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1. Episode Title: Episode 11 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 11)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Arjuna's misunderstanding of Krishna's explanation on Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga; The nature of Karma Yoga as a path to knowledge and self-realization; Krishna's role as the compassionate and universal teacher (Jagad Guru); The two distinct yet unified paths of spiritual practice (Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga); God's inherent qualities of omniscience, omnipotence, and compassion; The four human faults (bhrama, pramada, vipralipsa, asakthatha) and God's freedom from them; The concept of different spiritual paths catering to various types of seekers (mumukshus).

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 11, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Arjuna, Krishna, misunderstanding, self-realization, atma sakshatkaram, jnana nishtta, karma nishtta, guru, jagad guru, mumukshus, bhrama, pramada, vipralipsa, vipralambha, asakthatha, compassion, omniscient, omnipotent, purushartha, Sankhya yoga, atma jnanam, soul, knowledge, duty, action, spiritual path, divine teaching.

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord),

The first two verses of Bhagavad Gita’s third chapter comprise Arjuna’s question. The rest of the chapter contains Sri Krishna’s answer. The name of the third chapter is Karma Yogam (Yoga of Action), to learn how to do karma (action). Arjuna had a question about karma acharana (performance of activity). The meaning of karma acharana (performance of activity) is the performance of an activity. To perform an activity, everything in our body must be involved in it. It means, eyes must see, hands and legs must move, brain must function. It requires many tasks to be done. Therefore, karma (action), an activity, happens while involving the senses.

Arjuna [mis]construed that, ‘activity involving senses’ contradicts ‘jnana nishtta (steadfastness in knowledge)’. [To him] jnana nishtta (steadfastness in knowledge) entails withdrawing senses from all the activities [we do] and focus clearly on and work towards atma sakshatkaram (self-realization). (He thought) Atma sakshatkaram (self-realization) is attained after withdrawing the senses whereas Karma nishtta (steadfastness in action) occurs when the senses are working. Therefore, his question was, ‘How can karma (action) be a means to attain jnana (knowledge)?’

However, Sri Krishna had said earlier, that bodies with an acting jiva (individual soul), i.e. a human being, never sits idle. The body needs to be working. However, that work must be done knowing that it is for Him. He never said to stop work, but it should be done for Him. Work done this way not only results in no new karmic (related to action) bondage but also eliminates bonds of past karma (actions) and ensures that one attains atma nishtta (steadfastness in the soul). Therefore karma nishtta (steadfastness in action) is actually the necessary means to gain jnanam (knowledge) and jnanam (knowledge) will help reach atma sakshatkaram (self-realization), He said this.

Having not clearly understood this, he [Arjuna] was referring to the same and said, buddhim mohayasi iva (You seem to be confusing my intellect). He used a beautiful word, iva (it seems). It appears to me like You are confusing me, however, You are Kesava (one who has beautiful hair or slays the demon Keshi) and so You don’t do that. You are the one who thinks it’s enough if at least one person gets the benefit of all that you do: creation, sustenance and absorption. So why would You delude me? You will not think like that. However, I might be deficient in understanding what You conveyed. You are Janardana (one who rids people of their faults and fulfills their needs), the One who rids those who surrendered of their faults and fulfills their needs. You will therefore not guide me with what is wrong. You would not gain anything from it. There is nothing wrong or incomplete in what You said. You are not misleading anyone. Whatever You said must have been accurate. But I seem to have misunderstood it due to my lack of understanding. I am deluded. Instruct me on how to clear this misunderstanding.’ He [Arjuna] asked.

God is compassionate. He patiently began to reiterate with more clarity. A capable teacher never assumes that the pupil learns everything from the initial lesson. If the pupil does not understand, then the teacher repeats it 10 times until he learns properly. In our childhood, teachers used to make us write the alphabet. Today too, of course. At first, they would write the alphabet on the slate. Then they would hold our hand, point the chalk towards it and repeat those letters 10 times verbally. We would repeat after them only once or twice. Even when we repeat it just once or twice, our mom or dad or the teacher are elated that we are pronouncing it very well. They are the ones who put in the real work, but give credit to their little child. Among all such gurus (teachers), He [Sri Krishna] is the first guru (teacher). He is also the jagad guru (universal teacher). We say, Krishnam vande jagad gurum (I bow to Krishna, the universal teacher).

He realized Arjuna had not grasped what was conveyed. He understood that he had perceived something else in his mind. Therefore Bhagavan (God) thought He needed to clarify in detail. Sri Krishna began to explain from Verse 3.

sri bhagavan uvacha (The Blessed Lord said)

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SLOKA WORD -

lokesmin dvividha nishtta

pura proktha mayanagha! |

jnana yogena sankhyanam

karma yogena yoginam || BG 3.3

SLOKA MEANING -

In this world, O sinless one, I previously declared two paths: the path of knowledge for those who seek understanding, and the path of action for those who perform their duties.

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asmin loke (in this world)… in this world… dvividha nishtta pura maya proktha (a two-fold steadfastness was declared by Me before)… stable decisive knowledge that must exist in a human, I said… dvividha (of two types)… is of two types. However, the goal for these two types is the same. Describing in two ways does not mean there is a difference in the goal. However, I divided the existing means in two ways. dvividha proktha (declared as two types) I told you this clearly. Who did I tell this to? maya anagha (by Me, O sinless one) I said this and I said this to you. In reality, you are not deficient. You are an obedient one and are not at fault. However, your mind temporarily lost the ability to understand. I am the One who is teaching you.

There are various types of authorities in this world. [Similarly] Everyone does not start attending 10th grade at the outset. Some start in the 1st class. A few others start in 5th or 8th or 9th or 10th class. Everyone gets taught according to the class they sit in. Let's say, we go to a market to purchase a type of bracelet. Several options are found there. Bracelets made of plastic, clay, copper or gold. Gold bracelets are called simha lalata (lion's forehead, a type of ornament). Why can’t they sell just one type of bracelet that suits all? Different types are available for sale based on affordability, taste, ability. One may have the capability to purchase [a gold bracelet]. Despite that he might choose a regular bracelet instead of a gold bracelet. Some might not have the resources to buy [a gold bracelet]. Still they might desire to wear gold and show off, hence spend their hard earned income to purchase a gold one. To cater to such a customer’s desires, there are also options that look like gold, commonly called 'rolled-gold’. Some wear such jewelry so they feel like they are wearing real gold and show it off. We observe some people in this world… they adorn themselves with rings on all their fingers, jewelry covering their hands and neck. The weight of those ornaments itself would be between 2 to 3 kgs. We are unsure who he is trying to show them off to, but he wears them all and roams around! Without taking a closer look we cannot make out if those are real gold made or simply gold plated ones. However, to enjoy his possessions, to show off and make an impression on others, he puts them on. He is also a possessor. His desire must be fulfilled. A common man’s desire must also be fulfilled. Therefore, the market displays options for all.

Even in the case of vegetables, there are some that just arrived fresh [into the market]. After some time, a few damaged ones get left over at the bottom of the pile. The fresh ones are useful for some, whereas the damaged vegetables are useful to others. Therefore, no items in society go to waste. However, the consumers vary. Different people acquire different things. Similarly, types of mumukshus (seekers of liberation), those that seek knowledge, differ. Why is He giving this discourse? For whom? Not for anyone out there, but for the mumukshus (seekers of liberation). ‘I want to get better and elevate myself from the current state to a higher state.’ It is for the one who has this bhavana (feeling or intention), thought. Atma tattva (the truth of the soul) is the highest, indestructible, and eternal. Atma tattva (the truth of the soul) belongs to Paramatma tattva (the truth of the Supreme Soul) which runs it. He began upadesa (teaching) to impart this jnana (knowledge). However, He must also keep delivering [teachings] that are useful to everyone in the world.

Who is the one sharing such knowledge? He is not an ordinary person. Bhagavan (God), says maya (by Me) and pointed to Himself. God is naturally omniscient (all-knowing). He is omnipotent (all-powerful). Meaning there is nothing He cannot achieve. He is all powerful. He is known to be karuna varunalayam (an ocean of compassion). Karunyam (compassion), one who cannot bear to see the pain of others, feels it as his and therefore wants to pull them out of their pain so he is pain-free. The quality of that person is called karuna (compassion). He [God] is like the source and ocean of that karuna (compassion). Therefore, He will teach only that which is necessary for [attaining] the greatest purushartha (purpose of human life).

Additionally, teachers, while speaking, may be at fault in four different ways. They are bhrama (illusion), pramada (carelessness), vipralambha (deception), asakthatha (incapability). Some might have all four faults, while others may have one or two or more. Misunderstanding one for another is called bhrama (illusion). Not recognizing the knowledge of things as they are, out of carelessness is called pramada (carelessness). It is a Sanskrit term. These are bhrama (illusion) and pramada (carelessness). Vipralipsa (intention to deceive) is to intentionally misguide someone. To enforce one’s opinion on others and deprive them of the right knowledge so they are misguided is called Vipralipsa (deception) [Vipralambha (deception)]. That is called vipralipsa (deception) [or vipralambha (deception)]. Asakthatha (incapability) is the incapability of expressing what we know, despite knowing it. We know what sweetness is. However, we cannot differentiate the sweetness in various types of desserts. Gulab jamun is sweet, mysore pak is sweet, jilebi is sweet, janghri is sweet and so is bundi. Yet, we cannot tell the difference in sweetness between them all. We know they are sweet however. We cannot even speak about what sweetness is. This is called Asakthatha (incapability). Not able to explain about things we know. Vipralipsa (intention to deceive) is acting as if one knows something when in reality one doesn’t. Pramada (carelessness) is not paying attention to a subject despite its existence. Bhrama (illusion) is misunderstanding one for another. For instance, we imagine our body to be ourselves. This is called bhrama (illusion).

God does not have these! [Sri Krishna said] “I do not have these!” Even Arjuna is aware that Sri Krishna is devoid of faults such as bhrama (illusion) and pramada (carelessness). Sri Krishna therefore said, “maya proktha puranagha (declared by Me before, O sinless one):” ‘I am the one who earlier spoke about the deserving people.’ dvidha proktha (declared as two types) ‘I spoke about the two types [of deserving people].’ Who are they? jnana yogena sankhyayam (by the Yoga of Knowledge for the Sankhyas) sankhyayam (for the Sankhyas) one who has focus on sankhya (knowledge). We alluded earlier that sankhya (knowledge) refers to atma jnanam (knowledge of the soul). Samyak khyayathe (that which is perfectly known), knowledge that should be attained is the knowledge of soul. Knowledge of the soul is the epitome of all learning! sankhyam (knowledge) refers to that knowledge of the soul. [Sri Krishna continued], Only some can understand it with the help of jnana yogam (Yoga of Knowledge). karma yogena yoginam (by the Yoga of Action for the Yogis), [yoginam (for the Yogis)] those that practice and do their duty with karma (action). Earlier, I mentioned that they must be diligent. I did not confuse you. You did not understand it well. I will elaborate clearly for you now. Sri Krishna began to elaborate on this further in Chapter 3.

Vande guru paramparam (I bow to the lineage of teachers)!

Jai Srimannarayana!

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