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1. Episode Title: Episode 3 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 3)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The meaning of samsara, the distinction between body and soul, the importance of knowledge in overcoming ignorance, Arjuna's moral dilemmas in battle, the nature of dharma and adharma, the role of Krishna's teachings in alleviating sorrow.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Sankhya yoga, Arjuna, Krishna, samsara, deha (body), atma (soul), jnana (knowledge), ignorance, dharma, adharma, Yudhishthira, compassion, spiritual guidance.

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), The great knowledgeable people… rushis (sages), seers… all the various incarnations of God… and the acharyas (teachers) who enlighten us about thatthvam (true nature of existence)… they all have one goal. We must become faultless, live happily and peacefully, so that we can eventually attain life’s goal.

We are all called ‘samsarulu’ (those caught in the cycle of birth and death). ‘Samsara’ means to believe that our external body (deha) and the soul (atma) residing in it - which we refer to as ‘I’ - are one and the same. This is called ‘deha-atma-viveka-rahityam’ (inability to differentiate between body and soul). Our elders termed it ‘samsara’. ‘Sam’ means two different objects, ‘sar’ means to believe that they are one. Both are different entities. The body is a different entity. The soul (atma), residing in it, is different.

As long as the atma resides in the body, the body is able to do different activities. It is also capable of various thoughts. However, if the atma exits the body, it is simply a wooden log – a conscious-less object. Then the body is not aware of whether it’s burned, frozen, or affected in any other way. However, if these are felt, it means that there is something else [other than the body] that is pervading it. That entity is capable of ‘knowing’ things. It resides somewhere inside the body and is infusing energy throughout the body. It is also ‘knowing’ different occurrences.

As it pervades throughout the body, it is named ‘atma’. As it gives life to the body, it is also named ‘jiva’ (living entity). Since it is the reason for consciousness in the body, it is called ‘chit’ (consciousness). It has a few other names too. This atma is there inside the body somewhere. We do not know its size. We cannot say with certainty where it resides within the body. But with the power of knowledge it has, atma pervades the whole body, in every atom of it.

Even after the atma leaves the body, it exists elsewhere. It roams somewhere, does something. Whilst in the body, it works within the boundaries of the body. The body is a vehicle for it. The soul entered the body to utilize it as a tool. Man needs to know that both atma and the body are different entities. He needs to work while not obstructing its goal and not misusing the body. Thus, knowledge is very important to man.

What knowledge? Knowledge is not defined as the know-how of identifying material objects like tables, chairs, etc. Parashara Maharshi (sage) says…

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SLOKA WORD -

तद् ज्ञानम्, अज्ञानमतोऽन्यदुक्तम्

tad jnana, ajnana mato'nyaduktam

SLOKA MEANING -

Real knowledge is that which enables us to understand that there are three distinct entities – I (atma), this body (deha), and the thatthvam (true nature) that drives them - are existing currently as one unit.

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This is real knowledge – ‘tad jnana’. Knowledge other than this, of any kind, in any magnitude, is ‘ajnana uktham’ (nescience). Such pseudo-knowledge need not be termed as ‘jnana’ (knowledge) - even animals have it! Even insects have such instincts. They too know such things, but we don't refer to them as knowledgeable. In fact, they have greater knowledge [of certain aspects] than us.

If we observe a mosquito, it tends to hide on our body, where our hand cannot reach. It bites us there and knows how to escape. Observe any species other than humans, you will realize they have great intelligence. However, their knowledge is limited to protecting their body, procuring their food, and scaring away whatever danger they encounter. It does not extend to what is within the body. Most animals do not even have the awareness to think about the future. Even they have the ability to do so only temporarily, like sparrows.

At the proper breeding time, they plan to build a nest for little ones. The sparrow designs and constructs a beautiful nest, although it may not have any means or any tools to do so. On the other hand, man has limbs and various tools that he can put to use. Whereas the sparrow only has a beak, with which it gathers sticks, leaves, and fibers. It spots a place on a tree out of reach of other animals and builds the nest there to hatch eggs and give birth to chicks. Once the chicks grow older, they no longer need that nest. It abandons the nest and goes its way. It does not reuse the nest when it needs to breed next time. It builds another one from scratch.

Thus, its ability to look into the future is limited and temporary. It cannot think about the purpose of its existence here. If indeed any animal had this ability to think about it, the very existence of man would be at risk. The animals would all rebel against man. Man alone has such awareness. So, he should not limit it to the present body or only the current lifetime. Instead, he should think of ways not to return to this vicious circle of birth and death.

Our rushis (sages) instruct us to acquire such knowledge. That is the real knowledge. All other knowledge makes us think in lines of body and atma being the same - and our actions are in accordance with that ignorance. Such ignorance is termed ‘samsara’. We are all obsessed with our external body and its safety, its nourishment, its comfort, and its maintenance. The body is not permanent. One day, it is vibrant, but eventually, it wrinkles and disintegrates.

If the body succumbs to mechanical problems, it stops functioning properly. Since man has made himself dependent on this body, any changes or degeneration in it makes him anxious and sorrowful. Sorrow is good in a way. But what should be the reason for sorrow? Man should be sorrowful when he reflects upon the questions such as… What should I do? What should I achieve? Where am I? Where should I have been? …and realizes that he has only something so mundane when in fact he deserves a lot more! That should be the reason for his sorrow.

However, since he is oblivious of his goal, he is absorbed in only worrying about the body, which is temporary. Thus, God had to begin delivering the message of Gita so that humans could have a means to emerge from sorrow. This sorrow must arise because of the ignorance within. This is not sorrow which arises because of loss to or pain in the body. Because this sorrow is due to lack of knowledge, it should be corrected only with right knowledge. Knowledge should be attained by upadesam (instruction) from Elders. Therefore, it must be given through upadesam.

Arjuna was inflicted with sorrow that day. He felt what he was about to do was wrong as he saw relatives [on the battlefield]. The very nature of killing is sinful. Moreover, killing a relative is even more sinful; killing a relative in war is even more so. So, he thought he should refrain from war. When does a war become unjust? When the war is waged simply for the sake of it, without valid reason, then it is wrong. When a country is under attack from another nation causing internal commotion, we retaliate to teach a lesson - this is not an evil act.

In that event, if extremists who are taking the lives of people are killed in order to contain them, then it is not wrongful. Only when a war is waged without an appropriate reason, then it is wrong. Here, the other side [Kauravas] caused so much grief to [Pandavas], grabbed the kingdom, humiliated their wife in assembly, and did all kinds of misdeeds. So, the war waged against them can be described as dharma-yuddham (the rightful war). However, Arjuna has lost his ability to differentiate between dharma and adharma (righteousness and unrighteousness).

It is easy to explain to someone who either knows fully or does not know at all. Neither is he completely knowledgeable, nor completely ignorant. Partial knowledge is always dangerous.

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SLOKA WORD -

अज्ञः सुखमाराध्यः सुखतरमाराध्यते विशेषज्ञः

ajnaha sukham-a:ra:dhyaha sukhatharam-a:ra:dhyathe: vise:shajnaha

SLOKA MEANING -

We can easily explain anything to a person who is completely ignorant. We can educate him and bring him to the right path. In the case of a knowledgeable person, he will understand with a simple explanation.

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However, as the saying goes…

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SLOKA WORD -

ज्ञानलवदुर्विदग्धं ब्रह्माऽपि नरं न रञ्जयति

jna:na-lava-durvidagdham naram na ranjayathi

SLOKA MEANING -

It is impossible to convince someone who thinks he knows everything.

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We can awaken someone who is fully asleep or talk to someone who is already awake. However, if someone is just pretending to be asleep, it is impossible to wake him up. Is Arjuna fully ignorant? The soldiers on the battlefield can be called ‘ajnas’ (ignorant ones). They are ready to obey the instructions given. ‘Ajnaha sukham-a:ra:dhyaha’, it is easy to instruct such soldiers and shape them accordingly. Dharmaraja (Yudhishthira) is an intelligent one, ‘vise:shajnaha’. We see that he did not have any doubts. Once he set his mind on war, he did not flinch. Hence he is known as ‘Yudhishtira’.

Earlier, during the days of exile (aranya-vasa) when a celestial being (gandharva) abducted Duryodhana, he sent Bhima to subdue that gandharva and free Duryodhana. He did this because it was a time to show pity [towards Duryodhana]. However, when both the parties have finalized to wage war and are ready to fight, there is no question of stepping back. Nor is there a chance for any mental doubts. That is why he is named ‘Yudhishtira’.

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SLOKA WORD -

युधि तिष्ठति

yudhi thishttathi

SLOKA MEANING -

He was steadfast in war.

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However, Arjuna can neither be categorized as ‘ajna’ (ignorant) nor ‘vise:shajna’ (knowledgeable). He is in between. That is why he started having doubts. Thus, God had to address these doubts. It is indeed very difficult to satisfy such people. To achieve that, He had to give a 17-chapter discourse. Dharmaraja did not need any of these instructions. The rest of the army did not need any such teaching. He [Sri Krishna] had to bestow this knowledge to Arjuna. All of us are in the same state as Arjuna as well. We should all get rid of our sorrows. We should learn what is meant to be learned. We have to be molded in such a way to be ready to discharge our rightful duties. That is the goal of Bhagavad Gita. Let us get to know how it is achieved as we move forward.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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