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1. Episode Title: Episode 22 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 22)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of good words and their impact on life, Understanding the concepts of sre:yas (the good path) and pre:yas (the pleasurable path), The teachings of King Yama in the Kato:panishad, The significance of choosing the right path in life, The journey of the soul and its implications in human existence

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, sre:yas, pre:yas, Arjuna, Krishna, Kato:panishad, King Yama, dharma, soul, Angkor Wat, paths of life

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), If one uses good words as a common practice in life, they enable the speaker to respond positively, regardless of their level of understanding. They also provoke a positive reaction in listeners. Hence, we are advised from childhood not to listen to bad words, not to watch bad scenes, and not to do wrong deeds. Listen to good words, watch good scenes. Our elders taught us that we must always be listening to, speaking of, doing, and watching good things. Of course, we now refrain from heeding this kind of advice. This kind of good is termed sre:yas (the good path).

The word sre:yas is used in a very deep sense in the Upanishads as well. The Kato:panishad talks about the depth of this word. At the beginning of chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna what is sre:yas for him? Whether to fight the war or not, what is sre:yas? Usually, a person would advise either to fight the war or against it. However, Sri Krishna didn't do either. He responded with seventeen chapters of Bhagavad Gita. Can He give such an extensive response without being asked? Arjuna asked! Only then, Sri Krishna responded. When did Arjuna ask? Arjuna asked what is sre:yas for him. Sri Krishna was content with this word, sre:yas, and started explaining it to him.

What is sre:yas? Doesn't it just mean good? It is not limited to meaning ‘good’. It has a deeper meaning. Once Nachiketas visited King Yama. King Yama started teaching him. That teaching is called Kato:panishad. In this Upanishad, King Yama educates Nachiketas that there are only two paths that the soul can take. What are those? One is the path of sre:yas (the good path), and the other is the path of pre:yas (the pleasurable path).

In teaching to Nachiketas, King Yama says that whoever wishes to travel in sre:yo-ma:rga (the path of the good) will flourish. One who wishes to travel in pre:yo-ma:rga (the path of the pleasurable) will move in circles and will come back to me as my guest, and I will take care of him. One who travels in sre:yo-ma:rga doesn't require anything from me and will progress upward from me. In explaining this, he [King Yama] says,

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SLOKA WORD -

sre:yescha pre:yascha manushyame:thaha

thou sampari:thya vivinakthi dhi:raha

SLOKA MEANING -

The wise person carefully distinguishes between the good path and the pleasurable path.

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Dhi:raha (the wise), one who has good buddhi (intellect), will understand these two paths carefully. What will he do by understanding these two paths?

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SLOKA WORD -

thouhi: sre:ya a:dada:nasya sa:dhu bhavathi

hre:yate: arda:th pre:yo: avruni:the

SLOKA MEANING -

One who accepts the good path will be recognized as a good person, while one who is drawn towards the pleasurable path spirals down from the purpose of human birth, moving further away.

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Whoever is dhe:raha (wise), with intellect, will accept the sre:yas. What is sre:yas? What is pre:yas? Sri Krishna explains sre:yas and pre:yas in Bhagavad Gita. He [Yama] gives a long and detailed description of what happens to a person on sre:yo-ma:rga and pre:yo-ma:rga. In Bhagavad Gita chapter 8, Sri Krishna describes the same thing with simple words because complicated words make it difficult to understand. He talks about a white path, a black path; a bright path, and a dark path. What path will we pick if we have to pick one? Will it be a bright path or a dark one? We’re not sure what might cross our path in the dark - there may be snakes, insects, monkeys, stones, mud, or other things.

Do you know who would select to go down the path of the dark? Thieves and people with bad habits would desire to travel in the path of the dark. Whereas an intellectual one would like to travel in a bright, well-lit path. He would prefer to travel on a path that gives him happiness. Isn't it? That is why,

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SLOKA WORD -

suklakrushne gathi:hye:te: jagathaha sasvathi:mathe:

SLOKA MEANING -

There is a white path and a black path.

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On what path would you like to travel? I want to travel on the white path. Good! If you want to travel on the white path, contemplate on that path daily. Think of that path daily. There is a beautiful description of the white path. It says, agnissuklaha (the path of light). Our previous acharyas (teachers) have described this white path…

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SLOKA WORD -

archir dina pu:rva paksha shad udang ma:sa: abda va:tha amsumath

glou vidyuth varune:ndra dha:thru mahithas

SLOKA MEANING -

The white path is suitable for all of us. It is enjoyable, comfortable, and pleasurable.

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Hence, traveling on the white path is sre:yas. The black path is of two kinds. One is pitch black; we can't see a thing in that darkness. Another one is completely filled with smoke, says Sri Krishna. The path filled with smoke is called dhu:ma:di-ma:rga (the smoky path). What happens when we travel on this path? We are now talking about the journey of souls from human birth. We are currently not discussing what happens to other creatures. We need to know about humans. For sure, we will have to leave this body one day or the other. That is decided, isn’t it? What happens after we leave it? Should we slide ‘down’ to be born as an insect, rock, or something else? Or should we be born as human beings enduring all the joys, sorrow, and difficulties that come with this life? Or do we need a temporary status, enjoy various pleasures, and then finally slip from that position? Which one is desirable?

If we follow the path of dhu:ma:di (the smoky path), then we will be circling anywhere from insect life to the temporary life form that gives lots of pleasure like in svarga (heaven). That's the range of this dhu:ma:di, smoky path. This soul will be going through these parameters, circling in various life forms within it. The soul keeps rotating in this cycle. This is one path. There is another branch of pre:yo-ma:rga (the pleasurable path). It is called ya:mya:di-ma:rga (the path of suffering). The person entering this path will endure various kinds of suffering. The Garuda Purana describes these various kinds of sufferings based on the karmas (actions) of the person. Many of us might know about this Purana, and it's worthwhile remembering it again.

What happens when one travels on ya:mya:di margam [according to Garuda Purana]? What does one feel there? We do not know for sure how accurate these descriptions are, but let’s discuss. There is a vast temple named Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Angkor Wat is the most humongous temple of all the Vishnu temples in the world. It was built during the 11th and 12th centuries. Inspired by the teachings of Ramanujacharya, the ruling king at that time started the construction of this temple, and his son finished it. In the temple, on a massive wall of 400 feet, there's an amazing sculptural description of what happens when traveling in these two paths. The mid-portion of the wall portrays the consequences of traveling on dhu:ma:di ma:rga (the smoky path). It shows birth and rebirth, happiness and sorrow, various kinds of income and experiences. The bottom part of the wall portrays what happens to a soul when traveling on ya:mya:di ma:rga through sculptures.

What happens on this path? We see a lot of professional chefs who are experts in cutting vegetables. They cut the vegetables quickly into slices, and they carve them into beautiful shapes. They are experts in slicing the vegetable in various ways, horizontally, vertically, spirally, or granularly. All this is cutting. Our soul on this path [ya:mya:di ma:rga] is given a body capable of going through these various slicings. That body gets pierced with needles at times. It gets burned at times, and it gets fried at times. The Angkor Wat temple shows all these sufferings carved on its wall. Won't the person die if he gets tortured so much? The kind of body the soul acquires on this path doesn't die from this torture, but he feels the pain. This is ya:mya:di ma:rga.

The paths are dhu:ma:di ma:rga (the smoky path) and ya:mya:di ma:rga (the path of suffering). Do you wish to have such torturous experiences? Or would you fall into the cycles of birth, death, and all the joys and sorrows that come in between birth and death? Both these paths fall under pre:yo: ma:rgam (the pleasurable path). The subdivisions of pre:yo: ma:rga are dhu:ma:di ma:rga and ya:mya:di ma:rga. Is it wise to desire these paths? If one desires to be on this path, then he can go down that route. If one is adamant about being on these paths, then he is beyond anyone's help. However, one determined that these paths are not for him and he wants to travel on a brighter path, jyo:thir gamaya thamaso: (lead us from darkness to light) then the path is archi: ma:rga (the white path).

Even this path is depicted on the top of the wall at the Angkor Wat temple. On this path, there are personnel to receive you, wash your feet, sprinkle rose water on you, decorate you, fan you with ornate fans, sing your praises, give a tour of various galleries, and finally take you toward Bhagavan (the Lord) and ensure that you are comfortable there. It is fascinating that all this was sculpted on the wall in the 11th century with the influence of the great Ramanujacharya. There is a white path and a black path. Knowledge of the existence of these paths is what is required when we are here on earth. If you know of the existence of these paths, you will conduct yourself accordingly. With proper conduct, you will benefit accordingly. Acquiring knowledge is a crucial step. What is it you should learn? One should learn about sre:yas, the white path. Everyone wishes to live in bliss, eternal bliss.

To conclude, King Yama narrates to Nachiketas that one should always desire to walk on the white path, sre:yas. Whoever progresses on this sre:yas path will never cross paths with me. He will gain my respect as well. As for people traveling on pre:yo: ma:rga, I will be ready with all my personnel for them. Employment of my personnel flourishes in leaps and bounds because of such people. The word sre:yas originates from here. Unaware of all this, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna to tell what is sre:yas for him. Pleased with Arjuna, Sri Krishna gets ready to reveal all the knowledge required to travel on sre:yo ma:rga. We will examine in further episodes how Sri Krishna goes about this. Jai Srimannarayana!

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