**Episode 36 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 36)**

**TOPICS:** The symbolic meaning of the horses and chariot in **Bhagavad Gita**, the characteristics of the **Vedas**, and the concept of **apaurusheya** literature.

**TAGS:** **Bhagavad Gita**, **Symbolism**, **Vedas**, **Apaurusheya**, **Omkara**, **Nandaka**

Jai Srimannarayana!

Priya bhagavad bandhus,

Even today, people give lovely names to their vehicles, ornaments, and weapons. The chariot in which **Sri Krushna** and **Arjuna** reached the battlefield also has a name. **Nandaghosha**. It makes a nice **ghosham** (sound) and creates **nandam** or **anandam** (bliss). Thus, it is **nandaka** and **sugosha** as well. Hence, named **Nandagosha**. In chapter 1, verse 14, there is a mention of this chariot, **Nandagosha**.

mahathi syandane: stthithau

in the incredibly influential chariot

The chariot has enormous strength. What is that strength? We discussed earlier, during **khandava dahanam** (burning down of **Khandava Forest**), **agnihotra** (celestial being controlling fire) gave two gifts to **Arjuna** out of gratitude. What are they? The first one is the chariot named **Nandagosha** in which **Sri Krushna** and **Arjuna** are seated, getting ready for the battle.

As discussed, it is **nandana** and **sugosha**. Combining these words, it is named **Nandagosha**. It was given by **Agnihotra**.

The next gift was a wonderful bow named **Gandiva**. When **Arjuna** emerged victorious over **Indra**, all **devatas** (celestial beings in God’s administration) were pleased with **Arjuna’s** skills and gifted him with a **sankha** (conch). The conch that is to be blown as a mark to begin battle! The name of that **sankha**,conch is **devadatta** – given by **devatas**. **Sri Krushna’s** **sankham** also has a name, **Panchajanya**. After killing an **asura** (demon) named **Panchajanu** who lived in water, **Sri Krushna’s** conch was made from the spine of that **asura**. It is called **Panchajanya** as it is related to **Panchajanu**.

Even the horses which are tied to the chariot are very powerful. Four horses are tied to this chariot. Some people draw pictures of **Sri Krushna** and **Arjuna** in a chariot with five horses. They depict them as **panchendriyas** (five senses). This is incorrect. There is also a chariot with five horses. That chariot is the **jiva’s** (soul's) chariot, not what **Sri Krushna** drives. It is mentioned in a different place in a different context.

The horses tied to the chariot, **Nandagosha**, are used by **Sri Krushna** and **Arjuna** in **Bharatha Sangramam** (battle between **Kauravas** and **Pandavas**). These horses belong to **Sri Krushna**. When **Sri Krushna** is driving the chariot, He needs those horses which listen to Him and are accustomed to Him. That’s why He used His own horses and tied them to this chariot, **Nandagosha**.

The names of those four horses are

aswascha se:bya sugri:va me:ghapushpa vala:hakaha

One is named Sebhya, the second is Sugriva, another is Meghapushpa and the fourth is Valahaka. These four horses, white in colour, are tied to this chariot. What is this chariot? What are those horses? Let’s explore.

Previously, we discussed the essence of the word, **syandana**. The root of this word comes from **syandu + prasravane:**. something that flows, enables flow, and moves, enabling movement. This root word indicates movement, **gamanartha**. **Gamanartham** reveals **jnana** (knowledge) and becomes **buddhyartham** (translated into intelligence) as well. Meaning it grants knowledge, has the power to grant knowledge to the world. One that gives such power is **omkara**. This chariot, **syandana**, is an amazing chariot called **omkara**. There are four horses that pull this chariot. What are they? They are the four **Vedas** named, **Rug, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva**. These are white. **Vedas** give **jnana** (knowledge).

vid jna:ne vid la:bhe

Vedas give knowledge, revealing the purpose of one’s existence

To tell us what they are, **Vedas** are named as **hayam** (horses). **Hayagathau** is the root word. It also indicates something that moves, that which grants knowledge. **Vedas** show us all types of goals that can be obtained and the means to attain each one of them. What are the different types of results or goals one can aim for and how to attain them. This is similar to what horses do - where we can go and how to go there – they take us. Thus, horses indicate **Vedas**. What kind of horses are these? They are white in color. Actually, it seems like an unnecessary adjective. They could be white or black or red. Why is color important? There must be some purpose. Here, white perhaps indicates that they were brought from some Arab country, not needing a whip to be driven. These horses understand the intentions of the rider and behave accordingly.

swe:thaihi hayaihi

indicating absolute faultless characteristics of Vedas, these horses are referred to as white in color

**Swe:thatthva** is a symbol of purity. When discussing **Vedas**, we need to know that they are flawless and pristine. Why? Usually (people think of) **Vedas** as scriptures. Many people think someone wrote **Vedas** 3000 years ago, or even further around 20000 B.C. Thus, they talk of people as ‘those living in **Vedic** times’, etc. However, **Vedas** are timeless, they have no beginning. Why? **Vedas** were not written by anyone. If written by someone, we could say it was written during a particular time, printed at a particular time, by a certain person who wrote it, his time period, etc. However, nowhere in **Vedas** has it been revealed that a particular person has written them at a particular time and place. When discussing **Vedas**, it is said, “This is what Elders, the wise, told us.”

ithi sushruma purve:sha:m ena sthad vyecha chakshiree

whatever our elders have told us, we are saying the same - we have not written this ourselves

Hence, **Vedas** have no beginning. All other scriptures have a beginning. **Bharatha** has a beginning - **Vyasa** wrote it. **Ramayana** has a beginning - **Valmiki** wrote it. **Matsya Purana, Kurma Purana, Varaha Purana** (histories of God’s **avataras** as a divine fish, tortoise and boar) and other **puranas** were all written by someone during a particular period. **Veda** is not anything like that. It is not composed by **purusha** (a being). Hence, it is **apaurusheya**. All others are **paurusheya granthas** (written by someone). However, **Vedas** are **apaurusheya granthas** (not written by anyone). Why do we name them as **apaurusheya granthas**?

Usually if humans write something, that work is liable to contain some fault. What kind of faults? There could be misinterpretations, a fault termed **bhrama**. Whenever written by a human, there will be some level of misinterpretation. Another type of fault is **pramada**, lacking attention. Just as **Vedas** do not have misinterpretation, they also lack inattentive delivery, unlike human-composed literature. **Veda** is content with no chance of being composed with an inattentive mind.

The word **pramada** has different meanings in different languages. In Tamil language, it means ‘really nice’. If you give tasty coffee to a Tamilian, he may say ‘**romba pramadam**’. We also need not think that some danger has arisen because **pramada** in Telugu means danger. **Pramada** in Sanskrit means inattentiveness. In any man-made literature, no matter who composes it, there may be **pramadam** (faults due to inattentiveness). However, **Vedas** were not written even by God. That’s why they are unambiguous. They tell exactly what needs to be told, very clearly and directly.

Thirdly, if books are written by human beings, they might be saying something to deceive the reader or to satisfy him for selfish motives. This is **vipralipsa**. Man-made literature could have **vipralipsa** but **Veda** doesn’t have that fault, **vipralamba**. They don’t say anything for someone’s sake. **Vedas** described truths as they exist, clearly - whether you like it or not. Hence, **Veda** is free of that fault as well. **Veda** has no **vipralipsa** anywhere.

Fourthly, there is a chance that one cannot express his intention with proper words. Any author, , may know something very well but find it challenging to express it literally. For example, we know the taste of sweetness. If someone asks for the taste of **mysore pa:k, gula:b ja:mun, laddu, ja:ngari** (Indian sweets), we say that they are all sweet. We also say that sugar and jaggery are sweet. However, if someone asks us to describe the word ‘sweetness’, we can’t do it. We know it, but we can’t explain it. No one can explain it. There is a difference between the sweetness of each item compared to the other item, **jile:bi** versus **ja:ngari**, jaggery versus sugar, **laddu** versus **mysore pa:k**. If someone asks us to describe the difference, we can’t. We can’t describe it in words. We feel helpless in explaining things we know. In anything man made, there is a chance for this inability. Not only man made, anything made by any being has this limitation. **Vedas** do not have such limitations as they are not composed by anyone. They are free from this limitation, termed **ashakthatha** (helplessness or inability).

Veda does not have bhrama, pramadham, vipralipsa or ashakthatha. It is out of the realm of these 4 types of limitations, all-together operating at a different level. Thus, Vedas are referred to as white. By referring to Vedas as white horses, it is conveyed that Vedas give us pure, faultless knowledge. Vedas are the horses drawing the omkara chariot. Let’s try to learn how it fits in our case, and what else this verse is saying.

Jai Srimannarayana!