**1. Episode Title: Episode 59 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 59)**

**2. Topics & Tags:**

* **TOPICS:** The Bhagavad Gita as a timeless guide, Arjuna's sorrow and arrogance, the role of God (Krishna) as the ultimate knower and guide, the nature of righteous duty, the contrast between the Pandavas and Kauravas, the importance of dharma, and the different types of sorrow (tamasic, rajasic, and sattvic).
* **TAGS:** Arjuna, Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Sanjaya, Dhrutharashtra, Duryodhana, Pandavas, Kauravas, Margasirsha, Ekadasi, Viswarupa, Atma (soul), Acharya (spiritual teacher), Vedas, Avadam, Vishada (sorrow), Dharma (righteous duty), Pranam, Tamasic (ignorant), Rajasic (arrogant), Satvic (good).

**3. Main Content:**

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

Bhagavad Gita is a wonderful scripture preaching essential messages to mankind. Not only for the present, or the past, the future as well. Bhagavad Gita is forever a handbook for mankind. For this mankind, struggling with ignorance, for this mankind, troubled by ego, for this mankind, plagued with all types of hatred towards each other, Bhagavad Gita is the guiding light. It is a beautiful, protective layer of wisdom. It is an elixir, a divine message, showing the path and leading to a better life. God bestowed this to us.

We are examining the prologue of this message in chapter 1. When Sri Krishna was delivering the divine message to Arjuna in the midst of the battleground on the first day of Margasirsha month, Sanjaya listened. Subsequently, on ekadasi, the eleventh day of that month, when Dhrutharashtra asked, Sanjaya explained it exactly as it happened. We may wonder if Sanjaya altered the conversation between God and Arjuna into slokas (verses) or if the conversation actually was in sloka-form. Perhaps people in those times conversed fluently in Sanskrit verses.

Sanjaya says to Dhrutharashtra, “Whatever they spoke, I heard it as is. It was absolutely joyful to listen.”

tachcha samsmrutya samsmrutya (as I recall that conversation, even today, I feel thrilled with joy)

“I have seen the divine viswarupa (God’s form displaying the entire universe), twelve days ago. However even today, I am able to see that form as clearly as that day.” “I am simply overjoyed.”

Sanjaya passed on this divine message to Dhrutharashtra. He provided us with the entire detailed conversation between Sri Krishna, Arjuna and others as it happened.

In chapter one sloka 47, Sanjaya summarized Arjuna’s situation and concludes the first chapter. What was Arjuna’s state?

**SLOKA WORD - evam uktva: arjunas-sankhye:, ratthopasttha upavisat visrujya sa-saram chapam, soka-samvigna-manasaha SLOKA MEANING - (Having said this, Arjuna, in the midst of the battlefield, sat down on the seat of the chariot, casting aside his bow and arrow, his mind agitated by grief.)**

evam uktva (Sri Krishna listened to Arjuna’s monologue). Arjuna listed all the losses that would be incurred if the war indeed took place - as if he knew everything and God didn’t know any of it. At times, we also do something similar. We go to our acharyas (spiritual teachers) and try to convince them as if we know more and they do not know anything. Here, Arjuna is doing the same. Does Sri Krishna need to be told by somebody else? He is the one who proclaimed that He, Himself, is the essence of all Vedas.

vedaischa sarvaihi aham eva vedyaha (I am the only one to be known from all the Vedas)

vedanta krut veda videva cha aham (I am the compiler of the Vedantas and I am the knower of the Vedas).

He said so. Does Arjuna need to tell anything to such an omnipotent God? No. However at times, even if we do that, God agrees with us. He either brushes it aside, or if there is merit and He likes it, He will make it useful to us in some or other fashion.

Arjuna expressed his sorrow. He described the unwanted destructive consequences of war. Even at this stage, he spoke in a way revealing his arrogance and jealousy.

tan me kshema taram bhaveth yadi dhartarashtraha rane hanyuhu mam (It is better for me if all these Kauravas surround me and kill me while I'm unarmed.)

We see this in sloka 46.

dhartarashtrah rane hanyuhu, tanme kshema taram bhaveth

It is ‘kshema-tharam’ for me, the comparative degree of kshemam (benefit). ‘Kshema-thamam’, the superlative degree of kshemam, is the best benefit, to directly attain moksha (liberation). ‘Kshema-tharam’ means Arjuna obtains better benefits than the Kauravas, implying that they should not receive the same benefits as him. Sanjaya says, “Oh King Dhrutharashtra! Arjuna is in this state of mind.”

evam uktva (having said so)

Arjunaha sankhye (Arjuna, in that battlefield...)

...what is he doing?

ratho:pasttha upa:visath’ - rathasya upastthe (he sat in the middle of his chariot and at once, became very sad)

Having done what?

visrujya sa-saram chapam - sa-saram chapam (the bow along with the arrow) visrujya (having dropped them). He threw them down. In principle, the bow and arrow are not to be thrown down at all. However, overcome with grief due to his avasadam and vishadam (deep sorrow), he just let his bow and arrow fall.

soka-samvigna-manasaha (shattered by a feeling of deep sorrow, he sat down with that state of mind)

In a chariot, the sarathi (driver), has a separate designated place in the front. Arjuna did not sit close to the driver. He moved towards the center of the chariot and sat down as if to declare – “I will not wage this war at all.”

What a pity! Is now the time to feel this way? Everybody is ready to start the war. They are just waiting for you to fire arrows. They are eagerly waiting. If you sit down demotivated, they will undergo immense pain. So, you cannot be demoralized. You certainly have to wage war. If you take this step, you will not be at fault. If you take the other step, you will be flawed.

If a patient is on the operating table, under anesthesia and surgically opened up, at that point, if the surgeon says “Oh no! What is this I’m doing? All this bloodshed in surgery?” When is the doctor thinking this? When the patient is all set to be operated on the table. “I will not do this operation. This is just violence.” If he thinks like this, dropping all his instruments, he should be put in prison. Can he be considered a compassionate person? No! He will be considered an irresponsible doctor leaving the patient in a dangerous state.

Arjuna, having prepared for the war fully, is thinking that way! The Kauravas are all evil people, murderers. This war was in fact instigated by them. The Pandavas were always peace-mongers – like us Indians. They never wanted war. Just as India’s neighbors keep taking provoking actions, the Kauravas instigated this war. The Pandavas came to war as a result of that provocation. The Pandavas did not initiate the war by themselves. In the face of such a situation, Arjuna is overtaken by grief, forgetting his own responsibility! It is indeed his duty to face them. That is the obligation of a warrior. When the opponent crosses his limits, it is indeed one’s duty to push enemies back within their boundaries. If the opponent goes back without causing trouble, well and good. If that does not happen, what else can be done? The fault of initiating war does not lie with the Pandavas.

Yet, as if Arjuna is taking the responsibility for initiating war, he abandoned his dharma. In whose direct presence did he do this? The one who pledged - dharma samsthapana:rtthaya sambhavami (I will be born to establish righteousness) – the personification of dharma itself. Sri Krishna descended solely for the purpose of firmly establishing dharma. If Arjuna said these words to somebody else or left his dharma in front of someone else, we wouldn’t need to care much. However, he did this in the direct presence of God Himself, the personification of dharma, the one who descended to earth to establish dharma. To declare, “I am withdrawing from this war!” How surprising it is! Everybody is surprised.

Of course, there is no element of surprise to Sri Krishna because He is the one causing these thoughts in Arjuna as Hrishikesa (controller of the senses). He created immense sorrow in the mind of Arjuna. That too, to a state where Arjuna said:

senayor ubhayor madhye rattham sthapaya (Position my chariot in the middle of both armies)

“Position my chariot in the middle of both armies so that I can have a good look at the opponents. I will immediately decide whom I have to face in this battle.” Such a state he was in! However, after having a look at everyone, he began to see them as relatives instead of as opponents. He dropped the idea of waging war.

This is the essence of the chapter one Bhagavad Gita.

evam ukthva arjunas-sankhye:, ratthopasttha upavisath visrujya sa-saram chapam, soka-samvigna-manasaha

His mind was disturbed with deep grief. It is the same situation for all of us as well. As humans, we lead our lives in the same state. We lack clarity on what activities are to be done, what activities to be avoided. When performing prohibited acts, or when we drop recommended activities, we get into a state of confusion and experience sorrow. When one experiences such a sorrowful state, sastras (Vedic scriptures) inspire us to perform our duty correctly.

The summary of Vedanta Sastra is not to make us inert or run away from carrying out our duties. It is to carve us into responsible, duty-bound individuals, leading our lives following our faith, letting others live in accordance to their faiths. This is explained in the first chapter, named ‘arjuna vishada yoga’.

The sorrow experienced by Arjuna opened the road for him to understand the essence of tattva (eternal truths). Thus, sorrow is essential for a person who seeks spiritual upliftment.

Let’s recall - there are three people who experienced sorrow in this chapter. Dhrutharashtra, Duryodhana and Arjuna. However, Dhrutharashtra’s sorrow was tamasic (ignorant) in nature. Hence it is not regarded as pramanam (an appropriate means for knowledge). Duryodhana’s sorrow, which was rajasic (influenced by arrogance), is not recommended. Thus, we keep this aside as well. The sorrow experienced by Arjuna molded him to question God, made him want to listen to God’s message and ultimately surrender to God. So this sorrow is productive. Let us take help of Arjuna, who is sattvic (good) and learn the message given by God, follow our duties and get energized.

This brings us to the close of chapter one.

Jai Srimannarayana!