**Episode 30 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 30)**

**TOPICS:** The definition of **Vedanta**, the nature of **jiva** (the soul), the concept of **karma**, and the equality of all beings.

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Vedanta**, **Upanishads**, **Jiva**, **Karma**, **Equality**, **Sri Ramanujacharya**

Jai Srimannarayana!

Priya Bhagavad Bandhulara,

Bhagavad Gita is the essence of Vedas, the quintessence of all Upanishads.

One of the shlokas, verses from the invocation prayers eulogizing Bhagavad Gita says...

sarvopanishado: gavo do:gdha: go:pa:la nandanaha

pa:rdho: vathsaha ssudhi:hi bho:ktha: dugdham gi:tha:mrutham mahath

This shloka beautifully explains who bestowed Bhagavad Gita, for whose sake, and how it was given.

Previously, we discussed how Vedas are the base, a rich mine, an ocean of knowledge for all scientific knowledge that man has attained in any field.

**Upanishads** are parts of **Veda** that contain the knowledge of self, that a desirous true seeker must learn by approaching the Elders.

These beautiful **Upanishads** are also referred to as **Vedantam**. Generally **Vedanta** is understood as the ending of **Veda** because **vedantam** = **veda** + **antam** and **anta** translates to ‘the ending’. Hence, many conclude that **Vedantam** is the ending portion of **Vedas**. However, that is not the correct definition because **Upanishads** are found in the ending, middle and other sections of the **Veda**. Not all of them are towards the end, and hence this meaning of ‘**Vedantam**’ does not fit. Thus, we can’t define it this way.

**Antam** means goal. When we start a journey, when does it end? When we start an effort, when does it end? Whenever we attain what we aimed for, that’s when our effort ends. Whenever we reach the desired destination, that’s when our journey ends. So, ‘**prayanantam**’ is the destination we desire to reach. **Prayatanantam** is the fruit we desire to attain with our effort. Similarly, ‘**veda antam**’ is that ultimate knowledge, when learned, puts an end to a seeker’s effort to know everything there is to know. It is that ultimate knowledge encompassing everything and therefore, there is nothing else left to know for the seeker. **Vedantam** is such complete knowledge, the one which is the destination and goal for all knowledge.

Only then, our efforts end. Hence, **Vedantam** doesn’t mean the ending of **Veda**. It is the quintessence of **Vedas**.

Poets during **kavya samayam**, poetic conglomerations, delineate the word **antam** as beautiful and enchanting. They describe, ‘at **vanantam**’ as ‘at that part of the **vana**, forest, which holds all beauty’.

Similarly, Vedantam is that desirable knowledge which is precious and beautiful. What does one find to be most beautiful? We find our own form to be the most beautiful to us. Everyone feels the same. For others it may not appear so. Our appearance might be horrific or disgusting to others. However, we feel we are very beautiful.

As our perception stops at the physical body level, we see one as fair, dark, tall, short, fat or thin. However, the externally visible body is functional because of the invisible ‘I’ tattva (principle), running it.

When present in the body, the body functions. Or else, we call it a dead body. We know this very well. Hence, “I”, which we point to as the indweller, is the life force for the physical body. We call it as **jiva** or God. It is not akin to elements of nature we see around. It transforms the elements of nature as its body and resides within. Of course, **jiva** is not capable of that. Someone else gives it a body and the **jiva** simply resides in it.

We need to use this body carefully. Why? This is given to us as a wonderful means to exhaust burdensome loads of karma, the bondage that keeps us tied to life and death. Thus, it is beneficial to attain knowledge that supports judicious use of this wonderful tool. Therefore, it is dangerous to use intelligence that focuses solely on feeding and satisfying this tool. We need to get rid of such intelligence and inculcate an appropriate perspective. Thus, the real meaning of ‘I’ shouldn’t stop at the physical body, but rather reach the in-dweller of this body.

‘I’ is jiva. Jiva is self-luminous wherever he is. That is called jnana (knowledge). All jivas have jnana.

This jnana is natural for all jivas irrespective of which body they are in. However, depending on the bodies, jnana manifests differently. When we light a lantern, the light of that lamp depends on the cleanliness and color of the glass chimney. If the chimney is green, the light also appears green. If blue, the light appears blue, if red, we feel that there is something red inside. Due to the effect of the changes in the outer body and the impact of karma that is responsible for these changes in the body, we are not able to view the indweller i.e ‘I’. However, we are able to see it in everyone separately. That is, we are able to relate to it, at least to an extent. In fact, there is no difference between the jivas at all. Why? Because, no one gave birth to these jivas. Even God did not create jivas. Surprising! You may ask. “How can you say that? Vedas mention many times they were created by Him.”

thadaikshatha: bahusya:m praja: ye:ye:thi:

everything emanated out of Himself at His own will

srujyatha:

He created

Aren’t all these stating that He creates, sustains and dissolves them. Yes! They all exist eternally, but Bhagavan, God is the one who brings everything together and channels them to their respective bodies. Again, once the purpose is over, He brings everything together and then releases them by giving them new bodies accordingly.

Karma, the resulting state of one’s actions, carried forward from all previous lives, causes changes in bodies. Based on karma, a jiva can be granted the body of an ant, a mosquito, a fly, insect, microbe, flora, fauna, stone, etc.

Irrespective of the body, the Jiva’s original nature remains unchanged. On understanding this, we realise the oneness of all.

If we can understand, see and know the **jiva** in those bodies in their true nature, we see no differences in any of them. They are all the same. This is the philosophy of **samata** (equality) with respect to all **jivas**.

However, **jiva** is not visible to the naked eye, unperceivable through imagination as well. He can be seen only in **shastras** (scriptures). Thus, we can know about him, **jiva**, through **shastras** alone. It’s not reasonable to declare, “I don’t believe this unless I see it, I want to examine him with an apparatus or tools!” Such arguments are of no avail because we accept so many things not seen as **shastras** reveal these. The same **shastra** proclaimed the existence of **jiva** too! How minute he is.

**Jivas** inside the body are equanimous, based on the **samatha** – all have an equanimous relationship with God. All are ‘**sat santanam**’, worthy children of God, Lord’s progeny. Perceiving this relationship, 1000 years ago, **jagadacharya**, Guru to the whole world, **Sri Ramanujacharya** proclaimed, “Everyone is eligible for this **mantra**.”

He called upon everyone and shared the **mantra**, opening the doors of ultimate liberation to everyone.

With no taboos of untouchability, all are equally qualified. Untouchability and other categories are defects limited to the physical body only. In fact, one’s body becomes untouchable if he conducts unnecessary activities. Untouchability sprouts from the behavior of a person. It stems from one’s attitude. An intelligent person can become untouchable if abstaining from righteous deeds. A strong person also becomes untouchable if he fails to use his strength for the benefit of the weak. A person regarding all equally without inhibition becomes worshipable.

Hence, there are no differences between jivas, only the bodies are different for each.

How does a particular jiva get a certain body?

Why did he get it?

Who is this jiva?

Where did he come from?

Why and how did he come into existence?

Who brought him and when?

How is he brought and what does he do?

These are the questions one must seek answers for.

We know how to decorate our body because it is visible. However, it’s perishable. The imperishable and the invisible entities are atma (soul), and paramatma (the supreme soul sustaining all), God. The sections discussing these become the actual beautiful parts of Veda. That is why wherever these valuable sections exist in Veda are named ‘Upanishad’. These sections could be in the beginning of Veda. Ishavasya, however is towards the end of the last chapter in Sukla Yajurveda. This is the one area where it is towards the end. In others, it is in the middle portion. Hence, Vedantam means Upanishad.

Why is it named Vedantam?

It is the part of the Vedas elucidating the meaning of the most important and beautiful tattvam...

... because it explains what we all should know…

… because it is that which can uplift us.

Our ancestors declared that Bhagavad Gita is the essence of Vedanta, Upanishad. We can’t read all of them, but we can read and understand Bhagavad Gita. Hence, let us try to understand the encrypted hidden meaning of Vedanta from it during our sessions.

Jai Srimannarayana!