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1. Episode Title: Episode 17 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 17)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Understanding karma yoga as transforming work into a good deed that reduces bondage. The importance of \*jnana nishta\* (steady knowledge) for self-realization (\*atma sakshatkaram\*). Krishna's warning against hypocrisy: controlling the body while the mind dwells on sense objects. The concept of \*mithya chara\* (hypocrisy) illustrated by the "crane's meditation" (\*konga japam\*) and the Ekadasi fasting example. The critical role of the mind (\*manas\*) in determining the nature and outcome of actions. The teaching that true action involves controlling the mind and directing it towards God, even while the senses perform their duties. Transforming daily activities, like eating, into spiritual offerings (\*prasada\*) to God. The benefits of performing actions with detachment (\*asaktha\*) and a mindset of offering to the divine. How actions performed with the right attitude can destroy past karmic reactions and foster spiritual growth.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 17, Karma Yoga, Jnana Nishta, Atma Sakshatkaram, Self-realization, Arjuna, Krishna, Mithyachara, Hypocrisy, Konga Japam, Crane's Meditation, Ekadasi, Fasting, Manas, Mind, Indriyas, Senses, Detachment, Asaktha, Attachment, Spiritual Practice, Offering, Prasada, Rajas, Tamas, Raga, Dvesha, Bondage, Liberation, Spiritual Guidance

3. Main Content:

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

apadām apahartāram dātāram sarva sampadām

lokābhirāmam śrīrāmam bhūyo bhūyo namāmyaham

Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita enlightens us on karma yoga (the path of action). Karma yoga means transforming the work we do into a ‘good’ deed. A ‘good deed’ is one done in a way that does not add to our bondage. The activity must be done. However, the work being done should alleviate the burden, not add to it. Karma yoga is action done such that it does not add to, but rather reduces existing burden. It means, one has learned about the action properly and is exercising it. The purpose of human life can be attained only when one works this way. For this, one must attain jnana nishta (steady knowledge of realities). Jnana nishta results in one knowing himself. This is commonly referred to as atma sakshatkaram (self-realization). The term ‘atma sakshatkaram’ is generally difficult to understand. However, it is easier to comprehend when explained as ‘getting to know ourselves’. So let’s go with this. The means that enables us to achieve this is: to perform karma (action) by transforming every activity into a yoga (union).

‘I won’t do it that way; I’ll simply do how I wish. What will happen then?’, asked Arjuna. Sri Krishna answers him thus in verse 3.6.

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SLOKA WORD -

karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya

ya āste manasā smaran |

indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā

mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate || BG 3.6

SLOKA MEANING -

One who restrains the organs of action but whose mind dwells on the objects of the senses, such a deluded person is called a hypocrite.

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[Imagine] one is doing an activity. Initially, however, he is reluctant to do it and just sits idly… Like how a crane feigns meditation, standing in water. It is actually meditating with eyes closed, standing still on one leg, with oncoming waves splashing him… Yet it stays unperturbed. It appears as if it has amazing control. However, it has its own natural tendency. It has a mind inside and that mind is contemplating on the food nearby. It stays put this way until it gets its food. When an unseen fish surfaces and approaches nearby, it then quickly snatches the fish and flies away. All along it was thinking of fish, but kept its body in full control like a yogi (seer), and stood still. What should we call this? A new name has been coined for such behavior. It is called konga japam (crane’s meditation).

Ekadasi (the eleventh day of every fortnight), comes twice every month. Some get worried as Ekadasi approaches. They feel weak as soon as the day starts. Just the thought itself makes them weak even before the day arrives. Why does one feel weak? Not because he fasted, but because he was thinking of the fast on that specific day. Though resolved to abstain from cereals, he ate a lot of other varieties to compensate for it. He simply stayed away from rice-based meals. Someone shared this recently with us… ‘Since I resolved not to eat rice, I feel weak all day. However, I ended up eating much more than usual.” “I ate fruits and other snacks that were made. I did not take rice however.” If he had taken regular meals, he would have been content and carried on with his duties. Since he decided not to take rice on Ekadasi day… He substituted it with 2 or 3 or 4 times the quantity of other items. He ate more. Though he consumed more items and quantity than usual… the thought that he did not eat his regular meals on the day makes him feel weak. What made him sad or challenged? What made him unfulfilled? The thoughts, in his mind. Imagine if he told himself that he ate all his meals though he did not. He would have been fully content. If he would have mentally resolved his thoughts that way, he would have actually been content. He would have been fine, without weakness even if he did not feed his body. However, if he felt that he had not eaten anything though he had, or… that others had not fed him or what he ate was not enough… the thought of weakness continues to consume him and make him unhappy.

The manas (mind)… An activity done with a fully engaged mind is more critical than that done with just the body. Thinking that you have controlled the body but letting your mind have these thoughts will cause you further harm. Then, it is called something else. What happened here? Ignorance filled the mind and took over. Then, such a person is called mithya charudu (hypocrite). That is, his goal is something, but he is journeying in a different direction. He desires one thing but his activity leads him to another. He desires atma sakshatkaram (self-realization)… However, his mind longs for and enjoys only worldly materialistic objects… rather than contemplating on the soul and Lord whom he desires. The issue is not physical, but rather psychological, i.e. mental. Why did this question arise in the first place? Because he was arrogant in thinking he could achieve everything by himself. He thought he was restricting his senses. Or he thought ‘I am not doing any karma (action).’ Or he thought he had done karma tyagam (given up all activity). Or he thought he had stopped doing karma (action)… while the mind continued to do whatever it wished, enjoying everything. What are those people called? \*mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate\* (He is called a hypocrite).

What activity was supposed to be done? The challenge is not only restricting the body. Restraining the mind is key! As mentioned earlier, if one thinks ‘I ate to my satisfaction. My stomach is full now’… then even without food, he will not feel weak or sad. Sri Krishna speaks about this in the next verse, 3.7.

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SLOKA WORD -

yas tu indriyāṇi manasā

niyamya ārabhathe arjuna! |

karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam

asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate || BG 3.7

SLOKA MEANING -

But he who, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, engages the organs of action in karma yoga, without attachment, he excels.

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One must want to relinquish attachment. Let indriyas (the senses) work. The mind, however, should rest on God. This is what must be done. In our culture, elders bestowed a wonderful practice to us. We need food daily. Every morning we need something to eat. It is called ‘breakfast’ now. Today, we are asked to eat this breakfast after getting out of bed, or even before getting up! After bathing, or even before, calling the deed finished. However, in our culture, it is recommended that we first bathe and feel that the food is made for God. That it is not made for me to eat or for my needs, instead it is made for Him. One prays to God, feels the food is made for Him… and that he is there to serve Him… and this is happening with the strength and vigor given by Him.

svashesha bhuthena maya

sviyahi sarva parichchadaihi

vidhatum pritam atmanam

devaha prakramate svayam

He is purified with the thoughts of, ‘He, being my indweller, is enabling me to do this’. Another also does the same activity, i.e. he prepares breakfast. However, that breakfast is prepared simply to fill the stomach. Actually, one’s breakfast is not simply to fill the stomach. Instead, it is prepared as an offering to God. He offers it to God. He feels that God accepted his offering. Then he eats it, like how it is distributed to all devotees [at the temples]. Eating food is a natural phenomenon for the tongue. If you leave it to its natural behavior, it will continue to work without bothering you. While letting the tongue eat the food it needs, be sure it does not become a bondage for you. What does bondage mean? If the food one is consuming just as a breakfast does not have enough salt or spice or sweet… though eating it, he admonishes the chef that it does not taste good due to missing some ingredient or another. Yet, he does not stop eating it. He eats it and then screams at the cook. His mind is agonized and so is that of the poor chef. But, he does not stop eating that food. He invited a few additional mental challenges now which are self-inflicted. It means he added more to his bondage.

However, if he had consumed that food with the thought of offering to God… when the food is served to him, he takes it in with a pure feeling… he doesn’t think he is eating it to fill his stomach. He eats it with the thoughts, ‘This is God’s prasada (sacred offering). I have God inside me.” He offers it to that indwelling God called anuyaga (inner offering), and consumes it for that purpose. You gave what your senses needed. Since done with the noble thought of God’s prasada, that can eliminate the heap of your past sins. God feels joy. He, from within, destroys accrued karmic reactions, suppressing rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance)… transforming the feelings of raga (attachment), and dvesha (aversion) and… makes your current activity favorable. It is inevitable for the body to engage in an activity. However, one must learn how to perform that activity. For instance, adults prepare food for kids at home or cater to their other activities. Or assume a person was hired to do these. He has to do the work anyway. While involved in that, if he complains, ‘Why am I assigned to this work? Why do I have to do this?’ Doing that activity is inevitable, instead of complaining… he feels satisfied if it is done with affection and joy. The other one is also content to receive the benefit of activity. Doing the activity becomes easy and comfortable. Otherwise, it feels like the burden of a 40 kg man asked to lift a 100 kg bag. Instead of working while complaining, he now completes it comfortably, even if it is a larger scope of work.

‘O son! You should not simply control the senses while letting the mind wander. Even when the senses are acting up, let the mind focus on God’… \*manasā niyamya ārabhathe karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam\* (controlling the senses by the mind, engages the organs of action in karma yoga)… Let the activity happen. However, if a person’s mind focuses on what is needed, even while doing that activity, then that person is called asaktha (unattached). How is he able to do that? Because he is not attached to the activity. He does not feel arrogant, ‘I am doing this myself..’ He does not feel selfish, ‘This is mine’. He does not foster an attitude of, ‘Only I should enjoy this fruit, no one else can.’ Therefore, he became asaktha (detached), toward this. Only such a person… \*vishishyate\* (excels)… becomes easily eligible to receive real jnana nishta (assimilated and established knowledge of self). Not the one who imagines he controlled himself by just tying his body down but letting the mind wander freely. He only destroys himself and is not enlightened in any way. Therefore it is imperative to do karma yoga. While revealing this in verses 3.6 and 3.7, Sri Krishna elaborates on karma yoga to Arjuna. Let’s learn.

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

Jai Srimannarayana!

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