1. Episode Title: Episode 24 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 24)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The episode delves into the concept of karma (action) as yajna (sacrifice) as taught by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. It explains how every action can be transformed into a means for liberation (moksha) by performing it with the right attitude. The discussion differentiates between upayam (means) and apayam (hindrance) in the context of actions. It also explores the philosophical debate between Mimamsakas and Vedantins regarding the nature, form, and reception of offerings by devatas (deities), emphasizing the limitations of human perception and the importance of scriptural knowledge. Krishna's guidance to Arjuna on performing duty as yajna is highlighted as a path to freedom from karmic bonds.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 24, Karma, Yajna, Sacrifice, Liberation, Moksha, Upayam, Apaya, Sadhana, Yoga, Devas, Deities, Mimamsakas, Vedantins, Agnihotra, Oblations, Dharma, Duty, Krishna, Arjuna, Spiritual practice, Vedic rituals, Perception, Sense organs, Vishnu, Mantras, Prarabdha, Sanchita, Agami, Bonds, Dasharatha, Ramayanam, Valmiki.

3. Main Content:

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

In Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna bestows upon us a good recommendation: “Perform every work as a yajna (sacrifice).” Transform every work you do as a tool and perform it in a way, named as yajna (sacrifice).

What happens to it then? It becomes a good tool to liberate you. It becomes an upayam (means). It becomes a mokshopayam (means to liberation), an upayam (means) for the ultimate state of liberation and joy. Upayam (means) is a good word. It means that which takes you closer to what you are desiring. Upa (close), aya (takes). Upayam (means) is that which takes you closer to what you desire. It is also called sadhanam (tool). That which takes you away [from what you desire] is called apa + ayanam (takes away). Apa + ayam (away), apayamu (hindrance). Upayam (means) is that which takes one closer; apayam (hindrance) is that which takes one away. Every karma (action) you do must become upayam (means). Upayam (means) is also called yogam (union). Yuk (unites) also means that which unites you with the goal that you desire. It is called yogam (union). What are you desiring? Attainment of ultimate joy. Good for you. Karma (action) is an upayam (means) or sadhanam (tool) for that ultimate joy. Whatever activities are ordained to you as responsibilities from the time of birth are called karmas (actions/duties). When we transform karma (action) as upayam (means), sadhanam (tool) or yogam (union) and perform it, it is called Yajnam (sacrifice).

Because we earlier heard or watched yajna (sacrifice) at various times in many ways, accordingly we think of a kunda (fire altar). It is constructed in various shapes. They are circular, triangular or hexagonal, or in the shape of a lotus. Some have five sides, or eight. Kundas (fire altars) can come in various shapes. Some are constructed in the form of Garuda (mythical bird) for some types of events. Kunda (fire altar) is a space constructed in a specific shape. There is agnihotra (fire ritual), fire in it. There is a priest called hota (priest). He recites something called mantras (sacred chants). He offers oblations to agnihotra (fire ritual) such as ghee (clarified butter), sticks and other elements. While offering, he chants so as to reach devatas (deities) like Indra, Varuna, Yama, Agni, Vayu, etc. He chants the desired recipient names and offers the oblations. It is called svahakara (offering chant). Such havirdana (offering of oblations), takes the oblations through agnihotra (fire ritual) to the respective devata (deity). This is what is said. All we can see is agnihotra (fire ritual). Because shastra (scripture) says that it reaches them that way, we listen and understand. The priest holds a certain set of ladles named suk and sruva with which he makes offerings. This is what we see on an external physical plane when we think of Yajna (sacrifice).

However, that is not the only Yajna (sacrifice) there is. It is one type of yajnam (sacrifice). It is one way of performing yajna (sacrifice). In life, transform every single task or work done every second into yajna (sacrifice) and perform it. Whoever you are, if you do it that way, it will ensure that… prarabdha (destiny from past actions), the subset of karma (action) given in this current body, Sanchita (accumulated karma), backlog stock of karma (action), and agami (future karma), subset of karma (action) lined up for future will not be attached to you. It will alleviate you from all the bandhas (bonds). Therefore, do your duty that way. He says so in verse 9.

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SLOKA WORD -

yajna:rdha:th karmano::nyathra lo:ko:: yam karma bandhanaha |

thadarttham karma kaunthe:ya! muktha sangaha sama:chara ||

SLOKA MEANING -

Except for actions performed as yajna (sacrifice), this world is bound by karma (action). Therefore, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), perform action for the sake of yajna (sacrifice), free from attachment.

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Yajnardhath karmano (perform karma to make it a yajna). It will then not tie you up and it will also relieve you from existing bondage. Why delay? Do it that way. “Is waging a war also a yajna (sacrifice)?” Yes, it is. What Arjuna is doing now is a Yajna (sacrifice). The yajamani (patron) is Dharmaraja. Bhima and others are the hotas (priests), offering oblations. The temporary outcome is royal pleasures and alleviation of suffering by pulling down a wicked administration. However, the eternal benefit for all of them is moksha (liberation). It’s not something that’s attained now. It’s for after this body. Until then, they must continue to do what they are prescribed. Sri Krishna is giving this divine instruction to Arjuna. For this, he is detailing a wonderful way of leading life.

Mimamsakas (followers of Purva Mimamsa) are those who accept Purva Bhaga (introductory text) of Vedas (sacred scriptures). They accept Yajna (sacrifice) and limit it to that, but do not accept the existence of souls called devatas (deities). They believe in mantras (sacred chants) as devatas (deities). They say that devatas (deities) exist but in the form of mantras (sacred chants). So, they do not advocate a form for devatas (deities). Our people show a form to the burning agnihotra (fire ritual), fire. Varuna is shown in the form of jala (water). It’s said that Yama also has a form. Rishis (sages) say that devatas (deities) have a form but Purva Mimamsakas (followers of Purva Mimamsa) don’t accept it. They don’t accept offering oblations specially to devatas (deities). They don’t believe in pleasing the devatas (deities), and thus they offer some benefits.

Devatanam na vidyate vigrahe vigrahaha haviradanam yugapat karma sannidhihi pritihi phala pradanam cha devatanam na vidyate (deities do not have a form, nor do they accept oblations, nor do they give results). They decided this way. However, Vedantins (followers of Vedanta) did not accept it. Devatas (deities) have a vigraha (form). When an eligible person does an activity of offering havis (oblations) to devatas (deities), it reaches them. We don’t see anyone physically arriving there, receiving what’s offered. We don’t have that ability to see. It’s also not a suitable time to see them. Earlier, when events were organized, people would attend in thousands and lakhs. If the government imposes a lockdown, what it means is that it isn’t the suitable time. It could be the time-period or the time of the day that may not be suitable.

Back then, Dasharatha performed putrakameshti yaga (ritual for progeny). Scriptures like Ramayanam (epic) say that all the devatas (deities) arrived there to receive the offered havis (oblations). Itihasa (history/epic) stands as a means of knowledge here. They arrived, they discussed certain kinds of topics. God also arrived there and offered abhayam (fearlessness/protection). Sage Valmiki carefully recorded these and offered us the history. Now, how can we say that devatas (deities) do not have bodies? “They are all tales. We won’t believe in them.” Do you believe in it if you can see them? “We will believe in it only if we see them.” These days, it’s not right to say that. Because, aren’t you operating a cell phone to see someone somewhere in the US? You are not saying that you won’t believe in it as you don’t see the relation between the two. You are sitting here and making a connection to someone there. Hence, it’s not right to say that you will believe only if you see it. You compose an email and send it. The other person responds ‘Yes, I got it’. What did you see? Did you notice anything flying? We visualize things to the level that we can imagine. However, there are many processes that we cannot imagine in this nature.

Earlier, people used post-boxes to deliver letters. Perhaps, that still exists in some villages. People then asked, “Does putting the letter in this box deliver it to my person?” It did. It involved a process where the letters were collected, and grouped based on location. They would be sent there in some vehicle - bus, car or train. They are then sorted, distributed, and delivered to the right addresses. Not all that happens in nature is visually comprehensible for us. Some are visible, but it is stupidity to say that others don’t exist. If the recipient of the offerings in agnihotra (fire ritual) is invisible, that doesn’t mean there is no one. What’s the extent of the power of your eyes? They have limitations. There is a range of distance at which your eyes can perceive objects. Same with light. Eyes cannot see light below and beyond a certain range. Eyes cannot see in extreme light or in extreme darkness. Any sense organ works the same way. Our ears cannot hear above and below a certain frequency of sound. Sound emits. It’s measured in decibels I believe. If the sound emitted is below 5 or above 20 decibels, ears cannot process. It’s not because the sound isn’t there, it’s because of the capacity of the ears. Our tools are limited in their abilities. Eyes, ears and all sense organs are the same way. Can eyes or other sense organs perceive devatas (deities)? No.

We must perform yajna (sacrifice) with an intention of an offering. If we do so, it will reap benefits. Yajna (sacrifice) is not the only place where a homa (fire ritual) is performed. Whatever we want to do, it should be done in view of a devata vishesha (specific deity). If you do it that way, it does not bind you. In view of which devata vishesha (specific deity) should we be performing the yajna (sacrifice)? Yajnovai Vishnuhu (Yajna is Vishnu Himself). Some said that it should be done expecting Vishnu as the benefit. Our Elders did not accept that. Yajna (sacrifice) means doing all ordained duties in view of the ultimate One who has given those to you. If you do it this way, it does not bind you. If you do whatever the owner has asked you to do, why would it bind you? The owner has assigned you a task to dismantle something. It is your duty to dismantle something, so it’s not a mistake if you dismantle it. Because that is the prescribed duty. God gave a body for human beings to do their duties. You must do your duties. You must do them with the bhavana (feeling/attitude) of yajna (sacrifice). Why should it be done with the feeling of Yajna (sacrifice)? Arjuna’s biggest question now is why should it be done with the feeling of yajna (sacrifice)? Sri Krishna is explaining the answer beginning with verse 3.10. Gradually learning, let’s move forward.

Vande guruparamparam (I bow to the lineage of teachers).

Jai Srimannarayana!