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1. Episode Title: Episode 68 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 68): What is Ahankara?

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: This episode delves into the concept of \*ahankara\* (ego or false identification) as explained by Krishna in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3, Verse 27. It explores how the soul, though distinct from nature, mistakenly identifies with the qualities and actions of the physical body and the material world. The discourse uses analogies like a colored mirror, a car's fuel levels, and a pilot in a cockpit to illustrate how the soul imposes the characteristics of nature upon itself, leading to the illusion of doership and subsequent attachment to results. It highlights the importance of recognizing the true nature of the soul as separate from the body and its functions to avoid delusion and spiritual downfall.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 68, Krishna, Arjuna, ahankara, ego, false identification, prakriti, nature, gunas, sattva, rajas, tamas, doership, karma, soul, body, illusion, self-realization, spiritual guidance, verse 3.27, consciousness, dharma, spiritual wisdom, detachment, spiritual liberation, self-awareness

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana!

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

Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord),

We are traversing through chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita. We are traveling in the boat of Sri Krishna’s upadesha (teachings) that helps recognize our Self. In verse 27, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna - Prakriti (Nature) goes through many changes. You do not change. However, since you are with Nature, you are imposing its changes on yourself, thinking that you are it. This is what He says…..

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SLOKA WORD -

prakruthe:h kriyama:na:ni

gunaih karma:ni sarvasaha |

ahanka:ra vimu:dda:thma:

kartha::ham ithi manyathe: || 3.27

SLOKA MEANING -

All actions are performed by the qualities (gunas) of nature (prakriti). The soul, deluded by ego (ahankara), thinks, 'I am the doer.'

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He thinks he is the doer. How? Let’s place a mirror in front of ourselves. There is a color for the mirror. If there is a colored mirror, we look as if we are in that color. In fact, we are not in that color. The color belongs to the mirror. However, we project as if we are of that color. Similarly, we impose all the qualities of the body on ourselves and say that… We are of a specific type, specific race, specific caste, specific gender, specific age… In fact, the soul does not have gender, age, race or caste. He has only one [attribute], i.e. knowledge. Everything else is the changeable body formed by Nature. All the activities done in the body are also inspired by Nature.

The influx of sattva, rajas, and tamas (qualities of nature) are like the waves in the water. That causes various tendencies. These tendencies in turn cause something to grow and another to shrink. Like the fuel level that decreases as a car travels, when the body begins to move, the natural elements decrease. It could be the portion of earth, or water, or tejas (fire/light), or air, or akasha (space). The indwelling soul, i.e. we, recognize the increased and decreased levels of these because we are knowledgeable. We have the responsibility to maintain their quantities because the vehicle must move.

Fuel levels drop in the cars in which we travel. There are various types of fuel - petrol, diesel and their variants, etc. There is also something like grease for the machine to run. There is also water used as coolant for the radiator. There are all these different inputs. It’s dangerous for any of these to be under the required levels. So, it’s essential they get refilled. There are indicators when there is a need to refill. The indwelling Lord observes them as He is the captain of this flight. Because he is observing, the earth substance in the body demands refilling when low. This is called hunger. One will then get the right substance for refilling. What should he get? If the earth substance in the body needs a refill, that is exactly what he should be refilling it with. We can’t refill it with raw earth material as is. Some reptiles may survive on raw earth material. Humans don’t. We can’t eat raw soil itself. Some people say that pregnant women eat it at times. Put some things in it, sprout some things. Or make some bodies grow and eat them. Or some trees. Something like this. Both grow from the earth material. They grow by ‘eating’ what’s part of the earth material. He will therefore refill the body with that mrit dravya (earth material). Hunger gets satiated and he resumes work.

Sometimes, the level of water decreases through excretions. It could be through sweat, urination, or vapor. The indwelling soul observes. His knowledge recognizes change in movement when the level declines. There is an indicator that says the water level has come down. That is called thirst. He needs to refill water. What are the ways he uses to refill it is a different topic. He can refill water directly using water. Or convert it in the form of coffee, tea, any bottled drinks, etc. Something! He drinks and refills. It then resumes movement.

Air, or tejas (fire/light), or akasha (space) substance levels may decrease. He continues to refill them. When akasha (space) substance level is low, it means that his ability to hear has weakened. He uses a hearing aid and then he begins to listen. He will now resume running the vehicle. This change is due to the substances of Nature.

prakritehe gunaihi kriyamanani karmani (actions are performed by the qualities of nature)

If the one who should be using them thinks that he is them, what happens?! There is a driver in a car holding the steering and using the accelerator. He has quite a few things around him. He is not they. He is the one using them in driving the vehicle. If he recognizes this, then that’s ideal. If he doesn’t recognize this and thinks that he is the steering wheel and starts to rotate, we know what happens to the vehicle! A pilot of the flight understands the huge operating system in front of him and works with it. He should work the buttons and switches as per the need and carry on. He eats what he is supposed to and does his work while monitoring the system. The soul also must behave in the same way. He is different from the mechanism he runs. If the pilot thinks that he is the dashboard, it’s dangerous. He is not the dashboard. If he is the dashboard, he wouldn’t need to eat food. Isn’t the pilot eating and drinking? The crew supplies meals and water, on time, to the pilot as well. He too uses the washroom, etc. He is different from the system. The system should run as it should. He is different from it. He must get the work done through the system properly. In that case, he, along with the travelers, reaches the destination properly. Otherwise, it’s dangerous for him and the rest. In this body vehicle, we are the pilot. If we don’t ‘stay separate’ from it while running it, we will land ourselves in trouble. We will also cause trouble for those around us. This should not happen. This is what Sri Krishna’s upadesha (teachings) states!

Why is it happening that way? Because the soul thinks that the interfacing [body] is he. If a mirror is colored blue and if it thinks itself to be the color blue…? If it is colored red and if it thinks itself to be the color red…? This is happening because of one’s alochana (thought process). What are the natural qualities of water? Being cool and calm. These are the qualities. However, if you put some water in a vessel on the stove, what happens? The water gradually heats up - its coldness changes to hotness. It creates bubbles, releasing sound. It starts to release hot vapor. What happened? Why is water with all these qualities? Put the same water aside for sometime. The steam subsides. The boiling sounds stop. Movement decreases and the temperature returns back to cold. Why all of this? It is because of the touch of fire to the water. Water does not have those aforementioned qualities. Water took the heat from the fire through the vessel and became hot. Fire traveled through the vessel and touched the water. It started to separate the existing air molecules from it. That separation caused the air to leave the water as bubbles. There is an element called akasha (space). When it started to get released, we heard sounds. Despite not having these as natural qualities, the touch of fire makes water seem that it has those qualities.

Similarly, due to the touch of Nature through the body, the soul imposes qualities of Nature on itself. He thinks, “I am fair-looking.” Fair and dark are the color qualities of Nature. Smells are qualities of Nature. sound (shabda), touch (sparsha), form (rupa), taste (rasa), and smell (gandha). All of these are the dharmas (characteristics) of Nature - not of the soul itself. Similarly… Excitement, tranquility, ignorance, fatigue, and sleep are all not of the soul. These are formed due to the qualities of Nature. Just as water imposed some other qualities due to the touch with the vessel on fire… We are also imposing qualities of Nature. Water is not knowledgeable. Hence, it does not think whether the qualities are its own or not. Therefore, when the vessel is taken off from the stove, water returns to its original temperature. What about us? We are knowledgeable. Hence, we think. “This is me. This is mine.” We think we are Nature. We think the qualities of nature are ours. What happens then? What is not his is thought to be his.

anaham aham kriyate ahankarah (that which is not the self is taken to be the self, that is ego)

This becomes so intensified that his svarupa (true nature) becomes covered. Once hidden, those other thoughts start to dominate. karta (doer) “I am the doer.” “When I do the work, I deserve the result.” Consequently, there is an expectation of the result. Why did the expectation of the result crop in? “I am the doer. Everything that’s happening with this is because of me.” He is thinking of himself to be something that he is not. Thus, he is thinking that what’s happening is because of him when that is not the case. It is happening because of someone else. The sun is rising. Is he doing so because of us? He is setting. Is that happening because of us? Air is flowing. Is it because of us? However, we think we are doing all of this by imposing everything on ourselves. He is imposing doership. He is expecting results. He is building a bond thinking that everything is happening because of him. Because of all these three…

vimudhatma (deluded soul)

lost the natural state. He gets into bhranti (illusion), and is facing gradual downfall. Explaining this, Sri Krishna clarifies to Arjuna the reason [for the trap of ahankara (ego)] in verse 3.27. He later speaks about how to come out of it. What should he do to emerge from ahankara (ego)? Lord gives a solution. What’s the use of only showing the disease? It’s essential to explain how to come out of it. God explains that as well in chapter 3. Let’s learn it.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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