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1. Episode Title: Episode 125 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 125)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The four stages of practice in yoga, Understanding the challenges of spiritual progress, The journey of Viswamitra as a seeker, The significance of detachment in spiritual growth, The qualities of a sthitha prajna (steady-minded person)

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, yoga, Viswamitra, Arjuna, Krishna, spiritual practice, detachment, sthitha prajna, self-realization

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), In the scripture that describes the state of yoga, four types of practice stages are explained. The first one is yathama:na dasa (stage of making efforts), the second one is vyathire:ka dasa (stage of outer control but inner fickleness), the third is e:ke:ndriya dasa (stage of focus on a single goal), and the fourth and final one is vasi:ka:ra dasa (the ripened stage of a sthitha prajna, one with a fixed steady mind).

Let’s take an example. The first one, yathama:na dasa. If we are on one side and want to go to a higher point on the opposite side, it involves climbing up a slope. When you start making the attempt, there are so many people behind you trying to pull you back saying, “Why do you want to do it? The journey will hurt your legs.” “You will be fatigued. Why don’t you happily lie down and sleep?” He takes a step forward, but because there are ten people pulling him back, he wouldn’t want to move ahead.

When reflecting on Bhagavad Gita, your desire or love for worldly objects… remember, it’s not the objects, but it’s the desire for them that does not let us desire reflection on or attainment of atma (soul) or paramatma (God). It’s always about acquiring these material objects, living with and relishing these, and sharing the same with people and receiving the same. We don’t feel like trying for that self-realization or God realization. Even if we plan and reflect on them, the other things pull us back. It becomes yathana (difficult); every time he takes a step, there is so much to deal with to move ahead. It is extremely difficult.

However, when he attains knowledge of these and realizes the temporary nature of the worldly objects, the eternal nature of the atma and paramatma, he develops belief in these, listens to that, and knows that the wise recommend it, then he wishes to try. When he tries to take one step after another, he gets drawn back. He then decides he won’t listen to anyone trying to pull him back and steps forward. The first stage is when one knows it to be the right path and is trying to work on it. Well, he is trying, but others pull him back. He is also slipping down at times.

Imagine one trying to climb up a mud-covered rounded iron pole with water being poured forcibly down from its top. If he wants to climb up, how can he? It is a rounded iron pole and thus slippery. It is soft mud covered, making it even more slippery. There is water gushing down over it, making it further slippery. He climbs up a couple of leaps. Water pushes down and he slips again. This is called yathama:na dasa, the stage of attempting.

If he, however, doesn’t give up and continues to practice thoroughly, he will then gradually climb up. However, even after climbing up a few steps, his manas (mind) peeks behind. He has to move in the forward direction. However, the manas impacted by the past instincts pulls it. Firstly, he wanted to listen to them [the past instincts]. Hence, the attempt towards eternal realities didn’t succeed. Now, the mind stopped trying to pull him, meaning it stopped listening to them. It developed interest in this [eternal realities]. Therefore, it didn’t want to care about them and is moving ahead.

When it encounters any difficulty while moving ahead, it starts to look behind. If he steps back because it is looking behind, he will never be able to come up again. When it is looking behind, you should warn it and turn it forward and keep moving. This stage is called vyathire:ka dasa. In this stage, it feels like wanting to go back whenever there is a chance. The destination is 10 steps ahead. He stepped forward 2 steps. He feels like, “Oh no! There are 8 more steps. If I go back, it is just 2 steps. Why don’t I go back?” It keeps pulling him back.

Despite that, he pushes forward, driven by the interest towards eternal realities. He continues to forcefully push the mind ahead in spite of it wanting to go back. This is called vyathire:ka dasa. He moves 5 steps ahead. He is now halfway through. Five steps in both directions. He decides to move forward as he has come halfway through. He controls the mental upheavals and agonies by not heeding, by pushing them aside, by paying attention but not attaching to them, leaving them, and pushes himself in the forward direction. He does not look back. He moves ahead. They [desires] try to enter [his mind]. However, he doesn’t let them in and gradually moves ahead. This is e:ke:ndriya dasa, moving ahead firmly believing that there is only one desirable goal.

The first one is yathama:na dasa. After he practices it for a while, he steps into vyathire:ka dasa. Vyathire:ka dasa is the stage where he is vyathire:ka (opposed to that). He is free from the shackles of the past. He steps out of them [physically], but his mind turns towards them at times. If he moves ahead from vyathire:ka dasa, his mind matures to a rather cooperating mode. This is called e:ke:ndriya dasa. This is also a dangerous state. He will encounter mental turmoil at times. If he can tolerate that as well, desiring to only move ahead, reflecting on the greatness of this [eternal realities] repeatedly, thereby feeling inspired and moves ahead, then he reaches the pinnacle, the top-most point. He will reach the highest point. This is vasi:ka:ra dasa. This is the desired state, but it is very difficult to attain this. Not hours, days, months, or years are enough to attain it. It’s easier said than done.

Firstly, he needs to let go of this. He needs to detach from here. Despite being pulled back, we must turn it in the desired direction. We should move ahead and then reach the top. It feels good to hear. However, the great sage like Viswamitra needed thousands of years to reach here. He is the best example for all four stages. He started with the goal to be the master of archery. In fact, his desire was to overtake sage Vasista. To do so, he wanted to master archery to perfection. Because all his asthras (weapons) had been overtaken by the Brahmastra (invoked by sage Vasista). “I want to achieve that,” he thought. He wanted to attain the Brahmattva (state of being Brahman)!

He began the journey. He was in the first stage. During the first attempt, he encountered his nephew, Sunashvepa, and he gave away all the power of his penance. Yathama:na dasa. He made the attempt and lost it. He tried again and lost. This happened repeatedly. Every time he would begin, someone or other like Thrisanku would come for whom he would lose all his power. This is yathama:na dasa. He stepped a little ahead. He had the raga (attachment) in his mind. Hence, despite sitting in the forests, Menaka arrived and he lost interest towards the goal. He couldn’t live up to the second stage. He started the penance again.

Brahma said, “I am pleased with your penance. You are now declared to be a Rajarshi.” [Viswamitra] I worked so hard all these years to become Brahmarshi and you declare me as a Rajarshi?! It’s similar to someone given a graduation degree when he worked hard for a PhD. When someone is promised a post in the cabinet ministry and made to spend money and work during the campaign, and if he is later appointed as a district chairman, how would he feel? He would be very angry. That is how Viswamitra was. [Viswamitra] I did penance for Brahmarshi and you declare me as Rajarshi? [Viswamitra] I don’t need it; you can keep it. He sat in penance again. This is vyathire:ka dasa. Despite the forces that pull him back from his goal, he turned his mind towards the goal and restarted penance to attain what he wanted.

After some time, Indra sent Rambha to him. Earlier, it was Menaka. He wanted to see what happens when he sends Rambha. She went and made her attempts to distract him. He understood it. He cursed her to become a rock because she tried to unnecessarily disturb him. He could not control his anger. Thus, he lost the power of all the penance he did. He repented for having lost all the power of his penance. He began again. Having restarted, he crossed the stage of yathama:na and reached vyathire:ka. He now crossed the stage of vyathire:ka and reached e:ke:ndriya. He decided not to be distracted ever again and began penance. He performed penance for 10,000 years.

After completion, he sat down to eat. It’s called parana (conclusion of the penance by breaking the routine of fasting). People call it breakfast. He gathered something to eat and sat down. The moment he took the first morsel towards his mouth, someone at the door asked for alms (bikhsa:m dada:thu). He must give it to the one seeking it. How can he not give when someone is begging for it? He stood up to do so. Then, he found that it was Indra in disguise of a Brahmin. He could have said, “I sat down to eat after many years. Do you have any sense…” However, he didn’t. He knew it was Indra. He said to himself that this is all he deserved and gave away what he had set aside for himself to eat. He did that despite knowing that it was Indra. Indra felt ashamed.

So, what stage did he reach now?

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SLOKA WORD -

dukhe:shu anudvigna mana:ha sukhe:shu vigatha spruhaha

SLOKA MEANING -

[He] did not get carried away by his desire to eat. Sorrow. He was giving away the two morsels he wanted to eat after so long. [He] did not let it impact his mind. He controlled his mind. He took out everything else from his mind other than the goal of becoming a Brahmarshi. This is called e:ke:ndriya dasa. This is the state he is currently at.

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After this, he developed so much focus that he wasn’t disturbed by the many other hurdles he faced. It was then that Vasista and many other sages prayed to Brahma. Brahma then visited Viswamitra and said that he is now attaining the state of a Brahmarshi. [Viswamitra] I don’t want this coming from you. I want Vasista to declare this. He saw Vasista as Brahmarshi and so he wanted him to certify. That is what his goal was. Finally, Vasista declared to Viswamitra that he [Viswamitra] was now a Brahmarshi and asked him to rise. He then stood up.

Where is Viswamitra now? He has reached the pinnacle. He reached the top-most state. We must remember one thing here. After reaching there, he wasn’t arrogant about attaining it by himself. He immediately washed the feet of sage Vasista as he had become his guru by declaring him a Brahmarshi. This is the greatness. He neither broke down when he didn’t succeed nor got excited when he succeeded. He detached from attachment, fear, and anger. He wanted to perform penance. He wasn’t carried away by his success. He was completely filled and stable with humility with no other disturbing factor; hence he became a sthitha prajna (steady-minded person). He was a great seeker. Because he reached that state, he could become a Guru to Sri Ramachandra. Is it a simple thing to become a guru to Ramachandra? This is the ripened state. This is the state of a sthitha prajna.

Where are we now? The second stage from the top, e:ke:ndriya dasa. Arjuna! Are you in this stage? You asked about sthitha prajna. This is e:ke:ndriya stage. [Arjuna] “I am so sorry, I am not at that stage. Please explain the stage prior to this.” We learnt the ripened stage [vasi:ka:ra dasa]. We learnt about the e:ke:ndriya dasa. The one prior to it is vyathire:ka dasa. At least, help me understand that state. Sri Krishna moves ahead to begin explaining it [vyathire:ka dasa] in verse 2.57. Jai Srimannarayana!

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