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1. Episode Title: Episode 14 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 14)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of ignorance and its impact on decision-making, Arjuna's internal conflict and doubts, Understanding the importance of duty over personal desires, Krishna's teachings on responsibility and righteousness.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, ignorance, duty, responsibility, war, spiritual guidance

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), When one is covered in ignorance, he not only acts arrogant but also tries to force others to conform to what only he knows and likes. Despite being advised of good in many ways, he will not easily accept those suggestions. We see this even in Arjuna. He tries to prove his advisor guilty as well. We can clearly observe this state of Arjuna at the beginning of chapter 2, verse 6.

Arjuna asks Sri Krishna:

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SLOKA WORD -

na chaitadvidmaḥa kataranno gari:yo yadva: jaye:ma yadi va: no: jaye:yuḥu /

ya:ne:va hatva: na jiji:viṣha:maha te: vasthita:ḥa pramukhe: dha:rtara:ṣhṭra:ḥa //

SLOKA MEANING -

We do not know which is better for us: to fight and win or to fight and lose. Those standing before us are the sons of Dhritarashtra, and if we kill them, we cannot live.

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This sloka (verse) reminds us of our guru, Sri Gopalacharya Swamy. He would say, “Why is he talking like a fool?” … ya:ne:va hatva: na jiji:viṣha:mah (upon killing whom I cannot further live). Why does he say, ‘I cannot live having killed these people’? Is this what he should be saying? He should instead be saying, ‘I cannot live without killing them!’

Because they [Kauravas] committed many atrocities against [Pandavas], insulted their women, fed them poison, burnt their home, stole their kingdom, and cheated them in many other ways. To not punish them, to encourage them, to keep them close means we are further encouraging their heinous acts. It further means that we are indulging in and encouraging their faults. Arjuna should have therefore said, “What’s wrong in killing such people?” However, he is dragging Sri Krishna into his realm of ignorance as well.

When one says “How would we know?”, it implies that neither party knows. That is what Arjuna is saying here. na chaitadvidmaḥa (We do not know). Using a plural here means, ‘We are unable to comprehend this.’ Instead, he could have said, ‘I am unable to figure this out.’ He could have said “… aham na ve:dmi …” (I do not know). But he isn’t saying that. Instead, he is using the plural form “na chaitad vidmaḥa …” (We cannot understand this either).

“What is the guarantee that we’ll win this?” “Isn’t it said that winning or losing a war is at God’s discretion?” “Who will win?” He doesn’t want to say “who will lose?” Instead, he said, “we will win or they will win.” Sometimes certain words are amusing to hear. In Ramayana, Sri Ramachandra’s sons are Kusa and Lava. In Uttara Ramayana, Lakshmana would extol the qualities of Sri Rama.

Bhavabhuti, a renowned playwright, authored a fascinating anecdote indeed. In the anecdote, a horse is released post ashwamedha yagya (horse sacrifice). A notice is attached to its face. “Whoever dares to capture this horse will have to face Sri Ramachandra’s army!” “Dares to capture?!” “Someone left a note questioning our ability, insulting us!” “What do they mean by ‘dare to capture!’” “Tie it up! Let’s see who will come to get it.” They tied it up in Valmiki Ashram. Kusa and Lava, both of them, didn’t know then that Sri Rama was their father, so they restrained the horse.

Sri Lakshmana’s son, who was protecting the horse, soon followed. Sri Lakshmana’s son: “O! Brahmacharis (celibate students), sons of rishis (sages), who do you think you are, to restrain Ramachandra’s horse?” Lava and Kusa had already memorized the Ramayana by then. Kids [Kusa & Lava]: “Who are you talking about?” “Why don’t you introduce yourself first?” “Are you here to save this horse?” “If you want us to release it, then you must fight us. Why do you speak about Elders?”

vruddha:sthya na vicha:rani:ya charitha athishtanthuyum (There is no need to speak of Elders now). An adage goes ‘vruddha: na:ri pathivratha’ (all elders are naturally respected, no need to mention them here). If you are able to show your might, then we are ready to challenge you now. We will show our ability as well. The note on the horse’s face reads, ‘If anyone is capable of restraining it…! As if the world is devoid of any true warriors?! “Capable of restraining?!” We are ready to prove that we can hold it and stand up to any threat that might follow.

Lakshmana: “Oh no! Why do you speak like that and about whom? This is Sri Ramachandra’s horse!” Kids: “Why do you mention Sri Ramachandra when you should be speaking about yourself? We do not need to speak about elders.” Lakshmana: “Sri Rama is noble and righteous!” Kids: “Hmm! It’s probably not respectful to talk about Him now anyway.” Lakshmana: “Why?!” Kids: “Ramachandra is a brave warrior. A warrior should always step forward and not in any other way.” ‘Any other way’ implies? If it’s not forward, then it’s backward, right?! Not even the word ‘backward’. Forget stepping backward, the warrior should not even utter the word ‘backward’.

We’re not sure if it exists anymore, but folks in olden days followed a practice when initiating a task. They wouldn’t start counting with number 1, instead they start with ‘beram’ (a term used to avoid bad luck), then ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, ‘5’, ‘6’. Instead, the counting goes ‘beram, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6…’ ‘7’ should not be uttered! No no! That word should not be spoken [as it’s considered inauspicious]. They continue with ‘6.1’, then ‘8’ and so on. They don’t even like to use certain words. Similarly, Kusa and Lava said… thishtantuhum vardhathe: vruddha:sthe na vicha:rani:ya charitha (Why speak about elders?).

Lakshmana: “About Sri Rama?!” Kids: “It’s alright, we know all about Sri Rama already…” Lakshmana: “What do you know about Sri Rama?!” Kids: “Some time ago they chopped a sweet old lady’s, Surpanakha’s, nose and ears. Them?” They must not have enough strength to face a true warrior. They must have had the urge to use their strength on someone. So they chopped off an old lady’s nose and ears and claimed themselves as the greatest of warriors! sundhasri: nidhane: akunta yasasa..! (they truly achieved great glory [sarcastically]).

Enough! Not only that, Surpanakha later sent her three brothers Khara, Dushana, Trishiras in sequence. Khara came in the end to fight the war. When all his weapons rendered useless, he suddenly lunged at Sri Rama with a weapon in his hand. Sri Rama was fighting alone! He instructed Sita and Lakshmana to observe from a faraway mountain top. He said, “Watch how I alone will counter these 14,000 warriors,” and He fought with them! He decimated them all in a short period. Finally, Khara came and surprised Sri Rama! Sri Rama then had to take a small step back in that instant.

Sage Valmiki fascinatingly wrote -

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SLOKA WORD -

apa:sarpath prathipadam kinchith thvaritha vikramaha

SLOKA MEANING -

He took one step back and then stepped aside so he could dodge the sudden attack and save Himself.

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He killed Khara later, but that’s not the topic here. Whether Sri Rama killed Khara or not is not the important question here. “This great person took a step back and that is not acceptable.” “This Ramachandra! your Ramachandra! the great Ramachandra!” “The great one who is worshipped across three worlds!” “But maybe he is an ‘elder’ and everything they do is permissible. So let’s keep that aside,” says Kusa in amusement. It means that he wouldn't even utter certain words. Arjuna belongs to the same category.

Therefore he says, “Who can predict the results of war? Who controls that? Those are in Bhagavan’s (God’s) control. Isn’t it?” …yadva: jaye:ma yadi va: no: jaye:yuḥu … (Whether we win over them or they win over us?). Who can predict this? Can this be guaranteed or can this be believed? Despite all the effort and after waging war, there are no guarantees for a good result. It makes sense if the end result is fruitful after all the destruction. But there is no such guarantee in war.

We need to observe here that Arjuna stooped to a state where he was doubting Sri Krishna’s knowledge and decision. This sloka depicts that ignorance in humans, the sorrow caused out of it, and the arrogance as a result can destroy mankind in various ways. He says “…kataratno gari:yaha …” (I am unable to determine what is right). No! He said “We are unable to determine …” “Why? If we win, we will accrue the sin of killing a guru. Else if we lose, we will not be respected. Either way we will be blamed.” “If we do nothing, we can perhaps save face.”

It means that Arjuna doesn’t mind saying anything or tricking others to support his thinking. Therefore we need to understand how sinful sorrow is. We don’t know if we will win or if they will win. “…hatva: na jiji:viṣha:maha…” (How can we live after killing them?). For whose sake do we desire these? We don’t have a desire to live by killing them. We desire to live along with them without killing them. We want to enjoy the happiness along with them. How can you say that we should kill them, take their happiness, and then live?

In reality, to win or lose in a war is … avyavasthe hi drushyanthe:… (Can you question this, which was mentioned in shastra?). It means Arjuna is not in a state to follow Sri Krishna’s advice and is moving beyond this stage. In reality, in such situations earlier, Arjuna was the one who had advised others. It is said, “paro:pade:sa ve:la:ya:m sarve: vya:sa para:sara ha” (When giving advice, one speaks as if the sky's the limit - but when faced with adversity, he sobs uncontrollably). Arjuna’s state is similar.

During his previous Uttara Gograhanam War, when Uttara Kumara retreated with fright from the battlefield, Arjuna cajoles him to return and convinces him to wage war. This same Arjuna then said “It’s a sin to retreat, to give up, to let enemies walk away. War must be waged.” Then, he is the one who advised the prince to kill. However, on facing this situation himself today, the perspective changed - he is ignoring the knowledge from shastras. He feels his opinion is paramount. As an elder, he feels he always does things right, but now claims ignorance.

This is what we need to observe now. For anyone to admit that they don’t know something is a fine trait. It’s said, “... svajna:na jna:nino: virala: ha …” (There is no greater virtue than one to recognize one’s ignorance). But it’s not happening with Arjuna. To cure one’s sickness with a good medicine for better health, one needs to realize first that one is sick. If they don’t realize this, how can we help? If they don’t accept they are at fault, what can we do?

Sri Krishna’s opinion is – “We should not gauge what sort of happiness we’ll experience or how. Primarily, understand your responsibility here.” “It is irrelevant now what one gains or loses. Duty is crucial here.” However, Arjuna is thinking about gain and loss. He wants to enjoy the materialistic riches with them. It is immaterial if he would enjoy his life with them or not. Sri Krishna says that it is important to know your responsibility. Arjuna’s focus is on the desire for happiness.

The essence of Sri Krishna’s teaching is to reflect on responsibility. One must carry through with whatever is needed with those at fault - be it a relative, a woman, a man, or an animal. It is the responsibility of a wise person. You must adhere to it. This is Sri Krishna’s advice. This is the essence of Sri Krishna’s guidance. Because Sri Krishna is mahanubhava (one with a good heart), He can certainly shape Arjuna accordingly. Bhagavad Gita chapter 2, verse 6 demonstrates how Arjuna is trying to express his current state and how Sri Krishna is educating him. Let’s focus on this as we move ahead. Jai Srimannarayana!

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