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1. Episode Title: Episode 44 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 44) - Exemption from Karma - Part 3

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS:

\* Understanding the concept of exemption from karma (action) and identifying who is truly eligible to abandon it.

\* Analyzing the characteristics of a self-realized person (atma darsi) who has nothing to gain or lose from performing actions.

\* Krishna's teachings on the importance of performing actions without attachment (karma yoga) as the path to spiritual liberation.

\* Exploring Ramanujacharya's unique interpretation of "sarva bhuteshu" as referring to the five elements of nature.

\* Emphasizing the role of enlightened individuals in setting a good example through their actions for the benefit of society.

\* Distinguishing between those who are bound by the material world and its elements and those who are free from its influence.

TAGS:

HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 44, Karma, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Atma Darsi, Self-realization, Attachment, Detachment, Pancha Bhutas, Five elements, Ramanujacharya, Krishna, Arjuna, Nithyas, Mukthas, Paramapadam, Dharma, Duty, Asaktha, Sathatham, Param Apnothi Purushaha, Exemption from Karma, Action without attachment, Spiritual guidance, Material world, Renunciation, Self-knowledge, Upanishad.

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

When surrounded by a wide variety of delicious sweets... If offered the pulpy fibrous remains from a squeezed sugarcane, what will one do? Would he relish it? No. He won’t even look at it. Why? Because if he desires to eat, there are delicious dishes accessible to him. There are dishes that satisfy him. There are dishes that give him joy. Because such dishes are available, he won’t even think of the residue of squeezed sugarcane.

Similarly… For one who knows who he is, i.e., who is an atma darsi (one who sees the soul), has clarity on who he is… Because he doesn’t need to attain anything else or achieve any other purpose… For such a person… `thasya ka:ryam na vidyathe:` (there is no duty for him).

In verse 3.17, Sri Krishna clarifies to Arjuna that no one is exempt from performing karma (action). No one living in this world can abandon karma (action). Who is eligible to abandon karma (action)? Only one who has nothing to gain from karma (action). If that person has something that outweighs his loss from abandoning karma (action)… Then, he does not need karma (action).

“It’s not the case with you. You are wishing that you stay happy with all your relatives.” Relatives are those who are related through the body. Bodies are made of pancha bhutas (five elements of nature). All of them including Drona, Bhishma or anyone else are made of pancha bhutas (five elements of nature). Thus, you are under the control of the five elements in nature. You are desiring to be with them. You think you will experience distress if you hurt them. You think that you will be happy when you are with them. You think that you will have satisfaction when they are with you. If any of them are hurt, you say…

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SLOKA WORD -

pathanthi pitharo:hye:sha:m luptha pindo:daka kriya:ha

narako:ni:tham va:sobhavathi:thi anususruma

SLOKA MEANING -

Their ancestors fall (from heaven), deprived of the offerings of food and water. We have heard that such people dwell in hell.

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That’s in chapter 1. You spoke in detail about hell, heaven, pleasing one’s ancestors, and making offerings to them. You don’t have atma rathi (joy from self-knowledge), atma thrupthi (satisfaction with self-knowledge), and atma santhushti (contentment with self-knowledge). In this case, because you have given into elements of nature, you must work according to them.

Some feel themselves as sannyasi (one who renounces), who leave everything unto God. However, they also need something at every mealtime. If not at every mealtime, they want something at every other mealtime. If not every other mealtime, some need once in every two days. If not once every two days, some might need it once every year. In summary, there must be something at some point supporting it [body]. Also, they think about meeting with other people in the world. They conduct some sessions with others. They also have wealth through donations, etc. They live along with them. They also speak with leaders, politicians, etc. They think of what’s good and bad, etc. Meaning they are also living with the desire for what’s made with bhutas (elements) only. Maybe not fully but it exists to some level. Because they are wishing for some purpose with these, they must behave in accordance with them.

If there is no purpose at all… `naiva thasya kruthe:na:rtthaha` (he has no purpose in what is done). `kruthe:na` (if one works on something). He doesn’t need the result of it despite doing that task. He has the body, needs to put it to work, and it is working. There is some result from it but he is not connected to it. `na akruthe:na kaschana artthaha` (nor does he have any purpose in what is not done). If he does not perform the task, he won't get any result. However, he does not incur any loss due to that. He is not awaiting it anyway. Why? Because he has already attained whatever has to be attained. There is nothing new that he needs to attain or nothing that he will lose. Not just from one space or place.

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SLOKA WORD -

na cha asya sarvabhu:the:shu

kaschidarttha vyapa:srayaha ||

SLOKA MEANING -

Nor does he depend on any being for any purpose.

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Ramanujacharya Swami gives wonderful commentary for this too. `sarva bhu:the:shu kaschidarttha vya:pa…` `sarva bhu:the:shu` (among all beings). Sri Krishna gives the meaning to this word as the world you are living in. The world is made of pancha bhutas (five elements). No matter who it is, everyone is panchabhutatmik (made of five elements of nature). It is for the purpose of enjoying these that we desire to do something with our sense organs. Body desires good touches. Eye wants to see good shapes. Ear wants to hear nice tunes. Tongue wants to taste delicious things. Nose wants to smell good fragrances. Each sense organ has a desire. Sabda (sound), sparsa (touch), rupa (shape), rasa (taste), gandha (fragrance). All these came from pancha bhutas (five elements). Earth emits smells. Water gives taste. Fire gives color. Air gives touch. Space gives sound. So, these come from pancha bhutas (five elements). `kaschidarttha vyapa:srayaha sarvabhu:the:shu` (he has nothing to gain from any of these pancha bhutas). This is what Ramanujacharya Swami said.

However, those prior to Ramanujacharya Swami said… “Ranging from Brahma to a pillar, this person does not need to get anything from anyone.” “Hence, he can leave everyone and go to a forest.” Going to the forest might mean building a family there. Didn’t sage Vishwamitra go to the forests leaving his home? Didn’t another family rise there too? All the commentators prior to Ramanujacharya opined that… it meant to abandon people and the relations with people. However, Ramanujacharya clarified… `sarva bhu:the:shu` (among all beings) means all the five elements. There is nothing that this person… needs to attain from any of the pancha bhutas (five elements) or from whatever is made out of them. Atma tattva (reality of soul) is a tattva (reality) that is beyond those [pancha bhutas]. He is already in unison with the reality of soul. He has already attained it. He was told to do any work only to give him the means to attain self-realization. That’s what was said. Since he has already attained it, it does not matter what he gets or doesn’t while performing any work. There is no use for him with any of the two. This is true for that kind of a person.

Are you that kind of a person? Those in Paramapadam (eternal abode of God), known as Nithyas (who never left God) and mukthas (who returned to God) are of that kind. They are not desiring anything from pancha bhutas (five elements). They take a form using only the knowledge of soul and… `sathatha parye:thi jakshan kri:dan ramama:naha` (always moves about, eating, playing, and enjoying). They do services that are of jnana (knowledge). Not feeling satisfied with that, he molds nature over there to a suitable form he desires. `sa e:kadha: bhathi thridha: bhavathi panchadha: sapthadha: navadha: punascha e:ka:dasa smurthasyathancha dasacha, e:kascha: sahasra:ni cha` (He becomes one, he becomes three, he becomes five, seven, nine, and again eleven, a hundred, a thousand). Upanishad states that they take multiple forms for offering service to God. The focus there is on serving God. Not for the service done with a body [made of pancha bhutas]. There is no connectivity to anything related to the body. For such a person…yes!

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SLOKA WORD -

naiva thasya kruthe:na:rtthaha na akruthe:na iha kaschana

SLOKA MEANING -

He has no purpose in what is done, nor does he have any purpose in what is not done in this world.

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It does not matter where he is. There is nothing he will lose from not doing any work. There is nothing he hopes to gain from doing any work. Someone who gained many degrees in education like Ph.Ds, etc… When he is teaching a small kid how to write his first letter, He starts writing at the proper position and turns in the proper direction and completes it. He does it carefully so as to teach it to the kid. He is so learned that no matter what he does, it becomes a patented version. He is so great that whatever he writes becomes something meaningful. For such a person, there is no gain from writing or loss by not writing. For such a person, there is no loss if he does not do anything. However, Arjuna! You cannot be that way. Since you are one who is bound by the wheel of life, you must continue to perform all appropriate activities in the journey of life. You cannot abandon karma yoga (path of action) or give up performing karma (action).

Sri Krishna clarifies this in chapter 3, verse 19. `thasma:th` (therefore), because we are still bound by karma (action). Despite being in jnana yoga (path of knowledge) or karma yoga (path of action), it is karma yoga (path of action) that is the best until you are here [in this world]. Meaning karma yoga (path of action) is the best even for one who is eligible for jnana yoga (path of knowledge).

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SLOKA WORD -

thasma:d asakthas sathatham

ka:ryam karma sama:chara

SLOKA MEANING -

Therefore, always perform your duty without attachment.

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You must perform karma (action) properly. Who should be told to perform karma (action)? We don’t need to tell that to one who is performing karma (action). Even for a karma yogi (one who practices karma yoga) as well, karma yoga (path of action) is suitable and easy. Like water that flows into the lowlands. Therefore, you also [perform karma (action)]… `asakthaha` (no connection). Don’t build any bond with the work, but do it. If you bond with it, you will feel proud when it becomes successful. You will want to show off. If it fails, you will feel depressed thinking about how it all happened. It does not stop with one day, it goes on throughout life. Some people when angry say that they will even take many lives to take revenge. Instead of desiring for no second birth, he desires multiple lives. He is a dhirgha sutri (one who ties himself long-term to something). Both favorable and adverse responses continue to tag along with him for a continued period of time. This shouldn’t be the way. What is Sri Krishna saying? Don’t abandon performing work but abandon the continued attachment with it. `asakthaha` (remain unbound). Saktha (to bind) means to bind. Asaktha (to not bind) means to not bind. `sathatham` (always). Despite being a karma yogi (one who practices karma yoga), or having the right for jnana yoga (path of knowledge), or attaining self-realization… As long as you are in this world, performing your duty is the right thing to do. He [Krishna] is also doing it. Because if He does not do it… Similar to how if a teacher is not sitting in the right posture while writing… The student follows the same. If the teacher writes upside down, the student thinks that’s the right way. When you bow to elders and God, your child will watch you do it and learn the same. If you do it wrong, he will also do it wrong. Therefore, you must do it right for the sake of the child’s well-being. `asakthas sathatham ka:ryam karma` (always perform your duty without attachment). With determined knowledge that this is what and how it must be done… `sama:chara` (perform it properly). But doesn’t performing bind me? No, it doesn’t.

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SLOKA WORD -

asaktho:hy a:charan karma

param a:pnothi pu:rushaha

SLOKA MEANING -

For by performing action without attachment, a person attains the Supreme.

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When you perform it with no attachment… `param a:pno:thi` (attains the Supreme). You will attain atma darsana (self-realization), that is pre-eminent and permanent… compared to temporary worldly benefits. I.e. You will attain proper knowledge of who you are. That is when anything you do will not tie you up. You will perform karma (action), but it will not bind you. He later clarifies, giving the example of a lotus leaf in a pond. It lives in water but it stays untouched. Similarly… You will live amidst all these, doing all the work, but you will be able to do them untouched. In chapter 3, Sri Krishna thus clarifies the essence of the process followed in karma yoga (path of action). He is taking Arjuna forward explaining this beautifully in verses 3.17, 3.18 and 3.19. Let us also gradually move forward.

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

Jai Srimannarayana!

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