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1. Episode Title: Episode 20 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 20)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of understanding dharma (righteousness) and its application in life, Arjuna's internal conflict and realization, the nature of the soul (atma) versus the body, the significance of seeking knowledge, and the eternal truth of Akshara (the imperishable).

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, dharma, atma (soul), Akshara (imperishable), knowledge, self-realization, internal conflict, wisdom, temporary versus permanent.

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Arjuna failed in upholding dharma (righteousness), thinking what he was doing was right. Duryodhana also failed to do the same by hating what was the right thing to do. Both of them knew what was right, but didn’t know the right method of implementing it. Duryodhana wasn’t the type who listens to others. But, Arjuna had the quality of listening to others and hence became a key person for us.

In the form of Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna had to clarify and explain sreyas (conductive to well-being) and the goal of human life. He felt we should be made aware of the importance of attaining the right knowledge. If we have the supreme knowledge, then we can judge for ourselves what is right or wrong and what our duty is. So Sri Krishna started preaching atma tattva jnana (science of self-realization) to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita.

But if you start sharing your knowledge about something without being asked, it will not be appreciated. Did Arjuna ask Sri Krishna to teach him the science of realization? Actually, he didn’t ask it knowingly but did it unknowingly. Arjuna said two things, ‘I have a fault in me called karpanya (pitiable state). Tell me what is sreya (good) for me.’ These two words, karpanya and sreya, are really important. Normally we will think karpanya means ‘a pitiable state’, but that’s not correct!

What is karpanya? One is krupana (one who is in a pitiable state) when he passes away not knowing what needs to be known despite being born as a human being. Let’s take the example of two animals (cows). They were taken to a field full of grass and given 5 minutes to eat as much as they could. One animal started eating as fast as it could. The other animal kept thinking the whole 5 minutes if it should eat or take it home and share it with others. What will happen next? They will both be taken home.

We conclude that at least the first animal ate as much as possible and the other one lost the opportunity given to it by just thinking. If someone says, “Do this little thing, you will get great benefit. Everyone is welcome to do it.” One who is interested in it, one who needs it and qualifies for it should make efforts for it and attain it. If you keep thinking, you lose the opportunity, and you may not be presented with it repeatedly as per your wish.

Human birth is very valuable. For who? For the indweller, the soul (atma) inside. In actuality, the body that we see on the surface only works because of the soul inside. The soul is known as atma. If it is inside, the body becomes useful to work for something, earn, or at least to enjoy the experiences. If the soul is not within, it [body] can’t be used for anything except cremation.

If the body is given as a means to use in accordance with the soul, should we live for the sake of the body or for the self inside? We need to contemplate this. If you know about atma and body and their characteristics, then you can decide what you should do. Atma is eternal, the body is temporary. Now, what should we work for? Should we spend all our energy on something temporary? If it is said that it takes the same amount of effort for the benefit of the longer-lasting entity, should we not spend the energy on the long-lasting benefit instead?

It is our duty to think about this. Normally a wise man would use it for whatever is long-lasting. Sri Krishna felt the need to explain what is temporary and what is permanent, as we are not always aware of it. Because normally we only see the external body and think it is the one enjoying the pleasures. But that’s not true! If that’s true then even after the soul is gone, if we put this body in a comfortable car or an air-conditioned room… or place a tasty meal in front of it, it should eat and experience them all. But, that’s not happening.

The body loses its identity without the soul. Once the soul leaves the body, it (gradually) starts stinking, deteriorates, and (finally) gets destroyed. Should we work for such a body which loses its identity without a soul and is only used as an instrument for the soul’s experiences? Or should we work for the soul which is permanent? If the recipient of the actions by the body is the soul, is it not better to learn about the qualities and nature of the soul and work for its benefit rather than for that of the body?

Wise men should contemplate this. We should not lose long-lasting benefits for temporary happiness. If needed, we can sacrifice temporary happiness for the sake of experiencing long-lasting benefits. Should we prefer something that tastes bitter when we put it in our mouth but gives energy and strength later? Or should we prefer something that’s tasty now but will take our life 5 minutes later? Which one is good for us? We need to think about this.

Since atma (soul) is the one which is eternal, if we acquire the right knowledge about it then we can mold this body into a good instrument and make it work favorably for us. Hence Krishna wanted to give that knowledge. But Arjuna should ask for it, right? Krishna had to prepare Arjuna for asking about it. Arjuna was at least willing to listen and was partly qualified to know about the right knowledge. Duryodhana didn’t have that qualification, so Krishna tried to preach to Arjuna.

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SLOKA WORD -

sishyas te:ham sadhima:m thvam prapannam

yachchhre:yas sya:n nischitham thanme: bru:hi

SLOKA MEANING -

I am your disciple; please instruct me on what is beneficial for me.

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In Bhagavad Gita 2.7, Arjuna asked Krishna - ‘Please tell me that [which is good for me]’. Since it is not good to share knowledge without being asked, Krishna made Arjuna ask him. If you feed a person when he asks for it, food will taste delicious. Similarly, if you share knowledge when one asks for it, it then stays in his mind properly. When Arjuna unknowingly uttered the words, Krishna spoke as though he were replying to what Arjuna asked for.

What did Arjuna say? First he said krupanaha. He said - Karpanya dosha (fault of pity) vahataha swabhavaha - ‘I have this fault called karpanya in me.’ We discussed what karpanya was before. There is no guarantee how long this instrument called body will live. No one can guarantee that. Sir Arthur Cotton built a bridge on Godavari river and said this bridge will definitely last for 100 years. Surprisingly it lasted much longer than 100 years and is still existing. He also built a bridge on Krishna river and said it will last for a specific number of years. It lasted that long and more.

When few people give certain guarantees, they can be trusted. But nowadays when people build bridges, they are collapsing by the time of inauguration. There is no guarantee this body will definitely stay for a specific amount of time like 100 years. Priests usually bless someone by saying - ‘Shatha manam bhavathi shatha:yu purusha:ha - may you live for 100 years.’ But the minute the priest turns his back, that person might get a heart attack or corona and die. What happened to the blessing? Don’t know. Can anyone say for sure how long this body will live? No one can say.

That is why as long as we are alive, we should do whatever good needs to be done without wasting a second. But shouldn’t he first need to know what is good [for him]? Only then can he act on it. What is it that ‘good’ that needs to be known? Yajnavalkya Maharshi revealed it to Gargi in his teachings in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. There is one tattva (principle) which gave this body as an instrument to the soul and brought it here, that is called Akshara Tattva (imperishable principle).

This Akshara has Vaikunta (the eternal abode) as its home and is also called Narayana. The Maharshi explains further in the same Upanishad that this tattva is what supports the functioning of everything by indwelling in them. We don’t know about it. It resides as atma (soul) inside every object and has it as its body and makes it function. That is only one and it is called Narayana.

Deva Eko Narayanaha

It exists in every object starting from earth till the individual soul. That is Akshara tattva - that which is eternal and cannot be destroyed. Once you realize this eternal tattva, it will also make you experience eternity if you take shelter of it. Whatever qualities it has, you will also get the same qualities. We always wish for permanence in everything - our fortune, ourselves, our experiences, and everything around us. Those who wish for permanence should pray to the tattva which gives permanence, Akshara Tattva.

Therefore, from the time one enters this body and before one leaves it…

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SLOKA WORD -

etad aksharam aviditva: Gargi

asman lokath preethi

SLOKA MEANING -

If one does not realize this imperishable principle while in this body, he leaves this world losing a great opportunity.

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…if he doesn’t realize this tattva and leaves his body losing a great opportunity - he is the one to be pitied - krupanaha. Whoever understands this tattva while in this body is called brahmanaha (one who knows the ultimate truth). He is the qualified one and can be called brahmavit (one who understands Brahman, the eternal truth). It doesn't matter in which caste, creed, community, or gender he is born. It could be a man or woman, animal or Brahmin, untouchable or anything at all.

Whatever caste, creed, or gender body he takes birth in, if he understands the tattva, he becomes worshippable to us. Because they understand the tattva, we worship them as Alwars (saints). We take their shelter so they can help us understand it. Arjuna said, ‘I am Krupana, please tell me about the tattva’. Krishna was elated that He got an opportunity to tell him about Akshara tattva. He preached, as Bhagavad Gita, all about Akshara tattva. That is why, though Arjuna asked a simple question, Krishna gave him a very long answer.

There are a few reasons like this. Let’s try to get to know them. Jai Srimannarayana! Jai Srimannarayana!

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