** gives the soul a suitable body, providing a strong place, energy and tools required to work for reducing **karmic** bondage. However, why did this Supreme Spirit provide us with all these? What is the purpose of the experiences that come with this body? First, to lead a proper life here, on Earth. If one leads life as it were meant to be, when the soul leaves the body, it attains a state never binding to **karma** ever again. This is the result.

It is not possible to achieve this with our own efforts and desire.

‘eme vesha vrunute: tena labyaha

tasyesha atma vivrunute: tanum swam’

states Upanishad.

**Upanishad** declares, “Your efforts are useless in reaching that state.” There is a method to get there. That is via **Brahma Tattvam**. Though known by many other names, they are all integrated into the name ‘**Narayana**’. **Isha**, **Brahma**, **Jyoti**, **Akasa**, and **Indra** are the other names of that energy in different instances. Like multiple rivers merging into the ocean, all these names merge within the name, ‘**Narayana**’. The soul is able to reach that **Narayana**. **Narayana Tattvam** arranges everything materially required for the soul's journey in the current body.

Upon leaving the body, the soul reaches other planes to exhaust **karma**. In those planes, **devatas** enable experiences for the souls. **Devatas** are the respective energies in different planes enabling the soul to experience **karma**.

**Narayana** resides in all objects on Earth as well.6 Thus, **Narayana** resides in all material objects procured in this lifetime through various activities. **Narayana** resides within **devatas** who enable the experience of pleasures to souls that reach higher planes. Even in these higher planes, we cannot see **Narayana** directly. Here on earth, we perceive Him through various objects. We perceive Him through **devatas** in those higher planes. Our wisdom may not extend so far when trying to see Him through ‘things’. Our perception may be limited to the external appearance of objects. Thus, many people think all are Gods, and thus, equal. In reality, those divine energies are not Gods. They are **devatas**. He resides within these **devatas** and accomplishes specific tasks through them.

We can attain God, not directly, but indirectly. This is termed **sadvaraka** (via something). Even though **Purva Bhaga** describes obtaining **Narayana** via various material energies and **devatas**… …it is still an indirect method of attaining Him. However, with knowledge of **Upanishads**, we can attain **Narayana** directly, rather than by indirect means.7 Here, we use the name **advaraka** (directly via **Upanishads**, not **sadvaraka**). Thus, it’s not necessary to perceive Him through other objects or people. He is clearly visible…

yeha sarvajnaha sarvavith yasya jnana mayam

tapaha tadaikshata bahusyam prayayaha

**Upanishads** reveal **Narayana** directly at various such places, displaying His glories. **Upanishads** are the quintessence of **Vedas** manifesting **Narayana** directly in front of us. Unless one is a true seeker and approaches a **guru**, one cannot attain this. We discussed this many times. **Ramanujacharya** journeyed to his **guru** whenever summoned. 18 times, covering hundreds of miles without irritation, hopelessness, restlessness, or ill feelings - and with full faith. Only after many attempts was he blessed with Guru's teachings. **Upanishads** become available to those with such sincerity. They attain **Narayana** directly, with little effort. Thus, when one has genuine interest, does not mind hard work, seeks Elders (**gurus**)... …and **Guru**, out of generosity, is pleased with the service of the student. He then gives ‘**upa nishidya**’. **Upanishad** is the knowledge imparted when the teacher is pleased with the student who approaches, surrenders, resides, and serves. **Upanishads** present Lord directly and we can experience Him via the teachings of a **guru**.

**Bhagavad Gita** is also referred to as **Upanishad**.8

**narayanah param bramha**

**Bhagavad Gita** establishes **Narayana** as the supreme spirit.9 Starting in the 7th chapter, Lord explains how He resides in various objects. What He does, how He guides this soul back to His abode... …the journey of the soul, how an unrealized soul returns back to this world… …how a realized soul attains Lord’s abode never to return to this plane… …how easy it is to serve and love Lord. The happiness experienced with hard-earned **atma-sakshatkaram** (self-realization), is like the dim shine of a glow worm, whereas the incredible happiness in reaching His abode is brighter than the Sun.

He beautifully explains the importance of devotion and love in the 12th chapter of **Bhagavad Gita**.10 He further elaborates on the same, with six more chapters, 13th to 18th. This philosophy is conveyed so well that one need not look elsewhere. It is laid out so clearly, as if ‘**karatala amalakama**’, accessible directly in our palms. Such a supreme scripture, **Bhagavad Gita** is also named **Upanishad**.11

Other names are **Yoga Shastra**, and **Brahma Vidya**. In various situations, **yoga** comes to our aid. **Yoga** implies a method, a means.12 **Bhagavad Gita** compiled all such means in one place. It taught us how to progress through its levels. Every chapter in **Bhagavad Gita** is a **yoga**. The first chapter is **Arjuna Vishada Yoga** (Arjuna’s sorrow).13 The sorrow of **Arjuna** is also a tool. **Vishada** means crying, sorrow, and grief. How can this become a tool? To know this, we should explore **Bhagavad Gita** to understand. **Sankhya** is one **yoga** (tool). **Karma** is one **yoga**.14 Knowledge is one **yoga**. Restraint of **manas** (mind), is one tool. Knowledge is one tool. Each chapter is a tool. Every chapter is thus named as a type of **yoga**, **sadhana** (tool).15

Arjuna Vishada Yogaha,

Karma Yogaha,

Sankhya Yogaha,

Atma Samyama Yogaha,

Jnana Vijnana Yogaha,

Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yogaha.

Each chapter is suffixed with the term **yoga**. Eighteen primary **yogas** (tools), are explained. Others are described randomly here and there. Thus, Lord presented us with the best scripture called **Bhagavad Gita**. When treated casually, it’s an ordinary scripture. Some consider it a scripture invoking love and devotion, some read it to pass time, some, to acquire wealth, others for various managerial skills. In any manner, **Bhagavad Gita** has the ability and capacity to meet a person's requirements in a particular field. If anyone has interest to pursue beyond, **Bhagavad Gita** is qualified to bestow realization of **tattvam** (the eternal reality). It is the utmost and the most approachable scripture.

Let’s try to savor it bit by bit.

**Jai Srimannarayana!**