**1. Episode Title: Episode 55 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 55)**

**2. Topics & Tags:**

* **TOPICS:** The Bhagavad Gita as a guide, Arjuna's questions as a medical diagnosis, the controversial nature of social terms, the distinction between kula (caste) and jati (race), the definition and purpose of dharma (righteous duty), the consequences of adharma, and the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and skills.
* **TAGS:** Arjuna, Krishna, Hrishi:kesa, Bhagavad Gita, Vishnu Sahasra Nama, Kula (caste), Jati (clan/race), Varna (race), Dharma (righteous duty), Pitru Devatas (ancestors), Narakam (hell), Swargam (heaven), Pindamulu (offerings), Tharpanamulu (offerings), Sankara (blending), Sa:swatha (eternal), Rushi Kulam (caste of sages), Goldsmithe, Agriculture.

**3. Main Content:**

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

A patient should avoid being shy when visiting a doctor. He should clearly explain his problem. Only then, the doctor will be able to prescribe appropriate medicine. Krishna is a highly capable doctor.

ve:dyo: vaidyaha sada: yo:gi: (a name of God in Vishnu Sahasra Nama)

ve:dyo: vaidyaha is a knowledgeable doctor. He is also ‘sada: yo:gi:’ (always a Yogi), very capable of curing ‘disease’ if related to health – the provider of good health. Bhagavad Gita is a wonderful medicine prescribed by Him.

He identified possible ailments potentially troubling society. He maneuvered Arjuna to mention those ailments and planned on prescribing appropriate solutions. In the first chapter, Krishna, Hrishikesa (controller of everyone's senses), made Arjuna mention all those ailments even though they were not needed in context.

What are those illnesses?

Verses 40 to 44 in the first chapter of Gita – in five verses, all the details regarding these were mentioned by the Lord in detail. In his questions, Arjuna asked all these:

* What is kulam (caste)?
* ja:thi (clan)?
* varnam (race)?
* dharmam (practices, roles, and responsibilities of various people), the concept of pitru devatas (ancestors)?
* narakam (hell)?
* swargam (heaven)?
* pindamulu (offerings made to ancestors after their death) and tharpanamulu (offerings)?

All these terms are ostracized in modern society. Similarly, the system of marriage, blending of races – such topics are also discussed here. In recent days, these topics are the cause for fury. These terms sound illegal, as if discussing these topics needs to be condemned. People feel action needs to be taken against people who discuss such topics. People who talk about these topics are treated as pests to society that need to be exterminated.

However, it is our responsibility to understand them. A person who wants to preserve his health should be told what constitutes health and what is disease. He should be in a position to understand symptoms of disease and the signs of good health. Only then, he would want to get rid of the illness and seek good health.

Similarly, it is necessary to know what are the ailments for a healthy society and what constitutes good health. That is why Sri Krishna, as Hrishikesa, provoked Arjuna from within to utter certain words. What are they?

When a war like this happens or for that matter, whenever any war happens, youth lose their lives. Only elderly in the houses and young children remain along with the women who take care of them. What do women do? They are stuck with the responsibility of having to take care of their families. They might be forced to adopt inappropriate means to earn, leading to their and the society’s downfall. Such a society is no better than hell.

Not only is that dangerous to them, but it also pulls their ancestors, who have reached higher planes with their good karma, back to this plane. Thus, these people reach such a horrible state that their sins downgrade their ancestors from exalted places.

**SLOKA WORD - sankaro: naraka:yaiva, kulghna:na:m kulasya cha pathanthi pitharo: hye:sha:m, lupta pinda-udaka-kriya:ha SLOKA MEANING - (The mixing of races leads to hell for the destroyers of the family and for the family itself. The ancestors of these people fall (to hell) because the rituals of pinda and water are no longer offered.)**

The departed souls, ancestors, will lack family members to offer pindas and udakas or tharpanas (offerings of gratitude to ancestors). That is because eligible people to make those offerings to them have died in the war.

pathanthi pitharaha - “Won’t ancestors degrade in higher worlds due to lack of food and water”, Arjuna asked.

All those involved in leading society to such a state also will see downfall.

**SLOKA WORD - do:shaire:thaih kulghna:na:m, varna sankara ka:rakaihi uthsa:dyanthe: ja:thi dharma:ha, kula dharma:scha sa:swatha:ha SLOKA MEANING - (By these faults of the family destroyers, which create the mixing of races, the eternal practices of clan and family are destroyed.)**

Those flaws will grow, spoiling ancestry and lineage. uthsa:dyanthe: ja:thi dharma:ha, kula dharma:scha sa:swatha:ha

Those which need to be protected always, are called ‘sa:swathas’ (eternal). ‘Dharmas’ refers to practices, arts, and crafts. These practices and crafts should always be protected. Some families are dedicated to protecting such practices, arts, and crafts. However, when it is time to defend the mother-land, youth from such families are drafted to participate in wars. If they lose their lives in those wars, then that household loses protection, resulting in unrestrained behavior, leading to the downfall of the family members. That in turn leads to the downfall of their ancestors too who are in higher worlds.

Their ja:thi dharmas (habits, works, arts, and crafts) then are gradually lost. These are to be protected forever. Arjuna also differentiates between varna-dharmas (practices followed by the race / category of people), and kula-dharmas (crafts and practices followed by the lineage or caste of people). All of these are lost.

Those who are the cause for such a bad outcome… uthsanna kuladharma:na:m, manushya:na:m Jana:rdana

…become the cause of rooting out practices and crafts by waging wars to fulfill their greed… ‘narake: niyatham va:saha bhavathi’, ithi anu-susruma

…such people also migrate to other worlds after their death someday. When they leave the mortal body, they most certainly take a downward path toward hell. Not only experiencing hell once, in the hope of returning to a better situation later…no! For such people, narake: niyatham va:saha bhavathi. The messengers of Yama will ensure Hell as certain.

narake: niyatham va:so: bhavathi ithi anu-susruma

Sastras (scriptures) tell us this. Arjuna says, “Oh Lord, we will also fall to hell as a result of leading them in a bad path and causing the war to happen.” “What a pity! We wanted to be good. Yet, this war is leading us to hell.” “Is this appropriate? Do we really need such a war?”

He says further -

**SLOKA WORD - aho: ! batha ! mahath pa:pam karthum, vyavasitha: vayam yad ra:jya-sukha-lo:bhe:na, hanthum sva-janam udyatha:ha SLOKA MEANING - (Alas, what a great sin we are determined to commit! From the greed for kingdom and its pleasures, we are ready to kill our own relatives.)**

“We are getting ready to kill our own people, our own relatives because of greed for kingdom and luxuries.”

hanthum sva-janam

“This is not a good thing to do. Oh Lord, I can’t do this!” These words are all uttered by Arjuna. These are not our own compilations. We must know what he clarified to us through this.

“kulas should prevail”

“jathis should exist”

Arjuna used the words ja:thi (clan) and ‘varnam’ (race) in the same sense interchangeably. Thus, ‘ja:thi dharmam’ and ‘varna-dharmam’ have the same meaning. ‘Ja:thi’ refers to the structure giving an object its identity. It is also called ‘avayava samstha:nams’, technically. It is ‘ja:thi’ and also termed ‘varnam’. These ‘varnas’ are sa:swathas (eternal). Each ‘varna’ (race), has its own practices. These are referred to as ‘dharma’. ‘Kulas’ (castes), exist and each caste has its own practices as well. These practices are ageless. The practices of castes and races are forever. We should not tamper with them. This is one aspect that Arjuna clarified to us.

Secondly, what does dharma do? Dharma supports one’s mortal body in this world and bestows higher worlds after the current life... only when it is practiced correctly. However, what happens to those people who distort the entire structure of kula and varna... who distort all the righteous practices... who fail the women, the protectors of dharma, thereby causing varna-sa:nkaryam (inter group relationships giving birth to those who do not belong to one kula)... who cause all such chaos...

Such ‘dharma’ leads them to hell. narake: niyatham va:saha bhavathi. Such practice is not called ‘dharma’. Because the very definition of the word “dharma” is practice which gives happiness in both this world and the next world.

dharma is defined as:

‘abhyudaya, nissre:yasa siddhihi yathaha, saha dharmaha’

‘abhyudaya’ means happiness in this mortal world, derived from various objects and activities. It is limited to this mortal world. What is such happiness termed? Abhyudaya, as it is confined to this world. The same practice or activity must lead one to happiness even after leaving the mortal body. Happiness in other worlds is termed nissre:yasa. yathaha abhyudaya, nissre:yasa siddhihi that practice which bestows both abhyudaya and nissre:yasa is defined as ‘dharma’.

In essence, ‘dharma’ means righteous practices. These practices vary based on kula (caste) and ja:thi (race). Ja:thi, or varna, comes by birth. Our form did not manifest by our own choice – size of nose, mouth, eye, forehead, color / length / shape of hair, ear, throat, chin, cheeks, the size and shape of spine, etc. From top to bottom, it has a predefined form. None of this came to us by our choice. It came by birth. Such a way of formation manifested by birth is termed ja:thi or varna (clan / race).

To ensure that the social customs, which help in leading a better life, are maintained, there are certain boundaries laid. They are called kulas. There is a set of activities established by birth, like eating food, drinking water, breathing air – these are common to everyone. Then, for the sake of livelihood, there are other boundaries laid down. For example, if someone establishes a company, it has a set of rules. For a different company, another set of rules. Thus, to lead life in society harmoniously, certain guidelines - One should do a certain activity in a certain manner, another person should do another activity in a different way, etc. So there are groups of people co-located performing related activities. That is a caste or kula.

All the sages collectively constitute the caste of sages - ‘Rushi kulam’. People collectively performing another activity constitute another caste and so on. Such castes have a set of practices or activities. Generations after generations people in a caste master those skills and activities through practice. There are a set of rules to perform activities which come to us by birth - ‘ja:thi dharma’. These practices should never be tampered with. As long as these practices are preserved, life will be smooth. Ja:thi dharmas (the practices which come by birth) and kula dharmas (the practices which come by caste) are distinct.

Let us take an example of a gold-smith. He knows the techniques in that work from his childhood. Even a highly educated person from another caste will not be able to do the work of a goldsmith equally as well. That is the mastery gained in that craft. Such groups of craftsmen which are co-located are called castes. Whereas, classification based on birth is called Ja:thi. Each group has a set of skills.

The son of a farmer knows the basics of agriculture from his childhood, such as when to sow, water, not to water, harvest, how to classify the harvest, etc. Even a person with a master’s degree in agriculture may not know these so well. Thus, both ja:thi dharmas and kula dharmas are crafts. If these are well-preserved, techniques in those crafts will survive for ages. If we tamper with those practices, expertise in those areas is lost. We will then be left with only superficial, raw work. Our elders wanted to preserve these practices by all means. Bhagavad Gita chapter 1 mentions and presents them accordingly.

We too should try to understand this. Let us do that.

Jai Srimannarayana!