

Geeta for the Common Man -I

The first chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta is Arjuna Vishaada Yoga or Vishaada yoga in short. It is really surprising how Geeta includes the word Vishaada in it and how one can call or consider Vishaada as Yoga. First, one wonders how can one associate sorrow, weeping with Yoga? Vishaada the word means sorrow, crying. It is a well-known fact that when people cry they are being asked the reason for their sorrow. People do ask, "Hey what is wrong with you why are you weeping?" So we understand that to weep there must be something wrong with one or in one. This being the case, how can it be coupled with yoga?

When we cry, people around us consider this crying, a disease. Having verified everyone tries to find a solution for the problem of crying. If there is a person who cannot succeed in finding a solution to the problem of the other, then that person tries dissociating him or herself from the other. In the Bhagavad Geeta when Arjuna cries or gets into despondency, everyone wants to read and know the inner meaning of his crying. Arjuna is the hero of the Story- a divine story.

[It seems that there were two groups of people each representing one-value system. One group upheld all healthy values, whereas the other valued or cherished enjoyment at all costs. The ones who valued enjoyment at all cost grouped under the head of Kauravas. May be we can classify them as good and evil forces. There was a war between them and in the war, Arjuna a great unparalleled archer was on one side and Karna, Bhishma, etc., on the other. To take stock of the situation, Arjuna asks his charioteer to place the chariot in the right place from where he could have an over all view of the situation. This he feels could help him in making decisions. Once Sri Krishna places the chariot between the two armies, Arjuna runs into problems, which

in one word is being called Vishaada--despondency sorrow. The first chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta speaks about this Sorrow.]

This shows that our crying gets us sympathies and may be admonition, whereas, Arjuna's weeping brought him glory and the entire humanity studies or reads about his sorrow. So, either we do not know the art of weeping the Arjuna way or that our weeping is defective. Arjuna wept and what he received was the teaching that helps one with freedom (moksha). It looks as though it is most important that we learn to weep the Arjuna way. Saankhya Yoga is the second chapter, the third karma yoga the fourth is Jnaana Yoga and the fifth Sannyasa Yoga. We shall be seeing in the process of unfolding the meaning of the verses of the Bhagavad Geeta a very wonderful truth. The truth is the meaning of the first verse of the first chapter almost runs in and through all the chapters.

It looks as though the Vishaada Yoga forms the foundation for all the chapters of the Bhagavad Geeta. So, if one learns to appreciate the helplessness in all our pursuits regarding the end, then alone can one make any progress. Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna and many other saints are an example of this. In the Geeta itself Arjuna says "I give up," though not in so many words, but as one clear act of dropping the bow and arrow. It is only then the teaching begins.

Behind every act of weeping there is an element of ignorance that is Universal whether it is the child weeping or an elderly person doing it. Through this weeping the child in everyone, surfaces or manifests and if only we do not try to hide this truth through later acts, then blessings are there for the asking. This is being highlighted in Arjuna's sorrow and the subsequent surrender to the Almighty. This surrender is with the understanding the power within one's reach is a limited one. The word surrender is being used in a special sense, as we shall see later.

Only when a student gives up to the teacher then the teacher can start the work of teaching or the child when it gives up to the mother, can the mother do something. So, crying, breaking or opening up in front of them may be useful, but not elsewhere. Elsewhere we become a laughing stock of ourselves. The problem is not going to end either.

If we look into the Geeta the first chapter, the first verse, we see a peculiar fact. Dhritaraashtra weeps, pleads requests Sanjaya to tell what happened. Definitely war is not a happy situation for one to rejoice, especially given the handicap of Dhritaraashtra. Like a decent human being he asks Sanjaya "what my people (my sons and grand sons) and the sons and grandsons of Pandu do in the battle-field?" Virtually he was crying inwardly deep within though not outside. This crying did not help him for he was crying till the end of his life. The crying did not become metamorphosed into Yoga for him. The problem continued to exist. He could not get the teaching from Lord Krishna or any other master. Neither did he receive the teaching nor did his inner weeping bless anyone. The chapter is Arjuna Vishaada Yoga. This means even though Dhritaraashtra was much older than Arjuna, still he did not know the art of converting a sorrowful situation into Vishaada Yoga, but only adds to the existing Vishaada.

To be continued...