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1. Episode Title: Episode 72 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 72)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of knowledge and ignorance, Understanding the concept of the all-knowing, The importance of duty and righteousness, Krishna's teachings on the soul and its eternal nature, The folly of claiming complete knowledge

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Sarvajna (all-knowing), Arjuna, Krishna, duty, soul, ignorance, knowledge, debate, Tena:li Ra:makrushna

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), some people masquerade as all-knowing in order to deceive society around them. They speak as if they know it all. They act like they control everything. They claim they can achieve anything. Not only now, it has been this way for a long time.

Once a well-versed scholar visited the royal court of King Sri Krishna Deva Raya. He claimed to know everything and that he would defeat anyone [in debate]. Everyone was worried seeing his demeanor. He spoke about certain topics in the royal court. He exhibited his ‘vast knowledge’ and ‘expertise’ to those in the court. Everyone got a bit worried.

On that day, [the jester] Tena:li Ra:makrushna was not in the court’s attendance. It came to a point where everyone seemed to be defeated. That scholar then demanded, “O, King! Present me with a royal note that… this court has accepted my vast expertise … and admit that I won and defeated everyone in this court!” Maha:ra:ja, King [Sri] Krishna Deva Raya didn’t know what to do. He said, “Let's wait. We‘ll adjourn the court for today and decide on it tomorrow.”

Tena:li Ra:makrushna was away on a week’s leave. The king then canceled his leave and summoned him to come at once to the court. Ra:makrushna arrived at the court and asked, “Hey Maha:ra:ja! What is the issue?” The king said, “Our fame is in danger now. Our court is about to be disgraced. An unknown scholar came to our court for a challenge. Everyone is tongue-tied in his presence! They all were defeated. The scholar is demanding a royal note declaring his victory!”

Ra:makrushna said, “Oh! Is that right, Maha:ra:ja? Shall I do something about it?” The king said, “That’s why I summoned you.” Ra:makrushna said, “O great one! It will certainly be taken care of. When [should I do it]?” The king replied, “We adjourned the court for today. Tomorrow the decision must be made to present a royal note declaring we all were defeated. It is now up to you to protect our dignity. We are resting our hopes on you.”

Ra:makrushna continued, “O great king! My duty is to obey your order. I’ll never shatter your hopes.” He agreed to take care of it. He showed up at the royal court the next morning. The well-versed scholar also arrived there. He asked, “Who are you?” Ra:makrushna replied, “O great one! I heard you are a sarvajna (all-knowing).” The scholar said, “Yes. You may ask anyone in this court about it!”

Ra:makrushna continued, “O great one! Very happy to hear. I do have a question, however. If you could answer my question, then I have no qualms in accepting you as sarvajna.” The scholar demanded, “Go ahead and ask!” Ra:makrushna asked, “How many crows are there in our village?! How many crows are there in our village?” He [the puzzled scholar] thought he [Ra:makrushna] would ask something from sa:sthras (scriptures), or tarka (logic) or mi:ma:msa (philosophy) or vya:karana (grammar). He simply asked, “How many crows are there?”.

How would the scholar respond to this question? He sat there bewildered! A rule exists in [such a] debate. If I ask you a question and you are unable to answer it, then I must provide the answer. Only then will I be deemed the winner. I’ll be considered ineligible for the debate if I ask a question for which even I do not know the answer. The scholar remembered this rule then and demanded, “Alright, I do not know, however, you should know the answer… speak, how many crows are there in your village?”

Ra:makrushna chuckled and said, “O great one! I’ll give the answer. You do not know the answer, right? If you first write down a note that you lost as you do not know about it, then I’ll reveal the answer.” First of all, he clearly averted the impending threat from the scholar. Then the scholar wrote it down and bellowed, “Now tell us how many crows are there in your village?!” Ra:makrushna responded, “O great one! In our village, at this instant, there are a total of 92,345 crows. That is 92,345.”

The scholar asked the King, “O great king! This is a deceit! This is trickery. You have a responsibility to verify this immediately. Have the crows counted in your village right away! O king! You owe us a validation of the answer and assign a few people immediately to count these crows!” Ra:makrushna then said to the king, “If Your grace permits, I would like to submit a request.” The king said, “Go ahead.” Ra:makrushna then turned to the scholar and said, “Hey pundit (knowledgeable one), if you would allow as well, I have a request.” The scholar angrily said, “What is that?” Ra:makrushna gently said, “It's just that the count I gave is only valid… for this instant i.e. 92,345 crows. Once the search begins, the number might change with new crows coming in as guests from other villages. There might be a few crows that would have left to visit their relatives in other villages. I cannot help if the count changes due to these. O great king! However, today and for now the exact census is 92,345 crows.”

What can the scholar do now!? When will the committee be formed? When will they get to plan and prepare? When will they start and how many days would have lapsed by then? Also, how to count the crows that left the village? How to make out the crows that are visiting from outside? How to count them? To protect the dignity of the royal court, to uphold the honor of their kingdom… he won that argument only by his argumentative ability. In reality, did he actually count the crows in the village or know about their whereabouts? Even if we ignore this, if someone claims he knows everything… then we would just pity him for thinking crazily.

Similarly, if someone claims they know everything there is about a:thma (the reality of the soul), then we must pity him as well. Sri Krishna says…

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SLOKA WORD -

a:scharyavath pasyathi …

a:scharyavath vadathi …

a:scharyavath … sruno:thi [BG 2.29]

SLOKA MEANING -

Whoever speaks about a:thma (the soul), whatever is spoken about it… and how much ever is spoken about it… it [the soul] will continue to be an amazing wonder. Despite contemplating on it a lot, there is no one who will grasp it in its entirety.

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Sri Krishna thus proposes about the soul in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2, verse 29. One gets ridiculed if they claim they can control the entire sky with their hands. It's laughable if they say, ‘I chopped the sky to pieces and pulverized it’. We feel pity for him… that he may have gone crazy and need to be treated for mental illness at a hospital. We hear of many such people in the world that speak about the a:thma (soul) this way. That they know everything there is about the soul. Not just that they are knowledgeable, but that they can help others realize the soul in just 5 seconds or 5 minutes. We pity such people as well!

It means, similar to how it is not possible to comprehend the sky … it is just as difficult to grasp everything about the soul in entirety. Arjuna seemed uninterested to discuss the soul and made a face as if to say… “Why should I pine for such an obscure thing? Why would You try to convince me of its reality? Why would You try to waste my time on it? Actually, I do not want to broach this topic at all and do not want to know about it.”

Seeing this, Lord Krishna said, “If you truly do not care about the soul, then why mourn for it? I’ve declared earlier not to mourn for the bodies. You seem to be mourning a little for the body and a little for the soul as well. Because you are in agony you are saying, If I kill these people I’ll go to hell. Or maybe they will go to hell. They will be disgraced. They will fall to the lower worlds from their worlds. Why do you say such things? Since you speak this way, it implies that you are aware that the soul is separate from the body. You have that feeling and are thinking about it. That is why it became imperative to explain that there is no need to mourn for the soul. Because as per the scripture, the soul is nithyam (eternal). You cannot say that I neither need to know nor care about it. Because you speak as if you know about it already. You speak as if you know about bodies and that you know about souls. You say that you will not fight the war to avoid the sin which you might accrue by destroying these two [body and soul] and that you would like to roam in the forests…

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SLOKA WORD -

sre:yo: bho:kthum bhaiksham api:ha lo:ke: [BG 2.5]

SLOKA MEANING -

And you say that it’s better to beg for alms than to fight and kill them.

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It is clear that what you know is not genuine knowledge. It is your duty to acquire the right knowledge. Therefore, it is incorrect or unnecessary to think that if you fight with the bodies… to fulfill your duty then they would be at a loss. It is your duty alone to stop those that are at fault. So you have to do that. Since you think you are knowledgeable about the soul, I am telling you what this [truly] is. If one cannot learn about it despite all efforts, then why should one learn about it? What it means by ‘cannot be learnt about’ is that you may learn what you need to about it… and what fits your stature or role [but not everything there is].’

When you approach an ocean, take what you need from it. It does not mean then that whatever you possess is the entire ocean. There is more to it. Because there is more but you cannot see all of it, will you stop enjoying at least what you possess? No, right? You only need a small amount of water from the river. You take that and leave the rest in the flowing current. A:thma thaththva jna:na (knowledge of the soul’s reality) is also similar. Whether it is the sages or the great people or the scholars, they keep learning about the soul. However, they realize what they know [about the soul] is not comprehensive!

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SLOKA WORD -

yasya amathi mithi matham, thasya matham …

yasya: matham thasya matham

matham yasya na vedasaha:

SLOKA MEANING -

Upanishads state that if someone claims, ‘I know everything about the soul and… there is nothing more to learn’ then it means he is just a fool and that he doesn’t know anything at all.

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On the contrary, if anyone says, “I strived many years to learn about the soul, thought I knew a lot about it… but I realized that what I knew is just half of a water drop in an ocean of knowledge of the soul… oh my! There is still so much more to learn!” …that person is truly a knowledgeable one. … yasya amatham ithi matham, thasya matham … One who humbly says it's impossible to learn everything about the soul, it indicates he must know something about it.

The great Ku:raththa:lwan once stated

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SLOKA WORD -

vyoma:m bho:ja idamthaya:khila midan

bhra:ntho:yam ithyuchchate:

SLOKA MEANING -

“Gagana kusumam (sky flower), why would I not know about it? It is so beautiful, bright red and lush.” Anyone who speaks this way is just a fool.

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Gaganam (sky) means sky and kusumam (flower) means a flower. There are flowers and there are skies as well. But flowers growing out of the sky is an impossible phenomenon. This won’t happen. “Since I know everything, I know about that [soul] as well.” It implies that anyone who says this is just an ignorant person and a fool. “Knowledge of the soul is also like that. No one should think that they know everything about it. However much you learn about it, you still do not know it well.

The reason I ask you to not mourn for the soul is because it cannot be destroyed. Because Ve:das (scriptures) and the scriptures that give knowledge of the soul proclaim this, we must follow it. We must learn the way it teaches us, we must speak the way it asks us to. We must only believe the way it explains to us. We cannot, therefore, talk about it in whichever we feel like or know. Therefore Arjuna, there is no need for you to mourn for the body and no need to mourn for the soul. Since both are not needed, do not contemplate on the impact of war … losses you might incur, where they might go [after they are killed]... or what difficulties they might face.

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SLOKA WORD -

katham bhi:shmam aham sankhye:

dro:nam cha madhusu:dana!...

ishubhih prathiyo …. [BG 2.4]

SLOKA MEANING -

No need to cry or feel sad with such thoughts. Just move ahead by waging the duty-bound war properly.”

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As part of chapter 2, in the process of teaching about his duty, Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna the knowledge of the soul’s reality. He tries to alleviate his sorrow. Jai Srimannarayana!

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