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1. Episode Title: Episode 61 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 61)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The diversity of beliefs in life, The importance of fulfilling duties, Understanding the cycle of life and death, The concept of transformation in Vedic philosophy, Krishna's teachings on duty and responsibility

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, dharma, transformation, atheism, theism, life cycle, responsibilities

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), In this world, people believe in various ways. Some believe in what is seen, while others believe only in the unseen. Some lead life coordinating both the seen and unseen. A few live believing in prama:na (authoritative source of knowledge), whereas others think that prama:na are not necessary in life. Some people want to follow the footsteps of the wise, while others prefer to live freestyle, driven by their hearts, not bound by the wise or anyone else.

Different types! Some want to lead their life without hurting anyone, but some aim to live only for their own happiness, regardless of what happens to others. Humans are of diverse types. Irrespective of the type of person, fulfilling duties is absolutely essential. It doesn’t matter what you believe in; it’s mandatory for everyone to act upon their duties. Nobody should shirk their responsibilities.

What is the common duty for anyone? Taking good care of the body for as long as it exists. This also applies to those believing in three remarkable entities: de:ha (body), a:thma (soul), and parama:thma (God). It also applies to one who believes in de:ha and an a:thma that pervades through the body. The same applies for one who believes in nothing other than de:ha and considers it to be a:thma and parama:thma too! For as long as it lasts, nurturing this body is essential for anyone.

In order to nurture it, one needs to earn. To earn, one needs to work. To work, one must learn the work. To learn that, one needs to study. To study, one needs to approach someone who can teach. To whom one needs to pay accordingly. To pay, one needs to earn again, or someone must donate to us, or we must borrow from someone. This is a cycle. Life is a ‘cycle’.

As you go through the cycle of life, if you don’t become a trouble for others and take care such that you don’t get troubled by others, then your life is considered a good one. If you make it miserable for yourself and for those around you, it’s not considered worthy to talk about. What should we do to make it good? We must follow in the path of the experienced people. Sri Krishna named the path of the experienced people as a:rya jushtamu (the path of the noble). He says, “Practice ‘a:rya jushtam’. Please such a:ryas (noble people)…”

We must recall from our previous sessions about who A:ryas are. However, the effect of certain words is imprinted in us in various ways. Thus, it causes misunderstanding the instant we hear the word. A:ryas are not those A:ryas or Dravidians that we need here. A:ryas are those who acknowledge the past, think about the future, and ensure that the present is in good coordination with them, not causing conflict, and live their life in an appreciable way, living for society. They are A:ryas. Others who are not that way are called ‘ana:ryas’ (non-noble).

Only the people whose way of life is appreciated by everyone will be respected in society. The world honors and welcomes such people. We too should lead such a life. There were times when the whole society was full of A:ryas. If we ever crossed boundaries, this society would try to redirect us back to the right path. In fact, this is why rulers took charge. That is also why danda ni:thi (penal policy) came into place. Kauravas deserved punishment as they transgressed from the path, whereas Pa:ndava:s (the Pandavas), walking the advised path, were well regarded and accepted by the wise.

Pa:ndava:s were therefore in a position to implement punishment. However, despite being in a position to implement, if they hesitate and are consumed by various doubts, then it becomes essential to apprise and orient them towards their duty. This is what Sri Krishna does. For example, let’s say a man was employed as thala:ri (executioner). Assuming you all know who a thala:ri is, he is one who executes the death sentence ordered by the court to a convicted person.

That is the job he was employed in. What is his duty? If someone is sent for punishment, he should implement the task without any hesitation. He should not be in a dilemma, wondering if he should do it and worrying that it is violence. If he entertains such thoughts, he is not even suitable for that job. If he does his job, will he not get any pa:pa (bad karma), the result of a bad action? Certainly not. When one is on duty and implementing the rules of the job he was appointed to, he does not attain any pa:pa and it does not implicate him in any kind of guilt.

As Arjuna was in such a state and hesitant to implement it, he had to be given an upade:sa (teaching). In that process, Bhagava:n Sri Krishna felt it appropriate to address questions of all types of people, including believers of prama:na, Ve:das (Vedas). They should neither grieve nor become overly ecstatic, jumping up and down while they perform their duties. Neither of the two! One need not feel ecstatic and claim credit because results are favorable or resort to self-blame, get depressed, and grieve when results are unfavorable.

To summarize, both theists and atheists need not grieve at all. To explain that even an atheist need not grieve in such a situation, Sri Krishna gave the three verses 2.26, 2.27, and 2.28.

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SLOKA WORD -

ja:thasya hi dhruvo: mruthyuhu, dhruvam janma mruthasya cha

SLOKA MEANING -

“Anyone born will eventually die. Anyone dead will take birth again.”

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That triggers a huge doubt. “Anyone born will die.” This is fairly straightforward as we see it happening around us. However, when we hear "Anyone who dies will take birth again," it makes us wonder how one takes birth again. Let’s say a person with a villainous nature dies. People around him thank their stars that this wicked man is finally gone for good. They want to just finish the funeral and be done with it. If they see him come to life all of a sudden, imagine their horror! Alternatively, if he takes life in some other form as soon as the burial process is over, he will then need to be named differently!

If the phrase ‘anyone who has died must be reborn’ means one takes birth in this way, we would call him a ghost, demon, or evil spirit. We cannot even predict what and how he would act! So what is Sri Krishna conveying here? If one accepts a ji:va (soul) that is distinct from the de:ha (physical body), then the body he gets is referred to by the names said earlier. However, the present discussion (the 3 verses) is not about that case. We hear this verse quite often in many places. It is usually used to console people at times of death, advising them not to overly grieve, assuring them that the departed will be born again.

People around feel sorrowful, hearing this (if the deceased was wicked). Whereas, Sri Krishna advises not to grieve. Thus, this slo:ka is not about a:sthikas (theists). We need to keep reminding ourselves about this. This slo:ka is for atheists, who accept only visible natural matter. As these substances are all changing, the old form goes and a new form comes, the old purpose goes and a new purpose comes, the old name goes and a new name is given. We say that the old name has gone and a new name has come. This is the argument postulated by tha:rkikas (logicians). They refer to these processes as ‘birth’ and ‘death’.

People refer to it as tharka sa:sthra (philosophy of logic and reasoning). It is of two types, nya:ya (logic) and vaise:shika (atomism). Both together are referred to as tharka sa:sthra. They do not agree with the concept of transformation. On the other hand, we say ‘whatever existed as seed has transformed into a plant’. That which existed as a plant has transformed into a tree. A small newborn grew up to become a boy. That boy grew into an adult and that adult into an old person. We say parina:ma (transformation). It is called parina:ma va:da (the postulate of the theory of transformation).

However, the followers of tharka sa:sthra do not concur with this line of thought. Instead, they state - ‘old form is dead and new form is born’. That is their siddha:ntham (philosophy). Since they say ‘old is gone and new has come’ – they are essentially saying that something which did not exist earlier (asath), came about now. So they are called ‘asath ka:ryava:da:s’ (those stating that which didn’t exist earlier is now born, and that which exists now will not exist later).

However, Ve:dic dharma (Vedic religion) states and followers of Ve:das believe that nothing that didn’t exist [earlier] will take birth [now or later]. Similarly, nothing that exists [now] will cease to exist [later]. It is just transformation that happens. You may claim, “not really.” For example, the other day a house was burnt. All the sarees, dhotis, shirts, books, and other things were burnt to ashes. Correct. However, they are all not gone. They were burnt and became ashes - transformed. The matter still exists. All the moisture had evaporated. The earth component remained as carbon or ash. Subsequently, the ash became soil. That same soil in a different situation, at a later point in time and place, breeds a plant.

That [cotton] plant gave a seed, which flowered into raw cotton. That cotton was made into thread; which when woven, gave us cloth. So, the clothes have come back from the very ash, which was the result of burning down the clothes. Likewise, the burnt paper mixed up with mud in the land became fertile soil, which then led to germinating bamboo shoots. We get pulp from those bamboo shoots. That pulp is dried into ‘felt’ to give us paper again. We got back the paper. Transformation.

We must carefully remember both aspects. Did something emerge from nowhere, or did something pre-existing transform? In the world, only that which exists will change. Something will never emerge out of nowhere. Hence, no one would accept it as asath ka:rya (non-existent effect). It is sath ka:rya (existent effect) that goes through parina:ma. This is called ‘sath ka:rya va:da’ or ‘parina:ma va:da’. This verse is aimed at those who put aside a:thma (soul) and consider only the physical body.

We are not sure then, why people keep playing this slo:ka at such times [of death]. Probably because the person has suffered mruthyuvu (death), and the word mruthyuvu is used in this verse, they might be assuming that this is an appropriate verse to recite at that event. Anyway, since we must learn it…

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ja:thasya hi dhruvo: mruthyuhu, dhruvam janma mruthasya cha

SLOKA MEANING -

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These transformations of forms occur continually. Whereas the raw material is never destroyed. The base material though, is eternal. It is always nithya (eternal). If we say nithya, shouldn’t it be in the same state at all times, without any change? The raw material exists at all times. Once, it was molten gold, later it changes into solid gold, then into gold biscuits. When biscuits get liquified, they are shaped into wearable ornaments. They could break and again into biscuits when melted. Subsequently, when they merge with mud, they take their original form.

It is always transformation only. There is never destruction. Going out of sight is only for the form, but not for the raw material. So, is it changing constantly? Yes. Is it always existing? Yes. Is it always existing, or continuously changing? It is transforming while always existing. The element is always existing, but continuously changing its forms, names, and functions. Therefore, Vedic philosophy has termed this as prava:hatho: nithya (eternal flow). Though the water in a river is continuously flowing, water as an element always exists. Similarly, the elements are eternal in their basic root form, though their forms, names, and purposes keep changing.

If we understand this correctly, apariha:rye: artthe: (it is not possible for anyone to stop this), God addressed Arjuna with the adjective maha: ba:ho: (mighty one with strong arms) in the previous verse. “You may be a mighty one with strong arms, but even you will not be able to stop this.” “Hence, why grieve over it?” “Stand up and fight. Fulfill your responsibility." In this way, Sri Krishna motivates Arjuna and orients him towards fulfilling his duty. Similarly, let us also orient ourselves to fulfill our duties. Jai Srimannarayana!

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