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1. Episode Title: Episode 4 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 4)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of sorrow and its impact on decision-making, Understanding Arjuna's emotional turmoil, Krishna's guidance on overcoming despair, The importance of knowledge in addressing sorrow, The role of dharma in personal conflict

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, sorrow, dharma, visha:dam (despair), thaththva jna:nam (knowledge of absolute truth), Madhusu:dana, emotional turmoil, guidance

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Bhagavad Gita begins chapter 2 with a moral from Sanjaya. Sanjaya apprises Dhrutharashtra, describing Arjuna’s state of mind.

Sanjaya Uva:cha (Sanjaya said):

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SLOKA WORD -

tham thattha: krupaya:vishtam asru pu:rna:kule:kshanam|

vishi:dantham idam va:kyam uva:cha madhusu:danaha||

SLOKA MEANING -

He, who was overwhelmed with compassion and whose eyes were filled with tears, spoke this sorrowful statement.

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Arjuna is possessed with the feeling of mercy, like someone overtaken by an external power. He lost [control of] himself. He speaks as if he were under its influence. In fact, he didn’t know much, but he spoke as if he knew everything. This is dangerous. If one who knows about dharma (righteousness) and adharma (unrighteousness) speaks about them, then it is beneficial. However, if one who doesn’t know speaks as if he knows, then it is harmful. These days you find many such people. You are all nice folks. Like us, there are speakers who don’t know anything despite acting so knowledgeable. We speak as if we know it all and do not like to admit our ignorance. Arjuna is now in a similar state. He is consumed by sorrow. He is unable to differentiate good from bad. He is unable to decide whether to wage the war or not. He is disinclined to wage war. He would like to withdraw from the war but he knows that’s not right. They (Pandavas) came prepared for the war. He is well aware of his own capabilities.

Under normal circumstances, an individual’s sorrow can be pacified accordingly. However, an agitated person cannot be appeased with a normal conversation. He also acts in a way that is unnatural to him. He behaves according to that which is consuming him. Poor Arjuna was behaving thus. Though Arjuna did not want to wage the war and threw down his weapons while collapsing in his chariot, he is not incompetent. He knows that he is fully capable. Because, earlier, during the war of Uththara Go:grahanam, the same Arjuna successfully waged the war. He fought these same Kauravas and all these elders then. Dro:na, Bhi:shma, Duryo:dhana, Ashwattha:ma, and Sakuni were all there then. He fought alone against all these men on that day. During exile, he attained pa:supata:sthra (a powerful weapon) by penance exclusively in preparation for the war. He sought this weapon knowing he will need it later. So it is incorrect to say that he is averse to the war. Also, it cannot be concluded that he is incapable. Earlier (during Uththara Go:grahanam war), this same “elder” [Arjuna] gave advice many times to Prince Uttara Kuma:ra. The abundant advices that Sri Krishna is giving to Arjuna now…this same Arjuna was giving it to the Uttara Kuma:ra then. Does he not know about it? Yes, he knows. But it’s the effect of anxiety.

Sri Krishna said to Arjuna – “Hey! Today you speak this way. With what authority are you speaking thus? You say you will not fight the war, and questioning why even wage war at all.” [Sri Krishna] – “Having arrived in the battlefield, you now say, as an inept person, that you will not fight. Your assumed role of Bruhannala (a disguise) was over. Today you should neither act nor speak that way.” Arjuna sank to the depths of sorrow as he lost the ability to differentiate right from wrong. He is in a deep state of visha:dam (despair).

… visi:dantham …

Visa:dam results when the mind gradually degrades and is lost. Imagine a mud ball. When it dries, it develops cracks. Later, when water is spilled over it, the mud ball softens, gradually flows out and merges into a plain land. If the mind goes through a similar experience then it is termed as visha:dam. It then loses its original identity, melts, wanders around and settles on something entirely different. Arjuna is in that state today and therefore, Sri Krishna advised him. To relieve him of sorrow, Sri Krishna delivered seventeen chapters of guidance! We alluded earlier that sadness felt under normal circumstances can be dealt with. However, sorrow due to aggravation cannot be addressed easily. That … a:bha:sa sukham (false happiness) … i.e when one does not realize real sukham (happiness) and dukham (sorrow) … then it is challenging to reveal the meaning of real sukham. Arjuna is dwelling in that state now. Actually, he needed to be told to crush his enemies and enjoy the victory, and the kingdom.

bhunksho bho:ga:n samruddha:n (Enjoy the abundant pleasures)

This is what he [Arjuna] needs to do - this is actual sukham. Yet, he is contemplating to quit war, give up the kingdom, live in a forest and beg alms! He thinks of this as sukham. No! To realize happiness one has to endure sorrow. Since Arjuna was not experiencing this himself, Sri Krishna manifested an environment where the sorrow would dawn on him. In chapter 1, we learned that one of Bhagavan’s names is Hrushi:ke:sa (the one who controls the senses). He therefore controlled Arjuna’s senses and made him feel sorrow.

sukham hi dukkha:ni anubhu:ya so:bhathe: (One who experiences sorrow appreciates happiness)

Unless one experiences sorrow, he won’t realize the value of happiness. The value of light is appreciated only when one is in dark! A taste of spice will make one appreciate the sweetness of a dessert. Similarly, only the one who endured sorrow will appreciate the taste of happiness. Therefore, to make Arjuna truly realize what happiness is, Sri Krishna is actually making him feel the pain of sorrow. The sorrow of Arjuna is imbued with thrikarana suddhi (purity of thoughts, words, and actions). Meaning that he felt the sorrow via thrikarana suddhi.

thrikarana suddhi is segregated as mano va:ka:yamulu (mind, speech, and body) …

… i.e. he felt sorrow in his mind, in body and in senses. Sanjay explained this with words:

asru pu:rna:kule:kshanam |

vishi:dantham…

We mentioned earlier that sadness felt under normal circumstances can be dealt with, but sorrow with anguish is hard to manage. Such sorrow can be overcome only via thaththva jna:nam (knowledge about absolute truth). Further, such people [in visha:da] can decipher thaththva jna:nam only to a limited extent. Others [those not under distress] are able to grasp it all and choose the right path. However, for these people, they are only able to grasp enough to fulfill their current need. How far did Sri Krishna’s instruction benefit Arjuna? It only helped him enough to wage war. In reality, he did not gain the thaththva jna:nam despite listening to the entire Bhagavad Gita. He waged the war and later forgot all about it.

Using Arjuna as an excuse, knowing that we would be in a similar state where we think we know it all … when we really don’t, taking life to a distressed state not knowing what sukham and dukham are… Sri Krishna shared this to show the path. To pull ourselves out of sorrow, what does anyone do? We tend to search everywhere. Does it alleviate our sorrow when we make money? Or when we erect large buildings? Or when we own cars? Or when we have a large following? We try in innumerable ways. However, nothing will relieve our sorrow. On the contrary, these efforts worsen our sorrow. Because whatever we obtain needs to be maintained which further requires more earning and more effort. Therefore, whatever we do in this world with hopes of making us happy adds to increasing grief. Man attains eternal happiness only through thaththva jna:na. Bhagavan’s aim is to imbue this thaththva jna:na in all. This is the goal of Bhagavad Gita. Not just for Arjuna, but for all. For that reason, He began instructing this Bhagavad Gita. It began with sorrow. He started with Arjuna, who was consumed by sorrow. He concludes at 18.66…

ma: suchaha.

aham thva: sarva pa:pe:bhyo: mo:kshayishya:mi ma: suchaha || [18.66]

Sri Krishna states – “It’s not right to be depressed. Let go of that sorrow.” This is His final instruction. The verses that follow are treated as Uththara Pi:ttika (epilogue), meant to wrap up His guidance. But His intended message ends with 18.66. Bhagavad Gita started with the intent of getting over sorrow… and goes on until He states, “let go of sorrow.”

After 10 chapters, Arjuna thought he had learned it all! At the end of the 10th chapter, instead of recovering from sorrow, Arjuna was faced with new doubts. “You claim many things. You say that You govern this universe. That the world is operating because of You. And that every aspect of every being is regulated by You. Is that true?” Arjuna thus wondered again. Despite listening intently, he heard it all with a sense of doubt. “If You truly are that powerful, then will You show it to me? I would like to visualize it.” It implies that Arjuna’s faith was still wavering. In chapter 11, Sri Krishna had to then reveal his Vira:tru:pam (divine universal form). After seeing that form, Arjuna believed Him. Sri Krishna, wondering whether Arjuna really understood everything, summarized the entire message again to further clarify.

Therefore, Bhagavad Gita was not intended just for Arjuna. It was to melt the sorrows away from all of us. The manner it reached was… Arjuna initially felt mercy for all his relatives, feeling sad that they would all be killed. “I would also go to hell…”

… luptha pindo:daka kriya:ha

pathanthi pitharaha || [Sloka 1.42]

He was worried that they would all die and other unjust things would happen in a righteous war. His concern then gradually moved from all his relatives and fixated on two of them. Who are they? One is Dro:na and the other is Bhi:shma:cha:rya. It stopped with these two. Sanjaya was thus explaining this to Dhrutharashtra in the beginning of Chapter 2.

tham thattha: krupaya:vishtam asru pu:rna:kule:kshanam|vishi:dantham idam va:kyam

uva:cha madhusu:danaha||

Here, Bhagavan is addressed as Madhusu:dana (the one who can remove faults). Bhagavan’s work is to eliminate faults, wherever they may exist. He doesn’t have to offer anything new; instead, he simply needs to remove these sins… similar to unblocking a stream whose flow into an agricultural field is ebbed by a levee. We also have blockages that prevent the free flow of knowledge in. He needs to clear those up for us.

madhusu:dana (the one who can remove such blockages)

Arjuna is facing such an impediment now. To help him overcome this, Sri Krishna began this conversation with him. He was questioning Arjuna. “Due to the sorrow you are experiencing, you’ll be accruing three sins.” What are they? How are they manifested? Let’s try to learn these as we move forward in this 2nd chapter. Jai Srimannarayana!

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