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1. Episode Title: Episode 130 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 130)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of concentration and focus, Understanding the role of manas (mind) in achieving goals, The relationship between manas, buddhi (intellect), and indriyas (senses), The story of Rama and his acceptance of destiny, The significance of developing habits and familiarity in guiding the mind, The process of reforming manas for spiritual growth

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, manas, buddhi, indriyas, Rama, concentration, spiritual guidance, habits, familiarity, sthitha prajnatha

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), The second chapter of Bhagavad Gita tells us about concentration. There are three things that interfere with focus. One is indriyas (senses), along with the body. If we want to focus on something, as they are not used to it, they go towards what they are familiar with. Thereby we can’t achieve what we desire; we land up somewhere else.

Let’s say we somehow work hard and pull them back on track. There is a leader to the senses called manas (mind). It has many samskaras (habits) from the past. Even though you set a new goal today, it keeps thinking about whatever it is used to from the past instead of how to attain the goal. Some people come to us for advice. They ask why something can’t be done in a particular way. When we start telling them why it can’t be done, they proceed to tell why we should do it that way. Because they are used to that, they won’t listen to what we say and continue to express what they like. They try to convince us with what they prefer. They didn’t come to us for our advice; rather, they came to convince us with what they like. This is the general characteristic of our manas.

The second important thing is to control such manas. The third one is the buddhi (intellect), which gives thoughts in the right way. Manas, that which thinks, needs to be furnished with the right content. This is what buddhi does. In fact, even when you want to do something good or bad, it can provide logic to support both. If the mind is focused and in a stable state, it is easy to control the other two [intellect and senses]. Hence, manas is very critical. It is said,

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SLOKA WORD -

mana e:va manushya:na:m ka:ranam

SLOKA MEANING -

manas is the cause for everything

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We might have heard of Rama Chandra. When Rama turned 25, his father promised him the kingdom. He was asked to perform the rites prior to coronation, which he did. In the eastern part of Dasaratha’s mansion, they arranged many kalasas (pots with sanctified water) for his coronation ceremony. They sent a message to Rama to come early in the morning. Rama came, saw the kalasas, and went inside. While going, he looked at them happily, thinking all these kalasas were arranged for him. However, once he went inside, the situation changed, and he was instructed to go to the forests instead of ruling the kingdom. Common people would get angry and confront them; however, Rama didn’t do that. His stepmother informed him, ‘It is your father’s intention that you go to the forest. He is hesitating to tell you. Hence, I am conveying it on his behalf.’ Rama accepted happily.

He was coming outside. First, he convinced his manas to go to the forest. After his manas accepted it, he verbally expressed his consent. Mother Sita tells this to Hanuman in Sundarakanda while explaining to him about what happened before she came here [to Lanka]. After his stepmother conveyed it to him, Rama first realized and comprehended it with his manas, accepted it, and then responded to her through words. He accepted with his manas first. If we have to do something forcibly, we do it sadly. Our manas doesn’t accept it and continues to cry. However, it wasn’t like that for Rama. He accepted it with manas first. Later, va:cha prathigruhi:thava:n,

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SLOKA WORD -

va:cha prathigruhi:thava:n

SLOKA MEANING -

He responded verbally

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He said, ‘It is fine whether you or father says it. It is the same thing. I will definitely go,’ and came out. There will be some sorrow in manas, right? He saw the kalasas as soon as he came out. They were meant for him. But now, they will use it for Bharata. Ordinary people would get upset and feel like kicking those kalasas. However, Rama didn’t feel that way. Why? His manas already accepted going to the forest as soon as he was told. Once the manas accepted it, his indriyas didn’t oppose it. He saw the kalasas and paid obeisances to them. Why? Because he felt that these kalasas contain the sanctified water to use for [the coronation of] the future king. His manas accepted this. If he thought they [kalasas] were for him, maybe he would have felt sad. He thought they are worthy for the future king and hence are worshipable. He circumambulated them, paid obeisances to them, and went on his way to wherever he was supposed to go.

Unless you do sadhana (dedicated practice), this great qualification can’t be achieved by common people. However, Rama is an ideal human being. As he has attained the qualified state, he attained that state naturally. Since manas is not a visible instrument, we don’t know how and what it is doing. When it comes to indriyas, to avoid seeing, we can close our eyes. To avoid listening, we can put some cotton in our ears or do something. We can tie our hands or legs if we don’t want them to function. What can we do for manas? How can we control manas? How will it listen to us? This is an uncomfortable situation. It is not easy to make manas listen to us.

We can’t keep manas idle. We must give it some work. It is an instrument designed to work. To move about is the natural characteristic of air. If we stop the flow, it can take lives. To flow is the natural characteristic of water. If it keeps flowing, it is fresh; otherwise, it gets stagnant and dirty. Manas is an instrument that keeps working constantly. It is a very powerful instrument. We can’t see manas or hold it. Hence, it shouldn’t be kept idle. It should be given some work; otherwise, it will destroy you. Previously we spoke about the story of Guruji's rakshasi (malignant demon). Our manas is like that. We shouldn’t keep it idle. It is our responsibility to teach it how and where it should act.

When there is a huge flood, if we leave the water, it merges with the ocean. However, if we contain the water by building a dam or something, we can use it for many good purposes. Manas is also like that. It needs to be contained and sent in some direction. It shouldn’t be kept idle. There are a few people who disturb everyone around if they are not given a position. For them not to disturb everyone, they need to be given some position or the other. Manas is more dangerous than them. Where should we direct it? Whatever is our goal, we should direct it towards that. We shouldn’t keep it idle. We should teach it where it should flow or act. If it doesn’t flow like that, it will behave like unrestrained water drowning everything around. We have to remember this.

Manas should be familiar with whatever we are trying to show it. This is another problem. Little kids don’t go to strangers even if they offer them chocolates or other things. They take the chocolate but don’t go to them. They want to be with their mom or dad, whoever they are familiar with. They want to stay with them even if they hit them.

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SLOKA WORD -

usha nirastho:pi sishu sthanandayaha na ja:thu ma:thus charanau jiha:sathi

SLOKA MEANING -

Little kids, even if the parents hit them, want to stay with them, instead of going to a teacher or other strangers

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Similarly, our manas also wants to be with familiar things; it doesn’t desire to see atma (soul) or paramaatma (Supreme Soul), which it is not familiar with. Initially, when we put the kids in school, they don’t like to stay there. However, if we get them used to it and get them interested by saying that they can play with others, later they wouldn’t want to stay home and would only want to go to school. Developing the habit!

There is a place called Sri Rangam. There was a great person called Nambillai there. Usually, if you want to turn manas towards God, you should develop interest in divine sayings about God. He used to sit near a pushkarini (lake) near the Srirangam temple and give discourses about Bhagavad Vishayam (the subject of God). A lot of people used to sit there and enjoy the discourse. They all developed keen interest by listening to it constantly. Nambillai used to preach only about the greatness of Sri Ranga. In the afternoon, they would take Selvar, a deity of Rangaatha, and put bali harana (sanctified food) around the temple. At the time of bali harana, there used to be the sound of temple bells and other instruments. Everyone was required to stand. They were not allowed to continue their discussion and were required to stand at that time. The timing of bali harana was also around the same time as the discourse. Nambillai had to stop his discourse for some time, and they had to stand during bali harana. Unable to tolerate the break in the discourse because of bali harana, they used to ‘criticize’ Lord Ranganatha, saying, ‘the enemy to our discourse is coming.’ Who are they ‘criticizing’? Ranganatha! Who were they listening about? About Ranganatha himself!

More than the Lord, they were more focused on the person describing the Lord’s glories, as he introduced them to the subject and was able to convince them about it. There is enough subject matter about the Lord’s greatness. However, it should be told in a way that everyone likes it. You have to make their manas accept it. If manas likes it once, it will gradually act on it by taking indriyas and buddhi along with it. Manas will be able to mold buddhi to think accordingly. Hence, reforming our manas is a very important process.

In the second chapter, while instructing us about how to control the mind, the Lord discusses sthitha prajnatha (stable knowledge). Prajna is knowledge that is stable in the mind. It should be taken to a level where it is unwavering despite any attempts to distract. Discussing that and how to overcome the obstacles in the way, the Lord proceeds further. Let’s try to learn that. Jai Srimannarayana!

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