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1. Episode Title: Episode 42 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 42): Exemption from Karma - Part 1

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: This episode explores the concept of exemption from karma for enlightened beings, contrasting their state with that of ordinary individuals. It discusses how great souls like Sri Suka Deva, Emperor Parikshit, and Nammalwar transcend bodily needs and natural influences, thereby not being bound by the necessity of performing actions. The discourse highlights Krishna's teachings to Arjuna, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling one's duty (karma) for those who are still influenced by nature and bodily demands.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 42, Karma, Exemption from Karma, Sri Suka Deva, Parikshit, Nammalwar, Satakopa, Madhurakavi, Krishna, Arjuna, Dharma, Bodily needs, Spiritual liberation, Moksha, Bhakti, Yoga, Avadhuta, Yogi, Kali Yuga, Ved Vyas, Bhagavatam, Sowshilya, Avatara, Ramadasu, Divine qualities, Devotion, Duty, Self-realization

3. Main Content:

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

We begin with a prayer:

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 dangers, bestows all wealth, and delights the world.)

Take a dip in water, but don’t get wet. Is this a wise thing to say? Take a seat on an oil-covered floor but don’t get smeared with oil. A wise one wouldn’t say this. We don’t consider such people as intelligent. If someone claims he isn’t impacted by nature whilst he is living in nature, we should feel pity for him. We shouldn’t say anything to such a person. Because if we argue with a crazy person, we don’t know if his craziness will subside but we for sure will be caught up in it! Therefore, instead of arguing with such a person, we should simply let him go, feeling pity for him.

Yes, there are certain people living in nature but are beyond any effects of it. We can recognize such people by their behavior. As far as we know, they are very rare and we can only count such people on our fingers. A little before Kali Yuga started, there was a great sage named Sri Suka Deva, son of Veda Vyas. He can be perceived to be in such a state. He had no bodily feelings. He had no interaction with the surroundings. He would carry on just like that. His father, Veda Vyas was running behind him calling out ‘Oh son…’. No response - the reason… [Suka Deva] was beyond the bodily level, united with God… since God is all-pervasive, and… Because it is not the soul who answers, [by itself] but… it is enabled by God to respond, and Being everywhere, Lord could respond from anywhere…

Bha:gavatham (Bhagavatam) states that when [Veda Vyas] called out “son”, it was the trees that responded, not [Suka Deva]. Everything in nature responded saying ‘yes..’ but the son didn’t respond. This is Sri Suka. He had no dhya:sa (focus) on food. He had no focus on water. When someone is deeply involved in some activity, they don’t think about food or water even though they need them. They don’t think about them but if someone brings them, they accept. There are some great beings like yogis (spiritual practitioners) and avadhootas (ascetics). A great soul like Jadabharatha… They don’t need anything. They don’t have any thoughts for food or water. They sit at some place worshiping the indwelling Lord. However, if someone brings food to them, they will take it. Meaning they know that food is something that can be eaten. However, they don’t focus on it. They know that water is something to be drunk, but that’s not on their mind. There are some like this. However, the Great Sage Sri Suka’s state is such that he doesn’t even need them.

The emperor Parikshit reaches and seeks Sri Suka during the last stage of his life. He [Parikshit] asks some questions [to Sri Suka]. He [Sri Suka] is united with God and is brahma jnani (one knowledgeable about God). What is it that one must do before leaving the body when he realizes death is inevitable and nearing? Parikshit asked this question. As a response, he [Sri Suka] taught Bha:gavatham (Bhagavatam). He taught it for 7 days. What’s interesting is that only one among the thousands in attendance attained moksha (liberation) after listening to it. Only one attained grace. Who was it? Emperor Parikshit. [Sri Suka] spoke and [Parikshit] listened. It was 7 days of uninterrupted discourse accompanied with uninterrupted listening. There were many sages in attendance, but after hearing for some time… Some would go into yogam (sleep). Some, out of pain, would get up to stretch their legs, hands or neck. Some needed to get up for their daily morning routines. Some got up taking a break to have breakfast, lunch, snack, or dinner, etc. However, Sri Suka did not move from the position he sat in until the 7th day. He wasn’t tired. During the discourse, Sri Suka, the teacher, asked the one listening, King Parikshit, if he also would like to take a break. “I am filling the cups of my ears with your preaching, taking it in. What other hunger and thirst can exist?” He responded that way. He sat there for all 7 days with the same diksha (devoted dedication), and heard the discourse, attaining ultimate grace. The others needed food, water, sleep, and to care for the body. On a long-haul flight, you are advised to get up and stretch instead of constantly watching TV. You are advised to do some exercise, i.e stretches. The rest were doing all of this, but not Parikshit. Whilst living in nature, and dwelling in the body which is a form of nature… He could live without being controlled by any bodily pressures. For such a person, there is no need to perform any karma. He can give up karma. Sri Suka is also the same way. So, it’s fine for him [to not do any karma] as well.

There is another person. [Sri Suka and Parikshit] are before this Kali Yuga started. Another great being took birth on the 41st day of the current Kali Yuga. He was later named Nammalwar. He is also called Satakopa. He took birth and didn’t move for 16 years. He didn’t breathe, didn’t drink water, didn’t eat food, didn’t even have his mother’s milk ever. Sitting in the tamarind tree’s trunk hole, and developing a blue complexion… He was growing up in a town named Thirunagari in South India, without wanting [anything external]. A great soul named Madhurakavi tried to wake him up using sound as his tool. Madhurakavi asked a question and was answered [by Satakopa]. Satakopa expressed everything within his heart in beautiful cadence. It was a great outpouring. Everything poured out in a wonderful flow. After a while, he fell unconscious reflecting on God’s auspicious qualities. Because… Out of many qualities, one quality is that He surrenders to the most ordinary people. He allowed Himself to be tied up to a mortar by an innocent cowherd lady. He let Himself be beaten by them. He is the great One who ties all the worlds with the rope of karma. He is the supporting root of the entire universe. Such a One allowed Himself to be tied up by one lady with a rope. She demanded that He shouldn’t move and if He did [she would punish Him]. As if He were incapable of anything… He was shivering, sobbing, rubbing His eyes, with His chest moving up and down due to the sobs. He stood there like that, crying. Thinking of this quality of God, Nammalwar couldn’t bear it. He thought about the level of greatness of that God… And how easily He becomes accessible and surrenders to the devotees who love Him. Thinking about this, Nammalwar fell unconscious for 6 months.

Upon waking, he asked where he was. Worried that he would return to that state, they didn’t remind him of that quality. They talked about God’s other supreme qualities which help people, such as… Sowshilya (friendly nature with everyone despite being greater in every way to them). Nammalwar kept singing about those qualities. After singing for some time, he [Madhurakavi] asked if he was thirsty and would like some water. He said he was not thirsty. “What did you drink that you don’t feel thirsty?” “Where is the room for thirst when I am drinking the waters of God’s auspicious qualities?” For those like Ramadasu, there was no need to drink water. He sang, “Oh Rama, what an amazingly delicious name is Rama…what a great taste!” That itself became the desirable taste for him. If we sing, we end up desiring many tastes from outside because the inside gets dried up! That’s because we are dependent and controlled by them. They are not living in control of these. “Will you at least eat something?” “I feel satiated, there is no hunger.” “What did you eat?” “Thoughts about the various cheshta (activities), God’s avataras (incarnations), during all the avataras (appearances)…” “The stomach became full.” Does our stomach get filled up that way? No. “How about a couple of chocolates or ice-creams? Will you have something like that?” “Nothing else gives me happiness when thinking of God’s avataras (incarnations) and his divine activities.” “I do not need anything else.” He lived in nature, i.e. the body for 32 years. For 16 [of the 32], he was in yogam (deep meditative state). After he woke up, he lived for 16 years singing His qualities he experienced within. He did not depend on the water from nature even for a moment. Did not depend on the food or air. Meaning he was not under the control of nature. In this way, if anyone is capable of… living in this nature not controlled by it, not affected by it, or influenced by it… Then, such a person need not perform any karma. Why? Because… There is nothing that he needs to attain nor nothing to lose by performing or not performing karma…

What about us? If we do not perform karma, our body will become stiff. Check a hand that is released after being in a cast for a month. It becomes tough to clench immediately afterward. We can all understand this practically. Sit tight for 1 hour. It will take some time to stretch and put it in order after the hour. We are living beings dependent on it. We are having to live in control of it. For them, it is in their control. Therefore, there is no loss if they do or don’t perform karma. Because there is neither of those [loss or gain], there is no need to depend on karma. For such people, there is no need to practise karma. “What happened to you?” “Isn’t it necessary for you?” “You cannot skip doing karma. You must perform karma.” “Therefore, whatever is appropriate for you…” “Such as killing your enemies, eliminating wrong-doings, putting out wrong-doers.” “It is your responsibility. Therefore, you cannot give up.” Arjuna’s plan was to somehow escape this war. “There is no way out of it. You must fight. You must abide by your responsibility.” This is the essence of Sri Krishna’s message. That is why, He elucidated the wonderful wheel in chapter 3. Explaining that we must lead life through it, He explains in 2 beautiful verses that there are certain ones who can skip [karma]. Those are verses 17 and 18. Let’s enter them.

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

Jai Srimannarayana!

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