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1. Episode Title: Episode 93 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 93) - Why is the need for Karma Yoga?

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: The significance of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3 in understanding Karma Yoga. Defining Karma Yoga as transforming daily activities into a means of spiritual elevation. The unique human capacity for comprehension and the importance of learning spiritual principles. Three reasons for performing ordained duties: ease, safety, and preventing misguidance of others. The concept that even those qualified for Jnana Yoga should perform Karma Yoga, with examples from Krishna and King Janaka. The ultimate benefit of Karma Yoga: achieving liberation (moksha) and supreme bliss (niratisaya ananda). The importance of performing duties with proper knowledge and surrendering the actions to the Lord. The critical stage of spiritual progress in human life and the dangers of neglecting divine guidance at advanced stages. The role of divine and elder's guidance for human welfare and spiritual advancement.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 93, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, dharma, duty, action, spiritual elevation, human life, comprehension, ordained activities, ease, safety, misguidance, liberation, moksha, niratisaya ananda, supreme bliss, God realization, Bhagavath sakshatkara, Krishna, Arjuna, King Janaka, surrender, divine guidance, spiritual progress, consequences, arrogance, snakes and ladders, welfare

3. Main Content:

Jai Srimannarayana!

Priya Bhagavadbandhus (Dear devotees of the Lord),

Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita is an important chapter on how to leverage any activity as a ‘tool’. A tool here indicates a means or yoga (method), and the activity is called karma (activity). Transforming the activity we do as a tool that elevates us is called karma yoga (yoga of action). This is fitting for humans and is the reason why Bhagavan (Lord) tries to educate humans.

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SLOKA WORD -

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

SLOKA MEANING -

Again and again, I bow to Lord Rama, who removes all dangers, bestows all wealth, and is beloved by the world.

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He says, anuthishttanthi manavaha (humans follow), in verse 3.31. Why? For example, no one tries to teach a tree, as it cannot understand. No one tries to teach an animal as it also cannot comprehend. Only a human is capable of comprehension, hence an effort is made to teach. Not making an effort to learn, though being capable, is an offense.

Occasionally little kids grab a doll, decorate it, sing and play with it to pass time. Especially tiny tots do this when they buy such a toy. They do not expect a response as they are aware of it being a doll. On the other hand, as a human is not a lifeless being, we do expect a response from him. We expect a response only from a human but not from a doll. Despite being a human, if he does not respond then he is worse than a doll. Bhagavan (Lord) instructs in chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita, that one should not be that way. A human can utilize every karma (activity), every activity he does, to fulfill the purpose of his life. He can transform everything into a karma yoga (yoga of action) and get benefited from it.

There are a few tools available to transform karma (activity) into a yoga (method), jnana (knowledge) into a yoga (method), and prema (devotion) into a yoga (method). There are various yogas (methods), i.e., methods, to benefit from. One can leverage any of these. Everyone desires to gain more with minimal effort. In fact, one feels it is better if benefit accrues with no effort at all. This is a common weakness of human. A human is like a tool, he must work. He is a tool that possesses knowledge. That knowledge must be utilized to enable us to do our work [karma (activity)]. In simple terms, this is what Bhagavan (Lord) instructs in chapter 3.

Karma (activity) must be done as a yoga (method). Why? It means karma (activity) should be done. Work must be done, whatever is your duty. For Arjuna, his duty is to wage war. So, he must. Bhagavan (Lord) says, ‘One must do the work that one is appropriate for or that is designated for.’ He outlined a few reasons for this. What are they? He gave three reasons.

First - the body is habituated to do activity. The body is used to doing activity akin to how water flows down a slope. It is difficult to send water upwards. One must toil using a pump and a pipe. But you do not need to do anything to make it flow downward. Gravity ensures it flows down automatically. As a human body is made for activity, allowing it to do activity, keeps it suitable. [Bhagavan (Lord) says,] ‘Do it as it is easy.’

Second - doing ordained activities will not pose a threat. It is dangerous to do an unknown activity. If one, who does not know anything about chemistry, walks into a lab...thirsty...he’ll probably drink liquid from a random white bottle, as everything looks like water to him. If it is an acid bottle, he will lose his life! It is arduous to take up any unknown activity. For a human, doing karma (activity) is non-hazardous. Why? It is meant for the body. The body is made for the activity. Along its journey, it is natural to experience ups and downs occasionally. One must learn to deal with them. A boat when sailing in a river or an ocean will encounter large and small waves. It is natural for it to rock back and forth at that time. When navigating the boat, one must learn to prevent it from capsizing. Instead, if you let it drift, the boat might end up in a wrong destination. That should not happen! Therefore, there is no risk in doing karma (activity). One is it is easier, do it because we are used to it. Second is, do it because there is no risk.

In Bhagavad Gita, what was Arjuna’s intention? He thought, ‘Why should I work at all? I should give up on the war. We are used to surviving in the forest anyway, we’ll move there. No one will be troubled then.’ Such thinking is wrong! If doing the act is natural for you, then do it! He interpreted sitting in the forest as doing deep meditation. As he thought jnana (knowledge) is superior to karma (activity), he intended to do jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge). However, it is not for him! Even if one is qualified to do jnana (knowledge), he must do karma (activity). Bhagavan (Lord) establishes this in chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gita. He presents Himself as an example along with other eminent scholars. Initially He offers King Janaka as an example and later presents Himself as well.

name parthasthi kartavyam (Arjuna, I have no duty to perform)...

‘Why do I need to do it? What do I lose if I don’t do it? Yet I am doing it, isn’t it? Without ignoring karma (activity), I do what suits Me. No one is allowed to ignore it, even if they are qualified to do jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge)! It is better for him to do karma (activity) as well.’ One reason is that it is easier. Second, it is risk-free.

Third - others could be misguided by observing you. If you skip doing karma (activity), then others will think, ‘When he can skip it, so can I! Why should I do it?’ Such situations could arise from misleading others. Therefore, doing karma yoga (yoga of action) is preferable in view of your welfare and of others. In fact, one does not need to levitate towards the path of jnana (knowledge) or bhakti (devotion). If one does karma yoga (yoga of action), i.e. if an activity is done as prescribed, and transformed into a yoga (method)... that will yield an imperishable benefit of life i.e. moksha (liberation), liberation of soul from bondage of life and death, and niratisaya ananda (state of supreme bliss). Duties ordained to you are sufficient to make you attain such a state. That activity can be anything. For a cobbler, it could simply be stitching shoes. For a farmer, it could be tilling a piece of land. For a priest, it could be praying to a deity. For a student, it could be engaging in studies. For a family man, it could be doing family chores. Whatever is his ordained duty, engaging in its activities will directly lead one to a state of liberation. It will also unblock any hurdles along the way. For how long? It can guide until one attains Bhagavath sakshatkara (God realization). Therefore, even if one deserves or is qualified to do jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge), it is always beneficial for him to do karma yoga (yoga of action).

Some might imagine complexity when words like karma yoga (yoga of action) or jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge) are uttered. They simply mean ‘follow your duty’. Keep engaged in your work. In Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan (Lord) establishes in numerous ways that... Because work is ‘formed’ for a human he must be focused and engaged in it. However, one must learn the process of doing it, isn’t it? It isn’t right to do karma (activity) without proper knowledge. Doing it just for the sake of it, is also not right. It must be done after learning the proper way. How must it be done? Bhagavan (Lord) is the One who is the cause of our consciousness. He is the Owner, Master and the Revered One, who is Omnipotent. Therefore, depend on Him and surrender to Him. He is the One doing it and making it happen. While doing anything, offer it to Him. It is simply a minor shift in perspective. We should make the change in the way we feel [about what we do and who we are]. If this happens, it can lead you all the way!

For someone who has achieved 90% of the goal, striving for another 10% would see him attain it. One must not slip away now. This is what Bhagavan (Lord) wishes! If someone just began, i.e. at 1% or 2% or 3%, and slips, he would not lose much. He can make another attempt. The fact that we have this human life indicates that we rose from a lower state. We already moved past 1% or 2% and have probably made it to 96%. You probably remember the board game, ‘snakes & ladders’. In that, if you continually climb ladders, you gradually move up to spot 98, but there is a snake at 99. If you cross it, you are home at 100. However, spot 99 is where the snake is. Once you are at 97 or 98, your dice should not roll so that you land on 99! This is what we must do! Bhagavan (Lord) says, ‘To help you take that final step, I will accompany you!’ He offered that help to us. If that offer is not taken, who is at loss? We, right? No one bothers us, if we had not reached this stage with hard work. Elders are always there to help us. In fact, the purpose of all incarnations of God is to help us. There is no benefit to Him with this. He will lose nothing if you do not progress higher. Elders are similar. When they teach good learnings or share anything in scriptures... they do not do it with an expectation. Instead, they do it for our welfare. We must recognize that they strive a lot, for our benefit.

If you stop your karma (activity), thinking ‘What’s in it for me?’, then you will step onto spot 99 from 98. That will drop you all the way to spot 3! After reaching that high, He will help us not to slip down at the end. The goal that drove you until now, He tries to help you march on with that goal in sight. Any benefit accrued is yours, not His. Effort is yours as well, but you need support and guidance. He bestows this. This is what Bhagavan (Lord) advises in chapter 3. He says, ‘Don’t feel jealous! Do not reject my guidance, instead follow it with dedication. If you adhere to it, you will be able to overcome this last step. Recognize why you came this far. You will then be able to move ahead.’ If someone does not care for this and feels jealous, then he will revert to... one who slips while already down stays down. If he falls from top, he is no more. The injury is minor if someone slips while on ground. However, what if one falls from the top of a building? What about the one who falls from an airplane? How about the one who falls from a rocket? There is a difference, isn’t it? For the one who falls from rocket, even a speck of his ash would not be found. At least in an airplane fall, there is a chance of finding bones after he is gone. Once there was an airplane crash in Nepal or some other place. What happened then? At least a few bodies were found. What happens if they fall from even higher? For a soul, a human life is one which had risen higher than a rocket. A house fly or an insect or a germ is just a low-level life form. We worked very hard to get this [human] life. If we now strive to move further ahead, all our effort until now will turn fruitful. This is the essence of Bhagavan’s (Lord's) saying. He wants to reveal the state someone drops to, if they get arrogant and don’t heed this... by thinking, ‘Why should I care for this! I will make my own effort.’ Therefore, starting from chapter 3, verse 33, He clarifies what loss such people will experience. Let us learn this and take advantage of our life and opportunity here.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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