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1. Episode Title: Episode 88 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Episode 88)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The importance of performing one's duties, Understanding the concept of svadharma (personal duty), Krishna's teachings on facing challenges, The nature of karma yoga (path of action), The significance of mindset in actions

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Karma Yoga, Arjuna, Krishna, duty, svadharma, dharmya yuddha, action, mindset

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord), In Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna was averse to waging war. He felt killing relatives was unacceptable. It was his responsibility to wage war that day, but he felt an aversion for it. Arjuna would have rather begged for alms. After hearing this, Sri Krishna felt it was necessary to teach Arjuna the importance of performing duties. Sri Krishna started giving him an upadesa (teaching).

Sri Krishna described the 3 defects a man would acquire if he stops performing his duties:

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SLOKA WORD -

ana:rya jushtam

aswargyam

aki:rthikaram

SLOKA MEANING -

These are considered unworthy, lead to no heavenly reward, and bring disgrace.

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One would acquire these 3 defects. Hence no one should stop performing their duties. Though directly addressing Arjuna, He was conveying this to all of mankind. We did not acquire these bodies out of desire. None of us. No one acquired a body out of choice. Someone gave it to us. Whoever provided it, provided it to us to serve a purpose. Whatever purpose it was provided for, we should use it for that purpose. He [God] bestows one the samskaras (characteristics), based on karmic records. That person is formed based on samskaras and tendencies. He will have a few responsibilities based on birth, upbringing, education, environment, and needs.

Because of these responsibilities, one needs to perform a few activities. These activities could be anything from being a cobbler, butcher, chef, or other kinds of jobs. There is no need to specifically state a particular activity. Based on his situation, he will need to do some specific task. Everyone has to do something for livelihood, for fulfilling his responsibility towards family. We have to perform these activities without any hesitation. This is the essence. We get some benefits out of them, sometimes favorable and other times unfavorable experiences. You must perform your duty, regardless of being favorable or unfavorable.

If you get favorable experiences, enjoy them. Even if you get unfavorable experiences, don’t cry and stop performing your duty. Don’t turn back. Continue doing it. This is what a man has to do. If in the middle of a river, someone contemplates “I can’t swim, I’m tired.” What will happen? He will simply drown. Even if difficult, he should strive until he gets some support, to reach the river bank… or a boat happens to come by, or even just getting support of a stick to float. It might be strenuous for him, but he has to continue. Once he gets support, he can happily proceed without any effort.

Once in a favorable situation, one should not get too excited. Neither become depressed if encountering an unfavorable situation. Don’t take either situation to heart. Of course, one would feel them temporarily. If someone puts a block of ice on you, you will feel cold. You would feel nice if someone puts something warm on you. Or if someone applies a good fragrance on you, you would enjoy it. You would feel disgusted if you smell some bad odor. Temporarily, these are inevitable. But whether you feel it is favorable or unfavorable, you must not avoid your responsibilities. This is what a man needs to understand.

If he can perform his responsibility in this way, he is fulfilling his dharma (duty) at some level. Elevate this a little further… “God has given me this responsibility. Performing this gives Him happiness.” “So I will fulfill it and go ahead.” If one can think like this, a slight change in his thought pattern… Instead of adding new karmic records, it may erase his old records and make him eligible for promotion to a better state of existence. He did not stop his activity but has transformed the way his mind receives it. If he can make this slight change, there will be a wonderful change in the result which he gets.

To do it this way, whatever activity he is doing should be “I am doing this as God’s service. Whatever it is, it is my duty to do this.” If he can think like this and go forward, he is then known as a mumukshu (seeker). We should recognize the difference in that word. In general, he is a human being but if the thought process changes, he becomes mumukshu. Normally what he does is an activity, but if he changes his thought process and does it... the same activity becomes ‘karma yoga’ for him. Karma yoga is not something new which you get from somewhere. It means doing whatever activity you are doing by qualifying it with the thought process. This is mandatory for every human being.

Sri Krishna is addressing Arjuna and instructing us how to inculcate this change in thought process. That day, Arjuna had to wage war. That was his responsibility. Sri Krishna is commanding Arjuna to fulfill that duty. Today, we have some responsibility. Whatever responsibilities we have for our livelihood and other duties... we have to fulfill those without hesitation and move ahead. While moving ahead, we should not be carried away by potential favorable or unfavorable experiences. Temporarily, we may have some feelings due to them. If it is favorable, we might feel like smiling. When unfavorable, it’s expressed on our face. This can’t be avoided. They are signs of our being alive. If he doesn’t feel those, that means he is not alive.

These, he will and should feel. But giving excessive importance to them and being carried away by them is not right. Duty is important. Whatever comes through while performing them is ok. When traveling by car and facing a sudden torrential rain… we don’t cry, “oh, there is rain!” Or if it is very hot, we don’t shout “oh, it is so hot!” Sometimes our path is filled with rocks and sand, we do not feel bad, or if we see a smooth road, we don’t get excited that it is so wonderful. We continue our journey as we have to reach our destination. We have to keep the goal in mind, continue our activity, and whatever comes in between, we should accept.

Sri Krishna embarks further by instructing this in verse 2.30.

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SLOKA WORD -

de:hi: nithyam avadhyo:yam de:he: sarvasya bha:ratha! |

thasma:th sarva:ni bhu:tha:ni na thvam so:chithum arhasi ||

SLOKA MEANING -

The soul (dehi) is eternal and cannot be killed, so do not grieve for any living being.

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This dehi (soul) is common for everyone. But their dehas (bodies) are formed based on samskaras and karmas from previous lives. One gets a hard body, while another gets a softer body. One gets a human body while the other gets an animal body. Of those, one might get a deer body and the other might get a body like a rhinoceros. One might get a tender body and the other might get a very tough body like a tortoise… whose shell doesn’t get affected by anything. These are changes in bodies. Even in humans, one is fair and another is dark. One may get a body which is born rich, while another is born poor. One may have an exceptional ability to remember everything hearing it once. Another may be so dull-headed that he might hear it multiple times but still doesn’t understand.

Based on their situation, they may get different states. This is for bodies. Dehas (bodies), whatever they are - He gave to us temporarily to experience karma. It is important for us to remember that ‘He gave it.’ Whatever activity we have to do with the body which He gave is svadharma (personal duty). Paradharma (contrary duty) is contrary to that. We came into this body, then what is our svadharma? When in water, then what is our svadharma? When in water, svadharma is to swim. When on land, svadharma is to run. When on land, we can’t say we will swim. When in water, we can’t say we will run. When in water, we have to swim. Just as we see the external environments [land, water]... when in a particular body, the activity which we do becomes svadharma.

Whatever one does contrary to that, stopping duties related to that body, thinking that only knowledge is important… if he says “I will go into some yoga or meditation”... that is paradharma for him. He is in a particular body, but wants to do something contrary to that body. That is paradharma, not svadharma. Hence, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna in verse 2.31,

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SLOKA WORD -

svadharmam api cha:ve:kshya

na vikampithum arhasi |

dharmya:ddhi: yuddha:th sre:yo::nyath

kshathriyasya na vidyathe: ||

SLOKA MEANING -

To wage war is your svadharma. But you shouldn’t initiate it with petty quarrels.

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“To wage war is your svadharma. But you shouldn’t initiate it with petty quarrels.” You received an opportunity to stop an erring man from erring and protecting others from him... to stop him from degrading further by committing more sins. You have an opportunity to put an end to this by waging war. Hence, it is a dharmya yuddha (righteous war), a war where dharma is not transgressed. If we start a war by getting into petty quarrels with others... then it is not a dharmya yuddha, righteous war, but becomes adharma yuddha (unrighteous war). But you didn’t get into it [this war] like that. They themselves got the war ready for you. Now you have got an opportunity to contain their mistakes. Restrain them. This is a good opportunity for you. Even if you want to reform them, this is a good opportunity for you. You have faith in that good activity. Hence, this is suitable for you.

Whoever is in any occupation and faces any troubling situation while performing their duties… this wonderful verse [2.31] provides relief. Sri Krishna clarifies here that one’s occupation is one’s svadharma. While looking at it, na vikampithum arhasi (you need not become scared). You need not become scared thinking whether to do it or not. A doctor gives injections. Piercing the skin is his natural dharma. He can do it. It is not a sin for him. For others, it is. For you, Arjuna, your activity is a righteous war, dharmya. Just do it. Thus, Sri Krishna delivers Gita Upadesa (teaching), motivating Arjuna to fulfill his duties. Jai Srimannarayana!

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