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1. Episode Title: Episode 31 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 31)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Understanding the significance of Karthika month traditions, the deeper meaning behind lighting lamps and vana bhojanas, the importance of respecting and living in harmony with nature and its elements, the concept of senses as devathas (divine beings), the practice of Yajna (sacrificial ritual) in daily life, and the necessity of observing and learning from the natural order.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Karthika month, Vana bhojana, Dipa aradhana, Devathas, Nature, Elements, Jyothis, Knowledge, Sampradaya, Yajna, Senses, Upanishads, Prakruthi dharma, Interconnectedness, Harmony, Observation, Spiritual guidance, Dharma, Life lessons.

3. Main Content:

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

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 3 is a chapter that properly reveals true Nature. Particularly, it is a chapter that clarifies what one should know in the month of Karthika. What does one do in Karthika month? Vana bhojana (forest feast), cook and eat in the shade of many trees. Dipa aradhana (lighting of lamps), light up lamps at homes and temples to brighten the entire place. Additionally, we gather at the tree-filled groves, offering worship to vana devatha (divine force in the form of trees). The five elements as water, trees, land, air and space are all worshiped as the forms of devathas (divine beings). People spend divine quality time with them during the entire day and then head back to their homes. We see this as a tradition observed for a long time in many places. This is named as Karthika vana bhojanas. In the evening, people light up lamps. It is an indication to show that they have light when it gets dark. Or, it shows that they will always worship the tejas or jyothis (divine energy of light), that can eliminate any emerging darkness.

What should one do? We feel that trees are devathas. We feel that the rest of the elements are also devathas. The essence of this practice is to perceive devathas in every object in and the surrounding Nature. We must light up a lamp of that knowledge. We do it from Dipavali of course. We must light up all the lamps. A lamp giving the knowledge of ‘who I am’ should be lit. A lamp giving the knowledge of ‘who brought me here’ should be lit. A lamp giving the knowledge of ‘the relation between Him and us’ should be lit. A lamp giving the knowledge of ‘the goal that we must reach’ should be lit. A lamp that can eliminate the darkness from ‘the hurdles that block us from our goal’ should be lit. It does not harm to go another step forward. When you are living in a country, [a lamp of] interest and devotion towards the country [must be lit]. When you are born into a sanskrithi (culture) and sampradaya (set of Vedic traditions passed on from lineage), “I will protect the sampradaya. I will adhere to the sampradaya.” A lamp that fills the light enabling us to stand for it [sampradaya] must be lit. This way, if we can light the lamps that will remind us about the qualities that we must have, we can then assume that the expenses and our efforts [for lighting the lamps] will become purposeful. Otherwise, if all the effort involved and the wicks, oil used in lighting up a number of lamps is only for illuminating the place, we can simply use electrical bulbs to give brighter illumination. We can observe this. The goal of what we do in the month of Karthika is not limited to eliminating external darkness. There is also a jyothis (radiance) that must illuminate in us. It is related to many areas. Remember each area, light it up and radiate from within with the related knowledge. Light up a lamp for each of them. It’s fine to light as many such lamps as there are. Then they will become purposeful.

This is one part of it. The second part is about all the objects and creatures in Nature that are supporting our lives. That is why Srimad Bhagavatham reveals, firstly, everything that is worth and necessary for supporting the life of a human being were created. It was only after that did God bring in human beings to this world. What that means is that every prani (creature) cooperates with and supports the life of a human being. If something is cooperating with us, then it is a responsibility for us to offer proper help and protect it. Isn’t it? If air is cooperating with you, then it is our responsibility to take good care of it. If water is cooperating with you, then it is our responsibility to take proper care of it. If trees are cooperating with you, then it is our responsibility to make sure trees are able to grow well. If birds, animals, various types of insects, worms are cooperating with you, it is our responsibility to take good care of all of them. To take good care does not mean to nurture or pet them in our houses. It means to ensure their existence in their natural spaces is intact and they can live in their natural order. We must remember this when we speak of taking good care of them. That is why, our people must practice vana bhojanas. Spend some time in the spaces filled with trees and observe the environment there. To spend some time there, one should not spoil them by plucking leaves, branches. We should not mess up the area by plucking out flowers, fruits and scattering garbage of what we eat. It is about observing the truths of the environment and the surroundings. We can see nature where there is a small plant and a big tree. The small plant grows in its own manner. The same with the big tree. They don’t think of suppressing each other. The small plant does not yield to jealous or envious seeing the big tree. One does not fight for what is for the other. The big tree does not think of shaming the small plant that it is inferior or petty. Both grow in their own way and live together. We observe this in the trees.

If we take insects and worms, one takes another as its food. It’s not our responsibility to get rid of anything but to observe. There is a natural order that already exists in nature. If we go and put our hand in there, we will end up spoiling it and in turn destroy ourselves. We should observe. If there is anything we can learn from there, we should. We should be able to adopt it in our lives. If we take the forest areas, creatures like garden lizards feed on honey bees. We are not responsible for feeling pity and pushing away the lizards. Or, we are not responsible to drive away the bees because they suck nectar from the flowers. There are some channels like Discovery. Some have cameras observing and capturing what the animals are doing. One animal either feeds on another or nurtures. It does something. They never interfere in that process. They observe what is going on and share that with us. This is their responsibility. When we observe nature, it’s the same responsibility we have too. An animal such as a tiger or a lion eating up a smaller animal such as a rabbit or a wolf. We are not responsible for stopping them or doing something for the other. Be an observer. Observe. Understand what the prakruthi dharma (character of Nature) is. Observe their state. If you are intelligent, you will notice that it eats when hungry and does not bother touching anything else afterwards. If you can apply it in your life, do it. When we go to the forest, that is what we must do. Perhaps our people are observing vana bhojanas etc to learn any methods or morals from there. Hoping that, at least in the name of those events, people can spend some time there. They would be able to relish Nature or be able to observe what’s there. They would be able to at least stay away from materialistic things. Perhaps that is why these were organized. This is a method where we perceive and worship forest as the form of devathas.

Additionally, Upanishads named our senses also as devathas. Senses are made out of nature. They are part of nature. Therefore, senses are able to perceive things from nature. However, they are also named devathas. We will learn later about why they are named as devathas. God stated earlier in chapter 3 itself that you are created along with them [devathas].

de:va:n bha:vayatha ane:na the: de:va: bha:vayanthu vaha parasparam bha:vayantha (Respect the devathas. They will look out for the state that you desire. He declared that the two live happily in unison giving and taking from each other.)

Leading life while respecting the devathas, this way is a Yagam, a Yajna (sacrificial ritual). God is speaking of this [yajna] in the current scenario in chapter 3. He said that if one can lead a life like this, it is a very pious way. Why are senses referred to by the name of devathas? Devathas have certain abilities. They never sleep. They never stay on the ground. They are not visible to our eyes. However, they are around us and influence us. Whatever is surrounding us and has the name of devathas is of that nature. And the senses in us are also of the same type. None of them are visible to us. They are always working. They are never stable. That is probably why the Upanishads named our senses also as devathas. You are living along with them. So, respect their law. Behave according to them. They will offer you what you need. Ensuring the boundary of their law, order, and discipline, you can benefit from them. Let them also benefit from you. Stay happy together. This is what God is instructing us in chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita. This is in fact very essential for our life. To give us the knowledge of this, He demonstrated a wonderful cycle. After demonstrating the cycle, He says,

e:vam pravarthitham chakram (everyone must abide by the cycle)

In Karthika month, learn about that cycle, respect Nature and devathas. Show the interest and concern you have for them. They should be doing well and we should also do well. With the knowledge of all of that, light up a nice lamp. Doing so, let us move ahead in learning Gita.

Jai Srimannarayana! Vande guru paramparam (I bow to the lineage of teachers).

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