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1. Episode Title: Episode 81 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 81)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The meaning and significance of 'dharma' and 'svadharma', Arjuna's grief and moral dilemma, Krishna's teachings on duty and righteousness, the concepts of heaven (swarga) and hell (naraka), the nature of good deeds (punya) and sinful deeds (pa:pa).

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, svadharma, Arjuna, Krishna, dharma, heaven, hell, good deeds, sinful deeds, duty, righteousness.

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), very often, we hear the words ‘dharma’ and ‘svadharma’. Even those who don’t know the meaning of ‘svadharma’ use these words frequently. Those who don’t know what ‘svam’ (self) or ‘dharma’ (duty) is, also use them. It feels as if we understand them, but we actually don’t have clarity.

In chapter 2, Sri Krishna gave an upade:sa (teaching) to Arjuna. He thought it essential to give clarity on these words. In verse 2.31, Sri Krishna says…

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SLOKA WORD -

svadharmam api cha:ve:kshya na vikampithum arhasi

SLOKA MEANING -

If you know your svadharma (own duty) properly, you wouldn’t cry like this unnecessarily.

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Arjuna grieved prior to this, saying...

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SLOKA WORD -

aho: batha! mahathpa:pam karthum vyavasitha: vayam |

yad ra:jyasukha lo:bhe:na hanthum swajanam udyatha:ha ||

SLOKA MEANING -

Alas! We are committing a huge sin by waging war and killing these people.

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Arjuna tells Sri Krishna that He is also committing a huge sin. Arjuna is not saying that he is committing a sin alone, but includes Sri Krishna by saying ‘we’. Vayam vyavasithaha (we are ready to do it) - why? Yath ra:jya sukha lo:bena (out of greed to attain riches and kingdom). Thus, Arjuna expressed his grief.

Sri Krishna says that it is wrong to cry for that. Why? Is it proper for one to cry while he is executing his svadharma (own duty)? For a surgeon, let’s say ‘operating’ is his svadharma. If necessary, even if it is his wife, he needs to make an incision. He needs to do it whether it is brother, father, or anyone else. He is a surgeon and needs to operate, regardless of who the patient is. It is only dangerous when he does so without knowing what he is doing. As long as he knows what he is doing, then it’s okay.

However, if he says he doesn’t want to make an incision at all, is that proper? One has to perform his duty regardless of liking it or it being difficult. An executioner is an employed individual who implements the death sentence. What should he do? If someone is sentenced to death and sent to him, he should happily implement that punishment. This is not sinful; it is his job. It becomes part of his official duty. It becomes his svadharma (own duty). Even if inflicting pain, it’s not considered violence or sinful. No one claims he will go to hell for that. Instead, they say he will attain heaven (swarga) for fulfilling his responsibility properly.

Have you ever heard of yamabhatas (Yama's assistants), Lord of death Yama’s assistants? What do they do? When the time comes, they probably refer to something like a spreadsheet or maybe they refer to all the data [regarding a soul’s sinful deeds] in a smartphone. They have all the info about the whereabouts of the soul they are assigned to retrieve. Even if the soul refuses to comply, with the body on life support, from a doctor forcibly sustaining the heart or lungs, those yamadhuthas (Yama's messengers) forcibly snatch the soul [from the body, and placing it into a new suitable body for punishment] and hit him with thorny sticks, unleashing violent dogs on him. He [the soul] will be crying in a pitiful state. It doesn’t stop there. Once he is in hell, if he continues crying out loud, he will continue to be tortured, even by boiling him in hot oil.

Won’t he die? No. That realm is designed so that the soul is forced to experience the result of his karma (deeds). He is given a body suitable to experience his karma. That body will be frying in boiling oil but won’t get burned or turn into ashes. He won’t die. The indwelling soul will be experiencing the body’s pain of burning. As the body given is made for the purpose of experiencing pain, he will be experiencing it and nothing happens to the body. Let’s say, unable to bear the pain, he tries to jump out of the pan with boiling oil. Do you know what the yamadhuthas do then? They catch hold of him, pierce him with a spear, and put him back in the pan again. Isn’t it a sin to harass them, make them cry and trouble them like that? No! It is their duty.

This is to emphasize that whatever one’s duty may be, one should follow it. It doesn’t mean one should pierce or fry someone! Whatever is one’s prescribed duty, if he hesitates in performing it, then he is pa:pi:ya:n bhavathi (becomes a sinner). The one negligent is the one who commits a mistake, not the one who performed his duty properly. Arjuna was unsure if he would become a sinner by hurting his enemies. Poor Arjuna grieved thinking that way.

“No, the war which you are waging is dharmya (righteous), a righteous one.”

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SLOKA WORD -

dharmya:ddhi: yuddha:th sre:yo::nyath kshathriyasya na vidyathe:

SLOKA MEANING -

For someone like you, what more can you be bestowed with than such a dha:rmic (righteous), war?

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You should be happy. This great opportunity came to you by itself, unasked for. You got this opportunity to wage a righteous war, to punish wrongdoers, preventing them from sinning further. You got an opportunity to nullify the crimes which they did in the past. This is not something that one gets easily. So there is no need to contemplate - simply fight. In fact, only those people who follow dharma with this mindset attain swarga (heaven). Those who don’t go to hell (naraka).

We need to know what heaven and hell are. We might have some idea. Heavenly damsels like Rambha and readily available intoxicants are abundant there. Anyone can enjoy as many types of drinks, and as much as they like. That is heaven. Naraka (hell) is what we discussed before. It is a place where you are put into boiling water, pierced with spears, and cut into slices. Actually, these are not what heaven and hell are. Swarga (heaven) is what gives us sukha (pleasure). Naraka (hell) is what gives us dhukha (pain).

What are sukha and dhukha? Punya (result of good deeds) is sukha (pleasure) and pa:pa (result of sinful deeds) is dhukha (pain). Yet, what actually is sukha? Whatever gives us a favorable feeling is sukha. It is given by punya. If you attain it [sukha], that is swarga. Whatever gives us an unfavorable feeling, ananuku:lathaya: ve:dani:yam (that which makes you feel “I don’t like this. This is causing me trouble”), that experience is called dhukha. Whatever causes it is called pa:pa. Whatever the resulting experience is called naraka.

Swarga and naraka are not the same for everyone. They are different for each person. For a drunkard, a constant supply of liquor is swarga for him. He will be in his own world sitting in his garden, downing one bottle after another. He is not concerned about the outside world. For him, that is swarga, as he is experiencing something favorable there. For another person, it could be something else.

Mother Sita asked Rama one day, “Rama, do you know what swarga and naraka are?” Rama: “Why are you asking me this? I am also educated.” Sita: “Then tell me what they are.” Rama: “Swarga has de:vathas (heavenly beings), heavenly beings in a grand kingdom. Indra, king of de:vathas, will be there etc.” This is like ‘education during the rainy season’ where schools were not open regularly and education suffered. Or it is like ‘corona education.’ No need to write exams. No need for books or teachers. It is called ‘online education’ but children aren't sure what they are learning.

Sita: “Rama, your knowledge is also like that.” Previously they used to refer to it as ‘education during the rainy season’. Now we can slightly reword it and term it ‘corona education’. This reminds us of a funny story. There were two engineers. They also did ‘online engineering’. Their teacher gave them an assignment. The teacher asked them to measure the height of a big pole and then left them on their own. They were perplexed, as there was no ladder to climb the pole to measure it nor could they fly.

There was a woman who worked in the fields, passing that way. She saw these two lads and understood they were in trouble and were disturbed. She asked, “What is the problem?” Engineers: “Our teacher asked us to measure the height of this pole.” But we don’t have a ladder or anything. We don’t know what to do.” Woman: “Is that all?” Engineers: “Why do you say that?” Woman: “You have that bag with you. Please take out what’s inside.” They took out a few wrenches. Woman: “Give me a wrench.” The woman loosened the nuts and bolts of the pole and laid it on the ground. There was also a measuring tape in that bag. Since they were sent to measure it, they were given the instruments to do so as well. The woman took the tape and measured the pole. Woman: “It is 27.5 feet.” She left after that.

The second engineer said, “How foolish is this lady… our teacher wanted the height of this pole, but this lady gave us the length of the pole instead!” She [our teacher] wanted us to find out the vertical length of the pole, but she measured the horizontal. They are ‘online engineers’ with ‘corona education.’ Sri Rama’s education was similar. Sita: “[Your interpretation] is not the definition of swarga or naraka. Whatever gives you a favorable experience, that is swarga.” “Whatever gives an unfavorable experience, that is naraka.”

Rama: “So what now?” Rama still didn’t understand. Sita: “yasthvaya: saha sas swargaha nirayo: yasthvaya: vina: (Wherever you are with me is heaven; wherever you are away from me is hell). Dear Rama, swarga and naraka are not the same to everyone. They vary for each person; they are vayyakthikas (individual). For me, staying with you is swarga. Living away from you is naraka. It could be a village, forest, or a deep jungle. If I am with you, wherever it is, even if in a grove, it is swarga for me. You are asking me not to come with you, but instead enjoy comforts and royal pleasures. However, without you, all these will feel like naraka for me. There is no other naraka for me than this. It is your responsibility to properly know the definition of swarga and naraka.”

Thus, mother Sita explained swarga and naraka. Sri Krishna is explaining the same to Arjuna now in Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2. “What you are about to do, retreating from war, you think it will result in heaven… but it only gives dukha (pain). Instead, if you do your duty properly… though it may give momentary pain, it ultimately results in swarga (happiness). That is why this yuddha (war) is dharmya (righteous), where dharma is not transgressed.”

In 2.31, Lord says

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SLOKA WORD -

dharmya:ddhi: yuddha:th sre:yo::nyath kshathriyasya na vidhyathe:

SLOKA MEANING -

For someone like you, what more can you be bestowed with than such a dha:rmic (righteous), war?

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There can be no better sre:yas (good) for you than this. Inspiring Arjuna for war in such a way, Sri Krishna is taking the upa:desa (teaching) further. Jai Srimannarayana!

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