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1. Episode Title: Episode 80 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 80)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of fulfilling one's duty (svadharma), Understanding the consequences of neglecting duty, Krishna's guidance on righteous warfare, The nature of a Kshatriya's responsibilities, The concept of svam (one's own) in relation to dharma

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, svadharma, Arjuna, Krishna, duty, righteousness, Kshatriya, dharma, justice

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), Sri Krishna started the Bhagavad Gita by urging Arjuna to fulfill his duty that he ought to perform. Prior to that, the Lord described how one would accumulate sin if he neglects his duty, regardless of whether it is easy or difficult. In that context, the Lord recounted three defects resulting from forgoing one’s duty at the beginning of the second chapter. They are:

1. anāryajushtam (unworthy of respect)

2. aswargyam (not leading to heaven)

3. akīrthikaram (bringing disgrace)

A:ryas (noble ones) are those who are worthy of worship, and jushtam (that which pleases) is something that brings them joy. The wise do not appreciate it if anyone stops performing his duty; they feel bad about it. So Arjuna, what you are about to do will make A:ryas feel sad. Thus, this is anārya jushtam (unworthy of respect).

He clarified this nicely in the first part. The second defect is aswargyam. Arjuna, if you feel compassion and think, “Why should I punish or hurt them? Why should I lose my relatives?” and stop the war, you may think you will go to heaven, but instead, you will go to hell. To clarify this, Sri Krishna started explaining it in a few verses. Which verses are they? They are 2.31, 2.32, and part of 2.33.

Verse 2.31 goes like this…

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SLOKA WORD -

svadharmam api cha a:ve:kshya: navikampithumarhasi

dharmya:thi yudha:th sre:yaha anyath kshathriyasya na vidhyathe

SLOKA MEANING -

Hey Arjuna, everyone has their own duty. Duty (dharma) means the work or activity we do, to say it in simple terms. There are various definitions of duty. Simply put, whatever duty you are meant to do is termed svadharma (one's own duty). If you recognize and understand your svadharma properly, then you don’t have to worry like this unnecessarily.

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In the first chapter, Arjuna expressed his feelings, saying, “I have all these symptoms.” What are those symptoms? Arjuna said, “I feel tremors in my body. I have goosebumps. I am sweating. My hands are trembling, and my bow, Gandiva, is slipping from my hand. My body has become hot as if I have a fever.” He stated all of that.

Krishna replied, “All these are a result of a wrong thought that you brought into your mind. If not for that thought, you wouldn't have had any such symptoms. They weren’t necessary. If you recognize your duty properly, there is no need for you to be affected by anything. You are not one who can be affected.”

Arjuna asked, “Why? Why wouldn’t I be affected? Am I not losing everything? Am I not losing all relatives whom I love? What will I be left with? Whoever I want to enjoy my royal pleasures with, I will be losing all of them. I will be left alone. For whose sake are these riches and for whose enjoyment?”

Krishna responded, “This is what you are thinking - but remember one thing. You are a Kshatriya, which means you have the capability to rule now. You did not provoke anyone or incite them to war. Our neighboring countries sometimes provoke us into war. Arjuna didn’t do anything like that. You didn’t come here to settle some petty scores. This war is dharmya (righteous), in which dharma (righteousness) is not transgressed. You did not harass them or invoke war. They purposely committed many sinful activities and brought this war upon themselves. You are fortunate. This is a good war. It is a dharmya war where dharma is not transgressed. You cannot get an opportunity to participate in such a war with just a few or small puṇyas (results of virtuous activities). You can only get this opportunity if you have done a huge puṇya! Of many people with such puṇya, only a selected few would receive such a wonderful opportunity. You got that good fortune though you did not desire it.”

Krishna continued, “Suppose someone somewhere bought a lottery ticket and had to leave town for some reason. As he had already bought the ticket, he gave it to you, thinking that he wouldn’t win. Assume by some fortune, your lottery ticket is the winner of a 500 crore prize. It’s okay; we can think like that as there is nothing wrong in wishing for good things. How happy should you feel? You did not cheat anyone or beg from anyone or make someone lose it or wrongfully take it from someone. As you had God’s grace, it came to you gradually by some means. Similarly, Arjuna got this wonderful opportunity to wage war and punish the offenders and stop the sinful activities of the opponents. This is a dharmya war where dharma is not transgressed. If nyāya (justice) is not transgressed, it is nyāyyam (justified). Similarly, if it doesn’t transgress dharma, it is dharmyam (righteous). For the capable ones, whatever war is about to take place now is a righteous war. What better opportunity can there be than this?”

Hence, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that he need not worry. There are two important aspects which we need to take note of:

1. Svadharma (one's own duty)

2. Kshatriyas (warriors)

We need to learn about these two. What does it mean to be a Kshatriya? People are classified into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Kshatriyas are those customarily thought of as ranked second. We need not accept only this classification of Kshatriya. Alternatively, we can look at this another way. Kshathath thrayate iti kshatriyaḥ (one who protects others from loss or trouble is called a Kshatriya). If anyone in his jurisdiction has kshathi (loss or trouble) and one has the ability to relieve that person of kshathi, that one can be called Kshatriya. What is he doing? If others have kshatha (injury or difficulty), he is thrayate (protecting) them. He can’t be called Kshatriya simply by birth in that caste. We can also say that, but Sri Krishna is not saying it with that intention in this context.

“Arjuna, you are born as a Kshatriya. You are born with the authority to stop other people's offenses. Hence, that is your first priority. What better opportunity than this can you get to do that [punish offenders]? Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that this is good for him. There is nothing that can be better than this.”

The Lord also mentions another word. svadharmam api cha a:ve:kshya: (considering one's own duty). What is sva? What is dharma? Sva means ‘one’s own.’ Dharma means the work or activity which you should do. When you say that we should know what we should do, we should also know what we are prohibited from doing. We should know what we shouldn’t be doing. What should we do? We should properly do the activity which we should do. We should recognize the obstacles to that activity and remove them. We should see who can assist us with this and take their help. That is our responsibility.

If one is performing his dharma, it is also his responsibility to keep away others who are obstructing it. Suppose I have to dry an object to be used for some purpose. It is important to allow the sunlight to reach it without any obstruction. It is equally important to make sure to protect it from animals who may spoil it or eat it. This applies to those who want to achieve something out of that activity. Similarly, for the one who wants to achieve something out of this life, he should know what activity is to be done, that is dharma. He should also know what he is not supposed to do, that is also dharma. We should learn the extent and how it’s to be done. Dharma is work or activity. We should also know about those who are favorable, unfavorable, or passive towards that activity. We should keep those close who are favorable to us and keep away those who are unfavorable, and can set aside those who are passive. This is dharma.

Then what does svam mean? Svam means ‘one’s own.’ Only if you understand svam, will you understand svadharma. There are many levels to the word ‘svam.’ At first, svam is only the body. If you think the body alone is svam, then svadharma is to make sure the body is in proper condition. What does it mean to keep it in proper condition? When to eat? How much to eat? How to eat? How to be so that the body can give us all kinds of happiness? That means you know one level of sva, which is the physical body level.

For someone with family, sva is family and relatives. Then their sorrows and pleasures become this person’s sorrows and pleasures. If one thinks of sva as his body only, then he is only concerned that his hands, feet, eyes, ears, and other body parts are good and doesn’t care about the person next to him as his svam is confined to the body. However, if svam expands to family, then he will be generous enough to think about his family members' pleasures and pains as his own. This is one step higher.

Even one more step higher, whatever is separate from this visible body - ātma (soul) or manas (mind) or buddhi (intellect) - we think of that as svam. Whatever you think of as svam, you should recognize it, protect it, and remove what comes in the way. If you know that, then it is svadharma. If you implement it accordingly, it is svadharma acharana (practice of one's own duty). It is essential for us to get clarity on svam. Let’s try to do that gradually. Jai Srimannarayana!

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