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1. Episode Title: Episode 57 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 57)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Analyze the importance of fulfilling one's prescribed duties and responsibilities. Discuss Krishna's disappointment with Balarama's actions and his pilgrimage. Explore the concept of dharma (righteous practice) and its application in difficult situations. Highlight the significance of choosing the best option even when ideal choices are unavailable. Detail Krishna's persistent efforts to find an eligible disciple for spiritual guidance. Examine Arjuna's surrender as a disciple and his request for Krishna's guidance. Illustrate the consequences of abandoning one's duty through the examples of Balarama, Bhishma, and Yudhishthira.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 57, Karma Yoga, Dharma, Responsibility, Duty, Krishna, Arjuna, Balarama, Duryodhana, Pandavas, Yudhishthira, Bhishma, Romaharshana, Naimisaranya, Brahmahatya Dosha, Spiritual guidance, Pilgrimage, Leadership, Righteousness, Surrender, Sreyas, Upadesha, Vyasan, Puranas, Shantanu, Dhritarashtra, Kuru dynasty, Vows, Atonement, Self-upliftment, Moral choices

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

In Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita, encouraging Arjuna for war, Sri Krishna clarifies to him the necessity of fulfilling responsibilities. Whoever it may be, irrespective of whether he likes it or not, one must not attempt to escape from any ordained responsibility. It’s not related to our likes and dislikes. They are prescribed, and thus one must practice them. When it is anyway inevitable, then do it with interest, love, and as service to God. This is what Sri Krishna is instructing in summary. He is accordingly encouraging Arjuna and says, in verse 24:

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SLOKA WORD -

uthside:yur ime: lo:ka:ha

na kurya:m karma che:daham

SLOKA MEANING -

If I don’t fulfill My responsibilities, these worlds would be ruined.

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Despite being in this position, if I don’t fulfill My responsibilities, they will follow suit and will suffer consequences. They will try to follow the path without the ability to walk through it. Sri Krishna was disappointed with Balarama in this aspect. Before the onset of war, Balarama said he wouldn't take part in the war. He said, “Duryodhana is my student, and you are on the side of Pandavas.” “Victory for the Pandavas is certain when You are on their side. The other side will lose.” “I cannot watch my student lose. So, I won’t take part in the war. I will leave.” He went off on a pilgrimage.

It is not his responsibility to go off on a pilgrimage. [Sri Krishna thought] “If that’s the case, I would have also taken off the same way.” Why am I sitting through the war? Why am I having to take the side of the Pandavas? It is dharma (righteous practice) to take the better side between the parties. In time of elections, most politicians are not the best suitable. Who do we vote for? Some may say that they refuse to vote. This is not right. Even if there is no one fully suitable, it is our responsibility to choose the best among them. If one is wise and can make a good choice, has the time and the chance to cast a vote but does not do it, all the others not capable of selecting the right candidate will cast votes and elect someone incapable. When you have a chance, you must take it to select someone who is best amongst the lot.

Sri Krishna looked to see who He can grace Bhagavad Gita instruction upon. There were many eligible ones. However, when He examined who is best amongst them, it was Arjuna. The rest indulged in various activities. Some due to selfishness and some out of arrogance. Some due to thinking that they are highly devoted to God. Some due to thinking that they are highly knowledgeable. No one either approached Sri Krishna or sought His guidance. Krishna made various attempts with them hoping they might realize and change. Right at birth, He revealed to His parents His greatness. They didn’t ask Him to teach anything. He was born with four hands. He was adorned with all the ornaments at birth. His father eulogized:

ja:tho:si de:va de:ve:sa sanka chakra gada:dhara (You are born, O Lord of all gods, bearing conch, discus, and mace)

However, he never asked Him to give any upadesha (spiritual guidance) for his upliftment. So, they didn’t ask. Sri Krishna directed His father to take Him to the other side. The people here [Mathura] think they are all ‘educated’. At least maybe those who are not ‘educated’ will ask, He thought. Accordingly, He asked to be taken to Gokulam. He tried for 15 years with them. He displayed all types of powers. He thought at least they would ask Him but they didn’t. Disappointment.

He returned to Mathura. He struck Kamsa and the rest. He released Ugrasena and others from the jail. No one asked Him there either. They stayed silent because they got the kingdom. They kept quiet because they were relieved from difficulties. Everyone took shelter of their comforts. He thought He would try with the intellectual and wise. He reached Sandipa. Despite being a great person, Sandipa only asked for his lost sons to be restored. Sri Krishna thought He would be asked to grace guiding words for his upliftment. He wasn’t. What else could He do? He looked around everywhere. He couldn’t find any eligible person who had the desire to uplift themselves. Yet, He didn’t get disappointed. He tried.

He found that Pandavas are relatively more eligible amongst the rest. He got closer to them. He provided them with many kinds of support. He thought at least they would seek Him, but they didn’t. They thought they knew everything, just like how everyone else thought. Finally, as a result of many attempts, Arjuna said:

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SLOKA WORD -

sishyasthe:ham sa:dhi:ma:m thva:m prapannam

thad vada yath nischitham sya:th sre:yaha ithi

SLOKA MEANING -

I am your disciple, surrendered to you; please instruct me on what is definitely good for me.

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He found one person who asked Him what He believes is sreyas (the right thing to do). He felt that there was at least one, and that it was enough for this lifetime. He started preaching to him. It’s not permitted to be disappointed. It’s not permitted to declare that everyone is bad. We must carry out our responsibility and use our abilities. We must use the right. We must never say that we will not cast a vote because all the candidates are unfit. Whoever is better amongst existing applicants – when everyone is a devil, it is the quality of a wise person to select the ‘good’ devil.

“Hey Arjuna! That is why I am working with you.” My brother Balarama said he doesn’t want anything out of this and left in the name of pilgrimage. Okay. However, how should one behave when on a pilgrimage? Like a sadhu (saint). He should be like a saint – righteous, renouncing, humble, obedient. Was he like that? How can he say he was on a pilgrimage without all of those qualities? Didn’t he have those qualities? Let’s see!

He went straight to Naimisaranya as the first stop. At Naimisaranya, there is a great being, Romaharshana, a direct disciple of the renowned sage, Vedavyasa. While being chaturdhvarnasya (of the four castes), he is the best jnani (knowledgeable person). The guru instructed him to be the leading acharya (teacher) for Pauranika Shastra (scriptures of ancient stories), forever fresh and forever appropriate pastimes. He was preaching the literature of the Puranas (ancient stories) to all those gathered there. While preaching, “I am the preacher, you are the listener.” “I am knowledgeable, you are ignorant.” “I am the guru, you are the disciple.” The preacher should never feel that way. He should feel his acharya (teacher) is preaching to him and teach the same while attending as a listener. Romaharshana is a wise one. He is worthy, fully capable. He was giving a discourse on Puranas seated in the position of the preacher. Sages like Shaunaka and others were happily listening. The preacher believes that his teacher is within him and instructs through him to the audience. He should not preach on the basis of his physical ability. With the same feeling, he sat on Vyasan (seat of Vyasa), taking his position, and started preaching.

Balarama reached there. As he is Sri Krishna’s brother, everyone stood up out of respect. Romaharshana, though, did not stand up because he was sitting on the Vyasan (seat of Vyasa). Not because of arrogance but because of the glory of his position. However, for the one who was set out to pilgrimage, [Balarama] felt that despite him having reached there, while all the superior brahmanas (priests) rose, “You are after all a shudra (from the fourth caste)! I am Balarama, the brother of Sri Krishna!” “You won’t stand to offer respect?! See what I will do to you!” He hit him! Balarama is the strong one who taught Duryodhana how to fight. Romaharshana lost his life because of that one hit. Balarama accrued the brahmahatya dosha (sin of killing the highest). He accrued the sin of hurting a great being. He carried the sin of humiliating the position. He accrued these many sins. He took on a responsibility that was not his. He thought he should fulfill it. Therefore, neither could he fulfill his own responsibility, nor what he took upon himself. He failed at both. na ghar ka na ghat ka (neither belonged to home, nor to the pier). That’s what happened to Balarama that day. He had to perform atonement. He had to perform expiation for the sin of brahmahatya (killing the highest). He had to perform atonement for the humiliation he did. That is history.

The reason we are recollecting this is that Sri Krishna had tremendous dissatisfaction with Balarama. Though his own brother, Balarama ignored his prescribed duty. Arjuna! Don’t commit such sin. It is your responsibility to fight in the war. Do it well. Your brother is Dharmaraja. However, he is titled Yudhishthira. Do you know why? Just as you do, don’t you think he realizes Bhishma and Drona are your gurus? Bhishma is not only guru, but also grandfather. Don’t you think your brother Yudhishthira realizes that they are elders? And the others present are relatives? Why is he participating in the war then? He is not throwing down his weapons and saying that he would go beg for alms. Yudhi + sthira (firm in war)! He is one who recognized his duty, and so he stood firm on it. Yuddha (war) does not necessarily just mean killing everyone. It is to exercise one’s responsibility, regulating wrong-doings and encouraging righteous acts. This is the purpose of that war.

Bhishmacharya is even greater than him. Don’t you think he knows what dharma (righteous acts) are? Doesn’t he know that Duryodhana and others are committing a mistake? Doesn’t he know that Dhritarashtra is committing a mistake? Doesn’t he know that you are all good people? Doesn’t he know who I am? Yet, he is with the other side of the war? He is tied to dharma (righteous practice). He knows his responsibility. He took a vow when he was young. He said he would support and protect whoever is on the throne of Kuru. On the banks of river Ganga, he took a vow at a young age in the presence of his father, Shantanu. It was that he would never desire the kingdom. “I will give away the kingdom to whoever she [queen of Kuru dynasty] gives birth to. However, I will stand guard for the throne.” Because he took this vow, Dhritarashtra ended up taking the throne. Due to the weakness of Dhritarashtra, his son Duryodhana ended up ruling the kingdom. He made the vow. Hence, no matter who took the throne, whoever was ruling, he had to take their side despite their unjust reign. Yet, it’s against his duties to punish any righteous people. Hence, he said he will not hurt the Pandavas. He told Duryodhana that he would take care of the rest. Duryodhana was pleased with this. Why? It’s just those five Pandavas. There are so many of us, like Karna. We will take care of them. Take care of the rest of the army [Duryodhana said to Bhishmacharya]. Bhishmacharya knows dharma (righteous practice) and he knows his duty.

Arjuna! Don’t give up on your responsibilities. You should never become the reason for disturbing the order of the world. upahanyam imah prajah (these people would be ruined). If I don’t do my duty, this world will turn bad. Hence, I practice my responsibilities. Bhishma and others do too. Your brother also is practicing. What happened to you? In fact, you are not even as knowledgeable as your brother. Because your brother at least knows that one must do what ought to be done. However, you have the desire for kingdom, happiness, etc. In such a case, how can you abandon responsibility? That is not allowed. Orient towards responsibilities and move forward. Sri Krishna is taking Arjuna ahead, and all of us too. Let us also follow rules, practice responsibilities, and move ahead.

Vande Guru Paramparam (I bow to the lineage of teachers)

Jai Srimannarayana!

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