**1. Episode Title: Episode 54 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 54)**

**2. Topics & Tags:**

* **TOPICS:** Societal criticism, the responsibility of a well-wisher, the nature of advice, the transparency of sages (rishis and munis), controversy surrounding caste (kula) and race (varna), and the purpose of societal systems.
* **TAGS:** Kula (caste), Jati (creed), Varna (race), Pindam, Pitru (ancestors), Sraddhas (ceremonies), Varna Sankaryam (union of races), Varna Dharmas (righteous paths), Rishis, Munis, Acharayas (spiritual teachers), Purvacharyas, Ramanujacharya, Bhagavad Gita.

**3. Main Content:**

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavad Bandhulara (Dear Devotees of God),

Chapter 1 in Bhagavad Gita contains words that incite controversies in today’s society and which are heavily criticized globally.

However, we must not forget that the words depict the existing system. In any case, it is a well-wisher’s responsibility to give unequivocal advice on how the system should operate. It is the listener’s decision to what extent he wants to hear and implement. However, the well-wisher needs to reveal all aspects of that topic without withholding any details. Every commodity we purchase has an ingredients list, directions on usage, consequences of not using it in the prescribed manner, etc. It is up to the buyer to buy it or not.

The producer fulfills his responsibility by listing all the information about the commodity. Ironically it’s all printed in the smallest font which is neither easy to read nor comprehend. The buyer doesn’t read most of it and uses the product as he wishes, reaping the effects of the same, good and bad.

For example, I recently heard an advertisement about toothpaste. It spoke about the adverse effects of toothpaste on bones and teeth as it contains fluoride. The harmful effects of giving this to children from a young age and using more than the required amount was condemned. This fact is indeed mentioned on the package by the producer, but in extremely small font. Hence, it's not their mistake. Font being too small to read and not paying enough attention is our fate. The producer did not do anything wrong because he cautions, “Keep it away from kids, don’t use it for those below six months, anyone else must also use only an advised amount.” Someone recently informed us that everything is written on the package. The producer reveals all the information about its shortcomings, its form, and its nature clearly because it is his responsibility.

However, whether he conveys it in a visible font or vaguely is his discretion. SMOKING CIGARETTES IS HAZARDOUS. This is clearly written on every cigarette box, but in the smallest font. So, it is not the producer’s fault. He clearly stated what needs to be expressed. “It is your responsibility to see it when you want to buy it. If you want to be healthy, don’t buy it. Did I pressurize you to buy it?” claims the cigarette producer. This is the thought process of current society. The same is the case with alcohol. It is the same with all allopathy medicines. Poison... Allopathic medicines have the label “poison”. They caution the consumers to strictly use it based on the prescription of a qualified physician only. It is not the manufacturer’s mistake. Not using discretion during consumption is the consumer’s fault. All current businesses use such discretely deceitful methods to become successful.

However rushis (sages), munis (sages), and acharyas (spiritual teachers) never concealed anything in our scriptures. They clearly elucidated knowledge in layman terms. They ensured everyone has access to it. They even predicted what would happen in the future. It is up to you whether you recognize it, accept it, respect it, and follow it or not as you have the intelligence to judge. But our sages never minced words while advising. They never used hidden or indirect or misleading methods to impart knowledge.

Words like:

* kula (caste)
* jati (creed)
* varnam (race)
* pindam (gratitudinal offerings to ancestors)
* pitru (ancestors)
* sraddhas (annual ceremonies to ancestors)
* varna sankaryam (union of different races)
* varna dharmas (recommended righteous paths for each race)

These words are controversial and are liable to face criticism these days. Today’s society doesn’t tolerate such words at all.

Westerners have succeeded in diverting our attention from such concepts. Before leaving, the British cleverly tailored our educational system and instituted new laws destroying the very foundation of our country in every way possible.

Is caste or clan bad? Is creed bad? Is race bad? We hear many people often say, “All these should go away! We need an equitable society. We must eradicate all these!!” Surprisingly, those very people who come to the forefront, inciting and corrupting society with such speeches... devote their whole life donating their wealth, and time safeguarding the same - i.e. caste groups and creed groups and put in effort for the upkeep of these groups!

Mentioning of caste in certificates, asking for reservations, political parties using these for their benefit... political leaders’ behavior on seat allocation based on caste, their focus on the caste of a person who is leading a province... all these only exemplify that they do not have any intention at all of abolishing them. If those leaders are really serious about eradicating such systems, it’s very simple to accomplish. They can wipe them out from the system immediately. How? What can they do? All they need to do is remove those columns on birth certificates. That’s all!

Some might argue that people belonging to certain categories have faculty deficiencies or intellectual short-comings with lower mental ability. Such people will always be backward. Hence they need those reservations. If you are really magnanimous and concerned about them, take steps to make the ‘slow learners’ and people with low grasping power become capable, efficient, and competent. To make them capable, qualified and successful, appoint 2 to 3 teachers instead of one. If an ordinary student needs one teacher, arrange for 2 to 3 teachers to teach such students, thus making them competent, capable and proficient. Efforts should be focused on increasing their mental faculties and enriching their wisdom. Instead saying, “It’s enough if you score 20 out of 100, it’s okay if you don’t study,” will only lead to destroying their inherent mental powers, making them useless.

Are such steps taken out of concern, pity, and desire to uplift them? Society must think about this. Indeed, the entire society need not think about this. Those sections of the society who believe that they are benefitting from such schemes should reflect on it. It is their responsibility. If one section really desires to become able, proficient, accomplished, qualified and lead a good life, it should demand abolishing of reservation and strengthen their capabilities. They should question, “Make us capable on par with others. When there is a person who scores 99% because of his mental faculties…”...why are you encouraging us to just remain at a baseline of 22%, 30%, 35%, or 10% marks or just enough for promotion?” In such a case, what should they demand? “Help us enhance our abilities and score not 99%, but 100%! Please put in efforts to increase our capabilities.”

That is what a person who wants to progress should do. It is only then that society will flourish. How will society progress with inefficient people? For a society to be strong, each and every person should be capable. Efforts should be put in to develop society in that manner.

If you want to be healthy, your skin, muscles, nerves, bones, fat, and blood should be in good condition. If one is enfeebled with bones deficient in calcium, low WBC count, muscles losing tone, and nerves getting destroyed, how will he survive? What lifestyle will he lead? Similarly if a society wants to make its mark in this world, how should each and every person be? They should be able and competent. Just as all parts of the body should be in good condition to be physically fit, a robust society must have capable, proficient and accomplished citizens.

To make various groups of people in society able and competent, shouldn’t they be provided with the required support? Giving subsidies and effortless distribution of money under various schemes... Incentives such as giving away free licenses, opening liquor shops day and night to drink and sleep, distribution of fertilizers which spoil the soil, corrupting crops… Eat freely, you are not required to do anything, just eat, sleep, drink, enjoy – is this the foresight of a leader? Will society flourish under such leadership? Abusing the animals which give manure, destroying plants and fauna, harming the people who consume them and finally destroying themselves?

Is this the responsibility of leadership? Is this the responsibility of citizens who bring such leaders to power? All in the world have come into existence to do only good and not otherwise. It might be kula, varna, jati, dharma (righteous duty), or eligibility. All these have a purpose. However, a man should have proper discretion on how, when, and where to use them. Then, this society will be free from the turbulence it is facing now.

Our purvacharyas (ancestral teachers), acharyas (spiritual teachers) in lineage such as the great Bhagavad Ramanujacharya, clearly instructed us on what, how, where, why, and when to use them. Hence, such gurus became Jagadgurus (gurus to the entire world). They never discarded systems – kulam (family/dynasty), jati (creed), varna (social classification), dharma (righteous duty). However, today’s modern practices are decimating them and destroying the entire society.

Bhagavad Gita chapter 1 lays a right foundation with the hope to teach us how to inculcate them appropriately in our lives. Hence, the first chapter brings forth these controversial words. Let us understand and use them properly.

Jai Srimannarayana!