**Episode 33 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 33)**

**TOPICS:** The importance of understanding the context of scripture, the meaning of a **rahasya** (hidden message), and the dangers of misinterpreting sacred texts.

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Rahasya**, **Context**, **Scripture**, **Interpretation**, **Acharya**, **Sri Ramanujacharya**

Jai Srimannarayana!

Priya bhagavad bandhus,

Chapter 1, verse 14 of **Bhagavad Gita** is a wonderful **shloka**. Just as a small seed contains a large banyan tree, this **shloka** contains the essence of the entire **Bhagavad Gita**. As we say, “**Bhagavad Gita** in a nutshell”...

If we understand this **shloka** (verse) clearly, and expand on it bit-by-bit, it evolves into complete **Bhagavad Gita**. This implies that we should explore the rest of the scripture in alignment with this **shloka**. Generally, certain codes are given to indicate the established essence of a particular scripture. When we understand these codes, we must correlate the remaining content accordingly, without contradiction. We cannot simply pick up some random text here and there and declare it to be the essence of the scripture. It is analogous to having a meal in a systematic way, in the right order, and with the correct combination of items such as rice, curry, lentils, **papad** etc., rather than just individually. Similarly, any scripture contains an essential root element that reveals its comprehensive essence. If we can decode that, everything else comes together effortlessly.

Some “great” people speak about Bhagavad Gita, singing “Oh Advaitamrutha Varshini.” We don’t know where that was said in Bhagavad Gita. However, great scholars like Ramanujacharya Swami, following the path of His preceptors like Yamunacharya Swami, graced us with its essence, clearly presenting the heart of Sri Krishna. There was an international conference on Srimad Bhagavata, where all scholarly people in the world knowing the ins and outs of Bhagavata attended. It was a 2-day conference. About 1.5 days into the conference, an interesting debate occurred. One person suddenly stood up and said, “Do you know what Srimad Bhagavata teaches? It says, God does not exist. God is not eligible to be worshiped. This is what Bhagavata says.” Everyone was in shock! Why? Because God is in fact the essential truth of Srimad Bhagavata.

bhagavataha + idam = bhagavatam

this is how Bhagavatam was named

This is the scripture detailing the marvels and wonders of Bhagavan (God), thus, it is known as Bhagavata. It is a collection of experiences of great people who grasped the complete truth about God. Hence, it is termed Bhagavata.

As participants were discussing these aspects, this same gentleman said, “No! **Srimad Bhagavata** says God is not worshipable!” Eventually, everyone recovered from shock and asked him how he arrived at that conclusion. He immediately referred to the 7th Canto. They quickly turned their pages and read that particular content from 7th Canto. It has the same exact content as he mentioned. The scripture says “Who is God? Where is God? Who is that God other than me? I’m the one who rules this earth.” True, it has the same words. After collecting themselves, they read the pre and post text, and realized that those words were spoken by **Hiranyakashipu** (a demon who opposed God) when discussing with his son, **Prahlada**. True, it has the same text. However, can we conclude it to be the essence of **Bhagavata**? That is the question.

We need to understand the contextual pre and post references before summarizing an essence. Scriptures mention six aspects determining the essence of a given text. We need not dive into those details now. If one arrives at its essence without considering the introduction, details, conclusion, and the context of when, to whom, and by whom something was said - one must be termed a ‘media person’.

The modern media person, not the media journalists of olden days. Why? Some media personnel pick up only what suits him/her, ignoring the before and after portions of a speech. They repeatedly play the same, a number of times, once in the morning, after an hour, after another five minutes, after 10 minutes, until night...it keeps repeating. We have experienced this well.

Once, we went to inaugurate an eye hospital. There were others also. A gentleman was from Washington, DC. During his address at the event, he mentioned that eye diseases are prevalent in children of those who marry a maternal cousin (**menarika vivaham**). Instead of leaving it at that, he mentioned that **Swamijis** know more about these issues and should speak about such topics. After he concluded, it was our turn to speak. Since he said we should speak up on this issue, we did. Eminent doctors are stating that **menarika vivaha** can become the cause for eye diseases and many other diseases as well. Our country has an established family system and as part of it, we have **menarika vivaha**. That means, **menarika vivaha** is not prohibited in our country. **Sri Krishna** married his mother’s brother’s daughter. Her name was **Nagnajiti**, also referred to as **Nila Devi**. God Himself did it. There is no mention that His progeny had any kind of eye ailment. Even at an elderly age, His progeny fought valiantly in the war. They had no ailments throughout life. Even in these days, many couples belong to this category; their families live disease-free, happy lives. We all are their descendants and are talking about this now.

In most foreign countries, there is no such family system. It exists in certain regions like South America, and may be few other places globally. However, it does not exist in many places. So, there is no scope of such marriages there. People get married to others with different origins, but their families still suffer many diseases. They are the ones who have researched eye diseases. Many doctors claim to have done all the research and discovered these ailments. How are foreigners suffering from these diseases? Not from menarika vivahams! Not only eye disease, but no disease stems from menarikam. There is a technical word used in medical terms. This was informed to us by well-known doctors and we mentioned the same at that time. This was more than 15 years ago. We are stating what doctors have told us. We did not make this up. What is that word?

If the doctors cannot figure out the cause of a patient’s pain after conducting all known tests, they have termed it “idiopathic.” That means they do not know the reason, yet, the patient is suffering. So, doctors came up with this term. This is not my interpretation. So, what did doctors declare?

Idiopathic means the patient is suffering from excruciating pain, yet despite a doctor conducting various CT scans etc., he can not diagnose any root problem. Thus, he tells the patient that he is fine and there is no problem. So, the doctor is saying the patient is fine, but the patient is crying out of pain. What does it tell us? The patient is in a “pathetic” situation. The doctor who had conducted the tests has no clue, so he is an “idiot”. You got the point? The doctor is an “idiot”, and the patient is in a “pathetic” state, so they named this kind of issue as “idio-pathic.” We did not come up with this. We just repeated what doctors had mentioned to us at that time, and even now. We then continued to complete our speech and then traveled back.

Mid-way through our journey, we began receiving phone calls. “Swamiji, what did you say? It has become a big issue.” “They are having big discussions on TV. Several parties have joined the discussion.”

They are saying, “Doctor Chinna Jeeyar says, ‘Doctors are idiots’.”

“Who gave him the right to insult doctors? We will boycott him, and we will protest until he explains and apologizes for what he said.”

After some time, it eventually subsided. So, what did they do? They left out the pre and post portions of the message. They simply picked the portion that they wanted to use. Anyway, picking up a small portion from somewhere and trying to manipulate it is called distortion of facts. It is done to mislead people.

Similarly, in **Bhagavata**, if someone says, “God does not exist and this is the essence of the scripture”, we can conclude the speaker is a fool and trying to fool others. To know the essence, we must understand the whole scripture, in the manner our sages have shown it to us. Then, we can say “This is the essence.” Whichever section you take, it should not contradict the whole and should correlate to the rest. This is the rule. It applies to those who intend to learn scientifically. However, for one who thinks that because he has a tongue, and hence, can say whatever he pleases, ultimately misusing it, what can we say about him? What rules can be applied to him?

This is the same message aimed at people who distort facts about **Bhagavad Gita**. Chant chapter 1, **shloka** 14. Understand its essence. With it as the key, correlate the remaining content systematically.

Only then, will we have genuine reverence for **Sri Krishna** and follow His path. Otherwise, we are feigning it for selfish purposes.

Let us try to understand the essence of Gita in the prescribed method!

Jai Srimannarayana!