**Episode 37 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 37)**

**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,

The greatness of scriptures given by **rushis** (sages) and our revered predecessors can be understood simply through one verse: **Bhagavad Gi:tha** Ch. 1, V 14. It depicts how easily and wonderfully they explain profound topics.

“Seated on the magnificent chariot, harnessed by the four white horses, **Madhava** and **Pandava** played their divine conches.”

This is the 14th verse. However, every word in the verse has a very deep meaning. Previously, as we discussed, each word is symbolic. The use of the word, **syandana** (chariot), implies something. The use of the word, **hayam** (horse), implies something. The use of the word, **swetha** (white), implies something. White horses represent four **Vedas**. They are specific.

In general, any written manuscript may contain four types of limitations. They are **bhrama** (inadvertence), **pramada** (inattention), **vipralipsa** (cheating) and **asakthatha** (inability of the senses). Some books contain all four types of errors. Some are exclusively composed of these errors! Even for books written by our ancestors, there may be some of these errors. That is why it is considered that **Vedas** are not written by any specific person.

Great personalities, like **Nayyayakass** (logicians), suggested that God authored **Vedas**. Our **Vedic** scholars do not agree, “even God did not write **Vedas**.” God can be known through **Vedas**, but He did not write them. He is a **srashta** (one who does srujana). **Srujana** itself means to bring out what is inside. It means bringing something from an invisible form to a visible form. He gave a recognizable form, **Vedas**, to that which exist in Him in the form of breath. He taught the same to **Bramha** and others. He also did not create **Vedas** from scratch. Those who study **Veda** or **Vedantha** proclaimed this as the essence. We need to understand this. That is why **Vedas** are represented by **hayams** (horses) that guide us, steering us within the lanes of life. To represent their attributes, they are described as **swethaihi** (white or pure) **hayayihi** (horses). A chariot pulled by four white horses - this is represented as four **Vedas**.

**Vedas** are **apaurusheya**. Something which is written by a **purusha** (one who lives in a body) is called **pourusheya**. **Apaurusheya** means not written by any **purusha**. God also belongs to the category of **purusha**. We are normal **purushas**, He is the supreme **purusha**. **Veda** is not even written by Him. Hence, **Vedas** are declared as **apaurusheya**. Some may question “How can a scripture exist without someone authoring it?” These people may consider this a clever question. However, one must understand what **apaurusheya** means. There are umpteen examples of such things in this world, where the sounds are not a result of any human intervention. The chirping of birds is one example. Who could have taught them? A crow’s call has not changed in thousands of years. It is the same as it has ever been. Does anyone have to teach a crow to call? A peacock’s squawk also has not changed, from thousands of years. A lion’s roar has not changed in lakhs of years. These are also **apaurusheya**, in one sense. One may argue, “all of these examples are living beings.” Okay, consider the sound of ocean waves. These sounds existed as they are now from time immemorial. They will sound the same forever. Who created them? Did you? Did I? I didn’t. We don’t know who created them. No living being has created that sound. Hence, there is no rule that only a living being must create something. The sounds, or the written content, or the words that a human being creates, change over time because humans are never stable. Sounds made by other living beings or nature doesn’t change. A man’s thoughts or words are neither pure nor stable. He uses the same words to convey different meanings as time changes. Let’s examine a common expression, ‘high-level’, used by people in the computer industry. When somebody says, “this decision was made at a high-level,” they mean surface level [not in depth]. However, the actual meaning of ‘high-level’ is something ‘very deep’, not easy to grasp for someone with basic knowledge. However, current usage indicates ‘high-level discussions’ as which are not in detail, they are at a basic level. Two contrasting meanings to the same word! There are many other similar examples.

The words and the corresponding meanings used by humans are all fickle. Unlike man, other creatures in nature do not change. Sounds of nature also do not change. Hence they can all be categorized as **apaurusheya**. Have animals ever changed the sounds they make? No. A cat meowed in **Sri Rama’s** time-period exactly as it does today. How many eras have passed? How many lakhs of years? Does it change? Did human beings maintain that stability? Animals and birds have maintained. Okay, let’s put living beings aside.

Let’s look at non-living entities, like wind. When wind passes through a flute, a sound is produced. Such instruments are termed **kichakamulu** (wind-based musical instruments). The sound produced by such instruments is **venu nada** (the sound of a flute). Has it ever changed? It has not, it sounds the same even today as when **Sri Krushna** played it. The sound of the ocean waves has not changed since time immemorial. Do we call it living or nonliving? What about **paurusheya** or **apaurusheya**?

Certain sounds contain the secrets of nature and possess the power to transmit them. Those sounds have emerged by themselves, just as the sound of ocean waves or the wind exist by themselves. Such sounds are called **apaurusheya**.

Sages comprehended these sounds during a deep meditative state as their consciousness was completely pure to receive them. A dish antenna receives signals present in air and then transforms them to a format which one can see [television]. Similarly, sages used their intellect to receive knowledge contained in natural sounds and passed on the same to future generations. Thus, this knowledge shared was extraordinary. The meaning of those sounds cannot be understood through any other means such as the physical senses, or imagination. Therefore, such knowledge was termed **vedayathi** (that which enlightens!) Hence, it was termed ‘**Veda**’. The one who comprehended it passed it onto his students. They, in turn, did the same and this continued for ages. Nobody knows when it originated, by whom and for how long.

It is an uninterrupted stream of knowledge passed on in lineage, from one to another exactly as the first one has begun it and concluded it. This is called ‘**apurusheyatva**’ (the succession of knowledge from one to another with no distortion from the origin).

This is a fantastic concept that we need not delve deep into for now. As **Vedas** are **apaurusheya**, which are impeccable, they are represented by white horses. Therefore, they say the chariot has four horses representing four **Vedas**. They are pulling something. What is it? They are pulling **omkara**, the sound of ‘**om**’, the essence of **Vedas**. **Om** is like a precious **manjushika** (a jewelry box), containing **Veda**. Generally, people store a valuable ornament in a jewelry box. When wanting to use it, they open the box and remove it. When finished, they place the ornament back in the box and close it safely. Similarly, **Vedic** scholars use a box, ‘**om**’, to begin reciting **Vedas**. They decorate their neck [vocal chords], with these **mantras** like a necklace, memorizing them. When finished, they again end with ‘**om**’.

They recite ‘**Harihi Om**’ when beginning to recite **Vedam**. At the end, no matter how long the recitation, they end with ‘**Harihi Om**’. As the recitation starts and ends with ‘**om**’, it is represented as a jewelry box. After chanting ‘**om**’, they recite **Veda** to the people of this world. **Veda**, therefore, is considered as a neck ornament [vocal chords] as it is memorized. **Veda** is neither to be recited by looking at the text, nor it needs any enrichment by being understood by others.

Many people try to understand it. They think that what cannot be understood is mere waste. However, those who term it a waste are mere wastrels. One need not “understand” **Vedic** sounds. Can one fathom the sounds of ocean waves? Or the sound of wind? Can one fathom the **koel’s** cooing, a peacock’s scream, or a lion’s roar?

You simply hear it to adore it, and benefit from it. **Veda** is like this. Some people can explain the inner meanings. Let that be put aside for now. However, **Vedic** sound in itself is powerful and effective. That’s why it is memorised. They begin with **om** and end with **om**. This is why **om** is represented by a jewelry box which safeguards **Vedam**. The greatness of **om** is thus specified. It is driven forward by four **Vedas**. For this reason, **Vedas** are represented by horses. **Om** is represented by the chariot that is driven by **Vedas**. The chariot (**om**) gives us **jnana** (knowledge) and is thus termed, **syandana**. It makes one happy when one understands it. Therefore, it is called **Nandagosha** (a beautiful sound, giving bliss). It is also called ‘**pranava**’. **Pranava** is the chariot. The horses are **Vedas**. Their (**om** and **Vedas**) journey is with two - **Madhava** [**Sri Krishna**] and **Pandava** [son of King **Pandu**, **Arjuna**].

Let’s further unravel the hidden meanings of this journey.

Jai Srimannarayana!