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1. Episode Title: Episode 55 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 55)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of the soul (atma), understanding the qualities of the soul, the indestructibility of the soul, the relationship between the soul and physical elements, the eternal nature of the soul, the concept of sanathana (eternal), and the teachings of Krishna on spiritual wisdom.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, atma, Krishna, indestructibility, sanathana, eternal, spiritual wisdom, Arjuna, dharma

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Bhagavad Gita is a deep scripture as it illuminates an intricate topic, atma (soul) thathva (nature of the soul). If we want to know about it, we must have focus and interest as well as make an effort to think. This kind of scripture does not suit one who does not have focus and interest - one who simply thinks about and desires superficial things. For one who desires only superficial things, entering into this scripture is difficult and requires effort. Because Bhagavan Sri Krishna is the best Acharya (teacher), He is gracing us with the nectar of thought. He is discussing atma(s).

He speaks of the nature of atma starting in 2.23. He teaches us what is required for an object to destroy an atma. Atma is smaller/subtler than everything. Everything else is bigger than atma. Because it is smaller than everything, it can penetrate anything. Because everything else is bigger than atma, they cannot penetrate it. Because they cannot enter it, they can’t do anything to it. If there is a door that opens wide enough, we happily enter through it to the other side. We cannot do the same with a wall, can we? Why? Because we are larger than the particles of the wall, we cannot enter through them.

Atma is smaller/subtler than everything. Because it is smaller than everything and it can penetrate through anything, it is vyapaka (pervasive). It can spread into anything, hence atma is named vyapaka. All other substances are vyapya (that which is pervaded). It is a technical term to identify them. Because atma is vyapaka, vyapyas cannot do anything to it. We discussed that atma can penetrate anything, but there is nothing that can penetrate it.

We know how to thread a needle. The needle has a tiny hole at one end. Only if a thread is thinner than that hole, it can be threaded. It is not possible to thread a rope into a needle hole because it is too thick. Because atma is smaller than everything, nothing can enter it. Atma does not get destroyed, as it does not let anything enter it. Sri Krishna clearly states this in two verses. The two verses seem to reiterate the same, but our acharyas (teachers) prove that it is not reiteration. Let’s look at verse 23 and 24.

Verse 23…

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SLOKA WORD -

nainam chhindanthi sasthrani: nainam dahathi pa:vakaha |

na chainam kle:dayanthi a:paha na so:shayathi ma:ruthaha ||

SLOKA MEANING -

Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it, water cannot wet it, and air cannot dry it.

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Weapons do not have any ability to tamper with atma. As they are made from earth, they do not have the ability. How about elements like fire? Fire also does not have what it takes to penetrate atma. Fire also is not ‘strong’ enough to affect atma. When does a cloth get wet? Cloth is made of threads. Water is thinner than those threads. Hence when the water reaches between them, the cloth is said to get wet. When squeezed, some of the water leaves the cloth. Then, when dried in the Sun, the rest of the water is evaporated by the heat of the Sun. Heat means tejas (energy). Tejas penetrates through the water and converts it into vapor. The cloth remains as is.

Water could penetrate the cloth to get it wet. Can water do the same with atma? Atma has no components. There is no way for something to penetrate it. Atma is smaller than everything, hence water cannot penetrate it. Water has no ability to do anything to atma. Water is of no use when it comes to atma. Physical elements, or fire, or water, cannot affect atma. How about air? Can air push the atma? No, it cannot. Why? If air particles can enter atma, then it can take the atma away. However, atma is smaller than air particles. They flow around the atma and move along, but cannot do anything to the atma. No external objects are powerful enough to bring any change to atma.

He explained the weakness of such objects in the first verse of this series [2.23]. In the second verse [2.24], He explains that based on atma’s nature, there is no chance for it to get destroyed by any object, leave aside the weakness of the objects to destroy it.

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SLOKA WORD -

achche:dyo:yam ada:hyo:yam akle:dyo:yam aso:shyaha

SLOKA MEANING -

Atma cannot be cut, cannot be burned, cannot be made wet, and cannot be dried.

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Atma does not have the quality of getting transformed. In the scenario of a leaf trying to cut the table, the leaf is not capable of cutting the table and the table is not of the nature to allow a leaf to cut it. Hence, one is the nature of the object and the other is the tool being used. Similarly, the two here…

achche:dyaha (cannot be cut) - When can something be cut? When it is made of at least two parts and it gets broken into parts, it is called chedya (divisible into parts). However, atma is not a union of some parts. Hence, achche:dyaha.

ada:hyaha (cannot be burned) - Because it is impossible for atma to be penetrated by the tejo particles.

akle:dyaha (cannot get wet) - When something must be made wet, water has to get into it. We all know what happens to water that is poured onto a cloth soaked in oil. Does water penetrate the oil-soaked cloth? If we do the same on a normal cloth, the water would have penetrated the cloth and we would say that the cloth got wet. If the cloth is covered with a layer of oil, does water then penetrate the cloth? No! Why? Because there is no chance for the water particles to penetrate the oil-soaked cloth, it does not get wet. Similarly, because atma is the most minute substance, it does not have a chance to let water enter it, and thus, cannot get wet.

Also, it cannot be pushed away by the air because atma does not have the quality of getting pushed away. Therefore, atma does not have the quality of getting affected by anything external and anything external has no ability to affect atma. One is atma’s incapability and another is the external object’s incapability. He is proving the two in two different verses. In the process, He explains the quality of atma as…

nithyaha (eternal), sarvagathana (pervasive), stha:nuhu (firm), achalo:yam (unchanging), sanathana (eternal).

Sri Krishna is describing atma with wonderful adjectives. One of them is…

nithyaha - exists eternally in all three planes of time, past, present, and future. It exists today, it existed the same way yesterday, and will continue to exist tomorrow.

nithyaha, thrikaalika abadhyamu (unchanging entity in all three time planes, nothing that can change it).

sarvagathaha - nothing can reach into it, but it can reach into everything. Because this can reach into everything, it lasts long. Because it will not let anything reach into it, it can last long.

sarvagathaha - That is why it is known as vyapaka. Generally, vyapaka is that which pervades in many places and vyapya is that which pervades to lesser places. We must know what it means to pervade in many places or to pervade in lesser places. Atma can penetrate everything, so it is called sarva vyapaka. Sri Krishna is stating the same as sarva gathaha. Atma does not associate with any qualities of the object that it penetrates because they cannot penetrate into it.

stha:nuhu - stays firm like an anu (smallest particle). Anu does not mean atom. Anu is that particle which is smaller than all else. There must be no other particle smaller than it. That which is indivisible is anu. Currently, science refers to it as Preon. That’s the name it’s been given - it is very small, the subtlest particle known to us in modern science as of today. Perhaps tomorrow, it will be split. Yet, atma will still be within it because it is anu, which cannot be split anymore. That which is no longer divisible is called anu. Sri Krishna declares that atma is like that, stha:nuhu.

There is another beautiful meaning to it. An iron tamper that is used for breaking iron. Generally, iron is heated red and then hit with a sledgehammer to break it. The tamper itself does not get affected at all. The base of the hammer stays unchanged without even a stain despite being used to break many things. Its base is called stha:nu. Atma is similar and an example is being used. Even if a changing object is upon it, it does not go through any transformation. To help us understand this, the base of the sledgehammer is given as an example. The base that doesn’t get affected when used in breaking iron is also called stha:nu.

Not only that, it is also ayam sanathana (this is eternal). People are under the misconception that sanathana means that which is very old. People say dharma is sanathana. What does sanathana mean? Sanathana is that which always remains the same. sada: asthi, sanathana (that which always remains the same). Our habits, practices, scriptures, knowledge, etc. are always eternally the same. It’s not like the changing concepts of science which awards a Nobel prize for declaring something, and later awards another Nobel prize for disproving the same, and then again for disproving the disproof! Vedic literature always remains constant. Our dharma, Vedic knowledge, and the nature of atma are all constant. There is no question of which atma - mine, his, or someone else’s. All atmas are sanathana, always in the same form. They may change different bodies such as humans, animals, birds, insects, or trees, but their form will not change. Hence sanathana, the nature of atma is eternally unchangeable.

Sri Krishna is teaching this to Arjuna in 2.24.

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SLOKA WORD -

achche:dyo:yam, ada:hyo:yam, akle:dyo:yam, aso:shyaha,

nithyaha, sarvagathaha, stha:nuhu, achalo:yam, sanathana

SLOKA MEANING -

Atma cannot be cut, cannot be burned, cannot be made wet, cannot be dried, is eternal, pervasive, firm, unchanging, and eternal.

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Achalaha (cannot be moved) - If something has to be moved, you must hold and shake it. Atma is not in a form that can be moved. Sri Krishna is thus describing the nature of atma and urging Arjuna to quit his grief. Know about these and perform your duty. Let the results be anything. Encouraging him, Sri Krishna continues ahead with teaching this. Let us also try to learn it more clearly as we move ahead. Jai Srimannarayana!

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