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1. Episode Title: Episode 98 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Episode 98)

2. Topics & Tags:

TOPICS: Understanding and overcoming challenges in human life through Bhagavad Gita's teachings. The impact of \*prakruthi\* (nature) on the body and soul and how to navigate it. Identifying the root causes of undesired behaviors and deviations from righteous conduct. The Mahabharata story of Indra, Agni Deva, Arjuna, and the burning of the Kha:ndava Forest, illustrating the unalterable nature of divine order. Krishna's explanation of why senses and beings revert to their original nature despite attempts to change them.

TAGS: HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami, Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3, Episode 98, Kha:ndava Dahanam, \*prakruthi\*, nature, human challenges, soul, body, undesired behavior, instincts, Indra, Agni Deva, Arjuna, Krishna, Mahabharata, \*ra:jasu:ya yajna\*, \*a:ma do:sha\*, indigestion, Gandivam, Devadattam, Panchajanyam, Nandaghosham, divine order, senses, \*nigrahah kim karishyathi\*, \*prakruthim ya:nthi bhu:tha:ni\*, self-control, spiritual guidance, dharma.

3. Main Content:

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

The aim of Bhagavad Gita is to teach how to understand various challenges faced in human life. How to come up with suitable solutions and implement or practice them. In addition, the goal of Bhagavad Gita is also to educate a human of the activities he must do to ensure the soul on departing does not take another birth. While we are alive in this body, we must recognize the problems or challenges caused by the things or people or Nature around us. We must also understand their nature, why we experience them and how to overcome these.

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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 -

I repeatedly bow to Sri Rama, who removes all calamities, bestows all wealth, and is the delight of the world.

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Krishna’s aim is to share this knowledge in the first six chapters [of Bhagavad Gita]. If we are able to understand that and meticulously follow, then we have a chance to attain Him. The aim is to share how a body that is made up of components of \*prakruthi\* (nature) itself, and the soul within, navigate the impact of \*prakruthi\* (nature) on them. We are aware of the impact to some extent already. We know what we should avoid. Yet, we lean in to that undesired behavior. Sometimes we do it either knowingly or unknowingly.

We know we should not chew on our nails. It is unhealthy. We know there is dirt underneath them. Whether dirt exists or not, the nails or even our hair is a waste extract of the body and bones. We know this is a wrong practice. Whether one is literate or not, youth or adult, as soon as he sits to relax, he begins to chew his nails, and makes it look fashionable. Do they not know it is wrong? They do. Why is it happening then? Why do they resort to chewing? Even our hair is a waste extract from the body. We know it should not be played with. Hands must be washed immediately if you do. At least, the one that believes it is dirty, will wash his hands. However, the hand keeps making its way to the mouth automatically. Some, even while doing divine activities, like taking \*thi:rtham\* (holy water) or doing \*a:chamanam\* (ritual sipping of water), they take a sip and wipe the wet hand on their head. They take another sip, another wipe. Some even guide them to do that! They say, “It is very pious. Wipe it on your head, do it”. In reality, it is not right. Yet it has become a habit. Unfortunately, it has become our nature due to the instinct from within. Why is this happening?

There are many such deviations happening in varied forms. We sit to be idle and meditate. Though we know it is not right, we slowly start to pluck grass next to us and make a heap. We see heaps of grass after people sit in one place. We know we should not vandalize others’ walls with graffiti. In fact, there is no need to write on walls. However, some cannot control themselves. As soon as they sit by the wall, they scribble on it with a pen. If they see a white surface anywhere, they scribble ‘garbage’ on it. We observe this. It is due to the instinct coming from within. Krishna is revealing the root cause for this, in chapter 3. “This is due to the effect of \*prakruthi\* (nature). You assume you can manage its impact by yourself”.

`nigrahah kim karishyathi … prakruthim ya:nthi bhu:tha:ni` (what will restraint do? … beings follow their nature)

\*Prakruthi\* (nature), Nature that is within, stimulates one continuously. One operates within the confines of \*prakruthi\* (nature). It moves him with a certain force and speed. Even if one resolves to be unaffected, he can only maintain that for a short period of time. How long can he hold off?

There is a short story in Mahabharata. Indra, the leader of \*de:vatha:s\* (deities), decided to cultivate the Kha:ndava Forest. That forest provided amazing, flat and fertile land. He brought a good, growable set of seedlings there and decided to plant them. Though he decided on a specific day by himself, Indra checked with his \*guru\* (teacher) if the chosen day is auspicious and if he should plant the seedlings on that day. It would have been better if he had carried on without checking with his \*guru\* (teacher). Now that he asked, the \*guru\* (teacher) began checking \*panchamgam\* (Vedic calendar). He said, “That day and time are not auspicious. It doesn’t bode well for you.” Indra questioned, “Why is it not good? The planets are mis-aligned, right? Those very planets are my servants anyway. They are obligated to follow my decree. Therefore, let’s position those specific planets such that the day and time turns auspicious for me!” Then he ensured the planets were positioned in exactly the place he wanted them to be. You must have observed the deities of \*nava grahas\* (nine planets). They face away from one another. When one faces one side, others turn a different direction. He felt if they face each other, they might signal one another and alter their positions, which would undermine the initiative he undertook. So, he thought to position them in such a way that they cannot influence one another. He ordered accordingly. His \*guru\* (teacher) had already conveyed that the day does not bode well for him. Still, he felt they are his planets and are his employees. He moved them as he felt they must listen to him. He planted the seedlings on the designated day. He did a ‘clean & green’ project. Then Indra ordered the \*de:vatha\* (deity) of rain for rainfall, which he obliged. Eventually the plants grew and became an abundantly full forest. Everywhere there were lush trees with honey-laden flowers and fruits. Several creatures made it their home. Many plants, animals, birds and a variety of snakes began to survive there. They all found shelter in that forest.

One day, Yudhishtir [the eldest Pandava brother] performed \*ra:jasu:ya yajna\* (royal consecration ritual). Agni Deva (the Fire deity), flaming in the \*yajna pit\* (ritual fire pit), should be able to digest any quantity of \*ghee\* (clarified butter) offered to him. He could not digest it all and faced a situation of \*a:ma do:sha\* (indigestion). He thus began to suffer. Generally the \*yajna pit\* (ritual fire pit) is used to do this \*ho:mam\* (fire ritual), the \*yajna\* (ritual). A mixture called \*sa:kalyam\* (mixture of ingredients) made of several ingredients like sesame, rice other seeds and substances is prepared. It is mixed with \*ghee\* (clarified butter) and offered. They must all be incinerated. That is called \*pachanam\* (digested). Any offering to Agni Deva (the Fire deity) must become \*pachanam\* (digested). None should be left in the end. However, in recent times, priests simply fill up the pit in the end by dumping everything into it. Then they claim that the \*pu:rna:huthi\* (final offering) is complete and extinguish the fire. By chanting the \*pruthvi: sa:nthi manthra\* (earth peace mantra), they douse the fire entirely. However, some substances offered are still raw and did not incinerate. They did not become \*pachanam\* (digested), ‘digested’ by fire. This leads to indigestion for Agni Deva (the Fire deity). What happens if consumed food does not get digested? It leads to indigestion, doesn’t it? Similarly, that day of \*ra:jasu:ya yajna\* (royal consecration ritual) caused indigestion to Agni Deva (the Fire deity).

What should be done now? He consulted many. Ashwini De:vathas (Ashwini deities) are the consulting doctors for \*de:vathas\* (deities). He enquired with them. To help with digestion, they advised him to burn something that is thickly grown and lush. Agni Deva (the Fire deity) then scanned everywhere for such an abundantly grown area. He came across that very Kha:ndava Vanam (Kha:ndava Forest). It was endowed with amazing plants and trees that have medicinal qualities about them. That is what he wanted as well. Therefore, he needed to set that Kha:ndava Vanam (Kha:ndava Forest) ablaze. However, it was planted by Indra who happened to be his boss. That forest was seeded by Indra. If Agni Deva (the Fire deity) burns it down, he will be ousted from his job. What must he do now? He wanted to be a good employee, yet Agni Deva (the Fire deity) was unable to bear the pain of indigestion. After thinking deeply, he came up with an idea. Since Arjuna was born with Indra’s grace, he decided to approach Arjuna for help. He asked, ‘Hey Arjuna! I have severe indigestion. Do you have any idea to help?’ Arjuna said, ‘What can I do for you? What do you need?’ Agni said, ‘I need to consume Kha:ndava Vanam (Kha:ndava Forest), however it belongs to Indra. It is risky for me to do it, unless you offer protection for me.’ As Krishna is his brother-in-law and knowing he has His support, Arjuna said, “You will have no problem. Come on, go ahead.” Agni asked, “What if Indra tries to attack me later?” Arjuna responded, “I will take care of it. Even if he orders the rain \*de:vatha\* (deity) to drench the area, I‘ll build a canopy with arrows and ensure not a single drop affects you. Just go ahead!” In fact, Arjuna fulfilled his vow to Agni. Indra got upset and ordered a big downpour, yet the forest got burned anyway. Agni was extremely thrilled afterwards and presented an amazing bow called Gandivam and a chariot to Arjuna. He gifted a conch to Krishna for aiding Arjuna. The conch he gave to Arjuna is called Devadattam. Krishna’s conch is called Panchajanyam and the chariot is called Nandaghosham. He gave all these to them.

Now Indra was feeling tense. He felt, “Though I arranged for perfect planetary alignment, why did the forest get burned?” He went and asked his \*Guru\* (teacher) the same. Why should he consult \*Guru\* (teacher) now, when he ignored the same \*guru’s\* (teacher's) advice earlier? Still, he went and sought clarification. Even his \*Guru\* (teacher) was surprised. “You did align the planets, however, what happened?” Then, with divine vision, his \*Guru\* (teacher) saw the reason. Indra did ask the planets to assume appropriate places. However, shortly before the said auspicious time, the planets don’t face each other and stand in their own directions. Apparently, the planet \*Sani\* (Saturn), has a limp. How long can he stand? If it was in his designated place, he would have had some support. But this was not his place and he was hurriedly placed here. He slipped and fell on the planet behind him, who in turn fell on the planet behind him, and this cascaded to other planets. Exactly at the time Indra was planting the seedlings, all the planets moved and fell into their original positions where they were supposed to be to begin with. Indra finished planting the way he wanted to at that ‘auspicious’ time. Then the planets quickly re-adjusted and came back to their places that Indra had assigned. Later Indra came to check on the planets. They were all holding their assigned positions. They all stood up to show him and Indra thought the task was accomplished.

Visualizing this, the \*Guru\* (teacher) said, ‘Hey Indra! No one can alter the natural order of things. You assumed they are your servants. No! You and they are all the subjects of the Supreme \*Bhagava:n\* (Lord). \*Bhagava:n\* (Lord) set this order. You should only become the enabler of that order. You are just an executive officer but not a policy maker. You thought you are the policy maker, which is incorrect! Your responsibility is to protect the order with the authority given to you using the suggested tools. You should not deviate.

`prakruthim ya:nthi bhu:tha:ni` (beings move according to the given direction)

`nigrahah kim karishyathi` (it’s impossible to alter it in anyway my friend)

His \*guru\* (teacher) advises him accordingly as per the anecdote. Krishna was discussing the same in Bhagavad Gita 3.33. [Arjuna asked] Why do the senses have their own nature? Though we try to change them, why do they revert to their original nature, like a dog’s twisted tail? Krishna offers to answer this quandary by moving us ahead into 3.34. Let’s learn.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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