**1. Episode Title: Episode 58 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 58)**

**2. Topics & Tags:**

* **TOPICS:** The importance of preserving societal traditions, the concept of "worship your own and respect all others," the role of God as a focal point for all actions, the re-establishment of Vedic dharma, the philosophical evolution from Advaita to Vishishtadvaita, the psychological complexities of Arjuna's sorrow, and the destructive nature of jealousy.
* **TAGS:** Arjuna, Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Kula (caste), Varna (race), Dharma (righteous practice), Ve:das, Ramayana, Sri Rama, Valmiki, Adi Shankaracharya, Advaita, Ramanujacharya, Vishishtadvaita, Pandavas, Kauravas, Sanjaya, Jealousy, Arrogance.

**3. Main Content:**

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

The first chapter in Bhagavad Gita is very important, containing many good topics. We cannot discuss all of them, but it is necessary to mention at least a few. Castes are not bad, color is not bad, race is not bad, women are not bad, nor are generational practices. If we preserve them, society will flourish as they encourage growth. If everyone preserves their own art/occupation and respects others’ as well, then society will be like heaven. I must worship mine, I must respect everything else. Do not hate others, or suppress them.

Hate and suppression - historically, these have been Western ideals. Whatever is theirs must prevail and that which is not theirs must be wiped out of this world. Nearly everyone’s instincts are like this, more or less, in the rest of the world. However, the Vedas prescribed a way of life to the world.

sviya aradhana, sarva adarana (worship your own, respect all)

All must be embraced, nothing is to be hated. Do not disrespect or neglect that which is yours and passed onto you. Do not maintain indifference. Not only does it need to be protected, it should be carefully guarded, worshipped. Sri Rama worshipped his kingdom. Valmiki says, ramo rajyam upasitva, brahma lokam prayasyati. What does it mean to worship an empire? Isn’t it simply ruling? Ruling must not mean taking care of one’s own selfish interests, favoring a few and ignoring all others. Sri Rama administered the kingdom sincerely with as much care as one would worship a devata (deity). It is said that every ruler ought to be that way. Similarly, he should worship his dharma (set of practices), his work, caste, race, and color.

Not everyone is on the same path. Each is uniquely qualified. Hence, respect everyone’s practices. Do your work, and let others do their own. When in a forest, you see an Ashvattha tree, an enormous banyan tree, a large holy fig plant, a plum tree, some hedges, bushes, and so on. Each one of them lives on its own, protects and propagates its own race, and follows its practices. They don't contend with, abhor or suppress each other. That is why the forest is so elegant, beautiful and joyful. Human race and society should prosper in the same way. People differ from each other in the color of their skin, practices, professions, structure and shape of the body, characteristics, and work styles. One should not inculcate hate or degrade others’ occupation. Everyone should live with dignity. For that to happen, we should make God the focal point and everything should be done as a service to God. When one performs a task as a service to God, that activity is termed kainkaryam (service). One must lead life as kainkaryam. Then, everything you do will be a good deed. One may clean the streets, another may clean the seepage, another may be a priest in a temple. Each one of those is a profession. Each of those people should worship their own profession. No one should feel jealous of the other or defame other occupations. Everyone should revere their own occupation as a service to God.

Sri Ramanujacharya bestowed us with this ideology and established an amazing system. However, this was ruined by the westerners. This established system was in place even during the Bharata war, between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Arjuna guessed that change would take place in the prevailing system after the Bharata war. Those changes came to pass. Probably, the rulers of that period were mostly Buddhists, who brought unwanted change into the system. It was then that Adi Shankaracharya started a great movement to re-establish Vedic dharma in society. Even Vedas were destroyed in the days prior to Adi Shankaracharya. When it became necessary to breathe new life into Vedic dharma, Adi Shankaracharya brought forth an amazing philosophy and set aside all other ideologies that were dominating the world until then. Through the Advaita precept, he re-established an excellent system where one can accept and practice Vedas. That was the extent to which he could do in his lifespan of 32 years. Afterwards, Ramanujacharya extended the Advaita precept to add Visishta with unique features and gave it perceptible form. He gave true meaning to the existence of the world and the life of every human being. He gave true meaning to God’s compassion. He institutionalized a beautiful process to access God’s mercy and offered it to the world. This system which Ramanuja established was followed until the 16th century, and was then destroyed. To revive it, we must recognize the path that was established by Bhagavad Ramanujacharya. That is what we are trying to do now.

As Arjuna was explaining to Sri Krishna about the dangerous consequences of war, all the above also came into discussion. This is not a myth. In the first chapter, Arjuna references these with Sri Krishna.

**SLOKA WORD - aho: batha! mahathpa:pam karthum vyavasitha: vayam | SLOKA MEANING - (Alas, what a great sin we are determined to commit!)**

“Hey Sri Krishna, we are about to commit a huge sin because of greed for kingdom and happiness. Is this appropriate? Is it proper to wage such a war?” Sri Krishna responded, “Will they sit idle just because you don’t want to? They would want to take revenge, wouldn't they?”

Arjuna retorted. “I will not take revenge, even if they want to.”

Sri Krishna challenged, “Do you think they will lay down their arms if you do not retaliate?”

Arjuna concluded, “I will not hold weapons, even if Kauravas choose to do so.”

yadi mam aprati:karam asasthram sasthrapanayaha

Sri Krishna states, “They will not let you be.”

Arjuna replied, “If they want to hold weapons, let them.”

Sri Krishna reminded him:

sasthrapanayaha dhartarashtrat (they will kill all of you)

Arjuna challenged:

rane hanyuhu (let them kill)

Sri Krishna questioned, “Oh! Why so?”

Arjuna answered, “Did you know that if a warrior slays the unarmed in battle, those retreating, he will face vicious hell after death and the one killed will go to heaven?”

Sri Krishna responds “Yes, I know.”

Arjuna then says, “So let that happen. I won’t hold weapons, but they will attack me. I won’t seek revenge, but they will. Those seeking revenge on those who are not are destined for hell.”

Sri Krishna asks, “What about your fate then?”

Arjuna answers, “I will have done nothing, not waging war and opting for peace. I will go to heaven.”

Sri Krishna clarifies, “What a pitiful thought! You are neglecting your duties and hence, will experience extreme hell, not heaven. One who dies fighting for a righteous cause attains heaven. One unjustly waging war sees hell.”

“One who kills others that are averse to their duties sees heaven. Those killed for being averse to their duties result in hell after death. Thus, you would see hell.”

However, Arjuna didn’t think that way.

asasthram sasthrapanayaha dha:rthara:shtra: rane: hanyuhu

Arjuna thought, “Even if they kill me when I am unarmed... rane: hanyuhu dha:rthara:shtra:ha that’s better for me.”

He says Kshemataram. Arjuna used a comparative degree here, kshematharam bhaveth. Kshemam (good), kshematharam (better), kshemathamam (best).

Arjuna says:

tanme: kshematharam bhaveth

What is kshemam in this case? Arjuna thinks kshemam is if both Kauravas and Pandavas go to heaven. They lose the battle and go to heaven. If we are alive after the battle, and win the kingdom, we will also go to heaven after death. Even if vice versa, both will go to heaven. Is it right if we both go to heaven? We led life in a righteous path, they led it in an unjust path. How is it fair for both of us to go to heaven? What about all the troubles we went through? Even though it is kshemam (good), if both of us go to heaven, I am not interested in that outcome.

Then, what does he want?

kshematharam (better): If we back off from the battle, and they kill all of us, then they will go to hell and I will go to heaven. Thus, it is better than kshemam. It is kshematharam.

tanme: kshematharam bhaveth

What he wants is that they go to hell, and he goes to heaven. Arjuna felt that if both go to heaven, that’s kshemam. He felt that whether they go to heaven or not, the Kauravas should not go to heaven. That is kshematharam for me. This shows the jealous side of Arjuna. He too, is arrogant and jealous. But he is relatively far better than others. He is a better devil, as we discussed. So, Sri Krishna wants to refine him and cleanse him.

There is a story. There were two merchants who had their shops across from each other. They had the same type of business in the same area, thus competing with each other. One fine day, one of the merchants closed his shop suddenly and went away. The second merchant started looking for him and found that the first one was doing penance in a forest. The second one became tense and felt that the first one might be doing penance to attain something bigger than what he currently had. He decided to do the same thing, sat directly across and started doing penance. They were both competing with each other. One fine day, God came to the second person and asked for his wish. Instead of making a wish, he enquired whether God had gone to the first merchant. If so, he was curious to know what the first person asked for. God said that He came to him first and asked him to make a wish. Then the second merchant requested God to go to the first merchant to ask for his wish and then come to him to grant double. God obliged. The first merchant also asked God to go back to the second merchant and grant him twice of whatever the second merchant wished. Then God, being compassionate, again went to the second merchant and informed him that the first merchant will get twice of what the second merchant wishes. The second merchant paused for a second and requested him to remove one of his eyes. So, what about the first merchant? He will lose both his eyes. He is not worried about losing an eye, but is happy that the other merchant will lose both eyes. This is kshematharam.

If both get equal share, it’s kshemam. If the other person suffers a loss twice of what he will suffer, that’s kshematharam. This is because of jealousy. Arjuna also had a similar kind of trait in him, that’s why he mentioned...

dha:rthara:shtra: rane: hanyuhu

If we remain unarmed and if they come with weapons and kill us, we will go to heaven. Because they kill us despite being unarmed, they will go to hell. This is better for us.

kshematharam bhaveth

Sri Krishna was surprised to hear this from Arjuna. Sanjaya marveled at the pitiful state they all had got into! Let us move further, finding out what else he was surprised with.

Jai Srimannarayana!