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1. Episode Title: Episode 71 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 71)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The nature of the soul and its indestructibility, Understanding Arjuna's sorrow and responsibilities, Krishna's teachings on the impermanence of the body, The relationship between the body and the soul, The importance of knowledge in overcoming grief

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Arjuna, Krishna, soul, a:thma (soul), sorrow, dharma, impermanence, knowledge

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Some people feel very sad when they don’t know what others know. They desire to know more than anyone else. When others seem to have more knowledge than he does, then he feels sad. He feels sad that others are advancing ahead of him in knowledge. Arjuna also experienced a type of pain. What is that pain? That others know a:thma thaththva (the reality of the soul). Sri Krishna assures Arjuna, not to worry about it. In chapter 2, He says…

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SLOKA WORD -

a:pada:m apahartha:ram da:tha:ram sarva sampada:m

lo:ka:bhi ra:mam sri:ra:mam bhu:yo: bhu:yo: nama:myaham

SLOKA MEANING -

“I bow again and again to the one who removes all obstacles and grants all wealth.”

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“So, you need not worry.” In chapter 2, Arjuna felt sorrow at the start of the war. He experienced two types of sorrow. First, the sorrow of having to kill the armies assembled for battle. He felt sad when he noticed the many relatives that he had to kill. Second, he had to face the venerated elder, Bhi:shma, and his a:cha:rya (teacher), Dro:na - to wage war upon, attack, and hurt them. He must be relieved from this sorrow. To do that, he needs to be educated on who the people he is facing are… and the what, why, and how of his relationship with them. Arjuna also needed to be made aware of his responsibility. Without knowing it, he would not be free from his sorrow. He wouldn’t be ready for war unless he was first free from sorrow. Without the war, what needed to happen wouldn’t take place. Hence, Lord Sri Krishna first began to help Arjuna relieve his sorrow. He said, “No need to mourn for visible bodies.” “Nor is there a need to mourn for a:thmas (souls), the souls dwelling within.” “Then why cry?” Therefore, He thought of pacifying him, initially by speaking about bodies. He spoke about the visible objects [bodies] first, and the invisible ones [a:thmas] later. As the bodies are visible, He said, “No need to mourn as they cannot be preserved, despite one’s best efforts.” Even if you leave them aside without doing anything, will they last?

Earlier, we heard about our great elders and revered forefathers. They are the reason for our existence. However, we do not see them today. When it was time, they left us. Their bodies survived for a certain allotted time, must have completed the activities assigned, and disappeared after that. Or they were made to disappear through rituals such as cremation on death or by other means. They are not visible now. They [bodies] did not stop [from becoming invisible]. Not anyone’s! Once in Moscow, they tried to preserve Lenin’s body so it wouldn’t decay. His body was positioned in a standing posture for some time. Maintaining it became highly expensive. Then they saw no use in maintaining it, spending large amounts of money. Then they placed it in a reclining position, which is how it is now. Apparently, they continued to spend approx $2000 per day for its upkeep. It’s hard to estimate how long it could be maintained that way. Since they are able to bear the costs to maintain it, the statue is holding its shape today. If they are unable to spend on its maintenance, then the body will stink, decay and fall apart if touched. Change [in the body] cannot be stopped by any means. So, don’t mourn if the bodies in front of you change, because that is their very nature. Therefore, there’s no use mourning them.

Arjuna asked, “They are my relatives. How can I not grieve upon losing them?” Sri Krishna replied, “Though they are your relatives, they took a form to carry out good activities.” “It is our responsibility to encourage them when they perform good deeds.” “Similarly, they must be stopped when they commit wrong acts and… you have a responsibility towards ensuring that.” “Arjuna, since you are an able ruler, you have this responsibility.” “You must, therefore, dissuade and stop those who are committing wrongful acts.” If they don’t back down, you must punish and stop them. If they continue to resist, then you must eliminate them, and ensure those wrong acts do not happen. You have come here prepared to wage war against Kauravas, who are in that situation. Not just you and I, the whole world declares that they committed sins. Because they tried to burn you [Pa:ndavas] and your house, poisoned and tried to drown you, and tricked and cheated you in gambling to steal your kingdom. Besides these, they tried to disrobe a woman and insulted her in the palace court. What else is worse than such horrible acts?! They deserve to be punished for such wickedness. Many have tried to reason with them. I also took your message and tried to convince them. Elders such as Bhi:shma, Dro:na, and other elders have tried as well. Kauravas are not in a state to listen to anyone, and have come prepared to fight you. You are now faced with a genuine opportunity to punish them in the war, and have a responsibility to eliminate them if necessary. In the pretext of war, you will be doing them a favor. Whether it is your relatives’ bodies or your elders’ bodies, you do not need to mourn for them. You don’t have to mourn for the bodies,” said Sri Krishna.

As discussed earlier, anything visible is called bhu:tha (element). Bodies are made up of five cosmic elements i.e. pancha bhu:thas (five elements). Bhu:tha means one which takes a shape and gradually changes with time. Changes happen due to the association of the indwelling soul responsible for consciousness. Unbeknownst to us, there is a soul within. Because the soul is the cause of everything, Arjuna might be feeling sad for the soul. In chapter 1, Arjuna says -

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SLOKA WORD -

pathanthi pitharo: hye:sha:m

luptha pindo:daka kriya:ha

SLOKA MEANING -

“My elders and forefathers who died and are now in heaven, will fall [to lower worlds] if they are deprived of the sacrificial offerings from this plane.”

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What it means is that they had already cremated his forefathers’ bodies with rituals when they died. The elders and forefathers who you are speaking about in the higher worlds…

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SLOKA WORD -

narake: niyatham va:so:

bhavathi:thy anu susruma

SLOKA MEANING -

“This hell, and the punishment one endures there, is that for this physical body? No.”

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That body completed its journey here [in this world]. Hence, Arjuna himself stated that… it is the souls of his forefathers which were associated with those bodies, that travel there… that experience comforts, pain, or fall [to lower worlds]. These acts are not happening to the body as it got ‘disposed off’ here in this world. So who goes to heaven and has experiences? It is the soul. It means Arjuna is well aware of the soul existing differently than the body. You are aware of that and it is a fact. Because sa:sthra (scriptures), declared it. Mourning, even for the soul, is not necessary. Why is it not necessary? The scripture that proclaims that the soul exists and is different from the body, also says that the soul is subtle and indestructible. So why mourn for something indestructible? One could feel sad for things that can get destroyed. However, if it is undamageable, why cry about the soul? There is no need. Arjuna is speaking as if he ‘knows’ that the soul exists, but seems to have forgotten about its key characteristics and is experiencing sorrow. Sri Krishna thus had to expound on the realities of both thaththvas (truths) - body and soul, to Arjuna and began the explanation. He said…

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SLOKA WORD -

a:scharyavath pasyathi kaschid e:nam

a:scharyavath vadathi thatthaiva cha:nyaha

SLOKA MEANING -

“A:thma swaru:pam (the innate nature of the soul) is a wonder. Not just for you or me, but for everyone.”

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It is impossible to learn everything about the soul. It is impossible for anyone. If someone claims they counted all the grains of earth’s sand. How does it sound? We say they must be bluffing. One cannot even count the grains in a handful of sand! We can only pity the one who makes such tall claims. He is either innocent or crazy and gets laughed at as well. Similarly, if someone gives the exact count of stars in the universe, we feel the same way. Because all these are limitless and cannot be comprehended in entirety. Knowledge of the soul is also like that! Therefore, Sri Krishna says whoever says vadathi (speaks), he is uktva:pi na ve:da (even if he speaks, he does not know), whoever says sruno:thi (hears), he is sruthva:pi na ve:da (even if he hears, he does not know). Whoever says pasyathi (sees), he is drushtva:pi na ve:da (even if he sees, he does not know). It means, even if one claims that they learned everything there is, or spoken about, or seen everything there is, he still does not know everything. However, some of it can be imagined, as our mind is great. It can imagine things with advanced visuals. It knows well how to wander about in a virtual reality. Thus, the mind can imagine certain things. However, even such thoughts cannot comprehend the soul. What types of thoughts? Imagine a needle, with a plate resting on its tip, another needle situated above it and… a mountain perched on top of that needle… and that you stood atop this mountain with the whole sky above your head. Your mind can visualize all this. What do we say about this? Immense graphical imagination. It is possible. Despite whatever you can imagine, it is impossible to fully grasp a:thma thaththva jna:na (knowledge of the soul). Some might claim though, that they have full knowledge of the soul’s reality. They might define the soul’s characteristics as this and that. In chapter 2, Sri Krishna, however, clarified that reality cannot be grasped with our limited abilities. Some things are abhu:tho:pama (non-existent comparisons), they don’t exist but can be imagined. Such as Lord Brahma having 1000 heads, or someone having 2000 tongues or the Sun and Moon arising at the same time. In further chapters in Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says…

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SLOKA WORD -

divi su:rya sahasrasya:

bhave:th yugapad utthitha:

SLOKA MEANING -

“… even if 1000 suns arise …”

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But these events don’t actually occur. It implies that even if such visualizations occur, they won’t match the current object of comparison, a:thma thaththva jna:na (knowledge of the soul). How much ever one speaks, acts, or thinks about the soul, one cannot understand it in totality. It is indestructible. This is what our scripture says. Therefore, no need to feel sorrow about such a soul! Not for anyone! … na kaschid veda: (no one knows). In that case, why should you worry about it? Sri Krishna gave an amazing explanation on the wondrous details of the soul to Arjuna, to alleviate his sorrow. Let’s move ahead, learning further about this. Jai Srimannarayana!

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