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1. Episode Title: Episode 24 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 24)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The significance of the Bhagavad Gita as a guide for life, Arjuna's sorrow and its roots, The importance of duty over personal feelings, Understanding the nature of righteousness in conflict, The role of a teacher in dispelling ignorance

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

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Bhagavad Gita is a wonderful boon bestowed on mankind, giving direction to humans on the goal of life and teaching them the way of life. Taking humanity as the common principle, irrespective of ja:thi (community), kula (caste), de:sa (country), varna (creed), varga (class), etc., Bhagavad Gita is the divine panacea which has come to give whatever is required for mankind to reach the goal of life and to attain higher consciousness. The master physician who graced it to us is Sri Krishna Bhagavan.

Arjuna is only a means or an excuse for it. Taking him as an excuse, Sri Krishna gave this wonderful medicine to the entire mankind. This is like an amazing vaccine. But it doesn’t have any side effects. This is a good vaccine that is harmless. It is also a panacea. Coronavirus, for example, affects people differently based on country, region, or on whether one had been already infected once or more! Imagine how difficult it is to make a vaccine for such a virus. If the virus behaves in the same way, it is possible, but if it mutates in different ways, it is not possible for the same vaccine to counter all these mutations.

However, Bhagavad Gita is such a vaccine which can counteract any type of ‘virus’ or its mutations or any kind of risks it may bring upon or any ‘bacteria’ or anything else! It is a wonderful medicine which not only contains the capacity to challenge and eliminate any kind of flaw in an individual but also empowers one who accepts it.

In the second chapter, Arjuna is expressing the sorrow he is experiencing and praying to Sri Krishna to eliminate it. Arjuna’s main intention is to get rid of his sorrow. He is not thinking about performing his duty. How will Arjuna’s sorrow be eliminated? Why is he feeling sad? He thinks his sorrow is due to the war or from killing relatives and gurus. Actually, he shouldn’t feel sad about that. He should feel sad that they are ignoring and turning away from their duty. If he thinks that way, then he will think about how to drive others to perform their duty. Then duty becomes paramount. But Arjuna is not realizing what his duty is. He is aware of his comforts, his gurus, and the comforts of the kingdom. He is imagining that the sorrow is the result of these.

In reality, he should not feel sorrow because of them. He feels it is important to eliminate such sorrow that is caused by the thought of losing these comforts. He also believes he is in a position to make this decision. The decision must be made by Sri Krishna, and He must instruct him to follow it. But Arjuna believes that he made the decision.

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SLOKA WORD -

nahi prapasya:mi mama:panudya:th yachcho:kam …

SLOKA MEANING -

“I do not see any way to remove my sorrow.”

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Arjuna seems to say that – “Not just me, even You cannot guide any further here.” The letter “..hi..” emphasizes that. [As per Arjuna] “Even You would probably say that it’s better to withdraw from the war. Being a relative, [You might prefer for me to have] these physical comforts, royal riches, and its experiences. Instead of gaining these comforts by killing, it is better not to kill but leave others to their fate. Without putting in any effort, isn’t it better to live in a forest and beg for alms? I will then not have any sorrow and will not be blamed for killing my guru or relatives.”

Instead of viewing it as a sin, he should treat it as a duty or fate to punish the sinners and restore the kingdom. Arjuna is only seeing this as his personal experiences and sorrow. Arjuna’s opinion is that killing relatives is a sin, the resulting kingdom is undesirable, and it’s better to beg for alms than to enjoy those riches. But as per Sri Krishna, anyone who is at fault must be treated like an enemy, and it’s the duty of a qualified person to punish him. The kingdom must be run by a qualified one and is not by an unworthy person. Even if the ruler is a relative, if at fault, he must be punished to purge the kingdom.

Sri Krishna opined thus on what Arjuna must do and is trying to convey the same. But Arjuna, despite committing to be Sri Krishna’s disciple, is acting like those disciples who try to teach their gurus! They say – “Hey Guru! Your instruction is probably good, but I feel right about what I said.” Not sure then why they feel the need to learn from a guru. Similarly, Arjuna said –

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SLOKA WORD -

nahi prapasya:mi mama apanudya:th …

SLOKA MEANING -

“I do not see any way out of my sorrow.”

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The so:kam (sorrow) I have “… yachcho:kam …” “I don’t see any way out of my so:kam. How can You see any other way?” Why should Arjuna say what He is supposedly seeing? If anything, Sri Krishna should say it how He sees it. What does this sorrow cause?

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SLOKA WORD -

uccho:shanam indriya:na:m…

SLOKA MEANING -

“It is drying up my senses entirely and causing me a lot of grief.”

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What are your thoughts?

… ava:pya bhu:mow asapathna mruddham ra:jyam sura:na:m api cha a:dhipathyam “Should I wage the righteous war and enjoy the comforts after attaining heaven? Else should I kill my relatives, eliminate them and experience the blood-tainted royal pleasures? Should I choose tainted royal pleasures or heavenly comforts? I feel they both result in sorrow. I prefer the third option to live happily where I won’t fight in the war and don’t have to choose the other two. I feel this is a better option for me. Even You may not be able to suggest a better alternative?”

In a way, he is suggesting that Sri Krishna cannot offer another alternative. If a student proposes an argument with the teacher and asks, “Can you think of a better proposition than this? Isn’t this the best approach?” In a way, the student is indicating to the teacher that he is not keen on listening to other alternatives. Arjuna is commanding Sri Krishna this way.

Arjuna’s mind keeps thinking that the result of the war is to attain the kingdom. He forgets that the war is to crush the adharma (unjust practices). It is not certain if one wins the kingdom or not. It is not important who will survive post the war. It is important, however, whether he helped decimate the adharma or not. Will the doctor ever think that he is torturing the patient? The doctor tries to cure the disease effectively. If needed, he will cut open the body, inject into it, or stitch it up. He will do what is needed for the body to cure the disease. How can we question the doctor when he is surgically cutting the body or piercing it?

Therefore, it is not appropriate to think about violence or non-violence at that time. Focusing on the health of the patient is paramount for a doctor. Therefore, one should not focus on the end result but on the duty-bound actions. One should act to fulfill one’s duty but not debate on or expect resultant gains. It is your duty to plant a tree and water it. Sow and help grow it. Protecting it is your duty and should be fulfilled. Wondering whether they would be able to eat the fruits once the tree bears them should not be their concern. You must fulfill your responsibility. Such [result-focused] thoughts occur due to ignorance.

Sri Krishna realized that Arjuna’s misguided perspective of focusing on results or kingdom or killing relatives is due to his ignorance. How did He know it? He knew because of Arjuna’s choice of words. It is advised that a patient is allowed to speak in depth initially. The doctor is then able to learn more about his disease, the severity, and why he is suffering from it. Once he knows the root cause, administering the medicine will become easy. An able doctor is able to thus figure out the main cause for the disease and treat it well. Initially, Sri Krishna let Arjuna vent. Through that, it became apparent that his mind and thoughts are clouded with ignorance.

Ignorance can only be dispelled through right knowledge. Knowledge germinates by good advice. Arjuna is not in a state to realize this, but Sri Krishna can clearly see it. Our Elders have said that there exist several kinds of people.

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SLOKA WORD -

ni:thi jnaha niyathi jnaha ve:da jna: api bhavanti sa:stra jna:ha

SLOKA MEANING -

“There may be many who know right from wrong, some who can predict good fortune in others based on palmistry, and others who are well-versed in the Vedas and can interpret them thoroughly.”

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There may be many such people and are usually known as ‘ghana’ or ‘jhata’.

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SLOKA WORD -

brahma jna: api sulabha: ha

SLOKA MEANING -

“It may be easy to find one who can speak about brahma jnana (knowledge about the ultimate reality).”

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However, there is a challenge here –

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SLOKA WORD -

sva ajna:na jna:ni ha virala: ha

SLOKA MEANING -

“Those who can recognize where their ignorance lies are rare.”

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They are almost impossible to find! They may not even exist! Those that can diagnose their ailment properly will go to a doctor and get it cured. If they are unaware of their ailment or do not admit its existence or are not inclined to learn about it, then they cannot be helped. More than the quality of the medicine, it’s the degree of clarity in the patient about the disease in him. If he is unaware of the disease, he would ignore or discard any expensive or highly effective medicine. However, if he is truly conscious of it, then he will try to seek out and accept the cure wherever it might exist now or later.

Similarly, when one is conscious of their ignorance, they would seek out a jna:ni (learned one) and follow his counsel for an opportunity to better himself. Sri Krishna is able to make Arjuna realize the ignorance he is suffering from by letting him speak initially. Sri Krishna is therefore in a position to administer the ‘medicine’ to Arjuna now. He will begin that process now. Let us move ahead to learn how Sri Krishna is doing it. Jai Srimannarayana!

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