1. Episode Title: Episode 30 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 30): 4 Types of Karmas

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Arjuna's dilemma regarding his duty and Krishna's guidance on performing actions. The classification of actions (karma) into daily, occasional, desire-driven, and forbidden categories. The philosophical debate on whether actions bind or liberate, and the role of knowledge (jnana) in liberation. The influence of food (a:ha:ra) on the mind (manas) and the three qualities (gunas). The importance of performing actions as a sacrifice (yajna) to purify life and attain spiritual progress.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 30, Karma, Dharma, Arjuna, Krishna, Nithya karma, Naimitthika karma, Ka:mya karma, Nishiddha karma, Jnana, Vidya, Liberation, Mind, Body, Gunas, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, A:ha:ra, Yajna, Karma yoga, Duty, Responsibility, Sin, Purity, Food, Spiritual guidance, Sacrifice, Action, Forbidden actions, Recommended 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` (I repeatedly bow to Sri Rama, who removes all calamities, grants all wealth, and delights the world.)

Bhagavad Gita is the greatest upade:sa (edification) from Sri Krishna to Arjuna. Arjuna was under the illusion that he should not be doing what was actually his duty. Also, he was feeling responsible for doing that which he was not supposed to be doing. Bhagavad Gita taught him the way he must perform his duties. Arjuna is supposed to be fighting in the war. He is in that situation then. However, he felt it is better to beg for alms. He felt that whatever they did during their exile for 12 years in forests is better [than fighting in the war]. Why unnecessarily kill all of them? How can we eat the food obtained as a result of all the bloodshed? Is he feeling pity for them? Or is he being lazy about his work? There was no clarity in the reasoning. He went into such a state.

This kind of state is not limited to Arjuna back then. Today, we also feel the same about our responsibilities. We wonder if it is necessary to do our duties. We feel it may be better to do something else instead. We are inclined to do what we are not supposed to be doing. We are inclined to either skip or delay that which we are supposed to be doing. A similar situation emerged for Arjuna. The technical term for one doing the right thing is called karma a:charana (performing actions). It is the technical term. If we use the word ‘work that we do’, it sounds easy. If we use the term karma, it feels Ve:da:nthic (philosophical). It sounds like a difficult thing. It feels like a heavy load on the head. However, let’s use the term. If we use it a few times, we will get used to it.

Krishna’s teaching states that one must perform karma (actions). You said that the underlying jna:na (knowledge) is greater than karma (actions). Hence, my mind is set on that jna:na (knowledge). Therefore, I will skip karma (actions) and focus on jna:na (knowledge). This is Arjuna’s contention. [Interestingly,] everyone who argues about something has their own reasoning for the argument. During arguments in courts, if one wants to prove that something should be done… One quotes (incidents) from the past depicting why it should be done. The other one presents that which shows why the same should not be done. Yes, there are two sides to it. However, for the situation that is present at the moment, what is the right thing to do? That is what the judge needs to look at. Sri Krishna is currently the judge. Arjuna has his own set of prama:na (means for knowledge of something), supporting why he should stop doing the work. Krishna is instructing him to do the activity [karma (action)]. Arjuna is justifying that he must quit the activity because it is not a good thing to do. Dharma sa:sthras (scriptures on law and moral conduct) say:

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SLOKA WORD -

karmana: badhyathe: janthuhu vidya ya:cha vimuchyathe:

thasma:th karma na kurvanthi yathayaha pa:radarsinaha

SLOKA MEANING -

A living being is bound by actions, and liberated by knowledge.

Therefore, seers with true vision do not perform actions.

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Those with the right vision, good foresight and the worthy seers… `karma na kurvanthi` (They don’t do work.) Why? `karmana: badhyathe: janthuhu` (The work that a person does binds the person.) `vidya ya:cha vimuchyathe:` (Knowledge releases the person.) The great seer, Para:sara also said… `sa: vidya: ya: vimuchyathe:` (That is called vidya (knowledge), which liberates.) The same is also referred to as jna:na (knowledge), upa:sana (meditation), thapas (austerity). Therefore, I will just do thapas (austerity), meditate and reflect deeply. I will happily sit doing upa:sana (meditation in close vicinity to the target object). I will happily do vidya:bhy:sa (pursuance of knowledge). Why use these arrows? Why get hurt? Why shoot them and hit others? Why do I want the kingdom that is attained by someone being killed. Therefore, I will happily quit this and leave. This is the state in which he [Arjuna] was. He needs to be assured. He needs to be taught in an appealing manner that performing karma (actions) is a good thing. This is what Krishna is doing. He is focusing Chapter 3 on the same.

It is true that karma (actions) binds. However, karma (actions) is of different types. Nithya karma (daily activities), naimitthika karma (occasional obligatory duties), ka:mya karma (actions arising from desires), nishiddha karma (forbidden activities). There are various types of karmas (actions). Nithya karma (daily activities), one must not skip doing. Naimitthika karma (occasional obligatory duties), is also something that one must not skip doing. Ka:mya karma (actions arising out of our desires), is that which someone can skip if they don’t want. Let’s take eating as an example for nithya karma (daily activities) because we are used to that. It will be easier to understand. Having your meal is a nithya karma (daily activity). Depending on what your needs are, you should be eating. Whether it is rice, curries, roti or something else. Nithya karma (daily activities) cannot be avoided.

Naimitthika karma (occasional obligatory duties). Sometimes, there are some occurrences like eclipses, e:ka:dasi (eleventh day of the lunar fortnight) or something else etc. For that day based on the occurrence, there are some designated karmas (actions). Perform them. Ka:mya karma (actions arising from desires). As part of the meal today, you felt like preparing gulab jamun (an Indian dessert). If possible, he will make it. Otherwise, he will sleep imagining how yummy it would be. If he was able to secure the ingredients, he would make it. Or if someone gave it to him, he would happily eat it. This is ka:myam (desire). He got the desire to do something. If he can get it, he will eat it. Otherwise, he will skip it. You can skip doing ka:mya karma (actions arising from desires) if you want to. Nithya karma (daily activities) and Naimitthika karma (occasional obligatory duties) cannot be skipped.

There are some karmas (actions) named nishiddha karmas (forbidden activities). These are some karma (actions) that you must not venture into. On the subject of eating… `nakalancham bhakshe:th na sura:m pibe:th` (don’t eat meat, don’t drink alcohol). People get angry if we say these things. It is relatively comfortable to refer to them as tha:masa food (food that promotes inertia/darkness). Tha:masa food (food that promotes inertia/darkness) should not be consumed. How do we know what that means? Therefore, don’t eat onion or meat. Because if an animal is killed. It’s called a dead body. Only if a moving body is killed, it’s called a dead body. Immediately one may wonder whether “killing” a living being like a tree is not a crime.. Can that be consumed? Such questions will arise. There are answers for that. We must know all of that in detail. We must seek [right people] for those answers. Something can be called dead only when life is gone from a moving body. It can be a mosquito, fly, human being, or an animal. When pra:na (life force) leaves a tree, it is not called a dead body. It is said to be dried up. We call it a stick. However, if a moving body loses the same, it is named as a dead body. Doesn’t matter if it is a hen, lamb, donkey, dog, horse or anything else. Let’s not name them. If pra:na (life force) is lost or taken away from a body that was once moving, it is called a dead body. The place where dead bodies are kept is called a graveyard. If you put those bodies in this body, it is called a graveyard too. Therefore, don’t turn yourself into a graveyard. It is the tha:masa food (food that promotes inertia/darkness) that changes you in such a way. So, take out tha:masa food (food that promotes inertia/darkness). Don’t eat those. Don’t eat tha:masa food (food that promotes inertia/darkness). It is nishiddha (forbidden). Because it is nishiddha (forbidden), it is nishiddha karma (forbidden action).

Some leafy vegetables encourage rajo: and thamo: guna (dangerously active and highly inactive qualities respectively). There are no instruments that can discover rajo: and thamo: guna (active and inactive qualities) yet. Our science has not yet invented those. However, our scriptures have clarified those. They recommended keeping those types of foods away. Onion is an example that they cited. Bottle Gourd, radish are some examples. Actually, many nutritionists recommend these foods. That is right, but what are they good for? They are good for the body. Then, why not have them? A human being has both a body and a manas (mind). What is important? Body or mind? One person’s body is super strong, but his mind is not stable. What is he called? Something… His mind is not functioning. Such people are called by some names. Another’s mind is strong. His body might be diseased, or very thin, or may not have some organs yet his mind is efficient. Think about what is important now. Body or Mind? It’s not the body, it’s the mind. Body is necessary, but when it comes to what is the more important tool between the two, it is the mind. Take care of the body, without hampering the mind. Don’t build your body with that which is spoiling the mind. Use the body such that it doesn’t bring down the efficiency of the mind. That which nourishes the strength of mind is satthva guna (quality of goodness/purity). `satthva:th sanja:yathe: jna:nam` (From goodness, knowledge arises.) That’s what the saying is based on. Scriptures say, `a:ha:ra suddhow sattva suddhihi` (When food is pure, the mind becomes pure). Mind becomes efficient based on the food you eat. If your mind is good, you will attain knowledge in the right manner. Therefore, such food is named as sa:tthvika a:ha:ra (food that promotes goodness/purity). How are they formed and what are they? There is a process for that and you must follow accordingly. If we take such sa:tthvika food (food that promotes goodness/purity), satthva guna (quality of goodness/purity) rises in us. Rajo: and thamo: guna (active and inactive qualities) get suppressed.

Therefore, what is nishiddha (prohibited) and what vihitha (recommended)? What is recommended and what is not recommended? Even in the karmas (actions) that you do, there are some that are nishiddhas (forbidden). Don’t do them. There are some that are vihitha karma (recommended actions). They are nithya (daily), naimittha (occasional), ka:mya (desire-driven). Whatever, whenever and however they are right for you, do them happily. Do whatever you can. Even if you cannot do all of them, keep doing what you can properly and carefully. Therefore, `karmana: badhyathe: janthuhu` (a living being is bound by actions) is said in the context of prohibited karmas (actions). For the nithya (daily), naimitthika (occasional) and ka:mya karmas (desire-driven actions), if you know why and how to do them… Then it is not `karmana: badhyathe:` (a binding action). `yathaya: pa:radarsinaha` (great seers) `na kurvanthi` (not doing them). They are leaving the prohibited karmas (actions). They are not leaving the recommended karmas (actions). To clarify this… Sri Krishna structured a complete chapter 3 and then separated the related aspects into chapters 4, 5 and 6. There was the need to use four chapters to explain this. We are learning it. Satiate the de:vathas (deities) through the work you do. `ishta:n bho:ga: hi vo: de:va:ha: da:syanthe: yajna bha:vitha:ha` (The gods, nourished by sacrifice, will give you the desired enjoyments.) If you can do the karma (action) with proper knowledge of it, then it becomes a yajna (sacrificial action). If you can do this, the Nature around you will be happy. Lord also will be happy. If you can receive that and lead your life, you will become a capable one. Otherwise, you will become a thief. Your life must always go on with what you get from yajna (sacrificial action). He clarifies this in verse 2.13.

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SLOKA WORD -

yajna sishta:sinas santhaha

muchyanthe: sarvakilbishaihi |

SLOKA MEANING -

Those who eat the remnants of sacrifice are freed from all sins.

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There Arjuna said, “karmana: badhyathe: …” (a living being is bound by actions). However Krishna says… What does He say? `muchyanthe: sarvakilbishaihi` (relieves from all kinds of sins). When? `yajna sishta asinaha` (whoever leads a life that is turned into yajna (sacrificial action)). `sath` (he alone becomes sath (one who has)). He becomes san. Sath (one who has) means one who has. Asath (one who doesn’t have) is one who doesn’t have. You should be one who has, not one who does not have. Therefore, yajna (sacrificial action) is a very important means for a human being’s life. It is a tool. It is a wonderful process to sanctify karma (actions). When that happens, that yajna (sacrificial action) can also be called karma yo:ga (the yoga of action). He moves forward explaining it from verse 13. Let’s gradually learn it.

`Vande: guru parampara:m` (I bow to the lineage of teachers.)

Jai Srimannarayana!