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1. Episode Title: What are Niyatha and Aniyatha Karmas? – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 18)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The discourse emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's responsibilities and duties in life. It explains how actions (karmas) performed with a divine feeling and surrendered to God transform into dharma and yoga. Krishna's teachings clarify that one cannot truly cease action due to the influence of prakriti (nature) and samskaras (impressions from past lives). The analogy of flowing water is used to illustrate the ease and benefit of karma yoga compared to the difficulty and harm of neglecting one's duties. The discussion highlights the superiority of karma yoga over merely seeking knowledge without action, as stated in Bhagavad Gita verses 3.7 and 3.8. A key distinction is made between Niyatha Karma (compulsory, unalterable actions or their results) and Aniyatha Karma (alterable actions or their results), with examples provided. The necessity of performing Niyatha Karma, even for those aspiring for liberation, is stressed, along with the concept of `sarira yatra` (journey of the body) and its dependence on continuous action.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 18, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Dharma, Yoga, Karma, Niyatha Karma, Aniyatha Karma, Prakriti, Samskaras, Krishna, Arjuna, Duty, Responsibility, Action, Inaction, Liberation, Moksha, Atma Nishtta, Sarira Yatra, Nalakuvara, Ravanasura, Sita, Boons, Curses, Sins, Merits, Spiritual guidance, Self-realization, Divine service, BG 3.7, BG 3.8, Life's purpose, Spiritual growth, Divine will, Surrender, Righteousness, Consequences of actions

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana!

Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord),

a:pada:m apahartha:ram da:tha:ram sarva sampada:m

lo:ka:bhi ra:mam sri:ra:mam bhu:yo: bhu:yo: nama:myaham

No person, while alive, should ignore his responsibilities. The responsible acts when done with a divine feeling are known as karmas (actions). This karma (action), if done surrendered and dedicated to God, is called dharma (righteous duty). Such an act works as a stepping stone to elevate oneself and thus transforms into yoga (union with the divine). Therefore, it’s the duty of everyone to transform every karma (action) into yoga (union with the divine). We may or may not like to carry out such acts. Sometimes they are favorable. Other times not so favorable. Occasionally some of them are difficult and arduous to execute, yet they must not be ignored. If anyone wants to act with the intent of giving up his duty, God does not accept this approach in 2 different ways.

First: even if you feel that you stopped to act, prakriti (nature) somehow manifests a new wave, a new emotion, instigating your inner samskaras (impressions from past lives), to draw you towards it. He (Lord Krishna) said, “Therefore, you have not stopped acting, despite thinking otherwise.”

Second: the mind within has accumulated several samskaras (impressions from past lives) from many previous lives. Though we externally resolve to stop doing any activity, due to their influence, the mind internally repeatedly weeps and drags you towards its choices. Therefore, it is useless to cease your duty and is actually beneficial to simply carry it out. Also, it is better and necessary to train the senses to properly do the activities that they are accustomed to.

Streaming water is known to have a flow. Enable a channel for the water to flow in a manner that adds benefit to you. Do not obstruct it in anyway. Thus, water flows easily and will benefit you as well. We experience this in the world. If you decide to block the stream from flowing, it will either stagnate or flood the upstream areas. Either way, it’s a negative outcome. Activities carried out with our senses and the bodies are akin to this. Streamline the perception you have of the acts that you do. Habituate it to treat them as a service to supreme God. An effort is required to pump the water stream upwards into a tank, whereas they flow downwards effortlessly. They just flow easily down on their own. So, karma yoga (path of action), is like making the water flow downwards. There is not much effort in it as they are naturally carried out anyway. But aspiring for tapas (austerity), yoga (union with the divine), yagna (ritual sacrifice), jnanam (knowledge), while ignoring one’s duty is akin to pumping water upward to a mountain top. It is harmful and it can ‘fall’ anytime. Imagine one wanting to push a big rock up a mountain - it must be pushed up gradually every moment while carefully observing its movement. If by chance one’s hand slips, the rock will roll down crushing him on the way. It then hurls further down the mountain causing more harm. The senses behave similarly. Therefore, it is imperative to learn how to execute activities that the senses are used to, as a service to God. Acting as per scriptural guidance is always beneficial.

“One who is steadfast in such karma yoga (path of action) is in a better state than those with jnana nishtta (established knowledge of self).” Sri Krishna says so in verse 3.7. He further elaborates in verse 3.8.

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SLOKA WORD -

niyatham kuru karma thvam

karma jya:yo:hi akarmanaha |

sari:ra ya:thra:pi cha the:

na prasiddhye:th akarmanaha || BG 3.8

SLOKA MEANING -

You must perform your prescribed duty, for action is superior to inaction. Even the maintenance of your body would not be possible without action.

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akarmanaha (one who doesn't do karma) – ‘One who doesn’t do karma (action)’ means one who is in jnana yoga (path of knowledge) or one who gave up on his duty. Some might infer (incorrectly) that they are in jnana yoga (path of knowledge) and stop working. It means, there is a chance that those who think they have left (for jnana yoga) could fall down. Or maybe that he has not even begun. In the case where he did not begin, he may be forced to act in the future due to the pressure from the internal senses. Therefore, instead of being in such a position, karma jya:ya ha akarmanaha (one who comfortably acts on his duty is a better person). When we do a comparison between two, it implies that both have the right. i.e. jnana yogi (one on the path of knowledge) and karma yogi (one on the path of action), both are allowed to perform their duties. Only then, we can compare these two. We don’t compare one with another who does not have the right. Even for a jnana yogi (one on the path of knowledge), who has authority to stop doing karma (action), Lord said that performing karma (action) is paramount. Sri Krishna is thus showing us in verse 3.8, the superiority, significance, and necessity of performing one’s karma (action).

We act on 2 types of karma (actions) - niyatha karma (fixed actions) and aniyatha karma (unfixed actions). Acts done by compulsion are niyatha karmas (fixed actions). If someone is cursed, its results have to be endured. If someone is bestowed with boons, they have to be indulged. These are called niyatha karma (fixed actions), they cannot be altered in anyway. Kubera’s son, Nalakuvara, perhaps, once cursed Ravanasura. He cursed him, “If you ever lay your hand on a woman forcibly, then your head will split into many pieces. Beware!” This is the curse. Setting aside whether or not Nalakuvara is stronger than Ravanasura, it is a curse uttered by a divinely powerful being. Ravanasura was also great, correct? He tried to win over 3 worlds by then. He even tried to beat Yama once, though retreating for some reason. Despite being that great, when he kidnapped and restrained mother Sita in Lanka, he did not dare to touch her. Even Ravanasura had knowledge that when someone curses, its results are bound to come true. Therefore, he put her under a tree, and tortured her with arguments and emotions, yet never dared to touch her. He arranged approximately 700 demonesses to guard her in a shift system. He must have had around 200 demonesses per shift - morning, afternoon, and night. And perhaps had another 100 as a backup. Though they resorted to verbal and emotional pain, none of them physically abused Sita. It is incredible that Ravanasura never tried to test whether Nalakuvara’s curse would work or not. A great person’s utterances, when favorable, is called a boon and unfavorable is called a curse. The historical epic exemplifies how much Ravanasura respected such utterances. Similarly, the result of a qualified person’s statements is called niyatham (fixed). It will yield a niyatha (fixed) result. Hence, it must be experienced.

The results of other types of karmas (actions) are called results of aniyatha karmas (unfixed actions). So all the acts that we do in the world generally that result in sins and merits are called aniyathas (unfixed). Aniyathas (unfixed) can be altered or modified if we want to. How can they be altered? By performing a counter act. For example, while cooking, if someone adds an extra spoon of salt by accident, this is called aniyatha karma (unfixed action). We can imagine the plight of those who consume that food later. How to neutralize the taste? Add 2 spoons of sugar, or lots of water and drain the curry many times to dilute the effect of excess salt. This example illustrates that one can perform redemption to reduce or remove the unfavorable effect or improve the results. Such karmas (actions) or the results of the karmas (actions) are called aniyathas (unfixed). That is, they are not fixed as such. When in an unfavorable, unhealthy climate, we might contract a virus. A fever or other disease ensues. We then take medicine to curb this virus. This is aniyatha karma phala (result of unfixed action), the result of something alterable, from a physical body perspective. This applies to concepts in scriptures as well. Our acts also comprise both niyatha (fixed) and aniyatha karma (unfixed action).

Sri Krishna says, niyatham kuru karmathvam (you must perform your prescribed duty). Whatever karma (action) is niyatham (fixed), i.e. those must-do acts, you cannot drop or avoid them. kuru (do) those. (Sri Krishna says to Arjuna) Now you have the authority to rule. You have a responsibility to impart a lesson to those rulers who govern their kingdom poorly, causing hardships to their subjects. Therefore, the war that is upon you now is your niyatha karma (fixed action). You cannot cease such acts. (Arjuna says), ‘If I wage this war, I have to kill some and spare others. Will it not result in any karmic bondage?’ (Sri Krishna says) ‘Firstly, you are realizing it as your responsibility and doing it. Secondly, you are surrendering to Me and executing this act as a service to God. Therefore, it will not result in any bondage to you. Such karma (action) is considered better than the karma (action) of one who thinks they should ignore their duty and simply gain knowledge. karma jya:yo:hi akarmanaha (action is superior to inaction).’

Let me offer you another reason. Will you attain moksha (ultimate liberation) and bliss, the moment you attain atma nishtta (firm knowledge of self)? Will anyone even try this if it ever works out like this? Everyone wants to survive a bit longer even after attaining that state. So, during the remainder of his life, he must survive. i.e. he must eat food, dress, move about. All of this is needed. This is called sarira yatra (journey of the body). If you stop all your acts, how will the body undergo its journey?

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SLOKA WORD -

sari:ra ya:thra:pi cha the:

na prasiddhye:th akarmanaha |

SLOKA MEANING -

Even the maintenance of your body would not be possible without action.

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It is difficult to experience the journey of the body, if one chooses to cease their duties. Then will that person be considered alive or dead? To be able to live and carry on this journey, one has to earn a living which requires him to work - which requires intelligence. So, any work done with intelligence that provides a means to earn, which in turn helps body to make its journey, is called karma (action). This will stop as well if you stop acting on your duty. Therefore, you cannot cease your duties at all. Karma (action) must be carried out and must be done as a ‘yoga’ (union with the divine). Sri Krishna thus explained to Arjuna in verse 8.

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

Jai Srimannarayana!

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