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1. Episode Title: Episode 15 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 15)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Arjuna's confusion regarding the superiority of knowledge (jnanam) versus the necessity of action (karma) is addressed. Krishna explains the three types of actions: daily (nithya karmas), occasional (naimitthika karmas), and desire-driven (kamya karmas). The discourse emphasizes the human body as a tool given by God, highlighting the importance of using it for its intended purpose. The necessity of initiating and completing actions (karma) to achieve accomplishment (siddhi) and the state of no further action (naishkarmya) is discussed. Krishna teaches that liberation (moksham) and spiritual union (yogam) are not attained by abandoning duties or failing to act, but by performing one's prescribed actions. The futility of desiring results without performing the necessary actions is illustrated, leading to an analysis of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3, Verse 4, which clarifies that neither abstaining from action nor merely renouncing action leads to the state of no further action or accomplishment.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 15, Karma Yoga, Arjuna, Krishna, jnanam, karma, nithya karma, naimitthika karma, kamya karma, nimittam, nityaharam, naimitthika aharam, Ugadi pachchadi, kamya, atma, paramatma, siddhi, naishkarmya, atma sakshatkaram, moksham, yogam, duty, action, responsibility, spiritual guidance, self-realization, Bhagavad Gita 3.4, renunciation, accomplishment, liberation, knowledge, devotion, human body, purpose of life.

3. Main Content:

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

apadām apahartāram dātāram sarva sampadām lokābhirāmam śrīrāmam bhūyo bhūyo namāmyaham (I bow again and again to Lord Rama, the remover of dangers, the bestower of all prosperity, and the delight of the world.)

We are now in Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita. Here, Arjuna sought clarifications in a couple of verses. ‘You say jnanam (knowledge) is superior and that karma (action) binds us. Yet, you ask me to only perform karma (action). Karma (action) is that which distracts intellect as senses are put into various activities. Jnanam (knowledge), on the other hand, requires a focused mind devoid of any activity by the senses. These two are mutually opposite. Aren’t they? Instead of asking me to pursue jnana nishta (steadfastness in knowledge), you encourage me to do karma (action). Don’t they contradict each other?’ Arjuna asked.

Sri Krishna responded by saying, ‘Karmas (actions) change based on who performs them.’ We learned that there are generally three types of karmas (actions). Some karmas (actions) are known as nithya karmas (daily actions), some are naimitthika karmas (occasional actions), and others are kamya karmas (desire-driven actions).

Daily activities needed to survive are categorized as nithya karmas (daily actions). Activities such as waking up, bathing, dressing, eating food, and other activities needed to keep the body in control are called as nithya karmas (daily actions).

There are also karmas (actions) known as naimitthika karmas (occasional actions). Those are activities done for specific reasons. Imagine we board a vehicle to travel to another city. We do not do this daily. It’s a karma (action) done for a nimittam (reason). In Telugu speaking families, rice, dal, rasam, curry, pickle, and buttermilk are foods taken daily. It is called nityaharam (daily diet). In North India, they mostly take wheat based food such as rotis, chapatis, pooris, and parathas. That is the daily food consumed. However, there is also naimitthika aharam (occasional diet). It is taken for a nimittam (reason). For instance, during the time of Ugadi, Ugadi pachchadi (Ugadi special dish) is made. That is naimitthika (occasional). It is done for a specific reason. If an elder leaves this world, then their final rites have to be performed. At that time a few items are prepared with urad dal. It is called naimitthika (occasional).

Besides these nithya (daily) and naimitthika (occasional) karmas (actions), if one prepares or buys certain food to fulfill a desire or consume for fun, then it is called kamya (desire-driven). If he desires to eat an ice-cream, he gets it from a grocery store and eats it. Or if he wants pakodis, bajjis, pooris or something else, then he makes them and eats. It is called kamya (desire-driven).

Similar to how food can be categorized as nithya (daily), naimitthika (occasional) and kamya (desire-driven), activities done by humans in life are also segregated into daily (nithya), reason-induced (naimitthika) and desire-based (kamya). Imagine one wants to win a gold-medal or an award. To win that medal, he participated in a walkathon or a marathon. This is called a kamya (desire), a desire. He performs activities to fulfill desires and is able to fulfill some of them as well. Such activity is called kamya karma (desire-driven action).

Similarly, scriptures guide on what one must do when he recognizes the inner world, i.e., the mind, atma (soul), and the paramatma (God) within. Such activities are known as scripturally led work and activities. Even in these, there are nithya karmas (daily actions), naimitthika karmas (occasional actions), and kamya karmas (desire-driven actions). A man has to do these three types of karmas (actions). He acquired this body only to perform karma (action). We alluded to the body as a tool earlier. A tool is utilized only when a work can be carried out with it. Therefore, this body is a tool and it must be put to use. How to use it though?

Assume there is someone to whom this tool and we belong to. He might say, ‘Hey, this is how the tool should be used and for this purpose.’ Then we must follow what He says, as we identify Him as an owner. Who is the owner of this body? Someone who gave a body to us. With limited perception, we can see that this is given by a mother and a father. In reality, even they don’t know how a body is obtained or how it forms, changes or operates. Therefore, they do not have any authority on the body. There is another One situated elsewhere that bestowed it. He provides it to all beings. This substance is His. What about us who indwells within this body? Even we do not have freedom to do whatever we want. We have to act as per how [the body] drives us.

How should this tool be used so that it is advantageous to you? How should it be used such that the purpose of human life is fulfilled? What is that? What purpose does gaining a human body have? We are stuck in a wheel without realizing it. It is mostly filled with hardships. Occasionally we do experience happy times. However, they are not significant nor do we remember them. Hardships are always on top of the mind and we live constantly remembering them. We do have varied experiences, whether they are hardships or good times, and not all of them are favorable. This body must be used as a tool to make the situation always favorable. That is what we must do. We must ‘utilize’ it. This needs to be kept in quotations. Utilizing means, it must be made to work. Making it work is called as ‘Karma’ (action).

If someone wants to pass a test, he must do a karma (action). What karma (action) must he do? He has to study diligently. Is the act of studying enjoyable? It would be nice if someone shares how a good score can be secured without working hard. Even better if the certificate can be obtained without studying or taking the test to get grades. That is siddhi (accomplishment), an accomplished state. To attain that siddhi (accomplishment), one must first do a karma (action). Whether by referring to a book or not, he must be well versed with the topic in it. What do you mean by ‘with or without referring to a book’? It means, usually while taking a test a book is not used. Answers are written based on the questions given. In some places however, an ‘open-test’ is administered. Open test means you are allowed to use the book for reference while taking the test. It is actually a preferred mode. Do you know why? One must know the book’s contents already to figure out where the answer might be for a specific question. He should have read the book already from beginning to end. He should know where he might find a certain answer or which page covers a certain topic. It’s a good practice to refer to the book to answer the questions. He would have already read through the book and know where each topic is covered. For one that doesn’t have this knowledge, without writing on his own, he would cheat during the test by copying from sheets that others gave, or have someone else take the test on his behalf. Instead of resorting to such bad acts, imagine the proctor hands out the text book along with the question paper and says, ‘You have 3 hours of time. Refer to the book at your convenience and write down appropriate answers.’ That is the best thing. Because he will be able to understand the content and where it is in the book. So, he must have read it. He must have understood that. Isn’t it? [Therefore] One must study well. Studying is a karma (action).

After studying, if he gains knowledge, then he is known to have attained naishkarmya (state of no further action). That is, there is nothing more for him to study or write. He already wrote the test. He is just waiting for the results. He has attained naishkarmya (state of no further action) then. It means, he has put in all the required effort. There is nothing more to be done.

Imagine a cook needing to feed 10 guests. What is his job then? He must cut vegetables, store water, wash utensils, prepare food by mixing accordingly, etc. All of that is a karma (action). When will he attain naishkarmya (state of no further action)? After he has prepared food, he will store it in clean containers and cover them. If the guests still haven't arrived yet, he will relax with the TV or Whatsapp or something else. Then he is known to have attained naishkarmya (state of no further action). Instead if he says, ‘Oh, I will cook if and when they come’. Without turning on the stove and not prepping for cooking, he is not said to have attained naishkarmya (state of no further action). Similarly, if he cooks partially and finds excuses that he dropped food onto the stove, or it overflowed or his hands got burnt, to stop work, then he would not have, i.e., one who stops half-way through his work also has not attained proper siddhi (accomplishment). He is not considered to have accomplished his duty and hence would not have attained siddhi (accomplishment). Siddhi (accomplishment), in the case of a cook, is getting compensated appropriately. When will he get it? Only when the assigned task is accomplished satisfactorily.

In the case of a student, if he says, ‘I am unable to comprehend this [book]! It is very hard and has so many pages’. If he stops half-way through reading the book, he will not gain any advantage that is supposed to get. It may be Nithya karma (daily action), Naimitthika karma (occasional action) or Kamya karma (desire-driven action). If any of them are not initiated then naishkarmya (state of no further action) will not be attained. Work must be initiated. Once started it must be completed properly. It must not be abandoned midway through. Such work will not yield any results.

What did Arjuna seek? Atma sakshatkaram (self-realization). That is what he wanted. To achieve it, Arjuna said he wanted to quit war and retire to a remote place to do penance. Let us assume that it is called moksham (liberation). Moksham (liberation) means, any work undertaken should yield no burden nor bondage. It does not mean you should quit your duty. Work embarked on, should not result in more responsibility or bondage. This will not happen by quitting. It will also not happen by failing to initiate it. Activity must be done. This goes for anyone. Irrespective of the state he is in, he cannot stay away from doing activity. Sri Krishna shared at the beginning of this chapter. Anyone that takes birth must recognize his duties and fulfill them. It is not advisable for anyone to ignore his duty, or to quit half-way through. It will not yield any desired results! He says this in verse 4. How can you expect results without doing any activity? Sitting on the ground, if he desires to reach the top floor of a 7-story building, how will he get there? That person will become a laughing stock. [If he says], ‘I will jump from here to there’, everyone will ridicule him. Either take the steps to climb up or use the elevator to go to the top. He must do the activity that he is supposed to do. This is what Sri Krishna is referring to –

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SLOKA WORD -

na karmana: mana:rambha:th

naishkarmyam purushaha asnuthe:

na cha sannyasana:de:va

siddhim samadhi gachhathi || BG 3.4

SLOKA MEANING -

Not by abstaining from action does a person attain the state of no further action, nor does he achieve accomplishment merely by renunciation.

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Sri Krishna is guiding Arjuna forward saying that, ‘Ignoring everything but desiring results or victory will not yield yogam (union) or moksham (liberation)’. He is discussing this which we will review further.

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

Jai Srimannarayana!

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