

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 15: Chapter 2, Verses 24-29

(August 8 –August 14, 2018)

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अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥ २४ ॥

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।
तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ॥ २५ ॥

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम् ।
तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैनं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ २६ ॥

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ २७ ॥

अव्यक्तादिनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥ २८ ॥

आश्चर्यवत् पश्यति कश्चिदेनम्
आश्चर्यवद् वदति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति
श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥ २९ ॥

TRANSLITERATION

*acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthānur acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ*

*avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikāryo 'yam ucyate
tasmād evaṁ viditvainam nānuśocitum arhasi*

*atha cainaṁ nitya-jātaṁ nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtam
tathāpi tvaṁ mahā-bāho nainaṁ śocitum arhasi*

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi*

*avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyakta-madhyāni bhārata
avyakta-nidhanāny eva tatra kā paridevanā*

*āścaryavat paśyati kaścit enam
āścaryavad vadati tathaiiva cānyaḥ
āścaryavac cainaṁ anyāḥ śṛṇotī
śrutvāpy enam veda na caiva kaścit*

TRANSLATION

- (24) The soul is indestructible, the soul is incombustible, insoluble and unwitherable. The soul is eternal, all-prevading, unmodifiable, immovable and primordial.
- (25) It is declared that the soul is imperceptible, the soul is inconceivable, the soul is immutable; therefore understanding the soul as such, it is improper for you to lament.
- (26) O mighty armed one, even if you think the soul always takes birth or is always subject to death even then you should not lament.
- (27) For one who has taken birth, death is certain and for one who is dead, birth is certain; therefore you ought not to lament for an inevitable situation.
- (28) O Arjuna, of created beings before birth is unknown, between birth and death is known and after death is again unknown; therefore what is the cause for lamentation?
- (29) Some see the soul as amazing and others describe the soul as amazing; similarly others also hear of the soul as amazing and some even after having heard still have no knowledge of it.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F5gMi4WMGPbAJ_GVf-2IY7CfI000YeyP/view

Commentary:

Verse 24:

The reasons given as evidence supporting the eternal soul's immortal position is that it is *acchedyah* or indestructible or it is incapable of being cut. Being *adahyah* or incombustible it is incapable of being burned. Being *akledyah* or insoluble it is incapable of being moistened. Being free from moisture it is *ashoshyah* or incapable of being dried. Another reason for why the soul is not liable to cutting, burning, moistening or drying is because it is everlasting, all pervading, immutable, never undergoing modification and primordial as it has no beginning. The word *sthanuh* meaning unchangeable defines permanence and eternity of the immortal soul. The eternal soul, being the essential constitution of all living entities, is immortal and all pervading.

The point about immortality is again being driven home here. For the teacher to merely impart perfect knowledge is not enough; for that knowledge to be useful, it must sink deep into the heart of the student. Hence a skillful teacher often repeats a point previously made. In Sanskrit literature, this is called *punarukti*, or "repetition." Shree Krishna has often used *punarukti*, as a tool in the *Bhagavad Gita* for stressing the important spiritual principles to ensure that they are grasped deeply by his student.

Verse 25:

The word *avyakta* means invisible or imperceptible. This is because the eternal soul is totally transcendental to the material existence and cannot be practically examined as can objects which

possess qualities of a physical nature. The word *achintyah* means inconceivable because the eternal soul is impossible to perceive by the mind and the senses, being in every way transcendental to the material substratum which is what the consciousness of the living entities base their understanding on. The eternal soul, being in transcendence, differs from all other existences and levels of existence. Therefore, it is *avikaryah* or unchangeable and immutable. The Supreme Lord Krishna instructs that by knowing the eternal soul to be immortal, there is no cause for grief.

In this verse Lord Krishna gives additional reasons why one should never grieve for the soul. Because the soul is unmanifest it is not able to be cut or burned like objects which are manifest in this world and being unmanifest it is inconceivable as it is not possible to equate it with the form or nature of anything that one could imagine in the material existence. Being unable to imagine the constitution of the soul indicates it is immutable because it is devoid of any process of modification. Therefore, comprehending the nature and quality of the soul as enunciated above, one should not be under the delusion of lamentation.

Verse 26:

Here Lord Krishna uses the word *atha* to indicate that Arjun may want to believe the other explanations that exist about the nature of the self. This verse needs to be understood in the context of the philosophical streams existing in India and their divergent understandings about the nature of self. Indian philosophy has historically comprised of twelve schools of thought. Six of these accept the authority of the Vedas about the soul being immortal, and hence they are called *Āstik Darśhans*. The remaining six schools of Indian philosophy do not accept the authority of the Vedas and thus do not accept the existence of a permanent soul, and instead maintain that there is a stream of renewed animation from lifetime to lifetime, which ensures continuity of the individual. Renewed animation means that the soul is perpetually born when the body is born and perpetually dies with the death of the body. Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that even if Arjun subscribes to this philosophy of renewed animation of the self from life to life, there is still no reason to lament. *Why should one not lament? This is explained in the next verse.*

Verse 27:

For one who is born death is certain. Similarly when one dies rebirth is also certain. Therefore, for the inevitable fact of birth and death one should never subject oneself to lament. How can something which has been dead become live again? What is known as birth and death is but just different modifications of an ever existing condition. Thus coming into existence and disappearing from existence are but modified states of an ever existing reality. One of the conditions of this modified state is its appearance called birth and another condition is its diametric opposite called death. Take for example, a clod of earth, transformed into clay, transformed into a pot, transformed into dust and transformed back to earth again. The manifestation of a subsequent condition is but a modification of a previous condition and that same subsequent condition becomes a prior condition of another subsequent condition. So, it is natural that successive

modifications take place in regards to creation and destruction of physical bodies which cannot be avoided and so there is no reason to lament over it.

Verse 28:

Living entities like human beings though eternally existing due to the auspices of each one's eternal soul have an unmanifest or unknown origin before birth, a manifest condition from birth to death and proceed again to an unknown, unmanifest existence at the termination of the physical body. Therefore in the matter of the existence of living entities, the unmanifest, imperceptibly subtle, transforms itself into the manifest by modification which is known as birth and after some time again transforms itself into the unmanifest which is known as death. So when the correct understanding of birth and death is realized then what possibly is the necessity for lamentation? When one considers the transient nature of the physical body and the facts about birth and death being a physical reality, then to lament over a perishable physical body thus is like a person lamenting over friends seen drowning in a dream after one has already woken up.

Verse 29:

In continuation of the discussion of Verse 28 above, one might wonder as to why even those possessing intelligence lament over a perished body in this world? It is simply because of ignorance about the true nature of the eternal soul. The one who realizes the eternal soul either by thorough understanding of the truth revealed in Vedic scriptures or through the the words of the spiritual master, finds the eternal soul as truly amazing. The one who realizes the eternal soul as all pervading, super natural, and full of knowledge and bliss is bewildered and overcome by its incomprehensibility. While one talks of the eternal soul as amazing, another will hear of the eternal soul as amazing. Others still misguided by erroneous conceptions and overpowered by false doctrines fail to realize the eternal soul even after correctly hearing about it, indicating that even an opportunity of learning about the eternal soul does not always insure that one can understand it fully.

The whole world is amazing, from the tiniest atoms to the largest galaxies, for they are all wonderful creations of God. A little rose flower is also amazing, in its texture, smell, and beauty. But the most amazing thing is the Supreme Lord himself. The soul, being a fragmental part of the Supreme Lord (Paramaatman or Super Soul), is equally amazing. There is no doubt that the soul is more amazing than the things of the world because it is transcendental to material existence. Just as God is divine, its fragment, the soul, is also divine. For this reason, mere intellectual prowess is not enough to comprehend the soul, since the existence and nature of the soul are difficult to grasp. There is a similar description of the nature of the soul and its incomprehensibility in the Katha Upanishad:

*śhravaṇāyāpi bahubhīryo na labhyaḥ śhrīṇvanto 'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ
āśhcharyo vaktā kuśhalo 'sya labdhā 'ścharyo jñātā kuśhalānuśhiṣṭaḥ (1.2.7) [v32]*

“A teacher who is self-realized is very rare. The opportunity to hear instructions about the science of self-realization from such a teacher is even rarer. If, by great good fortune, such an opportunity presents itself, students who can comprehend this topic are the rarest.”