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1. Episode Title: Episode 57 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 57)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of sorrow and its causes, Understanding the qualities of the soul, Krishna's teachings on duty and detachment, The distinction between body and soul, Overcoming grief through knowledge

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, sorrow, dharma, atma (soul), anuso:ka, so:ka, knowledge, spiritual guidance

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Every one experiences sorrow at one time or another. Sorrow means sadness. What causes sadness? When one is unable to gain clarity in the required knowledge, it leads to sadness. When one's knowledge is not granting him what he wants to attain, it leads to sadness. Perceiving that you lost something that you had attained also leads to sadness. Unnecessary challenges cause sadness too. Thus there are many reasons for the cause of sorrow.

Arjuna experienced sorrow, as explained in Bhagavad Gita (Bhagavad Gita), chapter 2. He desired to get over this sorrow but was unable to find a way. Sri Krishna began His advice to relieve Arjuna of his sorrow. At every instance He said ...

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SLOKA WORD -

na:nu sochithum arhasi

SLOKA MEANING -

“It is inappropriate for you to be depressed this way. It isn’t correct for you to feel intensely sad.” said Krishna.

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There are two types of sorrows, so:ka and anuso:ka. So:ka is the general sorrow when faced with something unwanted, or when losing something he felt was his. That agony or anguish in the person is called so:kam. This so:kam disappears with elevated knowledge. Such knowledge, “tharathi so:kam a:thmavith” (the knower of the soul overcomes sorrow). If one can attain knowledge systematically, it naturally removes so:kam.

So what caused sorrow in Arjuna? The thought of killing his relatives and his gurus caused sorrow. They are relatives and gurus, but to what? It is the "body" that they are related to and the gurus of. What are they doing for the atma (soul)? If someone is being addressed, that includes atma too. What are they doing for it? Moreover, what is prominent, is it the atma or the body? Without the atma inside, a leftover seemingly healthy body still gets disposed of. On the other hand, as long as the atma is inside, a senile body is still being respected and cared for.

So what is important for us? The state of the body is not important. Instead, knowledge of nature and the cause of the indwelling conscious entity is important. This is to be clarified. Without realizing this and endlessly agonizing about objects associated with the body is called anuso:ka. The sorrow here isn’t just limited to one thing. It constantly moves onto additional related objects one after another. Arjuna is relating anything that is visible to such sorrow and grieving further. This is called anuso:ka.

“If you realize this you will be able to get over your anuso:ka” … Bhagavan (Lord) thus advises in this wonderful sloka in the 2nd chapter. We are at the 25th sloka. He had, so far, given a few reasons. Now He is collating and concluding them to summarize comprehensively. What is the sloka?

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SLOKA WORD -

avyaktho::yam achinthyo::yam avika:ryo::yam uchyathe: |

thasmad e:vam vidithvainam na:nu sochithum arhasi || 2.25

SLOKA MEANING -

“The soul is unmanifest, inconceivable, and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing this, you should not grieve.”

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Avyakthaha (unmanifest), ayam (this) – He is now speaking about the qualities of atma (soul). Ayam refers to atma. It is avyakthaha, which cannot be seen. Achinthya:ha (inconceivable), the ayam (atma) is beyond anyone’s thoughts. Avika:ryaha (unchangeable) – vika:ram (change) means the atma cannot be subjected to change. These are the qualities of atma as per Lord Krishna. He gave 3 qualities - avyakthaha, achinthyaha, and avika:ryaha. Krishna says - “If you are able to comprehend these qualities thoroughly …

thasmad e:vam vidithva

… if you have learned about it this way …

enam na anu sochithum arhasi

… there is no reason to feel sad about anything.” Lord Krishna is answering Arjuna thus.

The first quality of atma He spoke about was that it is invisible (avyakthaha). The dilemma that Arjuna faced was – “Alas! These are all my relatives… if I kill them, they may go to either heaven or hell. Maybe we’ll go to hell. If they kill me instead, they will definitely go to hell.” Bodies remain lying here but he is saying something travels to hell. So he must have realized that there is an atma inside a body. He says he is going to kill others. But all he can see are the bodies of others. Since he is saying he is going to be doing something to the bodies, his focus is limited to the body. He did not seem to go further to decipher the underlying indwelling thaththva (truth) (atma) inside the body.

So, what needs to be done now? He needs to be given clarity about that [thaththva]. A common man can understand what a body is with just a bit of effort. That it is visible to the eye, with a skin tone that is in either black or white or red … and that its stature is small, tall, thin, or fat. This is a typical form of a body that is visible. Other features are not easily visible. But the above can be seen clearly. These are not just limited to humans but can be seen in animals, birds, cattle, and many objects in nature. So all these can be seen.

But speaking of atma, He says - avyaktho: ayam (this is unmanifest). The atma is avyakthaha – it cannot be seen. Achinthyo:yam (this is inconceivable) – it cannot be understood even with the mind (manas). Vyakthamu refers to the objects that can be perceived with external sensory organs. Avyakthamu refers to anything that cannot be perceived with those sense organs. Every object is composed of pancha bhu:thas (five physical elements), which can be perceived with our senses. When they (objects) are in their gross form, they can be experienced. However, when they take the subtle form, they cannot be felt.

Big mountains and hills can be seen. When their rocks are pulverized, the resulting dust particles spread throughout the atmosphere are not clearly visible. They can only be seen when they reach a certain size or form. Can we see the tiny dust particles that are swirling around us in the atmosphere? They are also made up of the five physical elements. Nevertheless, we wouldn’t know that they are around us. It requires a certain technique to view them. The table we sit at gathers dust all the time. When we run our hand across it, we can see the dust on our hands. That dust settled on it after moving around in the air. While it’s in the air, however, we do not realize its presence. Could we claim that it doesn’t exist in the air because we cannot see it at that time? We cannot do that.

There are many objects around which our naked eyes lack the ability to see. When we are given powerful vision glasses or when observed under a microscope… we then realize that these particles indeed exist in a physical form! It means when the instruments we possess are not powerful enough to view them or… if the objects do not have the characteristic of being visible to the eyes, then we cannot see them under normal circumstances. Such objects are called vyaktha (manifest) objects. However, we do have certain sensory organs to perceive them. To make out the shape we have eyes, to hear a sound we possess ears. Nose exists to be able to smell, tongue exists for the taste, and with skin we can perceive the touch. These five organs exist. The objects can be perceived whether the body is in the gross form or in the subtle form. Sometimes they need instruments like a lens or need to be enlarged or need great vision. They can be seen if the sensory organs are functional; otherwise, they cannot be seen.

However, if the organs are functional, these objects can be seen. Those objects that are qualified to be perceived by the sense organs are called vyakthas. Atma is not eligible to be perceived by those sensory organs which can sense the objects made of the pancha bhu:thas. It is therefore called ‘avyaktham’ (unmanifest). This is not something we claim but instead was put forth in Mahabharata as….

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SLOKA WORD -

Indriyaihi gruhyathe: yath yath

SLOKA MEANING -

“Whichever is qualified to be perceived by the sensory organs, whether it is in subtle or gross form … it is considered qualified even if it can be magnified with instruments such as a powerful telescope and then perceived.”

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The qualification that these possess enables them to be seen. Such capability is lacking in atma. Atma is therefore called avyaktham. avyaktho:yam (this is unmanifest) ayam avyaktha ha (this is unmanifest) – something that’s beyond the capacity of sense organs. As discussed before… linga gra:hyam athi:ndriyam, states Bharata’s Shanti Parva (peace section) that which cannot be perceived by sensory organs.

One may wonder, ‘If it cannot be perceived in any way, how can we accept that it exists?’ That’s not what it means. Senses cannot perceive it, but its existence can be established by some other means such as scripture (shastra). There are only two other ways [excluding sensory perception], inference or scripture. Perceiving by inference is called lingam. There is a chance that it can be perceived with that or with the help of a scripture. This is what atma has.

In order to explain the same, earlier Lord Krishna used the words – achche:dyaha (indestructible), ada:hyaha (cannot be burned), akle:dyaha (cannot be dried), aso:chyaha (not worthy of grief). Here He wanted to further clarify atma's differentiating qualities using the terms such as avyaktho:yam (this is unmanifest). This is avyakthamu. It cannot be perceived by the senses that can make out external objects. Can this be inferred? There are a few that the senses cannot make out but can be inferred. The presence of smoke implies there is a fire nearby. We can guess the object based on the sound it makes. A person can be recognized by listening to their voice. Is it possible to infer [atma] through such ways? Atma cannot be inferred, achinthyo:yam (this is inconceivable). Chinthana means an activity carried out in manasu (mind), an internal sense organ. Achinthyaha, it is not possible to be inferred.

Not only that, it is also avika:ryaha (unchangeable). Any object that is perceived by the senses undergoes changes. Even those we recognize through inference also undergo transformations. We recognize fire when smoke is seen. Such [inferred] fire is capable of transformation. The indwelling atma does not go through changes even like an inferred object would undergo. So why worry about it?

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SLOKA WORD -

avika:ryaha

SLOKA MEANING -

“When you understand this”, [Lord Krishna says] “It is futile for you to feel the sorrow.”

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What needs to be done? e:vam vidithva e:nam (having learned this) Learn first. Like an ignorant person, why do you think that when the body falls that you are killing Bhishma, Drona, and others? You cannot think like that. Your duty now is to wage war against them according to your dharma (duty) and regain your kingdom. Therefore, orient yourself towards duty. It is not appropriate for you to back off from your duty. Get over the sorrow that could hamper it [your ability to do your duty]. You are not realizing where the sorrow is leading you to. It is not ending at Bhishma or Drona or other individuals. It is extending to their relatives and further on. This is anuso:kam.

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SLOKA WORD -

na:nu sochithum arhasi

SLOKA MEANING -

Lord Krishna says to Arjuna that there is no need to feel the sorrow now. Your appropriate duty now is to wage the war with a firm mind. This duty will become a:ryajushtam (one that pleases the Elders). Therefore get up! [Lord Krishna] He, Sri Krishna, was getting him prepared for the war, thus orienting him [Arjuna] towards his duty.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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