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1. Episode Title: Episode 13 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 13)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of following genuine guidance, recognizing true well-wishers, the relationship between Arjuna and his gurus, the dilemma of duty versus personal feelings, the story of Upamanyu and his devotion, the significance of guru's orders in spiritual practice.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, Drona, Bhishma, duty, devotion, guru, Upamanyu, Koutsa, dharma, artha, kama

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), It is the responsibility of an ujji:vishu (one who desires to elevate himself) to undoubtedly follow any command of those great well-wishers who help to attain a:thma ujji:vana (self-realization). However, this is applicable only when a true well-wisher advises us. At times, some people appear like well-wishers, but in reality, they may cause us harm. We must be careful with such people. We also have the responsibility to recognize genuine well-wishers in our life. Therefore, Bhagava:n (the Lord) has given us the knowledge and ability to differentiate in identifying such people.

Drona:cha:rya (Drona) and Bhi:shma:cha:rya (Bhishma) were Arjuna’s gurus from childhood. Arjuna grew up having completed an exile, i.e., 12 years of exile in the forest and 1 year incognito. After which, the Pa:ndavas (Pandavas) were no longer able to perceive their childhood gurus’ earlier stature. They are now serving under the criminal and unlawful Kauravas. They are associated with Kauravas now, employed by them and wishing well for them. They do not recognize the great people who are being suppressed by their crime and oppression. They are unable to motivate them to do the right thing. Therefore, they are not in that venerated guru stature anymore.

But for the Pa:ndavas, specifically the middle Pa:ndava, Arjuna, Sri Krishna is now his guru. Therefore, when Sri Krishna advises and commands Arjuna to do something, Arjuna must simply follow. Whatever is asked to be done must be actioned without hesitation or doubt. Because Sri Krishna is unselfish and He is not one to act for appreciation from others. However, Arjuna is doubting the advice given even by such a person, at the beginning of Bhagavad Gi:tha’s (Bhagavad Gita’s) 2nd chapter. In the 5th slo:ka (verse), he asks...

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SLOKA WORD -

guru:na Hathva: hi maha:nubha:va:n

shreyo: bho:ktum bhaikshamapi:ha loke:

hatva:rtha ka:ma:mstu guru:nihaiva

bhunji:ya bhoga:n rudhira pradigdha:n

SLOKA MEANING -

How can I consume their blood smeared food and survive?

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‘The kingdom is ours, all the happiness is ours and we want these all for ourselves.’ This is what Bhi:shma and Dro:na must be thinking being associated with Kauravas. The question is not whether they desire such things. However, they stuck by Duryo:dhana (Duryodhana) who is here to wage war with a desire for such things. It means they support him, doesn’t it? They can also therefore be called Artha Ka:mulu (those who desire power and money). That means Dro:na and Bhi:shma are thinking, ‘We want artha (wealth) and we want ka:ma (pleasure). We want to enjoy happiness. We need the kingdom’s riches too’.

“If they are thinking thus, then as a key student of theirs, I should provide what they desire.” “How can I not do that? Look at the traditions of our elders in history.” Once there was a great person called Upamanyu. He was educated in a gurukulam (school). He was able to pass his guru’s various tests. He followed his guru’s orders to the mark. Isn’t that why we remember him now? What was his guru’s order? His story is amazing to recollect.

Guru commanded – ‘Take the cattle out to graze’. Daily, he [Upamanyu] used to beg for alms and offered everything he received to his guru. This means he offered everything received on that day’s begging to his guru. But the guru did not leave anything for the disciple, like he was supposed to. This is of course to check the intensity of the disciple’s focus and obedience towards their gurus. But when we hear about the test, it sounds very rough and tough. Everything he obtained by begging, he offered it to his guru and the guru didn’t give anything back. The disciple is supposed to offer everything and not seek any benefit from it.

He was sent regularly for cow herding and milking. A few days passed thus. He used to accomplish that chore. Surprisingly, the disciple looked normal. The guru asked, “You look hale and healthy. What have you been up to? How did you feed yourself?” Disciple responded, “Whatever the plants and herbs I get while the cows are grazing in the forest, I manage with those.” Guru said, “Isn’t it a sin? To consume food meant for the cows and birds?” “If you take theirs, what will they eat? What will they do? So don’t eat them.” The disciple agreed, but he was getting hungry. He needs to eat something. What did he do? He started drinking the cows’ milk.

After a few days, the guru further asked, “Child! You look fit and healthy. What have you been eating?” Disciple [Upamanyu] said – “Swamy (Lord), I’ve been drinking milk given by the cows.” Guru responded, “Oh No, isn’t the cow’s milk meant for its calves? If we drink it, isn’t it a sin?” The disciple agreed. Later, he started drinking the leftover milk after the calves had their share. Guru then asked, “Hey, how come you still look good?” He said, “I’ve been drinking the milk left over by the calves.” Guru says, “No, No. The cows, knowing that you will drink their milk, are not feeding their calves fully and are even causing them discomfort. So do not drink it.” Disciple then stopped taking the milk.

A few days later, Guru asked again, “Hey, how come you still look good?” “Swamy, during the calves feeding time... whatever excess milk dripped from the corners of their mouths and was about to be wasted on the earth… I am consuming that milk.” Guru said, “Because you are drinking that milk, the calves are intentionally letting it go. So don’t even drink that as well.” What will he do? He is not allowed to drink milk, not even that which is about to be wasted. He is not allowed to eat food, not supposed to take food that he got by begging alms. How is he supposed to survive and overcome his hunger? He then looked for food that was not meant for any cattle as he was roaming the forest. He sadly found Calotropis (Jilledu) plants and ate them. When they are plucked, a milky liquid oozes out of its flowers. They spilled into Upamanyu’s eyes causing him to lose his vision.

After sunset, the cattle returned but this child was nowhere to be seen. The guru’s wife was already worried about this child who was enduring those difficult tests, but had remained silent until now due to hesitation. Today when he did not come back, she couldn’t hold back any further. She demanded from the guru, “What happened to the kid? Wherever he is, go get him!” The guru had to now set out in search of the child. Prior to the guru’s arrival, Ashwini: devatha:s (divine doctors) appeared near the child and said... “You have lost your eyesight. We can help restore it.” The child said, “It is not needed. Whatever needs to be done, my guru has to decide. I don’t need your help.”

We can understand the intensity of his devotion by his dependence only on his guru to receive any benefit. Because the disciple didn’t approve it, the devatha:s simply observed him. It became dark and the guru, holding a lamp, followed the cattle footsteps, he found the child moaning in a ditch where he had fallen. He called out “Upamanyu! Upamanyu!” and the child responded “Yes!”. Guru recognized him and pulled him up out of that ditch. Ashwini: devatha:s then directed the guru - “He did not take any help from us, even when we offered it to him. So you may grace him and offer him what is necessary.” Then the guru bestowed the required necessities and took care of him. This illustrates how diligently one must adhere to guru’s orders.

Similarly for Arjuna, “Dro:na is one of my gurus, yes? I must be under their control too [following their orders].” When they expressed desire for the kingdom and its pleasures, how can I… “hathva:… ”… “…. bhunji:ya….” kill them and take their pleasures away? Oh No! This is unfair. In history, there is a story of the great Koutsa. Great poets said, “koutsa prape:de varathanthu sishyaha.” Koutsa obtained his education from a guru’s for 14 years. We don’t know if he learned 14 vidyas (knowledge streams) or not, but he learned for 14 years. His guru was satisfied that he had completed his education well and told him to return home.

The kid wanted to offer Guru Dakshina (offering to the guru). The guru was unsure what to request. Despite repeated requests, the guru was not showing interest. The student insisted on offering something, so the guru said, “Son, get me gold that is as high as a man standing atop an elephant, with a hand stretched up high.” The guru exclaimed that in angst, but the kid took it literally, i.e., to the word. With an intent to fulfill his guru’s wish, he went to meet King Raghu. At that time, King Raghu was performing a Ya:gam (sacred ritual) termed Sarvasva Dakshina:tham (offering everything). As part of that, he was to donate all his possessions. Then everything would be returned back to him. The king had donated everything to everyone that was already present. Then this kid arrived to ask for gold from the king.

As soon as the king saw this kid, he welcomed him with a clay pot and clay plate along with water to wash his feet. When the kid saw this, he could infer what remained of the king’s wealth. What could he do then? He said “I don’t need anything.” The king insisted, “You came here with a desire. I must know.” The kid revealed his wish, “But I understand your state now, so I don’t need anything.” King Raghu declared, “It was said that when one approaches saying de:hi (please), pleading for something, but is sent back without fulfillment... and the seeker leaves disheartened… the life force of the ‘supposed donor’ also leaves along with the seeker. Therefore no need to worry. Please stay back tonight in our guest house. Tomorrow I’ll be able to consider your wish.”

That night, the king ordered his army chief to plan an immediate attack on Kube:ra (the god of wealth) and take all his wealth. Realizing the situation, Kube:ra willingly filled the entire king’s treasury with all the available riches [well beyond his original requirement]. King Raghu summoned Koutsa and said, “Son, Koutsa! Take the entire wealth I have and offer it to your guru.” Surprised, Koutsa responded, “Oh my! What do I do with all this? I will only take the amount of gold that was requested.” King said, “No way. All this came for your benefit, so you must take it all and use it!” As per history, Koutsa accepts it all and offers it to his guru. That’s not the primary topic here.

Arjuna said, “This individual Koutsa offered everything his guru wanted.” “But here I am taking away everything my guru desires such as riches, kingdom and their happiness…” “… artha ka:ma:n …” “… katham bhunji:ya …” “… hathva: bhunji:ya …” – I am even willing to kill them – The other great disciples did not care to fulfill their guru’s desires. How could I kill and snatch away my guru’s desires and happiness – artha ka:ma:n? Is it fitting for me? Old memories, and riches smeared with their blood, will not let us enjoy, live happily or experience royal wealth. We will see those blood smeared riches forever. Therefore, you should be advising us that it is not right to go into this war. Instead, hey Sri Krishna, you ask us to fight and kill our gurus!? “… hi … ”

What I thought is right, isn’t it? Arjuna thus exhibited the epitome of ignorance, trying to support his intent, rebuking Sri Krishna, his well-wisher. He even tried to convince Him to admit that his chosen path was the right one. Furthermore, he is trying to prove logically that his path is better than the advice given in sloka 2.6. Let us try to learn this gradually as we move along. Jai Srimannarayana!

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