

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ONE TO SEVEN

The whole subject matter of *Vedānta* is covered by the statement, '*tat tvam asi.*' The word *tvam* refers to the *jīva*, the individual; and *tat* denotes *Īśvara*, the Lord. And there is an equation between them, which is revealed by the word *asi*. An equation does not reveal something that is going to happen later. It reveals a fact that exists now. The *śāstra* does not say, 'You will become that—*tat tvam bhaviṣyasi.*' It says 'You are that—*tat tvam asi.*' This is a very important thing to note.

Once I say, '*tvam asi—you are,*' an expectation is created as to, 'What am I?' The speaker has something to convey; something is expected. This expectation, *ākāṅkṣā*, created by the statement, '*tvam asi*' is fulfilled by the word '*tat.*' Since the word '*tat*' is a pronoun, it refers to something already explained in the *śāstra*. *Tat-pada* was presented as the existent reality, *sat-vastu*, which is the cause of creation.

Since *tat-pada* stands for *Īśvara*, in order to understand the equation, *tat tvam asi*, the *tvam-pada* has to be understood properly. An equation means that there are two things that are equated. The necessity for an equation is that one side of the equation seems to be different from the other. If one is totally different from the other, there is no equation. Only if they are the same, but not recognised, can there be an equation.

If a chair is told, 'You are wood, that of which the whole wooden world is made,' the chair has to understand that statement. Naturally, it has to die to the notion that it is just a chair. It has to acknowledge that it is wood in the form of chair and it can be in the form of a table too. The chair has to recognise this and so, it is given an equation. When there is a possibility of an equation, it means that, there is an already existent fact.

Here too, this equation states an existent fact. The *jīva* happens to be *Īśvara*. To see this, what the *tvam-pada* implies must be understood and the nature of *Īśvara* must be understood. Then the equation can be understood. In the process of understanding the nature of the *tvam-pada*, and the nature of the *tat-pada*, the meaning of the equation is discovered. As a result of this inquiry, the discovery takes place that 'I am that.'

### INQUIRY INTO TVAM-PADA

#### SUMMARY OF FIRST SIX CHAPTERS

In the first six chapters of the *Gītā*, the subject matter is predominantly *ātmā*, the *jīva*. *Arjuna* was confused, and one who is subject to confusion is a *jīva*, an individual; this is the meaning of the word *tvam*. This first part of the *Gītā* is inquiry into the *tvam-pada*.

**CHAPTER ONE**

In the first chapter it is shown that *Arjuna* is confused. This means that a *jīva* is subject to confusion. *Arjuna* is not an ordinary *jīva*; he was born a prince, with the blessing of *Indra*. And he was a man of great character and valour. In his day, he was invincible. *Bhīṣma* waited for *Arjuna* to fight and *Droṇa*, his teacher, was anxious to see him fight. He was also accomplished in music and dance. *Arjuna*, who was so highly accomplished, found himself in a state of depression. What does this mean? An individual *jīva*, no matter what his accomplishments may be, is subject to sorrow. This was presented in the very first chapter.

**CHAPTER TWO**

Next was *Arjuna's* ascertainment of what is to be pursued in life, *puruṣārthanīścaya*. He found himself in a no-win situation, exactly the situation where one can discover what one really wants. If he is victorious, he loses those that are dear to him. If he does not gain victory, he is still a loser. In this unenviable situation is born his desire to solve the problem of sorrow in a way that requires no further solution. *Arjuna* addresses the human problem. He did not address his topical problem but saw a fundamental problem of the human heart that has to be addressed. To do so, in the situation he was in, he needed support. And *Kṛṣṇa* was the greatest support possible. Whenever you address such a fundamental problem, you cannot do it alone. You require help. The subject matter here being what it is, you require not just support, but a teacher. *Arjuna* finds in *Kṛṣṇa* a teacher.

The discovery of the human problem is the subject matter of *tvaṃ-pada*, the meaning of 'you.' And seeking a solution is done by *jīva*, the *tvaṃ-pada-ārtha*, as is finding a teacher and asking for this knowledge. *Arjuna* discovered the teacher in *Kṛṣṇa* and surrendering to him asked him to teach—*śiṣyaste'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam*.<sup>1</sup> *Kṛṣṇa* accepts *Arjuna* as a student and teaches him. As though he was waiting for such a situation, he teaches him immediately. He starts with the statement, *aśocyān anvaśocastvam*—you are grieving over that which does not deserve grief.<sup>2</sup> And then he talks about *ātmā* and how it is not subject to death at all. He says, 'Your conclusion about the *ātmā* is not true; it is not born nor does it ever die, it was never non-existent nor will it ever not be there; it is unborn, eternal, etc.,—*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit, nāyaṃ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ, ajaḥ nityaḥ* etc.'<sup>3</sup> He talks about *ātmā* in entirety right in the second chapter. This is the analysis of the *tvaṃ-pada*. Then he shifts to the exposition of the *tat-pada*. This is the whole style of teaching. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 2-7

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 2-11

<sup>3</sup> *Gītā* – 2-20

exposition of the *tat-pada* comes and goes, but the predominant topic in the second chapter is the analysis of the *tvam-pada*. Then he gives *Arjuna* a variety of arguments why he must fight and how *karma* is not opposed to knowledge if it is backed by proper attitude.

### CHAPTER THREE

In the third chapter, *Arjuna* wanted to know whether to pursue self-knowledge or not. In response to *Arjuna's* question at the end of the second chapter, *Kṛṣṇa* had described a wise man as one who is happy with himself, without requiring any addition or subtraction. *Arjuna's* thinking now is that he should pursue this wisdom. Since there was a lifestyle called *sannyāsa* meant exclusively for this pursuit, *Arjuna* considered that as a possibility for himself. Yet *Kṛṣṇa* was encouraging him to fight this battle. So, he asked *Kṛṣṇa*, which was better, a life of *karma* or a life of renunciation in pursuit of self-knowledge. 'You seem to praise both of them; so, please teach me again clearly. They must have different results because one seems to be a life of activity and the other, a life of non-activity. Both cannot have the same result. Action will produce a result, which will necessarily bind me. That means I will continue in *saṃsāra*. But *sannyāsa* is supposed to deliver me from *saṃsāra*. How can both be the same?' So, *Arjuna* wanted to know in unequivocal terms what the means for *mokṣa* is—a life of *karma-yoga* or a life of *sannyāsa*, and for whom this life of *karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa* is, for *Īśvara* or for the *jīva* (*tvam-pada-artha*)?

There is also a lot said about in the third chapter but it was all meant for the *jīva* with reference to *karma-yoga*. That is the predominant topic. Later, in the fourth chapter, he talked about knowledge again. Having pointed out that it is not *karma* that is a binding factor, but a lack of attitude and knowledge, he then talked about real *sannyāsa*.

### CHAPTER FOUR

*Sannyāsa* as a lifestyle is one thing but total renunciation, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* by knowledge is quite another. In the fourth chapter, *Kṛṣṇa* unfolded this total renunciation of action. This is only possible through knowledge. And for whom is this? It is for the *jīva*. The Lord says, 'I am always performing actions and still I do not perform any action; the system of the four *varṇas* was created by Me; understand Me to be the creator of that system and yet as someone who is not a doer at all—*cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ tasya kartāram api māṃ viddhi akartāram avyayam*.'<sup>1</sup> Even though he is very active, the Lord is released from *karma* because of his knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is required, not for *Īśvara* but for the *jīva*.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 4-13

The one who is able to see actionlessness, which is the nature of *ātmā* in all activity, and the one who sees action in inactivity, he alone sees; he is the most knowledgeable among men; he is the successful one who has accomplished all that has to be accomplished—*karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyēt akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karmakṛt*.<sup>1</sup> If you think you are a *kartā*, you perform action, even if it is refusal to act. It is the doership that is the kingpin of all actions. Therefore, the one who is able to see the absence of doership in the midst of all activities is a real *sannyāsī*.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

After talking about renunciation of action through knowledge, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*, he talked about *sannyāsa* again. He is to be known as always a *sannyāsī* who has neither aversion nor longing—*jñeyah sa nitya-sannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati*;<sup>2</sup> the one who sees knowledge and *karma-yoga* as the same, he sees—*ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*; *sannyāsa* is very difficult to attain without *karma-yoga* but the one who is capable of reasoning and is committed to a life of *karma-yoga* gains *Brahman* quickly—*sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ yoga-yukto munirbrahma na cireṇa adhigacchati*.<sup>3</sup> By these words *Bhagavān* shows the nature of knowledge in the fifth chapter. Gaining this knowledge one becomes a *sannyāsī* and in order to gain it, one takes to a life of *sannyāsa*. The nature of the knowledge was again pointed out by the word *sannyāsa*; so, the chapter was called *sannyāsa-yoga*. Again for whom was this pointed out? For the *jīva*. There, *tvam-pada-artha*, the nature of *ātmā*, was talked about only for the *jīva*. Those whose intellect is awake to that *Brahman*, for whom the self is that, who are committed only to that, for whom the ultimate end is that, whose impurities have been destroyed by knowledge, they attain a state from, which there is no return—*tadbuddhayaḥ tadātmānaḥ tanniṣṭhāḥ tatparāyaṇāḥ gacchanti apunarāvṛttiṃ jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ*.<sup>4</sup> All these are the nature of *pratyagātmā*.

#### CHAPTER SIX

In the sixth chapter, the main topic is contemplation, *dhyāna*. There *Kṛṣṇa* tells how to sit, what exactly should one do, and what kind of a lifestyle should one live, etc. He talks about making the mind abide in oneself, and not think of anything else—*ātmasaṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet*.<sup>5</sup> He also says that for one who is

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 4-18

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 5-3

<sup>3</sup> *Gītā* – 5-6

<sup>4</sup> *Gītā* – 5-17

<sup>5</sup> *Gītā* – 6-25

moderate in eating and other activities, who is moderate in effort concerning his duties, his sleeping and waking hours, meditation becomes the destroyer of sorrow—*yukta-āhāra-vihārasya, yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu, yukta-svapna-avabodhasya, yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, he talked about what is necessary for a contemplative life including the emotional life and attitudes that constitute *yoga*, a mature lifestyle. It ended with *dhyāna*, contemplation on *pratyagātmā*. In the contemplation, even though he mainly talked about *pratyagātmā*, he also brought in *Īśvara* when he said, *mat-cittaḥ yukta āsīta matparaḥ*, etc.

In these six chapters the *jīva* is presented as the seeker, the one who has to undergo changes, etc. And it is the *jīva* whose *ātmā* was presented there, mainly. This is called *tvam-pada-vicāra*, inquiry into the *tvam-pada*.

Then, in the seventh chapter you find the whole thing is different because the inquiry into the *tat-pada* begins. The whole approach is different here because *Īśvara* is discussed primarily.

## INQUIRY INTO TAT-PADA BEGINS

### A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN

Here we shall briefly see the meaning of each verse of the seventh chapter.

#### VERSE ONE

The very first verse begins with—*mayyāsaktamanāḥ*... *Mayi* means in Me, *Īśvara*; so, he brings in *Īśvara* right in the first verse. He says, ‘O! *Pārtha*, please listen to the way in, which you will know Me, *Īśvara*, totally, without any doubt, by taking to *yoga*, and having surrendered to Me with a mind committed to Me.’

#### VERSE TWO

In the second verse he says, ‘I am going to tell you this knowledge along with immediate knowledge. Whatever indirect, *parokṣa*, knowledge you have, because *Īśvara* is involved here, I am going to convert it into *aparokṣa*, immediate knowledge.’ We saw how *Kṛṣṇa* presents this knowledge in *parokṣa* form and also in an *aparokṣa* form. Once this is known, there is nothing else to be known.

#### VERSE THREE

Then in the third verse, to encourage *Arjuna*, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘One among millions really seeks Me and among those, only one knows Me in reality, *tattvataḥ*.’

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 6-17

**VERSE FOUR**

In the fourth verse he began talking about what he had promised. He divides everything into *parā* and *aparā prakṛti* and begins with *aparā* describing the eight fold *prakṛti*.

**VERSES FIVE AND SIX**

In the fifth verse he talks about *aparā prakṛti*. And he points out the *parā* in the second half of this verse and in the first half of the sixth verse. *Parā prakṛti* is consciousness, the very meaning of the word *jīva*, and is not a mere thought. That is indeed the *yonī*, the cause for everything. I am the *caitanya-ātmā*, which is the cause for everything—from, which everything comes, unto, which everything goes, by, which everything is sustained.

**VERSE SEVEN**

In the seventh verse he says there is nothing superior to Me and there is nothing besides Me. There is no cause for Me and in fact, there is nothing that is separate from Me. As various beads are held by one string, in Me alone is woven the great canvas of this world. Then he says I am the cause of all of them, the truth of everything, *Īśvara* is understood as *parokṣa*.

**VERSE EIGHT**

In the eighth verse he starts by saying I am the taste in the water and then goes on in detail talking about name and form and the very content of it. I am the material cause of everything. A thing is there only because of Me; I am the very essence of everything. All glories belong to Me. In the sun and moon, I am the light that is there. I am the essence of all the Vedas, which is reduced to *Om*. In space I am the sound and in a human being, his strength.

**VERSE NINE**

In the ninth verse he continues—I am the heat in the fire, the sweet fragrance in the earth. I am the very life breath of all people. I am the one because of whom a great ascetic is called an ascetic, because I am in the form of the result of all his austerities and remain as his very austerity.

**VERSE TEN**

In the tenth verse he says, I am the seed from, which all living beings come into being, the wisdom in the wise and the brilliance in the brilliant.

**VERSE ELEVEN**

In the eleventh verse, he says, I am the strength in the strong not sullied by his own personal problems of desire, likes and dislikes. Even your desire is Me as long as it is in conformity with *dharma* because *dharma* is Me.

**VERSE TWELVE**

In the twelfth verse he continues to talk about the indirect knowledge of *Īśvara*. All the *bhāvas*, beings born of *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa* or *tamo-guṇa* are born only of Me. Or here, the word *bhāvas* could mean the various thought processes born of *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*; they exist in Me, but I do not exist in them. I do not depend on them but they depend entirely upon Me. I give them their very existence. And whatever features they have are all Me; they are all My glory.

**VERSE THIRTEEN**

In verse thirteen he says that even when this is so, people do not recognise Me because they are deluded by three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and their products.

**VERSE FOURTEEN**

And, therefore, in verse fourteen he says, ‘This *māyā*, which is composed of the three *guṇas*, and, which belongs to Me, is very difficult to cross, *Arjuna*. *Arjuna*, you have to go to the *māyāvī*, the magician.’ When you are under the spell of magic, you cannot see the trick; so, you have to stand by the side of the magician and watch how he does it. Then you find that there is no magic at all. And, therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘I am that *māyāvī*, the magician. You come to My side, directly seek Me. Under the spell of My magic, you are seeking this and that. In fact, under the spell of magic, you are a seeker. If you know the magic, you find there is no seeking. Therefore, those who seek Me directly cross over this *māyā*.’

**VERSE FIFTEEN**

Why do people not seek you then? *Kṛṣṇa* answers this question in verse fifteen. They do not seek Me because they are given to life-styles that do not even allow them to think. There are even devotees who do not come to Me. Although they are devotees, they do not seek Me directly. Only very few seek.

**VERSE SIXTEEN**

In the next verse, he describes the four types of devotees. One is a devotee in distress, an *ārta*. Another is a devotee both when he is in distress and when he wants

something. For the sake of accomplishing that end, he seeks My help. He is an *arthārthī*. Then there is the *jijñāsu*. He is interested in the very truth of *Īśvara*; he wants to know what *Īśvara* is. Then of course, the *jñānī* is also a devotee. A successful *jijñāsu* is a *jñānī*.

#### VERSE EIGHTEEN

All of them are My devotees and all of them are great, but still, the *jñānī* is Myself, he says in the eighteenth verse. He becomes one with Me. Now, is this indirect or direct knowledge? Here is where he converts it to direct knowledge, *aparokṣa-jñāna*. He went on saying, I am the strength in the strong, etc., and now, he says, you can say the same thing. You are everything. That is what he meant by *vijñāna* in the second verse of this chapter.

#### VERSE NINETEEN

In verse nineteen he says that after a number of births, the one who has knowledge gains Me and such a *mahātmā* is not easy to find. ‘After a number of births’ means that when he comes to study *Gītā*, a number of births have already been taken care of. But this does not mean that he gains knowledge only after a number of births after coming to *Gītā*.

#### VERSE TWENTY

In verse twenty, *Kṛṣṇa* says people go to other *devatās* because they do not recognise Me at all. These are *ārtas* or *arthārthīs*. And I establish their *śraddhā*.

#### VERSES TWENTY-ONE AND TWENTY-TWO

Here he says such a person, endowed with *śraddhā* gains the result of his *karma* as ordained by Me.

#### VERSE TWENTY-THREE

In verse twenty-three he comes to the point. All the results are *antavat*, limited and finite. If devotees are only invoking the deities, they get very limited results. But if they seek Me, they become Me.

#### VERSE TWENTY-FOUR

Not knowing My real nature, they look upon Me only as *Kṛṣṇa* in a given form—as though I am another person who has come down from heaven.



#### VERSE TWENTY-FIVE AND TWENTY-SIX

Then in verses twenty-five and twenty-six he talks about his nature, which is found in all the *Upaniṣads*. I know everything and I am not subject to time. People do not recognise Me, whereas I know all that has gone before and all that comes later. Why do they not recognise *Īśvara*?

#### VERSE TWENTY-SEVEN

In verse twenty-seven he says even as they are born they are deluded. They are born with *icchā* (*rāga*) and *dveṣa*, because of, which there is *dvandva*, the opposites, and these opposites cause delusion. The delusion does not allow them to see properly. Even the knowledge of the external world is vitiated by these *rāga-dveṣas* and things are not understood as they are. Then what is the chance of their recognising Me?

#### VERSES TWENTY-EIGHT AND TWENTY-NINE

But those in whom these *rāga-dveṣas* and *pāpas* are neutralised by *puṇya-karma*, who are freed from the spell of these *dvandvas*, seek Me—for release from old age and death. They come to know *Brahman*, which is *pratyagātmā*. And they also understand what is *karma*, etc. So, they have no more problems.

#### VERSE THIRTY

How do they come to know Me? He says this in the last verse. They know Me not only as the truth of themselves but as the entire creation, all that is centred on the world, the *devatās* and the rituals. They know Me, even at the time of death, as the efficient and material cause, the one from whom nothing is separate.

Those who know Me in this particular form are not separate from Me. This is *vijñāna*.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER EIGHT

This chapter is called the *akṣara-brahma-yoga* or *tāraka-brahma-yoga*. *Tāraka-mantra* is that which helps you cross over the *saṃsāra*. *Om* is a *tāraka-mantra*. Another *tāraka-mantra* is ‘*rāma, rāma.*’ Here, *Om* is the *tāraka-mantra* and therefore, *oṃkāra-upāsana* is talked about in great detail.

The predominant topic of this chapter is *upāsana*. In the sixth chapter the topic was *nididhyāsana* as an *aṅga* of *śravaṇa*. Whereas, here real *upāsana*, *mānasa-karma* is talked about. ‘*Upāsana*’ means *saguṇa-brahma-viṣaya-mānasa-vyāpāra*. The words *upāsana*, *dhyāna*, *vidyā* and *jñāna* all mean the same.

The whole teaching, ‘*ayam ātmā brahma*’ is *śabda*, i.e., the whole thing is conveyed by words alone. Other means of knowledge such as direct perception and inference have no scope here at all. The words do their job by knocking off the ignorance. Some say that reality cannot be revealed through words. That is not true. In fact through words alone can the reality be revealed. Therefore, the only *pramāṇa* for self-knowledge is *śabda-pramāṇa*, words of the *śāstra*. *Dhyāna* prepares the person for the knowledge. Therefore, it is indirectly useful—*ārāt upakāraka*. If this is so, and if any *upāsana* is a *karma*, a *mānasa-karma*, then why is it placed here in the middle of the *Gītā* and also in the *Upaniṣads* and not in the *karma-kāṇḍa*? Why is it that all the varieties of *upāsanas* discussed in the *śāstra* are often found in various *Upaniṣads*? This is the question we have to answer now.

This is because between *karma* and *jñāna* there is a connection. *Karma* is indirectly useful because it helps in preparing the person for *jñāna*. The *kāyika-karmas* in the form of *nitya-karmas* and *naimittika-karmas* are useful in giving *citta-śuddhi* when done with the right attitude and is thus a *bahiraṅga-sādhana*. *Upāsana* is an *antaraṅga-sādhana* and it gives an absorption of the mind, *citta-naiścalya*, which is necessary for removing all the *pratibandhakas*, obstacles that prevent one from owning up this knowledge. And *citta-naiścalya* is gained through *upāsanas*. Therefore, they are relevant here in *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. Moreover, knowledge can take place only in the mind. In that way also these *upāsanas* and knowledge have a common factor—*mānasatva*. That is another reason why these are placed in the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*.

*Ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*, *Brahman*. The *jīva* does not know this fact. That means there is ignorance, which is the first *pratibandhaka* towards this knowledge and is called *āvaraṇa*. And to eliminate this *pratibandhaka*, one requires *pramāṇa*, means of knowledge—the *vedānta-śāstra*. The knowledge that I am *Brahman* will take care of the ignorance once it is understood. But to understand this fact about oneself, the

mind has to be ready. If the mind is not ready, this *āvaraṇa* does not go away even after exposure to the *pramāṇa* called *Vedānta*. Then one has to conclude that there are other *pratibandhakas*.

Therefore, we say that preparedness is required and that involves the removal of the other *pratibandhakas*. They are divided into two. One is *mala* and the other is *vikṣepa*. *Mala* means impurity and that is nothing but *rāga-dveṣas*. So, for the sake of removal of these impurities one has to do *karma*, both *kāyika* and *vācika* with the attitude of *karma-yoga* as we have seen before—*mala-nivṛttyarthaṃ karma*. *Vikṣepa* means restlessness or non-abidance of the mind. And for the removal of *vikṣepa*, *upāsana* is the means. This *upāsana* is in the form of *japa*, visualisation, etc. The various *upāsanas* prescribed by the *śāstra* are meant for creating a mind that is steady, and abiding. Taking the cue from this, even modern psychology uses various techniques of meditation and visualisation as forms of therapy to calm down the mind. A person may be free of conflicts, may live a life of *dharma*, and may have a right attitude; yet, he can have *vikṣepa*, because there is an unconscious part of the mind, which throws up these disturbances.

For this *vikṣepa-nivṛtti* we require the various types of *upāsanas*, such as *saguṇa-brahma-dhyāna*, *ahaṅgraha-upāsana*, *sampat-upāsana*, etc. Therefore, for *vikṣepa-nivṛtti* and for gaining a steadiness of mind, *citta-naiścalya*, *upāsana* is advised. Even though meditation is a *karma*, because it is a mental *karma*, it is relevant in this area where knowledge is discussed. The knowledge of *Īśvara*, *saguṇa-brahma*, has been talked about already in the seventh chapter and also will be addressed later in the tenth chapter. Thus it is very relevant to talk about meditation. Because all meditation is only with *saguṇa-brahma* as the object for the meditation, *saguṇa-brahma-viśaya-jñāna* is necessary for meditation. Therefore, the discussion on *upāsana* is relevant in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*.

There are many different types of *upāsanas* with different *upāsya-devatās* or *iṣṭa-devatās*. This is because each person has his or her own unique *saṃskāras* that make it easy for the person to relate to a particular *iṣṭa-devatā*. Because of the uniqueness of these *saṃskāras* there are varieties of *upāsanas* discussed by the *śāstra* and there are different types of results for them. But if a *mumukṣu* has no interest in the result, i.e., *adrṣṭa-phala*, in terms of going to *brahma-loka*, etc., then *citta-naiścalya* alone is the *drṣṭa-phala* that he gains through these *upāsanas*.

Even if he is interested in going to *brahma-loka*, when he reaches *brahma-loka* through these *upāsanas*, there, being taught by Brahmaji, he gains *ātmā-jñāna* and this is called *krama-mukti*. But it is very difficult to reach *brahma-loka*. Within *saṃsāra*, if there is the highest *karma-phala* that one can gain beyond, which there is nothing, that is gaining *brahma-loka*. This *brahma-loka-prāpti* is through *upāsana*. And there, if you have a special *puṇya* then you will be taught by Brahmaji and gain the knowledge

that '*ahaṃ brahma asmi*—I am *Brahman*' and you will gain *mokṣa*. Otherwise you have to be born again on this earth.

Therefore, the *upāsanas* are *āntaraṅga-sādhana*s for this knowledge in that they give the *citta-naiścalya* needed for *nididhyāsana*, which is necessary for assimilating this knowledge. Therefore, they are mentioned here in this chapter. This chapter also talks about the results of the *upāsanas* done for the sake of results other than *mokṣa*. And the chapter ends by stating the two *mārgas* or *gatis* the *jīvas* take after death.

## CHAPTER 8

### AKĀRA-BRAHMA-YOGA

In the *Gītā*, at the end of a chapter there are often one or two verses that introduce new ideas, which are expanded in the subsequent chapter. They either create a question in *Arjuna's* mind or are addressed by *Kṛṣṇa* directly.

In the last two verses of the seventh chapter, *Kṛṣṇa* talked about the understanding of a wise man even at the time of death and in doing so, introduced several new words. This forms the basis for the questions, which are formulated by *Arjuna* in the first two verses of chapter eight. Before we get into the chapter we have to see the relevance of this chapter.

*Arjuna's* questions introduce the entire topic of the chapter.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

किं तद्ब्रह्म किमध्यात्मं किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।

अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तमधिदैवं किमुच्यते ॥१॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*kiṃ tadbrahma kimadhyātmaṃ kiṃ karma puruṣottama*

*adhibhūtaṃ ca kiṃ proktamadhidaivaṃ kimucyate*

*Verse 1*

अर्जुन *arjuna* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

किम् तद् ब्रह्म *kim tad brahma* — what is that *Brahman*; किम् अध्यात्मम् *kim adhyātmaṃ* — what is that which is centred on the self; किम् कर्म *kim karma* — what is *karma*; पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama* — O! The one beyond whom there is none; अधिभूतम् च किम् प्रोक्तम् *adhibhūtaṃ ca kiṃ proktam* — and what is spoken of as centred on the beings; अधिदैवम् किम् उच्यते *adhidaivam kim ucyate* — what is it that is said as centred on the gods

*Arjuna* said:

What is that *Brahman*? What is centred on the self? What is *karma* O!

*Puruṣottama*? What is spoken of as centred on the beings? And what is it that is said as centred on the gods?

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र देहेऽस्मिन् मधुसूदन ।

प्रयाणकाले च कथं ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मभिः ॥२॥

*adhiyajñāḥ katham ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana*

*prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ*

Verse 2

मधुसूदन *madhusūdana* — O! The one who destroyed the demon *Madhu* (*Kṛṣṇa*); अत्र देहे अस्मिन् *atra dehe asmin* — here in this body; अधियज्ञः कथम् कः *adhiyajñāḥ katham kaḥ* — how and who is that which is centred on ritual; प्रयाण-काले च *prayāṇa-kāle ca* — and at the time of death; कथम् ज्ञेयः असि *katham jñeyaḥ asi* — how are you known; नियत-आत्मभिः *niyata-ātmabhiḥ* — by those whose minds are steady

O! *Madhusūdana*, how and who is that which is centred on ritual here in this body? And at the time of death, how are you known by those whose minds are steady?

*Arjuna* asks what is that *Brahman*, which you say the wise men know. The word *brahma* has many meanings. It can mean the Veda, a *brāhmaṇa*, or *Brahmajī*. It can also mean something big. That can be anything. So, what is that *Brahman*? Then you mentioned *akhilam karma*. What does it mean? Is it past *karma*, present *karma*, or future *karma*?

What is this *adhyātma* and what is said to be *adhibhūta*? What is it that is called *adhidaiva*? Is there an *adhiyajña* in this body? Who is the *adhiyajña* to be understood?

*Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here as *puruṣottama*. *Puruṣa* means person and *uttama* means the highest, so, *puruṣottama* can mean the most exalted among persons. But *Kṛṣṇa* is not the most exalted among persons; he is the only person—as *param brahma* he is the only *vastu* that is there. So, here, *puruṣottama* means he is *puruṣa* and he is the one beyond whom there is none. We will see the meaning of *puruṣottama* in more detail in the fifteenth chapter.

The Lord had said that those people whose minds are steady, *niyata*, know Me even at the time of their departure from the body. How is this possible? At the time of death people will either worry about their survival or think of what is beloved to them. This is the basis of *Arjuna's* question. At the time of death, when they have so many urgent concerns, how do they remember you? How are you recognised? How do you become the object of their knowledge?

Thus *Arjuna* asked many questions in the first two verses of this chapter. In the following four verses *Bhagavān* answers each and every question and then continues to elaborate.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।

भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसञ्ज्ञितः ॥३॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*akṣaraṃ brahma paramaṃ svabhāvo'dhyātmamucyate*

*bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmaśāñjñitaḥ*

Verse 3

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — the Lord; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

अक्षरम् *akṣaram* — that which does not decline; परमम् *paramam* — limitless; ब्रह्म *brahma* — Brahman; स्वभावः *svabhāvaḥ* — (its) manifestation; अध्यात्मम् *adhyātmam* — *adhyātmā* (that which is centred on the body,<sup>1</sup> i.e., the *jīva*); उच्यते *ucyate* — is called; कर्म-सञ्ज्ञितः *karma-śāñjñitaḥ* — known as *karma*; विसर्गः *visargaḥ* — offering (the act of offering an *āhuti* in the fire in a *yajña*); भूत-भाव-उद्भवकरः *bhūta-bhāva-udbhava-karaḥ* — the one who causes the production of bodies for the beings

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

*Brahman* is limitless and not subject to change. Its manifestation, centred on the body is called *adhyātmā*, the *jīva*. What is known as *karma* is an offering, which causes the production of bodies for the beings.

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् ।

अधियज्ञोऽहमेवात्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥४॥

*adhibhūtaṃ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaścādhidaivatam*

*adhiyajño'hamevātra dehe dehabhṛtāṃ vara*

Verse 4

देहभृताम् वर *deha-bhṛtām vara* — O! The most exalted one among those who have a body; अधिभूतम् *adhi bhūtam* — what is centred on the beings; क्षरः भावः *kṣaraḥ bhāvaḥ* — is the one subject to decline; अधि-दैवतम् च *adhi-daivatam ca* — and what is centred on the *devatās*; पुरुषः *puruṣaḥ* — (is) *hiraṇyagarbha*; अत्र देहे *atra dehe* — here in this body; अधि-यज्ञः अहम् एव *adhi-yajñaḥ aham eva* — I alone am what is centred on ritual

O! The most exalted one among those who have a body, what is centred on the beings is the one subject to decline and what is centred on the *devatās* is *hiraṇyagarbha*, here in this body, I alone am what is centred on ritual.

<sup>1</sup> The word *ātmā* here refers to the physical body.

**BRAHMAN IS LIMITLESS AND IS MYSELF**

*Akṣaram brahma paramam*—*Brahman* is limitless and not subject to change. *Akṣara* means that which does not decline. Anything that declines is within time and therefore, subject to all the six-fold modifications.<sup>1</sup> So, what does not decline is also free from these modifications. *Brahman* is *akṣara*—not subject to any change whatsoever. That can only be *parama*, not conditioned by place, time, or a given attribute. An object, like a pot, is limited in space by its own dimension, limited by time because there was a time when it was not and there will be a time when it will not be and being a pot, it is distinct from everything else, including other pots.

*Brahman* is not limited in any of these respects. It has no dimension and so, it does not exist in space. But, one may ask, is space also not free of this limitation since there is no place where space is not? It is true that space is all-pervasive within creation but it does not pervade *Brahman*. *Brahman* pervades space. And space is limited with respect to time; it does not exist in *pralaya* or deep sleep. Further, it is only space, distinguishable from all other things; it is not air or fire or time.

*Brahman* has no limitation with respect to objects because it has no particular quality of its own. And yet it is the truth of everything. Nothing stands separate from *Brahman* and that *paraṃ brahma* can only be *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

The word *akṣara* is used later<sup>2</sup> to refer to the single syllable word *Om*. So, *Śaṅkara* raises the question as to why the word *akṣara* does not mean *Om* here and he himself answers it. He says that the adjective *parama* negates that possibility. And further, *Om* is not the topic here. Even though it is a name for *Brahman*, *Om* is not *Brahman*. Therefore, *akṣara* is *Brahman* here.

*Svabhāvaḥ adhyātman ucyate*—*svabhāva*, the manifestation of this *paraṃ brahma* is said to be *adhyātma*, *jīva*. *Ātmā* here means body. So, *adhyātma* is that which is centred on the physical body. That can be anything—the body itself, sense organs, mind, *prāṇa*, mind, *buddhi*, and finally the *pratyagātmā*. So, *Arjuna* wants to know what is this *adhyātma*, which the wise men know.

Thus the word *adhyātma*, meaning the *jīva*, can refer to any of these. Contextually, here it is *pratyagātmā*, which obtains in this and every physical body in the form of consciousness. This is the nature of the *jīva*. As you reduce the *jīva* to its essence, the final reality is consciousness, called *adhyātma* here. *Akṣaram brahma* is also called the essence of the *jīva*, *adhyātma*.

<sup>1</sup> The sixfold modifications are the *ṣad-bhāva-vikāras*, namely, *asti*—*is*, *jāyate*—*is born*, *vardhate*—*grows*, *vipariṇamate*—*undergoes changes*, *apakṣīyate*—*decays*, *vinaśyati*—*is destroyed*. Every object has these sixfold modifications.

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 8-13



The meanings of the word *Brahman* and *adhyātma* are identical but are used in different contexts. Only *Brahman*, not *ātmā*, is used when we talk about the cause of the world. That *Brahman* is equated to this *jīva* who is *adhyātma* centred on a given physical body. Because *Bhagavān* said the wise man knows *Brahman*, the cause of everything, the word *adhyātma* is used here to dismiss the notion that *Brahman* is an object. They know *Brahman*, but not as something remote from themselves but as themselves. To point this out he says *adhyātma*. By knowing *Brahman* they know *ātmā*; and by knowing *ātmā* they know *Brahman*. This is because *Brahman* and *ātmā* are the same.

## KARMA IS ALSO BHAGAVĒN

*Visargaḥ karma-sañjñitaḥ*: Then *Arjuna* wanted to know what is meant by *karma*, which it was said, the wise men know in its entirety. *Karma-sañjñita*, what is known as *karma* is *visarga*, offering, the act of offering an *āhuti* in the fire in a *yajña*. *Śaṅkara* says it is an offering intended for a given *devatā*. Even though the word *karma* can mean any type of action, in the *śāstra* it specifically means the ritual in, which there is an offering. The ritual stands for all other *karmas*. Therefore, he calls *karma* as *visarga*. And it is the *karma-phala* that causes one to be born in a particular body. Therefore, he calls this *karma* as *bhūta-bhāva-udbhava-karaḥ*, the one that causes the birth of the existence of beings. In order to be born, a being needs a body. *Karma* is the cause for that. It produces a two-fold result—*dr̥ṣṭa* and *adr̥ṣṭa*. The *adr̥ṣṭa* produces bodies for you.

*Bhūta* can be taken as the already existent *jīvas*. They are not created, only the body is created. When you say a son is born, what is really born? Is it a *jīva* or a body? It is a given physical body with a given parentage at a given place and time. It is creating the bodies for the already existent beings that are created.

It is important to know that the *jīva* is not created. If it were to be created, then *ātmā* also would be created and there would be no possibility of *mokṣa*. The *jīva*'s essential nature is eternal and therefore, it is not created. Even the *jīva* who exists as an individual is not created because his cause, ignorance, is beginningless. A particular form is created and the cause for that is *karma*.

*Karma* also is non-separate from *Brahman*. The one who knows *Brahman* knows this. The action, the agent, and all other things connected to the action are *Brahman* as we saw in the fourth chapter.<sup>1</sup> They are all *mithyā*, which depend upon *Brahman*, which is *satya*. Therefore, the wise men know the entire *karma*, *akhilam karma*.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 4-24

Because of this *karma*, forms are born. When a person performs a ritual, he is propitiating the *devatās*. Rain and food and all things necessary for creation are provided because of the *devatās*. So, ultimately the ritual is the cause for a person's birth. We saw this is in the third chapter,<sup>1</sup> and *Śaṅkara* reminds us of that here.

## THE BEINGS THAT ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE ARE ALSO BHAGAVĒN

*Adhibhūtaṃ kṣaraḥ bhāvaḥ*—an existent being that is subject to destruction is called *adhibhūta*. All beings are subject to change and destruction. Anything that exists is called *bhāva*. And anything that exists is subject to change—*kṣaraḥ bhāvaḥ*. All that is born, the whole world that exists in time, is called *adhibhūta*. All the physical bodies that exist here and are subject to the changes of birth, existence, growth, development, decline and death, *Kṛṣṇa* says, are also Me.

Even though something changes, it does not disappear. So, wherever there is change, there is dependence upon a changeless basis. The essence, the existence of a given object, which is undergoing change, is never destroyed. And that, *Kṛṣṇa* says, is Me.

This *Brahman*, which is *akṣara*, is itself *adhyātma* with reference to the person who is making an inquiry; with reference to all other bodies he confronts, it is *adhibhūta*. 'Thus not only is *adhyātma* Me, *adhibhūta* is also Me,' says *Kṛṣṇa*.

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥५॥

*antakāle ca māmēva smaranmuktvā kalevaram*

*yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṃ yāti nāstyatra saṃśayaḥ* Verse 5

अन्तकाले च *anta-kāle ca* — and at the time of death; माम् एव स्मरन् *mām eva smaran* — remembering Me alone; मुक्त्वा *muktvā* — giving up; कलेवरम् *kalevaram* — the body; यः प्रयाति *yaḥ prayāti* — the one who departs; सः *saḥ* — he; मद्भावं याति *mad-bhāvaṃ yāti* — gains My nature, becomes one with Me; अत्र *atra* — here, with reference to this; संशयः न अस्ति *na asti saṃśayaḥ* — there is no doubt

And, at the time of death, the one who departs giving up the body, remembering Me alone, he gains My nature. Regarding this, there is no doubt.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 3-14, 15

## EVEN AT THE TIME OF DEATH A WISE MAN KNOWS THAT HE IS BRAHMAN

*Anta-kāle ca*—and at the time, which is the end, the last moment, *māṃ smaran*—remembering Me, *sa madbhaāvaṃ yāti*—he gains My nature. The time of one's departure from a given physical body in a given incarnation is called *anta-kāla* i.e., it is the time of one's death. It is not that only at the time of departure he remembers *Īśvara* and such a person reaches *Īśvara*. All through his life too, the person who knows he is *Brahman* will remember 'Me,' *Brahman*. His knowledge will not go away. The word *smaran* meaning 'remembering,' is used figuratively here. What is actually meant here is that this person who has the knowledge of *Brahman* will have that knowledge of *Brahman* even at the end of his life.

If *Brahman* is an object of thought kept in the memory, then at the time of death *Brahman* will not be of any use to you because it will not come to mind. When you face death, what is going to be thought of, is what concerns you the most. If *Brahman* is an object of thought and you have to rely upon thinking about it at the time of death, you are taking a chance. You may think of it, you may not. Even if you do think about *Brahman* at that time, it does not mean that you will know *Brahman* because thinking about *Brahman* is not the same as knowing *Brahman*.

*Brahman* is the very nature of yourself. That 'I am *Brahman*' is not just a statement; it is assimilated knowledge. Can it ever be a matter of memory? No. I can remember a hundred different things but *Brahman* can never be one of them because the one who remembers everything is *Brahman*. On the other hand, the one who knows himself as *Brahman* can never forget that he is *Brahman* because it is his very nature—not an object of memory.

*Kalevaraṃ muktvā yaḥ prayāti*—giving up the physical body, the one who departs. Where does he go?

He reaches Me; gains My nature, the nature of *paramātmā*—*saḥ mad-bhāvaṃ yāti*. This person is a *jīvan-mukta*. Even while alive, he knows the identity between himself and *Brahman*. When he dies, what happens? There is no *jīva*; there is only *Brahman*.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WISE MAN DIES?

If the person is not a *jñānī*, when the physical body dies, his subtle body continues to exist because the causal body, ignorance, still exists. Since there is self-ignorance, all his *karmas* are waiting to fructify. So, at the time of death he assumes a body appropriate for those *karmas* and travels to a place suitable for their fulfilment.

For a *jīvan-mukta*, such a travel does not take place because at the time of death his subtle body disintegrates. The same *śāstra* that tells us that a person travels after death, also tells us that the *jñānī* does not have any subtle body with, which to travel. It has disappeared because its cause, ignorance, is gone. The causal body is ignorance and knowledge of *ātmā* being *Brahman* amounts to removal of that ignorance. When the cause is gone, naturally the effect is not there. Once the threads are burnt, the piece of cloth cannot remain. Similarly, once ignorance is gone, the subtle body cannot remain. Therefore, there is no travel.

‘Giving up this body he reaches Me alone,’ says the Lord. ‘Reaching’ is purely figurative here. He has already said what he means by ‘Me’—*paraṃ brahma*. *Paraṃ brahma* is non-separate from *ātmā*. Therefore, there can be no real reaching. Reaching is only in the sense of being non-separate from *Īśvara*.

But one thing cannot assume the nature of another.<sup>1</sup> A given object, which has its own nature, cannot give that up and still exist in its original form. But here, the nature of *ātmā* is already *Brahman*. The *jīvan-mukta* knew this even while alive; dead, there is nobody there, no separate individual.

While he was alive there was a seeming doer and enjoyer. Now there is not even that. Before knowledge he was doing. After knowing he was seemingly doing. When he died, meaning when the body died, he does not even seemingly do. Once and for all he is gone.

Here there is no doubt—*atra na asti saṃśayaḥ*. *Atra*, here, means ‘with reference to this.’ This is not an assurance. It is purely a statement of fact. The *vastu* being eternal, there is no question of it being born. Once he knows himself as that *vastu*, how can he be born? What is eternal cannot be born. Even before this knowledge, he was eternal but he did not know that fact about himself. Therefore, there was a false entity that accumulated *karma-phala* and required further births. Now he knows his nature as *akartā*; and therefore, there is no question of any future birth for him.

There is not one *Īśvara* before knowing and another one after. All that is there is one *vastu*. The one who knows that reaches My nature, *mad-bhāvaṃ yāti*. And there is no doubt here. There is no question as to whether, ‘Does he go to *paramātmā* or not?’ There is no doubt because he already is *paramātmā*. Where is then the question of his going to *paramātmā*?

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussion on the verse 15, chapter 8, under the heading, ‘One recognises his identity with *Īśvara*.’

## TO UNDERSTAND THE ĀĪSTRĀ ONE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT IS MOKĀĀ

The expression, *mad-bhāvaṃ yāti* has been subject to various interpretations. We have to understand the *śāstra* well and, to do so, we must be very clear about what *mokṣa* is.

One commentator interprets this verse as saying, ‘The one who gives up the body thinking of Me, *Nārāyaṇa*, goes to *Vaikunṭha*.’ According to him, going to heaven is *mokṣa*. *Vaikunṭha* can be replaced by any other concept of heaven. Since it is a popular concept, it is worth examining here.

### BECOMING ONE WITH BHAGAVĪN, BRAHMA-S;YUJYĀ

The contention is that one goes to heaven and there becomes one with *Īśvara*. If that is so, the following questions arise: Who goes to *Vaikunṭha*? If the one who goes is an individual, does he have a body? If he does not, it will be like sleep where there is no time or space and therefore, no travel at all. There is no possibility of going anywhere without a body. Besides this, different worlds are presented in the *śāstra* as physical places. Therefore, when you go there, you must have a physical body. It may be a celestial body but it has got to be a body. A mere physical body will not be enough because it would be insentient. Therefore, you must also have a subtle body. This is an important thing. How can you become *Nārāyaṇa* with your own subtle and gross bodies? With one's own body, one is entirely different from *Nārāyaṇa*. On the other hand, if you don't have your own *sthūla-sūkṣma-śarīras*, then where is the individual who is to become one with *Nārāyaṇa*?

Again, if the individual becomes a part of the Lord, then does the individual retain his individuality? If so, there is no *mokṣa*. The Lord is the Lord and the individual is the individual. If the individual dissolves in the Lord, how can the individual be real? Individuality must be *mithyā* in order to disappear. If that is so, then one is already not separate from the Lord and the discovery of that fact is *mokṣa*. This is the real *brahma-sāyujya*, being one with *Brahman*. This is only figure of speech. One is *Brahman* always even when one is ignorant of that fact.

### IS S;MCPYĀ MOKĀĀ?

In another concept of *mokṣa*, the contention is that if one is pure enough, one is almost equal to the Lord and can therefore, go very near him. This is called *sāmīpya*. Nearness to *Bhagavān* is considered to be *mokṣa*.

But it cannot be *mokṣa*. Even though you may be near the Lord, someone else may be nearer. You would naturally compare yourself with the other and experience

pain. In other words, as long as you are a separate individual, you, will be subject to degrees of pleasure and pain. This concept of *sāmīpya* again does not dissolve the individuality and therefore, there is no possibility of total freedom.

### IS GOING TO HEAVEN MOKṢĀ?

Going to heaven of any denomination is not *mokṣa*. Sometimes the gain of heaven is referred to by the words *amṛta*, *mokṣa*, etc. But it is obvious that these words only point out a relative freedom from pain. Heaven, being a place reached by a person at a given time, the life therein is going to be within a time frame determined by one's own *puṇya*. That there is a heaven, I come to know by the *śāstra*; and that very *śāstra* makes it clear that a sojourn in heaven is only a sojourn. It will be over when the cause, the *puṇya*, is exhausted. For a serious *mumukṣu*, heaven holds no attraction. When I am already free, that I should go to heaven is nothing but a confirmation of the original error. Even going to *brahma-loka*, which is considered to be the greatest achievement in *saṃsāra*, is meaningless in the light of the fact that all the *lokas* are non-separate from *Brahman* and that *Brahman* is myself. So, there is no *mokṣa* in any sort of becoming that implies a change of body, place, and time. *Mokṣa* is here and now—not at another place, another time. This body-mind-sense complex does not in any way stand opposed to *mokṣa*. In fact, the human *śarīra* is adequate enough to gain this *mokṣa*, which is in the form of knowing that I am *Brahman*. And, *Brahman* is always free.

*Mokṣa* means freedom. That can only mean giving up something you already have. The body, mind and so on can be given up; but if they are given up, for whom is *mokṣa*? If it is for the physical body, from what does it require *mokṣa*?

*Śruti* says that the person who is free from a body is free from the desirable and the undesirable. None of the opposites touch him. If *mokṣa* means being free from the opposites, that is not possible for anyone who has a body. Even if you have only a subtle body, you cannot have freedom from pleasure and pain. In a dream there is no physical body but there is pain and pleasure. In sleep it is not so. Only in the absence of a physical or subtle body is there no pleasure or pain. In their presence, there is *sukha* and *duḥkha*. This is the truth of the *jīva*. *Mokṣa* is to get rid of *sukha* and *duḥkha*. So, how can you call going to heaven *mokṣa*?

You may argue that once you make it to *Vaikunṭha* you will experience only the desirable. But when the mind is active, all the properties of the mind will be there; desires will be there and depending on whether or not they are fulfilled, there will be varying degrees of *sukha* and *duḥkha*. Even though the present may not be affecting you, guilt and hurt lingering from past experiences will always be recollected. That memory cannot be avoided and that alone is enough to create pain and pleasure.

To be unhappy, all you have to do is look around and see, who is next to you, who is in front of you, etc. Then, comparison will be there, which is enough to make you feel miserable. At the very least you will be bored.

How can you call heaven a place of liberation? Even though the *śāstra* talks about *lokas* that are desirable, it does not say that going to one of them is *mokṣa*. It says that wherever you go, you will come back.

A serious *mumukṣu* will not wish for heaven but for a better chance next time. If he finds that in this body he is not able to understand, in this situation things are not conducive for him, he is going to wish for improved conditions for *mokṣa*, and not for heaven.

The *śruti* shows us that, in spite of having a body, mind, and senses, we are free from them. *Ātmā* is not touched by *sukha* or *duḥkha*; its nature is *ānanda*. Since it is already free, *mokṣa* is knowledge, the knowledge that I am free from being the body.

## IMPOSSIBILITY OF MOKṢĀ WHEN A FORM IS INVOLVED

*Madbhāva* does not mean a form. *Bhāva* here means the essence of something. The essence of *Īśvara* is formlessness and *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, also formless. Only then can there be identity. Two forms can never be identical.

One who knows the truth will understand *Īśvara* as having no particular form, the one to whom all forms belong. He knows he is non-separate from *Īśvara* because the whole cannot be separate from anything. It is partless, limitless. Nor can there be any kind of relation between the individual and the whole because the whole is the individual; the individual is the whole. This is just like how between the number one and infinity there is no relationship. One can be divided into infinity and infinity includes all ones, so, there is no relationship. If the Lord is whole, he cannot be separate from you. If he is separate from you, he becomes finite, not whole.

Any form you attribute to *Īśvara* is going to be less than *Īśvara* because a given form will exclude all others. Generally one form is given and all other forms superimposed upon it. One name is given and all other names superimposed upon it.

We have varieties of *devatās* and forms of worship. By all of them you can accomplish only *karma-phala*; so, there is no such thing as liberation through *Īśvara* with a form. There can only be the required grace whereby you can get a result within *saṃsāra*.

## MOKṢĀ IS KNOWLEDGE

If the words of the *śāstra* are understood properly, the whole thing reduces itself to *ātmā*, *sat-cit-ānanda*. The one who knows this, knows the truth. To know something,

you must see it as it is. If you know a rope as a rope you know the truth of it. Similarly, knowledge of the truth of *Īśvara* makes you a knower of *Īśvara*, rather than a knower of a particular form. If you superimpose *Bhagavān* on a particular form, then it is for the purpose of worship. That is fine; but this is not knowing the truth. And without knowing the truth, there is no question of reaching *Īśvara*. *Bhagavān* says, only the *jñānī* reaches Me; his *ātmā* is Myself alone. This knowledge is *mokṣa*.

We need not give up meditation because its result can provide situations conducive to gaining knowledge of the nature of *Parameśvara*. One is a devotee in order to be free from being a devotee. This is true of any type of devotion. If one is devoted to getting into the White House, his devotion will end only when he is elected to the White House. When will the devotee of the Lord fulfil his devotion? Only when he is the Lord. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘The one who seeks Me, who thinks of Me at the end of his life, gains Me.’

In the previous verse it was said that the one who thinks of *Īśvara* at the time of death reaches *Īśvara*. This logic is extended in the next verse to other objects.

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।

तं तमेवेति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥६॥

*yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaranbhāvaṃ tyajatyante kalevaram  
taṃ tamevaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ*

Verse 6

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! Son of *Kuntī*; अन्ते *ante* — at the end; यम् यम् वा अपि भावम् *yaṃ yaṃ vā api bhāvam* — whatever thing; स्मरन् *smaran* — remembering; कलेवरम् *kalevaram* — the physical body; त्यजति *tyajati* — he gives up; सदा *sadā* — always; तद्भाव-भावितः *tadbhāva-bhāvitaḥ* — being in that state; तम् तम् एव *taṃ taṃ eva* — that alone; एति *eti* — he reaches

O! Son of *Kuntī*, at the time of death, remembering whatever thing he gives up the body, being always in that state, that alone he reaches.

Whatever he is thinking of at the time of death, that alone he reaches. This seems to be a very good arrangement. Suppose I want to go to heaven. According to the *śāstra*, I have to do good *karma* my entire lifetime and avoid a lot of things. I want to go to heaven but do not want to give up anything or spend my time and energy doing the required rituals. I want to enjoy myself here and then go to heaven. So, I will do what I want here and at the time of death I will just think of heaven. Someone could think in this manner.

But this thinking is not valid. The problem is, after living such a life, you will not think of heaven at the time of death. Whatever thought has dominated all through your life, that alone will come to the forefront at the time of death. The thought patterns are



conditioned. At the time of death, the deepest impressions in your psyche created by your own love and commitment to an object will bring that object to your mind. It will be in keeping with your cumulative thought-life. And merely thinking is not enough; there should also be a relevant action. *Karma* is very important here. It is the result of the *karma* along with *saṃskāra* that produces the result. The idea is, if one has been working for a certain end, that end alone he achieves.

If a person lives his entire life for money's sake, all that will occur in his mind at the time of death is thought of money. In the next birth he will work for money again. This applies to worship of a *devatā* also. If he repeatedly invokes *Indra*, he will go to *indra-loka*. Whatever he thinks about, he works for and that alone he gets.

When you pursue *Īśvara* you become *Īśvara* because you are *Īśvara*. But if you think of any other end, you may gain that only if everything goes well.

Therefore, *Bhagavān* says:

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।  
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मा मे वैष्यस्य संशयः ॥७॥

*tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu māmanusmara yudhya ca*  
*mayyarpitamano buddhirmāmevaiṣyasyasaṃśayaḥ*

Verse 7

तस्मात् *tasmāt* — therefore; सर्वेषु कालेषु *sarveṣu kāleṣu* — at all times; माम् अनुस्मर *mām anu-smara* — remember Me; युध्य च *yudhya ca* — and fight; मयि अर्पित-मनोबुद्धिः *mayi arpita-mano-buddhiḥ* — being one whose mind and intellect are offered unto Me; माम् एव एष्यसि *mām eva eṣyasi* — you will reach Me alone; असंशयः<sup>1</sup> *asaṃśayaḥ* — there is no doubt

Therefore, remember Me at all times and fight. Being one whose mind and intellect are offered unto Me, you will reach Me alone. There is no doubt.

## ONE SHOULD ALWAYS REFLECT ON PARAMĀVARA

*Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara*—therefore at all times think of Me. Here the word *kāla* is used in plural as *kāleṣu*, to indicate the seasons and the day and night. In winter, summer, autumn and spring, through out this year and the next, may you think of Me.

*Bhagavān* says, *anusmara* and not merely *smara*. *Anu* means ‘in keeping with something.’ Therefore, *Śaṅkara* has commented on this word by adding *yathā-*

<sup>1</sup> असंशयः न संशयः अत्र विद्यते । शा० भा० ॥

*śāstram*—in keeping with the *śāstra*.’ Thus the Lord says, ‘Please think of Me as you have learned from the *śāstra*.’ There is no other way. You cannot think of *Bhagavān* unless you know something of him. Since it is a question of knowing *Parameśvara* as it is taught by the *śāstra*, may you pursue him all the time by *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*.

## THINK OF BHAGAVĒN AND DO WHAT IS TO BE DONE

*Yudhya ca*—and fight. Think of Me and fight. This is for *Arjuna*; but we have to extend it to ourselves. *Arjuna*’s situation is a battle therefore, the Lord says, ‘*yudhya ca*—and fight.’ But in our context this mandate refers to anything that is expected out of us under our circumstances, such as the daily prayers or whatever that needs to be done. ‘Do your duty, play your roles and pursue Me. In the process, you will come to know Me,’ says the Lord.

Let us assume *Arjuna* has come to know that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. Then he knows he is not a doer and will spontaneously do what has to be done. He does not need advice, nor does he need teaching. But *Arjuna* knows and does not know.<sup>1</sup> In this situation, *yoga* is important. So, *Kṛṣṇa* is telling *Arjuna* to be a *karma-yogī*.

If you are a *jñānī*, nothing is going to affect you; so, you can easily do what is to be done even though you have the freedom to do or not do anything. If you are an *ajñānī*, you had better follow the script of your role. It is the motive that is important here. It is like a servant performing his duties. Even though he is requested to do something he does not like, he will do it because all his actions are motivated by the master. His own personal intentions and motives are relegated to the background and he does what is to be done. If the action is a pleasant one, there is no problem. But if it is a battle, as it was for *Arjuna*, it definitely requires an appreciation of *dharma*. For a *kṣatriya* like *Arjuna*, there is nothing better than a battle, which is in keeping with *dharma*, as *Kṛṣṇa* reminded him in the second chapter.<sup>2</sup> So may you do what is to be done. It is due to *dharma* alone that you are acting and *dharma* is the Lord. When you conform to *dharma*, you are with the Lord.

*Mayi arpita-mano-buddhiḥ*—the one whose mind and intellect are offered unto Me, *Parameśvara*. The seeker here is referred to as *mayi-arpita-mano-buddhiḥ*, the one whose mind and intellect are offered unto the Lord. How do you offer your mind and intellect to the Lord?

<sup>1</sup> *Arjuna* knows because the Lord has taught him in detail that *ātmā* is indestructible and has given him the full vision. Therefore, one cannot say that he does not know. But he still has doubts as is evident by the fact that he is asking questions. The doubts arise because he has not yet assimilated the knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 2-31

Situations call for certain actions. What is to be done becomes very obvious and relevant to that situation. There is a *sañkalpa* in your mind as, ‘This is to be done.’ That is because you did not create the situation nor did you create the sense of propriety that dictates the action. This was not the case with *Duryodhana*. He created this situation. But *Arjuna* has to meet it with proper action. That propriety is the order that is uncreated by man. This is what we call *dharma*. It is not *Arjuna*’s creation, much less *Duryodhana*’s. That order creates the *sañkalpa* in *Arjuna* that *Duryodhana* has to be punished. Against that is a *sañkalpa* of his own that says, ‘Why should I fight my own people?’ That is not *Bhagavān*’s *sañkalpa*. It is a personal *sañkalpa* born of *Arjuna*’s affection. If that is offered unto *īśvara-sañkalpa*, then he becomes a *mayi arpita-manas*—the one whose mind has been offered unto the Lord. The *manas* here stands for the *sañkalpa-śakti*.

What is referred to here by the word *buddhi* is your sense of doership—that I am a doer, that I am doing something, that I am the cause of some action. Certain things are to be done, and in doing them you surrender your *ahañkāra*. *Buddhi*, here, can also mean your personal prejudices. The *buddhi* is also offered unto ‘Me’ when one is engaged in the pursuit of ‘Me,’ according to the *śāstra*. This person is a *mayi-arpita-buddhi*—the one whose *buddhi* has been offered unto the Lord. Thus, *buddhi* here stands for the sense of doership.

When the *buddhi* is offered in the pursuit of the truth of myself or in surrendering the notion of doership and the mind is offered unto the Lord in the form of *sañkalpas* conforming to *dharma*, one becomes *mayi-arpita-mano-buddhi*—the one whose mind and *buddhi* are offered unto the Lord. Such a person is not in conflict. He gains *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and it is not going to take time for him to understand that he is essentially non-separate from *īśvara*.

## THEN ONE WILL DEFINITELY RECOGNISE BHAGAVĒN AT DEATH

Further, the Lord says, ‘*mām eva eṣyasi*—you will come to Me alone.’ How? You will come to recognise Me and thereby become Me. As he has already pointed out, the *jñānī* is non-separate from *Parameśvara*. When he says, ‘Those who think of Me, reach Me,’ this is what he means. They discover their identity with *īśvara*.

The Lord says, ‘There is no doubt that you will reach Me—*asañśayaḥ mām eṣyasi*.’ Although he is giving a promise here, it is not a prediction; it is a simple logical consequence. There is no way of it not happening. Unlike trying to reach a mountain, where anything can happen, it is yourself; so, it is only a question of clarity of the knowledge.

But, suppose in the process of gaining clarity one should die, what would be the lot of this person? *Kṛṣṇa* has already promised that such a person will definitely pick up the thread in the next life and continue from where he left—*na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścit durgatiṃ tāta gacchati*.<sup>1</sup> Even if he dies without understanding, there is nothing more valuable that he could have been doing. From the standpoint of an onlooker it is a tragedy. He gave up everything in pursuit of this knowledge and then he did not get it. But he had grown out of everything else and was doing that which was most valuable to him.

He was happy he was doing it, and he died. This is true of everyone. Everyone pursues something or other and may die without completing what he set out to do. Someone who was making money does not die thinking, 'I have made all the money that I had set out to make. Now I can die.' Nobody dies thinking everything is over. Only a *jñānī* dies having completed everything. He is the only one who dies in fullness because he knows he is non-separate from *Parameśvara*. There is no doubt about this.

## REMOVAL OF OBSTRUCTIONS TO MOKṢĀ

### IGNORANCE

There are three possible obstructions for *mokṣa*. One is ignorance, *āvaraṇa*. The self is already free. So, I must only recognise the fact that I am identical with *Brahman* and therefore, free. Knowledge of this is *mokṣa* and what denies it is ignorance.

### IMPURITY

For any knowledge to take place, the mind must be prepared. For knowledge of *ātmā*, lack of preparedness may be in two forms. One is *mala*, impurities gathered in previous births, which unfold as difficult situations in this birth. To neutralise these, we do daily duties and prayers. Powerful likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, also obstruct this knowledge and *karma* is again advocated to neutralise them.

### AGITATION

The other obstruction is agitation. Without a composed mind, inquiry cannot be done properly. The mind has to be rendered steady by meditation. Some of the more complicated forms of meditation require great concentration and will bring about steadiness. You also understand the ways of the mind as it keeps moving from one thing to another and you have to bring it back. In the process you gain steadiness.

Purity and steadiness of mind go together. As one increases, so does the other. *Karma* produces purification of the mind; meditation produces steadiness of mind.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 6-40

*Karma*, meditation, and inquiry into the *śāstra* are the three means of dealing with the three obstructions.

In the next two verses *Kṛṣṇa* talks about a person who meditates upon *Parameśvara*. There are different types of meditation apart from *nididhyāsana*, contemplation.

## MEDITATION, UPĒSANA

When a form is involved in meditation it is called *upāsana*. There are two types of *upāsana*—*sampat-upāsana* and *ahaṅgraha-upāsana*.

### SAMPAT-UPĒSANA

In *sampat-upāsana*, a given object is looked upon as something more than it is. Two objects are involved, the one you know and the other you impose upon it. You may look upon the mind as *Īśvara*. In this form of meditation you impose upon an ordinary object something greater. This *sampat-upāsana* gives you a steadiness of mind, a general result of any meditation. By this we mean absence of agitation, a state of mind wherein there is a capacity for absorption and a degree of inner composure. This is an immediate gain, called *dr̥ṣṭa-phala*—a result that is seen.

Besides this, being a prayer, *sampat-upāsana* produces an unseen result, which we call *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*. According to the *śāstra*, this is generally in the form of the gain of other *lokas*.

### AHAṅGRAHA-UPĒSANA

In this second type of *upāsana*, *Brahman*, the cause of everything, is equated to *aham*, 'I.' But it is not pure knowledge because there is a *vṛtti* involved connecting two things. It is something like contemplation. So, it is at the level of *ahaṅkāra*. Since the *ahaṅkāra* has not been negated, the recognition has not yet taken place.

The next two verses can be taken as *ahaṅgraha-upāsana* or as *nididhyāsana*. Let us look at them as *nididhyāsana*.

अभ्यासयोगयुक्तेन चेतसा नान्यगामिना ।

परमं पुरुषं दिव्यं याति पार्थानुचिन्तयन् ॥८॥

*abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nānyagāminā*

*paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ yāti pārthānucintayan*

Verse 8

पार्थ *pārtha* — O! Son of *Pṛthā* (*Arjuna*); अभ्यास-योग-युक्तेन चेतसा *abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena cetasā* — with a mind, which is endowed with the practice of *yoga*; न

अन्यगामिना *na anya-gāminā* — which does not go to anything else; अनुचिन्तयन् *anu-cintayan* — reflecting as he was taught; परमम् दिव्यम् पुरुषम् *paramam divyam puruṣam* — to the limitless person who is effulgent; याति *yāti* — he goes

O! *Pārtha*, reflecting as he was taught, with a mind endowed with the practice of *yoga*, with a mind that does not stray to anything else, he reaches the limitless self-effulgent person.

The meditator goes to the limitless self-effulgent person—*paramaṃ divyaṃ puruṣaṃ yāti*. *Puruṣa* means a person. And he is *parama*. So, there is no possibility of him being anything less than the limitless person who is everything, from whom nothing is separate.

And he is *divya*. Two meanings are possible here for the word *divya*. One who is born in heaven, a celestial, is called *divya*. Or it means the one who is all-effulgent *Parameśvara* who is essentially the meaning of the word 'I.' He goes to that. How does he achieve this?

*Anu-cintayan*—by contemplating. *Cintayan* means doing inquiry, contemplating, or meditating. *Anu* means 'according to the *śāstra*.' Contemplating on the words of the *śāstra* in keeping with what is understood through the *śāstra-pramāṇa* is *anu-cintana*. As a student listens to the words of the teacher, if his mind follows the thought process that takes place, he is doing *anu-cintana*. The teacher is also doing *anu-cintana* because he follows the *śāstra*.

The object of this contemplation is also shown by the words, *paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyam*. And the result is that he goes to that same *puruṣa* because *ātmā* happens to be that. He contemplates upon the infinite and there is no contemplation upon the infinite minus you or anything else.

Thinking, contemplating, here is just seeing a fact that you have already come to know through the *śāstra*. It may be preceded by a few steps of thinking given by the *śāstra*, which are conducive to arriving at its vision. Seeing naturally implies a mind. So, he points out the kind of mind that is required.

*Abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena na anya-gāminā cetasā* —*Cetasā* means 'by the mind.' And two adjectives are given to describe the mind. *Abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena cetasā* means by a mind that is endowed with *abhyāsa*, practice, which itself is *yoga*. *Na anya-gāminā cetasā* means by a mind that does not go to anything else.

Only the chosen object is allowed to occupy the mind; anything else is dismissed as it arises. It is important to note that the meditation does not cease when other thoughts arise. If that were to be the case, meditation would not be possible. When you meditate upon a given object, there is always the possibility of getting distracted. That is why you meditate. As we saw in the sixth chapter, whenever the mind strays from the chosen

object of meditation, you bring it back—*yato yato niścarati... tatastato niyamyaitat...*<sup>1</sup> Bringing the mind back to the object of meditation is also part of meditation.

When *Arjuna* told *Kṛṣṇa* that the mind is itself agitation and he did not think he could do anything about it,<sup>2</sup> *Kṛṣṇa* agreed with him. Then he told him that it could be managed by *vairāgya* and *abhyāsa*.<sup>3</sup> This is the *abhyāsa* meant here. He emphasises it by saying *yoga*, which is another word that means the same thing. *Yoga* is *abhyāsa* and *abhyāsa* is a *yoga*, a means for gaining a mastery over the mind.

This meditator contemplates upon the *puruṣa*, who is limitless and all-effulgent. And he comes to identify himself as that *puruṣa*. Now further, what is the nature of that *puruṣa* he meditates upon and comes to recognise as himself?

कविं पुराणमनुशासितारमणोरणीयांसमनुस्मरेद्यः ।

सर्वस्य धातारमचिन्त्यरूपमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।।९।।

*kaviṃ purāṇamanuśāsītāram*

*aṇoraṇīyāṃsamanusmaredyaḥ*

*sarvasya dhātāramacintyarūpam*

*ādityavarṇaṃ tamaśaḥ parastāt*

Verse 9

कविम् *kaviṃ* — the one who is omniscient; पुराणम् *purāṇam* — the most ancient; अनुशासितारम् *anuśāsītāram* — the one who rules (everything); अणोः अणीयांसम् *aṇoḥ aṇīyāṃsam* — the one who is subtler than the subtlest; सर्वस्य धातारम् *sarvasya dhātāram* — the one who ordains all; अचिन्त्य-रूपम् *acintya-rūpam* — whose form cannot be conceived of; आदित्यवर्णम् *āditya-varṇam* — whose form is like lustre of the sun; तमसः परस्तात् *tamaśaḥ parastāt* — the one who is beyond ignorance (and knowledge) यः अनुस्मरेत् *yaḥ anusmaret* — the one who contemplates upon; (सः *saḥ* — he; परमम् पुरुषम् दिव्यम् *paramam puruṣam divyam* — to the limitless person who is effulgent; याति *yāti* — goes)<sup>4</sup>

The one who contemplates upon the one who is omniscient, the most ancient, who rules, subtler than the subtlest, ordainer of all, whose form cannot be conceived of, who is effulgent like the sun, who is beyond

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 6-26

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 6-34

<sup>3</sup> *Gītā* – 6-35

<sup>4</sup> This verse connects to the previous verse in this manner. The words that connect are brought down from the previous verse.

ignorance (and knowledge), (he goes to the limitless self-effulgent person.)

*Yah anusmaret*—the one who properly meditates upon. *Smarāṇa*, recalling, is only possible when you have come to know something. *Anusmarāṇa* is in keeping with what is already known to you. So, the meaning of this statement is ‘the one who contemplates after *śravaṇa* and *manana*.’

On whom does he meditate? He meditates upon *Parameśvara* who is described by the following words:

*Kavi*, the one who sees through. *Kavi* is an excellent word for *Parameśvara*. It also means poet because a poet sees something more than what meets the eye. Here *Bhagavān* is called *kavi* not because he sees something more; but because he sees everything—past, present and future. *Kavi* here means the one who is all-knowing.

*Purāṇa*—the one who is ancient, who in fact is eternal.

*Anuśāsītā*—the one who rules the whole creation, because of whom the law of *dharma* and all other laws in the creation exist.

*Aṇoh aṇīyān*—the one who is subtler than the subtlest thing you can conceive of. Anything that you can conceive of, even the subtlest concept, is an object of thought, but what is contemplated upon here is the one because of whom that subtlest of thoughts is known.

*Sarvasya dhātā*—the one who is the ordainer of everything. The one who meditates upon *Īśvara* in this manner comes to recognise himself as the upholder of this cause-effect relationship, the giver of the fruits of all actions. Previously he was only an agent, subject to the ups and downs of the results of his actions as they were given by *Īśvara*’s law of *karma*. By contemplating upon the *svarūpa* of *Parameśvara*, he identified himself as *Parameśvara* who is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

*Acintya-rūpa*—the one whose form cannot be thought of. What you cannot think about can also be non-existent. But here it is existent. If you take it as the one who is in the form of creation, how are you going to think about him? There is the known as well as the unknown. If you want to appreciate omniscience or all-pervasiveness, the one whose form is the whole creation, how are you going to imagine that? Your mind is capable of thinking of only one thing at a given time. It is not possible for a human mind to imagine everything at the same time. And if you look at *Īśvara*’s own *svarūpa* as *ātmā*, he is not available for objectification. It is *caitanya*, as the next word reveals.

*Āditya-varṇa*—the one who has the appearance of the sun. The form of the sun is nothing but light. It is not a light that comes and goes; it is always in the form of light; and it illumines everything. Similarly, this *puruṣa* is in the form of consciousness, which is not subject to increasing and decreasing. Like the sun, it always illumines without any



motive or intention. When we say it illumines everything, we are using a verb. That implies an agent. But here there is no agency involved; its essential nature is to shine. Like the sun, it illumines anything in front of it. Without doership, self-shining *ātmā* illumines the entire creation. Everything shines after it. It is *asaṅga*, untouched by what happens in its light.

*Tamasah parastāt*—It is above darkness. It illumines both light and darkness. It illumines particular knowledge as well as ignorance. It is pure consciousness.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTEMPLATION AND MEDITATION

The verb *yāti* is carried through from the previous verse. Everything else in this verse talks of the object of meditation, and also what one gains.

In contemplation there is no difference between what you meditate upon and what you get. If you are doing *upāsana*, the result is not going to be the same as what you meditate upon. If you invoke *Indra*, you will not become *Indra*. You will only go to another *loka*.

But here the one who meditates upon *parama-puruṣa* reaches *parama-puruṣa*. This is not a meditation wherein there is a knower-known difference. However small the difference may be, if there is a difference, it would be *upāsana*. If there is no difference, the knower is recognised as *Parameśvara*; therefore, there is no knower in reality.

All these words are appellations of *Īśvara* and that indeed I am. This is pure *jñāna*. That is why *nididhyāsana* is entirely different from *upāsana*. In *upāsana* the *jīva* and *Īśvara* are two different things, whether it is *sampat-upāsana* or *ahaṅgraha-upāsana*, where you superimpose *Īśvara's* attributes on the *jīva*. Even so, it can pave the way for *jñāna* and is therefore, considered a fruitful meditation. Contemplation, however, based on *śravaṇa* and *manana* is entirely different from any type of meditation.

If what you have understood is somehow contradicted by experience, *nididhyāsana* is to be done. *Śāstra* says that you are *sat-cit-ānanda*. If you do not think so, you are making a judgement about yourself on the basis of your mind and you require further inquiry. Until you understand, you must study the *śāstra*, which is the *pramāṇa*. *Vedānta* reveals that you are the whole. So, you cannot say that you have studied *Vedānta* and are now turning your attention to something else to fulfil yourself.

If you say that in spite of knowing the *ātmā*, you do not see that you are *ānanda*, logically it cannot be true. But experientially there seems to be a condition wherein there is knowledge and at the same time, some problem in owning up the knowledge. You cannot say you do not know, nor can you say you know that you are *Brahman*, because

you have problems. You have to eliminate the obstruction, which is a condition of the mind that seems to stand against the very knowledge that, you are free. That knowledge seems to be affected by a process of habitual thinking, which you take care of in a variety of ways; the main way is *nididhyāsana*.

Contemplation upon the knowledge that I am *Īśvara* is not an action. Wherever a statement of fact is repeated or contemplated upon, no result is produced because, it is an already accomplished fact—*siddha-viṣaya*. This is an important thing to know. An already accomplished fact is not the result of an action because it is not produced. *Karma* can produce, modify, cleanse, or help you reach something.<sup>1</sup> The fact is, *ātmā* is *Brahman*. It is a statement of fact like saying, ‘Fire is hot.’ This fact is not produced, and therefore, not a result of *karma*. As a statement of fact, it is to be merely understood. Similarly the statement, ‘I am *Brahman*,’ is a statement of fact that has to be understood. There is nothing to be accomplished by *karma* here. *Śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* are the threefold means to understand this and it is adequate. *Nididhyāsana* is contemplation in keeping with the *śāstra*. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says here that the one who contemplates on *Parameśvara* in this manner, i.e., in keeping with what is said in the *śāstra*, he reaches that *Parameśvara*—*yaḥ kaviṃ purāṇam ... anusmaret saḥ paramaṃ puruṣaṃ yāti*. This is knowledge.

*Kṛṣṇa* starts by saying that the one who knows him as *Īśvara*, being always in him, comes to him after death. There is no rebirth for this person. And another person who contemplates upon him as *Īśvara*, having gained from *śāstra* the knowledge that *ātmā* is *Parameśvara*, contemplates upon that. He is the *parama-puruṣa* that he is contemplating upon and he too does not come back after death.

Then there is another person for whom the contemplation is coupled with *yoga*, specifically *prāṇāyāma*. He is discussed in the next verse. He also reaches *Īśvara* because of his contemplation.

All these possibilities are mentioned because there are obstructions, which are different for different people. And they have to be tackled differently depending on the person. A seeker uses *yoga*, various forms of *upāsana*, and anything else that is necessary to remove obstructions.

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<sup>1</sup> *Karma* can be of the following four types:  
*utpādyā* — that which produces something.  
*vikāryā* — that which modifies something.  
*saṃskāryā* — that which cleanses something.  
*āpyā* — that which helps one to reach something.

प्रयाणकाले मनसाचलेन भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।  
 भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक् स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥१०॥  
*prayāṅakāle manasācalena*  
*bhaktiyā yukto yogabalena caiva*  
*bhruvormadhye prāṅamāveśya samyak*  
*sa taṃ paraṃ puruṣamupaiti divyam* Verse 10

प्रयाण-काले *prayāṅa-kāle* — at the time of death; अचलेन मनसा *acalena manasā* — with a steady mind; भक्त्या युक्तः *bhaktiyā yuktaḥ* — endowed with devotion; योगबलेन च *yoga-balena ca* — and with the strength gathered by *yoga*; एव *eva* — indeed; भ्रुवोः मध्ये *bhruvoḥ madhye* — between the brows; प्राणम् आवेश्य सम्यक् *prāṅam āveśya samyak* — placing the breath properly; सः *saḥ* — he; तम् परम् पुरुषम् दिव्यम् *taṃ param puruṣam divyam* — that limitless effulgent person; उपैति *upaiti* — reaches

At the time of death, with a steady mind, endowed with devotion and the strength gathered by *yoga*, indeed, placing the breath properly between the brows, he reaches that limitless effulgent person.

This entire discussion deals with the lot of a seeker at the time of death. A *yogī* is someone who can give up his life at will. Because of the strength of his *yoga*, he is able to stop the flow of *prāṅa* when he wishes to die. While he lives, he leaves the *prāṅa*, i.e., stops the functioning of the *prāṅa* while contemplating upon *ātmā*. It was very clear to him while he was alive that he was *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*; and therefore, he was free. But he still had *kartṛtva* because he used his will for death. So, he will go to *brahma-loka* and will be taught by Brahmaji and gain *mokṣa*. This is called *krama-mukti*.

*Prayāṅa-kāle* means ‘at the time of travel or departure.’ Death is referred to as departure here. How does he die? *Acalena manasā*—with a mind that does not waver, that is not distracted. And he is *bhaktiyā yuktaḥ*, endowed with devotion to the *puruṣa* he is contemplating upon. This is a person who has great love for the *ātmā* he contemplates upon. For him there is no other love.

And how does he wilfully stop his *prāṅa*? *Yoga-balena ca eva*—with the strength of his *yoga* practice alone. *Yoga-bala*, Śaṅkara says, is steadiness of mind born of his practice of absorption, the culmination of his practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*.

The object of meditation produces a *saṃskāra* in the mind and with repeated meditation, the *saṃskāra* deepens. For a *mumukṣu*, the only object of meditation is *ātmā*. Here he has a *yoga-bala*, which is due to the *saṃskāra* arising from repeated practice of absorption. This is a person who has lived his life in the practice of *yoga* along with the pursuit of knowledge. At the time of death, what does such a person do?

*Bhruvoḥ madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak*—First he brings his mind to his heart, the core of the self. He imagines a location on the right side of the heart, which is looked upon as the seat of the *ahaṅkāra*. It is purely a visualisation; but it does bring the mind to a state of absorption. Even when chanting a *mantra*, if you imagine that the *mantra* comes from there, the chanting is much more absorbing.

Then he stops his *prāṇa*, i.e., stops breathing. He inhales and does not exhale. *Śaṅkara* supplies the word *nāḍī*, a technical term from *yoga* for a kind of a nerve. He visualises a *nāḍī* going through the heart to the place between the eyebrows. Emitting the *prāṇa* through this *nāḍī*, placing it between the brows, he stops it there and does not exhale. And thus gives up his life.

When he does so, *paraṃ puruṣam upaiti*—he reaches the limitless person. Because of this expression we understand that he is a *vidvān* and a *yogī*.

So far, *Bhagavān* has talked about those who contemplate upon *Brahman* directly. There are others who use a symbol to arrive at contemplation. This he introduces in the next verse.

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः ।  
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥११॥  
*yadakṣaram vedavido vadanti*  
*viśanti yadyatayo vītarāgāḥ*  
*yadicchanto brahmacaryaṃ caranti*  
*tatte padam saṅgrahaṇa pravakṣye*

Verse 11

यत् अक्षरम् *yat akṣaram* — that which does not decline (about which); वेदविदः *vedavidāḥ* — those who know the Veda; वदन्ति *vadanti* — talk about; यत् *yat* — that which; यतयः *yatayaḥ* — those who make effort (*sannyāsīs*); वीतरागाः *vīta-rāgāḥ* — those who are free from desire; विशन्ति *viśanti* — enter; यदिच्छन्तः *yad icchantāḥ* — desiring which; ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति *brahmacaryaṃ caranti* — they (the *yatayaḥ* and the *vīta-rāgāḥ*) follow a life of study and discipline; तत् पदम् *tat padam* — that end; संग्रहेण *saṅgrahaṇa* — briefly; ते प्रवक्ष्ये *te pravakṣye* — I will tell you

I will tell you briefly about that end, which does not decline, about which knowers of Veda talk about which the renunciates free from desire enter, desiring, which they follow a life of study and discipline.

The first quarter of this verse is similar to one in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*<sup>1</sup> and the rest to one in *Kāthopaniṣad*.<sup>2</sup> That end, which all the Vedas talk about, desiring, which

<sup>1</sup> 3-8-8

<sup>2</sup> 1-2-15

people take to a life of discipleship, I am going to tell you briefly. That is *Om*. The same thing is going to be said here in three verses.

*Yad-akṣaraṃ vedavido vadanti*. *Vedavit* means those who know the Veda, not merely how to recite but the meaning of the Veda. There is a mandate that everyone should study one's own Veda, either the *R̥g-veda*, *Sāma-veda*, *Yajur-veda* or *Atharva-veda*—*svādhyāyo adhyetavyaḥ*. Mere recitation of the Veda is also called *adhyayana*. But a *vidhi*, a rule, is only complete when the result is realised. Veda is a *pramāṇa* and has the capacity to reveal a knowledge, which has a result. After learning to recite, one must analyse the sentences until one understands the entire *śāstra*, especially *Vedānta-śāstra*. Until that time, one has not fulfilled the *vidhi*. Its force applies until you know, 'I am *Brahman*—*ahaṃ brahma asmī*.' So, *vedavit* is the one who knows the meaning of the Veda.

*Brahman* is *akṣara*, that which is not subject to destruction, not being bound by time. Those who know the Veda talk about this.

In *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, *Yājñavalkya* teaches *Gārgī* what *akṣaraṃ brahma* is.<sup>1</sup> It is not big, nor small, not short, nor tall and thus, is free from all attributes. *Akṣaraṃ brahma* is not an object, nor is it something to be gained in the usual sense. It is not to be experienced, but known.

*Yadicchantah brahmacaryaṃ caranti*—desiring to know this, people live a life of *brahmacarya*, a life of discipline in the presence of the teacher. That discipline implies study, meditation, *mantra-japa*, etc.

*Yat yatayaḥ vīta-rāgāḥ viśanti*—*yatis* means those who are capable of right effort. One of the principal things that is required for this knowledge is renunciation. So, a person who gives up all other pursuits and dedicates his life to this pursuit is called a *yati*, he is a *sannyāsi*. They are free from all powerful likes and dislikes because they are not interested in security and pleasure. They are committed to *mokṣa*.

*Tat te padaṃ saṅgrahena pravakṣye*—I will tell you briefly that end, which is to be accomplished in terms of knowledge. *Padam* means the end that is to be accomplished. It also means that which is the most worshipful. Here *mokṣa* is the ultimate end and also, it is the most worshipful.

Here, *Śaṅkara* introduces the next two verses discussing *omkāra*, *praṇava*. It is introduced for the first time in the *Bhagavadgītā*. So, *Śaṅkara* makes a note here.

<sup>1</sup> एतद्वै तदक्षरं गार्गी ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्ति । बृ० उप० ३.८.८

**MEDITATION UPON OM****OM AS A WORD FOR CONTEMPLATION**

*Om* is a word for *Brahman*. Just as when you hear the word pot, a meaning strikes you, so too with *Om*. If you know the meaning, it registers when you hear the word *Om*. Then *Om* becomes a name, *vācaka*, and *Brahman*, what is named, *vācya*.

In general, between a word and its meaning, there is a permanent connection, *vācya-vācaka-sambandha*. For example, the word apple is a *vācaka* and the object apple, the *vācya*. It is not quite the same with the name of a person. John, for example, can mean anybody. John is not a *vācaka* in the same sense that apple is; it has no real *vācya* in that, there is no permanent *vācya-vācaka-sambandha*. John is a word that brings to mind a given person whom you know. It serves as a *vācaka* if you know that, it is the name of a person you know. Similarly, the *śāstra* has named *Brahman* as *Om*. If you have studied the *śāstra*, you recognise *Brahman* by the name *Om*. The *śāstra* says that *ātmā*, the conscious being is *Brahman* and that *Brahman* is *Om*. You contemplate upon the meaning of *Om* as yourself being everything. Then *Om* takes the mind to contemplation, not meditation. But if you contemplate upon the meaning of *Om* as *Īśvara*, then it becomes meditation, *dhyāna*, *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*.

In meditation there are two types of symbols. One is verbal, *pratīka*, the other a tangible physical form, *pratimā*. Upon either of these you can superimpose a concept of *Īśvara* and worship that symbol as *Īśvara*. In this type of meditation *Īśvara* is always *parokṣa*.

**MEDITATION WITH OM AS A PRATĪKA**

*Om* can also be a sound symbol, a *pratīka*. Then it means *aparaṇ brahma*. It is purely a symbol upon, which you superimpose your indirect knowledge of *Īśvara*. Because there is no knowledge, it is no longer a *vācaka*; it is purely for *upāsana*, which has the result of taking you to *brahma-loka*. There, you may be taught by Brahmaji if you are a *mumukṣu* and if you have enough *puṇya*. Or you will return to a human birth and pick up the thread.

In *Praśnopaniṣad*<sup>1</sup>, *Satyakāma* asks his *guru* what kind of *loka* a person will gain if he meditates upon *Om* and he is told that *Omkāra* can represent both *paraṇ brahma* and *aparaṇ brahma*. It is *apara* if it is a *pratīka*, a symbol for *parokṣa-Īśvara*. It is *para* if it is contemplated upon as *paramātmā* who is identical with *pratyagātmā*.

Each letter, as we have seen, represents one of the three states of experience. When *Omkāra* is chanted, the last letter, *makāra*, resolves into silence, which is pure

<sup>1</sup> 5-1 to 5-5

consciousness, neither waker nor dreamer nor sleeper. From that silence the *akāra* rises. When you chant *Om*, the word is pervaded by consciousness, which itself is not affected by *akāra*, the *makāra*, or the *ukāra*—A, U or M. Everything resolves in that which is neither waker-consciousness, nor dreamer-consciousness, nor in-between-consciousness, nor sleeper-consciousness, nor is it all-knowing-consciousness, nor unconsciousness—that is what is called consciousness. That is the *ātmā*, *Om*, the *vācaka* for *Brahman*.

In *Kaṭhapaniṣad*, *Naciketas* asks about that which is above *dharma* and *adharma*, above cause and effect. Lord *Yama* answers in a way that is similar to what is mentioned here. But in other places, *Oṃkāra* is presented as a symbol for *upāsana* for those who do not understand *param brahma* as it was taught to them.

Since the *gītā-śāstra* is dealing with the various forms of departure here, the one who meditates upon *Om* is discussed. If he meditates on *Om* as a symbol, there is travel and further birth; if he contemplates and understands it, there is no further travel.

In the following two verses *Bhagavān* talks about those who meditate upon *Om* at the end of their life and the result of that.

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुध्य च ।

मूर्ध्न्याधायान्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥१२॥

*sarvadvārāṇi saṃyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca*  
*mūrdhnyādhāyātmanāḥ prāṇamāsthito yogadhāraṇām*

Verse 12

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन् मामनुस्मरन् ।

यः प्रयाति त्यजन् देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥१३॥

*omityekākṣaram brahma vyāharan māmanusmaran*  
*yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṃ sa yāti paramāṃ gatim*

Verse 13

सर्वद्वाराणि *sarva-dvārāṇi* — all the gates (sense organs); संयम्य *saṃyamya* — closing; मनः *manaḥ* — the mind; हृदि *hṛdi* — into the heart; निरुध्य च *nirudhya ca* — and withdrawing; आत्मनः प्राणम् *ātmanāḥ prāṇam* — one's own *prāṇa*; मूर्ध्नि *mūrdhni* — at the top of his head; आधाय *ādhāya* — placing; योग-धारणाम् आस्थितः (सन्) *yoga-dhāraṇām āsthitāḥ (san)* — being the one who remains holding (his *prāṇa*) by *yoga*; ओम् इति एक-अक्षरं ब्रह्म *om iti eka-akṣaram brahma* — the single syllable *Om* (which is) *Brahman*; व्याहरन् *vyāharan* — chanting; माम् अनु-स्मरन् *mām anu-smaran* — remembering Me; देहम् त्यजन् *deham tyajan* — giving up the body; यः प्रयाति *yaḥ prayāti* — the one who departs; सः *saḥ* — he; परमाम् गतिम् याति *paramām gatim yāti* — goes to the most exalted end

Closing all the sense organs and withdrawing the mind into the heart, placing his breath at the top of his head and remaining, holding (his breath) by *yoga*, chanting the single syllable *Om*, which is *Brahman*, giving up the body, the one who departs remembering Me, goes to the most exalted end.

This is the *yogī* who meditates on *Om̐kāra*.

*Sarva-dvārāṇi saṁnyamya*—having closed all the gates. The gates are the ways through, which the world enters into you, the sense organs. The person discussed here is a *yogī*, not a *jñānī*. A *yogī* has to shut out everything and then concentrate. *Ajñānī*, may shut out the world or may not; because he knows, his vision has changed. Here the meditator is sitting in a relaxed posture with all his senses withdrawn.

*Mano hṛdi nirudhya ca*—and taking the mind inward. In fact, this is all you really have to do, to withdraw the senses from their pursuits. Just turn the mind towards yourself.

*Ātmanaḥ prāṇaṁ mūrdhni ādhāya*, placing his *prāṇa* at the top of his head, he does not allow the breath to be exhaled.

*Om iti ekākṣaraṁ brahma vyāharan*, chanting the single syllable *Om*, which is the name of *Brahman*, *mām anusmaran*—thinking of Me, *Īśvara*, he continues to hold his breath at the top of his head. And doing this, i.e., continuing to hold his breath in this way—*yoga-dhāraṇām āsthitaḥ*, *dehaṁ tyajan*—giving up his body, *yaḥ prayāti*—the one who departs, *saḥ paramāṇi gatiṁ yāti*—he goes to the most exalted end.

Death is only for the body, not for the *jīva*. The *jīva* keeps travelling until he knows he is the *ātmā*, which is eternal. Then the *jīvatva*, the superimposition upon *ātmā*, dies. The *jīva* does not die at any time because the truth of the *jīva* is *ātmā*.

And the one who leaves his body in this manner, goes to the most exalted end. The word *prayāti* can indicate travel. *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘Because of his great meditation, holding his breath, thinking of Me and chanting *Om*, he leaves this body and goes straight to *brahma-loka*.’ There he asks Brahmaji, Lord *Brahmā*, for this knowledge. Brahmaji teaches him the *ātma-jñāna* and he is released. *Paramā gati* is the end, which is the discovery of the self being *Brahman*. This is *mokṣa*, but gained in *brahma-loka*. This is called *krama-mukti*.

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥१४॥

*ananyacetāḥ satataṁ yo māṁ smarati nityaśaḥ*  
*tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ*

Verse 14



पार्थ *pārtha* — O! *Pārtha*; अनन्यचेताः (सन्) *ananya-cetāḥ (san)* — being the one whose mind that sees no other; यः *yaḥ* — the one who; नित्यशः *nityaśaḥ* — for a length of time; सततम् *satatam* — constantly; माम् *mām* — Me; स्मरति *smarati* — remembers; तस्य योगिनः *tasya yoginaḥ* — for that *yogī*; नित्य-युक्तस्य *nitya-yuktasya* — who is always united with Me; अहम् सुलभः *aham sulabhaḥ* — I am easily gained

O! *Pārtha*, the one who has a mind that sees no other, who remembers Me constantly for a length of time, for that *yogī* who is always united with Me, I am easily gained.

*Ananya-cetas*—the one whose mind is not in any object or *devatā* other than oneself. This particular expression is used throughout the *Gītā*. *Anya* means another. So, *anya-cetas* is one whose mind is committed to an object other than himself whether it is *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* or even *Īśvara* as someone other than oneself. The one who does not look upon *Īśvara* or anything else as other than himself is called *ananya-cetas*.

## HOW LONG MUST ONE CONTEMPLATE?

The Lord says *satatam*, constantly. *Satataṃ yaḥ māṃ smarati*—the one who always remembers Me. The word *smaraṇa* is used here because you can only bring back to mind what you already know. This *smaraṇa* is always preceded by *śravaṇa*. It means dwelling upon something and implies contemplation, *satsaṅga*, *manana* and even *śravaṇa*. The person spoken of here has undergone exposure to the *śāstra* and analysed it but still has the orientation that he is the body, *deha-ātma-buddhi*.

We have seen the difference between an orientation and a confusion.<sup>1</sup> A simple confusion requires clarification only once. An orientation or habitual error requires repeated correction. Here the *deha-ātma-buddhi*, the notion that the body is ‘I,’ and ‘I am the body,’ is such an orientation. That is why even when the confusion is resolved by the *śāstra*, one continues to have problems that are due to this identification. This is because, this notion has prevailed for a long time. When you have lived your entire life with the notion that, you are the body, how are you going to remove it just because somebody said, *‘tat tvam asi?’* The orientation has to go; and for that, constant *smaraṇa* of the fact that ‘I am *Brahman*’ or *brahma-abhyāsa*, as we saw before, is necessary. One must constantly dwell upon this knowledge until the orientation is corrected.

Since *satatam* means ‘always,’ the question arises as to why has *Bhagavān* used *nityaśaḥ*, which also means ‘always.’ This is because, the word *satatam* is used in the sense of ‘constantly – without any interval.’ So, by using this word the one who constantly remembers *Īśvara*, i.e., the one who spends his time in contemplation,

<sup>1</sup> See page no. 496, Vol 2.

thinking, teaching, discussing, the one who is thus constantly in *satsaṅga* is being indicated here. But ‘constantly’ can be for one day, a week, or longer. So, *Bhagavān* adds another word, *nityaśaḥ*, which also means ‘always.’ The affix *śas* conveys either the sense of abundance or limitation. Therefore, the use of the word *nityaśaḥ* indicates that he contemplates until one requires no more contemplation. That is why the meaning given for this word is ‘for a length of time,’ instead of ‘always.’

## HOW BHAGAVĒN IS EASILY GAINED

*Bhagavān* continues and says, *‘tasya yoginaḥ ahaṃ sulabhaḥ’*—for that *yogī* I am easily gained. *Sulabha* means the one who is gained without any difficulty. A number of arguments can be given as to why it is easily gained.

Anything that one wants to accomplish requires effort. No matter how small the effort, if it requires effort at all, it is not considered *sulabha*. Now the gain of *Brahman* is the maximum possible gain. You cannot exceed limitlessness. Our orientation is, the greater the gain, the greater the effort required to achieve it. But here, the greatest possible gain is said to be easily gained.

To gain *Brahman*, *Bhagavān* says here, one must dwell upon *Brahman*, the source of all love. What effort do you require to dwell upon what you love? Loving does not require any effort; it is very natural. At least, if it is an object, you have to bring it to mind. But here it is yourself. *Ātmā* is *Parameśvara*. Therefore, there is nothing to be desired. Its nature is fullness; so, dwelling upon that is a joyous thing.

Nothing new is produced either; so, it is not born out of effort. It is born purely of recognition of the fact. This is because, it is an already accomplished fact. No production is involved. Nothing new is added. Nothing old is removed.

Who is that *yogī*?

He is *nitya-yukta*—the one who is endowed with a mind that is always tranquil. It is under control, in the sense that, it does not have any problem in dwelling upon *Bhagavān*. It is something that is natural to him. Whenever the mind is free it goes towards *Bhagavān*.

It is like a person who is in love. His mind always goes naturally towards the beloved. Here the mind naturally goes towards *paramātmā* because he has understood it, as the word *smaraṇa* indicates. Where else will the mind go? Until he gains such a mind, he continues to do *śravaṇa* and uses his will to dwell upon the Lord. Later the very subject matter takes over and he does not require any will. All that is required is the initial choice. Being one who is *ananya-cetas*, whose mind is committed to *Parameśvara*, he remains absorbed.

By achieving *Īśvara* so, easily, what does one accomplish?

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।

नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥१५॥

*māmupetya punarjanma duḥkhālayamaśāśvatam*

*nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ* Verse 15

महात्मानः *mahātmānaḥ* — the wise men; उपेत्य *upetya* — having reached; माम् *mām* — Me; दुःख-आलयम् *duḥkha-ālayam* — the abode of misery; अशाश्वतम् *aśāśvatam* — finite; पुनर्जन्म *punarjanma* — another birth; न आप्नुवन्ति *na āpnuvanti* — do not gain; परमाम् संसिद्धिम् *paramām saṁsiddhim* — the ultimate success; गताः *gatāḥ* — (they) have reached

Having reached Me, the wise men do not gain another birth, which is the abode of misery and is finite; they have reached the ultimate success.

## ONE RECOGNISES HIS IDENTITY WITH ĪŚVARA

*Mām upetya*—gaining Me. Here *upetya* means reaching in the sense of being of the same nature. How is this possible? If there are two objects, one cannot assume the nature of the other. Each has its own attributes. If one becomes the other, the nature of one or both of them is destroyed. If, for example, you add water to milk, you will have a liquid of a different density from either of the original components. Therefore, one object cannot gain identity with another. An object enjoying its own attributes cannot enter into another and remain the same object.

Suppose one *bhāva*, object, is indeed the other *bhāva*. Then the separation is only due to ignorance. This is the situation here. Ignorance is the cause of separation between *Īśvara* and *jīva*. And there is an orientation, which is also a product of ignorance. Therefore, dwelling on *Parameśvara* is only to attack that ignorance and to remove that orientation. Gaining identity with *Bhagavān* is possible because, it is an already accomplished fact.

## UNDESIRABILITY OF FURTHER BIRTHS

*Kṛṣṇa* says further, ‘*Punarjanma na āpnuvanti*. They do not gain rebirth.’ Two more words tell us the nature of this *punarjanma*.

One may think it would be desirable to be born again—in a better situation, of course. The problem is, you will have the same struggle in one form or another because, to be born, you must necessarily be ignorant. No one is afraid of another birth; but only the pain. So, *Bhagavān* makes it clear here.

He says that every birth is an abode of pain—*duḥkha-ālayam*. *Ālaya* is a place. And *duḥkha* means ‘pain.’ There are three types of pain, as we have seen. Pain caused by your own body, mind, and senses – *ādhyātmika*, by the beings around you – *ādhibhautika*, and by unknown forces over, which you have no control – *ādhidāivika*. Another definition of a physical body is therefore, *duḥkha-ālaya*, an abode of pain. One thing or another is always in trouble. If everything else is all right, one needs at least some dental work! The body requires constant maintenance, like a car. You have to make sure it has fuel and water. You have to check all the parts and if there is some problem you have to take it to the garage, the hospital. And you need insurance in case of accidents.

But suppose you go to heaven where there is no *duḥkha*, because the physical body you will have there, would not be subject to any pain. To cover that, *Bhagavān* has another word—*aśāśvatam*, it is not eternal. Even if you gain a celestial body, it is not eternal and you have to reincarnate with a body that is subject to pain. And in a celestial body, although there will not be a predominance of pain, there will be some kind of pain. As long as you are an individual, some trace of pain will be there because of the isolation of being a *jīva*. Eventually, even a celestial body has to be given up because the *puṇya* that has taken and kept you there is exhausted or the abode, heaven, which is also a part of creation, is itself destroyed.

Who are freed from this kind of birth and rebirth? *Mahātmānaḥ*, those whose *ātmā* is *paraṃ brahma*. They gain the ultimate success—*paramāṇi saṃsiddhiṃ gatāḥ*. *Saṃsiddhi* is success. The only real success is *mokṣa* and this they have gained. *Paramā* means it is the most exalted among the *puruṣārthas*. Those who have gained this freedom will not come back again.

Even though gaining the Lord is easy, the result is the maximum. On the other hand, gaining a *loka* is difficult and the result is *duḥkha-ālaya*. To choose the latter is a bad bargain. In the next section *Bhagavān* talks about what a bad bargain it is.

In the previous verses, *Kṛṣṇa* said that those wise men who have recognised Me as their own self do not attain another birth. They do not assume another body, which is by nature subject to pain. But, what about the others who do not have this recognition? Where do they go and what is their lot?

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥१६॥

*ābrahm abhuvanāllokāḥ punarāvartino' rjuna*  
*māmupetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate*

Verse 16

अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; आब्रह्म-भुवनात् लोकाः *ābrahma-bhuvanāt lokāḥ* — (all) the worlds (where beings exist) up to the world of Brahmaji; पुनरावर्तिनः *punarāvartinaḥ*—

are of the nature of returning/leading back; तु *tu* — however; माम् उपेत्य *mām upetya* — having reached Me; कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! Son of *Kuntī*; पुनर्जन्म *punar-janma* — rebirth; न विद्यते *na vidyate* — there is not

O! *Arjuna*, all the worlds (where beings exist) up to the world of *Brahmaji*, are of the nature of those from, which one will return. However, having reached Me, O! Son of *Kuntī*, there is no rebirth.

*Ābrahma-bhuvnāt lokāḥ punarāvartinaḥ*—the worlds where beings exist, up to *brahma-loka*, lead back. The prefix ‘*ā*’<sup>1</sup> has the meaning of ‘up to,’ i.e., it indicates the ‘limit’ of something. It may or may not include the point of demarcation. Therefore, the expression, *ābrahma-bhuvanāt lokāḥ*—all the worlds up to *brahma-loka*, can either include *brahma-loka* or may not include *brahma-loka*. We have to analyse the context and see if *brahma-loka* is included or not. In this section, *Bhagavān* is saying that anything created, which is everything other than *paramātmā*, is by nature something from, which you will return—*punarāvartinaḥ*. Since all the *lokas*, including *brahma-loka*, are created, *brahma-loka*, otherwise called *satya-loka* or *kṛta-loka*, is also included in the description, *punarāvartinaḥ*. So, here, the meaning of ‘*ā*’ is ‘up to and including.’

*Bhuvana* means a world in, which beings exist. *Brahma* In this verse is *hiraṇyagarbha*, *Brahmaji*, who resides in *brahma-loka*. Therefore, *brahma-bhuvana* refers to *brahma-loka* where *Brahmaji* resides. when the Lord says, all the worlds up to and including *brahma-loka* are *punarāvartinaḥ*, what it means in other words is that they are subject to destruction. This world, the very ground on, which you are standing is perishable as is your physical body. If this world is destroyed, there is no possibility of you remaining to witness the destroyed world because your body is part of it. Nor is there any question of you retaining this physical body, no matter where you go. All the physical bodies and the worlds in, which they exist, are subject to destruction. There is a time when everything must dissolve in the cause and there is not a single place in the creation, which is going to survive the final dissolution, *mahā-pralaya*. Therefore, the Lord says, *Arjuna*, if you are planning to go to *brahma-loka* or any other *loka*, you will have to return because all the *lokas*, including *brahma-loka*, are subject to destruction.

There is one possible exception to this in the case of some people. *Śruti* allows that, those who go to *brahma-loka* may not come back. This is not merely because they have gone there, but being there, if they are taught by *Brahmaji* they come to understand that *ātmā* is *Parameśvara* and are thereby freed and they do not come back. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> आङ् मर्यादा-अभिविधौ ।

even those people are freed and do not come back, not by virtue of going to *brahma-loka*, but because of knowledge.

*Mām upetya tu kaunteya punar-janma na vidyate*—but having reached Me, *Kaunteya*, there is no further birth. How do they reach *Parameśvara* who is not located in this or any other *loka*? And if they have to go somewhere to reach *Parameśvara*, they have to come back. They reach him in terms of the knowledge that, as *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, they are non-separate from *Parameśvara*. They reach him by knowing that, he is *Brahman*, which is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, out of, which all this creation has come, and, which is the very truth of all creation. Reaching *Īśvara* in this manner, that is, by knowledge, they do not have rebirth.

Otherwise, all *lokas* are subject to time and for that reason alone one has to return from them. How long one remains there does not matter. It is still not eternal.

Here, two questions are implied. Why are all the *lokas* such that one must return from them? Because they are subject to time. Then how are they limited by time? That is pointed out in the next verse.

सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तमहर्षद्ब्रह्मणो विदुः ।

रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः ॥१७॥

*sahasrayugaparyantamah aryadbrahmaṇo viduḥ*  
*rātriṃ yugasahasrāntāṃ te'horātravido janāḥ*

Verse 17

(ये) जनाः (*ye janāḥ*) — (those) people; अहो-रात्रविदः *aho-rātravidaḥ* — who know about the day and night; ते — they; यत् ब्रह्मणः अहः *yat brahmaṇaḥ ahaḥ* — that which is the day of Brahmaji; (तत् *tat* — that;) सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तम् *sahasra-yuga-paryantam* — as that which has a measure of one thousand *yugas*; विदुः *viduḥ* — know; (ब्रह्मणः) रात्रिम् (च) (*brahmaṇaḥ*) *rātrim* (*ca*) — and night of Brahmaji; युग-सहस्र-अन्ताम् *yuga-sahasra-antām* — as that which has a measure of one thousand *yugas*; (विदुः *viduḥ* — know)

Those people who know about the day and night, know that a day of Brahmaji has a measure of one thousand *yugas* and a night (of Brahmaji), a measure of one thousand *yugas*

People, who know about Brahmaji's day and night, know that Brahmaji's one day consists of one thousand *yugas*. Here the word *yuga* refers to a *mahā-yuga*. So, the day of Brahmaji is one thousand *mahā-yugas* and the night of Brahmaji is one thousand *mahā-yugas*.

One *mahā-yuga* consists of four *yugas*, *satya*, *dvāpara*, *tretā*, and *kali*. *Kali-yuga* is four hundred and thirty two thousand years in length. *Dvāpara-yuga* is twice that, i.e., eight hundred and sixty four thousand years. *Tretā* is three times

*Kali-yuga*, i.e., one million two hundred and ninety-six thousand years. Then *Satya-yuga* is four times *Kali-yuga*, i.e., one million seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand. So, complete *mahā-yuga* is four million three hundred and twenty thousand years in length. One thousand of these is one day of Brahmaji—four billion three hundred and twenty million years.<sup>1</sup> When Brahmaji's night begins, all the *lokas* are destroyed. So, after four billion three hundred and twenty million years, all of creation except *brahma-loka* is destroyed. Night comes and Brahmaji goes to sleep. When you go to sleep, your world is dissolved; so, it is logical that when Brahmaji goes to sleep, the entire creation is gone except for *brahma-loka*. Then creation remains dissolved for four billion three hundred and twenty million years. Again it begins when Brahmaji wakes up and his day begins.

Brahmaji's longevity is one hundred years, called a *kalpa*, and at the end of it, there is the destruction of *brahma-loka* too. This is what those people who calculate time with reference to Brahmaji's day etc., know. The purpose of saying this here is to indicate that even though they are four billion three hundred and twenty million years, they are still countable. Because they are limited by time in this way, they are all places from, which one must return. So, going to a *loka*, including *brahma-loka*, is not going to help.

Such a long length of time is still subject to time. There is no eternal heaven because in time, there is no eternity. Then what is eternity? Only 'now,' which is not subject to time. There is no other eternity and that is indeed *ātmā*, which is *Parameśvara*.

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<sup>1</sup> <i>Kali-yuga</i>		432,000 or	432 thousand years
<i>Dvāpara-yuga</i> ( <i>Kaliyuga</i> ? 2)		864,000 or	864 thousand years
<i>Tretā-yuga</i> ( <i>Kaliyuga</i> ? 3)		12,96,000 or	1,296 thousand years
<i>Kṛta-yuga</i> ( <i>Kaliyuga</i> ? 4)		17,28,000 or	1,728 thousand years
<i>Mahā-yuga</i>			
or <i>catur-yuga</i> ( <i>Kaliyuga</i> ? 10)		43,20,000 or	4320 thousand years

One day of Brahmaji consists of 1000 *mahā-yugas*, i.e., 4,32,00,000 years, i.e., four billion three hundred and twenty million human years. And one night of brahmaji is again the same number of human years. Thus 1000 *mahā-yugas* constitutes one day and 1000 *mahā-yugas* constitutes one night, i.e., 2000 *mahā-yugas* constitute one complete day of Brahmaji. With this as one unit for a day comprising of a day and night 100 years form Brahmaji's life.

Please note: One human year is equal to one day of the devas. Thus one year of the devas is equal to 360 human years.

What happens when the day breaks or the night comes for Brahmaji?

अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।

रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसञ्ज्ञके । १८ ।।

*avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyaharāgame*

*rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasañjñake*

*Verse 18*

अहरागमे *aharāgame* — at the beginning of the day (of Brahmaji); अव्यक्तात् *avyaktāt* — from the unmanifest; सर्वाः व्यक्तयः *sarvāḥ vyaktayaḥ* — all that is manifest; प्रभवन्ति *prabhavanti* — arise; रात्रि-आगमे *rātri-āgame* — at the beginning of the night (of Brahmaji); अव्यक्तसञ्ज्ञके *avyakta-sañjñake* — in that which is called unmanifest; तत्र एव *tatra eva* — in that alone; प्रलीयन्ते *pralīyante* — they resolve

At the beginning of the day, all things that are manifest arise from the unmanifest. At the beginning of the night they resolve in that which is called unmanifest.

*Avyaktāt vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanti aharāgame*—from the unmanifest, come all the manifest forms when the day of Brahmaji breaks. From the sleep of Brahmaji arise all the manifest individuals, sun, moon, stars, all mobile, immobile, inert, and sentient entities and the places where they exist. Just as from our sleep our day or dream manifests, similarly from Brahmaji's sleep the whole creation has come about.

That Brahmaji is nothing but *Parameśvara*. This takes it one step further. Everything is *Parameśvara* and Brahmaji is not an entity other than that. Only from the standpoint of creation do we say that from Brahmaji alone everything has come. Brahmaji is non-separate from *Īśvara* and from *Īśvara* everything comes. When does this happen? At the break of day. In other words, when Brahmaji wakes up, the creation arises, comes into manifestation.

*Rātri-āgame pralīyante tatra eva avyakta-sañjñake*. Similarly *rātri-āgame*, when Brahmaji's night comes—after four billion three hundred and twenty million years—all things that are manifest dissolve, *pralīyante*. Where? They go back to the cause, the condition called unmanifest, *avyakta-sañjñake*, which is Brahmaji's sleep. Exactly like our own world resolves into us in sleep night after night, and comes back again day after day, when Brahmaji's day comes, there is creation and when his night begins, there is dissolution. This goes on thirty-six thousand times. Then Brahmaji's life is over and *brahma-loka* is also destroyed; only *Parameśvara* remains.

That *Parameśvara*, *Kṛṣṇa* says, is Me. If you reach Me, you don't get into this cycle. I am the only survivor, the only thing that is eternal, *nitya*. That is *sat-cit-ānanda*.



## BRAHMAN IS SATYĀ; THE WORLD IS MITHYĀ

From this we understand *Brahman* is *satya*, the world is *mithyā*. *Mithyā* is anything that is subject to the three periods of time. It is not that it did not exist in the past and is existent now. It is not that it existed in the past and is not existent now. Again it is not that it is not existent now but will be existent in the future. All the *lokas*, their residents and lords can be negated in all three periods of time. They are all other than *Brahman*, meaning *Brahman* is independent of all of them, while they are not independent of *Brahman*. Anything that *Brahman* is independent of is called *loka*. Within the *lokas* are many *jīvas*, including the *devatās* who are in charge. But, being subject to time, they are subject to death.

Then what is *satya*? What is not subject to the three periods of time. In the past it was, in the present it is, in the future it will be. That can only be one thing—*caitanya-ātmā*. Being the very basis of time, *satya-ātmā* is *nitya*. What is eternal, what exists is only one; that is *Brahman*, which is *ātmā*. And the creation, which is by nature an observable object, is *mithyā*. Anything seen is *mithyā*, it is perishable. The seer, however, can objectify even time and is therefore, the basis of time, eternal. That is *ātmā*, *Brahman*, the only one not subject to time.

That, *Kṛṣṇa* says, is himself and that alone is *nitya*. This is what *Bhagavān* means when he says here, ‘Reaching Me they do not gain another birth—*mām upetya punarjanma... na āpnuvanti*.’<sup>1</sup>

## WHY DOES BHAGAVĒN SAY, REACHING ME, RATHER THAN KNOWING THE ĒTMĒ?

Whenever *Kṛṣṇa* uses the first person singular with reference to himself, he means *paramātmā* and not the historical *Kṛṣṇa*. It can be argued that if this is so, why should he say, ‘Reaching Me you are freed from birth?’ If it is *ātmā* that one must know, then why should *Kṛṣṇa* not say, ‘Knowing oneself—*ātmānaṃ jñātvā*?’ He did not say so, because that is not enough. One has to know that *Īśvara* is *ātmā*. By the statement ‘knowing Me,’ *Kṛṣṇa* equates *Īśvara* and the *jīva*. That equation is the whole teaching. Pointing out that *pratyagātmā* is consciousness alone is not the teaching, *upadeśa*. That *pratyagātmā* and *Parameśvara* are identical is the teaching. This is why *Bhagavān* so, frequently says, ‘Reaching Me you are freed,’ meaning ‘recognising Me as *ātmā* you are freed.’ Only with this kind of equation does it become a teaching equivalent to, *tat tvam asi*. Otherwise it will be experiential. Dismissal of thoughts is not what is being taught here; it is the knowledge that, ‘I am everything,’ that is being taught.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 8-15

To point out this identity *Bhagavān* says, *mām upetya punarjanma... na āpnuvanti*—this *jīva* reaching Me, does not gain another birth. Knowing he is *Brahman*, he knows that he is eternal. And knowing *ātmā* is knowing *Brahman*, because there is no such thing as *Brahman* other than *ātmā*. Those who recognise *ātmā* as *nitya-brahma* do not return to another birth.

Those who go to *brahma-loka* etc., however, do come back to assume another birth. And to go to *brahma-loka* the effort required is extraordinary. It involves elaborate *karma* backed with complex *upāsanas*. Even if you achieve it, you have to come back again unless you have been taught ‘*tat tvam asi*’ by Brahmaji. For that you require some extra *puṇya*. Everyone who goes to *brahma-loka*, does not get a chance to be taught.

Gaining *Brahman*, on the other hand, is easy because it is your nature. Since I am so easily available, why do you turn away from Me and make efforts to reach *lokas*? That is the intention here.

## THE SĪĀUI AND LAȲA OF THE CREATION

In this verse *Bhagavān* says that every day when Brahmaji goes to sleep, the whole cosmos, all the physical and subtle bodies resolve. Then the whole creation arises when Brahmaji wakes up. If on the other hand, one considers that the whole creation is totally dissolved and an absolutely new creation comes up, there are three possible problems. These are raised by *Śāṅkara*.

They are: *kṛta-vipraṇāśa*—the total destruction of something created, *akṛta-abhyāgama*—the coming into being of something that is not created, and *niṣphalatva* of the *śāstra*—the purposelessness of the *śāstra*.

*Kṛta-vipraṇāśa*—the total destruction of something created. If all the *jīvas* in various *lokas* resolve into Brahmaji, they will all be gone. Since they were ignorant, in endless births, they accumulated endless *karma*. These *karmas* will also be gone now and have no possibility of fructifying. The *karma* done by these *jīvas* without being completely fulfilled, are destroyed because they also dissolve when Brahmaji goes to sleep. So, we have the complete destruction of something that is already created. This would be a logical defect in *Īśvara*’s creation.

*Akṛta-abhyāgama*—the coming into being of something that is not created. Then, every time Brahmaji awakes, new *jīvas* are created. But there are now no *karmas* for these new *jīvas*. That means *Bhagavān* creates varieties of new *jīvas* for his own amusement or for no purpose at all. There is no rhyme or reason to the creation. This is a second logical defect, the coming into being of something that is not created.

The *karma* in the account of the *jīvas* all get destroyed if the *jīvas* are destroyed. And if new *jīvas* are created, then they have come into being without any past *karma*

etc. So, what is created is destroyed and what is not created is brought into being. The next verse will dismiss both these defects.

*Niṣphalatva* of the *śāstra*—the purposelessness of the *śāstra*. A third difficulty is this. There is a *vidhi-niṣedha-śāstra*, which enjoins certain actions and prohibits others. If you do the prohibited actions, you will incur *pāpa*. If you do the prescribed actions, you will gain *puṇya*. Then there is the *bandha-mokṣa-śāstra*, which says that if you keep performing actions like this you will be in bondage; if you know the truth, you will be released.

If the *jīvas* totally disappear in *pralaya*, they will not enjoy the results of their many actions, good and bad. Without that, and without any knowledge, they will get liberated. So, both *vidhi-niṣedha-śāstra* and *mokṣa-śāstra* will have no meaning. All you have to do to get liberated is to wait for the *kalpa* to end. It is something like amnesty. If you wait long enough, it will come. You just keep living in *saṃsāra* and you will get liberated anyway because everything is going to end one day. You need only to wait for Brahmaji's night and it will all be over. The next verse removes this difficulty also.

## HELPLESSNESS OF THE JĪVA IN THE CYCLE OF CREATION AND DISSOLUTION

In the next verse *Bhagavān* shows that the *jīva* is helplessly caught in this cycle of creation and dissolution. *Karma* has its source in a five-fold affliction—*avidyā*, ignorance; *asmitā*—ego; *rāga*—likes; *dveṣa*—dislikes; and *abhiniveśa*—attachment or even mistaking something, which is non-eternal as eternal. Why does a person perform *karma*? Only due to a fondness or preoccupation with something, *abhiniveśa*. He has a confusion that by going to heaven, for example, he will get *mokṣa*. Or simply, by getting a certain thing he will achieve a given end and thereby better his lot. Similarly, *rāga-dveṣa* is a source of *karma*. And to do any action, there must be a subject, the agent, *asmitā*. All these are possible due to *avidyā*, ignorance. Together these five are the basis for all *karma*. Since they all exist in the mind of the *jīva*, *karma* has its abode in the *jīva*. Because of the force of this *karma*, necessarily, without his willingness, the *jīva* is forced to perform action.

भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते ।

रात्र्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे ॥१९॥

*bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṃ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*

*rātryāgame'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavatyaharāgame*

Verse 19

स एव अयम् *sa eva ayam* — that is indeed this; भूतग्रामः *bhūtagrāmaḥ* — group of beings; अवशः *avaśaḥ* — necessarily; भूत्वा भूत्वा *bhūtvā bhūtvā* — having repeatedly

come into being; रात्रि-आगमे *rātri-āgame* — when the night comes; प्रलीयते *pralīyate* — dissolves; पार्थ *pārtha* — O! Son of *Prthā*; अहरागमे मे *aharāgame* — when the day comes; प्रभवति *prabhavati* — it arises

That is indeed this group of beings (which), having repeatedly come into being necessarily dissolves when the night (of Brahmaji) comes, O! Son of *Prthā*. When the day comes, it necessarily arises .

Without any personal volition, by the law of *karma*, a person comes into being again and again. Every time the day breaks for Brahmaji, all the beings emerge. Then again, having existed, they resolve.

*Bhūta-grāmaḥ sa eva ayam bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*—*Bhūta-grāma* means the whole group of beings, mobile and immobile—all forms of life. *Saḥ* and *ayam* used together indicate that which was before, is the one now mentioned. The same group of beings that went into *pralaya* in the previous *kalpa* is the group spoken of here. That means *pralaya* is not a real dissolution but an unmanifest condition. *Ayam* tells us that the same group of *jīvas*, and not any other, comes back again. The group of beings that existed in the previous cycle, the previous day of Brahmaji returns in the next cycle. The repetition of the word *bhūtvā*, as ‘*bhūtvā bhūtvā*,’ is meant to show the cyclic nature of the *kalpas* and also that the same beings come, go into *pralaya*, then again come back.

Since the same ones who became unmanifest return to fulfil their *karma*, there is no destruction of all the created *karma*. And new *jīvas* are not created; the old ones are coming back. Both logical defects are dismissed by this verse.

The exception to this are those *jīvas* who got liberated. They do not exist at all as *jīvas*; all that is there, is *param brahma*. Only those who go into *pralaya* come back.

When do they resolve?

*Rātri-āgame avaśaḥ pralīyate*—when the night of Brahmaji comes, they necessarily resolve. *Avaśaḥ*, necessarily, means they have no say over the matter at all. They are forcefully pushed into dissolution.

*Prabhavati aharāgame*—then, the entire group of beings appears again when the day breaks for Brahmaji. Since the *jīvas* are infinite in number, their *karmas* are countless and they can therefore, appear in any form. Sometimes you find more animals on this earth and fewer human beings, or fewer animals and more human beings. That is the nature of the process. But they are all there somewhere in creation. In time, they all come into being.

The big bang or the biological theories of evolution are in keeping with this because they are processes. We do not accept an immediate simultaneous creation of everything but we consider it to be a process. First, the infra-structure comes into being,

then everything else comes about as part of a process within that. So, it is said here, again and again they come back.

*Bhagavān* says this explicitly to help you develop *vairāgya* towards *saṃsāra*. You are not going to solve the problem of *saṃsāra* by being in it. Repeatedly coming back to assume a birth is *saṃsāra*. Then, in a given life there are the ups and downs of *sukha-duḥkha*. This is *saṃsāra*, it repeats itself. Do not have the illusion that you can just go on living and one day, when the *kalpa* ends, you will gain *mokṣa*. There is no such amnesty. When the *kalpa* ends, it is like sleep. As soon as *Brahmajī* awakes the following morning, you come back. When this is the case, *mokṣa-śāstra* is necessary.

*Vidhi-niṣedha-śāstra* also becomes meaningful. Your *puṇya-pāpas* have to be accounted for in terms of experiences. The *pāpas* have to be gone through; the *puṇyas* have to be enjoyed. You can neutralise some of your *karmas* but you cannot totally eliminate all of them because there is an inviolable cause-effect relationship between an action and its result. That is why *karma-phala* is called *ṛta, satya*—it is true. It can wait, even for one *kalpa*, but if not now, later, in one form or another, here or elsewhere, the *jīva* will reap his results. Once *Brahmajī* has awoken, the subtle bodies are all going to experience their own *puṇya-pāpas* in some form. That means both the *vidhi-śāstra* and the *niṣedha-śāstra* become meaningful. This is within *saṃsāra*. Then *mokṣa-śāstra* also becomes meaningful. Through knowledge there is freedom, *jñānāt mokṣah*.

This verse shows us that the *jīvas* do not disappear in *pralaya*; they continue to exist even there and then they return. By saying this, *Bhagavān* emphasises what he pointed out before, that is, there is no way of getting rid of *saṃsāra* except by reaching him.<sup>1</sup> That reaching is identifying oneself to be *Parameśvara*, which is the one thing that is eternal, *nitya*.

## MEANING OF OĒKĒRA

Earlier, in verses 13 and 14 of this chapter, *oṃkāra-upāsana* as a means for gaining *Brahman* was pointed out. *Om* can be a name for *Brahman*, in which case it is to be understood. Knowing that, one is free. Or it can be meditated upon as a symbol of *Parameśvara*. By this, one goes to *brahma-loka* and can gain the knowledge of *Brahman*.

Now, if *oṃkāra* is the name, the *vācaka*, what is the named, the *vācya*? What is it that is revealed by *oṃkāra* essentially? That is shown in the next three verses.

Because there seems to be a repetition, *Śaṅkara* introduces these verses saying that they are taught with a desire to unfold the meaning of *akṣaram brahma*, which was

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 8-15, 16

referred to as *Om*—*om iti ekākṣaram brahma*.<sup>1</sup> What is the real nature or meaning of *omkāra*, which stands for *akṣaram brahma*? What is the nature of that *Brahman* for, which *omkāra* is the name, *vācaka*? By knowing this, one can gain *Brahman*, in other words, *mokṣa*. That is the purpose of the next three verses.

परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात्सनातनः ।

यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ॥२०॥

*parastasmāttu bhāvo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktātsanātanah*  
*yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati*

Verse 20

तु *tu* — but; यः *yaḥ* — that which is; तस्मात् अव्यक्तात् परः *tasmāt avyaktāt paraḥ* — distinct from, higher than, that unmanifest; अन्यः अव्यक्तः *anyaḥ avyaktaḥ* — another unmanifest; भावः *bhāvaḥ* — existent; सनातनः *sanātanah* — eternal; सः *saḥ* — that; सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु *sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu* — when all beings are destroyed; न विनश्यति *na vinaśyati* — is not destroyed

But distinct from that unmanifest is another unmanifest, which is existent and eternal. That is not destroyed when all beings are destroyed.

In the previous verse, *Bhagavān* showed that everything becomes unmanifest and from that unmanifest condition, everything comes back. This must be clearly understood. When we say the *jīva* is *anitya*, it is not like saying a pot is *anitya*. The name-form pot is finite. From the standpoint of the pot, its cause, the clay is not. The pot form is destroyed but not its cause, the clay. Similarly, when we say the *jīva* is *anitya*, it is only the name-form, the *upādhi* that is *anitya*. When the physical body dies, the subtle body remains and when *pralaya* comes, even the subtle body goes and all that remains is the causal body. And unlike the clay the cause of the pot, here the causal body is also *anitya* with reference to *paraṃ brahma*.

Only *ātma-vastu* is *nitya*. When you say I am a *jīva*, 'I' is really *ātmā*. Just as when you say this is a pot, there is clay plus the name-form pot, similarly when you say I am a *jīva*, there is *ātmā* plus *jīvatva*, the individuality, which is only a superimposition upon *ātmā* caused by *avidyā*. If in saying I am a *jīva*, *ātmā* is mistaken for the individual, that 'I' is *mithyā* because individuality, *jīvatva*, is superimposed on what is real, the *ātmā*. Only the *jīvatva* is *anitya* for the *jīva*; his nature, *svarūpa*, is *nitya*.

We must understand this well; otherwise, there will be a problem of a mix up between what is *vastu*, and what is *avastu*. This mixture exists in every situation. Only the *vastu* is real, *avastu* being dependent upon the *vastu* for its existence. Since, it draws its existence from the *vastu*, the *avastu* is not another object; it is non-separate

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 8-13

from the *vastu*. Therefore, there is only *vastu*. This entire world is nothing but *paraṃ brahma*. All that you see, the seer, and the sight, are nothing but *vastu*. If this is understood, you know that at the time of *pralaya*, the *jīvas* resolve into the unmanifest, the *avyakta-upādhi*, otherwise called *ajñāna-upādhi*.

When Brahmaji goes to sleep, it means that Brahmaji is in that particular state where he does not see that he is omniscient. That is what they call the unmanifest state, *avyakta-avasthā*.

*Paraḥ tu tasmāt avyaktāt anyaḥ avyaktaḥ bhāvaḥ sanātanaḥ*—distinct from or superior to that *avyakta* is another *avyakta*, which is eternal. *Tasmāt paraḥ*’ is similar to the expression ‘*avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ*’ in *Kāṭhopaniṣad*, which describes the Lord as the one who is distinct from all causes.<sup>1</sup>

We always try to accomplish an end within *saṃsāra* but *puruṣa* himself is expressed here as the end to be accomplished. *Puruṣa* is non-separate from myself and that is also the limit, the end to be accomplished. That *puruṣa* is *Paramēśvara* who is non-separate from *ātmā*. Recognition of that is the end and the recognition is the very nature of *mokṣa*.

The nature of *mokṣa* is described in various ways. Freedom from bondage, freedom from self ignorance, freedom from *saṃsāra*, reaching the abode of *Viṣṇu*, not as a place, but as recognition that I am one with *Īśvara*, or gaining *ānanda*, are some of the expressions describing *mokṣa*.

A most interesting one is that you gain the *puruṣa*. This is only possible if you are already *puruṣa* and do not know it. Then you can gain the *puruṣa* by knowledge; to be the *puruṣa* is, to know. That is why a *brahmavit* is sometimes described in terms of *Brahman*. The knower of *Brahman* is *Brahman*, *brahmavit brahma eva bhavati*.

The uniqueness of *Vedānta* is that the description of *mokṣa* will be a description of the *vastu*. The different descriptions in terms of result—freedom from bondage, gaining of *ānanda*, etc.,—are confusing for some people. If *ānanda* is understood as bliss, some experience of happiness that is out of the ordinary, a person becomes a seeker of that bliss. Like any other thing in *saṃsāra*, *mokṣa* becomes one of the things sought after. But this gain of *ānanda* is the gain of my own nature. It is not experiential

<sup>1</sup> महतः परम् अव्यक्तम् अव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः।

पुरुषात् परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥ कठ० १.३.११

*mahataḥ param avyaktam avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ*

*puruṣāna paraṃ kiñcit sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatih* — *Kāṭhopaniṣad* 1.3.11

*The unmanifest is higher than mahat; puruṣa is higher than the unmanifest. There is nothing higher than puruṣa. He is the end; he is the highest goal.*

*ānanda*, but the essence of every experience of *ānanda*. That recognition is gaining *ānanda*.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD TU

*Tasmāt tu paraḥ*. The word *tu* is always to distinguish between two things and can be translated as ‘but,’ ‘so,’ ‘whereas,’ etc. It is a word that introduces a new topic, bringing in a condition, whereby something already stated is to be distinguished from what is to come. *Tu* here is to distinguish *parā-vastu* from everything else. Everything else has been reduced to *avyakta*, but superior to that, *tasmāt tu paraḥ*, is something else. The word *tu* here shows the distinction of the *vastu* that is going to be talked about. It conveys the idea that there is no other thing like the *vastu*.

*Avyakta*, the cause of everything that is manifest, is not the final cause after all; it is only another *upādhi*. The true cause is the basis of the *avyakta*. That is *Brahman*.

When everything is reduced to *avyakta*, the cause, and if it is even other than that, you may think it is non-existent. It is like asking what, on this planet, is to the north of the North Pole? Once you are on the North Pole, there is nothing to the north of that.

To show that the *vastu* under discussion is not non-existent, *Bhagavān* uses the word *bhāva*, existent. It always is. That is the nature of *akṣaraṃ brahma*. It has no non-existence, *abhāva*, and does not change at all. What is distinct from *avyakta* and is an existent being is *paraṃ brahma*.

## DISMISSAL OF BEING A MEMBER OF A SET, SĒLAKĀAŪYA

*Anyah*—A thing that is different from another thing can still belong to the same group as the thing it is distinguished from. This is called *sālakṣaṇya*, having the same characteristic. For example, chair, table, sofa, etc., even though different from each other, are all characterised as furniture. They are all of the same class. Similarly, when you say, it is other than the unmanifest cause, *avyaktāt paraḥ*, it may be one of the many things in the world even though it is different from everything else. It is true that *Brahman* is different from everything else, but nothing is different from *Brahman*. Because it is not like any other thing, it is necessary to dismiss the possibility of *sālakṣaṇya*. *Brahman* cannot be characterised under any group, including *loka* or *devatā*. To show this, *Bhagavān* uses the word *anya*, meaning, it is quite another. It is distinct in an entirely different way from what we normally understand. It is not non-existent; it is not momentarily existent; it is existent and at the same time distinct from everything else. What is that?

It is *avyakta*, that is, it is not known as an object of the sense organs. Since *Bhagavān* has used the word *bhāva*, it can be understood as an existent thing. *Avyakta* makes it clear that it is something that is not available for objectification. It is the cause



of the very sense organ; so, it is not going to be available as a sound, or a form or colour. Then how are you going to know that *Brahman*?

It is manifest in the mind because it is the very nature of the mind. It is recognised there. Even in the sense organs it is present. It is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye—not the object of the eye, but that because of, which the eye sees, ear hears, sense of smell smells.<sup>1</sup> Even though it is not an object of perception, it is always manifest as the very truth of every sense organ, every thought—it is you. Further, it is *avyakta*, the very basis of the popular *avyakta*, the unmanifest, which is the seed of all beings.

*Sanātanaḥ* means that which always exists. It is beyond cause and effect and not bound by time. It existed before, exists now, and will exist later; it is timeless. Even though we use the word beyond, there is nothing beyond; everything we can reach or even imagine, is within this *avyakta*. That means it is the very nature of the seer, *dr̥k-svarūpa*, which is *param brahma*.

*Brahma-loka* etc., are all within your knowledge and within time and space, which are manifest from *avyakta*, the unmanifest. What is beyond that is *ātmā*, which is always immediately available as the self of all beings—purely in the form of consciousness, which is the truth of ‘I.’

And this, not being limited by time, is never destroyed. *Sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati*. The one who remains in all perishable forms, never getting destroyed, is indeed the *ātmā*.

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।

यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥२१॥

*avyakto'kṣara ityuktastamāhuḥ paramāṃ gatim*

*yam prāpya na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama Verse 21*

अव्यक्तः *avyaktaḥ* — the unmanifest; अक्षरः इति उक्तः *akṣaraḥ iti uktaḥ* — that was said to be *akṣara* (that which is not subject to destruction); तम् (अक्षरम्) *tam (akṣaram)* — that (*akṣara*); परमाम् गतिम् *paramām gatim* — as the highest end; आहुः *āhuḥ* — they speak of; यम् प्राप्य *yam prāpya* — gaining which; न निवर्तन्ते *na nivartante* — (people) do not return; तत् *tat* — that; मम *mama* — (is) my; परमम् *paramam* — highest; धाम *dhāma* — abode

The unmanifest that was spoken of as the one that is not subject to destruction, that, they say is the highest end. That abode of mine, gaining, which, (people) do not return, is the highest.

<sup>1</sup> *Kenopaniṣad* 1.2

*Avyaktaḥ akṣaraḥ iti uktah tam āhuḥ paramāṇ gatiṁ*—the *avyakta-ātmā* is *akṣara*, not subject to destruction. Because it is not subject to time, it is not subject to any kind of change. It is that which people who know the *śāstra* call *paramā gati*. A place that we reach or any accomplishment we achieve is called *gati*, the end. *Viṣṇu-loka* and *brahma-loka* are all ends for the *jīva*, the *saṃsārī*. But here, *ātmā*, the self who wants to go to places is itself said to be the end.

How is this possible? How can I be a *gati* to myself? How can there be two *ātmās*, one who reaches and the other who is reached? The answer is, for the confused person, truth is the end, *gati*. All other ends are within *saṃsāra* and they are for the confused *jīva*. So, when he wants to be released from that, *ātmā* itself, the truth of the confused *jīva*, becomes the *gati*.

That is what they say is the most exalted end, *paramā gati*. Any other *gati* is reached only after death and can be either bad or good. *Paramā gati* has no equal; it is *mokṣa*. So, the *ātmā* itself becomes *mokṣa* here. Freedom, the *puruṣārtha*, is non-separate from yourself. Therefore, the seeker of *mokṣa* is not separate from *mokṣa*. Since the seeker and the sought are one and the same, the seeking stems from ignorance. If I am the end and I am the seeker, the means for accomplishing that end can only be discernment, *viveka*. *Viveka* is the means, *ātmā* is the end. The *avivekī* becomes the seeker, the *avyakta-ātmā* the end, and *viveka*, the means.

*Yaṁ prāpya na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*—Why is it called the *paramā gati*? That is because, gaining this, they do not come back. There is no coming back because, it is not an end other than yourself. Generally from any end you certainly come back; but when the end is yourself, how can you come back? You can come back only from an experience. Simple *nirvikalpa-samādhi* without the knowledge that *ātmā* is *nirvikalpa*, for example, is an experience from, which you will come back. When it is knowledge, coming back is not possible. With the mind I am *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* and without the mind I am still *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. What is to be gained? Before a thought there is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*; when a thought is there it is the same. A thought does not displace *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*; it is nothing but an expression of the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Even if you have a thought, if you know you are *sat-cit-ānanda*, there is no question of losing that knowledge. Once there is no ignorance of *ātmā*, which does not change, there is no return.

*Ātmā* is indeed My abode, *dhāma*, *Bhagavān* says. That is the highest end, *paramā gati*. The expression *paramā gati* can give rise to the notion that there is a place that I have to reach. *Śāstra* does talk about heaven as a desirable place. But *Bhagavān* says here that the highest end is ‘you.’ There is no heaven beyond ‘you.’ All other places are places from, which you will return. This is the heaven, entering, which, you will never return. Everybody is generally committed to go to a place where they can be free from the troubles of life. That desirability is expressed by using the word *dhāma*.

At the same time it is made clear that even though it is heaven-like, it is non-separate from you and there is no coming back. That is the greatest abode. *Bhagavān* says, I have no abode, other than you. I reside in your own intellect. Achieving this *ātmā* by knowledge—which is the only way to achieve it—is *mokṣa*.

Now *Bhagavān* shows the only means for achieving this and that is none other than committed *vicāra*, inquiry into the nature of *ātmā*.

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।

यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ॥२२॥

*puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyastvananyayā*  
*yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvamidaṁ tatam*

Verse 22

पुरुषः स परः *puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ* — that *puruṣa* is limitless; पार्थ *pārtha* — O! *Pārtha*; लभ्यः तु *labhyaḥ tu* — but is to be gained; भक्त्या अनन्यया *bhaktyā ananyayā* — by a devotion in which there is no other; यस्य अन्तःस्थानि भूतानि *yasya antaḥsthāni bhūtāni* — within whom are the beings/creation; येन *yena* — by whom; सर्वम् इदम् *sarvam idam* — all this; ततम् *tatam* — is pervaded

That *puruṣa* is the limitless, O! *Pārtha*, but can be gained by a devotion in, which there is no other. (He is) the one in whom all the beings have their being, the one by whom all this is pervaded.

## THE WORD PURUṢA INDICATES BOTH TAṬASTHA-LAKṢAṆA AND SVARĪPA-LAKṢAṆA

*Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyaḥ tu*—*Arjuna*, that *puruṣa* is to be gained; it can be gained through *parā bhakti*.

*Puruṣa*, *Śaṅkara* says here, means the one who seems to sleep in the body in that he resides there without performing any action. That is why *Viṣṇu* is depicted as lying down. He is not sleeping at all but is very much awake as *caitanya-svarūpa*. *Ātmā*, which is *caitanya-svarūpa* is resting in this physical body. This is the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of *puruṣa*, the definition that defines something in terms of its connection to something, as we saw before. When we say that out of, which the world has come, by, which it is sustained and unto, which it returns is *Brahman*, this is *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman*. It indicates that *Brahman* is not to be sought as name and form or beyond name and form. It is to be sought as that out of, which all the names and forms have come, by, which they are sustained and unto, which they return. My own physical body is a name and form, and therefore, non-separate from *Brahman*. So, I need not search for *Brahman*. I need not wait for certain conditions or go to a place or be in a situation

where I can see *Brahman*. Every place, every time is *Brahman* and it is a matter of recognising what is already existing now. The very knower is non-separate from *Brahman* as is everything he knows. From this we understand that everything is *Brahman*. This is *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*.

*Puruṣa* can also mean *pūrṇa*, limitless. This is *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*, a definition, which tells the nature of *Brahman*. It is not limited by space or time or any attribute, even though all qualities belong to it. *Pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam...*—that is whole this is whole; and this whole coming into being is only a manifestation of name and form. If this whole is removed from that whole, what remains is that whole.<sup>1</sup> Any way you look at it, it is *pūrṇa*. Therefore, it is *para*. That one who obtains in the physical body is *para* or limitless. *Para* becomes the reason for it being *puruṣa* or we can say *puruṣa*, the *jīva*, is nothing but *para*. Either way it has the same meaning.

How are you going to reach this *para-puruṣa* when it is already the nature of yourself? *Bhagavān* says, it is gained only by a devotion in, which there is no other, *ananya-bhakti* *tu labhyaḥ*. *Śaṅkara* says here, it is a devotion characterised by knowledge. If he is already non-separate from yourself, the only way you can pursue him is through the committed pursuit of knowledge. Usually, when there is love, two people are involved and a fusion takes place. In the devotional literature, the *jīvas* represented by the *gopīs*, are totally absorbed in the pursuit of *Kṛṣṇa*, who is *Parameśvara*. This can be called *ananya-bhakti*, devotion to one object and only that object. But when another object is involved, it is really *anya-bhakti*. Here, *Bhagavān* says *ananya-bhakti*, a devotion in, which there is no other, a devotion to *ātmā*, which is not other than yourself.

Generally the result of devotion is to go to other *lokas* and the commitment is for that purpose. But in *ananya-bhakti*, the commitment is to one's *ātmā*. *Bhakti* here implies an inquiry that is imbued with *śraddhā* and longing. Because of that, only a *jijñāsu* or a *mumukṣu* can gain this knowledge.

Anything knowable that is other than yourself, you can stumble upon, but not *ātmā*. There are many reasons for that but the most important one is that *ātmā* is not an object. It is well-hidden because the person who looks for it is really looking for himself. So, the problem of seeking should be reduced to simple *jijñāsā*. All desires are reduced to one dominant consuming desire to know the *ātmā*. That is what is meant by the word, *ananya-bhakti* here.

<sup>1</sup> पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

*pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate*  
*pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate*

About that *ātmā* he says: *Yasya antaḥ-sthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṃ tatam*—the one within whom are all beings and things in the world and by whom all beings are pervaded, that is *ātmā*. Just as an effect is pervaded by its material cause, all names and forms, which are effects are pervaded by *ātmā*, the cause.<sup>1</sup> *Śaṅkara* uses the word, *kārya-bhūtāni*, in the form of a product, to describe these beings. As a product like a pot exists within its cause, the clay, all things exist within or are comprised of *puruṣa*. Not only that, this entire world is pervaded by *puruṣa*. Just like a pot is pervaded by space and within space alone all pots exist, this *ātmā*, being the cause of everything, is the one in whom all have their being and by whom all are pervaded. Being the cause of everything, there is nothing that is away from it. The existence of everything belongs only to *sat-cit-ātmā*.

What we call creation is nothing but name and form. Upon analysis, every name and form is reducible to further name and form until the entire *nāma-rūpa* is reduced to *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Wherever there is name or form, understand that there is this *ātmā*, which is non-separate from it. This *ātmā* is to be gained by *ananya-bhakti*. *Bhakti* implies something that you love. In *ananya-bhakti*, all objects of desire are reduced to one—the *ātmā*. The desire to know that *ātmā* is *jjñāsā*, and the love to know that *ātmā* is *bhakti*. Any form of *bhakti* is meant to discover *Īśvara* and the discovery of *Parameśvara* as *ātmā* is the end of the *jjñāsā*.

In these verses, *Bhagavān* points out two types of seekers. One group is directly and totally committed to *Brahman*. For them there is no travel after death because there is no subtle body. Its cause, the causal body, ignorance has been destroyed along with all its products. The *karma* standing in the account of the *jīva* is no longer separate from *Brahman*. Therefore, in effect there is no causal body. So, there is no more birth.

The other seekers are the meditators, *upāsakas*. They go to *brahma-loka* and there, being taught by Brahmaji, gain liberation. Then there are those who are doing good *karma* desiring a better life later. They do gain a better life. But they have to come back again. All this is pointed out here.

Keeping this in mind, *Śaṅkara* introduces the next four verses.

These discuss the meditators, the *upāsakas*, who impose the concept of *Brahman* upon *omkāra* as a symbol, in order to invoke or gain *Parameśvara*. For them, liberation is only after death. Such people the *śruti* says, can go to *brahma-loka*. They travel through the *uttara-mārga*, one of the routes followed after death. Those who perform good *karma* desiring a better life later, follow the southern route, *dakṣiṇa-mārga*, when they depart from this life. Both paths are shown to point out that there are two different directions. One, *uttara-mārga*, goes to a place from where there is no possibility of

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<sup>1</sup> Like the rope for the snake, *ātmā* is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause that does not undergo any change

return; the other, *dakṣiṇa-mārga*, goes to a place from where you will return. The south stands for, *saṃsāra* or death and north, for *mokṣa*. Everyone is attracted to *mokṣa*, even those who strive for the other *lokas*. Because of ignorance and confusion they pursue lesser things thinking that those will solve the problem. The northern route is also called the solar or bright path, the other one the smoky or cloudy path. Both are pointed out here only to praise the *uttara-mārga*.

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिमावृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।

प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ ॥२३॥

*yatra kāle tvanāvṛttimāvṛttiṃ caiva yoginaḥ*

*prayātā yānti taṃ kālaṃ vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha*

Verse 23

तु *tu* — however; यत्र काले *yatra kāle* — at which time (by which route); योगिनः *yoginaḥ* — meditators and *karmaṭhas*; प्रयाताः *prayātāḥ* — who have departed; यान्ति *yānti* — go; तम् कालम् *taṃ kālam* — that time; अनावृत्तिम् *anāvṛttim* — of no return; आवृत्तिम् च *āvṛttim ca* — and of return; एव *eva* — indeed; वक्ष्यामि *vakṣyāmi* — I will tell; भरतर्षभ *bharatarṣabha* — O! Foremost of the *Bharata* family

O! Foremost of the *Bharata* family, I will tell you what is the time (route) of no return and also the time (route) of return by, which the departed *yogīs* go.

Just as in a herd of cattle, there is usually one bull who stands out, *Arjuna* cannot be missed among the members of the *Bharata* family. Therefore, he is addressed as *bharatarṣabha*.

*Prayātāḥ* means travellers and the word is connected to the word, *yoginaḥ*, which refers to those who are either meditators or *karmaṭhas*. After death, some of the *yogīs* travel the path from, which they will return while others depart through a path from, which there is no return. I will now tell you about both these *mārgas*, says *Bhagavān*. The word *kāla* in this verse stands for the path, *mārga*, by, which people depart after death. The *mārga* is mentioned through the *kāla*. The word *kāla* also indicates the *devatās* identified with time.

Since the world is not separate from *Īśvara*, every phenomenon in the world is *Īśvara*. Looked at through a given phenomenon, *Īśvara* becomes a *devatā*. All things—earth, trees, rivers, besides being objects, are looked upon as *devatās*.

*Īśvara*, the efficient cause of creation is viewed from the standpoint of a given effect. If the Lord is the material cause, the world becomes the very form of *Īśvara*. When we view *Īśvara* through a given form in the creation, *Īśvara* becomes the presiding deity of that form. If we look at *Īśvara* through *karma*, he becomes the one who presides over the law of *karma* and gives the results of actions. Any number of

*devatās* are possible because there are varieties of phenomena. Because we can look at *Īśvara* from any given aspect in the creation, there are many gods but one *Īśvara* viewed from different standpoints.

This is said not only to show where these meditators go but to praise the meditators who go to *brahma-loka* and do not return, a description of the others and where they go is also given. The intention of *Kṛṣṇa* is to praise the *uttara-mārga* by using *dakṣiṇa-mārga* as a background. There is no better background than a good contrast. It is not said to belittle the other, but as an aid to understanding.

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।

तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥२४॥

*agnirjyotirahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam*

*tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmavidō janāḥ*

Verse 24

(यत्र *yatra* — where in which path;) अग्निः *agnih* — the god of fire or time;<sup>1</sup> ज्योतिः *jyotiḥ* — the god of time; अहः *ahaḥ* — the god of the day; शुक्लः *śuklaḥ* — the god of the fortnight of the waxing moon; षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् *ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam* — the god of the six months of the sun's northward travel; (सन्ति *santi* — are present;) तत्र प्रयाताः *tatra prayātāḥ* — those who have departed through that path after death; ब्रह्म-विदः जनाः *brahma-vidāḥ janāḥ* — the people who meditate on *Brahman*; ब्रह्म *brahma* — to *brahma-loka*; गच्छन्ति *gacchanti* — go

Where, in, which path, the god of fire or time, the god of light or time, the god of the day, the god of the fortnight of the waxing moon, the god of the six months of the sun's travel towards the north are present, departing there, through that path, meditators of *Brahman* go to *brahma-loka*.

This is a blazing and beautiful route. On the way all the *devatās* are there. *Agni*, the fire god is there to welcome you. *Jyotiḥ*, the presiding deity of time is there as is *ahaḥ*, the *devatā* of the day. *Śukla* is the fortnight of the bright half of the moon, represented by the *śukla-devatā*. The idea here is to indicate all that is bright. And all these *devatās* are present along the route to *brahma-loka*. *Uttarāyaṇa* is the period of six months when the sun is travelling northwards—to the north of the equator. The north symbolises *mokṣa*; therefore, when the sun is travelling northward, it is considered to be

<sup>1</sup> Here the word *agni* refers to the *devatā* and that too the *devatā* of time. So, too with the others mentioned in this verse and the next.

As *Bhagavān Śaṅkara* says:

अग्निः कालाभिमानी देवता, तथा ज्योतिरपि देवता एव कालाभिमानी । शा० भा० ॥

a *puṇya-kāla*, a better period of time than *dakṣiṇāyana*, the six months when the sun is travelling southwards—to the south of the equator. *Ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyana* literally means the six months of *uttarāyana*, but here, it refers to the deity presiding over the six months of *uttarāyana*. All these bright *devatās* invite the *jīva* on the path and take him to *brahma-loka*.

*Brahmavidah janāḥ brahma gacchanti*—those people who meditate upon *Brahman* through *omkāra* go to *brahma*—*brahma-loka*. The word *brahma* here stands for *brahma-loka*. Having reached there, they can gain knowledge of themselves as *Brahman* and are free. Thus there is no return for them. We are only talking about those meditators who are successful enough to go to *brahma-loka*. We know that the word *brahma* stands for the gain of *brahma-loka* rather than *Brahman* because it is said that they follow a path with *devatās* on the way. *Śaṅkara* says they go to *brahma-loka* and gain knowledge of *Brahman*, *kramaṇa*, gradually. This is called *krama-mukti*. Then he adds that for the knowers of *Brahman*, there is no travel. The intention of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is not to describe various paths but to point out that meditators go to *brahma-loka* and the path is brighter for them. So, *Śaṅkara* says that we have to take the word *brahmavidah* here to mean meditators on *Brahman* and not knowers of *Brahman*. There is no going or coming for those who have clear knowledge of *Brahman*. As you come to know that you are *Brahman*, you have gained liberation. We are not talking about such people here. Since there is a route mentioned, it is only for the meditators.

For the wise man, there is no subtle body to depart when the physical body dies. All the *prāṇas* have resolved in *Brahman*. There is no person, no nucleus to, which the *karma* can adhere. Since there are no *karma-phalas*, there is no travel. For him there is no going or coming because he is *Brahman*.

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।

तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥२५॥

*dhūmo rātristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam*  
*tatra cāndramasaṃ jyotiryogī prāpya nivartate*

Verse 25

(यत्र *yatra* — where, in which path; धूमः *dhūmaḥ* — the presiding deity of smoke; तथा रात्रिः *tathā rātriḥ* — similarly the deity of night; कृष्णः *kṛṣṇaḥ* — the deity of the dark fortnight; षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् *ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam* — the deity of the six months when the sun is travelling in the south; तत्र *tatra* — there (on that path); (गत्वा *gatvā* — going;) योगी *yogī* — the *yogī*, the meditator; चान्द्रमसम् ज्योतिः *cāndramasaṃ jyotiḥ* — the world of the moon; प्राप्य *prāpya* — having gained; निवर्तते *nivartate* — returns



The *yogī*, (travelling by the route) where the presiding deity of smoke, similarly the god of night, the god of the dark fortnight, and the god of the six months when the sun is travelling south (are present), having gained the world of the moon, returns.

There is a route, *mārga*, for people who are not *karma-yogīs*, but who do rituals to gain some merit. Even though he is a *karmaṭha*, and not a *karma-yogī*, he is called a *yogī*, because he does only enjoined *karma*, not those, which are considered sinful. Thereby he gains a *devaloka* called *candraloka*. Again, the description of this path is given only to praise the bright path. For both, travel is involved. On the bright path, there is no return once the knowledge is gained in *brahma-loka*. Here, on the other hand, people who are *karmaṭhas* follow the path called *dhūma-mārga*, smoky path. The *devatās* on this path all preside over things that represent darkness—the god of the night; the god of the waning or dark side of the moon, the god of the half of the year in, which the sun travels south are there on this path. *Jyotiḥ* here refers to *karma-phala*, not light because light cannot be enjoyed. A person who has done the enjoined *karmas* enjoys the fruit of those actions for some time and then returns back to the earth. The *jīva* is not released from *saṃsāra* just because he has done good *karma*.

The idea of the verse is that one travels; death does not give you *mokṣa*. Only knowledge can do that and if it is not gained, you embark upon these two paths after death. But these are only the good paths. There are others, which are not so good. There is even a *naraka*, a place where you undergo a certain pain. That is also *karma-phala* and when it is exhausted, you return. *Karma-phala* cannot be eternal; so, even from a painful *loka* you will return. Here he talks only about desirable ends; even from them, you return.

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।

एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः ॥२६॥

*śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate*

*ekayā yātyanāvṛttimanyayāvartate punaḥ*

Verse 26

हि *hi* — as is well known; जगतः *jagataḥ* — of the world; एते गती *ete gatī* — these two paths; शुक्लकृष्णे *śukla-kṛṣṇe* — the bright and the dark; शाश्वते मते *śāśvate mate* — are considered eternal; एकया *ekayā* — travelling by one; अनावृत्तिम् याति *anāvṛttim yāti* — one goes to a place of no return; अन्यया *anyayā* — by the other; आवर्तते पुनः *āvartate punaḥ* — one returns again

As is well known, these two paths of the world, the bright and the dark, are considered eternal. By the one (path), one goes to a place of no return, by the other, one returns again.

*Śukla-kṛṣṇe gatī hi ete jagataḥ*—These two paths by, which one gains various ends, are called as *śukla*, the bright path, and *kṛṣṇa*, the dark path. *Hi* here indicates ‘as it is known in the *śāstra*.’ *Śāstra* is the only means of knowing them. *Jagat* means ‘world’ and here it stands for the world of people—the meditators and those who do good actions. For such people who are qualified to do *karma*, there are these two paths available.

*Śaśvate mate*—they are considered eternal. These paths are relatively eternal because *saṃsāra* can go on indefinitely. Unless you gain *mokṣa*, it does not come to an end. You have to put an end to it by knowing the truth about yourself. So, when we say that these two paths are eternal, the idea is that there is no natural liberation. You must have a desire to know; and until that happens, *saṃsāra* continues. For the *jīva* who is ignorant, *saṃsāra* seems eternal.

*Ekayā yāti anāvṛttim anyayā āvartate punaḥ*—By one path, he goes to an end from where there is no return, *anāvṛtti*. That is the *śukla-gati* whereby he reaches *brahma-loka* and there being taught by Brahmaji, gains *mokṣa*. If he goes by the other, the *dhūma* or *kṛṣṇa-gati*, he comes back. Between the two paths, one would naturally want to choose the bright one, which leads to *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa*, however, is gained not by a path, *gati*, but by knowledge. This, *Bhagavān* shows in the next verse.

नैते सृती पार्थ जानन् योगी मुह्यति कश्चन ।

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवार्जुन ॥२७॥

*naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana*  
*tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna*

Verse 27

पार्थ *pārtha* — O! Son of *Pṛthā*, *Arjuna*; कश्चन योगी *kaścana yogī* — a *yogī*; एते सृती *ete sṛtī* — these two paths; जानन् *jānan* — knowing; न मुह्यति *na muhyati* — is not deluded; तस्मात् *tasmāt* — therefore; अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; सर्वेषु कालेषु *sarveṣu kāleṣu* — at all times; योग-युक्तः *yoga-yuktaḥ* — united to/endowed with the practice of *yoga*; भव *bhava* — may you be

Knowing these two paths, O! *Pārthā*, a *yogī* is not deluded. Therefore, at all times may you be united to *yoga*, *Arjuna*.

*Na ete sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana*—O! *Arjuna*, knowing these two paths, a *yogī* does not get deluded. The *yogī* here is a *vivekī* or a *jijñāsu*. He is not at all deluded about these two paths because he knows one is for *saṃsāra*, the other is for *mokṣa*. He has no confusion about the fact that gaining another *loka* does not give you liberation. Freedom comes only by knowledge, which can be gained here or in *brahma-loka*. The whole of humanity suffers from this delusion that going to heaven is *mokṣa*. It

is methodically propagated by all religions and is so prevalent in humanity that *Kṛṣṇa* had to state it explicitly as a delusion. A *vivekī* or *yogī* is not deluded about this at all.

*Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yoga-yuktaḥ bhava arjuna*—therefore, O! *Arjuna*, equip yourself for this knowledge at all times. Whatever is necessary for knowledge, please do. *Yoga* here is knowledge, preceded by purification of the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Knowledge is *yoga* and any means that helps you gain it is also called *yoga*.

Lastly, the glory of this *yoga* is told.

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।  
 अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा योगी परं स्थानमुपैति चाद्यम् ॥२८॥  
*vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva*  
*dāneṣu yatpuṇyaphalaṃ pradiṣṭam*  
*atyeti tatsarvamideṣu viditvā*  
*yogī param sthānamupaiti cādyam*

Verse 28

योगी *yogī* — the *yogī*; इदम् विदित्वा *idam viditvā* — knowing this; यत् पुण्य-फलम् *yat puṇya-phalam* — the result of good actions, which; वेदेषु *vedeṣu* — with regard to Veda (study of the Vedas); यज्ञेषु *yajñeṣu* — in rituals; तपःसु *tapaḥsu* — in disciplines; च एव *ca eva* — and as well; दानेषु *dāneṣu* — in charity; (शास्त्रेण *śāstreṇa* — by the *śāstra*)<sup>1</sup>; प्रदिष्टम् *pradiṣṭam* — is ordained; तत् सर्वम् (पुण्यफलम्) *tat sarvam (puṇya-phalam)* — all that (*puṇya-phalam*); अत्येति *atyeti* — crosses, goes beyond; आद्यम् *ādyam* — the primal cause; परम् स्थानम् *param sthānam* — which is the highest state; उपैति च *upaiti ca* — and he reaches

The *yogī* knowing this, (the answers to *Arjuna*'s questions in 8.1 & 8.2) goes beyond all things taught by the *śāstra*, with reference to the result of good actions, which abides in the (study of the) Veda, the rituals, disciplines, and charities. And he reaches the primal cause (of creation), which is the highest state.

There are two sentences here. Knowing this, the *yogī* crosses all that—*yogī idam viditvā, tat sarvam atyeti* is one sentence. The other is: He reaches the highest place, the primal cause (of creation)—*param ādyaṃ sthānam upaiti*.

*Vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu ca eva dāneṣu pradiṣṭam yat puṇya-phalam*—the *puṇya* that is ordained by the *śāstras* as a result of the study of the Vedas, performing of various rituals, austerities and charities. These are all the ways by, which one gathers *puṇya-phala*. Simply studying the Veda is a *puṇya-karma* and besides that there are many rituals mentioned there, which, if performed, bring *puṇya-phala*. The emphasis is

<sup>1</sup> This word is understood here therefore added to complete the meaning.

both on the study of the Veda and the performance of rituals. *Tapas*, is following various religious disciplines. *Dāna*, is giving time, expertise or money to others. All these produce *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, which is not immediately seen by you, but is credited to your account and reaped either in this life itself or later in another life.

*Yogī idam viditvā tat sarvam atyeti*—Knowing this, the answers to *Arjuna's* questions in the first and second verses of this chapter, the *yogī* grows out of the limited means and ends. He goes for the total freedom, which is knowing oneself as the limitless *Brahman*, which is the Lord.

*Paraṃ sthānam upaiti ca ādyam*—and he gains the status of *Īśvara*, which is the highest status one can reach. *Ādya* is what is in the beginning, the cause of creation. Only *Brahman* was there in the beginning; then *Brahman* created the entire world. And *Brahman* is in the form of this world. The cause is very important here. If it is *satya*, the product becomes *mithyā* because there is no product separate from its cause. When the cause is *satya*, the product continues to be *Brahman*. Therefore, if one understands the nature of *Brahman*, the creation, which includes oneself, *Īśvara*, the first cause, *ādyaṃ kāraṇam*, and understand that ‘I am everything,’ all these *lokas* have no meaning. Then, one understands that ‘I am that *Brahman*.’ And understanding that, one gains that ultimate end.

ओं तत्सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे

श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे अक्षरब्रह्मयोगो नाम अष्टमोऽध्यायः ॥८॥

*oṃ tatsat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde akṣarabrahmayogo nāma  
aṣṭamo'dhyāyaḥ*

Thus ends the eighth chapter that is called *akṣara-brahma-yoga* in the *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, which is likened to the *Upaniṣads*, whose subject-matter is *brahma-vidyā*, which is also a *yoga-śāstra*,<sup>1</sup> which is in the form of a dialogue between *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*. *Oṃ tat sat*.

<sup>1</sup> Here the word *yoga* refers to anything a person needs in terms of preparation of the mind, *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*, etc., that is needed for the assimilation of this knowledge. Since the *Gītā* discusses all these along with the *brahma-vidyā*, it is also referred to as a *yoga-śāstra*.

**ABABABABAB**

## CHAPTER 9

### THE KING OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, THE KING OF SECRETS

In the previous chapter, a number of topics were discussed ending with the gain of *brahma-loka* and the possibility of *krama-mukti*. In this, a person meditates upon a form of the Lord for the sake of *mokṣa*. As a result, he reaches *brahma-loka* where he can be taught by Brahmaji that he is limitless *Brahman*, the cause of creation. Knowing that he is free, he does not come back, that is, there is *anāvṛtti* for him—an end to the cycle of birth and death that characterises *mokṣa*. That is possible only with the knowledge that 'I am *Brahman*.' Only then, is there no longer an individual, an entity that can assume a body and travel.

All this was pointed out, since one may conclude that by meditation upon the Lord, *saguṇa-brahma*, one gains *mokṣa*, though not in this life. To show that there is no such thing, *Bhagavān* reveals here that *mukti* is always immediate. This has to be said explicitly to eliminate any notion that by going to heaven one will gain liberation. For that purpose, *Bhagavān* begins the ninth chapter of the *Gītā* with the following verse.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥१॥

*śrībhagavān uvāca*

*idaṃ tu te guhyatamaṃ pravakṣyāmyanasūyave*

*jñānaṃ vijñānasahitaṃ yajjñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt*

*Verse 1*

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — the Lord; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

तु *tu* — whereas; इदम् *idaṃ* — this; गुह्यतमम् ज्ञानम् *guhyatamam jñānam* — most secret knowledge; विज्ञान-सहितम् *vijñāna-sahitam* — together with immediate knowledge; ते अनसूयवे *te anasūyave* — to you who are without calumny; प्रवक्ष्यामि *pravakṣyāmi* — I will explain clearly and in detail; यत् ज्ञात्वा *yat jñātvā* — knowing which; मोक्ष्यसे *mokṣyase* — you will be liberated; अशुभात् *aśubhāt* — from all that is inauspicious

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

Whereas, I will explain clearly and in detail to you, who are without calumny, this most secret knowledge together with immediate knowledge, knowing, which you will be released from all that is inauspicious.

The word *vakṣyāmi* means 'I will explain.' The prefix 'pra' enhances the meaning of the verb. Therefore, *pra-vakṣyāmi* means I will explain in detail, clearly.

Explain what?—*idam*, 'this.' Since *Bhagavān* is just starting this chapter, how can he use the word 'this,' a pronoun that usually refers to something directly in front of you. Here, while introducing the topic, he says 'this.' But the pronoun can also be used to refer to a topic already begun, which is now being further discussed. And it can be used when you have something in mind, which you are going to explain, just as when you say, 'When I went to New York today, I met this man.' 'This' man is someone you have in your mind, whom you are going to talk about. *Śaṅkara* says, having brought to his mind—*tad buddhau sannidhī-kṛtya*. What he is going to tell has already crystallised in his mind. *Idam* is *brahma-jñāna*, the knowledge of *Brahman* that was unfolded from the second chapter through to the eighth and is now going to be elaborated further. *Bhagavān* is saying, 'I am going to tell you what I have already talked about before,' knowing full well what he is going to talk about later in this chapter.

## THE WORD TU DISTINGUISHES THIS KNOWLEDGE AS IMMEDIATE

The word *tu* indicates that he is distinguishing the topic he is now introducing from the one he has just discussed, *brahma-loka-prāpti* and the subsequent gain of knowledge, *krama-mukti*. To distinguish that kind of accomplishment from this, he uses the word *tu*, the distinction being that the knowledge he is unfolding here is to be gained right now, and not later. If you are already *Brahman*, why should you wait to go to *brahma-loka* to know that?

The vision of the *Gītā* is that, you are *Brahman*, and once you know that, you are free. Everyone wants to be free. If one claims to be interested in something else, he is just confused about what he really wants. This confusion has to be resolved so that he can understand right now that he is *Brahman*. You are already *Brahman* and that is exactly what you want to be. In the vision of the *śāstra*, you are totally acceptable. If you think that you are not, it is a mistake, and to correct that, knowledge is necessary. If you are already *Brahman*, postponement of the gaining of this knowledge is silly.

It is like a rich person who wants to be rich, not knowing that he has great wealth. To be rich, he has only to know that he is rich; anything else postpones it. Between who he wants to be and who he is, the ideal and the actual, what is the distance? There is no

physical distance nor is there any temporal distance. He will not become rich later; he is already rich. Nor is the rich person away from him. The only thing separating him from being rich is ignorance. That has to be removed.

Right now you are *Brahman*. Why should you postpone knowing that, by making efforts to go to *brahma-loka* and gain this knowledge there? If you want to do a few things here like making some money etc., my question would be, ‘Why do you want that money?’ If you say it is for some security, some happiness, I say that is exactly what *Brahman* is. You first discover that you are secure and happy and you can also earn money happily. Otherwise, after earning money you will discover that you are still unhappy. So, solve the problem of being unhappy, and then happily do whatever you want. So, you have to solve this problem first. You have to understand that you are *Brahman*; you are what you are seeking. This is the significance of the word *tu*. It distinguishes this knowledge that *Bhagavān* is now going to talk about as something to be gained right now.

*Śāṅkara* explains that this clear knowledge is the only means for immediate liberation. It is simple knowledge. There is no experience involved here; no particular condition to be achieved. He quotes a number of *śrutis* and *smṛtis* to describe the knowledge distinguished by the word *tu*—a knowledge that is the direct means for freedom, *sākṣāt mokṣa-prāpti-sādhana*.

It was said earlier—*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*, all that is here is nothing but *vāsudeva*, the Lord.<sup>1</sup> This entire creation is non-separate from the Lord. Since nothing is separate from that Lord, you are the Lord; you are the total. This knowledge liberates you. *Vāsudevaḥ sarvam* is not a belief; it is knowledge, a fact to be understood.

It is said in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*—*ātmaiva idaṃ sarvam*, all this is *ātmā*, yourself.<sup>2</sup> The whole world—sun, moon, stars, known and unknown—is not separate from you. What else can be said about you? You are everything, you are limitless, infinite, everything is you. And again the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* says, *ekam eva advitīyam*—one that is non-dual alone.<sup>3</sup> And knowing that I am that *ātmā*, which is everything there is freedom from all sense of limitations and one is free—this is *mokṣa*.

The same idea is also expressed negatively by the *śruti* when it says, that those who do not know this fact about the *ātmā*, suffer a life of limitations—*atha ye anyathā ato viduḥ anya-rājānaḥ te kṣyialokāḥ bhavanti*, those who look upon themselves as other (than *Brahman*), are subject to experiences that perish.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –7-19

<sup>2</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* –7-25-2

<sup>3</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* –6-2-1

<sup>4</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* –7-25-2



When you describe *mokṣa*, bondage is very clear. Still it is spelled out. In English we say it is expressed unequivocally. In clear terms the *śāstra* says that the one who looks upon himself as other than *Brahman*, delivers himself into the hands of death and one who understands that he is *Brahman*, is free.

This knowledge alone is the direct means for *mokṣa*, nothing else. Not meditation, *karma*, attitude, or values, though all of them are indirectly helpful to gain a mind that can grasp this knowledge. As even fuel, vessels, and so on are all needed for cooking, though all of them together cannot cook. For that you require fire. Similarly, for liberation, the direct means is the knowledge 'I am *Brahman*.' Hence *Śaṅkara* says clear knowledge is the direct means for gaining liberation, not anything else.

In knowledge, preparedness is what accounts for whether that knowledge takes place or not. The equation,  $1+1=2$ , is impossible for an infant to understand, because, he is not yet prepared. For the knowledge that 'I am *Brahman*,' to sink in, the preparation that is required is a certain maturity or assimilation of the experiences of life.

### WHO IS QUALIFIED?

Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says here, '*arjuna te anasūyave idaṃ pravakṣyāmi— Arjuna, unto you, who is free from asūyā, I will tell you this clearly.*' The word *asūyā* has no real equivalent in English. The definition of this word in Sanskrit is—*guṇeṣu doṣa-darśanam*, seeing a defect where there are virtues. Saying of a great man that he is lame is *asūyā*. It is an expression of not being able to accept good qualities or accomplishments in others. This is one of the worst problems a person can have. *Karṇa*,<sup>1</sup> a man of great virtues, had this problem. Even though he had all the princely qualities, because he thought he was the son of a driver, he suffered from a complex, which expressed itself as *asūyā*. *Arjuna* had no such complex and therefore, no such problem. So, he is called *anasūya*. Wherever there was some good quality, he recognised it, always giving a qualified person his due. he accepted him without *asūyā*. Absence of *asūyā* represents all other qualities, which *Bhagavān* is going to talk about in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters—*adveṣa*, *amānitva*, *adambhitva*, *ahiṃsā*, *kṣānti*, *ārjava*, etc. All are implied by this one word, *anasūyā*, and they qualify *Arjuna* for this knowledge.

### THE SECRET NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE

About this knowledge, *Bhagavān* says further that it is the greatest secret, *guhayatama*. *Guhya* means secret and the affix *tama* added to it makes it a superlative—the greatest secret. Why is it the greatest secret? There are various reasons.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to footnote on page 61, Vol I.

**EVEN IF IT IS TAUGHT, IT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD**

The fact about it is that no matter how many times you may tell it, rarely does anyone understand. It remains a secret in spite of being revealed. And even if it is understood, there are certain things that inhibit the assimilation of the knowledge. Therefore, it is the greatest secret, *guhyaatama*. The preparedness for it is the greatest thing you can accomplish in life. You require maturity, which does not come by itself; you have to work on it. That is why it has been said that you need not protect *Vedānta*. It guards itself like the formula on relativity,  $E = mc^2$ . You can write it down a hundred times and yet not understand what it means. One has to reach a point from where he can understand and that requires a lot of preparation. Therefore, this knowledge is *guhyaatama*.

**IT IS OUTSIDE OF OUR KNOWN MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Another reason it is the most secret, *guhyaatama*, is that, it is not something that can be gained by our known means of knowledge like perception or inference, or by our experience. There are two types of perceptions, perception by the sense organs, *indriya-pratyakṣa* and witness perception, *sākṣi-pratyakṣa*, which is a direct perception by the mind. Seeing the printed word on the page is perception through a sense organ, *indriya-pratyakṣa*. The conditions of your mind like *sukha*, *duḥkha* are known by you as a witness, the *sākṣi*. That the witness that witnesses everything is *Brahman*, is not a perception of either of the above—not *pratyakṣa*. It is not an object of experience, i.e., perception through a sense organ or a perception directly by the mind. Nor is it a matter for inference. Therefore, there is no way of knowing that ‘I am *Brahman*,’ unless you have another *pramāṇa*, means of knowledge. And that *pramāṇa* by which this knowledge is gained is *śabda*, the words of the *śāstra*. Thus because it is not available for any known *pramāṇa*, and because it is only through the teaching that you can gain this knowledge, it is *guhyaatama*.

**IT IS MOST VALUABLE**

Another thing that makes it the greatest of secrets is its worth. What is sacred or precious is always secret. You cannot keep a large emerald as a table weight. It will disappear in no time. Anything that is precious or rare, is kept secret. So, saying that it is the most secret is saying that it is the most precious.

*Jñānaṃ vijñāna-sahitaṃ te pravakṣyāmi*—This knowledge I am going to give you, which is the knowledge of *Brahman* as yourself, is also *vijñāna-sahita*. I am not simply going to state that there is *Brahman*. I am going to prove that you are *Brahman*. That is what is meant by the statement *vijñāna-sahita*. I will bring to you an immediate appreciation of this knowledge as yourself.

What will I gain from it? Suppose I tell you a secret like the crows have no teeth. What do you get out of it? When I say you are *Brahman*, you can say, 'If I am *Brahman*, let it be so,. What difference does it make to me?' The fact is, knowing that you are *Brahman*, you are everything, you will be free from all things that are inauspicious—*mokṣyase aśubhāt*. You will be free, from *aśubha*, what is not auspicious, not desirable. You will be released from sorrow, from inadequacy, smallness, and from the bondage of the self—in short, from *saṃsāra*. You will be free from a life of becoming.

*Śubha* means something that is ultimately good. It is often written at the end of a letter or book to indicate an auspicious conclusion. *Aśubha* means it is not an auspicious end. When a person dies and is released from the body, although the end takes place, it is not auspicious because it begins again. That is *saṃsāra* and from that you will be liberated, *mokṣyase*. *Aśubha* can also mean doubt. Then the meaning of these words will be—you will be released from doubt.

Now *Bhagavān* presents this verse and the next, to draw the attention of *Arjuna*.

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।  
 प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥२॥  
*rājavidyā rājaguhyaṃ pavitramidamuttamam*  
*pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartumavyayam* Verse 2

इदम् *idam* — this; राजविद्या *rājavidyā* — the king of all knowledge; राजगुह्यम् *rājaguhyam* — the king of secrets; पवित्रम् उत्तमम् *pavitram uttamam* — is the greatest purifier; प्रत्यक्ष-अवगमम् *pratyakṣa-avagamam* — directly appreciated; धर्म्यम् *dharmyam* — in keeping with *dharma*; सुसुखम् कर्तुम् *susukham kartum* — easy to accomplish; अव्ययम् *avyayam* — imperishable

This is the king of all knowledge, the king of secrets, the greatest purifier, directly appreciated, not opposed to *dharma*, easy to accomplish and imperishable.

The knowledge, *jñāna*, that was spoken of in the first verse is called *vidyā* here. The roots of both words have the same meaning, to know. This knowledge, which liberates one from *saṃsāra*, is necessarily different from any other type of knowledge and is therefore, called *rāja-vidyā*, the king among all disciplines of knowledge.

**WHY IS THIS CALLED RĒJA-VIDYĒ?****BECAUSE IT IS SELF-SHINING**

As in a kingdom, among the many inhabitants, the one who is the *rājā*, the king, is the final authority, similarly here, this knowledge is the *rājā*, the king, among the various disciplines of knowledge. *Śaṅkara* gives the meaning of the word drawn from its root, *rāj*, which means to shine. So, *rājā* is the one who shines by himself, who does not depend upon anything else. Among the people in the kingdom, the king is glorious, great in his own right. Similarly, the *ātmā* is the only one who is self-effulgent.

Knowledge of this self-shining self is the king of all knowledge because all other forms of knowledge depend upon this illumining factor called *ātmā*. Every other piece of knowledge is revealed by your *buddhi*, but this one is self-revealing, it shines of its own accord, *svayaṃ rājate*.

**IT RESOLVES ALL DIVISIONS**

All other forms of knowledge perpetuate the *jñātṛ-jñāna-jñeya-bheda*, the division of the knower, the knowledge,<sup>1</sup> and the object of knowledge. They confirm the notion of division that makes us experience ourselves as limited. This division, the *jñātṛ-jñāna-jñeya-bheda* accounts for all differences. It is not really the differences that we are concerned about here, but the division. Knowing that there are these differences is not a problem. But the sense of division creates self-inflicted limitations. When we say that the *jñātā*, the knower, is other than the *jñeya*, the known, then one limits the other. Thus the division causes a sense of limitation in the knower. This is because what he is not, that is, the entire world, is overwhelmingly big; whereas he is small and insignificant.

As we have seen, all divisions, *bhedas*, fall under three categories. They are: *vi-jātīya-bheda*, the division between species, *sajātīya-bheda*, the division within a given group, and *svagata-bheda*, the division within a member of a given group. Once I say things are divided, I become one among the divided. I am a distinct entity qualified by a few attributes living in and transacting business with the world, which is other than myself. I find I am a limited individual with my own problems that seem very legitimate. I become a mortal; I become limited in terms of sex, age, colour, race, and a whole host of other attributes. All of these are brought about by the original division—that of *jñātā*, *jñāna* and *jñeya*. This division is not ordinary; it creates *saṃsāra*. It is the villain of the drama called *saṃsāra*.

It exists in every other *vidyā*, even in psychology. If you examine your own psychology, even though it is ‘your’ psychology, you begin with a symptom, which you

<sup>1</sup> Here the word knowledge, *jñāna*, refers to the instrument of knowledge.

attempt to trace to its roots. The connection is inferred based on a pattern that emerges from the study of the behaviour and background of many people. That pattern becomes the basis for further deduction and you make a conclusion. This inferred piece of knowledge implies a knower, *jñātā*, who has knowledge, *jñāna*, of something known, *jñeya*. Even though psychology seems very much connected to myself, it is still a discipline of knowledge, which only confirms *saṃsāra*.

Any knowledge is true to its object. The knowledge of the crystal is as true as the crystal, in the sense, that all the properties of the crystal are contained in your knowledge of the crystal. But in knowing a crystal, you are the knower of it and different from the crystal. The self, however, is not a known object. The ‘object’ of the self is the self that knows. So, the knower of the self and the object are one. Once this is known, ignorance is removed and the *vṛtti* that removed the ignorance goes away leaving the *phala*—the resolution of the *jñātṛ-jñāna-jñeya-bheda*, the division of knower, knowledge and known. When these are destroyed, all other differences are also destroyed. I see that every piece of knowledge is nothing but myself, every object of knowledge is non-separate from myself and the knower, of course, is non-separate from myself. All three of them depend entirely upon the self, consciousness, as such. How is this so?

*Jñātā*, the knower, is a conscious being, *caitanya-ātmā*, with reference to something known. The knowledge, the *vṛtti*,<sup>1</sup> is also nothing but *caitanya-ātmā*. And the object of knowledge is not separate from *caitanya-ātmā*. If you say the object is outside *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, how is it outside? If you consider the world from the *sat-aṃśa*, the existence-aspect, there is nothing away from it. All that exists in this world has its being in *sat*, which happens to be *ātmā*. From the knowledge aspect, there is no piece of knowledge, which is separate from consciousness, the very nature of the subject, *ātmā*. The knowledge of the self implies all these. I alone am everything; one non-dual *Brahman*; knower, known and knowledge; the cause of the whole creation—*aham ekam advitīyaṃ brahma*, and at the same time the *jagat-kāraṇa*. This is *ātma-vidyā*. Definitely, it is the king among all forms of knowledge, *rāja-vidyā*. While every other *vidyā* maintains divisions, it devours all divisions.

### THIS IS THE ONLY THING YOU CAN CALL VIDYĀ

Going one step further, only this can really be called *vidyā*. Everything else is *avidyā* because the division is *avidyā*. The division—that I am the knower, this is an object of knowledge and I have knowledge of it—is all *avidyā*. There is no such thing as knower, known and knowledge separate from *Brahman*. These divisions are created by *avidyā* and depend entirely upon *ātmā* being taken as a knower. Based on that are all knower-known pursuits. Does that mean that if I have knowledge of *ātmā*, I will have no

<sup>1</sup> This *vṛtti* is the instrument of knowledge and the word *jñāna* in the *tripuṭī*, *jñātā*, *jñāna* and *jñeya* refers to this.

knower-known pursuits? Will there be no more seer-seen, hearer-heard? These will all remain but the division will be negated, *bādhita*. There is an apparent knower-known pursuit but between the knower and known, there is no division. Then for whom is the pursuit? Everything is 'as though – *iva*.' There is a seeming knower-known pursuit.

Moreover, in every other pursuit of knowledge, there is always something more to be known, which is invariably much greater than what is known. Sometimes what you think you know is also falsified later. And, our definition of knowledge is that which is not subject to negation, *abādhitaṃ jñānam*. All the knowledge we have is negatable because from another standpoint, it changes completely. If you say this is a table, from another standpoint it becomes wood. The table is *bādhita*. The previous knowledge is completely negated by knowledge of the cause, *kāraṇa*. And if a new discovery takes place, a given piece of knowledge also becomes *bādhita*. Furthermore, no knowledge is ever complete. Because the universe is a whole, every piece of knowledge is connected to every other piece of knowledge. In the whole, how can you have a piece of knowledge and still call it knowledge? Knowing an aspect of something you cannot say you know it completely. Unless you know the whole, you will not know the part as a part.

There is no other knowledge, knowing, which everything is as well known. Every other *vidyā* leaves behind a bit of ignorance because knowledge without the vision of the whole, is never understood completely. The whole happens to be the self and therefore, I am the whole, in, which there are no details because *ātmā* is free from attributes. All *nāma-rūpa* is superimposed upon *ātmā*. To know that the self is *Brahman*, as something that is whole, is to have complete knowledge because it has no attributes. If there are attributes, you have to know them and it is not possible to know them completely. So, any piece of knowledge is really *avidyā*, it cannot be called *jñāna*.

Whereas in knowledge of the self, *Brahman*, partial knowledge is not possible because there is no part. It is the partless whole and therefore, either you know it or you do not. 'I,' the *ātmā* is free from any form of limitation. It is one limitless consciousness, free from all attributes. There is no possibility of partial knowledge here. Therefore, only one *jñāna* is possible, *ātma-jñāna*.

So, *abādhita-jñāna* means not just that it cannot be negated; it means this alone can be considered as knowledge.

### **THIS KNOWLEDGE IS RĒJA - VIDYĒ BECAUSE IT GIVES ONE THE GREATEST SATISFACTION**

In any other *vidyā*, after knowing it how do you feel about it? Every Ph.D. is grateful when he is awarded his degree because he alone knows how little he knows. He knows how much he had to study and how little he has understood. Even what he has written, he has not understood completely? Every sentence can be research material for another Ph.D. This goes on and on. No one is satisfied with his knowledge even in a

given field. What to talk of the ignorance one has in so many other disciplines of knowledge. In terms of simple satisfaction, *ātma-vidyā* has the last word among the disciplines of knowledge.

Every dissatisfaction implies an ‘I,’ as *ahaṅkāra*, which is the knower. It is not the brain that is dissatisfied with itself. ‘I’ am dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction is centred on *ahaṅkāra*, the ego. How are you going to eliminate that? You cannot remove it, you can only understand that *ahaṅkāra* is only an apparent form, a *mithyā*-form, of *sat-cit-ānanda-advaya-brahma*. This knowledge, which removes the notion of limitation of the self is therefore, *rāja-vidyā*.

### THIS VIDYĀ IS ALSO CONSIDERED TO BE THE GREATEST SECRET, RĀJA-GUHYAM

All that we saw in the last verse for *guhyatama* can be said again here. It is the greatest secret. Any secret can be stumbled upon but this one can remain a secret for eternity. Any other secret is available for disclosure because as a knower you have means to know it, i.e., your perception and inference. But this self is the secret of the knower himself. How can he know it? About the knower who goes about unravelling all secrets, there is a great secret. He is the sought. What he seeks is exactly what he is. He is not going to figure that out. He has to be told by some other source.

It is like wanting to see your eyes. It is an illegitimate desire. If you see, you know that you have eyes; in fact, if you want to see the eyes, it is a problem. That I exist and that I am conscious is no problem. But if I have to know the nature of that self, I have a problem. To see the eyes you need a mirror. Words are also like a mirror to show you exactly what you have to know. You must see the fact that ‘I am *Brahman*.’ Till then, it is the greatest secret, *rāja-guhya*.

As we saw in the last verse, because of its sanctity also it is *guhya*. Anything that is precious is *guhya*. Among all the precious things, the most precious is self-knowledge, because anything else, no matter how precious, makes you more insecure. Even if a woman has a necklace, which has a value of one million dollars, she will wear an imitation of it and keep the real one locked up. Why? Because it is precious. Does this precious thing make her secure or insecure? She is insecure because someone may take it from her and even harm her in the process. All precious things in this world make us insecure. The only really precious thing is this *vidyā* because it makes you secure. That is why it is *rāja-guhya*—no one can take it away from you.

### ĀTMA-JOĒNA IS THE GREATEST PURIFIER

Further the Lord says that this knowledge is the greatest purifier—*pavitram idam uttamam*. *Pavitra* means something that purifies. There are many purifying agents, the

most well-known of, which is *agni*, fire, who is also called *pāvaka*, the one who purifies. Even so, there is nothing so purifying as *ātma-jñāna* because it removes the very concept of purity and impurity. It is, therefore, the greatest purifier, the most exalted, *uttama*. *Śaṅkara* says it is the most exalted because in an instant it burns away countless births, along with their cause, *puṇya* and *pāpa*.

Suppose a person commits a regrettable action, something that leaves him feeling guilty. He knows the action was wrong. Others also know that it was wrong and may even point that out. How are you going to remove that sense of guilt? You can try to shift the attention, look for a scapegoat, a justification. To an extent you can free yourself from guilt by focusing on your parents or the planets or confessing about the whole thing; but the guilt will not completely go. Once it is entertained, you cannot remove it. Similarly you cannot totally remove hurt. Some traces are always left behind. Psychologically, astrologically, or religiously you can deal with it but the guilt remains as long as I think that I am the *ahaṅkāra*. This is the nucleus, which holds all the imprints of guilt. Total elimination is not possible unless you understand *ātmā* is *akartā*.

That I never perform any action at any time is the truth about the self. It is not self-hypnotism. I cannot hypnotise myself into a belief that I did not do any action. But that I never performed any action is a fact from the standpoint of the *ātmā—naiva kiñcit (karma) karomi*.<sup>1</sup>

A story illustrating this is told of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. It seems there was a big discussion going on among the *gopīs* about *Kṛṣṇa* having many wives. He wanted to make the *gopīs* understand something. One day, when he was on the banks of the Yamuna he told the , that there was a *ṛṣi* on the other bank who had not eaten for a number of months and they must go and feed him. All the *gopīs* prepared food and taking it on several plates, went to the banks of the Yamuna to cross. They found the Yamuna in spate and no boatman would come. So, they came back to *Kṛṣṇa* and asked him how they were to get to the other bank. *Kṛṣṇa* told them to go to the Yamuna and address it saying, ‘If *Kṛṣṇa* is a *brahmacārī*, then O! Yamuna, please subside.’ The *gopīs* laughed, went to the Yamuna, not believing what *Kṛṣṇa* had said but simply following his orders. No sooner did the *gopīs* address the Yamuna as instructed than it dried up. In great wonder, thinking, ‘*Kṛṣṇa* is not a *brahmacārī*; He has *Rādhā*, *Rukmiṇī*, *Satyabhāmā* and others. What is all this?’ they went to the other bank to feed the *ṛṣi*.

They marvelled as he ate everything they had brought—plates and plates of food. When they went back to the Yamuna, they were again unable to cross and went back to the *ṛṣi* to seek his help to cross to the other side. He told them to go to the Yamuna and say, ‘If the Swami had never eaten in his life, oh Yamuna, please go down.’ They went and said so to the Yamuna and the Yamuna dried up. What does this story mean?

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –5-8



The story shows that *ātmā* is not the doer or the enjoyer—*ātmā akartā abhoktā*. The status of enjoyer or doer is only an incidental attribute imputed to the self from a standpoint. From the standpoint of the senses and organs of actions, an action is imputed to the self and you consider it as a *kartā*. Once you take it as a *kartā*, all limitations are imposed upon it. So, there is no possibility of a perfect action and there will always be remorse and guilt. If you are a perfectionist, you are constantly plagued with a sense of defeat. You remember all the actions you did not do properly. The whole world may praise you but you can still feel that you have not achieved anything. As a *kartā*, there is no way you can escape such a feeling. The only way out is to understand that the self performs no action.

Anything that helps you resolve your problem is *pavitra*—something that purifies. Prayer, rituals, disciplines, therapy, any kind of help you seek to get rid of guilt, hurt, laziness, frustration, procrastination and so on, all can be called *pavitra*. Among all possible things that can be called *pavitra*, which is *uttama*, the most exalted? It is only *ātmā-jñāna*; because that alone calls the bluff of the *ahañkāra*, the nucleus of all these problems. *Ahañkāra*, ego, is ‘I,’ the *ātmā*; but ‘I’ the *ātmā* is not ego. ‘I’ is *paraṃ brahma*. It not only cleanses you of all things done in this life, it eliminates all the *puṇya* and *pāpa* of previous lives that is standing in your account. By prayer etc., we neutralise some of the *pāpa-karmas* to an extent and also eliminate some guilt. But any amount of expiatory action can only neutralise a finite number of *pāpa-karmas*. *Brahma-jñāna* wipes out everything. As *Śaṅkara* says, it burns along with its root the entire *sañcita-karma*, which has been accumulated in thousands of births.

That root is ignorance whose product is *ahañkāra*. The complete elimination is instantaneous because knowledge does not take time. If a person knows clearly, ‘I am *Brahman*,’ that is the end of it. It is something like waking up from a dream. In a dream you may have committed a multiple murder but upon waking up, you are completely exonerated. You are not responsible for it because you did not do it. When that is so, what is there to be said about the purifying capacity of this knowledge? This is the most purifying—*pavitram idam uttamam*. And what kind of knowledge is it?

## DHARMYAM, ENJOINED BY ĀSTRĀ

And it is *dharmya*, something that is enjoined by the *śāstra*. *Śāstra* talks about various *karmas*, which will help you gain a number of results for yourself. This is all called *dharma*. But this knowledge is something that destroys *puṇya* and *pāpa* so, one may conclude that it is outside *dharma*. No. This is something enjoined by the *śāstra*, even though it destroys *dharma* and *adharmā* taking you beyond them. *Śāstra* is divided into two sections. One is meant for *abhyudaya*, the prosperity and well being of the *jīva* within *saṃsāra*. The other gives the utmost well being, *mokṣa*. So, from the standpoint of being a *mokṣa-śāstra*, this is *dharmya*. Because we see statements in

*śāstra* such as, 'Ātmā is to be recognised, heard about, thought about, and meditated upon—*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsītavyaḥ*,'<sup>1</sup> we understand this knowledge is *śāstra-vihita*. It is enjoined, by the *śāstra*.

In the *śruti* statement above, the suffix, *tavya*, indicates the imperative. It is a command, a *vidhi*. When there is a command in the *śāstra*, you should be able to fulfil it because it is based upon your will. The *puruṣa* using his will fulfils the *vidhi*. But when it comes to *ātma-jñāna* in *mokṣa-śāstra*, the *vidhi* does not apply in the way we normally understand because it is yourself. The statement, *tat tvam asi*—you are *Brahman*,<sup>2</sup> is not a command. *Śāstra* is not saying that you better become *Brahman* if you want *mokṣa*. It is a simple statement of fact. In a statement of fact, where is the pursuit? Even though there is no pursuit of action, because you cannot undertake any activity to be yourself, here too there are certain things to be done. As with any fact, it has to be understood. And therefore, it has to be inquired into as directed by the *śāstra*. Therefore, it is said in the form of the injunction, *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsītavyaḥ*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, because it is enjoined by the *śāstra*, this knowledge is said to be *dharma*. This is one meaning for *dharma*—not outside the *śāstra*.

## DHARMYAM, NEVER OPPOSED TO DHARMA

Another meaning is that it is never opposed to *dharma*. If you analyse *dharma*, you will find that it is the order, which is *Īśvara* and you will not be separate from that order at any time. Your notion of being separate, your *ahaṅkāra*, is negated; so, you are no longer frightened and isolated. Once you understand 'I am *Brahman*,' you have no need to prove yourself.

At the beginning of the *Gītā* we see that *Arjuna* is overwhelmed by his situation and confused about right and wrong. Because of his prior *saṃskāras* and the knowledge from his culture that there is a *mokṣa-śāstra*, he decides to solve his problem for good and asks *Kṛṣṇa* to teach him.

Since the knowledge is of yourself, the *buddhi* has to turn its attention towards the self. If it is unenlightened, it cannot, because it has no *pramāṇa* for that. Since you require a *pramāṇa*, you expose your *buddhi* to the *śāstra* coming from teacher. In any learning, if a teacher has to convey something, the *buddhi* of the teacher and student should become one. Only then can you gain the knowledge that is in the *buddhi* of the teacher. Here *Kṛṣṇa's buddhi* will become *Arjuna's* or your *buddhi*. So, the real *guru* is your own *buddhi* that is exposed to the teacher.

Then he can say, *tat tvam asi*.<sup>4</sup> You are that *Brahman*, from, which everything has come. In this process the *ahaṅkāra* goes completely because 'I' does not reside in

<sup>1</sup> *Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 4-5-6.

the mind and body. We know it continues even after knowledge because we see *Kṛṣṇa* talking. But the difference now is that the *ahaṅkāra* is enlightened. It is the *bādhita-ahaṅkāra*, the *ahaṅkāra* that has been negated cognitively, that continues. It has no need to prove itself because it is no longer insecure, frightened, mortal, and possessed of a number of attributes all of, which merely define its limitations. Before this knowledge everyone wants to be somebody bigger than what he is. But now, he has discovered that he is the very cause of the creation, *jagat-kāraṇa*.

With this knowledge, what kind of action will he do? Is his self-knowledge opposed to *dharma*? Is it opposed to all these virtues—*amānitva*, *adambhitva*, *ahiṃsā*, *kṣānti*, *ārjava*, *ācāryopāsana*, *śauca*, *sthairya*, *ātmavinigraha*? No. They are all very natural to him. What is a value if it is not natural and universal? Love, sympathy, compassion, friendliness, sharing, etc. are all natural. They are not something created by us but the very order of the creation. That order is *Parameśvara*. So, with this knowledge, the values he has will be *dharmya*, *dharmāt anapetam*, not opposed to *dharma*, the order. They will be spontaneous virtues.

Previously you tried to be sympathetic, to be loving. In order to be mature, you tried to be understanding. You tried to be giving so, that you could become more than what you were. As a mature person, you recognised and responded to the needs of others. There was an alertness, an attempt on your part, which was necessary. But now after knowledge, all these are natural to you. What was a *sādhana* before, becomes an embellishment now. Now, because the person is full, he has no need to go against *dharma*. He has nothing more to gain.

Generally behind every wrong action is a person who is frightened or greedy. He is greedy because he feels small, and frightened because he feels overwhelmed by the world—all because of ignorance. When that ignorant person is gone, where is the possibility of *adharmā*? *Dharma* becomes natural. Self-knowledge and *dharma* go together; so, the knowledge is *dharmāt anapetam*, i.e., *dharmya*.

## SUSUKHĀĒ KARTUM

Further, it is the most easy—if you are ready for it.

Because *Bhagavān* has described this knowledge as *rāja-vidyā*, *rāja-guhya*, *pavitra*, etc., one can be afraid that it is beyond one's capacity to attain. This notion is a deterrent to even undertaking the pursuit and so, it has to be addressed. If someone is asked to lift something, which is beyond his capacity, even looking at it, he will feel weak. Similarly, one can think that there is a lot of effort involved in gaining this knowledge and get discouraged. In fact, it is very easy to pursue, *susukhaṃ kartum* because you need not make any effort, you have simply to know. The means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, is available, the teacher is there; all you have to do is expose your

*buddhi*. The *śāstra* makes the *ahaṅkāra* drop. It is like your seeing these words right now. What effort do you make? Your eyes are open, the printed page is right in front of you, and you see the words. You are not doing something, your eyes are open, and you happen to see. Even if you do not want to see, you will see if the eyes are open and are backed by your mind. It is the same for any piece of knowledge. *Ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda* and all you have to do is expose yourself to the teaching and see exactly what the words say. Your will or effort is not involved. This is what is called surrender. You need not do anything; the words take care of the job of revealing what the self is. This is the teaching. And therefore, it is *susukhaṃ kartum*.

Any knowledge is like that. But for it to be easy, the person must have adequate preparation, *adhikāritva*. For *ātma-jñāna* the preparedness that is required is maturity. Daily experiences are good enough to make you a mature person, if you are ready to learn. Take cognisance of your behaviour and that of others. Maturity does not require any special experience; it requires just understanding of one's experiences. Nor do you have to be someone special in order to be mature. It depends entirely upon just how much attention you pay to your own behaviour, your own thinking. Anybody's experiences are good enough for this. Society provides enough frustrations, invokes enough anger. It does not deny you the material that is necessary for growth. You simply have to understand it and thereby maturity is assured. For such a mature person, this knowledge is *susukhaṃ kartum*.

From the standpoint of the result, it looks as though gaining this knowledge is going to be an enormous task; because, what is taught is that I am everything, the whole. Typically we think that for a small result, there will be a little effort, for a greater result, more effort. For an absolute result, what can be the effort? There is no such thing as absolute effort, nor is it required. To be *Brahman*, you simply have to know 'I am *Brahman*.' It is very easy, *su-sukham*, because it is just knowing. *Śaṅkara* says it is like discerning a ruby, *ratna-vivekaḥ iva*. For a person who has the expertise, it does not require any time to know whether a ruby is real or not. Just by looking at it, he can tell. *Śaṅkara* uses the example of a *ratna* because here too a certain expertise is required. It is as easy for a *jñānī* to understand that he is *Brahman* because he has the expertise—the knowledge, *ātma-jñāna*.

If it is very clear that all *nāma-rūpa* is *anātmā* and *ātmā* is the consciousness in whose presence all things are known, there is no problem. Knowing this, is very easy, *su-sukham*, and everything else, especially *brahma-loka-prāpti* takes a lot of time and effort. It is better to strive for *ātma-jñāna* and thereby *mokṣa*. Therefore, recognition for the self that it is *Brahman* is *susukhaṃ kartum*, easy to accomplish. All the other *karmas* also have a place here because they give you *puṇya*, which will lead you to this knowledge. The *puṇya* is *karma-phala* but the real benefit of all *karma-phala* is that it gives one the qualification, *adhikāritva*, and thereby, knowledge. After gaining the

*adhikāritva*, all you require is *viveka*. Once there is *viveka* one is pushed towards *ātma-jñāna* and *mokṣa*.

### PRATYAKĀA-AVAGAMAM

Then, if I am to gain this knowledge, how am I to gain it? It is not like *Vaiṣṇava* or any other place, being told of, which, I can gain some indirect knowledge, hoping to verify it later.

This knowledge, *Bhagavān* says, is *pratyakṣa-avagamam*, known to you directly, immediately. If I have to know a crystal, for example, what I need is immediate knowledge. When told, ‘This is a crystal,’ to know it is a crystal, I must have a thought, *vṛtti*, corresponding to the crystal, which removes my ignorance of the crystal. To have this thought, I must be able to see the crystal. Similarly, for self knowledge, the self already being available for appreciation, I must have a *vṛtti*, which can remove my ignorance about the self. That *vṛtti* is what is created by the teaching. It gives immediate knowledge, and having destroyed ignorance about the self, it goes away.

### AVYAYAM, KNOWLEDGE IS NEVER LOST

The *vastu* of that knowledge is imperishable, *avyaya*. The *jñāna-vṛtti* is perishable, *vyaya* but *ātma-jñāna* is *avyaya* because the knowledge is as true as its object. *Ātmā* is not subject to time. It is *nitya*; so, knowledge of the *ātmā* is also *nitya*. Since the object of knowledge is myself and because it is *nitya*, I do not require memory to retain the knowledge. I can remember a hundred different things but never the *ātmā* because, I am that *ātmā* because of which all memory takes place. If I am ignorant about that self, I need only have that ignorance destroyed. The knowledge that takes place is *avyaya* because it is myself and I can never lose sight of myself. When I see the world I am *sat-cit-ānanda*; when I do not see the world I am *sat-cit-ānanda*. I do not need to repeat it to myself. The words are meant to reveal, not for repetition. *Sat* is a *lakṣaṇa* to understand that the *ātmā* is not time bound; *cit* is a *lakṣaṇa* for understanding that the *ātmā* is not subject to ignorance. That it is *ānanda-svarūpa* is to show that the *ātmā* is *ānanda*, free from any limitation. These words are used to convey the knowledge of the reality and not for *japa*. We are not invoking the grace of the *sat-cit-ānanda* by saying *sat-cit-ānanda*’ham. If I repeat these words, I try to see the implied meaning of *sat*, of *cit*, and of *ānanda*. It is another type of *śraddhā* leading to *nididhyāsana*.

Another question can be asked here. Suppose a *jñāni* has a thrombosis in the area of the brain, which stores memory. When he regains consciousness, he has no memory of his own name or the people he knew. He previously knew all the *Upaniṣads* and now he remembers none of them. How can you say this knowledge is *avyaya*? Will he know he is *sat-cit-ānanda*? Yes, he will. He will not remember the words but since his original ignorance is gone, there will be no more birth for him. It is like the situation in

sleep. If you have understood that you are *Brahman*, when you are asleep, that knowledge is not available to you. That does not mean the ignorance has come back. Similarly here, the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is not functioning as it should. But once he has gained the knowledge, he no longer has any self-ignorance. So, there is no question of his returning to this world. That knowledge is *avyaya* because the result of it is yourself, which is *avyaya*. There is no question of it being lost.

The description of this knowledge is not really a praise. If you introduce me to a very rich man saying that he can buy this town, you are not flattering him. It happens to be true. Similarly, the words that are used here to describe this knowledge—such as *rāja-vidyā*, *rāja-guhyam*, *pavitram*, *uttamam*, *pratyakṣa-avagamaṃ*, *susukhaṃ kartum*—are all true descriptions of this knowledge. In fact, all these words are not enough. No matter what we say, we always fall short of the Lord. *Bhagavān* is never flattered and whatever you say about this knowledge of him is always less than what it is. It deserves all this and a little more.

Then, why are all these words used? Only to make *Arjuna* and the other students who read this more attentive. After hearing all this, *Arjuna* will be all attention and ready to listen. That is the purpose. Moreover, by all these words, the nature of the knowledge is told, and to know about the learning is a part of the learning. Most of the problems in the spiritual field are that people do not know exactly what they are seeking. Not understanding the nature of this knowledge, they are looking for some extraordinary experience, which will leave them entirely transformed. In short, they are looking for an event to take place. The self is not an event. It is something because of, which all events take place. That is why the nature of this knowledge has to be told.

You do not have to do something, or transform yourself, in order to become *Brahman*. That is why I used the example of the rich man. If you are rich, all you have to do to lose your sense of being poor is to discern that you are rich. For that you must be ready to listen. If one is conditioned to being a pauper, it is difficult even to listen. Take the case of a man who has been poor from birth. If he suddenly comes into an inheritance that makes him rich, it is going to take him a while to get used to the fact that he is a rich man. He is very much used to considering himself a pauper—his grand father was a pauper, his father was a pauper, his maternal grand father was also a pauper, his brother is a pauper, all his friends are paupers! Naturally, when you tell him he is rich, is he going to believe it? He will think you are deluded and will continue to beg.

In the same way, as far as happiness and fulfilment are concerned, we all think that we are paupers. We always beg for happiness at the altar of life, waiting for the hands of chance to shape a moment of joy. We keep on praying or manipulating so that some situation will become so conducive that we are happy for the moment. And we can never be sure that even after all our manipulating we are going to be happy. We can be so exhausted that we cannot even enjoy what we worked for. This is the lot of a pauper. So,

when one is told one is *ānanda*, limitless, fullness, etc., it is too much even to believe. To make him stop and listen, what we call *śraddhā*, or trust, is required. And it takes a lot of *śraddhā*.

After introducing the subject matter as *rāja-vidyā* and *rāja-guhya*, now *Kṛṣṇa* says that gaining this you will be released from bondage. Therefore, you have enough reason to have *śraddhā* in the pursuit of knowledge. One must have *śraddhā* in both the nature of the knowledge and the result in order to listen. That is why they both have been told in these two verses. In the next verse, to enhance the *śraddhā*, *Bhagavān* explains what one misses if one does not have *śraddhā*.

अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परन्तप ।

अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥३॥

*aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsyā parantapa*

*aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyusaṁsāravartmani*

Verse 3

परन्तप *parantapa* — O! destroyer of enemies, *Arjuna*; अस्य धर्मस्य *asya dharmasya* — in this self-knowledge; अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषाः *aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣāḥ* — those people who have no faith; माम् अप्राप्य *mām aprāpya* — not gaining Me; मृत्यु-संसार-वर्त्मनि *mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartmani* — on the road of *saṁsāra*, which is fraught with death; निवर्तन्ते *nivartante* — they return to/remain in

Those people who have no faith in this self-knowledge, *Arjuna*, not gaining Me, return/remain on the road of *saṁsāra*, which is fraught with death.

*Kṛṣṇa* addresses *Arjuna* as *parantapa*, the one who destroys enemies, a warrior.

*Aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣāḥ*: One who has *śraddhā* are called a *śraddadhāna*. And the one who does not have *śraddhā* is called *aśraddadhāna*. *Śraddhā* is giving the benefit of doubt to the veracity of words of the *śāstra*, and the teacher regarding the nature and result of this knowledge. I have *śraddhā* in the nature of this *ātma-jñāna*, self-knowledge, that the self is identical with *Brahman*, the cause of creation. Even though I have not yet understood this, I believe that what the *śāstra* says is true. And I have *śraddhā* in the result of this knowledge, which is freedom from any sense of bondage. If I have understood properly, I would not require *śraddhā*. But until I understand, I need *śraddhā* so that I can pursue this knowledge.

*Asya dharmasya*: The word *dharma* has a number of meanings. It is used in the sense of knowledge, duty, the order of *Īśvara*, religion, and also in the sense of a property or nature of a thing. Therefore, when ever this word is used, in order to understand its meaning, we have to see the context. Here the word *dharma* means *ātma-jñāna*, self-knowledge. This is because, in the previous verse the word *dharmya*

was used to introduce this knowledge. There we have seen that this word *dharmya* meant that it is enjoined by the *śāstra* and also that it was not opposed to *dharma*. The one who has this knowledge is not going to express himself against *dharma*. So, this knowledge is called *dharma*.

In this verse *Bhagavān* is talking about *āsraddadhānas*, the people who have no *śraddhā* either in the nature of the knowledge or its result. Because of this, they cannot even begin to pursue this knowledge.

For a person who has *śraddhā*, the *śāstra* is a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. This *śraddhā* that the *śāstra* is a *pramāṇa* is very important here. For a *nāstika*, who does not look upon the *śāstra* as a means of knowledge, there is no *puṇya* or *pāpa*. There maybe people who are very ethical in spite of this lack of *śraddhā*. But generally, a person who does not have *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*, will have a tendency towards *pāpa-karma*, because his whole pursuit will be directed towards his own comfort. Happiness is equated to satisfying the senses. After all, the senses will age anyway. Even if a person lives a very disciplined life, his senses will still age. After seventy years of age, his sight and hearing will still decline; so, what is the difference? There is an interesting statement by a total materialist, who has no *śraddhā* in any thing other than what is available to his senses. He says, 'Incurring debt, feed the senses and enjoy yourself as long as you live. If the body is reduced to ashes who will reap the results of its action?'<sup>1</sup> What is the lot of those who have such conclusions? The Lord says, '*aprāpya mām*, not gaining Me, *mṛtyu-saṃsāra-vartmani nivartante*, they keep returning to the cycle of birth and death.'

There is no doubt about whether these people reach *Parameśvara* by recognising the *ātmā* as *Brahman*. It is not possible. When they have no *śraddhā* even in *puṇya-pāpa*, *dharma-adharmā*, where is the question of their seeking identity with *Parameśvara*? Not gaining this, what happens to a person?

*Mṛtyu-saṃsāra-vartmani nivartante*—They come back to the cycle of life and death. The word *nivartante* has two meanings: 'they come back' or 'they remain.' *Mṛtyu-saṃsāra* is really *mṛtyu-yukta-saṃsāra*. This is a compound in which the middle word is dropped. It means, it is a *saṃsāra*, which is fraught with death, *mṛtyu*. Death is coupled with birth; so, this is a *saṃsāra* that is fraught with death and change. Even empires, which once flourished have all been levelled. All that remains are few remnants beneath the earth, some pots, some coins, etc. And the demolition squad is none other than Lord *Mṛtyu*, time. *Vartman*, means road, the road through, which you

<sup>1</sup> यावज्जीवेत् सुखं जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत्।

भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः॥

*yāvajjīvet sukhaṃ jīvet ṛṇaṃ kṛtvā gṛtaṃ pibet*  
*bhasmībhūtasya dehasya punarāgamaṇaṃ kutaḥ*



reach pain (because we are talking about the one who does not believe). Even *svarga* is within *saṃsāra*; but here, he is talking about *āśraddadhānāḥ puruṣāḥ*, the people of no *śraddhā* at all. And such people are on those routes, which lead them to a place of pain called *naraka* and births in lesser wombs like those of animals, etc. In these tracks they remain, *mṛtyu-saṃsāra-vartmani nivartante*.

This particular verse is said only to create *śraddhā*. The first two verses praise *ātma-jñāna* as *rāja-vidyā* to positively create *śraddhā*. This verse tells how much you miss if you do not have *śraddhā* in this knowledge.

Having drawn *Arjuna's* attention, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* begins the topic of this chapter in a very big way.

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।

मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥४॥

*mayā tatamidaṃ sarvaṃ jagadavyaktamūrtinā*

*matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṃ teṣvavasthitaḥ*

Verse 4

मया *maya* — by Me; अव्यक्त-मूर्तिना *avyakta-mūrtinā* — whose form cannot be objectified; इदम् सर्वम् जगत् *idam sarvam jagat* — this entire world; ततम् *tatam* — is pervaded; सर्व-भूतानि *sarva-bhūtāni* — all beings; मत्स्थानि *mat-sthāni* — have their being in Me; न च अहम् *na ca aham* — and I am not; तेषु अवस्थितः *teṣu avasthitaḥ* — based in them

This entire world is pervaded by Me whose form cannot be objectified.  
All beings have their being in Me and I am not based in them.

It is important to note here that in this and the following verses, the word *bhūta*, being, is used in the sense of *jīva*. The word *bhūta* also covers the entire world, *jagat*. When it is said that the *jīva* is created, sustained and destroyed, one should know that by *jīva* is meant an embodied being. The *jīva*, being non-separate from *ātmā*, is never created or sustained or destroyed. But the subtle and physical bodies, born of subtle and gross elements, are created, sustained and destroyed. So, for the *jīva*, creation, sustenance, and destruction are only with reference to these bodies. At the destruction of the entire *jagat*, which includes all bodies of all *jīvas*, all *jīvas* as well as the *jagat* become unmanifest. From this unmanifest state, when all these become manifest, that manifestation is called creation. As long as he does not recognise his identity with *Īśvara*, this process of manifestation and unmanifestation continues for the *jīva*.

## MAYĒ JAGADAVYAKTAMĪRTINĒ TATAM IDAĒ SARVAM

The Lord says ‘This entire world is pervaded by Me.’ There is an adjective to ‘Me,’ *avyakta-mūrtinā*. A form or the truth of a given thing is called *mūrti*. *Avyakta-mūrti* is a form that is beyond objectification. Something that can not be objectified may be hastily construed as non-existent. So, that there will be no such problem, *Bhagavān* has used the word *mūrti*. *Avyakta-mūrti* is the one who exists and is available for appreciation. That is Me, and by that Me, this entire creation is pervaded. It is not *Kṛṣṇa*’s body that is pervading everything but his real nature, *para-bhāva*. When *Kṛṣṇa* says here ‘*mayā*, by Me’ he uses the first person and that refers to the real being, *sat-cit-ānanda*. By Me, that is *Brahman*, which is *sat-cit-ānanda*, in the form of existence, consciousness, not limited by time, space, or any object, this entire world is pervaded, *mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ jagat*.

## MATSTHĒNI SARVA-BHĪTĒNI

Things that are born are called *bhūtas*. Because they are born, they are subject to change. *Ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpaḥ*, *pṛthivī* are all *bhūtas*. Then out of these *bhūtas* a number of systems, *lokas*, were born. And in any *loka* there are many forms of physical bodies, each with their own subtle body, all made of the five elements, the *pañca-bhūtas*, according to our five-elemental model. Out of these five *bhūtas*, subtle and gross, come all the *lokas* and the embodied beings within them. Together they are called *sarva-bhūtāni*. Even the *ahaṅkāra* is included in these *bhūtas*. All thoughts are created and have their being in one uncreated *ātmā*. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*, all beings have their being in Me.

And without Me there will be no being at all. *Śaṅkara* says, ‘Anything without an existential status is not available for empirical transaction—*na hi nirātmakaṃ kiñcit bhūtaṃ vyavahārāya avakalpate*. He introduces this sentence to illustrate an important point. All beings, upon inquiry, prove to be *mithyā*. Whenever you analyse any object, it is reduced to something else and is therefore, purely *nāma-rūpa*. If we stop here, there is only a void, *śūnya*. If at the bottom of everything there is *śūnya*, there will be no transaction, *vyavahāra*, at all. But because there is one thing that ‘is,’ everything is understood as existent; space ‘is,’ time ‘is,’ everything ‘is.’

But then, one may argue, there are certain things, which we understand as non-existent like the rabbit’s horn. Even so, the rabbit is existent, only the horn is not existent. And even though the rabbit’s horn is non-existent, how do you know of the non-existence of the rabbit’s horn? This is very important to note. To know this, there must be a person who knows. That person knows ‘*aham asmi*, I am,’ then he uses a means of knowledge to know that rabbits do not have horns. That rabbits have no horns is purely a piece of knowledge and to acquire that, there must be a means of knowledge.

You cannot say it is perception because eyes can capture only form and colour, not non-existence. They detect presence, not absence. So, the means of knowledge is not perception. Then how do you know that the rabbit's horn does not exist? It is not inference because all inference is based on perception. Nor is it a presumption. You do not arrive at the fact that rabbits do not have horns by presuming it from the fact that rabbits never hit you with their horns. You do not conclude, 'Rabbits do not hit me with their horns, therefore, they do not have horns.' It is not a knowledge born of perception or inference or presumption but an independent means of knowledge called *anupalabdhi*, a negative means of knowledge based upon the knowledge you have. You know what a rabbit is like but you don't really see the absence of the horn. When you question whether a rabbit has horns you determine that it does not have horns. That is arrived at by *anupalabdhi*, a means of knowledge employed by the person who is existent. He uses a means of knowledge to determine the fact that the rabbit has no horn. But the fact 'is' and the person who knows 'is'—exists.

Generally this existence is considered an attribute of the object. We say, for example, 'This pot is existent.' Here, existence becomes an attribute, which distinguishes this pot from an absent or a destroyed pot. This existent pot you will later call a destroyed pot. So, when you say, 'This is an existent pot,' 'existent' is used as an opposite to 'non-existence' or destruction. Since there is such a thing as an absent or a destroyed pot, you can say, 'This is an existent pot.' The knowledge that you have of existence is always opposed to non-existence. The fact that it exists only means that it is not yet destroyed. This is how our *buddhi* grasps existence and because of that, it is always an attribute imputed to an object.

## EXISTENCE IS NOT AN ATTRIBUTE

*Vedānta* just reverses this orientation. In fact its whole intent is only to dismiss this orientation. It says existence is not an attribute. It is unlike anything that we know. To this existence it is the objects that are so-called attributes. Let us look at it in a simple form. Suppose I say, 'This is a gold chain.' Here the gold becomes the attribute, the chain, the substantive. This is not a mere linguistic orientation, it reflects an orientation in my vision, my way of looking at the world and myself. It means that I see myself as a mortal being who is existent now, subject to ageing, to time, and is going to be destroyed one day. All these are involved in this simple statement. In *Vedānta*, we reverse this vision.

If you say, 'gold chain,' chain has the status of a substantive and the gold, an attribute. Do you add some gold to the existent chain? If you do, it is a gold-plated chain, not a gold chain. I am talking of a gold chain. In fact, all that is there is gold; chain being purely a *nāma-rūpa*. This is an entirely different vision. The gold becomes existent, *satya*, and the chain becomes *nāma-rūpa*—seemingly, added to gold. Why seemingly?

Any real addition should bring an addition to the gold. But here I find the chain's appearance does not bring any addition or change to the gold. The gold substance, the *svarūpa*, its weight and other properties remain the same. Even with the appearance of the chain, the gold retains its own nature. So, we say the appearance of the chain is a kind of addition, a seeming creation. We cannot totally deny a creation because we see the chain. Even so, it is only a seeming creation because there is no beginning of a substantive. The gold has been, the gold is, and gold will be. There is no real chain at all. It is nothing but an incidental *nāma-rūpa* attributed to the gold. Therefore, it is a sort of addition to the gold. If the gold could talk, it would say, 'All these golden ornaments, the gold chain, the gold bangle, gold ring, gold earring, gold nose ring, gold ring—all of them have their being in me.' The existence of the chain is entirely dependent upon the gold. Therefore, in *Vedāntic* language, we will not say 'gold chain' but 'chainy gold.' I have to completely change my language just to express my vision. In fact, it is not really the language we have to change but our vision. When I say, 'gold chain,' I must know that what I am saying is that the chain is gold.

Similarly if we say this entire creation is *Īśvara*, it means the creation is the attribute, *Īśvara* is the substantive, *vastu*. *Paramātmā* is *satya* and the entire creation is nothing but *nāma-rūpa*. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*, all beings are in that existence, which is 'I,' the *ātmā*. *Sarva-bhūtas* include my body, my senses, all that I know, my *ahankāra* and even ignorance. Ignorance 'is.' That 'is' is *ātmā*, consciousness. The thought 'is,' the knower 'is,' seer 'is,' hearer 'is,' thinker 'is,' thinking 'is,' emotion 'is,' memory 'is,' this 'is,' that 'is.' Then anything that you say that 'is,' is *ātmā*. And that 'is,' which is qualified by whatever you say, is itself unqualified. That 'is,' is *ātmā*; and therefore, the statement, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni* is meaningful.

Now it is clear what was meant by '*mayā tatam idaṃ sarvam*, everything is pervaded by Me.' It means nothing is away from Me. In anything that is, that 'is,' that consciousness, is the *ātmā*. In any piece of knowledge there is consciousness involved and that consciousness is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

And it is *avyakta* because it is not an object. The means of knowledge we have can only bring the objects to light. But the object is, and that 'is,' is yourself. This is something we appreciate not in the way we are used to because the one who appreciates is also pervaded by the *ātmā*, as is the knowledge of the object and the object itself. The *ātmā* is self-evident, not an object that is to be known.

First the Lord said, 'By Me all this is pervaded—*mayā tatam idaṃ sarvam*.' This means that the *ātmā* is in every being. Next by saying, 'All beings are in Me—*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*,' he completely changes the situation. In this particular expression, there is a potential problem.

## DOES THE LORD HAVE ĒDHĒRA-ĒDHEYA CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD?

There is a common notion that in every heart there is a divine spark. The *ātmā* is looked upon as something located in the *buddhi* of every being. According to this, the *buddhi* can be construed as the basis, the *ātmā* as the based, with a basis-based relationship between the *buddhi* and the *ātmā*.

To eliminate any such notion *Bhagavān* says, '*na ca ahaṃ teṣu avasthitaḥ.*' While all of them have their being in Me, I am not in any of them. We have hundreds of paradoxes like this. The meaning is simple: All of them are in Me, but because you may think that I am located in them, I say that I am not. They are all located in Me in the sense that I am the *sat* of all things like gold is the *sat* of all things golden. In every gold chain there is gold. Gold is not located in the chain, the chain is gold. The gold does not exist in chain in the sense that it does not depend upon the chain, which is only the *nāma-rūpa*. The very existence of the chain is because of the gold. If the chain is, the 'is-ness' is nothing but the 'is-ness' of the gold. Therefore, gold does not exist in chain, whereas the chain exists in gold. One is *satya*, the other, *mithyā*. *Satya* does not exist depending upon *mithyā* but *mithyā* cannot exist without *satya*. That is the whole intent here.

So, all of them exist in Me—*matshāni sarva-bhūtāni*; but I do not remain located in any one of them—*na ca ahaṃ teṣu avasthitaḥ*. 'I' becomes the basis, the *ādhāra* of everything. But I am not *ādheya*, based upon them because they are *mithyā*. I am the *satya*, the truth of all of them. They have their being in Me but I do not have My being in them. I am not dependent upon them for My existence while they depend entirely upon Me for their existence.

One may argue that it is like the situation of a king. The citizens depend entirely upon the king but he does not depend upon the citizens. One is independent, the other, dependent. Similarly if all the worlds are dependent upon you, and you are not dependent upon them, there is still a difference between the world and you. You have become the *ādhāra* and the world is the *ādheya*.

*Bhagavān* has covered this by saying that he is *avyakta-mūrti*. *Śaṅkara* states the significance of this. An object, which has a form is something that can be connected to another object. There is the possibility a basis-based, *ādhāra-ādheya* connection. The dish, for example, is on the table and the table is on the ground. Since each of these has a form, it can be the basis, *ādhāra*, for another object, which has a form, the *ādheya*.

Now let us consider the relationship between space and an object, which has a form. It can be the earth, it can be all the planets. All are based upon, accommodated in space except space, itself. But space also exists in Me, consciousness, which has no form whatsoever. If all things exist in space and space itself exists in Me, then I have no

location. If this is so, what kind of basis-based connection is there? With no location, there is no *ādhāra-ādheya*, basis-based, difference. I am self-existent and everything is based upon Me.

Those who do not understand this fact may say that the *ātmā* is based, is located, in the *buddhi*. The *buddhi* is the place where you recognise the *ātmā*, i.e., as consciousness, it manifests there. But that does not mean that the *ātmā* is located there. *Ātmā* is that by, which everything is pervaded, including your *buddhi*—*mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ*. *Buddhi* after all is a *vṛtti* and every *vṛtti* is nothing but *caitanya-ātmā*. A pot-*vṛtti* is consciousness plus the name and form, pot. Every *vṛtti* depends upon *caitanya-ātmā* like how the waves depend entirely upon water. But *caitanya-ātmā* has no form that can be located anywhere. So, it is not an object based upon something else. It is a *vastu* that has no form and has no connection with anything else; so, it is not possible for it to be *ādheya*, based upon something else. It is that in, which everything is based. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, the nature of *ātmā* is such that it has no connection whatsoever. Like the water has no connection with the wave. Between *satya* and *mithyā*, there is no connection at all. *Mithyā* does not exist apart from *satya*. One is *adhiṣṭhāna*, the other is a superimposition. Even the *adhāra-ādheya* difference is not there. The *jagat* is non-separate from Me yet ‘I’ am independent of the *jagat* because one is *satya*, the other is *mithyā*.

A connection can only be between two things that are *satya*. If *ātmā* is *satya* and if there is any other *ātmā*, which is equally *satya*, then, we can say that one *ātmā* is connected to the other *ātmā*; that one is based upon other, that one depends upon the other. But there is no second *ātmā* at all. If there were, you should be able to recognise it. But, anything you can recognise, is an object of *ātmā*, and not *ātmā*. That is because *ātmā* is consciousness, which recognises everything. There is only one *ātmā*, which from its own stand point is non-dual. It is pure *caitanya-ātmā*.

Because *ātmā* is not connected to anything, *Bhagavān* says:

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।

भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥५॥

*na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogamaiśvaram*

*bhūtabhṛnna ca bhūtastho mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ*

Verse 5

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni* — and the beings do not exist in Me; मे *me* — My; ऐश्वरम् योगम् *aiśvaram yogam* — *aiśvaram* (that which belongs to the *Īśvara*) connection (to the *jagat*); पश्य *paśya* — see; मम आत्मा *mama ātmā* — my self; भूतभावनः *bhūtabhāvanaḥ* — (is) the creator of beings; भूतभृत् *bhūtabhṛt* — the sustainer of beings; न च भूतस्थः *na ca bhūtasthaḥ* — and not residing in the beings

And the beings do not exist in Me; look at this *aiśvara* connection of Mine to the *jagat*. My self is the creator of the beings, the sustainer of the beings and yet is not residing in the beings.

First *Bhagavān* said, ‘All beings have their being in Me, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*.’ Now he says, ‘And the beings do not exist in Me, *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*. This removes any possible notion of *Bhagavān* being the *ādhāra* of all these beings. If *ātmā* is only one and everything is dependent upon *ātmā*, there is duality and *Bhagavān* would be a huge *saṁsārī* because a *saṁsārī*, after all, is someone with a number of dependants. To rule this out, he completely reverses his language and says, ‘All these beings and things do not exist in Me.’ It is like the clay saying ‘The pot exists in me,’ then after thinking it over saying, ‘in fact, the pot does not exist in me. All that is in me is clay. I exist in my own right and do not depend upon the pot.’ There clay is *satya*, anything else has no independent existence, it is only *nāma-rūpa*.

Similarly, every thought is me but in me there is only *caitanya*. If you turn your vision towards the *ātmā*, there is no thought there. And for that you need not do anything. When one thought has gone and another is yet to come, what obtains is consciousness, the *ātmā*, independent of a thought, independent of the whole *jagat*. That consciousness is the nature of the *ātmā* and in its *svarūpa* there are no beings.

Having said this, he says something more to make it clear that there is no contradiction in what he has just said.

He says, ‘*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*.’ *Paśya*, means ‘look, understand.’ The word ‘*aiśvaram*’ is an adjective to the word *yoga* and means ‘that which belongs to *Īśvara*.’ *Yoga* here means connection. The Lord says, ‘Look at My connection [with the *jagat*]—*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*.’ This is the *yoga*, connection of the cause, *paramātmā*, with the effect, the *jagat*. In any cause-effect relationship, the cause is independent of the effect while the effect depends upon the cause. This is the reality from the stand point of cause-effect, *kāraṇa-kārya*. If you go one step further and look at the cause, *kāraṇa*, is there an effect, *kārya*? You find that all that is there is only the *kāraṇa* because the *kārya* is nothing but the *kāraṇa* in another form. Therefore, the Lord says that the entire *jagat* is nothing but Himself. The cause of the entire *jagat* is *Īśvara* and therefore, it is all *Īśvara*’s glory. Therefore, he says, ‘*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*.’

If this is the nature of the *ātmā*, then along with *Bhagavān*, you can say the same thing! Along with *Kṛṣṇa*, *Arjuna* can also say ‘*mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam*—all this is pervaded by Me,’ because he understands that the *ātmā* pervades everything and there is no second *ātmā* available. In the *ātmā* alone all the beings exist, and at the same time the *ātmā* is free from all beings. Because this is the nature of the *ātmā*, anybody who understands this can say ‘*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*—look at My connection, My glories.’

All paradoxes are glories. *Ātmā* is the cause of everything and the recognition that takes place about this *jagat* is that, *jagat* is also 'I.' But when the beings do not exist, what do I have to talk about? All I see is *Brahman*, there is no *jagat* here, *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*. There is no connection between the *ātmā* and the *jagat* because there is no second thing belonging to the same order of reality to get connected. This is the wonder, *āścarya*, and that is why he says '*paśya me yogam aiśvaram*.'

And it is a wonder from another standpoint too, which *Bhagavān* expresses in this paradox. He says, '*mama ātmā bhūtabhṛt na ca bhūtasthaḥ*—My self is *bhūtabhṛt* but not *bhūtasthaḥ*.' *Bhṛt* means one who sustains or upholds, *bhūtabhṛt* is one who sustains all the beings, *bhūtas*. *Ātmā* sustains all the beings by giving existence, *sattā*, to all of them. Like clay sustains the pot, *ātmā* sustains the *jagat*. At the same time, it is not located in the *bhūtas*, *na ca bhūtasthaḥ*. That is, it is not limited by any of the *bhūtas*.

When the Lord says, he is the *bhūtabhṛt*, he is not engaged in this very big task of sustaining the world. That is why Lord *Viṣṇu* is portrayed as lying down. *Śayānaḥ sarvaṃ bibharti*—lying down he sustains everything, just as *ātma-caitanya* sustains your thought without getting involved in any manner. The meaning is, there is no connection, *saṅga*, in any manner. Further, he is not located in the *bhūtas*. Since it has no form, the *ātmā* cannot be *bhūtastha*, residing in the *bhūtas*. That is why he says, 'All the *bhūtas* are located in Me whereas I am not located in the *bhūtas*, I am *asaṅga*.'

## WHY DOES BHAGAVĒN SAY MAMA ĒTMĒ

*Bhagavān* says, *mama ātmā bhūtabhṛt na ca bhūtasthaḥ*. This word, *mama* is in genitive case, which usually indicates a connection. So, *Śaṅkara* says here that it is purely in keeping with the common understanding. People look upon the body as themselves and therefore, *mama ātmā* means the *ātmā* belonging to the body.

The problem in modern *Vedānta* is that they superimpose the *ahaṅkāra* upon the *ātmā* not knowing the *svarūpa* of the *ātmā*. Then they will say, 'You must realise the self, the *ātmā* of yourself, which is other than the self that obtains now. This self is subject to *saṃsāra*, etc., but there is a real self that you should realise.' You first create two selves, then remain two. The truth is that the one who has to realise the self is the self to be realised. There is no other self besides the one self that exists right now. The *ahaṅkāra* that claims to be the self is born of error and we are correcting this error by removing ignorance about the self-evident *ātmā*.

So, there is no division. This must be very clear. The mention, *mama ātmā*, is purely from the stand-point of the superimposition. If you superimpose the body-mind-sense complex on the *ātmā*, *ātmā* becomes as good as the body and you get the conclusion, 'I am a human being.' On the 'I,' the body-mind-senses are



superimposed and thereby you get one *ātmā* who is a *saṃsārī*, who has to now ‘realise’ the real *ātmā*. Thus there is no ‘*mama ātmā*,’ there is only one *ātmā*. Thus, when *Kṛṣṇa* says, *mama ātmā*, two entities—‘I’ and ‘mine’— there are no two entities here. His *svarūpa* is *sat-cit-ānanda* and that alone is there; there is no other *Kṛṣṇa* other than that *ātmā*.

*Mama ātmā*, which is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* is *bhūta-bhāvana*. By a mere thought, with the help of *māyā*, the *ātmā* creates everything. *Mama ātmā* makes the whole order of creation evolve and provides it with the sustenance to grow. It is not an agent appointed by any one to take care of the world, like a house-sitter. It is not that, one *Bhagavān* created the world and then asked the *ātmā* to take care of it; it is not that some *ātmā* would sustain it but have no *saṅga* because it is not his house. Here, in conjunction with *bhūta-bhāvana*, *ātmā* should be understood as *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

*Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* through its own *māyā* creates everything. And because all the *bhūtas* are *mithyā*, the Lord can say, ‘I am the sustainer of all beings, *bhūtabhṛt*,’ and ‘I do not reside in the beings, *na ca ahaṃ bhūtasthaḥ*.’ And again, that is the reason he can say ‘*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*—all the beings have their being in Me’ and in the same breath he can also say, ‘*na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*—all beings do not exist in Me.’ This is because they are all *mithyā*. These two verses completely destroy the concepts of duality and creation. The entire creation becomes purely figurative, an *upacāra*.

Then what is created? When you say, ‘There is nothing in Me—*na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*, there is only *ātmā*, you are not accountable at all for what you created like a person who dreamt and woke up. If you ask him, what he did, he will say that he created a whole world just out of his own thoughts. And if you ask him if that world was separate from him, he will say, ‘All of them were in me—*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*.’ If you were to ask him, ‘Do you depend upon them?’ he would say, ‘Not at all! It was my own glory, my own creation. Further more, I am *bhūtabhṛt*, the one who sustains the whole world.’ And again if you were to, ask him, ‘Who created the world?’ he would say, ‘My self, my *ātmā*, created the entire dream world.’ In all this there is no contradiction because in the dream the entire dream world was nothing but the dreamer.

Similarly, *Bhagavān* says that he creates everything, he sustains everything. Then in the next breath he says, he does not have the task of running the world because there are no beings at all, there is nothing there to sustain. When a person wakes up from the dream and talks about the dream, the dream world he experienced is only from the stand-point of the dream. The waker is a single person.

You have to account for a world that is created and sustained etc., only when the world is accepted by you as an independent entity. Only then can you ask, ‘Who created the world?’ The Lord would say, ‘I created this world.’ The next question is, ‘Who sustains the world?’ The answer would be, ‘I sustain this world.’ Then the next question

would be, 'Are you dependent upon the world?' The answer would be, 'No. I am not dependent on the world.' Then the next question would be, 'Is the world dependent upon you?' The Lord would say, 'Yes.' Naturally, it looks as though, he has a great task of sustaining this world. But if you ask him about it, he will ask, 'What task?' This is because in reality there is no world other than *Īśvara*. All that is here is *Īśvara* alone.

*Kṛṣṇa* is everywhere, or nowhere. He is in no particular place but the entire *jagat* is pervaded by him. That is why he said, 'This is My glory, which is to be understood—*paśya me yogam aiśvaram.*' With these two verses, *satya* and *mithyā* are very clearly established. 'There is nothing more than Me. I am the maker of everything, the sustainer of everything, and I am the one who dissolves everything. In fact, in Me there is no world at all. And all that is here in the form of this world is nothing other than Me.' This *Bhagavān* can say. And any one who understands the *svarūpa* of *Bhagavān* as the *svarūpa* of oneself can also say the same.

Everything that was said in these two verses is now illustrated with an example in the next verse.

यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान्।

तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥६॥

*yathākāśasthito nityam vāyuh sarvatrago mahān*  
*tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthānītyupadhāraya*

Verse 6

यथा *yathā* — just as; महान् वायुः *mahān vāyuh* — vast air; सर्वत्रगः *sarvatragah* — which goes everywhere; नित्यम् आकाशस्थितः *nityam ākāśasthitaḥ* — always exists in space; तथा *tathā* — similarly; सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानि *sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthāni* — all beings exist in Me; इति उपधारय *iti upadhāraya* — thus may you understand

Just as the vast air, which goes everywhere, always exists in space, similarly, may you understand that all beings exist in Me.

The word *yathā* means 'just as.' *Śaṅkara* says here that it means 'just as in the world.' Thus, just as in the world, air, *vāyu*, which moves from one place to another, *sarvatraga*, always exists in space, *nityam ākāśasthitaḥ*, *tathā*, in the same manner, all beings exist in Me, *Īśvara*. As *vāyu* moves from Kansas to New York or from there to India, it goes to a new place but not to a new space. *Sarvatra*, means 'every where' and *ga* means 'the one who goes,' Thus *vāyu* is called *sarvatraga*. It means that there is no place where he will not go. That is why he is also called *mahān*. The word *mahān* describes the dimension, i.e., pervasiveness of *vāyu*. In terms pervasiveness, *vāyu* is *mahān*, great.

So, too, may you understand that all beings remain in Me. Let them go anywhere; they are still in Me. Just as how *vāyu*, no matter where it goes, is never away from *ākāśa*, similarly all the *bhūtas*, whatever form they may assume, remain in Me.

But there is no burden imposed upon the *ātmā* by all these beings existing in it. There is no imprint left in space by *vāyu*. The space is limitless, all-pervasive, and it is *asaṅga*, unconnected to *vāyu*, even though *vāyu* cannot exist without space. It has its being in *ākāśa* alone and it moves around in *ākāśa*. The example is used only to illustrate that the *ātmā* is also *asaṅga*. It is unattached to anything yet nothing is ever away from the *ātmā*. As *vāyu* moves all over but never moves away from space, all the *bhūtas* can move from one place to another, whole worlds may come into being and collapse but they are never away from the *ātmā*. If the soul goes from here to *brahma-loka*, the whole movement is in *Brahman*. Because the soul is *Brahman*, the *jagat* is *Brahman*; there is nothing that is away from *Brahman*. If the self-conscious being moves from one place to another, the movement is in existence, the *sattā*. The soul 'is' and that 'is' is *Brahman*, *ātmā*. Therefore, it can never go away from *Brahman*. When you go to *brahma-loka* you are still the same *Brahman*. Even here, you are *Brahman*. When you can recognise this here, why should you go elsewhere to recognise it? All movements, all beings, all transactions, all kinds of comings and goings, and hidings are all in *Brahman*.

Why does he say that all of them are in *Brahman* instead of saying all of them are *Brahman*? It is to make it clear that 'I' remains untouched. Saying, 'in Me' is like saying 'in space.' Just as *vāyu* moves in space, leaving no imprint upon space, in the same way, all these beings exist in *ātma-caitanya* and yet leave no imprint on *ātma-caitanya*. May you recognise this clearly—*upadhāraya*.

When *Bhagavān* says, 'They exist in Me—*matsthāni*,' he is talking about the period of time when things exist, *sthiti-kāla*. At the time of their existence, all names and forms have their being in *paraṁ brahma* like air moves in and has its being in space. But there are three aspects to any created thing, its creation, *sṛṣṭi*, existence or sustenance, *sthiti*, and its destruction, *laya*. *Brahman* is the cause for all these. If one were to ask, 'What happens during the destruction, *laya-kāle*?' That is told in the next verse.

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम् ।

कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ॥७॥

*sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām*

*kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpādaḥ visṛjāmyaham*

Verse 7

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! *Arjuna*; कल्पक्षये *kalpa-kṣaye* — at the dissolution of the cycle of creation; सर्व-भूतानि *sarva-bhūtāni* — all beings; मामिकाम् प्रकृतिम् *māmikām prakṛtiṁ*

*prakṛtim* — to My *prakṛti*; यान्ति *yānti* — go; पुनः *punaḥ* — again; कल्प-आदौ *kalpa-ādau* — at the beginning of the cycle; अहम् *aham* — I; तानि विसृजामि *tāni visṛjāmi* create them

All beings, O! *Arjuna*, go to My *prakṛti* at the dissolution of the cycle of creation. Again, at the beginning of the cycle, I create them.

All beings (sentient and inert), *sarva-bhūtāni*, go to My *prakṛti*— *māmikāṃ prakṛtiṃ yānti*. He does not say ‘to Me’ but to My *prakṛti*. In saying this, *Kṛṣṇa* reveals a certain fact.

When one cycle comes to an end it is called *kalpa-kṣaya*, the completion or exhaustion of the cycle. At this time, all beings go into a state of dissolution in My *prakṛti*. We will not translate the word *prakṛti* here.

Again, in the beginning of the cycle, *punaḥ*, *kalpa-ādau*, I release them, I project them, *tāni visṛjāmi aham*. Here *vi* prefixed to the verb *ṣṛj* in *visṛjāmi* means ‘I create each one as it was in the previous cycle.’ So, the creation is the same as it was in all other cycles. To fulfil the *karmas* of the *jīvas*, again the cycle begins. Then it dissolves and from the dissolved state again the creation arises. The created world has its being in Me and the dissolved world goes into My *upādhi*. What is this *upādhi* and why should the Lord bring it in? Why should he not say, ‘It goes back into Me.’ A pot, for instance, comes out of clay and goes back to the clay. The clay does not say, ‘It goes back to my *upādhi*.’

The existence and dissolution of a given object takes place in the place from which it arises. When the pot is destroyed, it goes back to its cause, the clay. And from that same cause is its creation. From the clay the pot is born, into clay it resolves and while it exists it has its existence in clay.

What is under discussion here is the dissolution of the world into the *prakṛti* of *Bhagavān*. Since he says, ‘It goes into My *prakṛti*,’ it can be like saying, ‘It goes into my bank account.’ I am not my bank account, it is very clear. Similarly here, *Bhagavān*’s *prakṛti* is the place where the created world resolves. He says, ‘The existence of the world is in Me, *matsthāni*, but its dissolution, *laya*, is into My *prakṛti*.’ This seems to be a contradiction because we have seen that if a thing has come from a given material cause, into that, it resolves. If from *Īśvara*, the world has come, into *Īśvara*, the world should go back. But instead, he says, ‘It goes into My *prakṛti*.’ This is not a contradiction but a deliberate expression. We will see why.

## WHY DOES BHAGAVĀN SAY MY PRAKĪTI?

When *Bhagavān* says all these beings have their being in Me, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*, are they attributes of *paramātmā*? If so, *paramātmā* has the intrinsic attribute

of the *jagat* and is always *saguṇa*. If that is the case, *paramātmā* can never be free from those attributes. But our experience is entirely different. If we analyse the nature of *ātmā*, we find it is free from all attributes. At any given moment, between two thoughts what exists is *paramātmā*, which is *caitanya* free from any form of limitation. Intrinsically, *paramātmā* is free from attributes, *nirguṇa*. Only because of that is *mokṣa* possible.

If *paramātmā* is intrinsically free from the *jagat*, then, when *Bhagavān* says *matsthāni*, it exists in Me, it is only through some other factor. That factor is what we call *māyā*. It is the *māyā-upādhi* that makes *paramātmā* into *Īśvara*. Purely due to *upādhi*, *paramātmā* becomes all-knowing and all-powerful, the creator of everything. Due to a similar type of *upādhi*, you have limited knowledge, *alpajñatva*, and so on. As *ātmā*, your *svarūpa* is *sat-cit-ānanda*. It is pure consciousness, which is *satya* and limitless. Then, how do you become one of limited knowledge, limited power, limited pervasiveness? Due to *upādhi*. *Upādhi* gives rise to a point of view. You view the *ātmā* from the standpoint of a physical body-mind-sense complex then say, ‘I am limited,’ etc. It is an unfortunate statement because it is not true. *Ātmā* has not become *alpajñā*; it continues to be *sat-cit-ānanda*. That is why I can say *tat tvam asi*—you are *sat-cit-ānanda*. If someone asks, ‘Swamiji, if I am *sat-cit-ānanda*, how do I become *alpajñā*?’ The question itself is wrong because *sat-cit-ānanda* does not become anything. If you are *sat-cit-ānanda*, you cannot become *alpajñā*.

There is a notion that one was originally *sat-cit-ānanda* and gradually over a period of time due to a number of births, became *alpajñā*. Then it has to evolve back. The contention is that we are all in the cycle of evolution. Evolution of what? If *sat-cit-ānanda* is to evolve, what will it become? Now it is limitless, free from attributes. What is the part of it that evolves? How can *sat*, existence evolve?

The evolution of existence is only destruction. But this is an existence that is limitless. There is no possibility of evolution for such an existence. Can consciousness evolve? Something that has an attribute can evolve. But consciousness, which is pure existence, free from any attribute, cannot evolve. And, as we have seen, it is limitless. Thus, there is no evolution for *sat-cit-ānanda*.

Anything within *saṃsāra* can evolve. You draw an arbitrary line and any development beyond that you can call evolution. This human body may be an evolute because the human mind has a better capacity than the minds of other life forms. But the one who determines that this is an evolute is *alpajñā*. And when you say, ‘I am of limited knowledge—*alpajñō’ham*,’ that *aham* remains *sat-cit-ānanda*. The property of limited knowledge, *alpajñatva*, is purely an attribute, an incidental attribute, attributed to you by taking a point of view. For example, a modern artist may draw a table from the perspective of one who is looking at it from a position of lying down. It may not look like a table at all; it is just a perspective. That kind of table is not found anywhere.

Similarly you look at *sat-cit-ānanda* from the perspective of your limping physical body, your ageing brain cells etc., and say, ‘I have limited power, limited knowledge, limited pervasiveness,’ it is a perspective. Although the drawing had something to do with the table, this perspective has nothing to do with the table. The same is true with *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. If being limited is your view of yourself, it is due to *upādhi* and has nothing to do with *sat-cit-ānanda*. The same *sat-cit-ānanda* appears as though it is *alpajñā*. Because it is limitless, there is nothing that is apart from *sat-cit-ānanda*.

As the cause of everything, *sat-cit-ānanda* has to assume the status of being all-knowing, almighty. This we call God, *Īśvara*. But the attributes like, ‘all-knowing,’ and ‘almighty’ are incidental attributes from the standpoint of the *jīva*’s way of looking at the world. And when you look at this world, the same *sat-cit-ānanda* becomes the onlooker as well as *Īśvara*, the cause of everything. All names are his names, all forms are his forms. Therefore, you have any number of words to describe *Īśvara*. All due to some *upādhi* called *māyā-upādhi* or *prakṛti-upādhi*.

Therefore, when *Kṛṣṇa* says as *Īśvara*, ‘*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*—they are in Me,’ he is including the *māyā-upādhi* in that ‘Me.’ Only then, can he say all the beings have their basis in Me. He becomes the cause of every thing due to *māyā-upādhi*. Through *māyā-upādhi* alone, all the beings have their being in *paramātmā*. By itself, *paramātmā* is free from the creation because it is free from all attributes. So, with *māyā* alone does *Bhagavān* say *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*. When I look at *paramātmā* as the cause of the entire *jagat*, then *māyā* exists in *paramātmā* as its *śakti*. In *māyā* alone they exist and resolve and from *māyā* they are born.

## ARE BHAGAVĒN AND MĒYĒ TWO DIFFERENT ENTITIES?

Now we have a problem. There is no other thing except *ātmā*, *Brahman*; it is non-dual. If *Brahman* has *māyā* in itself, *Brahman* is one thing, *māyā* is another and we have two things. If fundamentally there are two, there is multiplicity and that is not acceptable because *Brahman* is non-dual, *advaya*. But when we say ‘One is *Brahman* and the second is *māyā*,’ we really do not have this problem. That is because, *māyā* is an interesting word. In Sanskrit, it is defined as follows: *yā mā sā māyā*. ‘That which is not’ is *māyā*. That is to say that *māyā* has no independent reality. It really does not exist. From one standpoint there is *māyā*, from the other, there is no *māyā*, only *Brahman*.

If you look at *Brahman* as the cause of creation, it has *māyā*; that is why it is said, *māyā-śabalaṃ brahma*. From the standpoint of itself, there is no *māyā*, there is only *sat-cit-ānanda*. *Māyā* is not an independent object enjoying a reality like *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* because *māyā* is *mithyā*. *Mithyā* is defined as something that does not exist apart from the *adhiṣṭhāna* on which it is dependent on—*mithyā* is therefore, *adhiṣṭhāna-ananyā*. Just like your shirt, which has no existence apart from its fabric, similarly, *māyā* is not a substance separate from *Brahman*. If it exists in its

own right, you can say *māyā* and *Brahman* together create the world and their getting together is the cause for creation. But they are not two independent factors because *māyā* is not independent from *Brahman*.

That is why we can worship the Lord as male or female. The string of 1000 names, *sahasranāmāvali*, of any *devatā* will invoke that particular *devatā* as the one who is the creator of everything, sustainer of everything, destroyer of everything—that is, who is everything. Then for the *devī*, the Goddess, or *māyā-śakti*, the string of 1000 names will say the same thing. She is the creatrix of everything, the sustainer of everything, the destroyer of everything. She is everything. This is another way of looking at the fact that there is only *Īśvara*. There is *Īśvara* from the standpoint of power, *śakti* and *Īśvara* without *śakti*. To think of two different entities—*Īśvara* and *māyā*—has no meaning at all because *māyā*, the *śakti*, is not independent of *Īśvara*. Like the capacity to burn is not independent of fire, *māyā-śakti* is not independent of *Brahman*, because it is the power of *Brahman* itself. From the standpoint of viewing *Brahman* as the cause of everything, you say it is *Brahman* with the power *māyā*—*māyā-śabalaṃ brahma*. But there is no problem of duality. One is *satya* the other is *mithyā* and *satya* plus *mithyā* is still one—*satya*.

When you stand before a mirror and see your reflection, there appears to be two of you—two heads, two mouths to feed and hundreds of other problems. But you know it is not so. You know there is still only one ‘you’ because you know that the reflection is *mithyā*. One plus one does not make two here. Even if you stand in a house of mirrors and see infinite reflections, there is still only one ‘you.’ The only difference is, all the images in the mirror are identical but in *Īśvara-sṛṣṭi* no two things look the same, not even two thumbs. The variety is infinite. Moreover, none of the reflections you see in the mirror is taken seriously. You cannot be detracted from or improved upon in a mirror. If you go to one *upādhi*, a concave mirror, and see yourself elongated, or you go to another *upādhi*, a convex mirror, and see yourself widened, you do not get alarmed, you are amused. Why? Because you know that it is *mithyā*. If it were real, it would be a problem. Being *mithyā*, there is no problem. *Mithyā* undergoes changes, *satya* remains the same. That means, in the *satya-vastu*, there are no changes. *Nāma-rūpas* change, *vastu* does not. It is the cause of all of them. It is the cause that never changes. Therefore, *paramātmā* plus *māyā* does not make two. One reality plus an infinite number of *nāma-rūpas* is still ‘one.’ From this standpoint alone *Bhagavān* says, ‘They resolve into Me.’ Only because of this *mithyā* was it said, *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*, and from his own standpoint, *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*. Again he says ‘*kalpa-kṣaye sarva-bhūtāni māmikāṇ prakṛtiṃ yānti*—again at the end of the *kalpa*, all the beings resolve in to My *prakṛti*.’ To say ‘they go back to My *prakṛti*’ or ‘they go back to Me’ are both right because the *prakṛti* has no separate existence other than *Īśvara*.

When it is proved that creation is *mithyā*, we have to accept a *mithyā* cause, which is *māyā-upādhi*, another word that is used for the *śakti* of *Brahman*. Because of this alone *Brahman* becomes the cause.

*Brahman* however does not undergo any change and is therefore, as we have seen before, *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. *Brahman* is both the efficient cause and material cause. But how can *Brahman* be the material cause, which must necessarily undergo change to become this variegated world? Even though the creation is non-separate from the cause, *Brahman* cannot undergo even an apparent change to create this world. We saw that *Brahman* remains the same and therefore, we say it is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

There are two types of *upādāna-kāraṇa*. One is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* and the other is *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. When the thing that is the material cause undergoes a change to become the effect, then it is called *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. And if it does not undergo any change to become the effect, it is called *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. Now, from the standpoint of the world, *Brahman* is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* because it is the cause that does not undergo any change. But whatever changes that are necessary are undergone only by *māyā*. Therefore, *māyā* is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa* for this world. Thus if you say *Brahman* is the material cause then it is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* and if you say *māyā* is the material cause, it is *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

Thus *Brahman* undergoes no change and at the same time makes all changes possible. It is like how the rope is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* for the snake and consciousness is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* for your dream. The dreamer is *caitanya*, the dream world is *caitanya* and the dream experience is *caitanya*. But without the *caitanya* there cannot be any creation and therefore, *caitanya* is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* and your own memory becomes the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. Similarly, *Brahman* alone is the cause for the whole creation as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* and *māyā* is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. Thus, through the *upādhi*, it becomes efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, through the *upādhi*, it becomes material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*.

*Bhagavān* points out in the next verse that he is the efficient cause through this *māyā*.

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।

भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ॥८॥

*prakṛtiṃ svāmavaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ*  
*bhūtagrāmamimaṃ kṛtsnamavaśaṃ prakṛtervaśāt*

Verse 8



स्वाम् प्रकृतिम् *svām prakṛtiṃ* — My own *prakṛti*; अवष्टभ्य *avaṣṭabhya* — controlling; पुनः पुनः *punaḥ punaḥ* — again and again; इमम् कृत्स्नम् भूत-ग्रामम् *imam kṛtsnam bhūta-grāmam* — this entire group of beings; अवशम् *avaśam* — necessarily; प्रकृतेः वशात् *prakṛteḥ vaśāt* — by force of *prakṛti*; विसृजामि *visṛjāmi* — I create

Keeping My own *prakṛti* under control, again and again I create this entire group of beings necessarily, by the force of *prakṛti*.

*Visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ*, again and again I create. After the dissolution at the end of each *kalpa*, I again create (Myself). Does that mean I undergo a change? No.

*Prakṛtiṃ svām avaṣṭabhya*, keeping My own *prakṛti*, My own *māyā-upādhi* in My hands, I create. This is the difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* keeps *māyā* under his control, the *jīva* comes under the spell of *māyā* or *avidyā* until he is released from it. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘Keeping this *māyā* in My hands, I create again and again, *svām prakṛtim avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ*.’

What does he create? *Bhūtagrāmam imam kṛtsnam*, this entire group of *bhūtas*, meaning the whole *jagat*. ‘What is seen by you, in its entirety I create, *aham visṛjāmi*.’ One may ask, ‘Why do you do that? All my problems are only because I find myself in this creation. So, why did you create all this?’

## WHY DID GOD CREATE THE WORLD?

*Avaśam* means it is something that has to take place. That is, without any will on the part of *Īśvara*, this takes place. This question, ‘Why did God create the world?’ has been asked millions of times. Any answer is only imaginary. The stock answer is that, it is all *Bhagavān’s līlā*—it is all a sport for the Lord. But why does *Bhagavān* need a sport, *līlā*? Is he restless, or bored, or lonely? If he is, then, how is he the Lord? Then he is as much a *saṃsārī* as me, the *jīva*.

The Lord answers this question by saying that, he did not really create anything at all. Only when he has created does he have to answer this question. In the next line he is going to say that he did not create anything. Assuming that there is a creation, we can only say that it came about without any will on his part. How then did it come?

*Prakṛteḥ vaśāt*, because of the force of *prakṛti* alone the creation takes place. The nature of *prakṛti* is to create. Not only the Lord, but you can also say the same thing. Why do you think about a given thing at a particular time? It is by the force of the same *prakṛti*. If you say, ‘I think,’ you have a problem; when you say, ‘*prakṛti* thinks,’ you have no problem. What is applicable right now here for you is also applicable to *Bhagavān* because *ātmā* is common and the *sṛṣṭi* is typical. A given thought is born in your head. That is, after all, a *sṛṣṭi* even though you do not will to create a given thought. There is, of course, deliberate thinking but what we are talking about here is a thought

that just occurs in your head without your willing. Why did this particular thought occur? Why is it created? It takes place naturally, *prakṛteḥ vaśāt*. Your will is not involved. Then, how can you assume responsibility for it? It is your thought, no doubt, but you have nothing to do with it because you have no will regarding it. This is true for a *jñānī* or an *ajñānī*. Both have nothing to do with the thought that occurs without any willing. So, let it occur and though there may be some cause we are not concerned with that; it is *prakṛteḥ vaśāt*.

An *ajñānī* has another type of thought, which is born of his own will. When he wills a given thought, he will of course claim authorship for it. Because he has *ahaṅkāra*, he thinks he is creating the thought. The *jñānī* will also have this type of thought but he looks upon this so called will as a part of *prakṛti*. In his vision, even while thinking, he does not think ‘Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking etc., I perform no action at all, *paśyan śṛṇvan sprśan jighran aśnan gacchan ... naiva kiñcit karomi*.’<sup>1</sup>

This is the difference between the *ajñānī* and *jñānī*. Both have the experience of finding themselves with an unsolicited thought—*prakṛteḥ vaśāt*. The *ajñānī* thinks that he created the thought because he thinks he is a *kartā*. Then the confusion is further compounded. He assumes responsibility for the very thought that occurs without his will, and feels guilty about it. Then through therapy etc., he tries to develop some kind of a distance but he still has *ahaṅkāra*. Therefore, the problem is going to recur in one form or another. But there is also deliberate thinking on his part, for which he will certainly claim authorship because he has the notion, ‘I am an author.’ A *jñānī*, however, has eliminated the notion that he is the author of any action by seeing that *ātmā* is *akartā*. If *ātmā* is *akartā* then because of the force of *prakṛti* alone, thoughts happen. There is no willing or wishing or any kind of action. All these just take place and it is as though ‘I do something,’ and as though ‘I do not do anything.’ It is as though things take place, of their own accord, *prakṛteḥ vaśāt*.

*Kṛṣṇa* says the same thing. This creation just takes place. This is the answer to, the question, ‘Why the creation?’ The *karmas* of all the *jīvas* form the *prakṛti*. When *pralaya* comes to an end, those *karmas* have to find their expression and the manifest creation begins at the beginning of the *kalpa*, *kalpāda*. *Bhagavān* brings the creation into being, keeping the *prakṛti* under his control, *prakṛtiṃ svām avaśtabhya*. It means that he does not come under the spell of *prakṛti* but this ‘I’ is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, which does not will anything to happen. Then who wills? In the presence of *Bhagavān* with reference to *prakṛti*, there is a will. It is said in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*: *so’kāmayata bahusyāṃ prajāyeyeti...* He desired, ‘May I become many.’ Now one can ask, ‘Why should he desire?’ Then we have to say that the desiring is also from the point of view of the *prakṛti* alone, *prakṛteḥ vaśāt*. From the stand point of *prakṛti*, *ātmā*

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 5-8, 9

seemingly desires. That is why *Bhagavān* says, ‘Keeping *prakṛti* under My control, *prakṛtiṃ svām avaṣṭabhya.*’ Without his willing, purely due to *prakṛti*, this creation takes place.

And it is a creation of great variety because the *jīvas* have to undergo many different kinds of experiences according to the *karmas* they have earned. Because of that there are varieties of bodies with their own unique *sūkṣma-śarīra*, all created according to the *karma* of *jīvas*. Now there arises another question here: When according to their *punya-pāpa-karmas* they are given bodies and situations etc., how is *Bhagavān* doing anything?

When a king gives money, protection, punishment, etc., according to the services and attitudes of his citizens, he seems to be the one meting out punishment and reward. The same philosophy extends to *Bhagavān*. If you do the right thing you are rewarded, if you do not do the right thing, you are punished. Even a dog is trained like that. If a person is well-behaved, he is the beneficiary and if not, he is adversely affected. By doing what is proper one is born in a good family, has a good body, and everything goes well for him. Another person is born in a situation full of disadvantages. Each person is affected by his own *dharma* and *adharmas*, which are subject to his choice. Whenever there is a choice, there is definitely *karṛtva*, doership. *Bhagavān* has no such problem because everything that is happening is due to *prakṛti*. He does not really participate in anything. When he says, ‘I do not create anything at all,’ the word ‘I’ refers to *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* and that is the only *ātmā* there is. In the presence of this *ātmā* *prakṛti* takes care of everything.

There is one more point to be understood here. And that is, without this presence of *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* the *prakṛti* cannot do anything. If we say so, then we will be saying what *Sāṅkhyas* propound, that is, *prakṛti* does everything and *ātmā* remains unconnected. But that is not acceptable. *Prakṛti* and *paramātmā* are not two parallel realities. *Prakṛti* is not independent of *paramātmā*. It is superimposed upon *paramātmā* entirely depending upon *paramātmā* for its existence. *Prakṛti* itself can not create, *ātmā* also cannot create by itself; they somehow come together to bring about this creation. But they are not two different entities enjoying the same degree of reality. One is *satya*, the other is *mithyā*. So, there continues to be only one. If this is not understood, we will end up with duality. That is why Lord *Kṛṣṇa* can say, ‘I created everything; I did not create anything.’ If it is not understood, it sounds like a contradiction.

In this creation there is a great deal of pain. *Bhagavān* seems to be responsible for all this. He created man with a wonderful body, senses and mind, and at the same time, he created some mosquitoes etc., to torment him. The human being has to fight against unknown sources of pain throughout his life. The one who created this pain must necessarily be affected by all this. *Bhagavān* says, ‘No. Whatever the creation is, it is all

due to the force of *prakṛti*, *prakṛteḥ vaśāt*, and I am not involved in it. These *karmas* do not affect Me at all.’

So, *Kṛṣṇa* says here:

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय ।

उदासीनवदासीनमसक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥९॥

*na ca māṃ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya*  
*udāsīnavadāsīnamasaktaṃ teṣu karmasu*

Verse 9

धनञ्जय *dhanañjaya* — O! *Arjuna*; तानि कर्माणि च *tāni karmāṇi ca* — and these *karmas*; माम् *mām* — Me; उदासीनवत् आसीनम् *udāsīnavat āsīnam* — who is seated as though indifferent; तेषु कर्मसु असक्तम् *teṣu karmasu asaktaṃ* — who is unconnected with reference to these *karmas*; न निबध्नन्ति *na nibadhnanti* — do not bind Me

O! *Arjuna*, these *karmas* do not bind Me who is seated as though indifferent, who is unconnected with reference to these *karmas*.

The Lord says, ‘With all its varieties, one superior another inferior, one healthy another unhealthy, this creation does not affect Me because I am unconnected, *asaṅgo’ham*.’ You can join *Kṛṣṇa* here saying the same thing, *asaṅgo’ham*. The reason that *Parameśvara* is not connected to all these *karmas*, *asaktaḥ teṣu karmasu*, is that, he is resting as one who is absolutely indifferent, *udāsīnavad āsīnaḥ*. This is an adjective *Bhagavān* uses to the word *mām*, Me, meaning *Parameśvara*, to make it clear why these *karmas* do not bind.

*Udāsīna* means the one who is absolutely indifferent. Some one who is neither a *rāgī*, one who likes, nor a *dveṣī*, one who dislikes, is called *udāsīna*. He is neither a liker nor a disliker. *Āsīna* means the one who is seated. Here *Parameśvara* is the one who is seated in the very *prakṛti*, in the very *māyā-upādhi*, exactly like *ātmā* is seated in your *buddhi*, being totally uninvolved in anything that goes on. The *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, which is seated in your *buddhi*, is like one who is indifferent, *udāsīna*, because it does not choose. It does not choose good *karma* or bad *karma*, a ‘good’ thought or a ‘bad’ thought. *Ātmā* does not choose, it just illumines. Therefore, it is *udāsīnavad āsīnaḥ*.

*Asakta* means unconnected, without attachment. As *ātmā* is seated in your *buddhi*, here, the one who is seated as the very basis of *māyā*, *Parameśvara* also remains unconnected, devoid of attachment to the result, devoid of identification with doership. He has no connection to the *karma-phala* nor does he think, ‘I am the doer.’ This *ātmā* remains absolutely indifferent because it is not subject to any change.

Whenever you see an object, there is a change in your *antaḥ-karaṇa*. If it is something you like, there is a particular modification that takes place and if it is an irritant, an entirely different type of change takes place. Now if there is an object, which causes no change at all in your *antaḥ-karaṇa*, other than the *vṛtti* by which you simply perceive it, the response in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is neutral, *udāsīna*. Like a perfectly neutral mind, *ātmā* does not undergo any change and is therefore, *udāsīnavad-āsīna*. With reference to those *karmas*, *teṣu karmasu*, the three-fold *karmas* of *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, and *laya*, *Bhagavān* says, 'I am not really involved.' He has no sense of being a doer. It is possible for any other person also to have no sense of being a doer by knowing the same *ātmā*. *Parameśvara's* *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda* and the *jīva's* *ātmā* is also *sat-cit-ānanda*. With this knowledge, there is no false identification of oneself as a doer.

And again, for the *ātmā*, there is no connection to the result of an action. Therefore, there is no sense of enjoyership for the *ātmā*. The cause for having no connection to *saṃsāra* is simply the absence of these two things, doership, *kartṛtva*, and enjoyership, *bhokṛtva*. If these are there, the whole *saṃsāra* is with you. Just the thought, 'I am the *kartā* and I am the *bhoktā*,' is enough to bring one into the hold of *saṃsāra*. Freedom from *saṃsāra* is a fact, which is to be discovered. And in this discovery you see that there is no *kartṛtva* or *bhokṛtva*—doership or enjoyership—in *ātmā*.

These sections of the *Gītā* where some paradoxes are presented to resolve certain other paradoxes are very important. *Bhagavān* says here, 'I create this entire group of beings—*bhūtagrāmam imaṃ kṛtsnaṃ visṛjāmi*. This is an expression of *Kṛṣṇa* assuming the role of *Īśvara*. He says very clearly, 'I create—*visṛjāmi*.' Then he says that those *karmas* of creation, sustenance and destruction do not bind him, *tāni māṃ na nibadhnanti*. He himself gives the reason as to why they do not bind him. He says, 'I am seated (within the *upādhi* called *māyā*) like one who is absolutely neutral.' This means he denies all responsibility. He now says that he is not responsible for these three *karmas* of creation, sustenance, and dissolution, which are continuously taking place in the world and which are imputed to *Īśvara*, and therefore, they do not bind him.

There seems to be a contradiction here. Generally you cannot say 'I create,' and then also say, 'I am not responsible for this action.' Even if you are forced to perform an action under duress, you still act. You only shift the responsibility to another person. But there is no person other than *Īśvara* who can induce him to perform an action and to whom he can pass the responsibility. If this is so, he has to assume responsibility for this three-fold *karma* of *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti* and *laya*. But he completely washes his hands off it. He says 'I create, sustain, and dissolve this creation; but I am not affected by the results of these actions.' In the next verse *Bhagavān* resolves this seeming contradiction.

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।

हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥१०॥

*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*  
*hetunānena kaunteya jagadviparivartate*

Verse 10

मया अध्यक्षेण *mayā adhyakṣeṇa* — owing to Me, the presiding presence; प्रकृतिः *prakṛtiḥ* — the *prakṛti*; सचराचरम् *sacarācaram* — (the world) consisting of movables and immovables; सूयते *sūyate* — creates; अनेन हेतुना *anena hetunā* — because of this reason; कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! son of *Kuntī*, *Arjuna*; जगद् विपरिवर्तते *jagadviparivartate* — the world undergoes changes

Owing to me, the presiding presence, the *prakṛti* creates (the world) consisting of movables and immovables. Because of this reason, *Arjuna*, the world undergoes changes.

*Prakṛti* meaning the *prakṛti-upādhi jagat sūyate*, creates this world, *jagat* consisting of things that move, *cara*, and things that do not move, *acara*. *Cara* and *acara* can refer to all types of sentient beings. Here *acara* meaning stationary life forms like trees and plants and *cara* all life forms that move about. Or *cara* can mean sentient beings and *acara* insentient beings. When *Bhagavān* says *prakṛti* creates everything, there is a potential problem. If *prakṛti* creates everything, that means he has nothing to do with it. If *paramātmā* has nothing to do with this creation, then we have two realities, *ātmā*, which performs no action and *prakṛti*, which does everything. Then we must ask whether *prakṛti* is inert or sentient. If it is sentient, we have two sentient beings. And, as we have seen, it is not possible to prove the existence of a second sentient being. There is only one source of consciousness, everything else is an object of consciousness, *anātmā*. No reasoning will help you establish a second conscious being, nor will perception. They can only establish an object, *anātmā*. And *śruti* is very clear that there is only one source of consciousness, the *ātmā*. If this is so, how can an inert *prakṛti* be capable of creation?

The *Sāṅkhyas* call *prakṛti* by the name *pradhāna* and the conscious being by the name *puruṣa* and say that the *puruṣa* is totally unconnected with *prakṛti* and therefore, *asaṅga*. And the *asaṅgatva* is total because for the *Sāṅkhya*, the *prakṛti* is a reality. And there is only one *prakṛti* whereas *puruṣas* are many. This parallel reality called *prakṛti* accounts for the entire creation, independent of the *puruṣa* who does not participate in the creation of the world.

This we cannot accept because it is against the *śāstra* and against reasoning also. A lot of arguments have been made in the first and second chapters of the *Brahma-sūtra* refuting this *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. If *prakṛti* creates everything, before the creation what was there? He says all that existed was *prakṛti*, and *puruṣa*, who is

not involved. What was the state of this *prakṛti* as it existed in dissolution? He will say that the three qualities of *prakṛti*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, were in a state of equilibrium. Then there is a disturbance of the *guṇas* and *prakṛti* starts creating. The question is, who disturbed this *prakṛti*? Since it is inert, it cannot disturb itself. It cannot think, ‘let me create.’ And *puruṣa* does not disturb. As there is no other factor to disturb this *prakṛti*, how does this creation start?

*Bhagavān* answers this here saying, ‘With Me as the presiding presence—*mayā adhyakṣeṇa*.’ Being blessed by Me, *prakṛti* creates this entire *jagat* that is made up of *cara* and *acara*—*prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*.’ When he says, ‘by Me,’ by the word ‘Me’ he means *paramātmā*, pure consciousness. The word *adhyakṣa* here means the one who presides. *Śaṅkara* says that in any situation it is pure consciousness that obtains. Therefore, he says the phrase, ‘*mayā adhyakṣeṇa*,’ means ‘*mayā dṛṣi-mātra-svarūpeṇa*—by Me the pure consciousness.’ This is one of *Śaṅkara*’s favourite words. In the *Upadeśa-sāhasrī*, he says, this pure consciousness is like space; that is, it has no particular form. Formless consciousness is the nature, the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. Therefore, when *Bhagavān* says ‘by Me,’ *mayā*, it can only be a self that does not undergo any change whatsoever. That is why he says, *mayā adhyakṣeṇa*. This *prakṛti* presided over by Me, creates—exactly like your mind and senses become conscious and capable of creation because of the presence of *ātmā*. Similarly, because of My presence, *prakṛti* is able to create all this.

*Śaṅkara* quotes a very important *mantra* here:

*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī sarvbhūtāntarātmā  
karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇasca  
Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 6.11*

*Ātmā* is called *deva* here and the word *eka* makes it clear that it is non-dual. A non-dual *Parameśvara* is hidden in all beings, *sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ*. It obtains in the *buddhi* of all beings, hidden in the sense that it is not available for perception but because of which all perception takes place. Thereby it is self-evident. The one who is not located in space but is all-pervasive, *sarvavyāpī*, the inner self of all beings, *antarātmā*, and the one who presides over all action whether it is the Lord’s actions of creation, sustenance, and dissolution or your action, whatever it may be. The one who blesses all the activities yet himself performs no action is *karmādhyakṣa*. And he is *adhivāsa*, the basis of all beings, the one in whom they all have their existence. He is witness, *sākṣī*, the conscious being, *cetā*. From the stand point of what is witnessed, consciousness has the status of being a *sākṣī*. But itself does not perform the action of witnessing. And that is why it is said he alone is, *kevala* meaning there is no second person, and he is free from all attributes, *nirguṇa*. Because of this, because of My presiding over, My lending consciousness to it, the *prakṛti* itself is conscious. Because consciousness inheres in the *māyā-upādhi* that *ātmā* becomes *Parameśvara*, the one

who does everything and knows everything, and therefore, has *sarvakāritva* and *sarvajñatva*. Blessed by this *ātmā* alone *prakṛti* creates everything.

Because of this reason, *anena hetunā*, the world undergoes all its changes, *jagat viparivartate*. The changes of creation and dissolution, and again changes within creation are all possible because of this alone. They are presided over by Me. Therefore, *ātmā* as the Lord can say, ‘I create—*ahaṃ viśṛjāmi*.’ And he can also say, ‘I do not create.’ How? Look at this.

In your own case, when the body is moving, the particular attribute of the body, movement, is imputed to the one who resides in the body. That is the ‘I.’ I am the one who is aware of this body and its movements but upon this awarer I superimpose the action of movement. We are not considering *ātmā* as *sat-cit-ānanda* here. We are talking about the *jīva*. This simple *jīva*, seated inside this body does not perform any action even though the actions done by the body are all attributed to the *jīva*. This is similar to the statement a person riding in a car makes. Although he performs no action at all, he will impute the attribute of the moving car to himself and say, ‘I did 60 miles an hour.’ Even if you become an Olympic runner you cannot travel 60 miles an hour. This is the property of the car; yet he says that he travelled 60 miles an hour. It is called *āropa*. You superimpose upon your own body a movement of 60 miles an hour, which belongs to the car. Similarly when the physical body is running or walking, the action is superimposed upon the *jīva* and then you say, ‘I run, I walk.’

It is the same for *Bhagavān*. The *adhyakṣa*, the conscious being obtaining in the *prakṛti* makes the whole thing happen. The *prakṛti* aspect undergoes all the changes being blessed by the conscious being, *cetana-ātmā* and therefore, *prakṛti* performs all this action.

When it is understood that the action of *prakṛti* is superimposed upon *ātmā* and that without *ātmā*, *prakṛti* itself cannot create, then you too can say, ‘I create, *ahaṃ viśṛjāmi*.’ Then, because consciousness itself does not perform any action, you can say ‘I did not create.’ In My presence, *prakṛti* performs all the activities. *Prakṛti* or *māyā*, of course, underwent all the changes. I remain in the *māyā-upādhi*, as I always have not been performing any action—*udāsīnavad āsīna*.

It is important to note that *Bhagavān* includes the entire world here by saying *sacarācaram*. When he says the entire *jagat* is created by *prakṛti* blessed by *ātmā*, which itself performs no action, your body and all the five elements are also included in the *jagat*. They are nothing but the product of *māyā* blessed by consciousness. And the product of *māyā* is not away from *māyā*, which itself is not away from *ātmā*. Therefore, there is nothing that is away from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Let us come to your physical body. Is it created or not? Since it is a modification of *prakṛti* or *māyā*, this physical body is also created by *prakṛti*. *Prāṇa*, mind and senses are all created by *prakṛti*. And behind this is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Therefore, your mind is functioning being blessed



by *ātmā* alone. Every thought, *vr̥tti*, enjoys *caitanya-ātmā*. It is the same whether it is your mind and its thoughts—individual *sṛṣṭi*, or total *sṛṣṭi*—the entire *jagat*, because *ātmā* is the same. Behind the whole scene of your personal creation or the total cosmic creation is this one *caitanya-ātmā* alone. Therefore, you too can say, along with *Bhagavān*, ‘Blessed by Me, *prakṛti* creates this world composed of movables and immovables—*mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram.*’ This is knowledge, *jñāna*. I perform no action, in My presence alone actions take place. The inert, *acetana*, itself cannot create and consciousness, *cetana*, does not create. In between there is the ‘so-called creation.’ Thus inert *prakṛti*, blessed by the conscious being, *caitanya-ātmā*, becomes the cause for the entire creation.

Thus, when *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘I create,’ but at the same time he says, ‘I did not do it,’ it is exactly like the person seated in the car saying, ‘I did 60 miles an hour’ and then saying, ‘No. I did not do it.’ In both the situations, the statements are made from the stand point of *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. You too can say, ‘I thought,’ and immediately follow it up with, ‘I did not think at all,’ etc. It is not denying your responsibility for your actions. Because such denial requires that you accept an action and your doership as real. If you say ‘I am an agent,’ *kartā*, then you cannot say that you did the action and at the same time deny that you are responsible. But suppose, you have this understanding that you never really performed the action even when you performed action, then, when you say, ‘I did the action,’ and ‘I never performed the action,’ you are revealing something.

*Bhagavān* accepts the *karma* when he says, ‘I create.’ But at the same time he says, ‘I did not do it,’ exactly like the person seated in the car says, ‘Because I was seated in the car, I did 60 miles an hour, at the same time, I did not perform any action.’ Both are true. Similarly here, *ātmā* from the standpoint of the *upādhi* is a *kartā* and from its own standpoint it is purely a blessing, a presence. The self is only a presence of consciousness, in, which the mind becomes active, and all actions take place.

This is what we saw when *Bhagavān* said earlier in the fourth chapter, ‘The one who recognises actionlessness in all actions is a wise man—*karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyēt sa buddhimān.*’ That wisdom is being talked about here. This entire *jagat* is changing because of the *prakṛti*, which is blessed by Me. Therefore, I can say, I create, I sustain, I destroy. And then I can say that I did not do anything because I am like a witness. Thus, all contradictions are resolved.

*Śaṅkara* describes your own experience here and says, *ḍṛṣi-karmatvāpatti-nimittā hi jagataḥ sarvā pravṛttiḥ*—‘any activity in the world is because it is an object of consciousness.’ For example, a desire in your mind is known to you, it is the object, *karma*, of consciousness, *ḍṛṣi*, in the sense that consciousness lights it up. It lights up any object, even the *ahaṅkāra*, the desirer. Then the action you do is also lighted up by the same *caitanya*. So, where is the possibility of an action, *pravṛtti*, without

consciousness being there? At the same time, consciousness itself performs no action. All the factors involved in an action, the *kāraṅkas* such as the subject, object, instrument etc., are all lighted up by the same consciousness. It only lights up, performing no action. Therefore, you can say, ‘I am not a doer—*aham akartā*. But without the lighting up there is no question of any action. How are you going to fulfil a desire without recognising it? And you have to be there to recognise it. If this is clear, then you see how you can say, ‘I did everything, at the same time I did not do anything. I am the *kartā*, I am the *akartā*.’

It is a common misunderstanding that the objective of this knowledge is to eliminate the *ahaṅkāra*. Then the question will naturally arise, ‘If I eliminate the ego, *ahaṅkāra*, how will I engage in any pursuit?’ We do not eliminate the ego. We say the ego is *ātmā*, but *ātmā* is not the ego. This amounts to an elimination of ego because you think *ātmā* is ego, which is not true. The ego appropriates to itself the status of being ‘I,’ of being some kind of an independent being. In fact, it is a misappropriation, which only brings in limitation and bondage. It is like losing a million dollar job because of misappropriating some postage stamps. The ego, even though it has no sense of ‘I’ without the *ātmā*, further appropriates to itself the body, mind and senses, thereby becoming an entity, which is limited. So, we negate that and the ego becomes *bādhita*. Enlightened, one continues to be an entity but at the same time, much more than what one thought one was. And thus one can say that there is *ahaṅkāra*, and also say that there is absence of *ahaṅkāra*. There is an agent who undertakes activity and there is no activity at all. Both are equally true.

*Śaṅkara* tells in detail the nature of this activity, *pravṛtti*—‘I enjoy this particular object,’ ‘I see this,’ ‘I hear this,’ ‘I experience this pleasure,’ ‘I undergo this pain,’ ‘for the purpose of that alone I will perform this action’ and ‘I will know this,’ etc. What he wants to show is that the nature of *pravṛtti* is such that it has its being in consciousness. When I say, ‘I see,’ the fact that I see something, implies knowledge, consciousness. When I say, ‘I see,’ the seer has its being in consciousness; the sight has its being in consciousness. The object of sight is also non-separate from your consciousness. Once you say, ‘I see this,’ ‘this,’ after all, is the object of your sight. How is it away from your consciousness? And therefore, nothing—the seer, seen, sight—is separate from consciousness. Similarly how can you say, ‘I enjoy,’ unless you light up the enjoyer, enjoyed and enjoyment. Therefore, all this *pravṛtti*—I will perform this action, I will know this object, I know this object, I am seeing this object, I am hearing this object—has its being in consciousness and resolves in consciousness. Once one such *pravṛtti* is over, you are ready again for something else. That also resolves in consciousness and again you are ready for another thing.

It is so intelligent, like a camera; even better. A film is exposed to objects in terms of light and registers an image. But that can happen only once. The film cannot be cleaned and used again. So, once it is exposed it is finished. Here it is not like that. Look

at this. The mind is exposed and the image of the object transpires there. Then it is gone and the light, *ātmā* is there. The eyes require some light as does the camera. But here the light is from within. It lights up the object. Then it is over and ready for the next exposure. And another good thing about this mind is that it can store all the images in the memory so that you can recall them later. Then, after a few days, some things get erased. If I ask you what you ate the day before yesterday, perhaps if you think it over, you will remember. But definitely not the day a month ago. This erasure is a wonderful thing, otherwise our heads will be full of lunches and dinners and varieties of things that we saw or read. But certain important things are always kept in memory. The memory is something amazing to me. How can it work unless it has capacity to destroy? But then it has the capacity to automatically remember certain things very clearly. Somehow it is all well organised. Therefore, consciousness lights up everything, including memory. Then when it is over, when the mind is cleared, everything is resolved in consciousness. It has its being in consciousness. It has its resolution in consciousness. The end, *avagati* is a resolution in consciousness. There is a lot more in this, which we will see further.

In the last two verses we saw that *prakṛti* creates the world consisting of things that move and things that do not move. It also sustains and destroys it. Destruction is in the sense of dissolving creation back to itself. *Prakṛti* can do this, *Bhagavān* says, only because it is blessed by Me. With *paramātmā* as its basis, *prakṛti* creates everything. Without this basis, it cannot be conscious and therefore, cannot create. *Prakṛti*, also called as *māyā*, draws its existence from *paramātmā*; and is conscious because of *paramātmā* and therefore, can create by itself. If the word 'I,' *aham* is used keeping the *māyā-upādhi* in view, the Lord can say, 'I create—*ahaṃ sṛjāmi*.' But in reality, that *aham* is purely *paramātmā* and to say that I create is only a referential statement. Then again, *Bhagavān* says, 'These actions do not affect Me at all—*na ca māṃ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti*, because I am like one who is absolutely indifferent, *udāsīnavat*.' This is from My own standpoint from where there is no action at all. We have two types of statements here, which understood together is *jñāna*.

Similarly, when you say 'I do—*ahaṃ karomi*,' all this is involved. The action that obtains in the *upādhi* such as the body-mind-sense complex is superimposed upon the self and then you say, 'I do.' If that is understood, the fact that you do not do anything, even when you seem to do all types of actions, should also be very clear. It is for this reason *Bhagavān* says that these *karmas* do not bind him.

## FOR WHOM IS THE CREATION?

*Śaṅkara* poses an interesting question here. When the Lord has no connection to objects of enjoyment and when there is no other conscious being to be an enjoyer, for what reason does he create the world?

**IS IT FOR ANOTHER?**

If the creation is for another enjoyer, we must first establish that there is another.

**IS THERE ANOTHER?**

The *mantra* that Śaṅkara quoted previously said that there is only one Lord, *eko devaḥ*, one conscious being concealed in all the beings, *sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ*. This means, as we have seen earlier, that there is only one self, which by nature is conscious and happens to be this entire creation. There is no multiplicity here at all, *sarvaṃ brahmaiva neha nānā asti kiñcana*. Even the *jagat* is not a second thing because it is *mithyā*. This is what the *śruti* says.

Now, suppose you say there are many *ātmās*. Then we must ask, is the second *ātmā* known to you or not? If you say there is a second *ātmā*, you have to say it is known to you.

**HOW WOULD ANOTHER BE KNOWN?****BY ĪTMĪ?**

If it is known, then we will ask, whether it is known by *ātmā* or *anātmā*? Suppose you say it is known by *ātmā*. To know there is a second *ātmā*, you must be able to see the difference between your own *ātmā* and the second *ātmā*. To do that, you must first see what is the peculiarity in your *ātmā* that makes it distinguishable from the second one. If you look into your *ātmā*, what do you see? White, black?

If you see a black *ātmā*, does the blackness belong to *ātmā* or *anātmā*? If it belongs to *anātmā*, how can you say it is ‘you?’ If it belongs to *ātmā*, how are you going to see it? A property of *ātmā*, which you have to see should be an object. And *ātmā* being yourself, you can never see it as an object. In order to see anything you must have *kartṛ-karma-bheda*, the seer must be different from the seen. So, to look into any particular feature of *ātmā*, you have to divide *ātmā* into two, the seer *ātmā* and the seen *ātmā*. How can you say that *ātmā* is both seer and seen? It is not possible at all. So, you cannot see the features in your own *ātmā*, which will distinguish it from another *ātmā*. Thus the difference between one *ātmā* and another cannot be known by *ātmā*.

**BY ANĪTMĪ?**

Then, you have to say it is known by *anātmā*. But *anātmā* is inert, *jaḍa*, it is something that I see. Being inert, *anātmā* cannot see anything at all. Therefore, this difference is not seen by either *ātmā* or *anātmā*. If it is not seen, you cannot prove there is another *ātmā*.

Then, Śaṅkara probes this further. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that this difference exists, is it different or non-different from *ātmā*? If you say it is not identical with *ātmā*, it becomes a property, a *dharma*, of *ātmā*, which is *anātmā*. If you say it is identical with *ātmā*, then we have the same problem of establishing how you are seeing it. There is no *pramāṇa* for it because *ātmā* cannot see its own features. It does not have that kind of subject-object division.

To summarise, if there are many *ātmās*, we must be able to distinguish one from the other. And to do that we must be able to establish differences among them. In order to establish the differences, first you must see your *ātmā* having this feature and another *ātmā* having other features. Unless you have established the differences between *ātmās*, you cannot establish the multiplicity of *ātmā*.

If your *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, then what about the other *ātmā*? If you say *ātmās* are many and all of them are *sat-cit-ānanda*, how can there be another *ānanda* other than this *ānanda*, which is limitless? If one *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* is limitless, where is the possibility of another limitless *ātmā*? There is no second limitlessness. That is why you can say, along with Īśvara, *mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛti sūyate*. That is knowledge. The whole teaching is that you should be able to say, along with Lord Kṛṣṇa, ‘By Me everything is presided over.’ Because when he says ‘Me,’ that ‘Me’ is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* and there is only one *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

#### CAN PERHAPS A SECOND ;TM; BE INFERRED

Even though you do not see *ātmā*, one may argue that you can infer it because a person responds when you talk to him. You are not inferring *ātmā*; you only infer that the mind is present. You never confront another *ātmā*. You confront the body, which is *anātmā*, or even the thought perhaps, by presumption. But the other person is confronting the same thought. Therefore, neither you nor he confronts *ātmā*. Since it can never be confronted, you cannot know another *ātmā* to count as a second.

Unless there is an enjoyer, there is no necessity for a creation. When you create something, either you should enjoy it or someone else should enjoy it. We have just seen that there is only one *cetana-ātmā*. Therefore, no other *ātmā* is available to be an enjoyer. Then who enjoys this world?

#### IS THE CREATION MEANT FOR ĪŚVARA HIMSELF?

If *śṛṣṭi* is for its own sake, *paramātmā* should enjoy the *śṛṣṭi* and to do that, it must become an enjoyer. Now to enjoy something, there must be a change on the part of the enjoyer. Previously he was not enjoying, now he is. Because enjoyment is a state of experience, it is something that did not exist before, exists now and will not exist later. You enjoy for the time being. Enjoyment being a particular mental disposition,

*vṛtti-viśeṣa*, there must be a change, *vikriyā* into and out of that state. So, *paramātmā* should undergo a change in order to be an enjoyer of the *sṛṣṭi*, which it has created.

*Śaṅkara* says that *Īśvara* does not undergo any change whatsoever, he is *avikriya*. So, *paramātmā* cannot become an enjoyer. That is one reason why the creation cannot be for itself.

Further, *paramātmā* does not have any sense of inadequacy that would prompt it to have a thought to create. *Ātmā* is *paripūrṇa*, one who is limitless, who is full. When there can be no desire to become complete, why would he create the world? So, *paramātmā* can neither create nor enjoy the creation. Thus, no one can say anything about the creation of the world.

### THE QUESTION, WHY CREATION? IS UNTENABLE

When *Śaṅkara* asks, ‘Why this creation?’ what answer can you give? *Śaṅkara* says the question and answer are both untenable. If you say that there is only one *ātma-caitanya*, there is no other *bhoktā*. In that case, why do you ask this question? You seem to understand non-duality; so, there is no question. If you understand that only one *caitanya-ātmā* exists, there is no real *sṛṣṭi* for any purpose and the question, ‘Why is there a creation,’ is untenable. When even to ask the question is not proper, to answer it is certainly not proper. *Śruti* herself expects this. Elsewhere she says, ‘*ko addhā veda ka iha pravocat kuta ājātā kuta iyaṃ viśṛṣṭih.*’<sup>1</sup>

Who knows this *jagat*? Who exactly knows every thing? Who is the one who sees the world? There is no *jagat* here to see. Other than *ātmā*, you cannot see the *jagat* and in the *ātmā*, you do not see the *jagat* at all. Who would be able to talk about this subject matter? Meaning who would be able to answer a question like this? Nobody would; because there is no *jagat*. Look at this wonder! From where, from where, has this *sṛṣṭi* come? This repetition, as *kuta, kuta*, etc., is for the sake of showing perturbation, *sambhrama*, as when you say, ‘Where is he? Where is he?’

### IS THE CREATION BHAGAVĒN'S LĪĒ, AMUSEMENT?

Some argue that it is *Bhagavān's līlā*. Then his play is my back pain, my heart-attack, my stomach ulcer. What kind of play is that? If he plays and makes me play too, then, we can say *Bhagavān* is just interested in play; so, he created some others to play with. But it must be play for the others or it is sadism. And we see that the world is

<sup>1</sup> को अद्धा वेद क इह प्रवोचत् कृत आज्ञाता कृत इयं विसृष्टिः।

*kaḥ* — who, *addhā* — directly, *veda* — knows (this *paramātmā*)? *kaḥ* — who, *iha* — here (with reference to this *paramātmā*), *pravocat* — can talk? *kutaḥ* — from where, *ājātā* — has this (creation) come? *kutaḥ* — where (is), *iyam viśṛṣṭih* — this creation?

not play; so, we cannot say it is *līlā*. Even if it were play, play is for someone who wishes to enjoy. If *ātmā* is *avikriya*, then, how can there be *līlā* for *ātmā*? In pure *caitanya* there is no *līlā*.

And there is no purpose in it because *Īśvara* has no sense of limitation or inadequacy, which would motivate him to create something. There is no purpose, *prayojana*, even for *Īśvara*, much less for *paramātmā*. *Īśvara* is the *ātmā* obtaining in the *māyā-upādhi*, making *ātmā* omniscient, *sarvajña*. The omniscient *ātmā* cannot be a desirer because he has no sense of limitation or inadequacy.

### WHEN CREATION IS IMPOSSIBLE, HOW DO WE ACCOUNT FOR IT?

Therefore, creation is not possible. So, how do we account for all this? What we call creation is nothing but *māyā*. Anything that is untenable is made tenable by *māyā*. If you ask how *māyā* can make it tenable, that is what *māyā* is—it makes the untenable tenable. This has already been shown by *Bhagavān* in the fifth chapter, *ujñānena āvṛtam jñānam tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*—knowledge is covered by ignorance; because of that living beings are deluded.’ The idea is that the whole question arises only from the standpoint of creation, *sṛṣṭi*. Only when you accept a *sṛṣṭi*, do you say *Īśvara* with the *māyā-upādhi* is the cause of creation. Then you can say *ātmā* qualified by *māyā-upādhi* is called *Īśvara* and *paramātmā* without the *upādhi* is the cause that does not undergo any change and is called *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. That is what is said here—*mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*. *Ātmā*, without giving up its nature, becomes the cause for everything. It is all only from the standpoint of a creation, not from the standpoint of *ātmā*.

### FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ĀTMĀ THE QUESTION IS UNTENABLE

In *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, there is no *jagat*; so, there is no necessity as to seek an answer as to how this world came about. Since it is not there in *sat-cit-ānanda*, there is no reason to talk about it. It looks as though the *jagat* is one thing, *sat-cit-ānanda* is another. That is not true either because when you see the *jagat*, *sat-cit-ānanda* is present. There is no *jagat* separate from *sat-cit-ānanda* but in *sat-cit-ānanda*, there is no *jagat*.

The question of how this *jagat* came about does not arise. From the standpoint of *sat-cit-ānanda*, only *sat-cit-ānanda* is there. When I look at the *jagat*, I find that it is not independent of *sat-cit-ānanda*. When this is so, the statements, ‘*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*—all the beings are in Me,’ and ‘*na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*—the beings are not in Me,’ are not contradictory but very clear. It means that there is nothing else except

Me, *sat-cit-ānanda*, so, the *jagat* cannot come from anywhere else; it comes only from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. And there must be some cause. And that cause is *Īśvara*. Therefore, the Lord says, '*mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*—blessed by Me, the *ātmā* alone, *prakṛti* creates everything.' Not only does it create everything being blessed by Me, it also sustains everything and resolves everything into Me. By My grace the world exists.

The creation is neither for *paramātmā* nor for any other, because there is no other. Therefore, it is very clear, the *sṛṣṭi* is not for the sake of any one. You say there is no other *ātmā* except *paramātmā*, which does not require a *sṛṣṭi* at all. You yourself have dismissed the possibility of there being a *sṛṣṭi*; so, why do you ask the question, 'Why is there a creation?' Once you know this much, you yourself have answered the question. Still there is something to see here.

### WHY RAISE SUCH A QUESTION IF IT IS UNTENABLE?

When *śruti* says, *ko addhā veda ka iha pravocat kuta ājātā, kuta iyaṃ sṛṣṭiḥ*, it is to show that there is no real *sṛṣṭi*. A question and answer are possible only when there is something real. But it is not real. *Prakṛti* itself does not create because it has no existence of its own. *Ātmā* does not create either. Therefore, it is purely by *māyā*;—then everything is possible.

The reality is that *ātmā* does not create. And *prakṛti* alone cannot create. It has to be presided over, supported by *paramātmā*. Therefore, the *prakṛti*'s existence is the existence of *paramātmā*. The *prakṛti*'s capacity to create etc., and the knowledge that is necessary are all due to *paramātmā* alone. *Prakṛti* blessed by *paramātmā* becomes the cause of and accounts for the existence of the creation. Thus *Bhagavān* says, 'I create—*ahaṃ viṣṭjāmi*,' only from the standpoint of *prakṛti*. He himself is not the creator and therefore, says, '*na ca māṇ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti*—those actions do not affect Me at all.' You can say the same thing. The body, mind and sense organs—all perform their activities being presided over, being blessed by *ātmā*. But those activities do not bind Me at all because between *prakṛti* and *ātmā* there is no real connection. A connection is between two entities enjoying the same degree of reality. Here, one is *satya* and the other is *mithyā*. And *satya* is not affected by *mithyā*. Therefore, *prakṛti* is a superimposition, *āropa*, upon *ātmā*. Because you see everything, there is a *prakṛti*, which is *āropita* upon *ātmā*. It is definitely superimposed because once you say *ātmā* is *paraṃ brahma*, there is no question of *prakṛti*.

You have to understand these two standpoints because this understanding is *mokṣa*. It is an understanding of one's freedom from enjoyership and doership. Everything is connected to *ātmā*, which is the basis of everything. At the same time, *ātmā* remains unconnected. It is always untouched—free from doership and enjoyership.



It does not perform action, much less does it enjoy the result of an action. You are already free and all your *karmas* are completely nullified. This is the whole vision.

Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says here, the ‘Me’ referred to in the verse is the *ātmā* of all beings, which is by nature always pure, enlightened and free—*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva*. It is not that the Lord means to say, ‘I am *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* for a particular being and not for another.’ In fact, he says, ‘I am the *ātmā* of all beings.’ Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, the one who is saying this, is *Īśvara* who is *paramātmā*, which is *jagat-kāraṇa*, which is non-separate from anyone. And it is *nitya-śuddha*, always free from all *karmas*, free from both *pāpa* and *puṇya*, free from sorrow, etc. And it is *nitya-buddha*, without any ignorance, and therefore, *mukta-svabhāva*, always free. So, you need not purify or enlighten the *ātmā* because it is not impure nor does it have any ignorance. You need not free the *ātmā*, because it is not in any way bound. It is omniscient and the cause of the entire creation.

Even though it is the *ātmā* of all beings...

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।

परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥११॥

*avajānanti māṃ mūḍhā mānuṣīṃ tanumāśritam*

*paraṃ bhāvamajānanto mama bhūtamahēśvaram*

Verse 11

अजानन्तः *ajānantaḥ* — not knowing; मम परम् भावम् *mama paraṃ bhāvam* — My limitless nature; भूत-महेश्वरम् *bhūta-mahēśvaram* — as the Lord of all beings; मूढाः *mūḍhāḥ* — the deluded; माम् *mām* — Me; मानुषीम् तनुम् आश्रितम् *mānuṣīṃ tanum āśritam* — the one who obtains in the human body; अवजानन्ति *avajānanti* — fail to recognise

Not knowing My limitless nature as the Lord of all beings, the deluded fail to recognise Me, the one who obtains in the human body.

*Mūḍhāḥ*, the deluded, means the people who do not have this discriminative knowledge. They have the notion of doership and a sense of guilt for all their commissions and omissions. Naturally they have a sense of enjoyership for the results of their actions. These are the people who do not recognise that *ātmā* is *akartā*, non-doer, *abhoktā*, non-enjoyer, and that things take place as they should. *Ātmā* is only a blessing, a presence. The doership and enjoyership are superimposed upon *ātmā* and do not belong to it. Those who do not have this discrimination completely neglect or disrespect Me in the sense that they do not recognise Me nor do they think I am to be inquired into or understood. Why? Because they do not know My limitless nature—*mama paraṃ bhāvam ajānantaḥ*. *Śaṅkara* says that *ātmā* is like space. That is, it is not limited by any particular form or location, always pure and all pervasive. And *ākāśa* itself is within

it. The whole creation is within *ākāśa*; but this is still interior, subtler, to *ākāśa* in that it is the basis of *ākāśa* itself.

And he is the one who is the Lord of all beings—*bhūtamahēśvara*. *Śaṅkara* says, he is *svātmā*, one's own self.

He is the one who obtains in the human body. And people do not recognise him as such. The people who do not know Me, who has taken a human form—*ajānantaḥ māṃ, mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*—do not recognise Me as *Paramēśvara*—*avajānanti māṃ bhūtamahēśvaram*. They take Me only as the body just as they conclude that they are themselves nothing more than their bodies. And they impute the limitations of the body such as, mortality, etc., to *ātmā* and conclude that they are mortal, subject to all the limitations that the body is subject to. In fact so intimate is this orientation that no difference is seen whatsoever between the body and *ātmā*. The lot of the physical body is one's own lot. It becomes so ridiculous that you can even say, 'I am white,' 'I am black,' etc. At least if you say 'I am fat,' or 'I am tall,' you are describing the body. But when you say 'I am white' you are talking about the pigment of the epidermis and equating it to yourself. This ridiculous state is achieved, because you happen to be in this physical body, and you take it as yourself. In doing so, you neglect *Paramēśvara*. By neglecting *Paramēśvara*, you only neglect yourself.

## HOW NEGLECTING ĪŚVARA IS NEGLECTING ONESELF

If you say that you have other things to do, all of them are only to become the Lord. You try to manipulate the world, to be in control. You want to be *Īśvara*—because you are *Īśvara* in reality. But you find that you are helpless and some theologies will tell you that you are eternally helpless, eternally imperfect and therefore, you need the Lord's grace to gain some beatitude. You accept it because you are convinced that you are helpless. But still you have a desire to control because you happen to be identical with *Īśvara*, who controls the whole creation. Therefore, what you really want is to be yourself. You neglect yourself and you want to be yourself in the sense that the very thing you neglect is what you want to be. That is why I say the reality of yourself is not simply metaphysical. It is a value. Here reality and the value are identical. You want to be free, freedom is the reality. You want to be happy, happiness is the reality—of yourself. That is why this *mokṣa-pravṛtti* is entirely different. It is not a philosophical pursuit. It is a life pursuit, a pursuit that gives meaning to life. The purpose of any pursuit is to become free from a sense of lack and the truth is that I am already free. If I do not recognise that and continue trying to be that, I can never succeed. With this limited body and mind I try to be free from a sense of lack. And what I am I neglect entirely.

*Bhagavān* says, 'I am the one who is seated in this human body, highly worshipful and the one everybody is seeking. And these people do not seek Me at all.'

What they should seek they are neglecting. This is the wonder, *āścarya*, of *māyā*. The one who obtains in this human form was said by *Śaṅkara* to be always free from any type of *karma*, or ignorance, and therefore, ever liberated, *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva*. It is he, that ever liberated one, *Bhagavān* says, who does not recognise *Bhagavān* as the truth of himself.

He disregards Me, not knowing my *paraṃ bhāva*, this limitless nature, which is identical to one's self and, which is *Īśvara*, the Lord of all beings. Then what do they seek in life? Only Me. Not recognising themselves, they begin seeking Me like the tenth man<sup>1</sup> or the pauper who is really a prince.<sup>2</sup> The whole problem is one of ignorance.

### NECESSITY FOR ĀRADDHĒ AND GRACE

Suppose someone is ignorant of an object. He insists, for instance, that charcoal cannot become a diamond. I can perhaps educate him and show him how it becomes a diamond. I can make him understand because it is an object. But if a person is ignorant of himself, while all that he seeks—freedom, happiness, freedom from agitation, etc.—happens to be himself, how will I arrest this person's attention? How am I going to show

<sup>1</sup> Once ten people crossed a river. And to start with they were worried if the river will carry them away in its flow. Therefore when they reached the other bank, they wanted to see if all of them had crossed over safely and so, the leader of the group started counting the people present. He forgot to count himself and got the figure of nine. Immediately panic set in in the group that the tenth man was lost. Everybody started wailing and weeping over the loss of the tenth man. The leader was searching here and there for the lost tenth man not realising that he was himself the tenth man. At this point there came a wise man and he saw the confusion and panic and asked them what the problem was. And when he was told that the tenth man was missing, he immediately saw what their problem was. He asked the leader to count again and when he counted nine he pointed out the fact the leader himself was the tenth man he was searching. Then all his problem of fear, sorrow, et., of losing the tenth man were all gone. The problem is the same when one seeks fullness not knowing that fullness is one's own nature. And when the problem is due to ignorance, the only solution to the problem is knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Once a king was attacked by his enemy and was killed in the battle and his son who was an infant was immediately sent away with a trusted servant so, that his life could be saved. He grew up in some small town living on alms and grew up to be a young man. By this time the loyalists of the old king had overthrown the enemy and now came searching for the lost prince. They found him living as a pauper on the streets. They looked for all the necessary evidence and were satisfied that he was indeed their lost prince and told him so. Now this prince, who thinks of himself as a pauper, what does he have to do to become the prince? He has to do nothing. He simply has to know that he is in reality a prince. When the problem is one of ignorance the only solution is knowledge.

him himself? This is not possible unless he has *śraddhā* that the self revealed in the *śāstra* does exist. The recognition of that self is possible only when you first recognise it as *asti*. *Śraddhā* is indispensable because you cannot stumble upon this particular fact. You can stumble upon something other than yourself but not yourself.

If someone does not recognise the possibility of such a fact, he cannot accept that the self is free from any sense of limitation. That is why it is always said that if a person has an affinity for non-duality, it is only because of the grace of the Lord, *īśvara-anugrahāt eva puṁsām advaita-vāsanā*.

Out of the sheer despair of his helplessness in manipulating situations, a person can perhaps become a kind of *bhakta*. But even this much recognition requires *īśvara*'s grace. A person in distress can remain in distress and just become desperate. He need not resort to *īśvara*. It is not necessarily true that someone in distress will become a devotee; he can become mentally ill. If he becomes a devotee, it is only by some grace.

But to recognise that I am the whole requires not just some grace; it requires extraordinary grace because what I seek is not an ordinary thing. It is *advaita*, it is myself. Even if it is told, without grace, it will not capture a person's attention. But if that grace is there, it rings true even when he hears it for the first time. That is due to *saṁskāra*. Why should he have that *saṁskāra*? We say it is purely due to the grace of *īśvara*. Everyone knows he is not the whole. You need no knowledge for that. But it takes a lot of knowledge to recognise one's identity with the whole. For this, necessarily, you require grace.

Without that grace they disregard Me who is the self of everyone and are destroyed. *Śaṅkara* says they are lowly people. Even though they were given a thinking faculty, they did not use it. In the next verse *Bhagavān* describes such people.

मोघाशा मोघकर्माणो मोघज्ञाना विचेतसः ।

राक्षसीमासुरीं चैव प्रकृतिं मोहिनीं श्रिताः ॥१२॥

*moghāśā moghakarmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasah*  
*rākṣasīmāsuriṁ caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīṁ śritāḥ*

Verse 12

मोघाशाः *moghāśāḥ* — those of vain hopes; मोघ-कर्माणः *mogha-karmāṇaḥ* — those of fruitless actions; मोघ-ज्ञानाः *mogha-jñānāḥ* — those of useless knowledge; विचेतसः *vicetasah* — who have no discrimination; च एव *ca eva* — indeed; राक्षसीम् आसुरीम् मोहिनीम् प्रकृतिम् *rākṣasīm āsurīm mohinīm prakṛtim*<sup>1</sup> — the deluding dispositions of *rākṣasa* and *asura*; श्रिताः *śritāḥ* — (they) resort to

<sup>1</sup> Here we have combined the words together to get the proper meaning of the entire phrase. The meaning of the individual words are as follows.

राक्षसी प्रकृतिः *rākṣasī prakṛtiḥ* – the disposition of a *rākṣasa*; आसुरी प्रकृतिः *āsuri prakṛtiḥ* –

Those of vain hopes, of fruitless actions and useless knowledge, who have no discrimination, indeed resort to the deluding dispositions of *rākṣasa* and *asura*.

*Moghāsāḥ* are those whose hopes are vain idle dreams. Or it can be taken as those who have wasted their grace. It takes a certain grace to be born a human being but that grace is wasted if they have not used their will properly.

### WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING, ALL ACTIONS ARE FRUITLESS

*Mogha-karmāṇāḥ* are those whose actions are fruitless. All the *karmas* they do are fruitless because they have not done them for *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, preparing them for *ātma-jñāna*. Since the end is not very clear to them, the *karmas* they do are useless. They are, in other words, not *karmayogīs*, *mumukṣus*, who do *karma* to be released from the hold of likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, so that they can recognise that *ātmā* is *paraṃ brahma*. For such *mumukṣus* everything becomes meaningful because there is an end in view. Marriage is meaningful, family is meaningful. Anything and everything is an *āśrama*, a stage in life and therefore, meaningful. Whereas the actions of people of vain hopes such as, ‘I will do this and I will get this result, etc.,’ become meaningless in the final analysis. There are some results; but they are ultimately fruitless, because their hope, which is to be full, is not fulfilled—all because of not recognising *Īśvara* as *ātmā*.

### THEY HAVE EDUCATION BUT NOT ITS REAL RESULT, MATURITY

*Mogha-jñānāḥ* are those who have education, even scholarship, but no maturity and so, no recognition of *Parameśvara*. Education should make you mature enough to recognise *Īśvara*. It is a part of growing up. We do not pursue something just because our ancestors did it. The hope is that one day you will ask the question, ‘What am I doing?’ Then you become alive to what you are doing. Otherwise it is a simple routine, within a structure. And any structure gives you a false sense of security because it has no real content. Yet if the structure is not there, you will fall apart. So, in a structured society you can grow well, but if you fall apart without it, you have not grown at all. One has to grow so that he can step into any structure and be a complete person.

Education is supposed to do that, not just make you a bread-winner. Even animals are able to find their food and shelter without any schooling. People have lived for ages in the jungles and mountains without any education at all. And they not only lived, they became great-great-great-grand parents and produced such sophisticated people as us. Without modern medicine and technology, they lived adequately enough to keep this

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*the disposition of an asura; मोहिनी mohinī –that which deludes*

population growing. To find food and shelter, you do not require language, culture, music and so on. You do not require anything that you were not born with.

The education you have should make you recognise *Īśvara*, not just as someone sitting somewhere but as the truth of yourself. Without that, any knowledge a person has is useless because it has not made him mature.

## WITHOUT MATURITY, THINKING AND BEHAVIOR ARE DELUDED

*Vicetasah*: These people under discussion, with the knowledge they have, are *vicetasah*, people who have no *viveka*. They cannot discern what is proper and improper, *dharma* and *adharma*, leave alone *ātmā* and *anātmā*. They are not able to interpret, in a given situation, what is right. Anything convenient is right. So, what happens to them? They resort to the dispositions of *rākṣasas* and *asuras*—*rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva mohinīm prakṛtīm śritāḥ (bhavanti)*.

A *rākṣasa* has a predominance of *rajoguṇa*. He has a lot of ambition, which fuels a great deal of activity and vainfulness. In the process of fulfilling all his ambitions he destroys anything or anybody that becomes an obstruction because his aim is so important to him. That is a *rākṣasa*. In the business world there are many *rākṣasas*. The corporate *rākṣasa* will destroy anybody. He will buy up and assimilate any small rival anywhere. There is no consideration for another life, for another's happiness and so on. This kind of behaviour is called *rākṣasa-prakṛti*. It is all because of non-recognition of *Īśvara*.

Or he is an *asura*, one whose make-up is predominantly *tamas*. Such people will eat or drink anything. There are no rules at all. I knew one person who collected his yoghurt for ten days and kept it on the window sill. The whole building had such a foul smell that we thought there was a dead rat somewhere. Then we found this yoghurt and asked him what it was for. He was fermenting it for his own consumption! That is called *tamas*.

*Bhagavān* says that this type of *prakṛti*, behaviour, is *mohinī*, it makes you more deluded. *Śaṅkara* says, they resort to and advocate complete identity of the body with the self. In their vision, the body and the self are one and the same. When the body is gone, I am gone. When the body is OK, I am OK. Therefore, all you need to do is pamper the body left and right. Feed the senses as long as you can, because they are not going to last. The 70-year old neighbour cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot eat—he cannot do anything. Therefore, make hay while the sun shines; you do not get a second chance. This is their argument. It has no sense at all. The word *mohinī* added to the word *prakṛti* makes it to mean more than a mere disposition. They have a philosophy to support their disposition, which is, in turn, a product of their own disposition. It is a

philosophy created by a mind that has a predominance of *tamas* or *rajas*. Sometimes they even become religious heads and cult leaders. Cults come up wherever and whenever there is no *vicāra*, no inquiry, no thinking.

Or they can be simple people who do not want to or cannot think. That is why people should be encouraged to think. If you can educate a person to think properly that is the greatest gift you can give. Anything less is not enough because he then requires further consultation. If you give advice, you will have to give it again. Make them think and discover. That is how people grow.

*Śaṅkara* says a few things about the dispositions of those of the *rākṣasas* and the *asuras*. He describes their lifestyles as follows: They say, '*chindhi*, slay him, *bhindhī*, cut him.' In other words, 'Destroy him. Do anything you have to—shoot him, knock him out, level him out—but finish him off.' Then, '*pība*, drink—anything, whatever it is. Even if it is fermented, drink it.' Then, '*khāda*, eat anything—anything crawling, flying, walking, swimming—anything that is available. Just eat it.' Vegetarian food is not what is meant here because that is very natural, *svābhāvika*. Then they say, 'Rob the other fellow's property, *parasvam apahara*—do whatever you have to, to get somebody's wealth, somebody's land.' This is similar to robbing somebody of their property and then calling oneself a pioneer. Others are all immigrants, aliens, but you are a pioneer. This is amazing to me. It is better to say we immigrated here because we wanted land. We came here and took what we could get. That is being honest and is better than calling ourselves pioneers.

These are the types of actions they do and these are also the topics of their conversations. These are the words you hear in an assembly of *rākṣasas* or *asuras*. Among themselves they talk of their accomplishments in terms of how many people they destroyed, how powerful they have become, what they are eating and what ornaments they have, etc. If you analyse the topic of any of their conversations it will be one of these. Their activities are cruel. And they are destroying themselves because they are incapable of using the grace they have.

The grace is *viveka*. You must tap it and make use of it, otherwise it becomes wasted grace. This is a most deluding *prakṛti*, disposition and to get out of it is very difficult. You need all the grace you can get.

## ĀRADDHĒ IS WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IN BEHAVIOUR

They are not able to recognise Me because they have no *śraddhā*. This is a very important connection to make. In *mīmāṃsā*, there is a rule that if you fail to do certain enjoined daily rituals and duties, you incur *pāpa*—*akarāṇe pratyavāyah*. They have some basis for this contention. But then you cannot say that a *karma* not done can produce a result. An action produces a result, not a non-action. If not doing an action

produces a result, why should you ever do an action? It is against all the laws of *karma*. So, *akaraṇe pratyavāyaḥ* is not to be taken literally. Although not performing an action does not incur *pāpa*, it does create a vacuum, which can be filled by wrong actions, which will attract *pāpa*. The idea is that when you do not do the right thing, it will not take long for you to do something wrong because you cannot remain inactive. That is why one must do the right thing.

But what if there is no natural tendency, *saṃskāra*, to do what is right? That is where *śraddhā* comes in. Doing the right thing implies not only common sense but much more here because we are talking about religious duties too. Therefore, you require *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* in order to appreciate *puṇya-pāpa*, what is to be done and what is not to be done. With *śraddhā*, there is a greater possibility of doing the right thing. Even though a person may still do wrong things, he is committed to doing the right thing. Otherwise, he becomes a person of vain hopes and useless activity—*moghāśāḥ moghakarmāṇaḥ*. That is the reference *Bhagavān* makes here, when he says that the people who have no *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* totally disregard him. If they disregard *Bhagavān*, what will they regard? If they do not regard the *śāstra* there is no *puṇya* or *pāpa* for them. Therefore, they become *moghāśāḥ moghakarmāṇaḥ*. This is how the concept of *akaraṇe pratyavāyaḥ* becomes meaningful.

## ŚRADDHĒ ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH, VIVEKA IS ALSO REQUIRED

Now *Bhagavān* talks about those, on the other hand, who have *śraddhā*. But *śraddhā* alone is not enough because it can induce one to perform *karmas* only for achieving results in this world or later. That means the problem is not clear. They have *śraddhā* alright, but they perform rituals etc., to amass *puṇya*, which can be encashed in the future. And all those results are finite, *anitya*. But then, they are satisfied with finite results. They do not think beyond that. Such people, even though they have *śraddhā*, are interested only in *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. They are working for a better situation in the next world or the next birth. They are not interested in *mokṣa*.

A *mumukṣu* also has *śraddhā*. Along with *śraddhā*, he also has *viveka*. He has the *viveka* to seek *mokṣa*. *Śaṅkara* says here that this verse is referring to those who are engaged in the pursuit of *mokṣa*. Of the four types of devotees, these are the *jijñāsus*. They recognise *ātmā* as existent, *asti*, and have discerned the fundamental problem. Their whole pursuit is for freedom, *mokṣa*. And it is a pursuit characterised by a committed devotion to the Lord, whom they are seeking to know, or whose grace they are seeking. Seeking grace is the initial step. You go one step further when you seek to know.



महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।

भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥१३॥

*mahātmānastu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtimāśritāḥ  
bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādimavyayam*

Verse 13

पार्थ *pārtha* — Arjuna; महात्मानः तु *mahātmānaḥ tu* — those of noble heart on the other hand; अनन्य-मनसः *ananya-manasaḥ* — being totally committed; दैवीम् प्रकृतिम् आश्रिताः *daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ* — being given to a spiritual disposition; माम् *mām* — Me; भूतादिम् *bhūtādim* — the cause of all beings and elements; अव्ययम् *avyayam* — one who is not subject to destruction; ज्ञात्वा *jñātvā* — knowing; भजन्ति *bhajanti* — they seek

*Arjuna*, those of noble heart, on the other hand, who are given to a spiritual disposition, knowing Me as the imperishable cause of all beings and elements and being totally committed to Me, seek Me.

*Mahātmānaḥ tu*, on the other hand the *mahātmās*, seek Me. A person whose mind is big, whose heart is imbued with love and compassion is called a *mahātmā*. That is why all *sādhus* are called *mahātmās*. A *sādhu* is a person whose practice is to help others, *parakāryaṃ sādhnōti*. He does not harm anybody and whenever possible, he will help another person. Helping is natural to him because he is moved by compassion. That person is a *sādhu*, a *mahātmā*.

*Pārtha*, *Arjuna*, they, have a disposition, which is very different from the previous ones we have seen. The word *tu*, whereas, here distinguishes them from those others we saw in the previous verse.

And these *mahātmās* are *daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ*—they are people who are given to a disposition in which *sattva* is predominant. These three *prakṛtis*, which he only mentions by name here as *rākṣasī*, *āsurī* and *daivī*, he will later take as topics and elaborate upon. *Daivī* means that which is connected to *deva*, the Lord. So, they have godly dispositions in which *sattva* is predominant. It consists of *dama*, self control, and other qualifications as well as faith in oneself and in the *śāstra*. Until you know, you require this *śraddhā*.

## ŚRADDHĒ AND VIVEKA WORK TOGETHER

This *śraddhā* is different from a faith, which remains with you till death and because of which you hope to reach heaven etc. In *Vedānta*, faith in the *śāstra* is only pending discovery. Until you discover, you assume it is right. It is a presumption but it is highly desirable.

When someone says you are *ānanda*, the whole, the centre of the entire creation and free from all limitations, that is the most desirable. It is exactly what you want to be. That is why you struggle to prove yourself. To whom do you want to prove yourself? In fact only to yourself. Even if you say it is to someone else, it is only because, if in his opinion you are acceptable, then you are acceptable to yourself. That only means in your own estimation you are nobody. Because the limitations are obvious. If you look at yourself through those limitations, naturally you have to prove yourself. And any attempt is not going to remove limitations. No matter what you achieve, though it can give you a healthy self-esteem, it cannot resolve your sense of limitation. The limited person continues to be limited. That is why a proverb in Tamil says that if your finger swells, there is a limit to how enlarged it can get. It is not going to swell to the size of a pumpkin. Whatever you accomplish, it is always going to be limited. If I am already limited, a few more limited embellishments do not make me free from a sense of limitation. Any attempt by a limited individual will definitely be found wanting.

These people who have a disposition characterised by self-control and compassion, seek Me. What kind of Me?

They seek Me who is the cause of all living beings—*bhūtādīṃ mām*. *Bhūtādi* means that which is at the beginning of all elements. Beginning is the cause; so, *bhūtādi* is the one who is the cause of this world. When he says, *bhūtādi*, the cause of this entire world, you can think that it has undergone a change. Once upon a time there was *Brahman* but now *Brahman* has become the world. If that is so, only the world is there; there is no *Brahman*.

To make it clear that it is not like that, he says, *avyayam*, changeless. The cause does not really undergo any change to become the world; the change is apparent. *Brahman*, the cause of the whole creation, retains its nature because the change is purely in terms of *nāma-rūpa*; it is *mithyā*. When the creation is *mithyā*, it requires only a cause that does not subject itself to any change.

*Bhūtādīṃ avyayaṃ mām jñātvā bhajanti*—knowing Me as the imperishable cause of the creation, they seek Me. How do they know *Bhagavān* in this way? Knowing here is only indirect knowledge, *parokṣa-jñāna*, from the *śāstra* and the teacher. Once they have that much knowledge, in order to understand it, they seek.

And their seeking is not a part-time affair. These people are *ananya-manasaḥ*, their minds are not distracted by anything else. Through *viveka* they have lost interest in *dharma-artha-kāma* and because of *saṃskāra* they seek *mokṣa*. Their disposition is one of self-control and compassion and they have trust in the words of the teacher and the *śāstra*. Their *mumukṣutva* is the result of all their prayers.

## THE COMMITMENT OF A SEEKER

Here a question can be asked. If this pursuit is to be done without distraction, what am I to do if I am a family person who has to run a household? As a mother or a father, should I pursue *Vedānta* or take care of my children? Whether you pursue this knowledge alone or pursue it along with fulfilling your duties, what counts is your commitment. If commitment is there, whatever you do, this pursuit will not go. It is something like a person who is in love. He is not going to think of his beloved by appointment. If his whole day is scheduled, one of the items in his schedule is not going to be thinking of his beloved. When someone is in love, he is consumed by that love. Whether he is doing his job or not, his love is not affected. That is called seeking, *mumukṣā*, and is what is meant here by being a person who is an *ananya-manas*.

*Śaṅkara* says such people are not selfish. They don't subscribe to this 'Me and Mine' philosophy. And they knowingly pursue. It is not simply because someone else whom he respects did it and he is just following in his footsteps. If you follow a beaten track, of course, you won't get lost; that is the beauty of it. But here the path is proper inquiry and if you properly cover all that is to be covered, you cannot but see. Like in arithmetic, if all the steps are followed, the answer must follow. If it is an improper answer, there must be a mistake in the steps. You retrace the steps and correct the mistake. But the correct answer is always the same and certain. That is the track of knowledge. And therefore, knowing full well what they are seeking, they pursue. How do they seek *Īśvara*?

This is explained further by two more verses.

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढव्रताः ।

नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ॥१४॥

*satataṃ kīrtayanto māṃ yatantaśca dṛḍhavrataḥ*  
*namasyantaśca māṃ bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate*

Verse 14

माम् सततम् कीर्तयन्तः *mām satatam kīrtayantaḥ*— those who are always appreciating/inquiring into Me; यतन्तः च *yatantaḥ ca* — and making the necessary efforts; दृढव्रताः *dṛḍhavrataḥ* — those whose commitment is firm; नमस्यन्तः च माम् *namasyantaḥ ca mām* — and those who remain surrendered to Me; भक्त्या *bhaktyā* — with devotion; नित्ययुक्ताः *nityayuktāḥ* — who are always united to Me; उपासते *upāsate* — they seek Me

Those who are always appreciating Me and making the necessary efforts, whose commitment is firm and who remain surrendered to Me with devotion, who are always united to Me (with a prayerful heart), seek Me.

*Satataṃ kīrtayantaḥ mām*—always appreciating the glories of Me, *Parameśvara*. They always see and appreciate *Īśvara*'s glory. And his glory is not ordinary. All beings, all things have their being in him but he is free from all of them; he does not depend upon them for his existence. This is a wondrous thing. He does not undergo any change and at the same time is the whole creation; he does not do anything and at the same time is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all creation. This is *Parameśvara*'s glory. And this they appreciate and praise. The word *kīrtayantaḥ* can also mean *vicārayantaḥ*, those who are always enquiring into *Īśvara* by *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. Who are the people who do this?—*yatantaḥ*, those who make the necessary efforts. What are the efforts here?

### THE EFFORTS REQUIRED

*Śravaṇa* and *manana* are not enough. They have to be backed up by the right kind of mind; because it is the kind of mind you have that really accounts for knowledge. A mature mind is necessary and is expressed here by the word *yatantaḥ*, those who take care of their minds properly. How? *Śaṅkara* paraphrases the word *yatantaḥ* with the following statement—*indriyopasaṃhāra-śama-dama-dayā-ahiṃsādi-lakṣṇaiḥ dharmaiḥ prayatantaḥ*. This is a very clear definition of a *sannyāsī*. *Indriya-upasaṃhāra*, means resolution of the sense pursuits, not acting upon one's fancies. Naturally this implies *dama* at the physical level and *śama* at the mental level. One has to have mastery over mechanical ways of thinking and the various moods etc., to which one is subjected. Instead of coming under the spell of thinking patterns, you are able to see through them, you have a say over them in the sense that you refuse to be led away by them. You do not act upon them. For this you must have an insight about yourself and also certain qualities, which are necessary to enjoy this mastery like *śama*, mastery over the mind, *dayā*, compassion, and *ahiṃsā*, non-injury. All these show the maturity of the person. Compassion can be natural or cultivated. Here it is cultivated compassion because he is making effort, *yatna*. He tries to be compassionate and whenever he lacks compassion, looks into what it takes to be compassionate. There is a conscious attempt to maintain this compassion.

Compassion is mentioned again and again by *Śaṅkara* because compassion towards all living beings is a vow that all *sannyāsīs* take. *Ahiṃsā*, not deliberately hurting another living being, is the greatest vow taken by a *sannyāsī* at the time of *sannyāsa*. This is the one that characterises him most. All other things like *amānitva*, *adambhitva*, *ārjava*,<sup>1</sup> should also be there because they are all necessary for the maturity of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* required to gain this knowledge. Therefore, the word *yatantaḥ* refers to those who are making effort to accomplish these virtues.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to verse 7 and 8, chapter 13

That is why *Bhagavān* uses the word *yatantaḥ* here. A *sannyāsī* is called a *yati*, the one who makes effort. He has two things to do. One is the pursuit of knowledge, the other is making effort to mature emotionally if he has to. He commits himself to *ahiṃsā* and then lives day to day, moment to moment. Any *vedāntī* becomes an *adhikārī* only when he lives life one day at a time. Otherwise *Vedānta* does not work. You plan only for one day. Even a plan for the future is only today's plan. Tomorrow you are ready to revise it. That is the life of a *vedāntī*. Naturally there is a certain effort, *yatna*, for gaining the qualification, *adhikāritva*, and the pursuit of listening to the *śāstra* and so on.

### IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT

And they are those whose commitment is firm—*dr̥ḍhavrataḥ*. Many people are very enthusiastic in the beginning, and then quietly withdraw. But those who are *dr̥ḍhavrataḥ* undertake their pursuits with a commitment. Once they undertake something, they commit themselves to it and pursue unless the evidence is totally against it. The moment you see things are not going well for you, you again study your course. What are you heading for? Is it worthwhile? If not, sometimes you have to withdraw and re-equip yourself and then start again. When you make a commitment, always make it small and then do better than what you have committed yourself to. Otherwise we create unnecessary pressures upon ourselves and feel defeated all the time. *Dr̥ḍhavrataḥ* here, however, are the people who are committed to *mokṣa*; so, there is no changing the goal.

*Vrata* is generally translated as vow. Here it is not exactly a vow but a commitment. You take a vow to accomplish a particular task. But here, a total change is required. They are committed to the *parama-puruṣārtha* called *mokṣa*. So, the other three *puruṣārthas*, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* do not assail them. That is why in the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the *Gītā*, while enumerating the qualities that are to be cultivated by a *mumukṣu*, the Lord himself mentions *tattva-jñāna-artha-darśana*, the capacity to see the truth of this knowledge as unfolded by the *śāstra*, as the last of the qualities. These people cultivate an understanding of the fact that the result of the knowledge is *mokṣa*. That means they have *puruṣārtha-niścaya*; that is, what they really seek in life, is very clear for them. Then the pursuit gains a direction and anything they do becomes highly meaningful. Because they understand that *mokṣa* is the result of *tattva-jñāna*, they have *jijñāsā*. It is not merely a desire for *mokṣa* without direction. They know for sure that the *mokṣa* they seek is in terms of the knowledge of the self alone and nothing else.

The entire pursuit is going to be determined by how clear you are about what you are seeking. If the human end is very clear to you, you have a direction. The knowledge and everything else involved, becomes something that you love only when this *puruṣārtha-niścaya* is there. If the understanding of *mokṣa* is hazy, there will be a lot of problems. That is why the *puruṣārtha-niścaya* is mentioned as one of the values for

*jñāna*. Since he has said *adhyātma-jñāna*, knowledge for which the subject matter is *ātmā*, you can conclude that understanding the *ātmā*—as a sinner, or as anything else for that matter—is *adhyātma-jñāna*. To avoid that, *tattva-jñāna-artha-darśana* is a very important value. This is the clear understanding that knowledge of myself is liberation. It also includes the understanding that nothing else is required. With the help of the *śruti* and through my own *vicāra* in keeping with the *śruti*, I realise that any pursuit is going to be limited. This is *anityatva-niścaya*, which results in a certain dispassion, *vairāgya*, and the understanding that self-knowledge is the only way out. That kind of understanding of the *puruṣārtha* makes them *dr̥ghavratas*. They give up everything because they are free from the three types of desires—for progeny, security, and a better situation in the hereafter. They live a life of a mendicant only for *ātma-jñāna*, for *mokṣa*. They are called *dr̥ghavratas*.

### GRACE IS NEEDED

In all this, the grace of *Īśvara* is important. Therefore, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says here, ‘*māṇ bhaktyā namasyantaḥ*—these are the people who have surrendered to Me with devotion. The whole pursuit is done only in an atmosphere of devotion. In such an atmosphere you cannot claim credit for any achievement because you recognise so many limitations. *Namasyantaḥ* are those who surrender, who have a prayerful heart in their pursuit.

People surrender to different things. Some surrender to money, converting it to *Īśvara* in the form of *Lakṣmī* or *Kubera*. They surrender to varieties of things according to their ends they seek, their own likes and dislikes and their *vicāra*. It is all dependent upon their level of maturity. But here, *Śaṅkara* says that they surrender to the self, the *ātmā*, the one who is the Lord, *īśa*, of the intellect. They surrender to that *ātmā* alone because they have placed all they have at the altar of *paramātmā*. That is the thing to be understood.

Or we can take it that they have surrendered to the Lord who is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the entire world, invoking his grace. *Īśvara*’s grace is here, as is your own grace and the grace of the *śāstra* and the *guru*. Pursuing *Īśvara* in an atmosphere of *bhakti* is very important. That is why it is not an academic pursuit. Nor is it a purely religious pursuit because there is so much *vicāra*, inquiry, involved. You are enquiring into the words and their meanings. So, it implies grammar, logic, and so on. It looks very academic but the whole pursuit is value oriented. It is a pursuit in an atmosphere of surrender, *bhakti*. That is why you cannot separate religion from this pursuit. Even though it is not a set of beliefs, but something that has to be understood, then too, *Īśvara*’s grace is necessary here. So, *Bhagavān* says that these people surrender to Me with devotion and seek Me with a prayerful heart—*namasyantaḥ ca māṇ bhaktyā upāsate*.

To recognise *Īśvara* as *karma-phala-dātā*, the giver of the fruits of action and *karma-adhyakṣa*, the one who presides over all *karmas* is *bhakti*. Any possibility of action is because of *Īśvara*. So, at both levels, i.e., at level of doing the *karma* and at the level of receiving the results, you have an appreciation of *Īśvara*.

### ONLY ABIDING DEVOTION IS ADEQUATE

This *bhakti* is abiding for those who are *bhaktyā nityayuktāḥ*—those who are always connected to Me with their abiding devotion. By *dehalī-dīpa-nyāya*,<sup>1</sup> the words *māṃ bhaktyā* can be connected to both *namasyantāḥ* and *nityayuktāḥ*. Thus the Lord says that these people are always committed to me with devotion. Being so, they meditate upon Me. This is said to point out that only a *bhakti*, which is lasting is adequate.

*Bhakti* can be sporadic, like the *śmaśāna-vairāgya*. When somebody dies and the bereaved goes to the cremation ground, *śmaśāna*, he develops a *vairāgya* towards his pursuits in life. He realises that all that he had worked so hard for, he cannot carry with him and begins to wonder as to what the real meaning of life is. He becomes a great seeker—until he goes home and sees the Wall Street Journal. All his *vairāgya* disappears. Now immediately he begins to think about how to increase his wealth. It was just a temporary *vairāgya*. Such a quest for the real purpose of one's life occurs in everybody's head but it is not pursued. Similarly one can have a flame of devotion but it can get extinguished because of inadequate understanding.

This prayerful attitude mentioned here is born of understanding. If the understanding is vague, the devotion is subject to waning and waxing. That is why the Lord says, *bhaktyā nityayuktāḥ*, those who are endowed with a lasting devotion. Their devotion is for the sake of gaining the knowledge of *Īśvara*. Previously it was said that there are four types of devotees, the one in distress, the one who wants to achieve something, and the third one, the *jijñāsu*. It is the *jijñāsu* who is being talked about here. These *mumukṣus*, *jijñāsus*, who are *nityayuktas*, want to know the truth of *Īśvara* because the *śāstra* says that *Īśvara* is everything.

Thus the Lord says, 'They worship Me, they seek Me.' How? He describes in the next verse.

ज्ञानयज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते ।  
एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ॥१५॥

<sup>1</sup> *Dehalī-dīpa-nyāya* is the analogy of a lamp placed on the threshold. It casts its light both inside and outside of the house. Similarly here the words *māṃ bhaktyā* goes with both the words.

*jñānayaज्ञेना cāpyanye यजान्तो मामुपāsate  
ekatvena पृथक्त्वेन bahudhā विष्वatomukham*

Verse 15

अन्ये च अपि *anye ca api* — and there are others too; ज्ञान-यज्ञेन *jñāna-yajñena* — with the ritual of knowledge; यजन्तः *yajantaḥ* — worshipping; माम् *mām* — Me; विश्वतोमुखम् *viṣvatomukham* — who is many faceted; एकत्वेन *ekatvena* — as one; पृथक्त्वेन *pṛthaktvena* — (and) as distinct; बहुधा *bahudhā* — in many ways; उपासते *upāsate* — they worship

In many ways—as one and as distinct—they worship Me as the one who is many faceted.

### FOR OTHERS, KNOWLEDGE IS THE ONLY RITUAL

*Anye*, others; they are other than those who are *moghāsāḥ moghakarmāṇaḥ*. They are of a spiritual disposition, *daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ*, and of noble heart, *mahātmānaḥ*.

And these people, worship Me through the ritual of knowledge—*jñāna-yajñena yajantaḥ mām upāsate*. Knowledge alone is the ritual for these people. And the object of this knowledge is *Bhagavān*. A *sannyāsī* does not perform rituals. When he renounces all his connections to the society, he also renounces rituals like *agnihotra* and so on, which are prescribed for the Vedic society. He has some other *karmas* but they are purely contemplative like a *japa* revealing the nature of *ātmā*. The *yajña* done by a *sannyāsī* who has given up all rituals is purely for the pursuit of *jñāna*. Just because he does not perform rituals, do not think he is not a *bhakta*. He worships Me by invoking Me in the form of the pursuit of knowledge. His *yajña* is nothing but *jñāna*.

*Mām viṣvatomukham upāsate* means they worship Me of many faces. I am the cause of everything, both the maker and the material, *nimitta* and *upādāna*. Therefore, I am also the product. I am the five elements, *pañca-bhūtas* and their products, *pāñcabhautikas*, I am everything you see—the clouds, the sun, the moon, and all the *devatās* like *Indra*, *Varuṇa* and *Bṛhaspati*. *Bhagavān* will elaborate on all this later. But he has already pointed out, ‘Everything has its being in Me, yet I am free from all these beings. Look at My glory, *Īśvara*’s glory—*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni na ca ahaṇ teṣu avasthitaḥ; na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram*.<sup>1</sup> This is how *Īśvara* is *viṣvatomukha*. *Upāsate* means they seek Me through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*.

How do they seek Me? *Ekatvena pṛthaktvena*. *Ekatvena*, as the one who is in the form of everything and also *pṛthaktvena*, as one who is distinct from everything. When

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 9-4, 5



the Lord says, ‘All beings have their being in Me—*matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni*,’ there is a distinction drawn between the self and not-self, *ātma-anātma-bheda*. So too when it is said, ‘All this is only *Brahman*—*sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma*,’ and then, ‘All this is to be envisioned as the Lord—*īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvam*.’ Here, there is the creation, *jagat*, and at the same time, there is the *vastu*, which they recognise distinctly. When one contemplates in this manner it is said, ‘*pṛthaktvena upāsate*.’

Now, look at this with reference to yourself. You are free from all thoughts—from memory, from a piece of knowledge, from any particular thought form. But no thought is free from you. That means you understand a thought as a name and form, *nāma-rūpa*, non-separate from the *vastu*. The *nāma-rūpa* is exactly what we call creation, *śṛṣṭi*. I am distinct, *pṛthak*, from *nāma-rūpa* but *nāma-rūpa* is not distinct from Me, is not independent of Me. B is A, A is not B. Therefore, a given *nāma-rūpa* is not *ātmā*. One has to understand *satya* and *mithyā* properly. Only then is the understanding complete. Therefore, they worship Me, both *ekatvena* and *pṛthaktvena*, as everything and as one distinct from everything.

It is said that they worship *Īśvara* as one who is present in various forms, *viśvatomukha*. What are those forms? In one sentence you can say, I am everything—everything is born of Me, sustained by Me, and goes back into Me. That is indeed *Brahman*. Or you can say it severally—I am the sun, I am the moon, I am space, I am time, I am the cause, I am the effect. You can repeat the entire dictionary or you can name a few things in order to understand. To simply say I am everything can be dangerous in that it can be understood in a very shallow manner. So, we sometimes go into the details. Not everything has to be mentioned but sufficient details are necessary to understand *sarvātmata* properly. That is why we have this five-elemental, *pāñcabhautika* model. Still, a few details are given in this and in the next chapter.

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाहमहमौषधम् ।

मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम् ॥१६॥

*aham kraturaham yajñah svadhāhamahamausadham*  
*mantr'ohamahamevājyamahamagniraham hutam*

Verse 16

अहम् क्रतुः *aham kratuḥ* — I am the ritual; अहम् यज्ञः *aham yajñah* — I am the worship; अहम् स्वधा *aham svadhā* — I am the food that is offered; अहम् औषधम् *aham auśadham* — I am food in general; अहम् मन्त्रः *aham mantraḥ* — I am the chants; अहम् एव आज्यम् *aham eva ājyam* — I alone am the ghee; अहम् अग्निः *aham agniḥ* — I am the ritual fire; अहम् हुतम् *aham hutam* — I am the oblation

I am the ritual; I am the worship; I am the food that is offered; I am food in general; I am the chants, I alone am the ghee; I am the ritual fire; I am the oblation.

**HOW BHAGAVĀN IS EVERYTHING INVOLVED IN KARMA**

In this verse, *Bhagavān* reveals that he is every aspect of the ritual. Since a Vedic ritual is the most exalted *karma*, by saying he is that ritual, he is naturally every other kind of *karma* and anything associated with it.

When you invoke *Īśvara* as a particular *devatā*, like *Indra* or *Varuṇa*, you first light a fire and into it you offer certain oblations, which are to go to the *devatā*. This is called a *yajña*. In a *jñāna-yajña*, you invoke *Īśvara* alone because every part of the *karma* is non-separate from *Īśvara*. The fire is *Īśvara*, the ritual is *Īśvara*, the offering is *Īśvara*, the one who performs it is *Īśvara*, and what you accomplish by that ritual is also *Īśvara*. That is a *jñāna-yajña*. As we saw in the fourth chapter, when it was said, *brahmārpaṇam brahmahaviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam*,<sup>1</sup> the language is ritualistic but the vision is *jñāna*. The *arpaṇa*, that by which you offer an oblation, the ladle etc., is *Brahman*, what is offered, the ghee, *havis*, is also *Brahman*, where it is offered, the fire, *agni*, is *Brahman*, by whom it is offered, the *kartā* also is *Brahman*. When you know that *Brahman* is *akartā*, there is no *kartā*, then the result that is accomplished by this kind of *yajña*, i.e., *jñāna* is also *Brahman*. And the one who accomplishes it sees *Brahman* in all situations. By understanding that *Īśvara* is everything, all *karmas* become *Īśvara*. This is what is meant when we say, ‘Whatever I do, it is all offered to you, O! Lord—*yat yat karma karomi tat tat akhilaṃ sambho tava ārādhanam*.’ That can be an attitude or a vision. If it is an attitude, it is *bhakti*. If it is a vision, then it is *jñāna*, the discovery that everything is *Īśvara*. Here *Bhagavān* points out that no ritual is free from himself.

The Lord says *ahaṃ kratuḥ ahaṃ yajñah*. Both *kratu* and *yajña* mean ritual. So, we have to make a distinction here between the two. *Yajña* is a word you can use loosely. Anything, even eating is a *yajña*. But *kratu* is always *śrauta* or *vaidika-karma*, enjoined by or known through the Veda. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, *ahaṃ kratuḥ*, I am the very *vaidika* ritual and therefore, by doing the *vaidika* ritual you are invoking Me. But if you understand Me, you have understood all *vaidika* rituals. Then you need not accomplish what can be accomplished by the *vaidika* rituals. That is the whole idea. Because the Lord says, ‘I am the *yajña*,’ after saying, ‘I am the *kratu*,’ *Śaṅkara* says *yajña* here means *smārta-karma*, any *pūjā* or offering. This is a form of worship, which is not enjoined by the Veda but is sanctioned by the secondary books that support the *śruti*, called *smṛti-granths*. Even the *Gītā* is considered to be a *smṛti-grantha*. So are works written by informed and qualified people about things based upon the *śruti*. From them we have certain *karmas*, which are not enjoined directly by the *śruti* but are based upon it. By mentioning both types of *karmas*, *Bhagavān* does not omit anything; all types of *karmas* are covered.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 4-24

*Aham svadhā*, I am the food offered to the *pitṛs*, the ancestors. During a ritual to propitiate the *pitṛs*, food is offered to the *brāhmaṇas* and crows, after invoking the *pitṛs* in them. And that food is called *svadhā*. The Lord says that he is that *svadhā*.

*Aham auṣadham*, I am the food eaten by everybody. *Oṣadhi* is plants, trees, and creepers; *auṣadha* is what is born of *oṣadhi*. So, food is only vegetarian. *Śaṅkara* says Rice, maize, oats etc, are all *auṣadha*. *Auṣadha* can also mean medicine because medicines were mainly herbal. But here the word should only mean food, which is an important part of any ritual.

Then he says, *mantrō'ham*, I am the *mantras* that are chanted when offerings are made to the manes and all deities. And I am the *ājya*, the ghee, one of the important oblations that is offered into the fire. Where it is offered, the fire, is also Myself, *aham agniḥ*.

Then he says, *ahaṃ hutam*, I am the very ritual itself where this oblation is offered to the various *devatās*. That very action is Me.

Here, in *Vedānta*, there is only one thing you should know. Where *karmas* are being dealt with, you have a number of things to do. You will never be able to complete them. And there will always be problems because in *karma* there is invariably some omission, or something done wrongly. Then the result that you wanted is quite different from the one you get. Any *karma* is like that. You rarely accomplish what you want. But if you know the *vastu*, which is one, you resolve everything. That is why it is called *rājavidyā rājaguhyam*. In the knowledge of this one thing, everything else is included. This one thing an intelligent man would seek.

*Bhagavān* tells further how he is *viśvatomukha* by pointing out a few more things.

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः ।

वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च ॥१७॥

*pitāhamasya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ*  
*vedyaṃ pavitramoṅkāra ṛksāma yajureva ca*

Verse 17

अस्य जगतः *asya jagataḥ* — of this world; अहम् पिता *aham pitā* — I am the father; माता *mātā* — the mother; धाता *dhātā* — the one who sustains; पितामहः *pitāmahaḥ* — the grandfather/the uncaused cause; वेद्यम् *vedyam* —that which is to be known; पवित्रम् *pavitram* — that which purifies; ओङ्कारः *oṅkāraḥ* — *Oṅkāra*; ऋक् साम यजुः एव च *ṛk sāmā yajuḥ eva ca* — and the *Ṛk*, *Sāma*, and *Yajur* Vedas

I am the father of this world, I am the mother, I am the one who sustains it, and I am the grandfather (the uncaused cause). I am what is to be

known, I am the purifier, I am the *Oṃkāra*, and I am the *Ṛk*, *Sāma*, and *Yajur* Vedas.

## I AM MOTHER AND FATHER, THE MAKER AND MATERIAL OF CREATION

*Pitā aham asya jagataḥ*, I am the father of this world. Here it is a little more than that. Saying he is the father, is saying that he is the creator, the *nimitta-kāraṇa* for this entire world. Then he says, *ahaṃ mātā ca*—and I am the mother. The *prakṛti*, *māyā*, is non-separate from Me, and therefore, I am also the material from, which the creation is born, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. Thus I am both father and mother, i.e., both the *upādāna-kāraṇa* and the *nimitta-kāraṇa* of this *jagat*.

Once you say father and mother, the next question is: ‘Who is his father?’ Every child when told that God created the world will ask, ‘Who created God?’ It is a common question. The concept of a creator comes from seeing that this world is so intelligently arranged. Because of that, there must be some creator. When you see cooked food, you know somebody has made it. Similarly there must be a creator for this world, which is so well put together. The next question is: ‘Who made God?’ Because I have parents, there must be some parents for God. To negate this idea of imputing a father to *Īśvara*, he says, *ahaṃ pitāmahaḥ*, I am the grandfather, meaning I am the uncaused cause. There is no grandfather for Me. *Pitāmaha* is also *Brahman*, the basis of this whole creation.

I am also the *dhātā*, the sustainer of the world and the giver of the fruits of actions.

## I AM THE ONLY THING THAT CAN BE KNOWN AND IS WORTH KNOWING

*Ahaṃ vedyam*, I am what is to be known. Because, by knowing Me, the *sat-vastu*, everything is known as well. In fact that is the only thing that can be known fully or totally. Everything else you know only partially. Everything else is *mithyā* and therefore, does not exist on its own and is therefore, available for appreciation only in parts. You can know it only from a standpoint. When you say this is a fern, it is only from a standpoint. A fern is nothing but an arrangement of some particular leaves. And if you analyse the leaf, you discover that it also has constituents. Any one thing, you claim to know in this world, is subject to further inquiry and knowledge and therefore, you have only a point of view. You simply draw a line and assign it a name. Thus you have only *nāma-rūpa*, never the final word about anything. Only that which is stable is *vedya*. That is *aham* because it has no stand point, no parts. And it is *satya*, not *mithyā*, it does not depend upon anything else and therefore, self-existent, self-evident. Without any further revision it can be known as free from all attributes. Knowing I am free from

all attributes, there is nothing more to be known. Thus only *ātmā* can be called the *vedya-vastu*. That alone is worth knowing. And again, by knowing *ātmā*, everything is as well known, and there is release, *mokṣa*.

The intellect is always cause-hunting. Even a child will open a clock to find out what is going on inside, what makes it work. This is the cause-hunting-*buddhi*. You want to know how it all works. It starts when you are young; where will it stop? Eventually it will lead you to *brahma-vicāra*. You will want to know who is the one who is behind all this. Once your mind starts working on this, when will it come to rest? Only when it comes back to itself appreciating that everything is Myself, will it come to rest. Only in this knowledge will it rest. Therefore, the statement, *ahaṃ vedyam* means 'I am *satyaṃ brahma*, knowing, which everything is as well known. All you have to know is *aham* alone is *satya*, and everything 'else' is *mithyā*, which means that I am everything. This knowledge is liberation. Till it knows this, the *buddhi* will keep on searching.

How am I to be known? *Sarvaiḥ vedaiḥ*. I am the one to be known through all the Vedas.

There are a lot of things called *pavitra*, that which purifies. But what is it that purifies totally? This *jīva* is subject to his likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas* and accrues all kinds of *puṇya* and *pāpa* because of the actions they impel him to do. What will purify him of all this? Only knowledge of *ātmā*. Therefore, *aham* is *pavitram*, I am the one who, when known, cleanses the *jīva* from every trace of *saṃsāra*.

I am *omkāra*. That is My name. *Om* is great, not as a sound but because the meaning of *Om* is Myself. It is a great word, a great sound because it is the name of *Bhagavān*. The Lord himself says, 'That *Om* is myself.'

Then he goes on to say I am the *R̥g-veda*, I am the *Sāma-veda*, and I am the *Yajur-veda*. Even though there are four Vedas, only these three are used in all rituals. These three are Myself. We can also take it to include the *Atharva-veda* and all *smṛtis*, *purāṇas*, etc. The body of knowledge, which is in the form of these Vedas is Myself.

He has already said he is the *karma* and the mode of doing the *karma* as well as the one who gives the results of actions. Now further, he says:

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ।।१८।।

*gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṃ suhṛt*

*prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṃ nidhānaṃ bījamavyayam* Verse 18

(अहम् *aham*) — (I am); गतिः *gatiḥ* — the end, the result of all actions; भर्ता *bhartā* — the one who nourishes; प्रभुः *prabhuḥ* — the Lord, the source of all resources; साक्षी

*sākṣī* — the witness; निवासः *nivāsaḥ* — the abode; शरणम् *śaraṇam* — the refuge; सुहृत् *suhṛt* — the one who is helpful by nature; प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानम् *prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam* — (I am) the one from whom the whole creation has come into whom everything is resolved and in whom everything has its being; निधानम् *nidhānam* — in whom everything is placed; अव्ययम् बीजम् *avyayam bījam* — imperishable seed, the cause

I am the result of all actions, the one who nourishes, the Lord, the witness. I am the abode, the refuge and I am the *suhṛt*, helpful by My very nature. I am the one from whom the whole creation has come, into whom everything is resolved, and in whom everything has its being, in whom everything is placed and the imperishable cause.

I am the *gati*, the result of all actions, *karma-phala*. Any end that is accomplished by a person is Myself. All heavens, *svargādi-lokas* are not separate from Myself. In My cosmic form, *viśvarūpa*, they are all areas of Me. There is nothing separate from *Parameśvara*.

*Bhartā*, I am the one who nourishes this world. *Bhartā* also is the word for husband because in those days he was the provider. But here *Īśvara* is called *bhartā* because he supports the world by lending the very existence to it. *Prabhu*, the one who is the master, who has all the glories. There is no other *prabhu* in this world, other than *Bhagavān*. If anyone thinks he is rich, he is mistaken. His richness depends entirely upon *Bhagavān*. He is the source of all resources.

I am *sākṣī*. Even though I am the sustainer of creation, *bhartā*, the one who resolves the whole thing, *saṃhāra-kartā*, and the one that creates it again, *ṣṣṭi-kartā*, still, I am only a *sākṣī*, I perform no *karma* at all. That is why I am identical with you.

As the creator, we can always complain to him. Why did you create me like this? Why didn't you place me somewhere else? *Bhagavān* will say, '*ahaṃ sākṣī*, I am only the witness; I am not responsible. It is all your own *karma*.

The real question is 'Am I created?' Only if you are created, will all these questions arise and only then will *Bhagavān* answer that it is according to your *karmas*. If you ask, 'Did I come into being,' that is, if coming into being itself is creation, then the question 'Why?' will not be there.

Such a question is answered at different levels. Accepting that you were created, the blueprint is given by no one but you. *Īśvara* would say, 'There is nothing I can do about it. You can pray to Me to modify it but this is how it is now.' If you give the tailor your measurements and in the meantime you put on weight, you will not be comfortable with what you ordered. But it was not the tailor's fault. He just gave you what you asked for. And again, if you just ask, 'Am I created?' you will find that the question resolves

into yourself. You realise that you are the *ātmā* that is not created, but, which is the cause of everything, which alone is the *sākṣī*. You can also say along with *Bhagavān*, ‘*ahaṃ sarvasya kāraṇam, ahaṃ sākṣī*—I am the cause of everything, I am merely the witness.’

There could be a second meaning for the word *sākṣī* and that is, the one who is maintaining the account of all your actions of omission and commission. You cannot get away from My vision. You may get away from the people's eyes, but not from Me. I am the one who is the law of *karma*, who records all that you do. That is *sarvajña* or *sākṣī*.

*Nivāsa* means a house. A house is called *nivāsa*, a place where you reside. Here, *Śaṅkara* says that it is the place in which living beings reside. You live in a house on this earth and the earth lives in the solar system, which lives in the galaxy. And the galaxies themselves live where? In Me. I am the one abode, *āśraya*, of this entire creation because I am the basis of everything, *sarvasya adhiṣṭhānam*.

*Śaraṇam* means refuge. The ultimate refuge. You go to heaven; but it is only a temporary refuge. From there also you have to move eventually and move back and forth between heaven and earth. What kind of a refuge is that? A refuge is a place where you can relax and from where you will not be buffeted about in *saṃsāra*. That is the ultimate *śaraṇa*. *Śaṅkara* takes it as a real *śaraṇa*, one that completely relieves you of your sorrow.

*Suhṛt*: *Bhagavān* is called *suhṛt*. We saw this before in the sixth chapter. *Suhṛt* is the one who helps someone without expecting anything, *pratyupakāra-anapekṣaḥ*, without even being a friend. Out of friendship you might help somebody. Then you are only a friend, *mitra*. You help out of your affection and empathy for your friend. If he suffers you also suffer. Naturally, it is expected that you will help. But a *suhṛt* is one who has no introduction to you at all. You are absolutely new to him and he is just seeing you now for the first time. That is enough. Whatever he can give, he gives. That is *Bhagavān*, he is the best friend. You can ask him anything and you need not wait for an introduction or a recommendation by an intermediary. You can directly ask as though you have known him for ages. Or, any *suhṛt* is *Bhagavān*.

*Prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam*<sup>1</sup>—I am the *prabhava*, the one from whom the whole creation has come, I am the *pralaya*, the one into whom everything is resolved, and I am the *sthāna*, the one in whom everything has its sustenance, its being.

*Nidhānam*—The question can be raised, ‘As the cause of the creation, does not *Brahman* undergo modification?’ This is answered by saying it is *nidhāna*, that basis in which all causes and effects are placed. That is *Brahman*, which, without undergoing any change, with reference to the *jagat* is called the creator. Because it does not change

<sup>1</sup>*prabhavaḥ – utpattiḥ yasmat; pralayaḥ – praliyate yasmin; sthānam – tiṣṭhati yasmin*

it is called *nidhāna*, that in which everything is placed, meaning superimposed. That is *Brahman*.

*Avyaya bījam*—All these names and forms, which constitute the effect, *kāryas* are *vyayas*, i.e., they are subject to change, to disappearance. The cause, however, is *avyaya*, not subject to disappearance, which means as long as *saṃsāra* is there, the *avyaya-bīja* is there. I am the undifferentiated cause, the seed, *bīja*, from which everything comes. If the *jagat* is looked upon as a sprout, I am its seed or potential form, *avyakta*, undifferentiated. Because he has already talked about the cause of creation and sustenance, *śṛṣṭi-sthiti-kāraṇa*, here he specifically refers to *pralaya*. And that cause is *avyaya* because everything goes back into it and comes out of it. In the seed is the unmanifest tree. Similarly here, in the state of *pralaya* is the undifferentiated cause, *bījam avyayam*. That is Me.

Further describing how he is *viśvatomukha*, *Bhagavān* says:

तपाम्यहमहं वर्षं निगृह्णाम्युत्सृजामि च ।

अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च सदसच्चाहमर्जुन ॥१९॥

*tapāmyahamaḥaṃ varṣaṃ nigṛhṇāmyutsṛjāmi ca*  
*amṛtaṃ caiva mṛtyuṣca sadasaccāhamarjuna*

Verse 19

अहम् तपामि *tapāmi aham* — I heat up; अहम् वर्षम् निगृह्णामि *aham varṣam nigṛhṇāmi* — I withhold the rain; उत्सृजामि च *utsṛjāmi ca* — and I release it; अमृतम् च *amṛtam ca* — and (I am) immortal; मृत्युः एव च *mṛtyuḥ eva ca* — and also (I am) death; च *ca* — and; अहम् *aham* — I am; सत्-असत् *sat-asat* — cause and effect, अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*

I heat up the world and I withhold and release the rain. I am immortal and I am also death. And I am cause and effect, O! *Arjuna*.

*Ahaṃ tapāmi*, I heat up, I energise, I light up the world. Being the sun, I light up and also heat up this world. Because of the heat, water evaporates and then rain starts. It is a cycle. When the earth gets parched, water vaporises. Then, I, the one who heated up the earth, now release the rain, *aham varṣam utsṛjāmi*, as the law governing rain. Then I hold it back, *nigṛhṇāmi*. This is especially easy to see in India. For eight months I withhold the rain. Then in the four months called monsoon, I pour down the rain. In other words, I am the seasons. The seasons are very important. In the network of the natural laws, the seasons are one of the things we are able to predict. Their predictability is because of the laws and *Bhagavān* says that he is in the form of those laws.

*Amṛtaṃ ca eva*—I am that *puṇya* because of which the gods become gods and have a certain *ānanda* and immortality.



*Mṛtyuḥ eva ca*—I am the *puṇya-pāpa* because of which all these mortal beings come into being and then die. And it can also be taken that I am the very principle or law of death, Lord Death. You cannot get away from God. Even if you die, that death is Myself. Death is Myself and life, *amṛta*, is Myself. In other words, to say it in two words, *sat-asat-ca aham*. Something that has a form by which you are able to recognise it and for which you have a name like pot, tree, leaf, is called *sat*. *Asat*, in this context, is not a non-existent thing, but what existed before the manifestation of the name and form, *nāma-rūpa*. The manifest form is *sat* and the unmanifest form is *asat*. In other words, the effect is referred to as *sat* here, and the cause is referred to as *asat*. In effect, *Bhagavān* is saying here that he is both the cause and effect. By this method, *kāraṇa-kārya-vāda*, what is pointed out is he is *satya* and everything else is *mithyā*, which is non-separate from himself, i.e., *Brahman*.

But the whole *kārya-kāraṇa-vāda* is from the standpoint of the creation. And the creation itself is *mithyā*. Therefore, there will be another statement later saying, I am neither *sat* nor *asat*, neither cause nor effect. At the same time I am both cause and effect. Please understand how important it is that we continuously have these two strands of thinking. One is superimposition, *adhyāropa*—‘I am the cause and I am the effect.’ The other is a negation, *niṣedha*, *apavāda*—‘I am neither a cause nor an effect.’ Both are to be said. Only then the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* will be properly understood.

Thus what is said here is that *Bhagavān* is the potential cause and the created object and in fact, is free from all of them because he is the basis for both. The *asat* and *sat* in this verse that is cause and effect, are both *mithyā*. Since I am both, cause and effect are negated.

Now *Bhagavān* talks about those who are ignorant of the *svarūpa* of the *ātmā* but have *śraddhā* in the Vedas, the rituals, the prayers, and the after-life. Even for that there must be some maturity. But it is not adequate for *viveka*. *Bhagavān* describes them in the next verse.

त्रैविद्या मां सोमपाः पूतपापा यज्ञैरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गतिं प्रार्थयन्ते ।  
 ते पुण्यमासाद्य सुरेन्द्रलोकमश्नन्ति दिव्यान्दिवि देवभोगान् ॥२०॥  
*traividya māṃ somapāḥ pūtapāpā*  
*yajñairiṣṭvā svargatiṃ prārthayante*  
*te puṇyamāsādya surendralokam*  
*aśnanti divyāndivi devabhogān*

Verse 20

त्रैविद्याः *traividyaḥ* — those who know the three Vedas; सोमपाः *somapāḥ* — those who perform the ritual in which *soma* is offered; पूतपापाः *pūtapāpāḥ* — those who are purified of their *pāpas*; माम् *mām* — Me; यज्ञैः *yajñaiḥ* — with rituals; इष्ट्वा *iṣṭvā* — having propitiated; स्वर्गतिम् प्रार्थयन्ते *svargatiṃ prārthayante* — they pray for going to

heaven; पुण्यम् सुरेन्द्रलोकम् *puṇyam surendralokam* — the world of *Indra*, which is a result of their *puṇya*; आसाद्य *āsādyā* — gaining; दिवि *divi* — in heaven; ते *te* — they; दिव्यान् देवभोगान् *divyān devabhogān* — the heavenly enjoyments of the celestials; अश्नन्ति *aśnanti* — enjoy

Those who know the three Vedas, who perform the ritual in which *soma* is offered and thereby being purified of their *pāpas*, having propitiated Me with rituals, they pray to go to heaven. Gaining the world of *Indra*, which is a result of their *puṇya*, they enjoy the heavenly enjoyments of the celestials in heaven.

*Traividyāḥ*—those by whom the three Vedas, the *R̥g*, the *Yajus*, and the *Sāma*, are studied. Each one of these Vedas is a *vidyā* and all of them together are called *trividyā*. These people who have studied all the three of them are called *traividyāḥ*. These people have learned how to chant them and perhaps also know how to perform rituals.

*Somapāḥ*—Here is a good example of how a translation can be misleading. The literal translation is, ‘Conversant with the lore of the triple Vedic texts, *R̥g*, *Yajus* and *Sāma*, they drink the *soma* juice and are cleansed of their sins by that very drink.’ *Śaṅkara* too says, ‘*tenaiva soma-pānena pūtapāpāḥ śuddhakilbiṣāḥ*, by this drinking of *soma* they are cleansed of sins.’ But that is not what is meant here. It is not to be understood that by merely drinking the *soma* they are cleansed of their sins. This is a technical expression. How should it be interpreted? *Somapās* are those who drink *soma*. There is a ritual called *soma-yāga*, which is done for gaining *puṇya-loka*. In the ritual, the juice of a creeper called *soma* is offered to the Lord and the worshippers take whatever is left over, the *śeṣa*, as *prasāda*. Those who perform and participate in the *soma* ritual are therefore, called *somapās*. So, *somapās* are people who have performed these rituals and who have partaken the *soma* as a part of the ritual, not those who merely drink the *soma* juice. Therefore, technically the word *somapā* stands for the one who has done the *soma-yāga*.

Such people are *pūta-pāpas*, relatively free from wrong actions. The purification talked about here is not elimination of *rāga-dveṣas*. Because they have *śraddhā* they avoid actions that are not to be done, *niṣiddha-karmas*, and do these *kāmya-karmas*, rituals prompted by desires. There is nothing wrong in that because these *karmas* are *vaidika* and are in keeping with *dharma*. They also perform the daily and occasionally prescribed rituals, which cleanse them of the effects of any wrong actions they may do. Thereby they become *pūta-pāpas*, cleansed from *pāpas* and are able to do these rituals. They do not do any terrible deeds and whatever small wrongs they may do are neutralised by doing the prescribed duties, *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, that they do diligently because of their *śraddhā* in the Vedas. That is a wonderful thing.

Even though they are doing *kāmya-karmas*, as long as they follow *dharma*, one day, they will gain *viveka*. At this time they lack the *viveka* because they are performing these rituals for better *lokas*. They are not *karma-yogīs*. They are prayerful, faithful people; but at the same time, they are only interested in obtaining desired ends like heaven and so on, because they have not properly ascertained what they are seeking. They lack *puruṣārtha-niścaya*. *Artha*, security, *kāma*, pleasures, and *dharma*, *puṇya*, become very important to them. All these three *puruṣārthas* are really worthless but they pursue them because they do not know what they are really seeking. Over the shoulders of all these three they are aiming at *mokṣa*, freedom. Because they do not pause and ask, ‘Am I a seeker? Why am I seeking,’ these three pursuits become so important.

*Māṃ yajñaiḥ iṣṭvā svargatiṃ prārthayante*—They pray to Me, *Parameśvara*, through the forms of *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Agni*, and all the other *devatās*. Having worshipped Me or having invoked Me through various rituals like *agniṣṭoma*, what do they request? *Svargati*, going to heaven or the end, which is heaven. They have heard that they will have a lot of pleasant experiences there and can remain there for a long time without ageing. It is a kind of relative immortality. This promotional material for heaven is available in the Veda supported by the *purāṇas*, etc. Naturally, without thinking they pray to Me for going to heaven.

*Te puṇyaṃ surendralokam āsādyā*— these people, gaining *surendra-loka*, the world of *Indra*, Lord of all the celestials. This world is called *puṇya-loka* because going there is the result of good *karma*. Heaven is called *puṇya-loka* here in the sense that it is the result of *puṇya-phala*. *Puṇya* alone is useless, you have to encash it. Even money is like that. You have to convert it into a house, a swimming pool, a Mercedes car, etc., to enjoy the benefits. This is all *puṇya-phala*. The result of *puṇya*, which they gain by all the rituals they perform, is going to the heaven called *surendra-loka*. Once they have reached there, what do they do?

*Aśnanti*, they enjoy—with the eyes and ears. In heaven, it seems you get satisfied merely by seeing. If you have hunger, you need not eat at all. The sight of all the edibles is enough. Then there are more subtle pleasures like music, etc. In heaven the sense organs are predominant. And their enjoyments are out of the ordinary.

What do they enjoy there? *Divyān devabhogān*—the heavenly objects of enjoyments. *Divya* is heavenly, not what is known here, *Śaṅkara* says. The dance and music here in this world is nothing compared to what you will see there. They are *divya-bhogas*, heavenly enjoyments, not these worldly ones. Where do they enjoy these? *Divi*—in that heaven. They are *deva-bhogas*, meant only for the celestials, not for mere mortals.

But there is one catch in all this and that he tells in the next verse.

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।

एवं त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥२१॥

*te taṃ bhuktvā svargalokaṃ viśālaṃ*

*kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṃ viśanti*

*evaṃ trayīdharmamanuprapannā*

*gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante*

Verse 21

ते *te* — they; तम् *taṃ* — that; विशालम् *viśālam* — vast; स्वर्ग-लोकम् *svarga-lokam* — heaven; भुक्त्वा *bhuktvā* — having enjoyed; क्षीणे पुण्ये *kṣīṇe puṇye* — when their *puṇya* is exhausted; मर्त्य-लोकम् *martya-lokam* — the world of mortals; विशन्ति *viśanti* — enter; एवम् *evaṃ* — in this manner; त्रयीधर्मम् अनुप्रपन्नाः *trayīdharmam anuprapannāḥ* — following the rituals in the three Vedas; कामकामाः *kāma-kāmāḥ* — those who are desirous of various ends; गतागतम् *gatāgatam* — the condition of coming and going, *saṃsāra*; लभन्ते *labhante* — gain

These people, having enjoyed that vast heaven, when their *puṇya* is exhausted, enter the world of mortals. In this manner, following the rituals in the three Vedas, those who are desirous of various ends gain the condition of coming and going, *saṃsāra*.

*Svarga-lokaṃ viśālam*—the vast heaven. The vastness is in terms of plenty, in terms of variety and also in terms of time. Having enjoyed, *bhuktvā*, this vast *svarga-loka*, when all the *puṇya* is exhausted, *kṣīṇe puṇye*, what happens to them? They are simply dropped down and enter the world of mortals, *martya-lokaṃ viśanti*. They thought they were immortals, *amṛtas*, when they were there. Suddenly they become mortals. They find themselves in another type of world where everything is different, the body, birth, childhood and all its problems, a place where death looms large and which is full of bugs and people who irritate you, where death is the rule and change is the routine. Thus they enter again the very place from which they sought to escape. They return to square one. If you realise that, you are developing *viveka* and *vairāgya*. These types of statements are meant to make you turn towards yourself. The *śāstra* always tries to drive you to a corner from where you cannot but seek *mokṣa*.

The cause for these people going to heaven is *puṇya*; so, their stay there will last only as long as the cause remains. The physical body they enjoy in heaven is earned by previous *puṇya-karma* and for every experience they have there, they have to encash some of their *puṇya*. When the last of the *puṇya* is exhausted, *kṣīṇe puṇye*, they come back to the world of mortals, *martya-lokaṃ viśanti*. From this it is very clear that, what is called *amṛta-loka* is really not *amṛta*, immortal. Here is where a mistake is often committed. Because heaven is presented in the *śāstra* as *amṛta*, which literally means that which is not subject to death, heaven is misunderstood as eternal. But the

immortality here is relative. With reference to our time frame, *svarga-loka* is considered relatively eternal. One day of the *devas* is much longer than one day here. Most of the theologies have adopted this Vedic concept of *amṛta-loka* as an eternal heaven. But it is referential eternality, not timelessness, not *mokṣa*. This is why when the *puṇya*, the cause for them to go to heaven and enjoy the heavenly enjoyments day after day, is exhausted, they come back. And they cannot extend their stay by doing new *karma* and gathering new *puṇya* there because they have no doership there, only enjoyership. Therefore, they come back.

*Evam trayī-dharmam anuprapannāḥ*—in this manner, those who follow the rituals enjoined by the three Vedas. *Evam* means ‘in the manner that was told in the previous verse,’ that is, doing Vedic rituals like the *soma* ritual and avoiding wrong actions. The three-fold Veda is called *trayī* here and the word *dharma* refers to *karma*, the things enjoined by the three Vedas, like performing a ritual to invoke the Lord or some *devatā* for the sake of the gain of some *loka*, etc. They are called *dharma* because they are not against *dharma*, *dharmāt anapetam*. These people pursue only legitimate enjoyments.

In the Vedas two things are dealt with—*karma*, which includes meditation, and *jñāna*. Here he is talking only about those who follow the *karmas* enjoined by the Vedas, not *jñāna*. Even though *trayī-dharma* can include *jñāna*, in this context we have to restrict the meaning to *karma*. *Anuprapanna* means one who follows the various *karmas* laid out in the three Vedas. He gives a description of these people.

They are *kāma-kāmāḥ*. *Kāma* can mean desire, the thought process by which you desire an object, or it can mean the desirable object. Here it refers to the desired object. And the whole word refers to those who desire these desirable objects—*kāmān kāmāyanti iti kāma-kāmāḥ*. It does not mean desirers of desires. You do not have to desire desires, you have them already. So, *kāma-kāmas* are those who have desires for various desirable ends. The Vedas talk about a variety of things, but you pursue only what you want, according to your maturity, *viveka*. What do you buy when you go to the shopping mall? Only what you are interested in. A bald headed person does not buy shampoo even though it is on sale. These people have *śraddhā* in and perform the various *karmas* mentioned in the three Vedas but only for various limited ends.

*Śaṅkara* indicates that the *sannyāsa* is not being talked about here even though the three Vedas also discuss renunciation and *mokṣa*. Because *Bhagavān* has said *kāma-kāmāḥ*, we understand that these people are not interested in *mokṣa*. Otherwise *trayīdharmam anuprapannāḥ* could include *mumukṣus* also.

#### WHAT DO THEY GET FOR ALL THEIR EFFORTS?

*Gatāgataṃ labhante*—They gain *gata*, going and *āgata*, coming. They go, and they come back. This is what they gain. It is because they went that they are back. This

particular life characterised by going and coming is called *gata-āgata, gataṃ ca āgataṃ, ca gatāgatam*. It means *saṃsāra*. These people who are the desirers of various objects gain only *saṃsāra*. Śaṅkara says that they do not gain any sort of independence or freedom—*na tu svātantryaṃ kvacit labhante*, but remain under the spell of the same *kāma, karma*, etc. They are helpless because they are caught in the hands of *karma*. Impelled by their own desires, again and again they do a variety of things and the *puṇya-pāpa* they gather, require various *janmas* for their fulfilment. Because of *janma* they do *karma*, because of *karma* they have *janma*. Thus they are helplessly caught in this orbit of becoming. All because they have not recognised the truth of themselves. As long as one looks upon himself as a doer, he does everything necessary for *saṃsāra* to continue. *Kartṛtva*, doership, is the villain of the piece. No matter what he does, the maximum he can achieve is to go to *brahma-loka*, which is also within *saṃsāra*. With the help of the *śāstra* he has to give up the notion that he is *kartā*. That takes place in the wake of knowledge. That is *mokṣa*. Again we see here why the desire for freedom, *mumukṣā*, is so important.

Śaṅkara introduces the next verse as being about those who, on the other hand, are free from desires and have a clear vision of *ātmā*. These are the people who are not committed to the three common pursuits of *dharma, artha* and *kāma*, but are committed to the pursuit of *mokṣa*. *Dharma* is less common in the sense that fewer people follow *dharma*. Still fewer are the people who pursue *mokṣa*. Unlike the others, they are not desirers, *kāma-kāmas*. Though *mokṣa* is also a desire, it is born of *viveka* and *vairāgya*. This *mumukṣu*, Śaṅkara says, has a clear vision of the goal, which is the knowledge of *ātmā*.

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥२२॥

*ananyāścintayanto māṃ ye janāḥ paryupāsate*

*teṣāṃ nityābhityuktānāṃ yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham*

Verse 22

ये जनाः *ye janāḥ* — those people who; अनन्याः *ananyāḥ* — (see themselves as) non-separate from Me; माम् चिन्तयन्तः *mām cintayantaḥ* — inquiring into Me or recognising Me; (माम् *mām*) पर्युपासते *paryupāsate* — seek Me, gain Me; तेषाम् नित्य-अभियुक्तानाम् *teṣāṃ nitya-abhityuktānām* — for these who are always one with me; योग-क्षेमम् *yoga-kṣemam* — what they want to acquire and protect; अहम् वहामि *aham vahāmi* — I take care of

If the verse is about a *jñānī*:

Those people who see themselves as non-separate from Me, recognising Me, gain Me. For those who are always one with Me, I take care of what they want to acquire and protect.

If the verse is about a *mumukṣu* :

Those people who are non-separate from Me, inquiring into Me, seek Me. For these who are always one with Me, I take care of what they want to acquire and protect.

This is a very famous and often quoted verse. It has an important location. It is about the middle of the ninth chapter, which is in the middle of the eighteen chapters.

It can be taken in two ways, as a description of a *jñānī*, a wise man, or as a *mumukṣu*'s approach to the object of his seeking. Śaṅkara takes it as a description of a *jñānī*, based on the words, 'ye *ananyāḥ*,' which he says is meant to distinguish these people from the ones *Bhagavān* has mentioned before in the previous two verses.

*Ananyas* are those who are not separate from Me, the Lord. Does that mean that in the Lord's vision, there are two sets of people, those non-separate from himself, and those who are separate? That is not consistent with all that he has said so far. Therefore, *ananyas* means those who do not look upon 'Me' as other than themselves, as another being. They do not see 'Me' in one form or another as someone separate from themselves. These are *ananyas* and they are never separate from 'Me.'

How is this possible? These are all individuals, how can they be non-separate from *Īśvara*, the Lord? Śaṅkara says that it is possible due to the fact that the Lord is the *ātmā* of all of them. When this is so naturally those who recognise the *ātmā* as *Parameśvara* are non-separate from him. The *ātmā* of *Īśvara* is the *ātmā* of the *jīva*, and that is *caitanya*, which is one, *eka*, which is non-dual, *advitīya*, which is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. Those who recognise themselves as this are called *ananyas*.

It is because of this word *ananya* that Śaṅkara has said in his introduction that these are people of clear vision, *samyag-darśīs*. All others are also non-separate from *Īśvara*, but they do not recognise it. The only difference between one group and the other is recognition and non-recognition, knowledge and ignorance. And that is a vast difference.

These people recognise even the *ahaṅkāra* as *Parameśvara*. There are some statements that express this. One such statement is, *yatra yatra mano madīyaṃ tatra tatra tava pāda-pañkajam*—wherever my mind is, there indeed are your lotus feet. It can be a prayer or a statement of fact. At another place it is said, *yatra yatra mano yāti tatra tatra samādhayaḥ*—wherever the mind goes there indeed is *samādhi*, recognizing *Īśvara*. The mind cannot go away from *Parameśvara* because the mind is itself *Parameśvara*. It is like someone who wants to get away from space. Where will he go? There is no such place. This is the way in which these people recognise *Īśvara*.

Such people, recognizing Me or inquiring into Me, *māṃ cintayantaḥ*, gain or seek Me, *māṃ paryupāsate*. And for them, *teṣāṃ*, who are non-separate from Me at

any time, *nitya-abhiyuktānām*, I take care of *yoga* and *kṣema*. This is one of the most popular statements in the *Gītā*—*yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmi aham*.

*Kṣema* is retaining or protecting what you have acquired—*prāptasya rakṣaṇaṃ kṣemaḥ*. In India there is a convention that one writes '*kṣemam*' at the top left hand corner of a letter to indicate there is no bad news and everything is fine. If it is a letter informing someone of a death, '*kṣemam*' will be absent. The person has gone. You cannot retain what you do not have; so '*kṣemam*' is omitted. And retention here is always of what is desirable and what you want. Retaining the extra weight that you have gained is not *kṣema*!

*Yoga* has many different meanings, for example, it can mean the title of a chapter. But when *yoga* and *kṣema* appear together in a compound, the meaning for *yoga* is acquiring what you do not have—*aprāptasya prāpaṇam*. And it must also be desirable to you.

Look at your life. All your concerns can come under one of these two. What is it that bothers you? Just think of any one thing. It will either be about something you want, *yoga* or something you are afraid to lose, *kṣema*. I have no peace; I want to gain it — *yoga*. I do not have enough money; I want to gain some — *yoga*. I am losing my hair, my health; I want to retain them — *kṣema*. *Yoga* and *kṣema* indicate a lot about the life of a *jīva*. If *yoga-kṣema* is taken care of, everything is taken care of.

The Lord says, 'I take care of these for those who are always non-separate from Me—*nitya-abhiyuktānāṃ yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmi aham*.' Here *Śaṅkara* raises a question and answers it. Even other *bhaktas* get their *yoga-kṣema* taken care of by *Bhagavān*. He is the object of their prayers and as the *karma-phala-dātā*, he gives the results. So how can you say he takes care of the *yoga-kṣema* of only these *nitya-abhiyuktas*? What does it mean? He says it is true that *Bhagavān* takes care of all others too but there is a difference with these people.

The object of a devotee's prayer is what is desired by him. Look at the previous verse. These people pray and offer rituals to *Īśvara* for a particular result—heaven. Heaven is the desired object, not the Lord. He is just the means to achieve their end. They will use anyone to get what they want but they know the local forces are not adequate; and they know that the Lord has all knowledge, *sarvajñatva*, all power, *sarva-śaktimattva*, and all compassion, *sarva-dayālutva*. So they wish to use him to get what they want.

But then look at this. *Cintayantaḥ mām*, inquiring into Me, *māṃ paryupāsate*, they also seek *Īśvara*. Then what do they get? Let us consider a *mumukṣu* here, one who wants liberation. He also prays to the Lord, but what is the object of his prayer? It is *Īśvara*. He wants nothing else, only to know *Īśvara*. 'My object is only to find you,' he says, 'So I pray to know where you are, what you are.' After finding *Īśvara* what does



he want? He says, 'Nothing; only to know that I am one with you.' Such *mumukṣus* do not look upon *Īśvara* as really separate from themselves. There is a sense of separation for the time being because of ignorance. To resolve that, they are always enquiring into the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. 'If he is non-dual he is one with Me. How can that be? I am such an insignificant being. How can I be *Parameśvara*, the Lord? These doubts are there because there is no knowledge, only faith, *śraddhā*. So they seek, *pariyupāsate*. How? By *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, with devotion and commitment.

The object of their prayer, their pursuit is only *Parameśvara*. They do not use *Parameśvara* for gaining limited ends. They are only seeking to know him. This is the difference, *Śaṅkara* says. These are the *ananya-darśīs*, the wise people, who do not care whether they are alive or dead. They are not anxious about looking after themselves; nor are they afraid of what will happen to them. They are with *Bhagavān*, they are non-separate from him and have no concern for their own *yoga-kṣema*. Whatever happens, happens. Everything, even their desires, are all in the hands of *prārabdhakarma*, which is non-separate from *Parameśvara*. Since they recognise the law of *karma* as non-separate from *Parameśvara*, whatever takes place is *Parameśvara* for them. They are not using him to protect their *yoga-kṣema* but *yoga-kṣema* is taken care of by *Bhagavān* himself in the form of the laws of *karma*. So they have no concern about their *yoga-kṣema*.

An ordinary *bhakta* is deeply concerned about his *yoga-kṣema*. He has concern because he has doership and centred on this is his entire effort for *yoga-kṣema*. Being what he is, a *bhakta* knows that in spite of all his efforts, he will not be able to get what he wants and retain what he wants to retain. So he looks for help. As a *bhakta* he performs rituals in order to get and retain what he wants.

A *jñānī*, on the other hand, is not a *kartā*. Who is the *kartā* then? If at all there is a *kartā*, it is only *Bhagavān*. He is the creator, *sṛṣṭi-kartā*, and sustainer, *sthiti-kartā*, and destroyer, *saṃhāra-kartā*. That is what *Śaṅkara* says here.

*Mokṣa* is only through knowledge of *ātmā* being *Brahman*, which is the cause of the world. To know this you must inquire and to inquire you must have an appropriate means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. How am I going to inquire into *Īśvara*? Through the *pramāṇa*, which happens to be in the form of words. Therefore, enquiring into *Bhagavān* is inquiring into words, the words of the *śāstra*. Thus they seek Me, they worship Me by enquiring into who I am. That is the best form of worship. The *jijñāsus*, whom we are talking about here, are *bhaktas*. *Bhagavān* gives them an assurance. For those who are so totally committed to Me, I will take care of all that is necessary, *yoga* and *kṣema*. What a *jijñāsu* wants to gain and protect is knowledge. *Bhagavān* will take care of his concern because he is his *bhakta*. The idea is that *śraddhā* will take care of everything.

When *sannyāsīs* give up everything, they do not count upon being taken care of by society, or by anybody for that matter. Society does take care of them in some ways but they do not count on that. They do not think there is a necessity for anybody to take care of them. Things will be taken care of. This is the attitude of the *sannyāsī*. Here, however, *Bhagavān* assures them, ‘I will take care of your *yoga-kṣema*.’

If the *yoga* and *kṣema* of the wise are taken care of by *Bhagavān*, the seekers' *bhakti* will free them from their concerns of *yoga-kṣema*. Their own commitment to *Īśvara* will free them from the concerns of *yoga-kṣema*. Because of their commitment to *Īśvara*, naturally they are not concerned about their *yoga-kṣema*. They know that *Īśvara* will take care of it. This is expressed as *ahaṃ yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmi*.

Generally for our *yoga-kṣema* we use a number of forces, our own powers, our knowledge, our skills, all the resources at our command, etc. Often, that is not enough; so, we invoke the Lord as well. There is nothing wrong in that. It shows that a person is mature enough to recognise *Īśvara*—but only as a means to accomplish his own *yoga* and *kṣema*. He does not seek to understand the Lord. This is the ordinary *bhakta*.

Whereas, here he says, ‘These people do not seek *yoga-kṣema*, they seek Me.’ Who are they?

*Ananyāḥ*—Here *Kṛṣṇa* presents himself as *Īśvara* or *Vyāsa* presents him as *Īśvara*. Either way it is the same. As *Īśvara*, he says, ‘These are the people who are not separate from Me. They recognise Me as the very *svarūpa*, the very *ātmā* of themselves. They realise there is no separate *Īśvara* because *Īśvara*, by nature, cannot be separate from anything, including me. Even looking at it from the physical viewpoint, *Īśvara*'s body will include my body. If the whole creation is taken as *Īśvara*'s body, my body is included. My *antaḥ-karaṇa* is also included. So, even from the standpoint of the body, there is nothing other than *Īśvara*. From the standpoint of *ātmā*, *aham*, which is the main thing here, there is no separation whatsoever. The *jīva* is non-separate from *Īśvara*. *Īśvara*'s *ātmā* is *jīva*, *jīva*'s *ātmā* is *Īśvara*. From the standpoint of *māyā-upādhi*, there is *Īśvara*. But the *ātmā* of *Īśvara* is nothing but the truth of the *jīva*, the *caitanya-ātmā*. And the *jīva*'s *ātmā* is nothing but *Īśvara*. There is only one *aham*, this limitless *ātmā*, which is the truth of both the Lord and the individual. Those who recognise this identity are called *ananyas*. How did they become *ananyas*?

*Māṃ cintayantaḥ*, thinking of me, not their own *yoga* and *kṣema*, they are committed to the pursuit of the knowledge of Me, *Īśvara*. Enquiring into *Paramēśvara* is the aim of their life. They are *jijñāsus*. They are not making efforts for their *yoga-kṣema*, but for the discovery of *Īśvara*. *Śaṅkara* presents the *ananyas* as *jñānīs*, *sannyāsīs*. Their *sannyāsa* is not a life style but a renunciation characterised by the knowledge, *aham akartā*, I am a non-doer. They know that they have never done anything, at any time, and they are not doing anything even now while talking. They know that while performing all these varieties of action, *paśyan śṛṇvan sprśan jighran*

*aśnan gacchan svapan śvasan pralapan viṣṭjan grhṇan unmiṣan nimiṣan api*, they do not perform any action. *Paśyan*, seeing, he says, '*ahaṃ na paśyāmi*, I do not see,' *śṛṇvan*, hearing, he says, '*ahaṃ na śṛṇomi*, I do not hear.' What he means is, this self, the meaning of 'I' being what it is, *ātmā* performs no action. But in its presence all activities take place. I am in the form of consciousness in the presence of, which the mind is mind, the senses are senses. 'With the mind desiring, with the intellect deciding, I perform action with the organs of action—*manasā saṅkalpya buddhyā niścitya karma karomi karmendriyaiḥ*.' This is *jñāna*.

*Ye janāḥ paryupāsate*, those people seek or recognise Me in all the states of experience. That is why the prefix *pari* is used for *upāsate*. It means at all times, in all states of experience. Who are they? By seeking *Parameśvara* seriously through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, enjoying the *amānitvādi* qualities, they have become *nitya-abhiyuktas*, those whose minds are always awake to Me, who have recognised that they are never separate from *ātmā*. Their minds do not come in between themselves and the vision. *Abhiyukta* means endowed with *amānitvādi* virtues. These people have gone through the whole process and therefore, have no inhibiting factor to their knowledge. They are *nitya-abhiyuktas*.

*Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse by raising the objection we saw in detail earlier. Since we say everything here is *Īśvara*, other *devatās* are also not separate from *Īśvara*. So, whether the devotees worship *Kṛṣṇa* or *Rāma*, Allah or the Father in Heaven, all of them worship only *Īśvara*. Nobody worships a *devatā* other than that *Parameśvara*. So, would he not also look after the *yoga-kṣema* of these devotees? Why has *Bhagavān* singled out the *jñānī* or the *jijñāsu*? It is true, *satyam evam*. But there is a distinction.

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥२३॥

*ye'pyanyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ*

*te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajantyavidhipūrvakam*

Verse 23

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — *Arjuna*; ये अपि *ye api* — even those; अन्य-देवता-भक्ता: यजन्ते *anya-devatā-bhaktāḥ yajante* — devotees who worship the Lord as other *devatās*; श्रद्धया अन्विता: *śraddhayā anvitāḥ* — endowed with *śraddhā*; ते अपि *te api* — they also; माम् एव यजन्ति *mām eva yajanti* — worship only Me; अविधि-पूर्वकम् *avidhi-pūrvakam* — (but) backed by ignorance

*Arjuna*, even those devotees who endowed with *śraddhā*, worship the Lord as other *devatās* also worship only Me, (but) backed by ignorance.

*Ye api anya-devatā-bhaktāḥ*—Those for whom God is other than themselves. This is the type of verse a *dvaitī* will misinterpret. He will translate this as those who are devotees of other *devatās*, and say it is meant to show that *Kṛṣṇa* alone is God. It is not like that.

All the *devatās* are *Īśvara*: It has been proved that everything is *Īśvara*, nothing is separate from *Īśvara*. So, anybody who worships any form, any name, in any mode, worships only *Īśvara*. These are devotees who do not recognise any of the *devatās* as *Īśvara*, but only as individual *devatās*.

*Yajante*, they worship in various modes. How? *Śraddhayā*, with *śraddhā*. Whether it is a tribal religion or a more sophisticated religion, all devotees have *śraddhā*.

*Kaunteya te api māmeva yajanti*—they also worship Me alone, *Arjuna*. The only problem is, their worship is backed by ignorance, it is *avidhi-pūrvakam*. No doubt they are worshipping Me, but they do not know Me. They think each *devatā* is different from every other, and from Me.

I receive their various forms of worship alright, because I am the ultimate recipient through all the *devatās*, but they do not recognise this due to ignorance.

For what reason is it said that their worship is backed by ignorance? The next verse clarifies.

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।

न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥२४॥

*ahaṃ hi sarvayajñānāṃ bhoktā ca prabhureva ca  
na tu māmabhijānanti tattvenātaścyavanti te*

Verse 24

च *ca* — and; हि *hi* — indeed; अहम् *aham* — I am; सर्व-यज्ञानाम् *sarva-yajñānām* — of all rituals; भोक्ता *bhoktā* — the recipient; प्रभुः एव च *prabhuḥ eva ca* — and the only Lord; तु *tu* — but; ते *te* — they; न माम् अभिजानन्ति *na mām abhijānanti* — they do not know Me; तत्त्वेन *tattvena* — in reality; अतः *ataḥ* — therefore; च्यवन्ति *cyavanti* — fall away

And I am indeed the recipient of all rituals and the only Lord. But they do not know Me in reality. Therefore, they fall away.

*Ahaṃ hi sarva-yajñānāṃ bhoktā*—I am indeed the recipient of the offerings of all worship, whether it is a Vedic ritual, *śrauta*, or any of the various forms of *pūjā* or prayer, *smārta*. With respect to all of them, I am the recipient., whichever form they worship, that is Me. I am the final altar of all their worship.

*Prabhuḥ eva ca*, and I am the Lord of the *yajña*. A *yajña* produces a result. I am the one who gives that result, the *karma-phala-dātā*, not the *devatā*, that you invoke. The result may come through the *devatā*, but it comes from Me alone. I am the ultimate giver. There is no wonder if Africans dance for rain and the rain comes. It is a ritualistic dance and it will bring rain. But the *devatā* that is invoked is Myself alone. There is no difference.

The only problem here is that they do not know Me in reality, in essence—*na tu mām abhijānanti tattvena*. What exactly is the nature of *Īśvara*? Who are these *devatās*? Who is this *kartā*? Who is the *karma-phala-dātā*? All these, they do not know. Even though their worship can lead them to *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which can lead them to *mokṣa*, they do not get that result. For that, they must have at least some vague knowledge that there is one *Īśvara* who is everything and that they are doing their worship for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, so that, they can understand this truth of *Īśvara*. But that kind of *jñāna* they do not have. So, what do they get?

*Cyavanti te*, they fall away. They get only simple limited results, not *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. For that, a person must be interested in *mokṣa* and understand that the prayer is done for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. He alone gets the higher result. When a *karma-yogī* performs a ritual, his disposition is entirely different from that of a *kāma-kāmi*. As we saw before, a *kāma-kāmi* desires certain results and makes use of a particular *devatā* to fulfil them. Therefore, he gets only that much result. But he falls away from the higher result. This should be the real result of all worship because it leads to *mokṣa*. They are worshipping Me, but at the same time they do not recognise Me. So, instead of gaining limitlessness they get only a limited result. The prayer itself is not defective but the efficacy is reduced by their own ignorance. If you have *jjñāsā* and do *yajña* with an effort to know *Īśvara*, you can get *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* leading to *viveka*, and therefore, *mokṣa*. The others fall away from that.

But one thing you must know, all these devotees definitely get results. So, none is denied the result of his *karma*. This is pointed out in the next verse.

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान् पितृन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।  
 भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ॥२५॥  
*yānti devavratā devān pitṛnyānti pitṛvratāḥ*  
*bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām*

Verse 25

देवव्रताः *devavratāḥ* — those who are committed to the gods; देवान् यान्ति *devān yānti*— reach the world of the gods; पितृव्रताः *pitṛvratāḥ* — those who are committed to the manes; पितृन् यान्ति *pitṛn yānti* — reach the plane of the manes; भूतेज्याः *bhūtejyāḥ* — those who worship the spirits; भूतानि यान्ति *bhūtāni yānti* — go to the realm of the

spirits; अपि *api* — whereas; मद्याजिनः *madyājinaḥ* — those who worship Me; माम् यान्ति *mām yānti*— reach Me

Those who are committed to the gods reach the world of the gods. Those who are committed to the manes reach the plane of the manes. Those who worship the spirits go to the realm of the spirits whereas those who worship Me, reach Me.

*Devavrataḥ devān yānti*—those who are committed to the *devas* in their worship gain the world of the *devas*. *Devavratas* are those whose devotion and commitment are to the gods. These are the people who perform *vaidika* rituals to specific gods like *Indra* etc. As a result, they go to that plane of experience, *loka*, where those gods are. As we saw, they will stay there only as long as the *punya* they have gained from their *karma* lasts. The intention here is to point out the limitation of even good results.

*Pitrvrataḥ pitṛn yānti*—those who worship the *pitṛs*, the ancestors, gain the world of the manes. These are the people who have a disposition, which has predominantly *rajas*. They perform Vedic rituals like *śrāddha*, which is done every year for the departed soul on the anniversary of the death. They also perform *smārta-karmas*, which are not Vedic rituals. *Pitṛ* is a mane, a departed soul living in a particular plane of experience, which is more desirable than this world. That plane is called *pitṛloka*, and to that plane they go. There they gain the status of a *pitṛ* like *Agniṣvatta*, etc., when they die. *Agniṣvatta* is the name of a mane and they get that particular status when they die.

There is a community in the Coorg district in Karnataka where worshipping the manes is done in a big way. In Tamil Nadu there is a movement of *nāstikas* and the followers of that movement reject anything that is Vedic. So, they do not go to temples or perform any Vedic rituals. But they too worship their departed leaders. There were two leaders of this movement who are dead now. Every year their followers go to where they are buried and place flowers, burn incense etc. They will not say they worship, but that is what they are doing. They are worshipping *Īśvara* in that form. These are *pitṛvratas*.

*Bhūtejyāḥ bhūtāni yānti*—those who worship the *bhūtas*, spirits, and various minor *devatās* like *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *gaṇas* etc., are *bhūtejyas*. *Gaṇeśa* as the *Gaṇapati* is one of these. If you worship *Gaṇeśa* as *paraṃ brahma*, that is different. Then you are worshipping *Īśvara*. But there are people who worship him as *Gaṇapati*. Then they are worshipping him as a *bhūta*, some kind of exalted spirit. They will get only that level of experience. It is better than this one world but they gain only that much.

Having said all this, he further says, '*yānti madyājinaḥ api mām*—those who are committed to Me reach Me. Just as these people reach their own ends, consistent with whom they have worshipped, similarly those who worship Me will reach Me alone. 'Me' means *Parameśvara*, *paramātmā*, the cause of everything. Śaṅkara says here that *vaiṣṇavas* are those who recognise the Lord as *Viṣṇu*. *Viṣṇu* means the one who is all-pervasive and who includes every *devatā*. They recognise Me as themselves and thus, reach Me.

What do you want now? Do you want to partake of some given plane of experience or you want to be every experience? All experiences are Me, nothing is separate from Me. So, *madyājīs* are those who seek Me, recognise Me in all the *devatās*. Their approach, their seeking is entirely different. They are *mumukṣus*, the ones he described earlier as *ananyas*.

### FOR THE SAME EFFORT, RESULT IS LESS DUE TO IGNORANCE

Here Śaṅkara makes a note. Even though the effort is the same, because they are worshipping Me in ignorance, they enjoy only limited results. Effort is common to all of them. In every *yajña* you have to make effort. As all those *devatās*, they worship are Me, they are all worshipping Me. But because of ignorance, they do not recognise Me as the real recipient of their worship. They think they worship separate *devatās* for gaining separate *lokas*. Because of that, they limit themselves to that particular experience. The effort is the same as it would be if they were doing rituals for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. But they become the recipients of limited results due to ignorance.

It is like a person who knows that something he has is an antique. But he does not know its value. So, he makes a lot of effort to find an antique dealer and finally finds one who gives him a hundred dollars for it. He is happy. But actually its value is several hundred thousand dollars. So, even though he made the effort required to find the antique dealer, he got a lesser result due to his ignorance.

To say that the Lord is everything, you have to know it. Otherwise how can you say it? You do not see the Lord being everything, you have to know. Unless you recognise *ātmā* as *paraṁ brahma* who is the *nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*, you cannot say the Lord is everything, I am everything. If this is understood, on the other hand, the result is the gain of limitlessness. There is no coming back once you know because the *ahaṅkāra* is gone. You are *mukta*, liberated. All this has been pointed out.

Not only is the result so great, but it is also easily achieved, *sulabha*, because it is already a fact about you. For sugar to become sweet, what should it do? It simply has to know, 'I am sweet.' Similarly, one has to simply know, 'I am limitless, *ānando'ham*.' It is simply a thing to be known. Therefore, it is *sulabha*. Because you require *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* you may think, at least it requires lots of rituals. No, says Lord *Kṛṣṇa*.

Then what should I do?

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥२६॥

*patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*

*tadahaṃ bhaktyupahṛtamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

Verse 26

यः *yaḥ* — he who; भक्त्या *bhaktyā* — with devotion; पत्रम् *patram* — a leaf; पुष्पम् *puṣpam* — a flower; फलम् *phalam* — a fruit; तोयम् *toyam* — water; मे प्रयच्छति *me prayacchati* — offers Me; तद् भक्ति-उपहतम् *tad bhakti-upahṛtam* — that which is offered with devotion; प्रयतात्मनः *prayatātmanaḥ* — of the person whose mind is pure; अहम् अश्नामि *aham aśnāmi* — I receive

He who offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water—I receive that offering imbued with the devotion of the person whose mind is pure.

Again this is a verse that is quoted often. What you offer does not matter. It can be a leaf, *patra*, like a *bilva* or a *tulasi* leaf, *puṣpa*, a flower, *phala*, fruit, *toya* water. But the action of offering is necessary and how it is offered is also important.

*Yaḥ me bhaktyā prayacchati*—he who offers to me with devotion. *Bhaktyā prayacchati* means he gives with devotion recognising Me as *Īśvara*. ‘I offer this to *Īśvara* for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, *jñāna* and *mokṣa*. Then any *karma* is a *yoga*. There is no entity called *bhakti*. It is only a condition of the mind. When you perform a ritual it is *karma* but *bhaktyā prayacchati* means you do this *karma* with devotion. Then it is *karma-yoga*. Any *karma* can be *yoga* if there is *bhakti*. A *pūjā* is *karma*, so is singing *kīrtana*. It is an oral action, *vācikaṃ karma*. If you do *dhyāna* it is a mental action, *mānasaṃ karma*. All of them are *karmas* and with *bhakti* they become *karma-yoga*.

Whose offering is this? *Prayatātmanaḥ*, of a person with the right effort. This is someone whose mind is pure. *Bhakti*, devotion, is an expression of a pure heart. The action is done with a pure heart and in order to gain that pure heart we also perform an act of devotion.

## IMPORTANCE OF AN ACT OF DEVOTION

The action becomes important here because it produces a corresponding emotion. If the action is not done, the emotion will also disappear. So, we have certain actions, which cause particular emotions to manifest. The form and the spirit, as I have mentioned earlier, are both important. Suppose there is a form, which is not backed by the spirit. It is a mere form, a dead form. And when the spirit is there, a particular form is not necessary. To make an offering to the Lord, you do not need a physical action. If you



have devotion for the Lord you have it. You need no special action to express it. When you have an appreciation of *Īśvara*, its expression, devotion, is always in you. But the problem is, devotion is not real as long as you think you are a devotee. When there is an *ahaṅkāra*, an ego, which thinks it takes care of your *yoga-kṣema* and uses *Īśvara* as an accomplice, you need an act of devotion. It becomes as important as the spirit of devotion.

As I told you before, if you hate a person, the best way of getting rid of that hatred is to act as though you have love for him. You may say it is hypocrisy. If your intention is to deceive the person, it is hypocrisy. If your intention is to get rid of the hatred, it is not. You do something like giving a flower to him daily, for 41 days. The act of giving a flower, in any culture so far on this planet, is a symbol of love or affection. In Indian culture it also indicates respect and devotion. That action, which in your psyche is connected with love and affection, no doubt will come in conflict with your emotion towards the person you hate. But you also want to get rid of this hatred. So, you give the flower and the day comes when you need not do it anymore. In the act of love there is love expressed; so, the opposite emotion, hatred, is converted into love. This is what we call *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*. In order to eliminate a given emotion you bring in the opposite emotion. If there is hatred, you bring in love. If there is jealousy, you bring in understanding, acceptance, some kind of admiration. This is how you change.

Here, the act of devotion is as important as the devotion. Only in the act is the devotion manifest and this manifestation is very important. It has to become an all-consuming passion; I must become the very content of devotion, which means that the *ahaṅkāra* should not be there at all. That is why they ask you to do *pūjā* daily. It need not even be understood. It is just a cultural expression.

## WHY WHAT YOU OFFER IS NOT IMPORTANT

God is not going to be pleased just because you have offered some flowers. He is not going to be flattered by your act of giving or by your praising him because whatever you can think of, is less than the Lord. It is something like the child who has just learned how to multiply. When his father helps him do his homework, he says, 'Dad, you are a great mathematician.' How does he know? His understanding of a great mathematician is limited by his own knowledge of mathematics. A title should be given by a person competent to give that title. We cannot even spell the word omniscient correctly, what can we really understand when we call the Lord omniscient? From the little knowledge we have, how are we going to appreciate the Lord's omniscience? We have no immediate knowledge of this at all. It can never be immediate knowledge unless we step out of the individual mind. Then we can say, 'I am that *sarvajña*.' That is the freedom we can get. With reference to our mind etc. there is no question of being all-pervasive, all-knowing, all-powerful. When a *bhakta* praises the Lord, his praise always falls short

of what the Lord is. So, the Lord cannot get flattered, much less, can he take what you offer.

When you offer something to the Lord, he does not take it away. If he did, nobody would give anything. But if a priest comes to your house to perform a ritual, he always comes with a bag. At various stages of the ritual, things are offered to him and he puts them in his bag. If the Lord were to take what you offer, he must have a place of his own, like this bag, to keep it. Where can the Lord have a place of his own? To say this is the Lord's own place, there must be some place, which is not his. Being *sarva-vyāpī*, all-pervasive, all places are his places; being everything there is no place of his own. Whatever you offer remains there. Why then do I offer?

### WHY PRAY?

Often people ask me if the Lord is all-pervasive, if he is in me and outside me, why should I pray? Drop the 'if.' The Lord is everywhere. If you know that, there is no need to pray. But if you do not know, pray in order to get that knowledge. You seem to see yourself as separate from the Lord who is omnipotent, omniscient and includes you. To that Lord whom you have not understood, pray, 'I am told that you are all-pervasive, O! Lord. Show me how you are all-pervasive, how am I included in you? If only the Lord is there, then how am I the Lord? Please reveal this to me.'

This act of prayer is as important as the spirit behind it. Without the act there will be no spirit unless you are a *jñānī*. His whole life is an act of prayer. But for a person who is not a *jñānī*, even if the spirit is absent, as long as the act is there, the spirit will come. Because you cannot perform an act of prayer without the spirit entering into it. That is because prayer is the most voluntary action in the world. It is an action for which the result is not immediate; so, the free will expresses itself in the fullest form. In all other actions you are motivated in one way or another. When you see a go-getter, you see a driven person. But if that person simply falls back and offers a prayer, it is definitely voluntary because nobody can make another person pray. Even parents can only ensure that children close their eyes and maybe even utter the Lord's name. But whether you pray or not is entirely up to you.

When we were children, we were asked to do a whole set of rituals before and after the *gāyatrī-japa*. They took about fifty minutes but unless we did them, we would not get our coffee. Therefore, for coffee's sake we were driven to do them. If you are just doing something to please your mother and get your morning coffee, it is only an action, not an act of prayer. But you do pick up the spirit when you perform the act.

If in the act of prayer, there is some spirit, we call it real prayer. In it is your appreciation of *Īśvara* and your own helplessness. This keeps you sane. The sanest person is one who understands his own limitations as well as his virtues. One who

understands only one's own virtues, I would not say is the sanest. When you appreciate not only your helplessness but also *Īśvara* as the one who is limitless etc., your sanity is complete. Then your whole life becomes an expression of prayer.

### THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER IS THE SAME; THE FORM CAN VARY

The importance of prayer is recognised in every religious culture. But each has its own form, which is purely cultural. The prayer is common, how the person prays is prescribed differently. One person may follow a *pūjā* form, step by step, in which *patra*, a leaf, *puṣpa*, a flower, *phala*, a fruit, *toya*, water, are offered. Even if they are not available, you can offer any or all of them mentally. You can even do the whole *pūjā* mentally. But if it is mental *pūjā*, we need not limit our offering to *patra*, *puṣpa*, *phala* and *toya* alone. Mentally we can offer everything imaginable. But the action is important and that is what *Bhagavān* points out here. What is recommended in this verse is an act of worship called *pūjā*. You need not do Vedic rituals, only an act of worship in which you offer *patra*, *puṣpa*, *phala* or *toya*.

There is a verse that says that in *Kali-yuga* for the people who have impure minds, who do not have rituals prescribed for them, reciting the Lord's name is enough.<sup>1</sup> In all the *yugas* peoples' minds are impure, so, this verse embraces all people whose minds are to be purified. Since they have *rāga-dveṣas* etc., they live by means, which are not always proper, and are called *pāpa-dravya-upajīvīs*. If you observe your pursuits, you will notice that when you get something, it is usually at the cost of someone else. There is often some aggression towards others. Therefore, there is *pāpa* involved in your daily life. Then old impurities, *kalmaṣas*, cannot be eliminated because daily you gather new ones. You can only eliminate them by doing *nitya-naimittikādi-karmas* like *agnihotra* and other rituals, which are prescribed in the Vedas according to *varṇa* and *āśrama*. But these people do not have any such rituals prescribed for the *varṇa* and *āśrama* they are in. How are they going to rid themselves of *kalmaṣa*, and gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhī*? The name of the Lord is the only means, *gatir govindakīrtanam*. It includes *pūjā*, *kīrtana* etc.

Whatever the offering is, it must be *bhakti-upahṛta*, that is offered with devotion. If you are moved by devotion expressed in the offering of a flower, a leaf etc. with a pure heart, what happens to that offering?

### AN OFFERING MADE WITH DEVOTION IS RECEIVED BY

<sup>1</sup> कलौ कल्मषचित्तानां पापद्रव्योपजीविनाम् ।  
विधिक्रियाविहीनानां हरेर्नामैव केवलम् ॥  
*kalau kalmaṣacittānāṃ pāpadravyopajīvinām*  
*vidhikriyāvihīnānāṃ harernāmaiva kevalam*

**BHAGAVĒN**

*Aham aśnāmi*, I eat. Śaṅkara says that this should be taken as *ahaṃ grhṇāmi*, I receive it. It means the person gets the result for his action, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. You need not do elaborate rituals. All that is required is recognition, and an act of prayer. The meaning of this verse is that an act of prayer is important and it should be done for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* leading to *mokṣa*. When *Bhagavān* receives your prayer, you are already blessed.

There is a story illustrating this in *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. A poor man, *Sudāmā*, also called *Kucela*, lived with his wife and twenty seven children. He and *Kṛṣṇa* had studied together in the same *gurukula* at the feet of the *ṛṣi*, *Sāṅdīpani*. Studying under the *ṛṣi* had given him great insight and devotion. Even though he was a *grhastha* and had to find food for his large family, he was cheerful and devoted to the Lord. His wife found it increasingly difficult to maintain the family on his meagre earnings. One day she suggested to *Sudāmā*, that as he had been with *Kṛṣṇa* at the *gurukula*, he should seek *Kṛṣṇa's* help. *Sudāmā* was unwilling to go and ask for charity in the name of friendship. She finally prevailed. After agreeing, *Sudāmā* started to worry, 'How can I go and meet *Kṛṣṇa*, my old friend, without a gift? He is no ordinary person, he is more than a king and one should not go empty-handed to a king, to a deity or to the guru—*rikta-pāṇiḥ na paśyeta rājānaṃ daivatam gurum*. And I don't have anything to offer to him.' His wife said, 'I have something you can offer him.' She had already saved some beaten rice, called *poha*, from what *Sudāmā* had brought home. She wrapped all she had, which was about three morsels, in a rag and gave it to *Sudāmā*. He went to *Dvārakā*.

*Kṛṣṇa*, learning that *Sudāmā* had come, asked that he be escorted into the palace with great respect. He came down to meet *Sudāmā* at the door, washed his feet and welcomed him into the palace. In those days, if you were a *brāhmaṇa*, the king had to greet you with respect, and do certain prescribed acts of worship. Then *Kṛṣṇa* asked *Sudāmā*, 'Did you bring anything for me?' Initially *Sudāmā* did not say anything, for he thought *Kṛṣṇa* would take offence at the insignificant gift he had brought. He saw the palace, the riches around, and was aghast within himself as to how he could have come to see *Kṛṣṇa* with some beaten rice wrapped in a rag. But *Kṛṣṇa* found the small bundle hidden in his clothes, pulled it out, and began eating from it. He took one mouthful, and then a second one. Before he could take the third one, his wife, *Rukmiṇī*, who was standing near him, stopped him. She stopped him because, that very act of eating, *grahaṇa*, becomes *anugrahaṇa*, bestowal of his grace on *Sudāmā*. When *Kṛṣṇa* took the first morsel of rice, there in *Sudāmā's* village his hut got transformed into a palace. His wife and all the children suddenly found themselves in the best of clothes. *Rukmiṇī* stopped *Kṛṣṇa* from taking more of the beaten rice, because if he had taken all of it, the whole world would have belonged to *Sudāmā*.

That is the Lord's *anugrahaṇa*. It becomes available immediately when he accepts an offering. *Sudāmā* was so overwhelmed by *Kṛṣṇa*'s welcome and the arrangements for his comfortable stay that he forgot to ask *Kṛṣṇa* for any help. He was just happy meeting *Kṛṣṇa* after such a long time. He went back to his village, and when he reached it, he was not sure whether it was his village or another. Everything was different. Even the ponds that had been dry were full of water. The trees were full of flowers and fruits. He could not recognise the place until his wife and children came and greeted him. When *Bhagavān* takes, he gives.

Even the fact that you can pray is the result of prayer. You try. See if you can really open your heart and pray. You will find it very difficult. With all the pain and cynicism we have inside, it is very difficult to open up. A hundred arguments will come to prove how prayer is useless. So, it takes a number of 'as though' prayers before we can really pray. Prayer being an action, which is highly voluntary, as I told you, where the freewill gets its maximum expression, is the most efficacious action. The role of the will is so complete. You are not driven to it, you do it on your own. And its result is assured. That is why *Śaṅkara* interprets the word *grhṇāmi* as *anugrṇāmi*.

As a *sādhana* for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, an act of *bhakti* is very important. It will instil devotion because it does imply a certain degree of surrender and recognition of one's limitations. This can lead to helplessness but when it is accompanied by the recognition of *Īśvara* as limitless, the act of devotion makes this appreciation very real. The attitude of surrender becomes more and more real through the act of surrender. So, the act is as important as the very attitude until the attitude does not come and go. If it is an abiding attitude you have no need to perform an act of devotion as a means, as we will see in the next verse.

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥२७॥

*yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat*

*yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam*

Verse 27

यत् करोषि *yat karoṣi* — whatever you do; यत् अश्नासि *yat aśnāsi* — whatever you eat; यत् जुहोषि *yat juhoṣi* — whatever ritual you perform; यत् ददासि *yat dadāsi* — whatever you give; यत् तपस्यसि *yat tapasyasi* — whatever religious discipline you follow; कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — *Arjuna*; तत् कुरुष्व *tat kuruṣva* — please do it; मद् अर्पणम् *mad-arpaṇam* — as an offering to Me

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever ritual you perform, whatever you give, whatever religious discipline you follow, *Arjuna*, please do it as an offering to me.

Various actions that you do, whether they are secular or scripturally enjoined, either by the Vedas or by *smṛti*, please do all of them as an offering to Me, *kuruṣva madarpaṇam*. Why is this said here?

Generally even though people perform these rituals, prayers, etc. they do them for their own *yoga* and *kṣema*. The same ritual can be a *kāmya-karma* or a *niṣkāma-karma*. *Niṣkāma-karma* does not mean you do not expect a result. Nobody can perform an action without expecting result. It means you expect no result except *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. You may do anything but if it is no longer a *kāmya-karma*, you do it with an entirely different attitude. What you want is *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

What exactly is the purification? Not to be in the hands of likes and dislikes, the two words that really cover all other psychological problems. If you analyse any problem you have, you find it comes under *rāga-dveṣas*. Things did not happen as I wanted, therefore, I have a problem. Things do not happen as I want, therefore, I have a problem. I do not see that things will not happen as I want, therefore, I have a problem. All problems, normal or abnormal, can be brought under *rāga-dveṣas*.

## CONNECTION OF PRAYER AND MENTAL PURIFICATION

This *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* is very important and to achieve it, prayer is inevitable. Why? Because only a prayerful mind can accept all this. Only on seeing my helplessness, can I forgive myself. Only understanding myself very clearly as a limited person can I totally accept that I could only do as much as I did; I could not have done anything better. Perhaps in the order of things this is how it should have been. With that kind of recognition, that prayerful attitude, there is serenity. When the mind is settled like this, it can inquire properly. Here *Bhagavān* is talking about a person who is interested in *mokṣa*. He does *karma* for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. He may do the same action as a *kāma-kāmī* but he does not want this and that. He wants only one thing, *mokṣa*, which is non-separate from himself. As a *karma-yogī* he has renounced the results of his actions, *karma-phala-tyāga*. He plays roles and performs *karma* etc. But he does not work for *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, but works only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Or he can be a *sannyāsī* who gives up the *karmas*, duties, so that he has no role to play. Both the *karma-yogī* and the *sannyāsī* have a recognition of *Īśvara* and that is called *bhakti*.

*Tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam*—whatever you do, please offer it to Me. It means may you not expect a result of *yoga* or *kṣema*; just do it and let it go to the Lord. It is an expression of your devotion to *Īśvara*. All you want is *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. The very offering of such a prayer brings about inner purification. Therefore, whatever you do, please offer it to Me for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* leading to *mokṣa*. *Bhagavān* is not going to be elevated by your offering but you are enriched in the process.

*Yatkaroṣi*—whatever you do. *Bhagavān* addresses *Arjuna* directly here. Whatever you do is made into an offering and the result of that *karma* is taken as *prasāda*.

*Yadaśnāsi*—whatever you eat. That is why, while eating we offer the food saying, *prāṇāya svāhā, apānāya svāhā, vyānāya svāhā, udānāya svāhā, samānāya svāhā* and then finally saying *brahmaṇe svāhā*. It means this: Unto the Lord who is in the form of *prāṇa*, the respiratory function, *apāna*, the system that throws things out of the body, *samāna*, the digestive system, *vyāna*, the whole circulatory system, *udāna*, the *prāṇa* that ejects the life out of the body at the time of death, I offer this food. *Brahmaṇe svāhā*, to the one who indwells every physical body identified with the total subtle body, *hiraṇyagarbha*, I offer this food.

*Yat juhoṣi*—whatever fire ritual you perform, whether it is a *śrauta-karma* or a *smārta-karma*, or any ritual that you perform daily or on special occasions, please offer it unto Me. Let it not be for *dharma*, *artha*, or *kāma*. All that is important is your attitude. *Bhagavān* is not going to be flattered by what you do or do not offer. Still, through some association you make your offering more and more real, which creates in you a certain *bhāvana*, attitude. *Viṣṇu* is the one who loves ornamentation; he is *alaṅkāra-priya*. Lord *Śiva* loves a bath; he is *abhiṣeka-priya*. Lord *Sūrya* loves salutations; he is *namaskāra-priya*. So, you do all this, for your own sake, really, to make your devotion more real. It is only your attitude that counts. Two pieces of wood in the form of a cross mean nothing; every telephone pole looks like that. But it stands for something; so, there is an attitude, *bhāvana*. So, it will work. Nobody will be denied the result of his prayer whether he is a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, a Parsi, or anybody. These things must be very clear. Any religion is based on *bhāvana*. That is what makes a person a devotee.

*Yat dadāsi*—whatever you give as an offering, as charity—gold, food, ghee, clothes etc. These are the things that we generally give to *brāhmaṇas*, people like priests, dedicated to a religious life. In former times, they were working for the society and the society took care of them; so, *dāna* was generally for *brāhmaṇas*. Now it can be anything you give in charity. All the charities you do, dedicate them unto *Īśvara* as a worship.

*Yat tapasyasi*—any particular religious discipline you undertake. There are varieties of *tapas* like fasting and *japa*.

In all this, *Bhagavān* says, ‘Whatever you do, do it as an offering unto Me.’ These are all expressions that we have to understand properly. Otherwise what does ‘Perform all actions dedicated to the Lord’ mean?, which Lord? Where? How? This is the problem.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO OFFER EVERYTHING TO BHAGAVĒN?

Here, we have to understand that gaining the knowledge of *Īśvara* and understanding that I am not separate from *Īśvara* is *mokṣa*, freedom. If you want that, you need *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and you have to work for it. When *dharma* is *Īśvara*, even duties are for *Īśvara*. What is to be done becomes important because it is looked upon as *Īśvara* and thereby *rāga-dveṣas* are relegated to the background. Then the special rituals that you perform are meant for no other result than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* leading to *mokṣa*. Wanting *mokṣa* means wanting *Īśvara* because *mokṣa* is non-separate from *Īśvara*. Knowing I am *Īśvara*, whose nature is fullness and who is the cause of creation, is indeed *mokṣa*. When you are seeking *mokṣa*, don't think that you are seeking anything other than *Īśvara*. When the various rituals, prayers, etc., that you perform are all for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is necessary for *mokṣa*, they are all for *Īśvara*. Because, the *svarūpa* of *mokṣa* is nothing but *Īśvara*. So, when you perform these prayers and rituals etc., they are all meant only for *Īśvara*.

Similarly, the other duties, which you are called upon to do in day-to-day life are also for *Īśvara* if they conform to *dharma*. Your likes and dislikes, tendencies etc., may be opposed to what you have to do. But they are overruled when you conform to *dharma*, because that itself is *Īśvara*.

For the person who is living his life in this manner, like *Arjuna*, what will happen?

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।

सन्न्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥२८॥

*śubhāśubhaphalairēvaṃ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ*

*sannyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māmupaiṣyasi*

Verse 28

एवम् *evam* — in this way; मोक्ष्यसे *mokṣyase* — you will be released; कर्म-बन्धनैः *karma-bandhanaiḥ* — from the bondage of *karma*; शुभ-अशुभ-फलेः *śubha-aśubha-phalaiḥ* — in the form of desirable and undesirable results; सन्न्यास-योग-युक्त-आत्मा *sannyāsa-yoga-yukta-ātmā* — being one whose mind is endowed with renunciation and *karma-yoga*; विमुक्तः *vimuktaḥ* — released; माम् उपैष्यसि *mām upaiṣyasi* — you will come to Me

In this way you will be released from the bondage of *karma*, which is in the form of desirable and undesirable results. Being one whose mind is endowed with renunciation and *karma-yoga*, you who have been released will come to Me.

*Mokṣyase*—you will be released. From what?



From the *karmas* that give you desirable and undesirable results—*śubha-aśubhaiḥ karma-bandhanaiḥ*. These binding *karmas* have desirable and undesirable results, in other words *sukha-duḥkha*. *Karma* produces two types of results, desirable, *śubha-phala*, and undesirable, *aśubha-phala*. And the *karmas* themselves are bondage because they produce results for the agent, the *kartā*. He is the one who has to experience the *karma-phala*, which comes in the form of *sukha* and *duḥkha*. In order to experience them, he must have a body, mind, senses, etc. Therefore, he requires a birth, *janma*. Because of *karma* there is *janma*, because of *janma* there is *karma*.

From all this, *Bhagavān* says, you will be released. How?

*Evam*—in this manner, by doing what was described in the previous two verses. Performing all actions as a dedication to *Īśvara*, as it was explained, you become *sannyāsa-yoga-yukta-ātma*, one whose mind is endowed with *yoga* and *sannyāsa*. This is *mokṣa*. But the person we are discussing is doing *karma*. And all that he does he dedicates unto the Lord, as the Lord himself said in the last verse—*yatkarōṣi yadaśnāsi yat tapasyasi*... So, what is the *sannyāsa* here? *Śaṅkara* makes it clear; it is *sannyāsa* and at the same time, *yoga*. It is called *sannyāsa* because he renounces the results of his actions; there is *phala-tyāga*. Everything is done as an offering to *Īśvara*—*tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam* and he is interested only in *Īśvara*, nothing else. *Īśvara* is non-separate from *mokṣa*; so, if he is interested in *mokṣa*, he is purely interested in *Īśvara*. Since he has *karma-phala-tyāga*, it is called *sannyāsa*, considering the root meaning of the word rather than the popular meaning, which is a life style of renunciation. It is not the renunciation of *karma*, but an attitudinal renunciation. The context here is the performing of all these rituals, prayers, duties etc.

Therefore, we are talking about *karma-yoga*. Still, it is called *sannyāsa-yoga* because there is *karma-phala-tyāga*. He gives up his likes and dislikes and does *karma* only for the sake of *Īśvara*. Not for anything else. This person is committed to *Īśvara*. So, naturally there is *sannyāsa*. Why is it *yoga*? *Śaṅkara* says, because the word *karma* is associated with it. And it is *karma-yoga* because the word *sannyāsa* is there. Otherwise it would be only *karma* for the sake of *artha* and *kāma* now; and later it becomes a *karma* that binds you, *karma-bandhana* by producing *puṇya* and *pāpa*. These *karmas*, however, do not bind since they create *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and through *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, you gain *mokṣa*.

There is an order there. The same thing was said in the fifth chapter of the *Gītā*.

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥५-७॥

*yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ*

*sarvabhūtātmaphūtātmaḥ kurvannapi na lipyate*

Verse 5-7

One whose mind is purified by being committed to a life of *karma-yoga*, who has mastered the body and has the sense organs under control, and who knows oneself to be the self in all beings, (such a person) is not affected even while doing (actions).

This sequence is a style of the *Gītā* and must be understood. Otherwise, it will read as though *karma-yoga* is a means for liberation. That will destroy the whole *śāstra* and create countless problems. Therefore, here we must remember that particular word, *yoga-yukta*, the one who is endowed with *karma-yoga*. What does he become? *Viśuddhātmā*, his *antaḥ-karaṇa* is pure, meaning he is no longer in the hands of *rāga-dveṣas*. Therefore, he is *vijitātmā*, his mind is in his hands and so are his sense organs; he is a *jitendriya*. Such a person becomes *sarvabhūta-ātmabhūta-ātmā*. In time he gains this knowledge and his self is no longer enclosed but is released from the limitations superimposed upon the self. He is the self of all. Even if he performs an action he is not bound by that *karma*, *na lipyate*. That is what is said here.

So, by doing this, you will get released from *karma*. Look at this. *Karma* generally binds you, but by doing the same *karma* with a change of attitude, it becomes the means for liberation. The binding *karma* becomes non-binding.

Because he does everything for the sake of *Īśvara*, he is a *bhakta* and also a *jijñāsu*, *karma-yogī*, *mumukṣu*—all these at once. Because he is *sannyāsa-yoga-yukta-ātmā*, he has all the qualifications for gaining the knowledge. So, for him knowledge becomes easy.

Therefore, *vimuktaḥ mām upaiśyasi*, liberated, you will come to Me, in time. Because he has said *mokṣyase*, you will get liberated, there is a time involved here. Knowledge does not take time. But removing the obstructions does. Being a *karma-yogī*, you gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and with that mind you are able to understand the *śāstra* and are, therefore, *vimukta*. Living, you are liberated because the mind does not pose any problem in so far as the knowledge of yourself is concerned, which you have gained from the *śāstra*. It is not inhibited by any problem that would be there for want of *karma-yoga*. And uninhibited self-knowledge is *mokṣa*. The teaching is there, *pramāṇa* is there, and *vastu* is there. Knowledge should take place. And it has to take place in your mind. If that mind has a problem, we have to take care of it and that is done by *karma-yoga*.

Living, you are liberated; then what happens at the time of death? When the body falls at the time of death, you are one with Me. What exists is only *Īśvara* because the notion of individuality, *jīvatva* is eliminated. The *jīva* has resolved into *Īśvara* and therefore, you are one with *Īśvara*, which means that you are *Īśvara*. Even alive there is only *Īśvara*. But because of *prārabdha-karma*, the body-mind-sense complex continues. Therefore, its seeming limitations continue. Then, that body falls away and the seeming limitations also disappear. There is only *Īśvara*.

Therefore, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says here, *mām upaiṣyasi*, you will come to Me. This is addressed to the *jīva* who is now listening, not to the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Here, ‘you’ falls short of *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. It goes only up to the *jīva*, the *jijñāsu* and not beyond that. ‘You shall come to Me’ means that there will be no ‘you,’ the individual. You who is *sat-cit-ānanda-brahma* alone is there.

This is another expression that can be misunderstood. You have been Me, but you come back to Me again. As though you are a stranger, you come back to Me. This is a figurative expression. There is no coming to *Bhagavān* or going away from *Bhagavān*. You are always non-separate from *Bhagavān*. It is just a matter of recognition.

### DOES BHAGAVĒN ALSO HAVE PARTIALITY?

But in the previous verse he says, whatever you do, *Arjuna—yat karoṣi yadaśnāsi yad juhoṣi*—offer it all to Me. And the one who performs all actions for the sake of *Īśvara* will get *Īśvara*, whereas the others will not. Then we have a problem. *Bhagavān* becomes the one who has *rāga-dveṣas* like any ordinary person. If you praise him, calling him *Indra*, *Candra* etc., you get something out of him. Then if you criticise him, he doesn't give you anything at all. Today he shows *rāga*, and tomorrow he shows *dveṣa*. Flatter him and he gives you everything. If he is angry, he leaves you out completely. This is what we see in the world. We thought *Bhagavān* was different, one who would be equal to all people and give equally to everybody. But it looks as though he too behaves like an ordinary person. You go on doing everything for *Bhagavān*, then he is pleased and says, ‘Come back!’ But the others who did not care for him, he also does not care for. What is this? If you care for him, he cares for you. If you do not, he does not care for you. What kind of *Bhagavān* is he? He should care for me even if I do not care for him. I do not see him doing anything for me nor is he immediately available for me. How can I care for him? I have a hundred different cares in my life.

But he is said to be all-wisdom, all-love, and all-compassion. In his vision, in his compassion I have done nothing to deserve being neglected by him. Suppose a child happens to kill a cockroach. You do not consider it a sin. It was afraid and it therefore, did something. Even if a person commits a small felony, you accommodate him. Our local laws seem to be very kind to the children because they do things in innocence. So, what about the almighty Lord who is all-wisdom, who is absolute love and compassion? In his vision what kind of misdemeanour can I commit that will not get his pardon? In fact I must destroy the universe for him to get angry. If I put Mars out of place, turn Jupiter inside out, just spirit the entire Earth away, if I make a mess of his whole home, then he should get angry with me. But these small little things that a human being may do, he should pardon.

I am not like *Rāvaṇa* who made Lord *Varuṇa* come and water his garden and wanted *Vāyu* to come and sweep his floor, etc. He abused all the *devatās* and should be

punished, all right. But not me, doing my small little thing. What kind of person is he, if only when you go on flattering him, he is very kind to you? And if you neglect to say 'You are *Ananta*,' 'You are *Kṛṣṇa*,' 'You are *Rāma*,' you are this, you are that, etc., he thinks that I am no good and therefore, does not care for me. In my innocence and childishness I may not care for him. But in his wisdom and in his compassion, he should care for me. What kind of a God is he if he also has *rāga-dveṣas*?

It is very clear that such a God is insecure. He has his own fans called *bhaktas*, devotees. So, he cares for them. And the others, who mind their business and are now grown up, he dislikes. He should be proud of them. But he wants them always to look up to him, which means he does not want them to grow. He is not even like enlightened parents.

Now we have reduced *Īśvara* to our level. It is the argument of an opponent, *pūrvapakṣī*, remember. The answer to this is given in the next verse.

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥२९॥

*samo'haṃ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ*  
*ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham*

Verse 29

सर्व-भूतेषु *sarva-bhūteṣu* — in all beings; अहम् समः *aham samaḥ* — I am the same; न मे द्वेष्यः अस्ति *na me dveṣyaḥ asti* — there is no one whom I dislike; न (मे) प्रियः *na (me) priyaḥ* — nor is (anyone) my favourite; ये भजन्ति तु माम् *ye bhajanti tu mām* — but those who seek Me; भक्त्या *bhaktyā* — with devotion; मयि ते *mayi te* — they exist in Me; तेषु च अपि अहम् *teṣu ca api aham* — and I exist in them

I am the same in all beings. There is no one I dislike nor do I have a favourite. But those who seek Me with devotion exist in Me and I in them.

*Samaḥ ahaṃ sarva-bhūteṣu*—I am the same in all beings. I am not someone separate from them. In all the beings I am the same limitless *Īśvara* because the *ātmā* of everyone is Myself alone. In all beings I am available for owning. They need not even come to Me; they are Me. So, what would be My attitude towards them?

*Na me dveṣyaḥ asti*—How can I have a *dveṣya*—one who is disliked, when everyone is Me? I do not hate Myself. I cannot hate Myself because I know that I am complete—*ahaṃ pūrṇaḥ*. To hate oneself, one must be ignorant of oneself. I have no such ignorance. I know that I am everything and when that is so, everyone is Myself. There is no separate person at all. Everyone is the same whole person, which is why he is called *puruṣa*. When this is so, there is no person to be hated.

You may not dislike some one, but suppose you have a liking for somebody else. That is good enough. It means you are indifferent to others and it also establishes a gradation, *tāratamya*. It is not enough to say, *na me dveṣyaḥ asti*, there is no one for whom I have dislike.

Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, *na me priyaḥ asti*—I have no favourite, no beloved. Human beings are subject to all that but not *Īśvara*. Then why does he say those who worship him will come to him etc.? If he is giving favours, you can say he gives certain people favours and not others. The problem here is, *Bhagavān* says, I am themselves. They have to know Me. I cannot be more than what I am for them nor can I do more than what I have done already. They themselves are Me. They are not separate from Me. I am not giving favours to anybody but those who know Me get Me. It is all according to the law. Even grace is *karma-phala*. They have the free will to earn that grace or not to.

Then finally speaking,

*Ye māṃ bhajanti bhaktyā*, those who seek Me, who praise Me, who worship Me with devotion—all these can be taken as the meaning of the word *bhajanti*—*mayi te teṣu ca api aham*, they exist in Me and I exist in them. They exist in Me because they seek Me. Then they become one with Me and therefore, I exist in them. What about others? They are also non-separate from Me but they do not seek Me with commitment, with devotion, *bhaktyā*. If they do, then I am in them, they are in Me. Here you must note that *Bhagavān* is not speaking with reference to *satya* and *mithyā* as he did earlier when he said *matsthāni sarva-bhūtāni na ca ahaṃ teṣu avasthitaḥ*. Here he is saying that the seeker's *ātmā* is Me. Therefore, all the seekers exist in Me, and I in them in that both of us are one and the same. Pure *ātmā* is pointed out. He is not talking about the relationship but the identity between the *jīva* and *Parameśvara*. Therefore, I am them and they exist in Me. All of them have their being in *ātmā*. When each one says, 'I am so-and-so' that 'I' is *Parameśvara*. They all exist in Me, one *paramātmā*, and I am in the form of all of them.

Why should he say so?

## THERE IS NO WHOLE-PART RELATIONSHIP WITH ĪŚVARA

One may think that they exist in Me like the parts exist in the whole. This is what the school of thought called *viśiṣṭa-advaita* says. But this cannot be. There are no fractions of *ātmā* because *ātmā* is always whole. It cannot be fractionated. It is not that from the same fire each one has a spark of divinity. There is no spark here. The spark is the whole. These theologies all exist because we have psychological issues. Everyone wants to belong to somebody because he feels empty inside. He wants to be claimed by somebody and therefore, he says he belongs to a big person, in this case, *Viṣṇu*. It is purely psychological. There is nothing wrong with wanting to belong to somebody but

we are not talking about simple psychological issues here. It is more than that. You do not belong to *Īśvara*. You are *Īśvara*.

If you think you belong to *Īśvara*, then you will also think *Īśvara* belongs to you. Then, *Īśvara* will have one million people saying the same thing. They are all deluded. When they discover there is another person to whom *Īśvara* has given the same feeling, their devotion will disappear. *Īśvara* becomes like the fellow who was searching for a greeting card and with the help of the shopkeeper finally found the one he was looking for. It said, 'You are the only one I love.' Then he asked the shopkeeper for a dozen of them! Similarly, *Īśvara* gives every devotee the feeling that he belongs to that devotee. He should; otherwise no devotee will be a devotee. But among the devotees, each has always an eye upon the other devotee. Each thinks 'The Lord belongs to me. I am the only one dear to him. That is what he told me.' When one says to the other, 'He told me the same thing,' all the devotion falls apart.

This is what happens if you think you are a fraction of the Lord. This is *viśiṣṭa-advaita*. If everyone belongs to *Īśvara* and everyone thinks that *Īśvara* belongs to him, definitely he will have the feeling, 'I am not special to *Īśvara*, he has general devotees, I am only one of them.' And devotion will evaporate. There is no belonging. You are *Īśvara*. There is no question of separation because *Īśvara* cannot be made into parts so that you have a spark of that *Īśvara*. Therefore, when one understands, 'I am in all of them, they are in Me,' there is no separation.

*Bhagavān* says, 'I have no *dveṣa* for the people who do not care for Me nor do I have *rāga* for the people who care for Me. I am available for everyone because in all beings I am the same, *samo'haṃ sarva-bhūteṣu*.' It is a question of owning up. The *ātmā* of everyone is *Parameśvara*. I am not hiding myself from anybody nor I am choosing to reveal Myself to someone. I do not extend favours to some and punishment to others. It is all one's own doing.

Having said this, he continues to talk about the nature of the commitment to the pursuit of *Īśvara*, called *bhakti*. *Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse saying 'Listen to the glory of that devotion.'

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥३०॥

*api cetsudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk*

*sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ*

*Verse 30*

अपि चेत् *api cet* even if; सुदुराचारः *sudurācāraḥ* — one of highly improper conduct; अनन्यभाक् *ananyabhāk* — being one without a sense of separation; माम् भजते *bhajate mām* — he worships/seek Me; सः साधुः एव मन्तव्यः *saḥ sādhuḥ eva mantavyaḥ* — he

is to be considered a good person; हि *hi* — because; सः सम्यग्व्यवसितः *saḥ samyagvyavasitaḥ* — he is one whose understanding is clear

Even if someone of highly improper conduct seeks Me without a sense of separation, he is to be considered a good person because he is one whose understanding is clear.

*Api cet sudurācāraḥ*—even if he is a person whose conduct is highly questionable. *Sudurācāra* is a person whose conduct, *ācāra*, is perfectly bad. He omits all the things that are to be done and does all the things that are not to be done. He is completely unmindful of others' happiness or welfare. Such a totally self-centred person is a *durācāra*. In that, he excels everybody else. There are many criminals but this one excels all of them. Generally you do not put the prefix, *su*, in conjunction with the prefix, *dur*. But here Lord *Kṛṣṇa* uses this *su* with *durācāra*. Even though his conduct has been like this, and continues to be like this, he is *ananyabhāk*, one who does not see anything else except *Īśvara*. Somehow, in spite of all his *durācāra*, because of some previous *karma*, he has discovered a devotion for *Īśvara* and is committed to the knowledge of *Īśvara*. Therefore, he has become *ananyabhāk*, one who commits one self to the pursuit of the knowledge of *Īśvara*. He seeks Me, *Parameśvara*, even though his *ācāra* is highly questionable.

Then what happens to him?

*Sādhuḥ eva sa mantavyaḥ*—that person is to be considered a *sādhu*, one whose conduct is good, because his thinking or his understanding is clear, he is well established in the knowledge of *Īśvara*—*samyag-vyavasitaḥ saḥ*. When his understanding about *jīva* and *Īśvara* is clear, naturally he should be looked upon as one who is committed to the pursuit of *Īśvara* and as one who has proper understanding.

## A PERSON CANNOT ALWAYS BE JUDGED BY HIS CONDUCT

If he has such knowledge, how can his conduct be questionable? It is only an argument. That is why *api cet* is there. It is a supposition. Suppose there is such a person. If he is committed to the pursuit of or has understood *Īśvara* properly as non-separate from *ātmā*, then who can evaluate his conduct? His ego, *ahaṅkāra*, is not there but because of some prior habits picked up, he may continue to do certain things, which are looked upon as questionable. A story told in the *Mahābhārata* illustrates this.

One *brāhmaṇa* was sitting under a tree doing his prayers and meditation and *tapas* invoking the Lord. In the process he developed some powers, which he himself did not know about. One day, when he was sitting under a tree, a crane on top of the tree dropped some droppings on him. He looked at it with angry eyes and the crane was burnt to ashes. Then he knew he had this power. He used to go for *bhikṣā* daily to the same

village. Previously he was humble like a *sādhu*; but once he got the power, he became very proud. He went and asked for *bhikṣā* and the woman made him wait for one hour before serving him. He was very angry and asked her how she could make him wait like that. She said that she was doing her duties, which was more important. He said, 'Do you know who you are talking to?' She said, 'Yes I know, but I am no crane.' He asked her how she knew about the crane. And she told him to go and ask a particular butcher. The butcher was busy serving his old and ailing father; so, the *brāhmaṇa* had to wait again. He was furious and asked the butcher why he had made him wait. Then the butcher asked, 'Did that lady send you here?' The lesson here is: Do not judge people by what they do. One was a house-holder and the other a butcher but they were both doing their jobs and were definitely better than the *brāhmaṇa* with all his prayers and meditations.

### IMPROPER CONDUCT CANNOT CONTINUE

And he is to be considered a *sādhu* because when he has properly understood, *samyag-vyavasitah hi saḥ*, and is pursuing knowledge, his improper conduct is not going to continue. How can it? All *durācāra*, if you analyse it, is either a habit or a real crime. Habit will naturally drop off in time. Crimes are always centred on the person who is insecure, the small 'I.' Because he is so highly insecure, his behaviour becomes aggressive. If he has devotion to *Īśvara*, in the very acceptance of *Īśvara*, his ego gets diluted. And in the pursuit of knowledge of *Īśvara*, it gets even further diluted. Thereby all the tendencies based upon fear, tendencies to cheat, to deceive, to hurt, naturally drop off.

To give an example. When a cotton cluster is thinned out so that it becomes fluffy, all the particles sticking to the cotton drop off. You cannot easily remove them one by one but once the cotton fibres are separated, you find all the particles drop down because there is nothing for them to stick to. The ego too, once diluted, cannot hold on to these tendencies. They all drop off because fear and selfishness, which are at the centre of all crimes, are due to ego. If that ego is diluted, where is the question of these things sticking there?

*Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse saying that, having given up improper conduct, which is external, this person becomes a *dharmātmā* because of an inner clarity in understanding of oneself and *Īśvara*.

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।

कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥३१॥

*kṣipraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati*

*kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*

Verse 31



क्षिप्रम् *kṣipram* — quickly; भवति *bhavati* — he becomes; धर्मात्मा *dharmātmā* — one whose mind is in conformity with *dharma*; शश्वत्-शान्तिम् *śaśvat-śāntim* — eternal peace; निगच्छति *nigacchati* — he gains; कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — Arjuna; प्रतिजानीहि *pratijānīhi* — may you know for certain; मे भक्तः *me bhaktaḥ* — My devotee; न प्रणश्यति *na praṇśyati* — does not get destroyed

Quickly he becomes one whose mind is in conformity with *dharma* and gains eternal peace. May you know for certain, Arjuna, My devotee never gets destroyed.

*Kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā*—*Dharmātmā* means the one whose mind is in conformity with *dharma*. *Dharma* becomes natural to this person because commitment to *dharma* is a part of devotion to *Īśvara*. The moral order is not created by an individual; it is a part of the creation. We require such an order because we have the faculty of choice. Once we have that we must have a set of norms for interaction with the world. Otherwise it is a power given to us without proper controls. Therefore, one does have innate common sense knowledge of this moral order. That is why there is universal agreement about what is fundamentally right and wrong. Besides this, there is cultural right and wrong and situational right and wrong. An interpretation is possible only because there is a universal order, which is a part of the creation. And creation, or what is created by *Īśvara*, is non-separate from *Īśvara*. Therefore, *dharma* is *Īśvara*. That is not an ordinary thing.

This is something we find only in the *vaidika-śāstra*. Elsewhere *dharma* is purely a mandate, which if you follow, you will be rewarded, and if you do not, you will be punished. This is how all of *dharma*, which is values, ethics etc., is presented. But here, *dharma* is non-separate from *Īśvara*. So, seeking *Īśvara* is not going to be away from that *dharma*.

Because his mind is committed to *dharma*, he is called *dharmātmā*. And *dharma* is always expressed in terms of conduct. Later we are going to see a verse, which says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*—completely giving up *dharma*, which means *karmāṇi parityajya*—completely giving up *karma* because only where there is *karma* does *dharma* come into play. *Karma* is controlled by *dharma* and has to be in keeping with it. Therefore, *karma* is *dharma*.

Previously he was *durācāra*, now he is *dharmātmā* because of his clarity of understanding—*samyag-vyavasītaḥ hi saḥ*. And because of his devotion to *Īśvara*, naturally, this change takes place quickly. Even though he was *durācāra* when he started all this, his knowledge and devotion are such that, it consumes all his improper behaviour. Such a person is free from conflict. Therefore, he gains eternal peace—*śaśvat śāntim nigacchati*. There are different types of *śānti*. Because he does what is to be done and avoids what is not to be done, naturally he gains inner *śānti*. This is relative.

But then he already has clear understanding. Because of that, he becomes *dharmātmā*. And being a *dharmātmā*, his understanding becomes clearer. As his conduct improves, his clarity also increases. He understands the nature of the self as not subject to modification and therefore, *nitya-śānta-ānanda*. Therefore, this *śānti* is *śāśvat-śānti*, a *śānti*, which is eternal because it is a peace that is the nature of the self. In spite of thinking, *ātmā* is *śānta*, so, let the thinking take place. That is clarity. Whatever the condition of the mind, it does not become a basis for self-judgement because it does not bring about any change in my knowledge of *ātmā* being *avikriya*, not subject to change. That is *śāśvat-śānti*. Therefore, self-knowledge is called *śānti*.

This knowledge is not sullied by thinking. This is true of any knowledge. If you know what a car is, that knowledge is not in any way affected just because the mind is restless or disturbed. Even when the mind is sad, 1 + 1 is still 2. The nature of knowledge is that it does not get disturbed just because the mind is in a certain condition or the body has become very old or weak. The clarity of knowledge is such that he knows he is *śānta* in spite of the mind, not because the mind is *śānta*.

*Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*, may you know for certain, *Arjuna*, my devotee does not get destroyed. This is a very famous sentence. Devotee here is the committed person and implies that he has recognition of *Īśvara*. That recognition is a great blessing. It is not an easy thing to recognise *Īśvara*. That there is *Īśvara* is a great step and then the one who seeks to know that *Īśvara* is really one whom we call a *bhakta* here. He never comes to a bad lot, whatever his conduct has been.

Even regarding the pursuit, he is very clear about what he is after. And if he appreciates *Īśvara*, naturally he gains the *śānti*, which is the nature of *ātmā*. And he does not come to destruction, to a bad lot. This is true for any person.

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।

स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥३२॥

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ*  
*striyo vaiśyāstathā śūdrāste'pi yānti parāṃ gatim*

Verse 32

हि *hi* — indeed; पार्थ *pārtha* — *Arjuna*; ये अपि स्युः *ye api syuḥ* — even those who are; पाप-योनयः *pāpa-yonayaḥ* — born in families given to improper conduct; तथा *tathā* — so too; स्त्रियः *striyaḥ* — women; वैश्याः *vaiśyāḥ* — *vaiśyas*; शूद्राः *śūdrāḥ* — *śūdras*; ते अपि *te api* — they also; माम् व्यपाश्रित्य *mām vyapāśritya* — taking refuge in Me; यान्ति *yānti* — gain; पराम् गतिम् *parām gatim* — the ultimate end

Indeed, *Arjuna*, even those who are born in families given to improper conduct, and so too, women, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*, taking refuge in Me, they also gain the ultimate end.

*Pāpa-yonayaḥ* are those who happen to be born to parents who are of very bad conduct like criminals and so on. It can also be taken as animals etc. because we have stories about such *jīvas* as *Gajendra*, an elephant, getting *mokṣa*. Caught by a crocodile, he plucked a lotus from the pond and offered to the Lord. Because of his devotion, the Lord helped him release himself from the crocodile. And *Jaṭāyu*, who was a bird, got *mokṣa* and of course there was *Hanumān* who was more of a monkey. *Pāpa-yoni* is any birth in which there is a predominance of affliction. For us, *pāpa* is not sin. It is anything that gives you *duḥkha*. Even a mosquito bite is a *pāpa*. Thus, if you get a mosquito bite, one *pāpa* has gone.

*Śaṅkara* takes the word *pāpa-yonayaḥ* as being *striyaḥ*, *vaiśyāḥ* and *śūdrāḥ*. Women undergo more physical and perhaps emotional pain than men and so, a female birth can be considered a *pāpa-yoni*. And a *vaiśya*, *śūdra* etc., do not have a good start in life. A *vaiśya* does business; so, the motivation to sell something is greater than that to be truthful. He cannot say, ‘This is useless but if you want it, you can buy it.’ If he can, he is almost ready to become a *sannyāsī*. Therefore, it is considered to be a *pāpa-yoni*.

I<sup>1</sup> do not agree with this. Because the word *tathā*, so too, is there, it is very clear that *strī*, etc., are not *pāpa-yonis*. The verse says, ‘Even those who are *pāpa-yonis*, so too, women, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*, *ye api syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ tathā striyaḥ vaiśyāḥ śūdrāḥ*.’ And nowhere is it said that *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* are *pāpa-yonis*. The word *pāpa-yonayaḥ* can also mean those who are born outside the four groups of people—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*.

Or, more correctly, *pāpa-yonis* are those who are born to parents given to a life of *adharmā*. But *strī*, woman, who falls within the four groups is also mentioned; so, *strī* cannot be included in *pāpa-yonis* here. These would be people like the *cāṇḍālas* etc., who come from a certain tribe that does not conform to any kind of *dharma*. The point is, all of them get liberated. Therefore, the criterion for gaining *mokṣa* is not the parentage or the *varṇa* a person belongs to. Nor is it the *āśrama* the person happens to be in. All these do not really count in gaining *mokṣa*. They count only in determining what kind of duty the person has to perform if the *varṇa-āśrama* system is working. For *mokṣa*, which is in the form of knowledge, these things do not count at all. Therefore, all these people can also gain *parā gati*, the end from which there is no return. It is also an end, which cannot be improved upon; it is the ultimate end called inner freedom, which is the recognition of *ātmā* being identical with *Īśvara*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Puja Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati*

When all these people can get liberated...

किं पुनर्ब्राह्मणाः पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा ।

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ।।३३।।

*kiṃ punarbrāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayastathā  
anityamasukhaṃ lokamimaṃ prāpya bhajasva mām*

Verse 33

किम् पुनः ब्राह्मणाः *kim punaḥ brāhmaṇāḥ* — then what to talk of *brāhmaṇas*; पुण्याः *puṇyāḥ* — who have fortunate births; भक्ताः *bhaktāḥ* — devoted; तथा राजर्षयः *tathā rājarṣayaḥ* — so too the sage-kings (*ṛṣatriyas*); इमम् *imam* — this; अनित्यम् *anityam* — non-eternal; असुखम् *asukham* — of very little happiness; लोकम् *lokam* — world of experience; प्राप्य *prāpya* — having gained; माम् भजस्व *mām bhajasva* — may you seek Me

Then what to talk of *brāhmaṇas* who have fortunate births and are devoted, so too, the sage-kings (*ṛṣatriyas*)? Having gained this world, which is non-eternal and of little happiness, may you seek me.

*Kiṃ punaḥ brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyāḥ bhaktāḥ*—what to talk of *brāhmaṇas* who are born in *puṇya-yonis*? Because of certain *puṇya*, they really have a head start in this pursuit. They are born in a family where there is culture and from the beginning are exposed to rituals etc. When he is eight years old a *brāhmaṇa* boy is initiated into the study of the Vedas, the *gāyatrī-mantra* and so on. This is not an ordinary opportunity. And of course they must be *īśvara-bhaktas*. They do not fritter away the opportunity they have but with devotion, commit themselves to the pursuit of this knowledge.

*Bhaktāḥ rājarṣayaḥ tathā*—similarly, the *ṛṣatriyas*, who are kings and sages. They also have an advantageous beginning. *Bhagavān* calls them *rājarṣis*; they are kings, and they are sages—*rājānaḥ te ṛṣayaḥ*. This means they are born in a royal family and they are knowers of *Brahman*.

*Bhagavān* has covered everybody. Therefore, it is not where you are, but what you are, that is important. Devotion and commitment is as necessary for the *brāhmaṇa* as for the *pāpa-yoni*. And further, no matter what the station in life, the fundamental condition is the same. *Bhagavān* describes it very clearly.

*Anityam asukhaṃ lokam imaṃ prāpya*—having gained this world of experience achieved by a human being, which is non-eternal, and of very little happiness. If you are a *śūdra*, you are a human being; if you are a *vaiśya* you are a human being; if you are a *brāhmaṇa* you are a human being; if you are a *cāṇḍāla* you are a human being. Even if you are *Hanumān* you are like a human being in that you are capable of thinking and not purely controlled by instinct. For all of them this world is the same. Non-eternal, *anitya*, and not happy, *asukha*. The world of human beings consists of experiences,

which are not lasting and not always happy. The ‘a’ prefixed to *sukha* here is not negation but conveys the sense of only a little. If there is no *sukha* nobody will want to live. Everyone has some *sukha*, but it is inadequate and *anitya*. Having gained it, one finds it is finite and very fleeting.

*Śaṅkara* says, the status of being a human being, which is the means for fulfilling all the *puruṣārthas*, is very difficult to gain. The idea is, do not fritter it away. What should one do then?

*Māṇ bhajasva*, commit yourself to pursuing knowledge of *Parameśvara*. Anything less will not satisfy you. No one can say minus *mokṣa*, which is *Parameśvara*, this is enough for me. Even though one may think if he gets a certain thing he will have all he wants, once he gets it, it becomes clear that it is not enough. Therefore, everybody is seeking *mokṣa*. To gain that freedom from the sense of limitation, you have to come to ‘Me,’ says *Bhagavān*. This means that you have to know ‘Me.’ Therefore, *māṇ bhajasva*, please worship or seek me.

Lastly, how should one seek you?

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्तवैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥३४॥

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṇ namaskuru*  
*māmevaiṣyasi yuktvaivamātmānaṃ matparāyaṇaḥ*

Verse 34

मन्मना: *manmanāḥ* — one whose mind is committed to Me; मद्भक्तः *madbhaktaḥ* — who is devoted to Me; मद्याजी *madyājī* — whose rituals are offered to Me; भव *bhava* — may you become; माम् नमस्कुरु *mām namaskuru*— may you surrender to Me; आत्मानम् एवम् युक्तवा *ātmānam evam yuktva* — having oneself prepared in this way; मत्परायणः (सन्) *matparāyaṇaḥ (san)* — being one for whom I am the ultimate end; माम् एव एष्यसि *mām eva eṣyasi* — you will reach Me alone

May you become one whose mind is committed to Me, who is devoted to Me, whose rituals are offered unto Me and may you surrender to Me. Having yourself prepared in this way and being one for whom I am the ultimate end, you will reach Me, the self alone.

*Manmanā bhava*, may you become one whose mind is lost in Me, is committed to Me, *Parameśvara*. Committed to the Lord means committed to the pursuit of the Lord. Generally we are committed to various other things in the world, that are nothing but *artha* and *kāma* and use the Lord to gain those things. There is nothing wrong with that. But having achieved what you wanted, you are not going to complete the journey towards fulfilment. Therefore, may you choose Me straight away as the one to be gained,

as the one in whom you lose yourself. Gain here is in the form of knowledge. So, may you become one whose mind is committed to Me.

*Mad-bhaktah bhava*—may you become one who is devoted to Me,’ says the Lord. When your mind has to be in the pursuit of the Lord, your love must not be elsewhere. If you are intellectually convinced about the pursuit of *mokṣa* but your heart is distributed in hundred different things, it does not work. You will not have a mind that is seeking the Lord. *Bhakti*, here is the emotion of love. *Bhakti* is defined as *prema-svarūpa*—of the nature of love. So, the Lord says, ‘May I, *Īśvara*, the very subject matter of *Vedānta* become the object of your love.’ In other words, may you be a *jijñāsu*, where your devotion is for the very knowledge of *Īśvara*.

*Madyājī bhava*—may you become one whose rituals, prayers etc., are offered only for Me. This means they are only for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, whereby is the gain of *Īśvara*. In every prayer, *Īśvara* is invoked. But then it is not usually for *Īśvara*’s sake that you perform the ritual. You do it for heaven or some similar end. Even though *Īśvara* is involved, the purpose is entirely different. Here, however, *Īśvara* is invoked only for the sake of gaining *Īśvara*, nothing else. That is excellent. The same prayer is converted into a great *sādhana* because you are invoking *Īśvara*’s grace for knowing *Īśvara*. You do not want anything less.

Then, the Lord says, *māṅ namaskuru*—may you surrender unto Me. Because the word *kuru* is there, an action is indicated. So, the surrender here is *yoga*. Surrendering your doership and enjoyership, may you commit yourself to Me. The attitude described here is: Whatever is given to me by *Īśvara*, I am happy with that. All that I do, I do conforming to *dharma* because *dharma* itself is *Īśvara*. Unto that *Īśvara* I surrender my personal likes and dislikes. That is what is called *namaskāra*, surrender.

*Evam ātmānaṅ yuktvā*—having prepared oneself in this way. When you are doing all these things, it will bring about *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and, *Śaṅkara* says, in this way your mind will be composed and focused. And having focused the mind, *samādhāya cittam*, one surrenders unto *Īśvara*. The mind can be focused on anything but here it is only on *Bhagavān*.

When that is so, what will happen?

That person becomes *matparāyaṇa*, the one for whom I, *Īśvara*, am the goal. For him, the ultimate end, the only end is *Parameśvara*. All because he is *manmanāḥ madbhaktah madyājī* and the one who has surrendered unto Me. He has taken refuge in Me and thus is called *matparāyaṇa*, one for whom I am the ultimate end, the only end in fact.

That being so, the Lord says, *mām eva eṣyasi*, you will go to Me alone, you will gain Me alone. Discovering that *ātmā* is *Parameśvara*, you will become one with Me. This expression, ‘becoming one with Me,’ is always a problem. What is to become one

with a person? Do you go somewhere and become one with him? How will you become one with him? Is it a kind of a relationship? Is it a kind of emotional identity or some kind of intellectual identity or some kind of physical identity like an amoeba in your stomach? How exactly does the devotee get identity with *Īśvara*?

*Bhagavān* says, ‘Because I am the *ātmā* of all beings, coming to Me is recognising yourself. When you gain yourself in terms of knowledge, you come to *Īśvara*.

We have taken the syntax to be, *evam ātmānaṃ yuktvā mām eṣyasi*—having prepared your mind in this way, you will gain Me. Here, we have taken the word *ātmānam* to mean the mind. Whereas *Śaṅkara* says, *evam yuktvā-samādhāya cittam evam*, meaning, ‘Having gained the composure of mind in this manner...’

And then he says, *ātmānaṃ mām eṣyasi*, you will reach *ātmā* that is Myself. And he explains the word *ātmā* as himself, who is the *ātmā* of all beings—*ahaṃ hi sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ ātmā*, and who is the *parā gati*, the ultimate end. Looking at it this way, you get the meaning that your reaching the Lord is reaching yourself because *Īśvara* is the *ātmā* of all beings.

All this goes along with *kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*, may you know for certain, *Arjuna*, My devotees never get destroyed. Thus ends the chapter nine with the assurance from *Bhagavān* that a *bhakta* who comes to know or wants to know *Bhagavān* in this manner is never destroyed.

ओं तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे

श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे राजविद्याराजगुह्ययोगो नाम नवमोऽध्यायः ॥९॥

*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde rājavidyārājaguhyayogo nāma  
navamo’dhyāyaḥ*

*Om tat sat*. This indicates the end of the chapter. *Om* means *Brahman*. *Tat sat*—that alone is truth. *Iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu*, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is equivalent to *Upaniṣads*, in this *brahmavidyā*, a *śāstra* whose subject matter is *brahmavidyā*, that is, the identity of *ātmā* and *Brahman*...

And it is not only *brahmavidyā*, which deals with realities, it is a *yoga-śāstra*. It talks about the *antaḥ-karaṇa* and *karmas* etc., telling what one has to do for purification of the mind. And *dharma*, all disciplines, values, prayer etc., come under *yoga-śāstra*. In this *yoga-śāstra*...

And this was in the form of a dialogue that took place between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*—*kṛṣṇa-arjuna-saṃvāda*. In this dialogue, *kṛṣṇa-arjuna-saṃvāda*, is this *navamo’dhyāya*, 9<sup>th</sup> chapter dealing with the topic, *rāja-vidyā*, *rāja-guhya*.

*Rāja-vidyā* is *brahma-vidyā* and it is *rāja-guhya*, the greatest secret. There are many secrets but this is the king, *rājā*, of all secrets, because even after you are told it remains a secret. And once you understand, it is the most precious.

**ABABABAB**



## CHAPTER 10

### THE GLORIES OF BHAGAVĒN

The *Bhagavadgītā* is both *brahma-vidyā* and *yoga-śāstra*. As *brahma-vidyā* it can be reduced to one sentence, *tat tvam asi*—you are that. In this, one has to understand, what this ‘you’ is, and what ‘that’ is. To understand any sentence, you must understand the meaning of each word.

The meaning of the word *tat* is *Īśvara*, the cause of all. ‘Who’ is this *Īśvara*? *Tvam-pada* stands for *jīva*. Who is this *jīva*? Inquiry into both must be done.

We saw that the first six chapters of the *Gītā* deal mainly with the meaning of the word ‘*tvam*—you.’ The first chapter depicted *Arjuna*’s sorrow, which is the lot of any *jīva*. Then, discovering in *Kṛṣṇa* a teacher, he declared himself *Kṛṣṇa*’s student and sought refuge in *Kṛṣṇa*. In the second chapter Lord *Kṛṣṇa* teaches him what the *ātma-svarūpa* is. The next chapter, *karma-yoga* is also about the *jīva*. The fourth chapter teaches that *ātmā* is *akartā*, which is again teaching the nature of the inner self, *pratyagātmā*. Then the fifth chapter deals with the *jīva*’s renunciation and the sixth chapter is committed to contemplation with reference to *pratyagātmā*, the contemplator.

From the seventh chapter onwards there is a complete change in the presentation of the subject matter. *Īśvara*, the truth of *Īśvara*, the glory of *Īśvara*, is the central topic in these chapters, i.e., the next six chapters.

The tenth chapter of the *Gītā*, called *vibhūti-yoga*, presents the glories of *Īśvara*. Even though he is all pervasive and is everything, still, the glory of *Bhagavān* is visible wherever there is a ray of glory.

In India, in ancient times, any good place was dedicated to *Bhagavān*. A confluence, the coming together of two rivers, is always a wonderful sight. There, you will find a temple. Any mountaintop, from which there is a scenic view, will have a temple. On *Rāmeśvaram*, the island is a temple. *Kanyākumārī* is an excellent place where you can see the merging of the three bodies of water, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean, each with its own colour. It is a great sight. There you find only a temple, no palace or secular monument.

In the seven hills of *Tirupati*, there is the famous *Bālāji* temple. In the Himalayas, in *Badrinath*, there is a temple. The big snowy peak of *Kailāśa* is itself worshipped as Lord *Śiva*. Thus any unusually good spot, in any spot where the glory of nature is very

evident, there is a temple. Even if you build a temple on a very common site, with its exquisite sculptures and imposing towers, it becomes a beautiful place. Thus any place of glory or beauty was always given to the Lord. Why? Because, it is his beauty.

*Śaṅkara* introduces this chapter called *vibhūti-yoga* saying, in whichever situation, in whichever object, there is some glory, *Bhagavān* is to be contemplated upon and appreciated.

The truth of *Bhagavān* is not easily understood and therefore, must be told again and again. Repetition is valid as long as something has to be understood. If it is to be believed, repetition is meaningless. Thus *Śaṅkara* validates the repetition. It is not simple repetition though. There is an elaboration, which also reveals the style of teaching. What you say in passing in one place, you expand upon in another. Previously the *vibhūtis*, glories, of *Īśvara* were pointed out in passing and now they are taken up as the main topic. This is how the whole teaching is. In order to cover one topic, you may have to touch on another topic briefly and reserve it for later discussion.

Here, the topic of the glory of *Bhagavān* is discussed. There is nothing that is not *Bhagavān*—that is what is going to be told here. In whatever situation, if there is some glory, there the glory of *Bhagavān* is to be recognised. Something beautiful is not taken merely as a beautiful thing. That beauty is *Bhagavān*—he is the source of all fame and beauty. For a *bhakta*, an intelligent person who discerns this, *Bhagavān* alone is famous. Nobody else. Fame, wherever it is, is *bhagavad-vibhūti* alone. To make this clear is this chapter, which is rightly called, *vibhūti-yoga*.

## WHY BHAGAVĀN REPEATS WHAT HE HAS SAID

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* himself explains why he is going to repeat this now. *Bhagavān* says,

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

भूय एव महाबाहो शृणु मे परमं वचः ।

यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ॥१॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ*

*yatte 'haṃ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā*

Verse 1

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — the Lord; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

महाबाहो *mahābāho* — O! Mighty armed *Arjuna*; भूयः एव *bhūyaḥ eva* — indeed again;

शृणु *śṛṇu* — listen; मे परमम् वचः *me paramam vacaḥ* — to My words, which reveal the

limitless; यत् *yat* — which; ते प्रीयमाणाय *te prīyamāṇāya* — to you who is pleased (by

My words); हितकाम्यया *hitakāmyayā* — for your good; अहम् वक्ष्यामि *aham vakṣyāmi*

—(which) I will tell

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

Indeed, O! Mighty armed *Arjuna*, for your benefit, listen again to My words, which reveal the limitless, which I will tell you, who is pleased (by My words).

*Mahābāhu* means literally the one who has two long arms; but here it means a man of might, of glory. *Bhagavān* is going to talk about his glories and by addressing *Arjuna* as *mahābāho*, he is trying to say, ‘The glory that you have belongs to Me.’ That is what he wants to prove. Later he is even going to say, ‘Among the archers I am *Arjuna*.’ Therefore, the glory you have, *Arjuna*, is My glory. So, mighty-armed *Arjuna*, please listen. Why? Because you alone are qualified to listen to this.

*Bhūyaḥ eva śṛṇu me vacaḥ*—indeed, again listen to My words. The word ‘again’ stands for repetition of the topic. The topic was the truth of *Bhagavān*, *bhagavat-tattva*, and also his glories, which were mentioned, in the seventh and ninth chapters. There is an adjective *paramam* that has been added to *vacaḥ*—words. How can we translate this word *parama*? As supreme? Words are not supreme. *Śaṅkara* says that they are exalted words, *prakṛṣṭa*, because they are meant to reveal the *vastu* that is limitless. The words become *parama* because they reveal the *paramam vastu*, *param brahma*.

*Yat te ahaṃ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā*, which I will tell you, who are pleased—pleased with My words. From his looks and eagerness, etc., it is clear that *Arjuna* is pleased. What he has been waiting for seems to be happening and therefore, *Arjuna* seems mightily pleased with what is going on right now.

A few hours ago he was not pleased at all. In the first chapter he was definitely not pleased. The weeping was over the moment he said, ‘I am your *śiṣya*.’ From then on the problem had been transferred to *Kṛṣṇa* and with that *Arjuna* had a relief. Afterwards, chapter after chapter, he has been learning. Now *Arjuna* seems to be highly pleased. Whether he was pleased or not, it is very clear, *Kṛṣṇa* was pleased with *Arjuna*, because he says *prīyamāṇāya*. From your expression, I see you as one who is pleased. *Kṛṣṇa* presents himself as *Īśvara*, who is *sarvajña* and therefore, he knows *Arjuna* is highly pleased now. For your sake who is pleased with My words, *vakṣyāmi*, I am telling this.

*Śaṅkara* gives an example here, and says that *Arjuna* is like a person who is highly pleased by drinking *amṛta*, nectar. *Amṛta* is considered to be the sweetest thing, drinking, which one becomes immortal physically. It is only a relative immortality; but even then there was a war for this *amṛta* between the *devas* and the *asuras*. It is so sweet that it is the last word in taste. There is nothing that is more desirable—at once pleasing and immortalising. Generally anything that is good for your health has to be taken while you block your nose. Healthy and tasty do not go together at all. Only *amṛta* is both.

*Amṛta* is mentioned in the *purāṇas* and for *Śaṅkara* and people like him, who have been dealing with the *purāṇas*; it is a common word. Therefore, he can use it as an example though it is not exactly an example because it is not directly known to anybody. It is only known indirectly but on that basis *Śaṅkara* uses it as an illustration. He is qualified to do that because he is also dealing with all these *purāṇas* while writing his various commentaries. For him it is a household word. But we cannot use *amṛta* as an illustration. We can only understand what *Śaṅkara* means here when he says explaining the words of the Lord, ‘In the way that a person is so pleased by taking nectar, similarly you seem to simply lap up all that I have been saying. Therefore, I am going to tell you, who are pleased—*prīyamāṇāya te ahaṃ vaksyāmi.*’

Why? *Hita*—with a desire to bring good to you. *Hita* is *mokṣa*. That any glory, *vibhūti*, is *Bhagavān* and the truth of *Bhagavān*, *bhagavat-tattva*, is to be understood in order to understand *tat tvam asi*. Understanding this sentence is the greatest *hita*, *śreyas*. *Śreyas*, the greatest good you can do for a person, is to make him recognise that he is *Īśvara*. What better good can you do? Nothing is greater than recognising that you are *Īśvara*.

With a desire to do good to you I will tell you because I am interested in your welfare, *Arjuna*. The ultimate thing you can know is the truth of *Bhagavān*, *bhagavat-tattva*. Even before that, recognising *bhagavad-vibhūti* also is beneficial, *hita*, to you.

## HOW RECOGNIZING ĪŚVARA'S GLORIES BENEFITS YOU

If you recognise all glories as *Īśvara's* glories, your pride, your *ahaṅkāra* diminishes. That paves the way for understanding what *Īśvara* is. What stands between you and *Īśvara*, after all, is your ego. That ego has to be dilated and then dismissed by knowledge. This dilation of the ego is not easy because knowledge of *śāstra* generally inflates the ego. How do you deflate it?

My ego gets deflated when I understand that anything that makes me feel glorious belongs to *Bhagavān*. If I say my precious wealth is something that I have gathered with great effort, I cannot say it belongs to somebody else. It is my effort. That is how we become possessive. This sense of ownership gives us some kind of self-esteem. But the very fact that I require self esteem shows that I do not have much of it. So, how am I going to part with my hard-earned accomplishments and say that the glories belong to *Bhagavān*?

You do not have to part with anything. Suppose a person is capable of thinking properly. That clarity in thinking is a glory. It is not an ordinary accomplishment; it is the highest achievement you can have as a human being. There is nothing more beautiful than clarity in thinking. If there is such a capacity enjoyed by a given person, then there

cannot be pride about it. There can only be appreciation of *Īśvara*. That very clarity of thinking should help him recognise that all this belongs to *Īśvara*. There is no personal accomplishment at all. Everything is *Īśvara* and whatever glory I have is *Īśvara's* glory. That recognition does you a lot of good, *hita*, even though it is relative.

So, this *vibhūti-yoga* benefits you in a two fold way. It reveals the nature of *Bhagavān*, *bhagavat-tattva*, whereby you recognise the full meaning of the sentence *ahaṃ brahma asmi*, I am the Lord. That is the ultimate *hita*, called *śreyas*. But in order to get *śreyas*, there is a relative *hita* necessary. If you recognise *Īśvara's* glory, it is altogether different. Whenever you see some one who is extraordinarily gifted, instead of feeling jealous you can say, 'As I have some glories, he also has some. There in him *Īśvara's* glory is expressed better.' When you can look at it this way, your jealousy your pride, your inferiority, etc., will go away. You only recognise the glory of *Īśvara* wherever you see something beautiful.

Therefore, this is a very important chapter for a seeker. To assimilate what *Bhagavān* is saying here is essential for maturity.

## WHO IS QUALIFIED TO TELL BHAGAVĒN'S GLORIES?

*Bhagavān* says, 'Only with a desire to bring good to you, am I telling this. So, please listen.' Why does *Bhagavān* have to say this here? Perhaps we can get it from somewhere else. Why should he spend his time repeating, 'The glory of the Himalayas is Me, the glory of Everest is Me, the glory of *Gaṅgā* is Me.' Some pundit can do this. No. If a pundit has to tell this and make it meaningful, he requires validity. That validity can only come from *Bhagavān*. Therefore, only *Bhagavān* can speak authoritatively of his glories.

This He makes clear in the next verse. *Bhagavān* says:

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।

अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥२॥

*na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ prabhavam na maharṣayah*  
*ahamādirhi devānāṃ maharṣīṇāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ*

Verse 2

सुरगणाः *suragaṇāḥ* — the whole host of gods; मे प्रभवम् *me prabhavam*<sup>1</sup> — My glory/coming into being as this world; न विदुः *na viduḥ* — do not know; न महर्षयः *na maharṣayah* — nor do the sages; अहम् आदिः हि *aham ādiḥ hi* — because I am the cause; देवानाम् महर्षीणाम् च सर्वशः *devānām maharṣīṇām ca sarvaśaḥ* — of all the gods and sages

<sup>1</sup> The word *prabhava* can mean both 'glory' and coming into being.

The whole host of gods do not know My glory/coming into being as this world, nor do the sages because I am the cause of all the gods and sages.

*Me prabhavam* can be taken as My glories, My *śaktis* or My coming into being in the form of this world.

*Na viduḥ*—they do not totally know. They all know, but not totally. Who? We are not talking about local people here.

*Suragaṇāḥ*—the whole host of gods—*suras* are the *devas* like *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, etc. Even they do not know Me totally. They may know themselves as *paramātmā*, but still they do not know all the glories of *Īśvara*. Even Brahmaji can only create, he cannot sustain. And *Viṣṇu* can only sustain, he cannot create. That is not his job. *Śiva* as *Rudra* can only destroy, not create or sustain. Each one has only one job. Therefore, all My glories, even Brahmaji etc., do not know.

Not only that, even the great sages, *maharṣis*, do not know. A *maharṣi* is a great sage—*mahān ca asau ṛṣiḥ*, he is great and he is also a sage. *Maharṣis* are the ones who know, from whom we get all our knowledge. Even they do not know *Īśvara's* glories totally. In general they know everything. As *jñānīs* they know the truth of everything as '*ahaṃ satyaṃ brahma*, and everything else is *mithyā*. So, everything, known and unknown, is *Brahman* alone.' That knowledge is omniscience, *sarvajñatva*. But it is different from the omniscience of *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* has that omniscience plus all the details of the *mithyā*. These details even the *maharṣis* do not know.

## WHY DO THE MAHARĀIS AND DEVATĒS NOT KNOW?

*Aham adīḥ hi devānāṃ maharṣiṇāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ*—because I am the cause of all the gods and sages. It is something like the son being told by the father how wonderful his marriage was: It went on for four days. On the first day Bhanumati danced, the second day Ariyakkudi Ramanujam sang, the third day Maharajapuram Santhanam sang, and on the fourth day Semmangudi came. Hundreds of people came and there was a great canopy. On being told all this, the son asked, 'Why didn't you take me?' How can the son ever know all about the marriage directly even though the father describes it so thoroughly? He can only have indirect knowledge born of a description in words, words that have their own limitations experienced both by the speaker and the listener. Words are not always understood as they are meant. The limitations of language on the part of the listener and the speaker edit, abridge, and distort the very experience that is being described. This is the problem in indirect knowledge. Because he was not there at that time, the son cannot have the same knowledge as the father. Similarly, *Kṛṣṇa* says, all these *devas* do not know My glories totally because I am the cause of all these *devas*, and all these *maharṣis*.

The creation is presented in the *śruti*, as coming about in various ways. Straight away, *yugapat*, everything comes simultaneously from *Bhagavān*. Or it comes in this order: First *ākāśa*, then *vāyu*, then *agni*... And afterwards the gross elements, *sthūla-bhūtas*. An order is pointed out here. Or first comes *hiranyagarbha* and afterwards creates everything. There are many modes of creation mentioned in the *śāstra*. But any way you take it, I am the cause, *aham ādiḥ*. In that there is no option at all. Whichever way you look at it, I am at the beginning. Since I am the *ādi*, the cause of both the *devas* and *maharṣis*, what can they know about Me? Everything they know was taught by Me and all that I know they cannot know.

Here *Bhagavān* is pointing out that he is the most qualified to talk about his own glory, *vibhūti*.

## WHY ONLY BHAGAVĀN ALONE IS QUALIFIED TO TELL HIS GLORIES

The *maharṣis* are all human beings. Even though they are endowed with great powers, they are only mortals, *jīvas*. So, are the *devas*. That is why all of them cannot know My glory. *Prabhava* usually means creation but in keeping with the subject matter of the present chapter, *Śaṅkara* explains that it refers to the total *śakti* or glory of *Bhagavān*. They do not know My glories totally because they all have limited knowledge. They may be *devas* who know a lot more than the mortals here, and the *ṛṣis* definitely know a lot more than any other mortal. But from the standpoint of omniscience, *sarvajñatva*, all of them are of limited knowledge, *kiñcijjñas*. That is why they cannot know My glories totally, much less can they talk about them.

Only I am qualified to talk about them. This is called praise, *praśaṃsā* of the subject matter. What I am going to tell you, only I am qualified to talk of. Thus Lord *Kṛṣṇa* introduces himself as *Īśvara* here. Whether *Kṛṣṇa* presents himself as *īśvara-avatāra* or *Vyāsa* presents him as *Īśvara*, it does not really matter to us. *Kṛṣṇa* is *Īśvara*. So, the dialogue here is between *Īśvara* and *jīva*, *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*.

## WHO IS THE ONE WHO SAYS HE IS OMNISCIENT?

When this statement is made by *Kṛṣṇa*, we look upon him as *Īśvara*. There is no problem in that. But a question arises here. By whom is this statement, 'I am *sarvajña*, the one who knows everything and therefore, I am going to tell you everything,' made? Is it by the *sarvajña-sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*? Or is it by the knower, the *pramātā*?

The one who knows is called *pramātā*. When you read this and understand you become the *pramātā* and what is understood becomes the *prameya*. The understanding itself is called *pramā* and the means of understanding the *pramāṇa*. So, there is a doubt

here as to whether the *sarvajña* is *pramātā* or *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Because in order to be a *sarvajña*, one must necessarily have something more viz., an *upādhi* apart from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, which is knowledge as such, pure consciousness. In that way every *ātmā* is *sarvajña*. But that is not the *sarvajñatva* that is being talked about here. Here when he says he knows ‘everything,’ that requires the knowledge of all the details of *mithyā*. For that, something else, an *upādhi*, is required. Without that there is no knowledge possible.

The one who knows is called *pramātā*. When you read this and understand you become the *pramātā*, and what is understood becomes the *prameya*. The understanding itself is called *pramā* and the means of understanding the *pramāṇa*. Now is this *pramātā* the *sarvajña* or is the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* the *sarvajña*?

*Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* being pure consciousness, is *sarvajña* all right. But that is not the *sarvajñatva* being discussed now. Here when *Kṛṣṇa* says that he knows everything, and is a *sarvajña*, it i.e. different. This *sarvajñatva* requires something else other than the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*—i.e., an *upādhi*. Only then is it possible to know all the details of the *mithyā-jagat*. Without this *upādhi* there is no knowledge possible.

And again, he not only said, ‘I know,’ but also said, ‘I am going to tell you in detail.’ Having the status of being a speaker and also an all-knowing person is not possible for *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, which does not undergo any change. Omniscience with the knowledge of all the details and being a speaker are not applicable at all to pure *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Therefore, the one who says this, is not just *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

Then who is it that knows and speaks? Only the *pramātā*, the knower can know and therefore, can talk. But if you take Lord *Kṛṣṇa* as a *pramātā*, a knower, then you would be attributing *jīvatva* to him. This is because generally, every knower is a *jīva*. If *Kṛṣṇa* is also a *jīva*, he cannot be omniscient. If he is not omniscient, he would not be qualified to talk about *Īśvara*’s glory. Therefore, the *pramātā*, as we know, cannot be the *sarvajña*.

If neither the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* nor the *pramātā* can be the *sarvajña*, then who is the *sarvajña*? There are two forms for any *jīva* whether it is a *deva*, a human being, or a worm. One is called the *vāstava-rūpa*—what is essentially true. It is not negatable at all. The other is called the *ādhyāsika-rūpa*—a status or role that is assumed, that is superimposed upon the *ātmā*. Like an actor who has an essential personality and, at the same time, a role that he plays. Similarly, every *jīva* has a superimposed form and an essential one. This is also true for *Īśvara*.

Between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, there is no distinction at all in reality, that is, there is no *vāstavika* difference. Both are essentially *sat-cit-ānanda*. Even the *svarūpa* of a worm is *sat-cit-ānanda*. The *vāstava-rūpa* of any creature—whether a *deva*, a



*gandharva* or a *yakṣa*, a human being or a crow—is one and the same *sat-cit-ānanda*. There is no difference whatsoever. When the Lord says *aham* and when the *jīva* says *aham*, that *aham* is one and the same *sat-cit-ānanda*.

Whereas the other form, called *ādhyāsika-rūpa*, has the status of being a knower, doer, etc. It is with reference to this *ādhyāsika-rūpa* that there is a seeming difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*. When you bring in the knower, you bring in your *buddhi*, your intellect, the *upādhi* that makes *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, to seemingly gain the status of being a *pramātā*.

A *jīva*, to be a knower, must identify with the *buddhi*. Thus the *buddhi* determines the incidental status, *ādhyāsika-rūpa*, which is superimposed upon the *ātmā* and called a knower. But it is not real. So, in the status of being a knower, there is a seeming difference between *Īśvara* and the *jīva*. Even between two *jīvas*, there is a seeming difference. The *ātmā* of one person and another are ‘both’ *sat-cit-ānanda*. But in the *buddhi* there is definitely a difference. So, in the status of being a knower, there is a difference between any two *jīvas*. When a *jīva* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, how does he become a knower? It is only due to the *upādhi*. From the empirical standpoint, he is seer, hearer, thinker, doer etc. Similarly, with reference to the empirical creation, *vyāvahārika-sṛṣṭi*, *Īśvara* is also a *pramātā*. Just like a *jīva*, due to the *upādhi* alone, he is a *pramātā*.

That is why there is gradation of knowledge. Among individuals, one has knowledge of Law, another knows Medicine. That is why a lawyer has to go to a doctor and a doctor to a lawyer. They are both of limited knowledge. What the lawyer knows the doctor does not know, and what the doctor knows, the lawyer does not know.

Now, what about *Īśvara*? You cannot say what the *jīva* knows, *Īśvara* does not know. The situation is somewhat like that of a teacher and student. The teacher knows what the student knows, but all that the teacher knows, the student does not. While the *jīva* is limited in knowledge, *kiñcijjñā*, *Īśvara* is *sarvajñā*, all-knowing. Only in that sense can we say that there is gradation of knowledge.

## HOW UPĒDHI ACCOUNTS FOR GRADATION IN KNOWLEDGE

A *jīva* is a *kiñcijjñā* because he has *avidyā-upādhi*, which seemingly limits the *ātmā*. Whereas *Īśvara* has an *upādhi*, called *māyā*, which does not limit. On the other hand, it makes *ātmā* omniscient and the cause of the world.

Then, in the expressed form, the *jīva* has a given *buddhi* with which he can know a few things. But *Īśvara*, through *māyā-upādhi*, is *sarvajñā*. The concealing power, *āvaraṇa-śakti*, of *māyā* affects the *jīva*. Therefore, he cannot know everything. Whereas for *Īśvara*, that *āvaraṇa* does not exist. There is only the capacity to create. Thus, the very *māyā*, which keeps the *jīva* under its spell becomes a glory for *Īśvara*.

That is the first *vibhūti*. *Māyā* itself becomes the *vibhūti* for *Parameśvara*, who is not different from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*.

The *buddhi* is limited because it has a location. It operates in a *sthūla-upādhi* depending upon brain cells and so on. Whereas *māyā* is not limited at all because it is the cause of everything.

How do you know this? It is established by the *śāstra*. Therefore, the one who is in the form of *Kṛṣṇa* is conditioned by *māyā-upādhi*. By his own words in the fourth chapter, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* presents himself as *Īśvara*, or *Vyāsa* presents him as *Īśvara*.

This being so, the knower, the *pramātā*, who is conditioned by the physical body recognised as *Kṛṣṇa*, has *māyā* as his *upādhi*. Keeping the *māyā* under control, a particular form is born. Since he is an *avatāra*, he is not forced into this birth by the strength of his own *karma*. The assumption of a body is at the will of *Īśvara*. It is voluntary. And for him there is omniscience but the gods like *Indra* are limited in knowledge. Therefore, the *devas* he talked about in the previous verse, do not know about his glory. They are all *jīvas* enjoying their own limited *buddhis*; so, their knowledge will only be limited.

From the standpoint of *upādhi*, the *jīva* is a *kiñcijjñā*, and *Īśvara* is *sarvajñā*. *Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* obtaining in a given *upādhi* is called a knower, *pramātā*. *Ātmā* alone is called the *pramātā*, and not the *upādhi*, i.e., not the *buddhi*. The same *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* with the *māyā-upādhi* becomes *Īśvara*, *pramātā* who is *sarvajñā*. Viewed from the standpoint of the *upādhi*, the identity between *jīva* and *Īśvara* is not possible. But the *pramātā* is not real; it is *ādhyāsika*, *mithyā*. Although there seems to be a difference, essentially there is no difference. In reality the *jīva* is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, pure consciousness, that is one, non-dual, and so is *Īśvara*. This identity is revealed by the *mahāvākya*, *tat tvam asi*.

This relationship between *Īśvara* and the *jīva* is like that of a wave and the ocean. If the wave is told that it is in reality the ocean, it will ask, 'How can I be the ocean? The ocean was there before I was born.' Then the wave realises the implied meaning of 'you' is water and the immediate meaning is wave. Wave and ocean are purely *nāma-rūpa-upādhi*. There is no wave or ocean but merely a certain form for which a name is given. On analysis one finds both ocean and wave are water. That alone counts. There is no real difference. If you count names and forms, in the ocean there are many waves, breakers, etc. Now count water and see if there is any additional wave or ocean; all that is there is water. That is the knowledge of non-duality.

Only in the body of *Kṛṣṇa* is the consciousness conditioned by *māyā*. In our physical bodies, it is the same consciousness conditioned by ignorance, *buddhi*, etc. How do you distinguish this? *Kṛṣṇa* has a body and so does *Arjuna*. *Arjuna's* *ātmā* is *caitanya* and *Kṛṣṇa's* *ātmā* is also *caitanya*. His *caitanya* is conditioned by his body,

mind and senses and my *caitanya* is conditioned by my body, mind and senses. How can you say my *caitanya* is conditioned by ignorance and his is conditioned by *māyā*? Only from the standpoint of limited knowledge, *kiñcijjñatva*, and omniscience, *sarvajñatva*. He knows ‘everything’ and I do not. There is nothing unknown to him whereas everything is unknown to me except the little I know. And, *Kṛṣṇa* is talking here about things that a man of limited knowledge cannot talk about at all.

As long as there is *vyavahāra*, empirical life, *jīva* is *jīva* and *Īśvara* is *Īśvara*. As *pramātās*, knowers, there is no identity between *jīvas*, including the *devas* like *Indra* and *Varuṇa*. But from the standpoint of *paramātmā*, there is no difference whatsoever between them as well as between *jīva* and *Īśvara*.

Even though *Īśvara* is a *pramātā*, the knower, he has omniscience, *sarvajñatva*. Therefore, he can say, ‘Even the *ṛṣis* and the *devas* do not know what I am going to tell you.’ Being omniscient, it is proper for *Kṛṣṇa* to say so. Even the *devas* and the *maharṣis* do not know Me because I am the cause of every one of them and am *sarvajña* while everyone else is *alpajña*.

## BHAGAVĀN AS CAUSE

Now *Bhagavān* describes himself as the one without birth and as the cause of everything and says that one who knows him in this way gains *mokṣa*.

यो मामजमनादिं च वेत्ति लोकमहेश्वरम् ।

असम्मूढः स मर्त्येषु सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥३॥

*yo māmajamanādiṃ ca veti lokamaheśvaram*

*asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate*

Verse 3

यः *yaḥ* — the one who; माम् *mām* — Me; अजम् *ajam* — who is unborn (not an effect); अनादिम् च *anādim ca* — and beginningless (not a cause); लोक-महेश्वरम् *loka-maheśvaram* — who is the limitless Lord of the people/world; वेत्ति *veti* — knows; सः मर्त्येषु *saḥ martyeṣu* — he among the mortals; असम्मूढः *asammūḍhaḥ* — being no longer deluded; सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते *sarpapāpaiḥ pramucyate* — is released from all *punya* and *pāpa*

He who knows Me as the one who is unborn (not an effect) and beginningless (not a cause), the limitless Lord of the people/world, he among the mortals, being no longer deluded, is released from all *punya* and *pāpa*.

Previously *Bhagavān* said ‘I am the cause for all the *devas* and the *maharṣis*.’ For the *ātmā* of a *deva* or a *maharṣi*, he is not the cause because *ātmā* is he. It is for the

*upādhi*, because of which you call this *jīva* a *maharṣi* or this one a *deva*, a human being or an animal. For all the *upādhis* meaning body, mind and sense complexes, *Īśvara* is the cause, *ādi*. Creation is only for the *upādhi*.

Because I am the cause of everything, there is no cause for Me. Therefore, *aham ajaḥ*, I am unborn. Why? Because, I have no cause, *anādi*. Otherwise *aja* and *anādi* both have same meaning. *Anādi* means the one who has no beginning and is therefore, not born. So, why these two words? I am not born, *aja*, because I have no beginning, *anādi*, meaning no cause. Therefore, the cause for not being born, *ajatva* is *anāditva*, having no cause.

Another way of looking at this is that *aja*, the one who is not born, i.e., one who is not an effect. And *anādi* means the one who has no cause, i.e., he himself is the cause of everything. As he is the cause of everything, even of *devas* and *maharṣis*, there is none other to be the cause of *Īśvara*. And at the same time he is not born, i.e., not an effect.

*Śaṅkara* takes it this way because *Bhagavān* has been saying that he is the cause of everything. In this context it is proper to take it this way. *Loka-maheśvara*, the one who is the Lord of all people and who is limitless. *Śaṅkara* says that he is the one who is not subject to birth, who is not the waker, or dreamer, or deep sleeper. He is neither the physical world nor the subtle or causal world. He is the one who is the *adhiṣṭhāna*, the basis of all three and the truth of all three, called *turiya*. And he is free from ignorance and its product; he is the Lord, the cause of everything.

## RESULT OF KNOWING BHAGAVĒN IN THIS WAY

The one who recognises this is an *asammūḍha*, free from delusion. Someone who is deluded takes *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, the cause of everything, as a product. What is free from form is taken as something with a form. What is timeless is taken as subject to time. In other words, *ātmā* is taken as *anātmā*. When you say I am tall etc., the tall body is taken as *ātmā*. Upon *ātmā* you superimpose the body etc., and upon the body you superimpose *ātmā*. The result is a typical *samsārī*. That person is called *sammūḍha*. *Asammūḍha* means the one who is free from this delusion.

*Saḥ martyeṣu asammūḍhaḥ*—he is not deluded even though he is one among the mortals. Even though he is one among the mortals, you cannot take him to be a mortal anymore. Such a person is released, *pramucyate*. He is liberated. He gains *mokṣa*.

And *sarvapāpaiḥ*—in terms of all *pāpas*, he is released. There are two types of *pāpa*; one is deliberate, well thought out. The other is a wrong done because of indifference or carelessness. You are supposed to be careful in not hurting etc. If you are not, that carelessness produces *pāpa*. There was a person who was assigned to bring banana leaves for a wedding feast. He had to go some ten miles to get them but that was his job. When the marriage is over, it is very important that all the guests eat and go.

Everybody is ready to eat and there are no banana leaves. This person had not brought the banana leaves. When the bride's father asked him what happened to them, he said, 'Oh, that is my mistake. I accept my mistake.' Accepting the mistake cannot solve the problem. When something is to be done, it is to be done. There is no use not doing it and then owning up the mistake. It is an omission due to carelessness. You are supposed to be alert and careful. Even if you unconsciously step on an insect while walking, this is non-deliberate *papa*. All these *papas* are neutralised by doing your *nitya-karma*, daily prayers.

Because *Bhagavān* has said *sarva*, all *pāpa*, it includes *puṇya* also. *Puṇya* is also a bondage. It is a golden shackle, binding him to experience some better situation. How is he liberated from all *pāpas*? Because he is no longer a *kartā*. He recognises the *ātmā*, which was always *akartā*, a non-doer, but taken as the doer. Because of that, he subjected himself to the various *puṇya-pāpa-karmas*.

Now, recognising the fact that *ātmā* is *akartā*, he is released from *puṇya* and *pāpa*. This is *mokṣa*. The *prārabdha-karma* is there for the time being; but he will be released from that also in time.

## DETAILS OF BHAGAVĒN AS CAUSE, HIS GLORIES

Further, *Bhagavān* says, 'I am the Lord of all beings because...'

बुद्धिर्ज्ञानमसम्मोहः क्षमा सत्यं दमः शमः ।

सुखं दुःखं भवोऽभावो भयं चाभयमेव च ॥४॥

*buddhirjñānamasammohaḥ kṣamā satyaṃ damaḥ śamaḥ*  
*sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ bhavo'bhāvo bhayaṃ cābhayameva ca*

Verse 4

अहिंसा समता तुष्टिस्तपो दानं यशोऽयशः ।

भवन्ति भावा भूतानां मत्त एव पृथग्विधाः ॥५॥

*ahiṃsā samatā tuṣṭistapo dānaṃ yaśo'yaśaḥ*

*bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṃ matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ*

Verse 5

बुद्धिः *buddhiḥ* — the capacity to understand; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — knowledge; असम्मोहः *asammohaḥ* — freedom from delusion; क्षमा *kṣamā* — accommodation/composure; सत्यम् *satyam* — truthfulness; दमः *damaḥ* — restraint in behaviour; शमः *śamaḥ* — mastery over the ways of thinking; सुखम् *sukham* — pleasure; दुःखम् *duḥkham* — pain; भवः *bhavaḥ* — creation; अभावः *abhavaḥ* — destruction; भयम् *bhayam* — fear; च अभयम् *ca abhayam* — and fearlessness; एव च *eva ca* — and further; अहिंसा *ahiṃsā* — harmlessness; समता *samatā* — equanimity; तुष्टिः *tuṣṭiḥ* — satisfaction; तपः *tapah* — religious discipline; दानम् *dānam* — charity; यशः *yaśaḥ* — fame; अयशः *ayaśaḥ* — ill

fame; पृथग्विधाः *prthag-vidhāḥ* — these many different; भावाः *bhāvāḥ* — things; भूतानाम् *bhūtānām* — of living beings; मत्तः एव भवन्ति *mattaḥ eva bhavanti* — are all from Me alone

The capacity to understand, knowledge, freedom from delusion, accommodation/composure, truthfulness, restraint in behaviour, mastery over the ways of thinking, pleasure, creation, destruction, fear, and fearlessness, and further, harmlessness, equanimity, satisfaction, religious discipline, charity, fame, ill-fame—these many different things of living beings—are all from Me alone.

Here *Bhagavān* says, *mattaḥ eva*, all these are only from Me. What are they? He tells them one by one, so that nothing is left out. This is why the chapter is called *vibhūti-yoga*. Any glory that you see, any fame in the creation belongs to Me. If there is any brilliance or accomplishment in a given person, that belongs to Me. If anything is strikingly beautiful, that beauty belongs to Me. In the *Purāṇas* we learn that certain rivers are more sacred than others. That sanctity is only because of Me. Therefore, whenever you worship or respect something extraordinary, that respect and worship go only to Me because everything is born of Me.

## **BHAGAVĀN AS THE CAUSE OF THE QUALITIES OF LIVING BEINGS**

*Buddhi* and *jñāna* both have the same meaning; so, we have to make a distinction here. *Buddhi*, *Śaṅkara* says, is the capacity of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* to reveal subtle things, things not available for perception at all. When you say something is beautiful, that beauty is not available for mere sense perception. Yet it is something that you appreciate. Any kind of enjoyment or anything inferentially arrived at is also subtle, *sūkṣma*. Though not available for perception, still you appreciate its existence. The capacity to reveal such things belongs to the *buddhi*. The one who has that power is called *buddhimān*. He may be a scientist or a musician, but we call him *buddhimān*. He has the capacity to see things that are subtle in nature.

Then, its product is *jñāna*. Those who have *buddhi* gain knowledge of the meaning of the words like *ātmā* etc. That is called *jñāna*, knowledge. Because the object is there, knowledge of it is possible. That object is born of Me. And knowledge is born of Me because being *sarvajña*, all knowledge is with Me. Any time you come to know something, it has come from Me. Since omniscience is already there, you do not produce any knowledge, you only remove the ignorance with reference to a given object. Thus, knowledge is ‘born.’ You may think that you have produced a certain knowledge. *Bhagavān* says, ‘No, it has come from Me.’ The very faculty of knowing is from Me and the knowledge itself is born of Me. If you see this, your *ahaṅkāra* gets diminished.

*Asammoha* is freedom from delusion. Whenever an object appears in front of you, if it is known as it is, without any distortion, it means that you pursue the knowledge with discrimination. This is called *asammoha*. If you come to a hurried conclusion without discrimination, that is called *sammoha*. You see a rope and you jump thinking it is a snake. That would be called *sammoha*. *Asammoha* is deliberately, without hurrying, looking into things and understanding them as they should be understood. You keep an open mind and explore and understand; then there is *asammoha*.

You should know that the senses, the mind, etc., can deceive. They are capable of distortion and do not really present objects as they are. Our perception can be born of our own fear and anxiety etc. We can even project things that are not there at all. Therefore, proper understanding is very important. It will make you alert. That *asammoha* is also from Me, *Bhagavān* says.

*Kṣamā*— Suppose you are scolded by somebody or are subjected to verbal or physical abuse, you will not be affected by that if you have *kṣamā*. *Kṣamā* is a state of mind in which you do not internalise those things. If someone is angry, you have to deal with his anger. But if, in the process, you become angry, you are internalising the problem. Not internalising is *kṣamā*. If somebody is angry, you confine his anger to him. Try to understand why he is angry and do what has to be done. That is dealing with it. The mind that does not undergo any internalisation in situations, which are not very pleasant is said to have *kṣamā*.

*Satyam*—Here *Śaṅkara* gives a definition of *satya*.<sup>1</sup> Here he has taken the word *satya*, not as an ontological word talking about the reality of something, but as referring to the value of truthfulness in the spoken word. The spoken word should be true to something that is seen or heard or experienced by you. And in that manner, that is, exactly as it was seen or heard, it should be conveyed to another mind in order to make the other mind understand it exactly as you understood. Something was heard or seen or experienced by you. Therefore, you can talk about it. Not that you should go about talking to others about everything. That is not necessary. But when you want to, please say it honestly. As it was experienced directly through your own sense organs or as it was reported to you by somebody else or even experienced by you subjectively, in the same manner it is to be spoken of, for the purpose of making another person understand. That is called *satya*.

All these belong to an order, a moral order, uncreated by the individual. It is all *Bhagavān*'s creation. *Satya*, *dama*, *śama*, are all *Bhagavān*'s creation and when you have them, you are in harmony with the creation and with *Bhagavān*. So, what we speak

<sup>1</sup> सत्यम्—यथादृष्टस्य यथाश्रुतस्य च आत्मानुभवस्य परबुद्धि-संक्रान्तये तथैव उच्चार्यमाणा वाक् सत्यम् उच्यते।  
*satyam—yathādṛṣṭasya yathāśrutasya ca ātmānubhavasya parabuddhi-saṅkrāntaye*  
*tathaiva uccāryamāṇā vāk satyam ucyate.*

is what we know. *Satyaṃ vada*, be truthful. Then it should also be pleasing, *priyaṃ vada*. We make a prayer for this —*jīhvā me madhumattamā*—let there be honey on my tongue. May I speak in a way that pleases, that does not hurt anyone.

Only a teacher can say hurtful words, nobody else. He has to say the truth and when he does, it is not always very pleasant. But even he has to say it in a way that does not frighten the person away. Though he sometimes has to say something unpleasant he has to say it in a pleasant way. Therefore, be truthful, but do not be indifferent to your discretion. All these, *Bhagavān* says, emanate from him alone.

*Dama* is discipline with reference to external organs. It is control at the level of expression, a capacity not to be carried away by an action, which has already arisen in your mind. Having arisen, it can be carried out either perceptually or by an organ of action. The capacity to refrain from that is called *dama*.

*Śama*, a mastery over the very ways of thinking. We do not yield to certain patterns of thinking, which we know are harmful or useless. You get a certain space because of which you are able to have a mastery over the ways of thinking. That is called *śama*. When *śama* is there we do not need to practise *dama* because it follows automatically. There is no problem. But in the absence of *śama*, we do require *dama*.

*Sukha*—inner pleasure or happiness. Even *sukha*, *Bhagavān* says, is born of Me. It means there is nothing you can claim as your own. These are all desirable things and they are all from Me alone.

Even undesirable things are from Me, he is going to say later. But here he emphasises desirable things because undesirable things do not cause a problem in terms of inflating your ego. But *Bhagavān* makes it clear that whenever you get desirable things, which can cause pride, this pride is meaningless. This is what he wants to prove. Wherever there is something praiseworthy, the source of that is Me. Therefore, you cannot be proud about it. In one form or another the *ahaṅkāra* wants to survive. So, *Bhagavān* says that whatever you accomplish, the accomplishment belongs to Me. It is My glory, My fame. As an individual there is no fame unless you say, ‘I am the Lord.’ Then you are not an individual. You can say, ‘Everything is mine.’ But purely at the individual level one has to recognise all glories or accomplishments as *vibhūtis* of *Īśvara*.

*Duḥkha*—affliction, *Bhagavān* says, is also from Me. All pain is according to the law of *karma*, which is Myself. And, therefore, it also comes from Me.

*Bhāva*—creation. Any creation is from Me. Even though you may be the father of a child and may say the child is born of you, in fact, it is born of Me, *Bhagavān* says. I saw a cartoon of *Bhagavān* as a kid trying to make a chicken. He had all the genes in a test tube; then the tube broke and all the genes got scattered everywhere. In the cartoon they show him with a question mark! He is God and he is wondering what to do! It is



very revealing. Putting together all these genes to make a chicken is not an ordinary thing. So, if anybody thinks that I am the doer, it is meaningless. The hen can think she created the chick, the rooster can say he is the author. But *Bhagavān* says, 'I am the author.' Even a creation within the creation is from *Bhagavān*. That is the idea.

*Abhāva* has different meanings. The prefix 'a' can be used in the sense of total absence, *abhāvārtha*, or inadequacy, *alpārtha*, or it can be used in the sense of opposite, *viparyayārtha*. When you say there is no light, it can mean darkness. Or it can be inadequate light. Here *Śaṅkara* takes it as opposite, *viparyaya*. Why? Because *Bhagavān* has said creation, *bhāva*. If creation is from *Bhagavān*, its opposite, destruction takes place because of *Īśvara* alone. That there is the possibility of destruction is because of Me alone. Destruction means destroying something that is created. There is a law that governs life and because of that law, life continues. Because of the same law, life goes. The law is *Bhagavān* and that is why he says, 'Destruction is also from Me.'

'*Bhaya*, fear, is also from Me,' *Bhagavān* says. Because, the source of fear is the vastness of the creation, and its irrevocability. Certain things, namely death and time are irrevocable, you can never reverse them, and that inevitability causes fear. Death and time are also *Bhagavān*. So, all fear, *bhaya* is caused by him. You can avoid this *bhaya* if you hold on to *Īśvara* but if you think you are going to take care of things, *bhaya* comes. As long as an individual thinks that he is an individual, separate from everything else, there will be fear. *Īśvara* himself becomes *bhaya-kāraṇa*, the source of fear.

The *Taittirīyopaniṣad* says, air, *vāyu*, moves because of fear of *Īśvara*, and the sun rises because of this fear alone, meaning because of *Īśvara's* mandate. *Agni* and *Indra* both do their jobs; *Agni* keeps burning and *Indra* rules the heaven all because of *Īśvara's* mandate. Even Lord of Death is on the move because of *Īśvara*.<sup>1</sup>

*Abhaya*, fearlessness. The same *Īśvara*, if you do not look upon him as separate, is *abhaya-kāraṇa*, the very source of fearlessness. Both fear and fearlessness are from *Īśvara*. If *Īśvara* is not known to you, the whole world is separate from you because to know *Īśvara* is to know everything is *Īśvara*. If this is not known, the fear will start from cockroaches. If it is known, there is no fear at all.

*Ahiṃsā*, not hurting another living being deliberately. How do you know *ahiṃsā* is from *Īśvara*? Is it revealed in a scripture? Otherwise, how can you prove that anything came from *Īśvara*? *Ahiṃsā* does not need to be revealed because it is known to us. It is revealed already by common sense. The law is there. We all know. One does not want to get hurt nor does one see anyone else wanting to get hurt. Therefore, *ahiṃsā* exists as an

<sup>1</sup> भीषास्माद् वातः पवते भीषोदेति सूर्यः भीषास्माद् अग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चम इति ।

*bhīṣāsmād vātaḥ pavate bhīṣodeti sūryaḥ bhīṣāsmād agniścendraśca mṛtyurdhāvati pañcama iti*

integral part of the moral order. The moral order is a part of the creation. It does not need to be mandated by *Īśvara* in some scripture. If such a thing happens to be there, it is universal. If it is universal, it is not man-made; it is from *Īśvara*. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, *ahiṃsā* is from Me.

They are all from 'Me.' And they are also good for gaining 'Me,' because when you follow them, you are in harmony with the universal order that is 'Me.'

*Samatā*, sameness of mind whether you get something desirable or undesirable. *Tuṣṭi*, contentment. When you gain something you have a sense of satisfaction. (A gain does not necessarily leave you with a sense of satisfaction. It can be a source for greed. The more you get, the more you want.) That sense of having enough, *alam*, is called *tuṣṭi*, a contentment with what you have. If contentment is there, you become the master of any desire you have. A desire that comes out of contentment is a luxury. It becomes your endowment. Because you are capable of desiring, you desire. It is not that you desire in order to be content. You have a contentment out of which desires come, so that all activities become expressions of *Īśvara*. 'Contentment,' *Bhagavān* says 'is born of Me.' That particular frame of mind called contentment is because of the predominance of *sattva*. And *sattva* is *māyā*, which is of *Īśvara*. Therefore, contentment is from Me alone.

*Tapas*—refers to religious austerities. *Śaṅkara* says, that disciplining the body backed by control of the sense organs is called *tapas*. Suppose someone finds that things are not going according to his will because of his own limitations and finds himself carried away by various situations, then he decides he is going to take charge of his life by undergoing a religious discipline. That is what they call *tapas*. Any difficulty you willingly undergo for the purpose of some other accomplishment is called *tapas*. But it should be for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* or *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*, or any other spiritual or religious goal. Any pain you undergo for that purpose becomes *tapas*.

That also, *Bhagavān* says, is from Me. Why? Because, various disciplines bring about certain definite results. That law, which connects the means to the result is from Me. When you strike a matchstick, there is flame. *Īśvara* says that is from Me. Striking the match stick is *sādhana* and the flame that results is *sādhya*. This law is from Me; it is Me. *Tapas* is *sādhana*, the result is the *sādhya*. And there is an invariability in the result; if you do this *tapas* you get this result. That means there is a *sādhana-sādhya* connection. Therefore, it is from *Īśvara*.

*Dāna* means giving. *Śaṅkara* says, *dāna*, giving should be according to one's capacity. This is a very interesting qualification. One should not cross one's limit. You give, up to your limit but if you cross that, somebody else has to give you *dāna*. To give to one's limit, no further, is called *dāna*. This capacity to do *dāna* is definitely from *Īśvara*. It is not something everyone can do. Only those who can give, give in charity. Charity requires a certain culture, a certain maturity and humility. That disposition to

give is a particular *punya*. To give, one has to have that. Thus, people who can give, keep giving. There are some people who cannot give at all. There are still others who give and complain about it all the time. And then there are people who can give and forget about it. This is *dāna*. There is also another important factor involved in *dāna*—that is the recipient, *pātra*, the one to whom you are giving. You must make sure that the recipient is worthy. *Śaṅkara* says that it should be proper distribution, *samavibhāga*. Propriety in distribution implies selection of the recipient.

*Yāśas* means fame. *Śaṅkara* says fame born of *dharma*, *dharma-nimitta-kīrti* is the real fame. This is also from *Īśvara*. How can you say *Īśvara* gives fame? Suppose a person has fame. Why is he famous? Suppose it is because he did a lot of charity and people recognise him as a good and great man. Now the recognition is because of the good he has done. That means there is such a thing as good, which is recognised universally. That good is *Bhagavān*. That is law, the universal law. So, this person is good to all and therefore, he becomes famous. But suppose no one cares for what he did; they think it is all silly. Then he will not become famous; instead, he will be considered an idiot. And again, suppose one's charity is in the form of going to New York City and distributing cocaine. Every day the person buys one hundred thousand dollars worth of cocaine and distributes it. He may become popular among certain people. But that is not the *kīrti* meant here. That is why *Śaṅkara* says *dharma-nimitta-kīrti*. But notoriety is also from *Bhagavān*.

*Ayaśas* means ill fame. Here the particle 'ū' is used in the sense of opposite, *viparyaya*. It is not anonymity here, though that also is from *Bhagavān*. *Śaṅkara* says that it is fame born of improper action, *adharmā-nimitta-kīrti*. Like Al Capone;<sup>1</sup> he is also famous—for doing things, which are not proper. Why do people look upon him as one who did improper things? Because there is such a thing as propriety, which is created by *Īśvara*. And naturally, there is the other side of the coin, impropriety. Whoever follows that becomes notoriously popular.

All these various things that *Bhagavān* has mentioned so far are connected to living beings, *bhūtānāṃ bhāvaḥ*. And they are *prthagvidhāḥ*, many and varied. 'All these many and varied things connected to living beings,' *Bhagavān* says, 'are from Me alone.'

How is it that they are from *Bhagavān*? Does he arbitrarily distribute them? No. All these take place according to one's own *karma*, one's own efforts, *svakarma-anurūpeṇa*, says *Śaṅkara*. And that law of *karma* is from Me. So, in that form, everything is from Me alone. *Śaṅkara* introduces this one word to explain that in spite of the disparity we see in *karma*, there is no partiality on the part of *Bhagavān*. It is all *svakarma-anurūpeṇa*, according to one's own *karma*, which includes both

<sup>1</sup> Capone, Al (1899-1947), gangster of the Prohibition era.

present effort and past *karma*. Together they are the basis for all these various things, *bhāvas*. They do not come from us, but from *Īśvara*. Further...

## BHAGAVĒN AS THE CAUSE OF THE SAGES AND MANUS

महर्षयः सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा ।

मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमाः प्रजाः ॥६॥

*maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavastathā*  
*madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ*

Verse 6

महर्षयः सप्त *maharṣayaḥ sapta* — the seven *ṛṣis*; पूर्वे *pūrve* — of long ago; चत्वारः मनवः *catvāraḥ manavaḥ* — the four *manus*; तथा *tathā* — as well as; मद्भावाः *madbhāvāḥ* — those whose minds are resolved in Me; मानसाः जाताः *mānasāḥ jātāḥ* — born of (My) mind; येषाम् *yeṣām* — of these; इमाः प्रजाः *imāḥ prajāḥ* — are all these living beings; लोके *loke* — in the world

The seven *ṛṣis* of long ago as well as the four *manus* who have their minds resolved in Me, are born of My mind, and of these are all these living beings in the world.

*Pūrve* means people who lived in the remote past, long, long ago. At the beginning of the creation in a particular cycle, there were seven *maharṣis*—*Marīci*, *Aṅgiras*, *Atri*, *Pulastya*, *Vasiṣṭha*, *Pulaha* and *Kratu*.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *purāṇas* there are 14 *manus*<sup>2</sup> and we are now under the rule of the *Manu* called *Vaivasvata*.<sup>3</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Gītā*, *Bhagavān* says, this *yoga* I taught to *Vivasvān*. His son is called *Vaivasvata-Manu*. In each *manvantara*, *Manu*'s period, only four of them have the status of being the ones that create the people, *prajā*. And because of that reason they are special and therefore, *Bhagavān* mentions them. And in the present *manvantara*, those four are *Brahmasāvarṇi*, *Rudrasāvarṇi*, *Dharmasāvarṇi*, and *Dakṣasāvarṇi*. All of them, and the seven *ṛṣis*, *Bhagavān* says, are *madbhāvāḥ*.

<sup>1</sup> This is the generally accepted list of the *saptarṣis*. But at some places the name *Bhṛgu* replaces that of *Aṅgiras*. And again the names of *saptarṣis* varies with each *Manvantara*,

<sup>2</sup> The 14 *Manus* are: *Svāyambhuva*, *Svārociṣa*, *Uttama*, *Tāmasa*, *Rāvata*, *Cākṣusa*, *Vaivasvata*, *Sāvarṇi*, *Dakṣa-sāvarṇi*, *Brahma-sāvarṇi*, *Dharma-sāvarṇi*, *Rudra-sāvarṇi*, *Raucyadeva-sāvarṇi* and *Indra-sāvarṇi*.

<sup>3</sup> The period of each *Manu*'s rule is one fourteenth of a day of *Brahma*, 4,320,000 human years; so, one day of *Brahma* consists of 14 *Manu*-periods. The period of each *Manu* is divided into four sub-periods, each under different rule.

*Madbhāvāḥ*, Śaṅkara says, are those whose *bhāvana*, disposition or mind, is resolved in Me, *Bhagavān*. It means they have become one with Me, being enlightened people. And they are endowed with the powers of *Viṣṇu*, meaning *Īśvara*.

*Mānasāḥ jātāḥ*—they are all born by mind alone. They are directly born by *Īśvara*'s mere *saṅkalpa*. These *catvāraḥ mānavaḥ* and *sapta-maharṣayaḥ* are the direct children of *Īśvara* according to the *purāṇas*. What we see in the *purāṇas* is confirmed by *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* here.

*Yeṣām loke imāḥ prajāḥ*—of these are all the living beings in the world. First, the *manus* were created and then the *ṛṣis*. After the *ṛṣis*, the sons of *ṛṣis*. From them are born, all the living beings in this world, all under the mandate of *Manu*. That is why human beings are called *mānavāḥ*. And they are also descendants of *ṛṣis*. That is why everyone has a *gotra*. 'All of them,' *Bhagavān* says, 'are from Me.'

## RESULT OF KNOWING THE GLORIES OF BHAGAVĀN AND HIS CONNECTION WITH THEM

एतां विभूतिं योगं च मम यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।

सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ॥७॥

*etāṃ vibhūtiṃ yogam ca mama yo veti tattvataḥ*  
*so'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṁśayaḥ*

Verse 7

एताम् मम विभूतिम् *etām mama vibhūtim* — this glory of Mine; (मम) योगम् च (*mama*) *yogam ca* — and (My) connection with that; तत्त्वतः *tattvataḥ* — in reality; यः वेत्ति *yaḥ veti* — the one who knows; सः *saḥ* — he; युज्यते *yujyate* — is endowed; अविकम्पेन योगेन *avikampena yogena* — with unshaken vision; न अत्र संशयः *na atra saṁśayaḥ* — there is no doubt about this

The one who knows this glory of Mine and My connection with that in reality, he is endowed with unshaken vision. There is no doubt about this.

*Vetti tattvataḥ* means he knows in reality, as it is. He knows this glory of Mine that has been so far told, *etāṃ vibhūtiṃ mama*. *Etām*, Śaṅkara says, gives the sense of what was said so far. *Vibhūti* is what has come from or emanated from *Īśvara*.

And he knows My association with all of them, *mama yogam ca*. He knows not only My glories but My connection to these *vibhūtis* in reality. How is the Lord connected to his glories? *Īśvara* is *saccidānanda-svarūpa*. So, what connection can he have? The connection between the glory and *Īśvara* is exactly the connection between your own *ātmanā* and your limited knowledge. The connection is like this: the other is, the one is; the other is not; the one is. This is the connection between *satya* and *mithyā*.

Through *māyā* are all the connections. There is no other connection. Only *māyā* connects *paramātmā* and any glory that is manifest. The one who knows that, knows *satya* and *mithyā*. If he knows *Īśvara* and his glory in reality, he knows what is *satya* and what is *mithyā*, naturally.

Once he knows that, there will be advantages for him at different levels. Simply, accepting *Īśvara* as the one who is the source of all glories in others, and me will free me from a lot of problems. If someone sees a person sing very well and understands that it is *Bhagavān's* glory, then he cannot be jealous of that person. If he is able to sing well, his own glory will not give him a big ego. He avoids pride, jealousy, hatred, etc. simply by attitude. This attitude brings about a certain composure, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and steadiness of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*. Then if he comes to know these glories, how they come about and how *Īśvara* is connected to them, he himself *avikampena yogena yujyate*, is endowed or connected with an unshaken vision. The clarity of the vision of *ātmā* as *Parameśvara*, the *samyag-darśana*, *Śaṅkara* says, is well-rooted and steady, *sthira*. The one who recognises Me and My glories properly and the connection of Me with the glories etc., is endowed with an uninhibited vision, a vision that does not shake. *Yoga* here means the vision. Any other *yoga* will be shaky.

*Na atra saṁśayaḥ*—there is no doubt in this. If you understand *Īśvara* and his glories and his connections, etc., properly, that is enough. Then you know yourself. *Īśvara-darśana* is *ātma-darśana*. There is no other *darśana* of *Īśvara*. That is why it is not merely experiential. To know silence is not enough. That silence has to be understood. Similarly, *Īśvara* and the connection between *Īśvara* and *jagat* has to be understood. Understanding *Īśvara* means understanding the whole *jagat* as *Īśvara*. You have to understand the whole *jagat*. And if you have to understand the *jagat* as something born of *paramātmā*, *caitanya-ātmā*, then the connection has to be understood properly. If that connection is understood, you understand *satya* and *mithyā*. That is liberation. This *Īśvara-darśana*, which is *ātma-darśana* is given here by pointing out the glories.

*Bhagavān* thus introduces his own chapter, a chapter of his glories, with these verses. Because the word *yoga* is used, we have to clarify the meaning. *Yoga* can be anything. Therefore, *Bhagavān* gives the meaning in the next verse.

Only knowledge can be unshaken. Appreciation of the Lord as the cause of the world is not enough. The connection must be clear. Does the creator really become a creator? What type of creation is it? All these are to be understood. Only then can you understand *Īśvara*. The degree of reality enjoyed by the creation is to be understood first. If that is understood, the status of the creator is also very clearly understood. When this is so, a person will be endowed with this unshaken vision.

What type of vision is that which is not shaken? That is told here.

## NATURE OF THIS CLEAR VISION

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।

इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ॥८॥

*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate*  
*iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ*

Verse 8

अहम् सर्वस्य प्रभवः *aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ* — I am the creator of everything; मत्तः सर्वम् प्रवर्तते *mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate* — because of Me everything is sustained; इति मत्वा *iti matvā* — thus knowing; बुधाः *budhāḥ* — the wise men; भावसमन्विताः *bhāvasamanvitāḥ* — endowed with vision; माम् भजन्ते *mām bhajante* — gain Me

I am the creator of everything and because of Me everything is sustained.  
Thus knowing, the wise men endowed with vision gain Me.

*Aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ*—I am the cause for the creation of everything. *Aham* here means *paraṃ brahma*, the one who is called *Vāsudeva*. We have seen the word *Vāsudeva* before—that in which alone all have their being. Like pots have their being in clay, the *jagat* has its being in the self-existent *sat-vastu*. Everything else depends entirely upon that. And there is only one thing that is self-existent; that is *ātmā*. The self alone is self-existent; everything becomes evident to it. So, what is self-evident is self-existent and anything not self-evident cannot be called self-existent. Without my obliging the *vastu* with my perception, inference, etc., it is self-evident and this self-evident *ātmā* alone is self-existent. It is called *Vāsudeva*, that in which everything has its being. Thus, *aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ*—I am the cause of everything. *Prabhava* means the source of creation; so, I am the cause for the creation of everything.

Somebody may create something, but then, its care may fall to someone else. Like modern parents. They are the cause for the children alright but then somebody else takes care of them. Similarly, *Bhagavān* may create everything and then appoint somebody else to be in charge of it.

To negate this idea, *Bhagavān* says, '*mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate*—because of Me everything is sustained. This *jagat* continues to exist and is sustained by Me. A created object sustains itself for a length of time undergoing partial changes and finally a total change, in the form of disappearance. A human body changes partially; So, the person I saw ten years ago I may now see as bald but I can still recognise him. Later after death, the body disintegrates. Thus you find activities of sustenance and disintegration taking place with reference to each and every object. There is no real destruction. There is only the disintegration or partial disintegration of a particular form. This is the *jagat* characterised by its sustenance, its changes, and its disintegration. Then there are the results and their enjoyment. This includes the experiences of pleasure and displeasure,

the places of enjoyments and activities, which produced *karma-phalas* that provide situations for enjoyment. All these constitute what we call *jagat*. And *Bhagavān* says, ‘I am not only the cause for the coming into being of this creation, I am also the cause for its sustenance. Because of Me alone everything exists and behaves in its own way.’

### THOSE WHO HAVE THIS CLEAR VISION ARE COMMITTED TO GAINING IT

*Iti matvā*, thus knowing, that this whole *jagat* that they encounter is from Me alone, *māṃ bhajante budhāḥ*, the wise men gain Me, recognise Me, know Me. *Śaṅkara* defines the wise men here as *avagata-paramārtha-tattvaḥ*, by whom the truth of everything is understood as nothing but *paramātmā*.

*Bhagavān* describes these wise men as *bhāva-samanvitāḥ*—those who are endowed with *bhāva*. The word *bhāva* has different meanings. We have to see the context. Here it is vision. What vision? The definite knowledge of the reality in the form of the understanding, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ The meaning of the word ‘I’ is *Brahman* the limitless, which is *jagat-kāraṇa*. Those who have that clear vision are called *bhāva-samanvitāḥ*.

*Māṃ bhajante*, they gain Me. They become one with Me because between *Īśvara* and the *jīva*, there is no essential difference. *Īśvara* is nothing but *paraṃ brahma*, *jīva* is also *paraṃ brahma*. This identity they gain. Further...

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।

कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥९॥

*maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam  
kathayantaśca māṃ nityaṃ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

Verse 9

मत्-चित्ताः *mat-cittāḥ* — whose minds are in Me; मद्गत-प्राणाः *madgata-prāṇāḥ* — whose living is resolved in Me; बोधयन्तः परस्परम् *bodhayantaḥ parasparam* — mutually teaching each other; कथयन्तः च माम् *kathayantaḥ ca mām* — and talking about Me; नित्यम् *nityam* — always; तुष्यन्ति च *tuṣyanti ca* — they are satisfied; रमन्ति च *ramanti ca* — and they revel

Those whose minds are in Me, whose living is resolved in Me, teaching one another and always talking about Me, they are (always) satisfied and they revel (always).

They know *Īśvara* as the cause of the creation and the truth of that *Īśvara* as themselves. Understanding the cause-effect, *kāraṇa-kārya*, is the basis of the whole teaching. The effect is inseparable from the cause, which is *Brahman*. Therefore, the



effect is inseparable from *Brahman*. Because it is inseparable, the effect is *mithyā*; it is only apparent.

Therefore, the entire *jagat*, which includes the body, mind, sense complex is a product and is *mithyā*. So, between the cause and the effect, the relationship is very peculiar. The cause is *satya*—that which exists independently; and the other, which is called *mithyā* depends upon that independently existent principle. Like pot and clay; like your shirt and its cloth. If you analyse it, the cloth is *mithyā* the thread is *satya*, the thread is *mithyā*, the fibre is *satya*, fibres are *mithyā*, particles are *satya*. You can go on and on like this. Then what is *satya*? That which does not depend upon anything else. Is there such a thing? Yes, that is *Brahman*. Thus through this *kāraṇa-kārya-viveka*, the teaching takes place here.

By knowing that *Īśvara* is everything, they become one with *Īśvara*. How is that? This second step is interesting. The first step is knowing *Īśvara* as the maker and the material cause and therefore, that the effect, the creation is non-separate from him. This is the knowledge of *Īśvara*. Knowing this, you come to recognise that you are that *Īśvara*. This is the second step. If *Īśvara* is everything, your physical body is *Īśvara*, your mind is *Īśvara* and your senses are also *Īśvara*. What is not *Īśvara*? If everything that is created is *Īśvara*, perhaps consciousness is not *Īśvara*, because, it is not created. You cannot say that because what was there before creation was *sat* alone.

If consciousness is uncreated, that cannot be different from the *sat*, the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. So, *sat* and *cit* are the same. Therefore, knowing *Īśvara*, you become one with *Īśvara*. This is not an ordinary statement. First it is presented as though something else is the cause. Afterwards, if you analyse the whole thing, it ends up that you are the cause. Your isolation, the separation between the Lord and yourself is simply swallowed in the vision of *Īśvara*. Therefore, the vision of *Īśvara* is the vision of oneself, the vision of the whole.

*Maccittāḥ*—those whose minds are in Me, *Parameśvara*. With their knowledge, the mind naturally is non-separate from *paramātmā* and therefore, cannot go away from *paramātmā*. People often complain that they understand but then their mind goes away. But understanding is never away from the mind. The understanding is that the mind is never away from *ātmā*. That is understanding that nothing is away from *Brahman*. For those who understand, the mind is never away from Me, the whole, because *satya* is *ātmā*. And that sustains the mind.

*Madgataprāṇāḥ*— In this expression, the word *prāṇa* is taken to represent all the sense organs. They are all awake to *Īśvara*. Therefore, these people are called *madgataprāṇas*. Even though they perceive things distinctly, these wise men see something more. What is seen by the eyes is a form and this form is distinct from every other form. That they see. But then, they see something more because they also appreciate that the object perceived, the perception and the perceiver all have their being

in one consciousness, which is self-existent. If there is no ignorance with reference to this fact, one becomes *madgataprāṇa*. Although all the sense activities take place, one is never away from *Parameśvara*. The perception of the sense organs is not a hindrance to the knowledge of the self. So, being in the world does not in any way hinder the vision of the self. And not going through experiences is not going to bring about the vision. Ignorance is the hindrance, not perception.

Those who do not have that hindrance are *maccittāḥ madgataprāṇāḥ*. In other words, *Śaṅkara* says that even for one second their lives are not away from *Īśvara*.

*Prāṇa* is also breathing; therefore, can stand for living, *jīvana*. So, *madgataprāṇas* are also those whose living is non-separate from *Īśvara*. There life is resolved in *Īśvara*. It means there is no division of spiritual life and material life for them. Some people have a peculiar philosophy that life has two separate compartments as spiritual and secular. There are no such compartments. Everything is one whole alone. For one who knows, life is non-separate from this vision. Whatever you know about yourself is what you are and if that happens to be the whole, how are you going to be away from it? Do what you will, you cannot be away from it because the one thing you can never be away from, is yourself. You can be away from one object or the other, but never from yourself. Those who understand this clearly are *madgataprāṇas, maccittas*.

## HOW DO SUCH PEOPLE LIVE?

*Ramanti*, they revel. How? *Parasparaṃ bodhayantaḥ*, mutually teaching each other. What else can they do? Those who want to learn, they teach. *Mām kathayantaḥ ca*, talking about the glories of Me, *Parameśvara*. When do they do this? They do it always—*nityam*.

*Kathayantaḥ* is different from *bodhayantaḥ*. *Bodhana* implies a class situation or a discussion. *Kathana* is just descriptive. There is no teaching. When you describe the glories of the Lord—his knowledge, his strength and so on, it is called *kathana*. In talking about ‘Me,’ whether teaching or describing, they discover a joy and in that they revel, *ramanti*, and enjoy satisfaction, *tuṣyanti*. Revelling does not require anything but *Parameśvara*.

He has used two words here, *ramanti* and *tuṣyanti*, which have a similar but slightly different meaning. *Ramanti* is with reference to the external world; so, it involves people here. *Tuṣyanti* is with reference to oneself. They have found satisfaction; so, they do not need to go after things in order to be happy. There are two ways of going after things. One can go after things for happiness or one can happily go after things. Going after things to discover happiness generally does not work. And if you are happy with yourself as a person, then you need not go after things. It does not produce any result for you. But then, you can do things joyfully.

*Śaṅkara* gives an example of how they revel in talking about *Īśvara*. Suppose a person is with someone very beloved to him. What would be the joy he discovers in conversing with, in being in the company of, his beloved? With such a joy or more, the one who appreciates *Īśvara*, revels in sharing his understanding of *Īśvara*.

This can include even those who do not have that knowledge but discover their joy in teaching and sharing what they see of the glories of the Lord. Even when you see a beautiful flower, you can simply say the flower is beautiful or you can see something more than that. The beauty of the flower is the glory of *Īśvara*. Wherever there is any ray of glory, anything striking, that is where *Īśvara* is present for you to recognise.

Thus, the verse can be about the wise men or the *jīṅāsus*, those who want to be wise and who are after this knowledge. They share with others whatever they have come to know and in the process, they discover further clarity.

Only when you discuss what you think you know, do you discover what you do know. Clarity takes place only when you begin to part with the knowledge you have, sharing it with another person. Because there is a pair of eyes looking at you, they become a check for you. If there are any fallacies in your thinking, it will become very clear. Any vague areas in your thinking also become very evident. Because if you commit a mistake, those eyes will reveal that something is wrong. When you see that, your mind becomes alert. It begins to discover those areas of vagueness. The sharing of knowledge can also be mutual, in a discussion among seekers. Both are part of *brahmābhyāsa*, the *sādhana* for knowing *Brahman*, which is not different from yourself. There is no other *sādhana*. It is not something that is going to emerge at some time in the heat of meditation. The self is yourself. It is never hidden at any time. The only thing that covers it is ignorance. Therefore, listen and reflect on what you have understood by sharing it with others and in discussions among yourselves.

## BHAGAVĒN'S COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO KNOWING BHAGAVAT-TATTVA

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥१०॥

*teṣāṃ satatayuktānāṃ bhajatāṃ prītipūrvakam*  
*dadāmi buddhiyogaṃ taṃ yena māmupayānti te*

Verse 10

तेषाम् सततयुक्तानाम् *teṣāṃ satatayuktānām* — for those who are always committed to Me; प्रीति-पूर्वकम् भजताम् *prīti-pūrvakam bhajatām* — seeking with love; तम् बुद्धि-योगम् *tam buddhi-yogaṃ* — that vision of knowledge; ददामि *dadāmi* — I give; येन *yena* — whereby; ते माम् उपयान्ति *te mām upayānti* — they reach Me

For those who are always committed to Me, seeking Me with love, I give that vision whereby they reach Me.

*Teṣāṃ satatayuktānām*, for those who are always committed. Those who are seeking in this manner were previously called *nityayuktas*, always committed to Me—not just in the morning and/or evening. *Īśvara* is not just one of the irons in the fire for them. Their priorities are clear. They have assimilated their experiences and understand exactly what they are seeking. Seeking the truth of everything is not a pastime, it is their life. And they do not see any other pursuit that is worth while. They are mature.

Such people have a love for the knowledge of *Īśvara*. What started as a curiosity becomes a desire because you cannot accept ignorance once you know that there is something to know. That is why, as I told you, if you want to make somebody miss his sleep, tell him that you have a great secret to tell him, and that you will tell him tomorrow morning! Once one knows that there is something to know, one cannot but try to know it. It becomes a desire. Afterwards, this *jjñāsā*, a desire to seek knowledge becomes a love of knowledge. Once it becomes love for knowledge, then they revel, *ramanti*, they enjoy satisfaction, *tuṣyanti*. Then you will not ask, ‘Swamiji, when will this seeking end?’ Nobody asks, ‘When will this love end?’ In love, you are always happy—especially if that love is for knowledge. As long as it is a desire, it is fraught with pain because there are impediments in fulfilling a desire. Once it transforms into love for knowledge, then it is a matter of revelling. Impediments do not count.

*Bhagavān* says, to those seeking with love, *ahaṃ dadāmi*, I give. What do I give? *Buddhi-yoga*, the vision of Myself. When you are seeking *Īśvara*, he has to give, he has to reveal himself. Therefore, he says, ‘I give them that *buddhi-yoga*, the vision of truth, the vision of Me, through which they reach Me, they become one with Me.’ The followers of *Hare Kṛṣṇa* movement and other *dvaita* schools of thought would translate these words as, ‘I will give them the grace whereby they will come to Me. Where? In *Golokabṛndāvan*, or any other heaven. Previously, *Kṛṣṇa* was here; then, he transferred himself to *Goloka*, where he has been waiting for these people to come.

Because you are always singing the glories of *Īśvara*, you are a special invitee there. You go there and play with him. But when he plays with the others, you will have to wait—the same old problem that the *gopīs* faced. Previously, when *Kṛṣṇa* was playing with one *gopī*, another *gopī* would be very jealous. These are our original problems. This problem, which was here on earth, *Bhūloka*, will also be there in *Golokabṛndāvan* too. I do not know, which *śāstra* refers to *Golokabṛndāvan*. No *Upaniṣads* talks about it. *Goloka* can be translated as the light, *loka*, of words, *go*—the meaning of the words of *śruti*.

When the Lord says, ‘I give this clear vision,’ it is just an expression. You can say he gives and you take; but after all, *Īśvara* is the *ātmā*. So, where is the question of his giving anything and to whom? The *buddhi-yoga* is gained and in this, the object is

nothing but *ātmā*, which is *Parameśvara*. The Lord himself is the object of that knowledge. Therefore, when he says, ‘*dadāmi*’ he means, ‘I give them this *buddhi-yoga*, whereby they recognise Me, they come to Me.’

But there is also an element of grace involved in all of this. Because the obstructions, *pratibandhakas*, in gaining this clear vision are numerous. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, those who seek Me are assured of the grace they will need. Because those who seek Me, *jijñāsus*, are also *bhaktas*.

The very pursuit is *bhakti*. Naturally it is able to produce a certain grace. A meditation upon *Īśvara*, besides being a part of the means for knowing, is also a *karma*. *Dhyāna* is a mental activity and is therefore, able to produce *karma-phala*. That *karma-phala* is called grace. Anything *adṛṣṭa*, if it is favourable to you, it is called grace or *puṇya*.

Grace is gained by this very pursuit and because they are *jijñāsus*, they are considered *bhaktas*, devotees; so, the act of devotion involved in their pursuit produces a certain grace. They say that even if you just repeat the *Gītā* without studying it, it becomes a prayer. Similarly, the *Upaniṣads* can be repeated daily as a prayer because the words all there come from *Bhagavān* and describe *Bhagavān*. If they are repeated with *śraddhā*, it is a prayer and it has a result. So, it can also be taken that gaining this vision requires the grace of *Īśvara*.

If one were to ask, ‘Why do you give this *buddhi-yoga* to your devotees? What stands as an obstacle to gaining this clear vision for destroying which you are giving this *buddhi-yoga* for your devotees?’ *Kṛṣṇa* answers in the next verse.

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥११॥

*teṣāmevānukampārthamahamajñānajaṃ tamaḥ*  
*nāśayāmyātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā*

Verse 11

तेषाम् एव *teṣām eva* — for them alone; अनुकम्पार्थम् *anukampārtham* — out of compassion; आत्मभावस्थः अहम् *ātma-bhāvasthaḥ aham* — I, obtaining in the thought of the mind; ज्ञान-दीपेन भास्वता *jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā* — by the shining lamp of knowledge; अज्ञानजम् तमः *ajñānajaṃ tamaḥ* — delusion born of ignorance/lack of discrimination; नाशयामि *nāśayāmi* — I destroy

For them alone, out of compassion, I, obtaining in the thought of the mind, destroy the delusion born of ignorance by the shining lamp of knowledge.

*Teṣām eva*—for those seekers who are seeking nothing but *śreyas*, there is freedom from being a *jīva*, *mokṣa*. How will they get this *śreyas*?

*Anukampārtham*—out of sheer compassion. *Bhagavān* will give them this *śreyas*. Compassion is grace here, which is evoked by your own *karma*, or prayer.

How will he give them this *śreyas*? *Ātma-bhāvasthaḥ*—being present in their own minds, he will give them this *śreyas*. *Ātma-bhāvastha*—This is a very interesting word. The simple meaning is, ‘the one who resides in the thought in the mind.’ *Ātmā* here refers to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the mind, and *bhāva* refers to *vṛtti*, the thought-modification. Thus ‘*ātma-bhāvastha*’ is the one who obtains in the *vṛtti*, in the thought of everyone. By using this word, *Bhagavān* removes a possible misconception arising from his saying ‘*dadāmi*, I give.’ When he says, ‘I give,’ we can go away with the idea that *Īśvara* is located somewhere from where he hears our petition and answers. This tendency to put a distance between ourselves and *Īśvara* is a continuing problem. Whenever *Bhagavān* says *dadāmi* etc., this problem arises. To counteract it he says here, *ātma-bhāvasthaḥ aham*, I am the one who obtains in the *vṛtti*, in the very thought of the seeker as *paramātmā*. I obtain in your mind as ‘*aham*, *aham*, *aham*,’ purely in the form of consciousness. As *Īśvara*, I shine in the form of your own *svarūpa*. Later in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, he will say, ‘*sarvasya ca ahaṃ hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ*—I obtain in the heart, *hṛdi*, in the *buddhi* of everyone.’ Here the same thing is conveyed by saying, ‘*aham ātma-bhāvasthaḥ*.’

Obtaining as the very essence of every thought what does *Parameśvara* do? *Nāśayāmi*, I destroy. Because of the seriousness and devotion of their commitment, a certain conducive condition is created in the minds of the *jijñāsus*. In that conducive condition, called grace, *ahaṃ nāśayāmi*, I destroy. What does he destroy?

*Tamaḥ*—darkness, *Śaṅkara* says, it is *moha-andhakāra*, delusion. *Bhagavān* says, ‘The delusion of darkness I destroy.’ This delusion is born of ignorance, *ajñānaja*. Or you can call it *aviveka*, lack of discrimination. Out of lack of discrimination is born the false notion of the self being the body, mind, etc. And again the reverse, the notion of the body-mind-sense complex being the self. These false notions about oneself, which in a word we call *mithyā-pratyaya*, I destroy, *ahaṃ nāśayāmi*. Who is this *aham*? Not someone somewhere, but the one obtaining as the very essence of the *vṛtti*, the truth of any thought. How does he destroy?

*Jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā*—by the shining light of knowledge. The destruction of delusion does not require any weapon. All that is involved is a simple lighting of a lamp. When the whole problem is ignorance and delusion, all you require is a flame of knowledge that leaves no dark corner anywhere in your *buddhi*. That is why the adjective *bhāsvatā* is used for *jñāna-dīpena*. It is not a knowledge clouded with doubts and vagueness but a shining smokeless flame of knowledge that leaves nothing to be

desired. It leaves no shadows of ignorance in your mind. ‘By that lamp I destroy,’ says *Bhagavān*, ‘You do not destroy, I do.’ This is another interesting thing.

In a confluence, when the river reaches the ocean, you have no idea whether the river flows into the ocean or the ocean reaches out and enters the river. You will find that for a mile at least from the ocean, the river water is saline. You can sometimes even see the flow of the river reversed as in a tidal bore.<sup>1</sup> Thus, you find you do not know whether the river is reaching the ocean or the ocean is reaching out to the river. That is what is said here; the knowledge reaches out to you as it were.

### DO WE GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF ĒTMĒ OR IS IT GIVEN?

You will find both kinds of expressions in the *śāstra*. One is that you recognise Me or reach Me, gaining this knowledge through your own pursuit. But in fact you do not gain this knowledge. In every other knowledge there is a subject, a *jñāna-kartā*, a knower, involved and there is also an object of knowledge involved. In the knowledge, *ayaṃ ghaṭaḥ*—this is a pot, for example, the pot is an object, which is objectified by me through my mind. Because I am the one who objectifies the pot, I say, ‘This is a pot—*ayaṃ ghaṭaḥ*.’ In this, the subject is not cancelled; it is retained and the object is known by the subject. This is true in all forms of knowledge. But, when it comes to *ātma-jñāna*, the *kartṛtva* itself is destroyed. The notion that I am the knower is destroyed by the knowledge that I am pure consciousness, which is *Brahman*—*ahaṃ śuddhaṃ kevalaṃ caitanyaṃ brahma*. The *ahaṅkāra* itself is resolved into a flame of knowledge.

The reason there is *no kartā* involved in this knowledge is that the *pramāṇa* is not in the hands of the *ahaṅkāra*. However, when you use perception as a means of knowledge, the perception is in your hands; you are the *kartā*. Using the means of knowledge known as perception, you see this pot, this tree, etc. Similarly, inference, *anumāna*, implies a *kartā*. Only presupposing the existence of the subject, the knower, does inference operate. In the statement, ‘I infer,’ there is a subject. Presumption, *arthāpatti*, another form of inference, also presupposes a knower. Then the knowledge, of the absence of something, like my not having a pot in my hand—*kara-tale ghaṭaḥ nāsti*, arrived at through the *pramāṇa* called *anupalabdhi*, also implies the existence of the knower. By the *pramāṇa* called *anupalabdhi*, I gain the knowledge that a thing does not exist. That involves a *kartā*. So, does the knowledge gained through *upamāna*. You may be told that a bison is like a water buffalo. You know what a water buffalo is but not a bison. The illustration, *upamāna*, of the water buffalo gives rise to indirect knowledge of a bison. When you see a bison, remembering the illustration of the water buffalo, you gain direct knowledge of the bison. All this implies a subject. So, the

<sup>1</sup> A high, often dangerous wave caused by the surge of a flood tide upstream in a narrowing part of the lower course of a river where its current is met by the tides.

subject is never cancelled. When you know about a cell, an atom, or a particle, the subject is involved. Even if you know something about your psychological past, there too the subject is involved. You make inferences such as 'I am responding to this in this way because of what happened to me before.' That inferential connection is made by the *kartā*, the subject.

In fact, in all these, the subject is untouched. But when you expose yourself to the *śabda-pramāṇa*, particularly *Vedānta*, the *kartā* does not operate. Once it has placed itself in a situation where such knowledge can take place, it does nothing further. Like a river, which has come to a point from where it sights the ocean. After that it does not do anything. The ocean takes care of it. It is the same here. Your going to a teacher and exposing yourself to the teaching is all done by your own will. It does not happen automatically. You have to place yourself in a condition where knowledge can take place. Then *śabda*, the words, take over.

The sentence that gives the knowledge is, *tat tvam asi*. In the process of understanding this firstly, the meaning of the word *tvam*, you, is analysed properly and then, *tat*, *Īśvara*, is also analysed properly, then the *akhaṇḍa-artha*, the meaning of identity that is involved in the sentence is recognised. What does that recognition do? First let us understand how the recognition takes place. It has to occur in the *buddhi*, because that is where the ignorance is destroyed by the *buddhi-vṛtti*, eliminating the notion that the self is merely the subject. The subject is the self, but the self is not the subject. The knower, known, knowledge, are all one and the same. Where is the subject, where is the object? *Ātmā* is free from all three of them. It is *Brahman*.

This recognition that the self is *Brahman*, swallows the subject. So, how can you say that you gain it? Through the *śāstra*, *Īśvara* alone gives this knowledge. You do nothing to gain it. Since the *ahaṅkāra* is not involved, it is proper to say that *Īśvara* gives you this knowledge.

Even though in the previous verse the Lord said, 'I give this vision, *ahaṅ buddhi-yogam dadāmi*,' here he says, 'In fact I do not give anything. Remaining in the *buddhi*, as the very truth of the *buddhi-vṛtti*, I only remove the ignorance, *ajñānaṃ tamaḥ nāśayāmi*.'

*Dadāmi* is now replaced by *nāśayāmi*. One is positive, the other negative. In the positive expression, there can be a division. Someone is giving; someone is receiving. Because division implies duality, there is the possibility of a wrong understanding that there is a giver and that *Īśvara* gives. It can look as though something positive is given, some kind of knowledge is superimposed upon or thrown into the *buddhi*. It is not like that. In fact there is no giving involved. *Bhagavān* is only destroying ignorance. Knowledge is not something that happens. What really happens is that ignorance, *ajñāna*, is removed. Then why do we have such expressions as 'gaining knowledge?' Because a *vṛtti* is necessary to destroy ignorance, we say knowledge occurs. But in fact



knowledge does not occur. What happens is that the *vr̥tti* is produced and it destroys ignorance. Knowledge is not created; *ajñāna* is removed.

That is why this whole process is a process of *niv̥rtti* and not *prav̥rtti*. *Prav̥rtti* implies a *kartā*. In this *niv̥rtti*, the *kartā* itself is negated. The removal of ignorance of the self being *Brahman* is what is called knowledge here. Positively nothing happens.

If knowledge is something that can be positively given, and it is given to someone who is ignorant, that person will remain ignorant. Knowledge would merely get superimposed upon him. The truth is that knowledge always is. We only remove the ignorance that conceals it. And knowledge is always true to the object. *Ātmā* is *Brahman*. If that *Brahman* is limitless, it is limitless all the time. And the knowledge of it is also as true as the 'object.' If *Īśvara* is omniscient, then all knowledge exists already. No new knowledge is ever created. In your mind it may not exist but to correct that, all we have to do is bring in the particular *buddhi-v̥rtti*, which is able to destroy ignorance. To know that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, we bring in the *buddhi-v̥rtti* that will destroy self-ignorance. There can be obstacles to that; so, to remove them, you require grace. From that perspective *Bhagavān* can say, 'I give this vision—*ahaṃ buddhi-yogaṃ dadāmi*.

## THE DAWN OF KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE THE LIGHTING OF AN OIL LAMP

*Śaṅkara* explains very beautifully this imagery of the lamp taking it as an oil lamp. A lighted oil lamp implies a few things—oil, wick, flame, and oxygen and *Śaṅkara* explains all the parts of the analogy.

What is the oil for this lamp? *Śaṅkara* says that the oil, *sneha*, is *bhakti*, devotion and cheerfulness. *Sneha* can also mean affection or love. What is the difference between love and devotion? Where there is respect and reverence with the love, there is devotion, *bhakti*. Love, when it is for *Īśvara*, involves a certain supplication, a surrender and looking up to. This appreciation and respect is implied in *bhakti*. Thus love, with respect and reverence, is *bhakti*. *Śaṅkara* says that the wick of the lamp must be *abhiṣikta*, soaked with the oil, *sneha*, which is cheerfulness and *bhakti*.

I<sup>1</sup> find that spiritual seekers become very serious. There is a sadness about them. I have seen some of these people who have dedicated their lives to certain organised religions for the pursuit of God. They are so frightened, all because they see all their thoughts as either virtuous or sinful. Thoughts are just thoughts, neither good nor bad. Only actions are right or wrong because they produce results. But then, if one deliberately meditate upon or prays for the fall of someone, then it is an act, a mental act.

<sup>1</sup> *Swamiji*

We take it as a *karma*. Thus there are no good or bad thoughts; there are only thoughts and there are proper or improper actions, be they mental, verbal, or physical. Only if you understand this, can you be cheerful. And, this is not an ordinary thing to understand. Thus, to light this lamp of knowledge the wick has to be soaked in the oil of cheerfulness and devotion to the Lord.

What is the wick for this lamp? The wick is the preparedness of the *buddhi* purified by the study of the *śāstra* with a proper attitude and all other disciplines under the tutelage of a *guru*. This wick obtains in the lamp of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. This lamp should be protected from strong winds. *Śaṅkara* says, the strong winds, which may blow off this lamp are the binding likes and dislikes. But then, the flame has to be sustained by air. That air, *Śaṅkara* says, is the *buddhi-vṛtti*, which recognises the identity between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, accomplished by constant contemplation.

Having listened to the words of *Kṛṣṇa* on the glories of *Īśvara*, *Arjuna* now asks a question. The important thing to understand here is that the *Gītā* is a dialogue. Its subject matter is primarily to be understood; very few things are meant for belief.

The main issues are to be understood and some of them, like values, attitudes, etc. are meant to be understood and lived up to. So, there is a certain will involved here. But when *Bhagavān* talks about realities, that is purely to be understood. Even beliefs require some understanding. Since there is a lot to be understood, there is a dialogue. And now *Arjuna* makes a request to the Lord.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।

पुरुषं शाश्वतम् दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥१२॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*paraṃ brahma paraṃ dhāma pavitraṃ paramaṃ bhavān*

*puruṣaṃ śāśvataṃ divyamādidevamajaṃ vibhum*

Verse 12

आहुस्त्वामृषयः सर्वे देवर्षिनारदस्तथा ।

असितो देवलो व्यासः स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥१३॥

*āhustvāmṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣināradastathā*

*asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṃ caiva bravīṣi me*

Verse 13

अर्जुन *arjuna* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

भवान् *bhavān* — O! Revered one, you are; परम् ब्रह्म *param brahma* — limitless *Brahman*; परम् धाम *param dhāma* — the light of all lights; परमम् पवित्रम् *paramam pavitram* — the most purifying; सर्वे ऋषयः *sarve ṛṣayaḥ* — all the sages; देवर्षिः नारदः तथा *devarsīḥ nāradaḥ tathā* — including *Nārada*, who is the sage among gods; असितः

देवलः व्यासः *asitaḥ devalaḥ vyāsaḥ* — (and) *Asita, Devala, Vyāsa*; त्वाम् आहुः *tvām āhuḥ* — talk of you as; पुरुषम् शाश्वतम् *puruṣam śāśvatam* — eternal being; दिव्यम् *divyam* — not of this world/celestial; आदिदेवम् *ādidevam* — the source of all the gods; अजम् *ajam* — unborn; विभुम् *vibhum* — all pervasive; स्वयम् च एव *svayam ca eva* — and indeed, yourself; ब्रवीषि मे *braviṣi me* — tell me (so)

*Arjuna* said:

O! Revered one, you are limitless *Brahman*, the light of all lights, the most purifying. All the sages, including *Nārada*, the sage among gods, *Asita, Devala*, and *Vyāsa* talk of you as the eternal being, not of this world, the source of all the gods, unborn and all pervasive. And indeed, you yourself tell me so.

## ARJUNA REVEALS HIS UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HE HAS BEEN TAUGHT

Having listened to *Kṛṣṇa* through these chapters, *Arjuna* has a certain understanding of the topic. He now speaks from his understanding. All the sages talk about you, O! *Kṛṣṇa*, as being *paraṁ dhāma*. *Dhāma*<sup>1</sup> is used here in the sense of light. As light helps you to see things, so too this is the light of all lights, the light of consciousness. You are the source of all consciousness. You are the consciousness. With *dhāma* in the sense of abode, you are the most exalted end reaching, which there is no further end possible or necessary.

Then he says, you are, *bhavān, pavitraṁ paramam*. There are a lot of things, which purify the mind and bring solace to it. But how can one ever completely purify the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which is subject to *puṇya-pāpa-karmas*. Nothing can get rid of these except the knowledge of *Īśvara*. Therefore, you are the *pāvana*, the one who is most purifying. The knowledge of the Lord, when he reveals himself, destroys the *jīva*, the individual, who feels isolated, frightened and bound. In the wake of knowledge of the Lord the *jīvatva*, the feeling of isolation is destroyed. That is because the knowledge of the Lord is knowing that ‘I am non-separate from the Lord.’ Here, the knowledge is that the subject, the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge are one and the same. If it is knowledge of myself then the object of knowledge is myself. The knowledge is as true as myself and the subject is myself. So, the one who knows is also myself. Here the subject, object and the knowledge are all one. Therefore, by that knowledge *Īśvara* completely purifies a *jīva*. The *saṁsārī* who is a limited individual subject to birth and death is totally released. There is nothing more purifying, *pāvana*.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *dhāma* is derived from the root *dhā*. Here it has the meaning of *raśmi*. It also has the meaning of ‘abode.’

Then *Arjuna* goes on to say that all *ṛṣis* talk of you as, *puruṣaṃ nityaṃ śāśvatam*. The word *puruṣa* has two meanings. The one who enclosed by the body-mind-sense complex is called *puruṣa*, and *puruṣa* is also that which fills up everything. So, when you repeat this word, ‘*puruṣaḥ puruṣaḥ—puruṣa* is *puruṣa*,’ it becomes a *mahāvākya*. If you say, *puruṣo’haṃ puruṣaḥ*, it means the one who obtains in the body-mind-sense complex, seemingly enclosed, is indeed the limitless *puruṣa*, filling up everything. *Puruṣa* being limitless, is not bound by time, and therefore, is *śāśvata*. *Divya* means something of an exalted nature that is not of this world, *alaukika*. It is unlike anything we know. When we have no example to explain something extraordinary, we use the word *divya*. *Ādideva* means the one who was there before the beginning of all the *devas*, the god of gods, their very source. And he is *aja*, the one who is unborn, not subject to birth at all. And he is the cause of everything, *vibhu*, all-pervasive, the one from whom everything has come and who sustains everything in the sense that his mandate is followed by everybody.

### ARJUNA CITES OTHERS WHO CONCUR

People who say all this about *Kṛṣṇa* are those who know. In every generation there will be a few. *Arjuna* says that what he had said in the previous verse about *Kṛṣṇa* is not only his personal observation, but that of the sages, who really knew this subject-matter and whose opinion you cannot dismiss. Also he says, all the *ṛṣis* of *deva-loka*, including *devarṣi Nārada*, say the same thing. Other *ṛṣis* like *Asita*, *Devala* and *Vyāsa* also say, that this is what you are. They may all say so, but suppose the person himself says he is not *Bhagavān*. Not here. Therefore, *Arjuna* says, ‘Even you yourself have told me that you are *Īśvara*, *svayaṃ eva ca braviṣi me*.’

And *Arjuna* goes on to say,

सर्वमेतदृतं मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव ।

न हि ते भगवन् व्यक्तिं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ॥१४॥

*sarvam etadṛtaṃ manye yanmāṃ vadasi keśava*

*na hi te bhagavan vyaktiṃ vidurdevā na dānavāḥ*

Verse 14

केशव *keśava* — O! Lord *Keśava*; सर्वम् एतद् *sarvam etad* — all this; यत् माम् वदसि *yat mām vadasi* — which you have told me; तत् ऋतम् मन्ये *taṃ ṛtam manye* — I consider that true; हि भगवन् *hi bhagavan* — indeed, O! Lord; न देवाः *na devāḥ* — neither the celestials; न दानवाः *na dānavāḥ* — nor the *rākṣasas*; ते व्यक्तिम् *te vyaktim* — your person; विदुः *viduḥ* — know

All this, which you have told me, O! Lord, I consider true. Indeed, Lord, neither the celestials nor the *rākṣasas* know your person, i.e., they do not know what you are.

All the descriptions given by these *ṛṣis*, I consider to be true. What you have been saying to me (in the earlier chapters) and what others have said, I consider to be *ṛta*, absolutely true.

Even though both these words, *ṛta* and *satya* mean truth, there is some difference between them, especially when they are used together. When a fact is described by words and there is no difference between what the words mean and what the fact is, that is *satya* or *ṛta*. If the two words, *satya* and *ṛta*, are used together, either it is repetition or they have different meanings. In that case, *satya* is the truthful expression of something as you see it. What you express outside is as you see it inside, it is *yathārtha-bhāṣaṇa* and that is called *satya*. But suppose you do not see correctly. Sometimes what you think is the truth turns out to be false because of your lack of knowledge. What you think as true is really false, though your expression of it is true to what you know. That is *satya*. But if what you see is accepted by the *ṛṣis* and is in keeping with the *śāstra*, that is *ṛta*. If what you see is *ṛta*, it is a truth that can never be negated. So, *ṛta* is more powerful than *satya*. Here the two words are not used together. And *Arjuna* uses only the word *ṛta*. Therefore, when *Arjuna* says that he considers what *Kṛṣṇa* has said to be *ṛta*, he is saying that there can be no doubt about these words at all and that they are absolutely true.

In the next line he says, ‘O! *Bhagavān*, neither the celestials, *devas*, nor the *rākṣasas*, *dānavas*, know of your person, *vyakti*. You are the cause of everything, but they do not see you at all. Everybody sees the effect, the creation, but nobody sees the cause thereof.’

*Arjuna* continues and in the process reveals the knowledge he has gathered so far.

स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।

भूतभावन भूतेश देवदेव जगत्पते ॥१५॥

*svayamevātmanātmānaṃ vettha tvaṃ puruṣottama*

*bhūtabhāvana bhūteśa devadeva jagatpate*

Verse 15

पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama* — O! Most exalted being; भूतभावन *bhūta-bhāvana* — O! The creator of all beings; भूतेश *bhūteśa* — O! The ruler of all beings; देवदेव *devadeva* — O! The Lord of the gods; जगत्पते *jagatpate* — O! The Lord of creation; त्वम् स्वयम् एव वेत्थ *tvam svayam eva vettha* — you yourself know; आत्मना *ātmanā* — with your own mind; आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — (your) self

You yourself know your self with your own mind, O! The most exalted being, the creator of all beings, the ruler of all beings, the Lord of the gods, the Lord of creation.

वक्तुमर्हस्यशेषेण दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।

याभिर्विभूतिभिर्लोकानिमांस्त्वं व्याप्य तिष्ठसि ॥१६॥

*vaktumarhasyaśeṣeṇa divyā hyātmavibhūtayāḥ  
yābhirvibhūtibhirlokanimāṃstvaṃ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi*

Verse 16

दिव्याः *divyāḥ* — extraordinary; हि *hi* — indeed; आत्म-विभूतयः *ātma-vibhūtayāḥ* — the glories of yourself; याभिः विभूतिभिः *yābhiḥ vibhūtibhiḥ* — those glories by which; इमान् लोकान् *imān lokān* — these worlds; व्याप्य *vyāpya* — pervading; त्वम् तिष्ठसि *tvam tiṣṭhasi* — you remain; अशेषेण वक्तुम् अर्हसि *aśeṣeṇa vaktum arhasi* — you are capable of telling in full

You indeed are capable of telling in full the extraordinary glories of yourself, the glories by which you remain pervading these worlds.

## HOW ONLY BHAGAVĒN IS QUALIFIED TO RELATE HIS GLORIES

*Arjuna* confirms the opinion of the *ṛṣis* that *Kṛṣṇa* is *Īśvara*. Then he tells why *Kṛṣṇa* alone is qualified to talk about all those glories by which he remains covering the entire universe. Though there are others to talk about it, you are the most eligible, *Arjuna* says.

*Tvaṃ svayaṃ vettha*, you yourself know, not being taught by anybody. What does he know? *Ātmānam*, you know the truth of yourself. How? *Ātmanā*, through your own mind. That is why you speak of yourself as *Īśvara* all the time. *Śaṅkara* says here, that you know yourself as one who has knowledge, overlordship, strength, and power that leave nothing to be desired. In short, you know yourself as *Īśvara*, *puruṣottama*, the one who is exalted among the *puruṣas*.

And he is addressed as *bhūta-bhāvana*, the one who creates all the beings with their body-mind-sense complexes. For each being he creates a unique *sthūla-sūkṣma-śarīra* appropriate to his *karma*. And not only does he create all beings, he also takes care of them; so, he is called *bhūteśa*, the ruler of all beings. Then he is addressed as *devadeva*, the Lord of all the gods and *jagatpati*, the Lord of this entire creation. All these are appellations of the Lord.

*Vaktum arhasi aśeṣeṇa*, you are capable of revealing without leaving anything out. What is revealed is *ātma-vibhūtis*, your own glories, which are not of this world,

*divya, alaukika*. The word *ātmā* shows that this refers not only to the Lord but to yourself. *Arjuna* is implying, ‘You know about me, *ātmā*, and you can talk about all the glories of *ātmā*, which you know so well.’

*Yābhiḥ vibhūtibhiḥ lokān imān tvaṃ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi*, all these glories by which you stand pervading all these worlds, only you are eligible to talk about. *Arjuna* says later, ‘I am still not satisfied with what you have been saying about yourself. You talk not just about your glories but mine too, which you can see. All of us want to listen to our glories. So, tell me more.’ Lord *Kṛṣṇa* does not simply tell *Arjuna* that he, *Kṛṣṇa*, is everything; he proves the fact that he is everything. And *Kṛṣṇa* also implies that *Arjuna*, or anyone for that matter, can know that he is also not different from *Īśvara*. Then all these glories would apply belong to him too. It is not flattery, but a statement of fact; so, even when, it is not understood it has a ring of truth and a logic to it. Here you have facts, which elevate you and the more you listen, the more you want to know. We all love to gaze at ourselves in the mirror—much more than is necessary. There is self-love in us because *ātmā* is something you cannot but love. It is intrinsically *ānanda*, fullness. Because you have some insight about that, you cannot give up the hope that one day you are going to be wonderful. So, when someone holds up a word-mirror and makes you see that you are everything, you can never be tired of it.

*Arjuna* says, ‘Listening to these nectar-like words, which reveal your glories and therefore, mine, I have no satisfaction, *tr̥pti*. So, please tell me more about these glories. For those of us who cannot directly appreciate you, which are the places and things in which your glory is so pronounced that it can become an object of meditation?’ Thus *Arjuna* asks for further description. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘It is very difficult to do this and even if I describe it for days, it won’t end. But still, I will make an attempt to say a few things.’ Then, in the eleventh chapter he makes a drastic revelation by giving *Arjuna* a vision of the cosmic form.

कथं विद्यामहं योगिंस्त्वां सदा परिचिन्तयन् ।

केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन् मया ॥१७॥

*katham vidyāmaham yogiṃstvāṃ sadā paricintayan*

*keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo’si bhagavanmayā*

Verse 17

सदा परिचिन्तयन् *sadā paricintayan* — always contemplating; कथम् विद्याम् अहम् *katham vidyām aham* — how can I know; त्वाम् *tvām* — you; योगिन् *yogin* — O! The greatest of the *yogīs*, Lord; केषु केषु च भावेषु *keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu* — and in which things; चिन्त्यः असि *cintyaḥ asi* — are you to be meditated upon; मया *mayā* — by me; भगवन् *bhagavan* — O! Lord

Always contemplating, how can I know you, O! The greatest of the *yogīs*? And in which things are you to be meditated upon by me, O! Lord?

### ARJUNA'S REQUEST TO HAVE THE GLORIES OF ĪŚVARA REVEALED

Here he says, '*sadā paricintayan*, always contemplating, how can I know your glory?' All we see around us are only objects. To appreciate *Īśvara*, the *puruṣa* because of whom the object is an object we have to go behind the objects and see beyond what we can physically perceive. It is purely a vision of the *buddhi*; so, it is with *jñāna-cakṣu*, the eye of wisdom, that you have to see. Meditation upon *Īśvara*, *īśvara-dhyāna*, is seeing the glories of *Īśvara*, *īśvara-vibhūti-dhyāna*.

Then *Arjuna* asks the Lord, '*keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyaḥ asi*—what are the objects, in which you are to be meditated upon?' There are many objects and beings in the universe; in some of them the Lord's glories are particularly manifest. These are identified as special by the Vedas or *purāṇas*. Also certain objects by convention and some people by their deeds become popular. The glory, which made them popular is *Īśvara* and thus they become a focus of meditation.

So, *Arjuna* says, 'O! Lord, tell me all those glories in which you are specially manifest, where you can become the object of meditation.' It is true that the Lord is manifest in everything but the glories of some objects and people stand out in creation. The value in any of these glories is *Īśvara* and the absolute value, *pratyagātmā*, is also *Īśvara*. A value in anything is always connected to a being. If there is an intrinsic value to a reality, then that intrinsic value belongs only to *Īśvara*.

Here the value is not imagined or superimposed, as it is in gold, for example. Gold has two values, the superimposed and the intrinsic value. That it is shiny, malleable, rare, and rust-proof is its intrinsic value. The monetary value is superimposed. But its intrinsic value minus our projections is *Īśvara's* glory. That is the basis for *īśvara-dhyāna*. I eliminate my projections and appreciate *Īśvara's* glory as identical with the object's intrinsic value. That value is the glory of *Īśvara*.

Therefore, please tell me in which objects I can see you like this.

विस्तरेणात्मनो योगं विभूतिं च जनार्दन ।

भूयः कथय तृप्तिर्हि शृण्वतो नास्ति मेऽमृतम् ॥१८॥

*vistareṇātmano yogaṃ vibhūtiṃ ca janārdana*  
*bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptirhi śṛṇvato nāsti me'mṛtam*

Verse 18



विस्तरेण *vistareṇa* — in detail; भूयः *bhūyaḥ* — again; कथय *kathaya* — please describe; आत्मनः योगम् *ātmanah yagam* — the power/wonder of yourself; विभूतिम् च *vibhūtim ca* — and the glory; जनार्दन *janārdana* — O! Lord: हि *hi* — because; अमृतम् शृण्वतः मे *amṛtam śṛṇvataḥ me* — for me the listener of this nectar; तृप्तिः न अस्ति *tr̥ptiḥ na asti* — there is no satisfaction

Please describe again in detail the wonder and the glory of yourself, O!  
Lord, because I, the listener of this nectar, have no satisfaction.

As *Īsvara*, the Lord, you have unique capacities like omniscience and omnipotence, called *yoga* in this verse. These manifest in the creation as glories, *vibhūtayah*, like the sun and the moon, which are the glories of his power. ‘Again, O! *Janārdana*, please describe to me in detail your glory, *vistareṇa vibhūtiṃ bhūyaḥ kathaya*.

*Janārdana*<sup>1</sup> is the one who destroys people of improper conduct, *duṣṭa-janān ardayati iti janārdanaḥ*. Here destruction means to discipline by giving *karma-phala*. There are two meanings for the root *ard* in the word *janārdana*. One is going, *gamana*, the other is asking for or requesting, *yācana*. *Śaṅkara* gives two meanings for *Janārdana* using both senses of the root. In the sense of going, *gamana*, he is the one who makes all the *asuras*, those who are opposed to the *devas*, go to unpleasant places like *naraka*. By the law of *karma*, which is non-separate from him and is mandated by him, he sends them to *narakādi lokas*. Taking the second meaning of the root, he is the one who is propitiated by all people, either for limited results or for the limitless, *niśśreyas*. Limited results, *abhyudaya*, are prosperity, pleasures and so on. Any desirable end other than *mokṣa* is called *abhyudaya*. *Janārdana* is the one that all these people pray to for both types of results. In a prayer there are two objects. The primary object is what you are asking for and the secondary object is whom you are asking. For a *saṃsārī*, the two are separate. But a seeker prays to the Lord to know the Lord. So, the two objects become one. The person from whom all this is asked, be it *abhyudaya* or *niśśreyas*, is called *Janārdana—janaiḥ ardyate yācyate yasmāt saḥ janārdanaḥ*.

Please describe your glories to me, the listener, because the description is like *amṛta*, nectar, to my ears. *Amṛta* is anything that satisfies you or gives you happiness. *Śaṅkara* says that *Arjuna* refers to the words coming out of *Kṛṣṇa*’s mouth as *amṛta*.

<sup>1</sup> अर्दते: गतिकर्मणो रूपम् । असुराणाम् देवप्रतिपक्षभूतानां जनानां नरकादि गमयितृत्वात् जनार्दनः ।

अभ्युदय-निःश्रेयसपुरुषार्थ-प्रयोजनम् सर्वजनैः याच्यते इति वा । शा० भा० ।।

*Ardateḥ gatikarmaṇo rūpam asurāṇāṃ devapratipakṣabhūtānāṃ janānāṃ narakādi gamayitṛtvāt janārdanaḥ. Śā. Bhā.*

*Abhyudaya-niśśreyasapurūṣārtha-prayojanam sarvajanaīḥ yācyate iti vā.*

'For me, there cannot be enough of it, *trptiḥ nāsti me.*' The more he hears, the more he wants to hear.

### LORD KĪĀŪA RECOUNTS HIS GLORIES

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

हन्त ते कथयिष्यामि दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।

प्राधान्यतः कुरुश्रेष्ठ नास्त्यन्तो विस्तरस्य मे ॥१९॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hyātmavibhūtayāḥ*

*prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me*

Verse 19

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān* (The Lord); उवाच *uvāca* — said;  
हन्त *hanta* — well now; कुरुश्रेष्ठ *kurusreṣṭha* — O! Best of the *Kurus*; ते *te* — to you;  
(ये) दिव्याः आत्म-विभूतयः (*ye divyāḥ ātma-vibhūtayāḥ*) — the glories of Mine that are  
divine; (तः) कथयिष्यामि (*tāḥ*) *kathayiṣyāmi* — (those) I will narrate; प्राधान्यतः  
*prādhānyataḥ* — in keeping with their importance; हि *hi* — because; मे (विभूतीनाम्)  
विस्तरस्य *me (vibhūtinām) vistarasya* — for the detailed description of My (*vibhūtis*);  
अन्तः न अस्ति *antaḥ na asti* — there is no end

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

Well now, O! Best of the *Kurus, Arjuna*, I will tell you My divine  
glories in keeping with their importance; because there is no end to a  
detailed description of My glories .

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥२०॥

*ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ*

*ahamādiśca madhyam ca bhūtānāmanta eva ca*

Verse 20

गुडाकेश *guḍākeśa* — O! The master of sleep, *Arjuna*; अहम् आत्मा *aham ātmā* — I am  
the self; सर्व-भूताशय-स्थितः *sarva-bhūtāśaya-sthitaḥ* — who resides in the hearts of all  
beings; च *ca* — and; अहम् *aham* — I am; भूतानाम् *bhūtānām* — of all beings/things;  
आदिः *ādiḥ* — the cause of the creation; मध्यम् च *madhyam ca* — and the sustenance;  
अन्तः एव च *antaḥ eva ca* — and resolution

O! The master of the sleep, *Arjuna*, I am the self, who resides in the  
hearts of all beings and I am the cause of the creation, sustenance, and  
resolution of all beings/things.

*Hanta* is an expression of wonder or pleasure. *Kṛṣṇa* is happy that *Arjuna* has asked him this. He says, ‘*te kathayisyāmi*—I will explain to you these special heavenly glories, *divyāḥ ātma-vibhūṭayaḥ*.’ There is no end to my glories, they are endless, *nāsti antaḥ vistarasya me*. Therefore, I will enumerate them in keeping with their importance, *prādhānyataḥ*.

*Śaṅkara* explains: It is not possible to narrate all of them without leaving anything out. Even in one hundred years the list would not come to an end. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says that he would tell *Arjuna*, a few important ones among them.

Firstly, you said you want to meditate. Then meditate upon yourself for I am yourself, *aham ātmā*. Instead of glorifying *Īśvara*, just know yourself, for you are that *Īśvara* and all the glories belong to you.

*Guḍākeśa* is the one who has mastered sleep. The word *guḍākā* means sleep. One who has mastered this *guḍākā* is *guḍākeśa*. *Śaṅkara* says *jita-nidra*<sup>1</sup> where *nidra* means *tamas*; he is the one who has mastered *tamas* and is alert. There is another meaning of *guḍākeśa*; the one who has matted hair—*guḍa* means thick or matted and *keśa* means hair.

*Arjuna* asked *Bhagavān* as to which are the objects in which he is available for meditation and *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘*aham ātmā guḍākeśa*—I am the self, the *ātmā*, in you *Arjuna*.’ The *aham*, the *pratyagātmā* in *Arjuna* is *Bhagavān* and the name-form *Arjuna* is only an *upādhi*. Since all glories belong to *Bhagavān*, and *aham* is *Bhagavān*, all glories of *Bhagavān* also belong to the *pratyagātmā*. The primary statement of the *śāstra* is that the *vastu* is *pratyagātmā*. ‘Secondly, with reference to *avastu*, which is *mithyā*,’ the Lord says, ‘I am *jagatkāraṇa*, the cause for everything. And I am the one who obtains in the *buddhi* of all beings, *sarva-bhūta-āsaya-sthita*, as the *pratyagātmā*. So, first you have to recognise Me as yourself.’

The statement, *aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūta-āsaya-sthitaḥ* is an equation. That *ātmā*, which obtains in the *buddhi* of all beings, I am. The predication is between *aham* and *ātmā* where the adjective to *ātmā* is *sarva-bhūta-āsaya-sthita*. That *ātmā*, which resides in the heart of all beings, I am. *Aham* here means *Īśvara*. So, *Īśvara* is predicated to *ātmā*. This *ātmā* obtaining in all beings is *paramātmā*. That I am, *aham asmi*. If you want a primary form of contemplation upon *Īśvara*, then contemplate on the *pratyagātmā*. *Nididhyāsana* is another *aṅga* of *śravaṇa*, the *śāstra-vicāra*, which is the real means for knowing. *Śaṅkara* says that it is to be meditated upon always, *nityam dhyeyaḥ*.

*Bhagavān* says, ‘In all the various objects that I am now going to narrate to you, I should be meditated upon. I am available for appreciation there.’ How is this so?

<sup>1</sup> गुडाका निद्रा तस्याः ईशः गुडाकेशः जितनिद्रः । शा० भा० ।।

*Aham ādīḥ bhūtānām*, I am the efficient and material cause of the creation, the one because of whom the creation of all things takes place. Then *madhyaṃ ca*, I am the sustaining cause, *sthiti-kāraṇa* of all the *bhūtas*, beings. The sustenance of all beings is because of Me. And I am *antaḥ*, the cause into which they resolve. In the end they come back to Me, the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. This being so, any object is Me and can be meditated upon as Me. Any value, which is intrinsic in the manifested form is Me, like sugar in the sugarcane. You may love sugar. That is your personal value. But in the sweetness in the sugar you can see *Bhagavān* because it is this sweetness, which makes sugarcane what it is. With this understanding we can see that *Īśvara* is available for invocation in any object that has some glory. Being the *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*, nothing is separate from him. There are countless names and forms, all of which are available for meditation. But then you only see your ego surfacing as an admirer with reference to certain objects. The source of that admiration is nothing but *Īśvara* seen by your ego as it assumes the form of an admirer.

Since *Īśvara* is the cause for creation, sustenance and dissolution, naturally anything here is an object of meditation. *Īśvara* can be invoked in any given form. Still in certain places he is invoked more easily.

आदित्यानामहं विष्णुर्ज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।

मरीचिर्मरुतामस्मि नक्षत्राणामहं शशी ॥२१॥

*ādityānāmahaṃ viṣṇurjyotiṣāṃ raviraṃśumān*  
*marīcīrmarutāmasmi nakṣatrāṇāmahaṃ śaśī*

Verse 21

आदित्यानाम् *ādityānām* — among the *Ādityas*; अहम् विष्णुः *aham Viṣṇuḥ* — I am *Viṣṇu*; ज्योतिषाम् *jyotiṣām* — among the luminaries; रविः *raviḥ* — the Sun; अंशुमान् *aṃśumān* — the one who has rays; मरुताम् *marutām* — among the *Maruts*; मरीचिः *marīciḥ* *asmi* — I am *Marīci*; नक्षत्राणाम् *nakṣatrāṇām* — among the luminaries seen at night; अहम् शशी *ahaṃ śaśī* — I am the Moon

Among the *Ādityas* I am *Viṣṇu*; among the luminaries, the Sun, the one who has rays. Among the *Maruts*, I am *Marīci*; among the luminaries seen at night, I am the Moon.

वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि देवानामस्मि वासवः ।

इन्द्रियाणां मनश्चास्मि भूतानामस्मि चेतना ॥२२॥

*vedānāṃ sāmavedo'smi devānāmasmi vāsavaḥ*  
*indriyāṇāṃ manaścāsmi bhūtānāmasmi cetanā*

Verse 22

वेदानाम् *vedānām* — among the Vedas; सामवेदः *sāmavedaḥ asmi* — I am *Sāmaveda*; देवानाम् *devānām* — among the gods; वासवः *vāsavaḥ asmi* — I am

*Indra*; इन्द्रियाणाम् *indriyāṇām* — among the sense organs; मनः अस्मि *manaḥ asmi* — I am the mind; भूतानाम् च *bhūtānām ca* — and of the embodied beings; चेतना अस्मि *cetanā asmi*— I am the faculty of cognition

Among the Vedas I am the *Sāmaveda*; among the gods I am *Indra*; among the sense organs I am the mind, and of the embodied beings I am the faculty of cognition.

In the *purāṇas*, Vedas, you will hear of various objects suitable for contemplation upon *Īśvara*. From the standpoint of the *purāṇas*, among the twelve *ādityas*, I am *Viṣṇu*. *Īśvara* viewed from the standpoint of sustenance is *Viṣṇu*. Here *Viṣṇu* is the name of one of the *āditya-devatās*,<sup>1</sup> known to us through the *purāṇas*. Each *āditya*, Sun, sustains life within its sphere but *Viṣṇu* is the all-pervasive sustainer of even the *ādityas*. And here *Bhagavān* says, I am that *Viṣṇu*.

From the standpoint of the world, among the luminous bodies in the sky the brightest is the sun, *ravi*, the one who has rays, *aṃśumān*. The sun is the centre of our solar system, the energising factor because of which the earth has life. So, among the luminous bodies I am the life-giving sun. In the *śruti*, there are several *devatās* mentioned. Among them are the *marut-devatās*. Among these *marut-devatās* I am *Marīci*. Among the luminous bodies visible in the night sky, *nakṣatras*, I am the moon, *śaśī*, the brightest. There is another interpretation of this. *Nakṣatra*<sup>2</sup> means the place one goes to. Due to the efficacy of certain rituals, one goes to *lokas*, which are called *nakṣatras*. Among all these *nakṣatras*, *candra-loka* is one of the better ones. But this *candra-loka* is different from *candra*, the moon.

In all these, the one who obtains is *Īśvara* and his *vibhūti* is what is pointed out here. The glory of the *devatās* or the glory of the luminaries is nothing but the glory of *Īśvara*. So, the topic is not, which *devatā* is to be worshipped but that an object is what it is because of the glory of *Īśvara*. This is what is to be understood here.

Among the Vedas, I am the *Sāmaveda*. All four Vedas talk of the glories of *Īśvara*. In each, the first portion discusses *karmas* or rituals and the law of *karma*, which is non-separate from *Īśvara*. It reveals the Lord as the one who presides over the law of *karma*, *karma-adhyakṣa*, and as one who is the *karma-phala-dātā*, the one who gives the results of actions. For the performance of a ritual, *puṇya* is the *karma-phala*. Something that is the cause for a favourable result, but considered by you as luck because it is not visible, the *śāstras* call *puṇya*. It can be gained by the

<sup>1</sup> The *ādityas* are twelve in number and they are: *Dhātā*, *Mitra*, *Aryamā*, *Rudra*, *Varuṇa*, *Sūrya*, *Bhaga*, *Vivasvān*, *Pūṣā*, *Savitā*, *Tvaṣṭā*, *Viṣṇu*.

<sup>2</sup> *Nakṣate*, *gacchati* – goes, *yajamānaḥ* – the performer of the rituals; *etat* – to this place; *iti* – *nakṣatraḥ*.

performance of certain rituals. That a particular ritual will produce a particular result is *Īśvara's* mandate. Therefore, in that very *karma* is *Īśvara*. The means, *sādhana*, is *Īśvara* and the end that is sought, the *sādhya*, is *Īśvara*. The entire *karma-kāṇḍa* talks indirectly of *Īśvara* in this way. The *jñāna-kāṇḍa* reveals *Īśvara* directly. So, all the Vedas talk about *Īśvara*. 'Among them, I am *Sāmaveda*,' says the Lord. In the *Sāmaveda* all the *mantras* are sung, that is, they are recited in a simple musical form. This 'singing' is more than mere recitation. Therefore, the *Sāmaveda* stands out among the recited Vedas. Another reason, though weak, is that the *Sāmaveda* has the famous *mahā-vākya*, *tat tvam asi*. So, 'Among the Vedas I am the musical and pleasing *Sāmaveda*,' says *Bhagavān*.

'Among the various *devas*, I am *Indra*.' *Indra* is the Lord of the *devas*, the most exalted among them. His elevated status is due to *Īśvara* alone. So, the glory of *Indra* is *Īśvara*. In *Indra*, who is the most exalted of *devas*, we invoke *Īśvara*.

There are different types of sense organs or *indriyas*; the organs of action, *karmendriyas*, and the organs of knowledge, *jñānendriyas*. 'All of them,' *Bhagavān* says, 'are Me.' 'But among them I am the mind,' because all senses have the mind as their basis. It is through the mind that we gain the knowledge of the world and through the mind we order the *karmendriyas* to perform their actions. The mind is behind the sense organs as a receiving organ that receives data from all sense perceptions. And it is the seat of desires, which are fulfilled by the *karmendriyas*. Both the sense organs of perception and the organs of action depend upon the mind. Therefore, the mind is also considered an instrument, *karāṇa*. Among all the *indriyas*, *karāṇas*, I am the mind, the one that is most important, without which none of the others can function. Wherever there is such importance, there is the glory of *Īśvara*. The glory of the mind is *Īśvara*.

Then, 'Among the embodied beings, *bhūtānām*, I am the *buddhi*, the faculty of cognition.' The capacity to inquire and understand, which is manifest through the *buddhi*, is *Īśvara*. There is nothing more beautiful than clarity of knowledge. *Bhagavān* says, 'I am that *cetanā*.' *Cetanā* implies not only clarity, but free will. It is the highest form of *prakṛti's* manifestation. If you accept a process of evolution, *prakṛti* reaches a point of fulfilment the moment the *upādhi* gains the faculty of choice, *buddhi*. There is an in-built faculty for a child to grow to become an adult. It is a biologically mechanical process involving no special will. This is called *bhāva-vikāra*. But once the will is given, *prakṛti* has fulfilled itself and does not help you in your growth any further. You have to use the will, you have been given, to grow into a mature person. And you can grow up to the point where you discover you are infinite. That is the highest manifestation of *Īśvara* as a being.

रुद्राणां शङ्करश्चास्मि वित्तेशो यक्षरक्षसाम् ।

वसूनां पावकश्चास्मि मेरुः शिखरिणामहम् ॥२३॥

*rudrāṇāṃ śaṅkaraścāsmi vitteśo yakṣarakṣasām  
vasūnāṃ pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇāmaham*

Verse 23

रुद्राणाम् *rudrāṇām* — among the *Rudras*<sup>1</sup>; शङ्करः च अस्मि *śaṅkaraḥ ca asmi* — I am *Śaṅkara*; वित्तेशः *vitteśah* — (I am) *Kubera*, the Lord of wealth; यक्ष-रक्षसाम् *yakṣa-rakṣasām* — among the *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*; वसूनाम् *vasūnām* — among the *vasus*; पावकः च अस्मि *pāvakaḥ ca asmi* — I am Fire, the purifier; मेरुः अहम् *meruḥ aham* — I am *Meru*; शिखरिणाम् *śikhariṇām* — among the snow-peaked mountains

Among the *Rudras* I am *Śaṅkara*; I am *Kubera* among the *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*. Among the *Vasus* I am Fire. I am *Meru* among the snow-peaked mountains.

Now *Bhagavān* talks about the eleven *Rudras* found in the *purāṇas* and the *śruti*. ‘Among them, I am *Śaṅkara*.’ Earlier he told us that he is *Viṣṇu*, the sustainer, among the *Ādityas*. Now he reveals that he is *Śaṅkara*, the destroyer among the *Rudras*. *Śaṃ karoti iti Śaṅkara*—the one who blesses is called *Śaṅkara*. In the tradition he is looked upon as *Śiva* and worshipped for *mokṣa*, as the destroyer of ignorance and its product, *saṃsāra* and *duḥkha*. In the word *Upaniṣads*, the root *sad* means that which causes the disintegration of *saṃsāra* by putting an end to ignorance, *avasādayati*. Because destruction is involved, *Śiva* is always worshipped by the one who wants *mokṣa*. *Śaṃ* means that which is auspicious, *maṅgala*, the final end. By destroying ignorance, he gives the ultimate end, which is *mokṣa*. And there is nothing more auspicious than *mokṣa*.

‘*Ahaṃ vitteśah*, the presiding deity of wealth,’ says *Bhagavān*. That is not *Lakṣmī*. She is wealth itself and is *Īśvara*’s glory. When you look at *Īśvara* from the standpoint of wealth, then *Īśvara* is *Lakṣmī*, the *Śakti* of *Īśvara*. But the presiding deity of wealth is *Kubera*. So, here, *vitteśa* is *Kubera*, one of the *yakṣas*. ‘*Yakṣāḥ*’ and ‘*rakṣāḥ*’<sup>2</sup> are groups of celestials. Among them, I am *Kubera*.’ There is yet another group—a group of eight *vasus*<sup>3</sup>. ‘Among them, I am the god of fire, *ahaṃ pāvakaḥ*.’ The god of fire is called *anala* because he burns everything; he never has enough—*alaṃ na vidyate yasya*. He is also called *pāvaka*, because by burning he purifies everything.

<sup>1</sup> The *Rudras* are eleven in number. The names of the eleven *Rudras* are given differently in different *purāṇas*. They are: *Aja*, *Ekapāda*, *Ahīrbudhnya*, *Tvaṣṭā*, *Rudra*, *Hara*, *Śambhu*, *Tryambaka*, *Aparājita*, *Īśāna* and *Tribhuvana*.

<sup>2</sup> *rakṣāḥ*—a particular sect of *asuras*. *Rakṣitavyaṃ śarīram asmāt iti rakṣāḥ*, the one from whom one’s body has to be protected.

<sup>3</sup> The *vasus* are eight in number. They are *Dhara*, *Dhruva*, *Soma*, *Ahas*, *Vāyu*, *Agni*, *Pratyūṣa* and *Prabhāsa*.

Then he talks of the mountains. There are two types of mountains, *śikharīs*, those with peaks, and *aśikharīs*, those without peaks. Here *Bhagavān* refers to mountains that have peaks. ‘Among them, I am *Meru*.’

पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम् ।

सेनानीनामहं स्कन्दः सरसामस्मि सागरः ॥२४॥

*purodhasāṃ ca mukhyaṃ māṃ viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim*

*senānīnāmahaṃ skandaḥ sarasāmasmi sāgaraḥ*

Verse 24

पार्थ *pārtha* — O! *Arjuna*; पुरोधसाम् च *purodhasām ca* — and among the priests; मुख्यम् *mukhyam* — the chief; बृहस्पतिम् *bṛhaspatim* — *Bṛhaspati*; माम् विद्धि *mām viddhi* — may you know Me to be; सेनानीनाम् *senānīnām* — among the commanders-in-chief; अहम् स्कन्दः *aham skandaḥ* — I am *Skanda*; सरसाम् *sarasām* — among the reservoirs of water; सागरः अस्मि *sāgaraḥ asmi* — I am the ocean

*Arjuna*, may you know Me to be *Bṛhaspati*, the chief among the priests.

Among the commanders-in-chief I am *Skanda*; among the water reservoirs I am the ocean.

*Puraḥ* means ‘in future.’ So, *purodhas*<sup>1</sup> is the one who helps you gain *puṇya* in the future — by performing rituals, etc. That is a priest. Even kings bow down to priests. Yet among the priests there is one who is above all the rest—*Bṛhaspati*, the *guru* of *Indra* the king of the *devas*. Even the king of the *devas* bows to *Bṛhaspati*, the *guru* of the *deva-loka*. I am that *Bṛhaspati* who is the chief, *mukhya*, among the royal priests.

*Senānīnām*<sup>2</sup>, among the commanders-in-chief who lead the army, I am *Skanda*. *Skanda* is Lord *Subrahmaṇya*. In the *purāṇas*, he is referred to as the general of the *devas*, *devasenādhipati*. Lord *Subrahmaṇya* is also called *Skanda* or *Ṣaṇmukha* and is invoked for protection from any type of fear. So, here *Īśvara* is invoked as one who protects and the glory of that *Skanda* is *Īśvara*’s glory.

There are two types of water reservoirs. One is created by God, the other, by man. Among the God-made water reservoirs, which are stationary, *sarasām*, I am the ocean, *sāgara*. This does not include the flowing rivers, which he talks of later. So, here he says, among the natural stationary water reservoirs I am the mighty ocean.

<sup>1</sup> *puraḥ, agre (in future) yajamānaṃ dadhāti (helps the one who performs the ritual in gaining puṇya iti) purodhas.*

<sup>2</sup> *senāṃ nayati, svavaśam āpādayati iti senānī—*the one who leads the *sena*, the army, i.e., the one who keeps the army under his control.



महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।

यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥२५॥

*maharṣīṅāṃ bhṛgurahaṃ girāmasmyekamakṣaram*

*yajñānāṃ japayajño'smi sthāvarāṅāṃ himālayaḥ*

Verse 25

महर्षीणाम् *maharṣīṅām* — among the sages; अहम् भृगुः *aham bhṛguḥ* — I am *Bhṛgu*; गिराम् *girām* — among the words; एकम् अक्षरम् अस्मि *ekam akṣaram asmi* — I am the single syllable *Om*; यज्ञानाम् *yajñānām* — among rituals; जप-यज्ञः अस्मि *japa-yajñaḥ asmi* — I am the ritual of *japa*; स्थावराणाम् *sthāvaraṅām* — among the mountains; हिमालयः *himalāyaḥ* — the Himalayas

Among the sages I am *Bhṛgu*, among the words I am the single syllable *Om*, among rituals I am the ritual of *japa*, among the mountains, the Himalayas.

Among the ancient *maharṣis*, *Bhṛgu* was considered to be the greatest. He is mentioned in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, which says *Bhṛgu* who was the son of *Varuṇa* got this knowledge from his father. Here *Bhagavān* says I am this *Bhṛgu*.

*Gīḥ* means speech. *Śaṅkara* says that, here it refers to 'words.' Among the many words, *girām*, in all languages, there is one all-inclusive word of one single syllable. That is *Om*. Phonetically, the word *Om* does not belong to any language. It is a universal sound consisting of three sounds—A-U-M. When anybody opens his mouth and makes a sound, it is 'ā.' When he closes his mouth and makes a sound, 'm' is the sound produced. The same 'ā' becomes 'u' when the mouth is rounded. So, these are sounds, which come naturally to any human being, and all other sounds, are modifications of 'ā.' All words are combinations of these sounds and all names are words in all languages. So, *Om*, the name of the Lord, is a single syllable representing all words.

It is a perfect name for the Lord. How, otherwise, are you going to give him a name? If you give him one name you are excluding all other names—as though they are not the names of the Lord. This is the difference between the Lord and an object. When you say apple, it means only one object and excludes all others. All other fruits, all other objects are excluded. Similarly if you say *Rāma*, then *Kṛṣṇa*, *Śiva*, you and everybody else are excluded. So, the Lord's name has to be such that it includes all names. That is why in prayer we repeat a given name 108 times. The Sanskrit letters from 'ā' to 'ha' are 54 in number when you include certain forms of letters, which are not generally counted. All names are names of the Lord and all names are but words, which in turn are letters. If you count the letters in ascending order, *ārohaṇa*, then in descending order, *avarohaṇa*, they amount to 108. Within this alone all words are possible. Therefore, if you repeat one name 108 times, you have symbolically repeated all the names of the Lord, known and unknown. That is for Sanskrit. Then phonetically, all sounds in all languages are between 'ā' when you open your mouth and 'm' when you close it. The letter 'u' stands

for all other sounds in between. So, we have *Om*. When you say *Om*, all names are included; So, the whole *jagat*, the apparent form of *Īśvara*, the Lord, is covered. Once you have said *Om*, you require nothing more because it is a non-linguistic phonetic symbol for the Lord.

The Lord is one and non-dual containing within himself all things, which are expressed by *Om*. So, *Om* stands for the non-dual one and among the words, I am *Om*. That is why *omkāra* is the sound symbol, *pratīka*, for meditation upon *Īśvara*.

‘A’ stands for the waking world, ‘u’ for the thought world and ‘m’ for the unmanifest. It starts with creation, *sr̥ṣṭi*, and resolves into *Brahman*. *Om* is thus a word-symbol for meditation upon *paraṃ brahma*. It is also a word through, which you understand *paraṃ brahma*. Thus it becomes both a word revealing *Brahman* and a verbal symbol for meditating upon *Īśvara*.

*Om* as a word means that which protects and sustains everything, *avati, rakṣati*. In that sense, *Om* is the name for *Īśvara*.

There are many rituals called *yajñas*, for which you require a number of ingredients. You need a fire. And when you light one, some small creatures, living in the wood you offer, may be unwittingly destroyed. You need money to buy the things required to perform the *yajña* and that money you obtain by competing in the world. In doing so, you hurt somebody. Your gain is necessarily at the expense of someone else's gain. So, in the process of performing the ritual, we unwittingly hurt or destroy many things. To offset these *pāpas* we have to say a few extra prayers. All rituals and prayers help in acquiring *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. But among them, *japa-yajña* or mental repetition of the Lord's name is the greatest because you do not harm anything. So, among all these various *yajñas*, I am this *japa-yajña*, which incurs no *pāpa*.

*Sthāvarāṇāṃ himālayaḥ*—among the mountains, I am the Himalayas. Here, he talks about the mountains, which may or may not have peaks. *Sthāvara* means that which does not move. So, among these immobile mountains, I am the Himalayas, *ālaya*, an abode of *hima*, snow. The distinction of the Himalayas among all the mountains is the vastness of their ranges.

The Lord continues to describe his glories as they express in various exalted beings. He has chosen what is famous in the *purāṇas* and the *śrutis* and all that is popular in the world. Later Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, among men I am *Arjuna*. Wherever there is excellence, that excellence belongs to the Lord.

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।

गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥२६॥

*aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṇāṃ devarṣīṇāṃ ca nāradaḥ*

*gandharvāṇāṃ citrarathaḥ siddhānāṃ kapilo munih*

Verse 26

सर्ववृक्षाणाम् *sarvavṛkṣāṇām* — among all the trees; अश्वत्थः *aśvatthaḥ* — (I am) the ficus religiosa, the sacred tree; देवर्षीणाम् च *devarṣīṇam ca* — and among the celestial sages; नारदः *nāradaḥ* — (I am) *Nārada*; गन्धर्वाणाम् *gandharvāṇām* — among the *gandharvas*; चित्ररथः *citrarathaḥ* — (I am) *Citraratha*; सिद्धानाम् *siddhānām* — among the *siddhas*; कपिलः मुनिः *kapilaḥ muniḥ* — (I am) the sage, *Kapila*

I am the sacred ficus tree among all the trees and among the celestial sages, I am *Nārada*. Among the *gandharvas*, I am *Citraratha*, among the *siddhas*, I am the sage, *Kapila*.

The *aśvattha* tree, made famous by the *śruti* and the *Gītā*, symbolises the entire *saṃsāra*. The twigs of the *aśvattha* tree are used in the *vaidika* fire rituals and the tree itself is worshipped by people who want children. The *neem* tree, which grows along with the *aśvattha* tree is considered its wife and generally couples wanting children perform the marriage of these two trees. So, among the trees, *aśvattha* is the most sacred and therefore, the Lord says here that among all the trees, I am the *aśvattha*, every part of which is worshipped. There is even a *śloka* on this in which Brahmaji is invoked in the root of the tree, *Viṣṇu* in the middle, and *Śiva* at the top and then they are worshipped there—*mūlato brahmarūpāya madhyato viṣṇurūpiṇe agrataḥ śivarūpāya vṛkṣarājāya te namaḥ*.

Then he talks of *ṛṣis*. There are two types of *ṛṣis*, those who are human beings, *manuṣyas* and those who are gods, *devarṣis*. *Ṛṣi* means the one who knows. They are also called *mantra-draṣṭās* because all the *veda-mantras* are seen in the minds of *ṛṣis*. For every *mantra* there is a *ṛṣi* who received it. Sage *Viṣvāmītra*, for example, is the *ṛṣi* for the *gāyatrī-mantra*. *Ṛṣis* are involved in every part of the Veda and among all the *ṛṣis*, *Bhagavān* says, I am *Nārada*. In all eighteen *purāṇas*, *Nārada* appears quite often. Here *Bhagavān* says that the greatness enjoyed by *Nārada* is his.

There are different types of celestials. Among them, are the *gandharvas*, a group of art and music lovers. ‘Among these *gandharvas* I am *Citraratha*,’ says *Bhagavān*. *Citraratha* was one of the sixteen sons of *Kaśyapa* and he was a king and a great artist.

‘Among the ones born wise, *siddhas*, I am *Kapila*,’ says *Bhagavān*. There is a beautiful story in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* about *Kapila*. As a young boy, he teaches *brahmavidyā* to his mother, *Devahūti*.

उच्चैःश्रवसमश्वानां विद्धि माममृतोद्भवम् ।

ऐरावतं गजेन्द्राणां नराणां च नराधिपम् ॥२७॥

*uccaiśravasamaśvānāṃ viddhi māmamṛtodbhavam*  
*airāvataṃ gajendrāṇāṃ narāṇāṃ ca narādhipam*

Verse 27

अश्वानाम् *āsvānām* — among the horses; उच्चैःश्रवसम् *uccaiḥśravasam* — *Uccaiḥśravas*; अमृत-उद्भवम् *amṛta-udbhavam* — born of the churning for nectar; गजेन्द्राणाम् *gajendrāṇām* — among the elephants; ऐरावतम् *airāvataṃ* — *Airāvata*; नराणाम् च *narāṇām ca* — and among men; नराधिपम् *narādhipam* — the king; माम् विद्धि *mām viddhi* — may you know Me as

May you know Me among the horses as *Uccaiśśravas*, born of the churning for nectar, *Airāvata* among the elephants and the king among men.

‘Among the horses I am *Uccaiśśravas*,’ says *Bhagavān*. It is Lord *Indra*’s horse. There is a famous story in the *purāṇas* in which the *devas* and *asuras* churn the ocean of milk to extract *amṛta*. Using mount, *Mandara*, as the churning rod and the serpent *Vāsuki* as the churning rope, the *devas* and *asuras* churn this ocean. During the churning a lot of things came out, one of which was this particular horse. It was given to *Indra*. Because it was born of the ocean, which produced the nectar or because it was born when the churning for *amṛta* took place, it is *amṛtodbhava*. *Amṛta* means *kṣīra*, milk, here; and *udbhava* means that which was born of; therefore, *amṛtodbhava* means born of milk, (here milky ocean).

*Airāvata* is the name of a white elephant born of *Irāvān*. It was also produced from the churning of the ocean for *amṛta*. *Irā* means water, *tadvān* means one who has that, therefore, *Irāvān* means one who has water, the ocean. Born of *Irāvān* is *Airāvata*. It is the only one of its kind and it also belongs to *Indra*. Among all the elephants, I am *Airāvata*. Then among the human beings, I am the ruler, *narādhipa*, in other words, the king. All the power and pomp of the king belong to Me. The crown, which makes him a king, is Me.

आयुधानामहं वज्रं धेनूनामस्मि कामधुक् ।

प्रजनश्चास्मि कन्दर्पः सर्पाणामस्मि वासुकिः ॥२८॥

*āyudhānāmahaṃ vajraṃ dhenūnāmasmi kāmadhuk*

*prajānaścāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇāmasmi vāsukiḥ*

Verse 28

आयुधानाम् *āyudhānām* — among the weapons; अहम् वज्रम् *aham vajram* — I am *Vajra*; धेनूनाम् *dhenūnām* — among the cows; कामधुक् अस्मि *kāmadhuk asmi* — I am the wish-fulfilling cow; प्रजनः च अस्मि कन्दर्पः *prajānaḥ ca asmi kandarpaḥ* — I am *Kandarpa*, the God of love who is the cause for progeny; सर्पाणाम् *sarpāṇām* — among the poisonous snakes; वासुकिः अस्मि *vāsukiḥ asmi* — I am *Vāsuki*

Among the weapons I am *Vajra*; among the cows I am the wish-fulfilling cow, and I am *Kandarpa*, the God of love, who is the cause for progeny; among the poisonous snakes I am *Vāsuki* .

Among the various weapons I am *vajra-āyudha*. Made from the bone of a great *maharṣi* called *Dadhīci*, it is the most powerful of all weapons. And it too belongs to *Indra*. So, among all the weapons I am the most powerful *vajra-āyudha*.

There are thousands of cows, which give milk. But *Kāmadhenu* gives anything you ask from it. So, among the givers nobody can give like *Kāmadhenu*. It also came out of the ocean while it was being churned for *amṛta* and it belonged to sage *Vasiṣṭha*. There is a story in which King *Viṣvāmitra*, travelling through the forest with his soldiers and retinue, came to *Vasiṣṭha's* cottage. *Vasiṣṭha*, though living in a simple hut, was able to feed the king and all his soldiers through the bounty of the *Kāmadhenu*. When King *Viṣvāmitra* came to know of this, he wanted to have the *Kāmadhenu*. *Vasiṣṭha* told him that the cow would yield only to a *brāhmaṇa*. *Viṣvāmitra* vowed he would become a *brāhmaṇa*. But the cow did not yield anything. As long as he had *rajas* expressing as anger, greed, etc., nothing happened. Finally King *Viṣvāmitra* understood and gave up everything and became a *maharṣi* himself. This is the story of *kāmadhenu*. And the Lord says, 'Among givers, I am *Kāmadhenu*.'

*Prajanaḥ* is the cause for progeny. In the parents of children, I am *Kandarpa*, the God of love. He is the presiding deity of the love that is behind progeny. *Prajana* is adjective to *Kandarpa*. We have to add, 'In the parents of children.' Parents are not the cause of progeny. It is *Kandarpa*, the god of love, who is the cause of progeny. And the glory of *Kandarpa* is the glory of the Lord, and not that of *Kandarpa*.

Then among the poisonous snakes I am *Vāsuki*. *Vāsuki*, as we have seen, was used to churn the ocean for *amṛta*. It is a very long snake found in *deva-loka* whose very breathing will destroy people. So, it is a source of great fear. That source of fear and that poison is nothing but Me. There is nothing that is separate from Me.

अनन्तश्चास्मि नागानां वरुणो यादसामहम् ।

पितृणामर्यमा चास्मि यमः संयमतामहम् ॥२९॥

*anantaścāsmi nāgānāṃ varuṇo yādasāmaham*

*pitṛṇāmaryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṃyamatāmaham*

Verse 29

नागानाम् *nāgānām* — among the many headed snakes; अनन्तः च अस्मि *anantaḥ ca asmi* — and I am *Ananta* (the king); यादसाम् *yādasām* — among the gods of water; अहम् वरुणः *aham varuṇaḥ* — I am *Varuṇa* (the king); पितृणाम् *pitṛṇām* — among the manes; अर्यमा च अस्मि *aryamā ca asmi* — I am *Aryamā* (the king); संयमताम्

*saṅyamatām* — among those who enforce discipline अहम् यमः *aham yamaḥ* — I am *Yama*

And I am *Ananta* among the many headed snakes; I am *Varuṇa* among the gods of water; among the manes I am *Aryamā*; I am *Yama* among those who enforce discipline.

There are one-headed and many-headed snakes according to the *purāṇas*. Among the many-headed, I am *Ananta*, *Ādiśeṣa* a great devotee of Lord *Viṣṇu* who had one thousand heads. Lord *Viṣṇu* reclines on the coils of *Ādiśeṣa*, the original spring mattress!

*Yādasām*, among the presiding deities of rivers such as *Gaṅgā*, *Yamunā*, etc., ‘I am *Varuṇa*.’ *Varuṇa* is the Lord of water and is therefore, exalted among the presiding deities of rivers etc. His glory is again that of the Lord.

‘Among the celestial manes, I am *Aryamā*.’ People who live a religious life but do not perform the *vaidika* rituals such as *agniṣṭoma* become celestial manes called *Agniṣvāta* etc., otherwise known as *pitṛs* in general. Their king is *Aryamā*. This glory of *Aryamā* is of *Īśvara*.

Among people who enforce the law like the police and judiciary, I am Lord *Yama*, the Lord of death. Nobody can go past him. The power he has, which makes him the feared Lord of death, is nothing but Me.

प्रह्लादश्चास्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलयतामहम्।

मृगाणां च मृगेन्द्रोऽहं वैनतेयश्च पक्षिणाम्॥३०॥

*prahlādaścāsmi daityānāṃ kālaḥ kalayatāmaham*  
*mṛgāṇāṃ ca mṛgendro’haṃ vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām*

Verse 30

दैत्यानाम् *daityānām* — among the *asuras* who are born of *Diti*; प्रह्लादः च अस्मि *prahlādaḥ ca asmi* — and I am *Prahlāda*; कलयताम् *kalayatām* — among things that reckon; अहम् कालः *aham kālaḥ*— I am time; मृगाणाम् च *mṛgāṇām ca* — and among the wild animals; अहम् मृगेन्द्रः *aham mṛgendraḥ* — I am the king of animals, the lion; पक्षिणाम् *pakṣiṇām* — among the birds; वैनतेयः च *vainateyaḥ ca* — and I am *Garuḍa*

And I am *Prahlāda* among the *daityas*, the *asuras* who are born of *Diti*. Among things that reckon, I am the Time and among the wild animals I am the lion. And I am *Garuḍa* among the birds.

The one who is born of *Diti* is a *daitya*. A descendent can be regarded either from the maternal or paternal standpoint. Here it is from the standpoint of the mother. The son of *Kuntī*, *Kaunteya* is another example of mentioning the descendent from the

standpoint of the maternal side. The sons of *Diti* are all *asuras*. The *asuras* and their progeny are called *daityas*. Among them, there was one who, even though he was a son of an *asura*, was a *bhakta* of *Nārāyaṇa*. That was *Prahlāda*. He continuously repeated the Lord's name in spite of his father, King *Hiraṇyakaśipu*'s order and his teachers' efforts to teach him otherwise. *Hiraṇyakaśipu* had ordered in his kingdom that he alone should be worshipped as God and no other God should be worshipped. Everyone had to repeat the words, *Hiraṇyāya namaḥ* and worship him as God. *Prahlāda* refused to do that and continued to say the Lord *Nārāyaṇa*'s name—*Oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya*. All attempts to make *Prahlāda* accept *Hiraṇyakaśipu* as *Īśvara*, including attempts to kill him failed. One day, his father asked, 'Where is this *Nārāyaṇa* of yours?' 'Everywhere' said *Prahlāda*. 'Is he in this pillar?' 'Yes,' said young *Prahlāda*. Then *Hiraṇyakaśipu* kicked the pillar. He had tried to ensure that he would be immortal by securing a special boon. The boon was that he cannot be killed by a human being or animal, neither during day nor at night, neither inside nor outside the house, neither by a wet nor dry instrument, etc. So, when the pillar broke open, Lord *Viṣṇu* came out in the form of *Narasimha* with the head of a lion and a human body. He came at twilight, *sandhyā-kāla*, when it was neither day nor night. He sat on the threshold so that he was neither inside nor outside. And since *Hiraṇyakaśipu* should not touch the ground, *Narasimha* put him on his lap and killed him without violating any of the conditions of the comprehensive boon. Later he enthroned *Prahlāda*. 'That *Prahlāda* who is a great *bhakta* among the *daityas*, I am,' says the Lord.

There are many people who keep accounts. Among all of them, I am the Time that is ticking away constantly. There is nothing that escapes the reckoning of Time. That Time I am.

Among all the wild animals living in the forest, I am the king of them, the lion or tiger. The lion is not afraid of any animal. A tiger, though it may kill a lion cub, will never voluntarily engage in a fight with a lion. It will run away. But a lion will not run away even from a tiger. Sometimes the lion is wary of an elephant. But it is relatively fearless and can kill an elephant too. There are many forests where, in the absence of lions, the tigers, if they are there, become the rulers. The word *mṛga* means a wild animal whose habitat is the forest. What we should understand here is this. *Bhagavān* says that the fearlessness and the power in the king of animals are 'Me.'

Next he says, 'Among the flying creatures or birds, I am *Garuḍa*.' *Garuḍa* is the son of *Vinatā* as is *Aruṇa*. Therefore, he is called *Vainateya* and is a devotee of *Viṣṇu*. *Garuḍa* flies very high where even vultures cannot go. It looks like an eagle with a white band around its neck and sighting it is a good omen. The capacity to soar to such heights and fly so beautifully are its special features. 'This *vibhūti* of *Garuḍa* is nothing but Me,' says *Bhagavān*.

पवनः पवतामस्मि रामः शस्त्रभृतामहम् ।

झषाणां मकरश्चास्मि स्रोतसामस्मि जाह्नवी ॥३१॥

*pavanaḥ pavatāmasmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtāmaham*

*jhaṣāṇāṃ makaraścāsmi srotasāmasmi jāhnavī*

Verse 31

पवताम् *pavatām* — among the purifiers; पवनः अस्मि *pavanaḥ asmi* — I am air; शस्त्रभृताम् *śastrabhṛtām* — among those who bear weapons; अहम् रामः *aham rāmaḥ* — I am *Rāma*; झषाणाम् *jhaṣāṇām* — among the fish; मकरः च अस्मि *makaraḥ ca asmi* — I am the shark; स्रोतसाम् *srotasām* — among the rivers; जाह्नवी अस्मि *jāhnavī asmi* — I am *Gaṅgā*

Among the purifiers, I am air. I am *Rāma* among those who bear weapons. And among the fish I am shark; among the rivers I am *Gaṅgā*.

*Pavana* is another name for *Vāyu*, air. ‘Among the various purifying agents, *pavatām*, I am *Vāyu*,’ says *Bhagavān*. It is *Vāyu* that keeps the atmosphere clean and it also has a life-giving quality. It provides carbon dioxide for the plants and oxygen for man. That cleansing, life-giving capacity is Me.

Among those who wield weapons, I am *Rāma* who is an *avatāra* of *Viṣṇu* himself. The *avatāra* in this human body of *Rāma* had great prowess. Even with one arrow he could dry up the ocean and perform incredible feats because his arrows had extraordinary powers. Since there are other powerful *avatāras* also named *Rāma*, like *Paraśurāma* and *Balarāma*, *Śaṅkara* says, *Dāśarathī Rāma*, who was the son of *Daśaratha*.

*Jhaṣas* are fish and other varieties of sea animals. Among them, ‘I am *makaraḥ*.’ The word *makara* can refer to any large aquatic animal such as a crocodile, a shark or a whale. A shark has a great capacity to devour. Its whole body seems to be full of teeth. The crocodile is also very powerful. And there is nothing like a whale for size, strength and beauty. It is the elephant of the waters. ‘That *vibhūti* of the shark or whale or a crocodile, I am,’ says *Bhagavān*.

Among the rivers I am *Jāhnavī*, otherwise known as *Gaṅgā*. Her water is always fresh. It is said that no bacteria can thrive in Ganges water. Whether that is so, or not, every Hindu home has a pot of *Gaṅgā* water, which never spoils. And through association and the circumstances of her birth, *Gaṅgā* stands for knowledge. She is said to have come from Lord *Śiva*’s head. And there are hundreds of stories associated with her as a source of knowledge and purification. In India every river is worshipped. But *Gaṅgā* has a special place. It is not just a river, but *jñāna-gaṅgā*, the unbroken flow of knowledge itself. One dip is said to remove all sins. That is the *śraddhā* people have for *Gaṅgā*. She is looked upon as a *devatā*.



सर्गाणामादिरन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन ।

अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां वादः प्रवदतामहम् ॥३२॥

*sargāṇāmādirantaśca madhyaṃ caivāhamarjuna*  
*adhyātmavidyā vidyānāṃ vādaḥ pravadatāmaham*

Verse 32

अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; सर्गाणाम् *sargāṇām* — of creations; अहम् *aham* — I am; *ādīḥ* — the beginning; अन्तः च *antaḥ ca* — and the end; मध्यम् च *madhyam ca* — and the middle; एव *eva* — indeed; विद्यानाम् *vidyānām* — among the disciplines of knowledge; अध्यात्म-विद्या *adhyātma-vidyā* — I am knowledge of the self; प्रवदताम् *pravadatām* — of those who discuss; वादः अहम् *vādaḥ aham* — I am the discussion leading to truth

I am indeed the beginning, the middle, and the end of the creations, *Arjuna*. Among the disciplines of knowledge, I am the knowledge of the self. Of those who discuss, I am the discussion leading to truth.

*Sarga* here can be any activity. Of the various actions you may perform like talking, eating, etc., ‘I am the beginning, the middle and the end.’ The act of creation, the action that protects and sustains, and the action of destruction are the three most important of all actions. Or, you can interpret it this way. The beginning of any action is the thought of doing it, *saṅkalpa*. I am the very *saṅkalpa* of every action. The process of doing it, *kriyā*, also is ‘myself’ and so is the result, *phala*. There is nothing else besides Me.

Among the various disciplines of knowledge, I am *adhyātma-vidyā*, the knowledge centred on the *ātmā*; in other words, the knowledge, which reveals the nature of *ātmā* and knowing, which you know everything. This is the only *vidyā*, which completely frees you from ignorance—because you are not ignorant. You are *sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*.

Among the three different types of discussions, *vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitandā*, I am *vāda*, a discussion to discover the truth. In *jalpa*, each participant wants to convince the other of his view. The discussion is not to find the truth, but only to prove one's point, like a discussion between two believers. In *vitandā*, anything one of the participants says is judged wrong by the other. It is a personality clash and has nothing to do with finding out the truth. The whole point is to prove the other person wrong. While *jalpa* is fanaticism, *vitandā* is an ego trip. The third is *vāda*, a discussion to find out the truth. Whether you contribute to the discussion or just listen, the purpose is to discover the truth. Such fact-finding discussions are real discussions and this is what is referred to here. In fact-finding discussions we want to discover what is really there and what is there is *Īśvara*. In the other two types of discussion, there is only *ahaṅkāra* and one's own mental cobwebs. There is no truth. *Vāda*, on the other hand, leads you to the

discovery of *Īśvara*. And *Bhagavān* says, ‘*Vāda* is Me.’ The fact-finding capacity in the dialogue of those who discuss is ‘Me.’ Here the sixth case in the word *pravadatām* has the meaning ‘of.’<sup>1</sup> Therefore, ‘I am the *vāda*, the very fact-finding discussion of those who discuss, *pravadatām*.’ The prefix *pra* before *vadatām* tells us that the persons who are discussing are committed to *vāda*, not other forms of discussion.

An account of the glories of *Īśvara* continues. Even though there is nothing separate from him, wherever there is excellence, whether it is in terms of knowledge, beauty, or prowess, etc., that excellence should be viewed as *Īśvara*’s. This applies not only with reference to people but to places as well.

We saw that *Bhagavān* said, ‘Among the words, *girām*, I am *oṃkāra*.’ *Om* is a word, which includes phonetically all words in all languages. Because all forms are the Lord’s form and all names his name, the word *Om* is a perfect name for the Lord.

Now the Lord talks about the most important letter among the letters in the beginning of the following verse.

अक्षराणामकारोऽस्मि द्वन्द्वः सामासिकस्य च ।

अहमेवाक्षयः कालो धाताहं विश्वतोमुखः ॥३३॥

*akṣarāṇāmakāro’smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca*  
*ahamevākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṃ viśvatomukhaḥ*

Verse 33

अक्षराणाम् *akṣarāṇām* — among the letters; अकारः अस्मि *akāraḥ asmi* — I am the letter ‘a’; सामासिकस्य च *sāmāsikasya ca* — and among the compounds; द्वन्द्वः *dvandvaḥ* — (I am) the *dvandva*; अहम् एव *aham eva* — I am indeed; अक्षयः कालः *akṣayaḥ kālaḥ* — perennially eternal time; अहम् विश्वतोमुखः धाता *aham viśvatomukhaḥ dhātā* — I am the all pervasive giver (of *karma-phala*)

Among the letters I am ‘a’ and I am the *dvandva* among the compounds;  
I am indeed the perennially eternal time. I am the giver (of *karma-phala*) who is all-pervasive.

*Akṣarāṇām aham akāraḥ asmi*—among all the letters I am the letter ‘a.’ The first sound is ‘a’ and through the modification of that basic sound come all other sounds of letters in all languages and dialects. Therefore, among all the letters, I am the basis. The excellence in that basic sound is Me. Without that sound emanating from the voice box, where is the possibility of language? The greatest musical instrument ever made is the human voice. All other instruments have notes but lyrics and *bhāvanā* can come

<sup>1</sup> In this section, two types of sixth cases have been used. One is ‘*śeṣe*’ and the other is ‘*nirdhāraṇe*.’ *Śeṣe* has the meaning of ‘of’ and *nirdhāraṇe* *ṣaṣṭhī* has the meaning of ‘among.’

only through the human voice. There, the basic sound is 'a.' So, the Lord is manifest in the form of 'a.' Every other sound is a modification of that. Because he is that basic sound, in all sounds *Bhagavān* is there. Nothing is away from him.

In all languages there are compounds. In English we have words such as house-keeping, blue-eyed, work-place, foot-path, etc., which are compounds. They are all formed through usage. But in Sanskrit, compounds are formed by rules. So, you can make a compound, which, if properly formed, can theoretically be understood by anybody else.

Two beautiful features of the Sanskrit language are the compounds and the *taddhita* or nominal derivatives. For example, the word, *ārṣa* means that which belongs to the *ṛṣis*. *Vedānta* is *ārṣa*. It does not belong to anybody in particular. *Ārṣa-vidyā* is a compound. It is *ārṣa*, born of sages, and it is *vidyā*, knowledge.

## THE BEAUTY OF SANSKRIT COMPOUNDS

As an example of compounds made in the Sanskrit language, here we can look at a beautiful compound—*kaṭākṣa-kiraṇa-ācānta-naman-mohābdhaye*. It is one word. All these words, *kaṭa*, *akṣa*, *kiraṇa*, *ācānta*, *naman*, *moha* and *abdhi*, make up this one word. There is only one declension at the end—*moha-abdhaye*. *Kaṭa* means a corner and *akṣa* an eye; so, *kaṭākṣa* means corner of the eye, a glance. If you look at someone through the corner of your eye, you illumine the person by your sight. So, this side glance being like a *kiraṇa*, a ray of light, is *kaṭākṣa-kiraṇa*. These rays mentioned here, like the rays of the sun, not only light up things, but also dry up things. What do they dry up? They dry up the *mohābdhi*. *Moha* is ignorance and delusion and *abdhi* is ocean. So, *mohābdhi* is the ocean of ignorance and delusion. It is dried up by being *ācānta*, sipped up. So, the whole ocean of ignorance and delusion is dried up by the ray of one side-glance. Whose glance? Whose else can it be except *Īśvara's*? Our glance does not even dry up the tears, let alone the ocean. Here, I am not even asking for a direct look from the Lord. Just a glance is enough for me. Because he is infinite, my sorrow is nothing. *Kaṭākṣa-kiraṇa* amounts to grace. The rays of whose glance dry up the entire ocean of delusion, for whom? *Namaskṛtānām*, for those who have surrendered to him. To get the glance you have to go to him.

This verse continues and ends in two more compounds—*ananta-ānanda-kṛṣṇāya jagan-maṅgala-mūrtaye*, salutations to that Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, who is limitless and all joy, whose very form is a blessing to the world. All these are compounds. The one who is *ananta*, limitless, *ānanda*, all joy, *Kṛṣṇa*—to that *Kṛṣṇa*, my salutations. *Kṛṣṇa* never had any sorrow, unlike *Rāma* who behaved as though he were a human being. *Rāma* is the Lord expressing in the form of *dharma* and *Kṛṣṇa* is the Lord expressing in the form of *ānanda*. *Ānanda* attracts. It is the only attraction in

the world and the Lord is that *ānanda*. *Jagan-maṅgala-mūrti* is the one whose very form is a blessing to the world.

There are even longer compounds than these. The beauty of Sanskrit is that in one compound you can express so much. They are divided into four main groups—*avyayībhāva*, *tatpuruṣa*, *bahuvrīhi* and *dvandva*. In the *avyayībhāva* compounds, the first word is an indeclinable and is the most important. Take the word *upakumbham*, which means ‘near the pot.’ Here the first word, *upa* is the predominant word. In a *tatpuruṣa* compound, the last word is important as in *rājapuruṣa*, the employee of the king. Here the second word, *puruṣa*, is important because the compound refers to the *puruṣa*, the man who belongs to the king. In a *bahuvrīhi* compound, another word, a word that is not in the compound, is the most important, *pradhāna*. That is, the compound refers to a word that is outside the compound. That is, it is an adjective to another word. Suppose that I say, ‘*eka-karṇam ānaya*.’ *Eka* is one, *karṇa* is ear, and *ānaya* means bring. Should you chop one ear off the first person you see and bring it? No; *Eka-karṇa* is a person who has only one ear. So, this means, ‘Bring the one-eared person.’ This is *bahuvrīhi*. Most of the compounds in the *Gītā* are like this. And the fourth is the *dvandva*. It is different. In the word *Rāmalakṣmaṇau*, which is more important? Here both are equally important. If you want to see *Bhagavān* in a compound, analyse a *dvandva* compound. Among the compounds I am the *dvandva*, the compound where all words are equally important. The idea is, the Lord is equally present in everything. *Rāma* is the Lord, *Lakṣmaṇa* is the Lord because the Lord is the same in all beings, *samo’haṃ sarva bhūteṣu*. I am equal in all beings and in the *dvandva* compound you can see this fact about Me totally. Therefore, I am the *dvandva* among the compounds.

Then he says, ‘*aham eva akṣayaḥ kālah*’. There are two meanings given for *kāla*. Here there is no sixth case, no ‘among,’ as we have been seeing like in ‘Among the letters I am *ū*’ or ‘of’ as in ‘Of those who discuss, I am the discussion.’ Here, *Bhagavān* is simply expressing himself. Where there is no sixth case it means that he is talking about his *mahattva*, greatness. *Akṣaya* means that which does not come to an end. In the relative field of *samsāra*, time does not come to an end. In a sense, it is a continuous flow. Of course in *paramātmā*, there is no time. But within the framework of the *jagat*, time is continuously flowing and in it, all things come and go. So, I am that time, which is perennially eternal.

Or, *Śaṅkara* says this statement means: I am the time, which is eternal, because of whom time is born, but who is timeless. I am *akṣayaḥ kālah*, I am timeless, the truth of time and the very creator of time.

*Dhātā ahaṃ viśvatomukhaḥ*—*Viśvatomukha* means the one whose faces are everywhere. He is all-pervasive. And he is *dhātā*, *vidhātā*, giver of *karma-phalas* to all the beings according to their *karmas*—the one who ordains everything. It is not an

arbitrary one-sided giving. For each action, a specific result has to be given. The lord says, 'I am doing that. My laws produce all the results. For all actions, right and wrong, I give the results.' And he is qualified to do that because he is *viśvatomukha*, all pervasive. The idea is that there is nothing that takes place outside the scope of his vision. So, every result is true to the *karma* that produced it.

While everything is the manifestation of the Lord, there are areas of excellence. These are the places where you can appreciate the Lord. If you just appreciate the object, you miss out on something. But in appreciating the object as a glory of the Lord, you connect yourself to the whole. Otherwise you connect only to an object in a subject-object relationship. In recognising *Īśvara's* glory, you are immediately connected to the Lord, the total. Therefore, wherever there is an expression of excellence, *Bhagavān* says, please understand that it belongs to Me.

मृत्युः सर्वहरश्चाहमुद्भवश्च भविष्यताम् ।

कीर्तिः श्रीर्वाक् च नारीणां स्मृतिर्मेधा धृतिः क्षमा ॥३४॥

*mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaścāhamudbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām*

*kīrtiḥ śrīrvāk ca nārīṇāṃ smṛtirmedhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā*

Verse 34

मृत्युः *mṛtyuḥ* — death; सर्वहरः *sarvaharaḥ* — that takes away everything; च अहम् *ca aham* — and I am; च भविष्यताम् *ca bhaviṣyatām* — of those yet to be; उद्भवः *udbhavaḥ* —the cause of prosperity; च नारीणाम् *ca nārīṇām* — and among feminine words; कीर्तिः *kīrtiḥ* — fame; श्रीः *śrīḥ* — wealth; वाक् *vāk* — speech; स्मृतिः *smṛtiḥ* — memory; मेधा *medhā* — capacity to receive and retain knowledge; धृतिः *dhṛtiḥ* — fortitude; क्षमा *kṣamā* — equanimity

And I am Death that takes away everything; and I am the cause of prosperity of those yet to be. Among the feminine words I am fame, wealth, speech, memory, intelligence, fortitude, and equanimity.

*Mṛtyuḥ* is that which puts an end to something. *Śaṅkara* says there are two types of death. One takes away wealth and so on, *dhana-hara*. This can include your title, land, possessions, money etc. Then there is *prāṇa-hara*, the one who takes away your life.

Here, which *mṛtyu* is *Bhagavān* talking about? He makes it clear by saying *sarva-hara*, the one who takes away everything. If he takes away money etc., you can always gain that money back. Or, even if you do not, without money you can gain some knowledge and thereby still be happy. So, there is no way that *mṛtyu* can rob you of your happiness by taking away *dhanādi*, wealth etc. But if it takes away your life, what can you do? Therefore, *mṛtyu* is called *sarva-hara—sarvaṃ harati iti sarva-haraḥ*. One who takes away is *hara*. But then with the word *sarva* as a modifier, it means that

he is the one who takes away everything. *Bhagavān* says there is no *mṛtyu* except Me. Therefore, Lord Death is also Myself alone.

Previously he spoke of himself as Lord *Yama* in the sense of the discipliner of all those who discipline, *yamaḥ saṃyamatām aham*. This is based on the root *yam* having the meaning of control. Since this aspect of *Yama* was mentioned before, here *mṛtyu* is the one who puts an end to everything.

Or, I am the Lord in the form of the destroyer, who resolves everything into himself at the time of *pralaya*. I am the sustainer, I am the creator and I am also the *saṃhāarakartā*. At the time of total dissolution he destroys everything and brings it back to himself. *Sarvahara* then is *Rudra* who, it is pointed out here, is also not separate from *Īśvara*.

Then again, *udbhavaḥ* is that which happens in plenty and in a desirable way. *Śaṅkara* translates it as *abhyudayaḥ*, prosperity. Any pleasant experience, whether it is a world of experience or a comfort gained through some wealth etc., is called *abhyudaya*. There are two desirable ends for a human being—*abhyudaya* and *niśśreyasa*. *Niśśreyasa* means *mokṣa* and is the most desirable. Anything other than *niśśreyasa* is *abhyudaya*; therefore, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* become *abhyudaya*, because they are other than that which is the most desirable.

Not only the *abhyudaya*, but the cause for it is also Me. All the *dharma*, *puṇya*, etc., is born of Me alone. Do not think that you have created it. It is My law and therefore, is gained only because of Me. And anything created by Me is non-separate from Me. If anyone has gained anything in terms of *dharma*, *artha* or *kāma*, that is Myself. The result is Myself and I am the cause for the gain of that result. The connection between the means and the end, *sādhana* and *sādhya*, is created by Me and therefore, I am the cause of the *abhyudaya*.

*Udbhavaḥ bhaviṣyatām*—I am the prosperity of those who are going to gain prosperity in the future. Even the *puṇya* you think you have gathered today, you have not. I am the one who is gathered by you and the capacity to gather is also Myself.

Then again, among the words in the feminine gender, *nārīṇām*, I am *kīrti*, *śrī*, *vāk*, *smṛti*, *medhā* and *kṣamā*. *Kīrti* is fame born of *dharma*. *Śrī* means wealth, health knowledge, everything desirable. *Vāk* is speech that is good, *hita*; truthful, *satya*; and pleasant, *priya*. This is all implied in *vāk* because he is talking about something exalted. *Smṛti* here is the capacity to remember. *Medhā* is the power to receive, retain, and reflect upon knowledge. If there is *medhā* there will also be *smṛtī*.

*Dhṛti* is fortitude or courage. *Kṣamā*, though it is often translated as forgiveness, is more of a capacity of not getting disturbed. Whether there is praise or censure, the mind does not undergo any significant change. For praise, there is no elation; for

censure, no depression. Among all the words in the feminine gender, I am these qualities.

*Śaṅkara* says, even if somebody has a shade of these such as fame, or a little wealth through, which he looks upon himself as being fulfilled, that is the Lord. Suppose one has some capacity to speak. He gives a simple after-dinner-talk and is so happy when everybody praises him. That *kīrti*, *śrī*, *vāk*, etc. is Me. All these belong to Me because I have all of them in absolute measure.

बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम्।

मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहमृतूनां कुसुमाकरः॥३५॥

*brhatsāma tathā sāmṇāṃ gāyatrī chandasāmaham*  
*māsānāṃ mārgaśīrṣo'hamṛtūnāṃ kusumākaraḥ*

Verse 35

तथा *tathā* — so too; साम्नाम् *sāmṇām* — among the *sāmas*; बृहत्साम *brhatsāma* — the *brhatsāma*; छन्दसाम् *chandasām* — among the metres; अहम् गायत्री *aham gāyatrī* — I am *gāyatrī*; मासानाम् *māsānām* — among the months; अहम् *aham* — I am; मार्गशीर्षः *mārgaśīrṣaḥ* — *Mārgaśīrṣaḥ* (November-December); ऋतूनाम् *ṛtūnām* — among the seasons; कुसुमाकरः *kusumākaraḥ* — the spring (the one that brings forth flowers)

So too, I am the *brhatsāma* among the *sāmas*, *gāyatrī* among the metres; among the months, *Mārgaśīrṣa*, and among the seasons, the spring.

The *sāmas*, the *mantras*, which are sung, are sung in different styles each of which has a name. One of them is more difficult and more melodious than the others. That is called *brhatsāma*. Therefore, among the *sāmaveda-mantras*, I am *brhad*. Only certain *mantras* are sung in this particular manner. Those *mantras* together with the style are called *brhatsāma*.

There are many metres, *chandās*, in the Veda such as *uṣṇik*, *anuṣṭup*, *triṣṭup* etc. Among them, I am *gāyatrī*. Generally a verse in the *anuṣṭup* metre is called a *śloka* and has 4 *pādas* of 8 letters, *akṣaras*, a total of 32 letters. In the Veda, *gayatrī-chandas* has 3 *pādas*, each having 8 *akṣaras*, a total of 24 letters.

The *Gāyatrī-mantra* is as follows; *tat savitur vareṇyam*<sup>1</sup>— is the first *pāda*; *bhargo devasya dhīmahi*— is the second; *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*—is the third *pāda*. Here, the 24 *akṣaras*, syllables are: *om tat sa vi tur va re ṇyam bhar go de va*

<sup>1</sup> This *pāda* has another reading—*tat savitur vareṇyam*. Here there are only 7 syllables. Then to make it 8, *Om* is added at the beginning and then finally the whole mantra will have 24 syllables.

*sya dhī ma hi dhi yo yo naḥ pra co da yāt.* The Lord says, ‘Among the various meters, I am *Gāyatrī*.’

Why is it *śreṣṭha*, more exalted than the rest? The first *mantra* of *Ṛg-veda* is in *gāyatrī-chandas* and for every *devatā* there is a *mantra* in *gāyatrī-chandas*.

*Śaṅkara* says that it is this *mantra* that is popularly called *Gāyatrī-mantra*. There are many *mantras* in the *gāyatrī* metre but this particular one is called *gāyatrī*. Like the word *Rāma*. Even though it has its own etymological meaning, when it is said, it is understood to mean *Daśaratha*'s son. It is called *rūḍhi*, the popular meaning.

When you say Gandhi, only one Gandhi is understood; others have to be qualified by their first names. Similarly here, *Gāyatrī*, though it is just a metre, is understood as this well-known *mantra*.

## MEANING OF GĀYATRĪ-MANTRĀ

I am this *mantra* not only because it is popular. Its meaning is the entire *brahma-vidyā*. Let us look at it. *Om* is *Bhagavān*. *Bhūr bhuvah suvah*, are the three worlds, gross, subtle and unmanifest, *sthūla, sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa-prapañcas*. *Om* is all three; it includes everything.

*Tat*, that (Lord), *vareṇyam* is the most worshipful. *Dhīmahi* means ‘we meditate’ upon that Lord, as a *sādhana*, or we recognise that Lord, which is knowledge. This *mantra* in fact is chanted first as a *sādhana*. Later, when it is understood, it is contemplated upon. We contemplate upon *devasya savituh*, the one who is self effulgent and all knowing. The one who is all-knowing is symbolised by *savitā*, the sun because in brilliance such as the sun's, there is no trace of darkness, a symbol for ignorance. The sun is always likened to the Lord because it has no taint of darkness, unlike the moon, which has patches. *Yaḥ*, that Lord, who is *bhargah*, all-knowing, *pracodayāt*, may he brighten, *naḥ dhiyah*, our minds. This is prayer. In contemplation we have the meaning—the all-knowing Lord (as the self) illumines our minds.

This *Gāyatrī-mantra*, in a succinct form, holds a lot of meaning. Once you know this *mantra*, it is said that you have as well studied all the Vedas. A child who has been initiated into the *Gāyatrī-mantra*, after prostrating to an elderly person or a scholar, gets up and introduces himself in this manner: ‘I am born in the family of this *ṛṣi*, (*Bhāradvaja* etc.) and I follow this *dharma-sūtra* (*āpastamba-sūtra*, *bodhāyana-sūtra* etc.) for the purpose of performing various rituals.’ Then he will say, ‘I have studied this branch of the Veda (*ahaṃ yajuśśākhādhyāyī, ṛkśākhādhyāyī, sāmaśākhādhyāyī*, etc.)’ This practice is still maintained by the *brāhmaṇas*. He may never have opened the Veda but he can legitimately say this because *Gāyatrī* chanting is considered equivalent to the study of one Veda. When he says, *ahaṃ yajuśśākhādhyāyī*, it is not true because he has never studied the *Yajur-veda*. But then



he has been initiated into *Gāyatrī* and therefore, he is acquitted of any falsehood. Chanting the *Gāyatrī* transforms a person into a *brāhmaṇa*.

Among the months, *māsānām*, I am the *Mārgaśīrṣa*. With the end of this month, the southern solstice comes to an end. During this month, the sun goes to the house of Capricorn, *makara*. This month is astrologically conducive to religious activities. I make this month auspicious.

Among the seasons, I am the spring. Everything bursts forth at that time. All the trees seem to be waiting for it. The spring is called *kusumākara* because this season makes all the plants to flower. Also it is the season that is enjoined by the Veda for the performance of an important fire ritual, *jyotiṣṭoma—vasante vasante jyotiṣā juhoti*.

द्यूतं छलयतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम्।

जयोऽस्मि व्यवसायोऽस्मि सत्त्वं सत्त्ववतामहम्॥३६॥

*dyūtaṃ chalayatāmasmi tejastejasvināmaham*

*jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvaṃ sattvavatāmaham*

Verse 36

छलयताम् *chalayatām* — among those that deceive; द्यूतम् अस्मि *dyūtam asmi* — I am the game of dice; तेजस्विनाम् *tejasvinām* — of the brilliant; अहम् तेजः *aham tejaḥ* — I am the brilliance; जयः अस्मि *jayaḥ asmi* — I am the victory (of the victorious); व्यवसायः अस्मि *vyavasāyaḥ asmi* — I am the clarity in thinking (of those who have clarity in thinking); सत्त्ववताम् *sattvavatām* — of those whose nature is predominantly *sattva*; सत्त्वम् अहम् *sattvam aham* — I am the *sattva* (the contemplative disposition)

I am the game of dice among the things that deceive; of the brilliant I am the brilliance. I am the victory of the victorious. I am the clarity in thinking (of those who have that clarity). Of those whose nature is predominantly *sattva*, I am that *sattva* (contemplative disposition).

*Chala* is anything that has an element of deception. Among those things that make you incur loss, I am the game of dice. *Dharmaputra* lost everything in a game of dice. The Veda prohibits playing with dice. It says, *akṣaiḥ mā dīvyā—do not play with dice*.

I am that brilliance of people who have brilliance in any field of knowledge,. Whatever brilliance they enjoy, it does not belong to them, but it is tapped from the original source, *ātmā*, which is limitless in terms of power and knowledge. Everything you have tapped is from that source. *Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* being *Īśvara* has all the potential. In a given *upādhi*, there cannot be infinite brilliance because we are talking in terms of manifestations, not *svarūpa*. In essential nature, one is non-separate from *Īśvara* because the self is limitless. That is a different thing altogether.

But in the manifest form, in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, there can only be limited brilliance, *tejas*. Therefore, at any time in any *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the brilliance is the manifestation of *Īśvara*. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘Of the brilliant, I am the brilliance.’

I am the victory of the victorious, the success of the successful. In people who have the clear understanding, I am that clarity of understanding.

Then of those in whom *sattva* is predominant, that *sattva* I am. Everyone is a composite of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* accounts for contemplativeness, inquiry, knowledge, and happiness. *Rajas* for ambition, energy and so on. *Tamas* for dullness. If *sattva* is predominant in a person, he will not feel, ‘I am *sāttvika*.’ That is a manifestation of *rajas*. *Rajas* is also the Lord, but that is not a *vibhūti* as *sattva* is. The expression of *sattva*, his contemplative disposition, *Bhagavān* says, is Myself.

We are talking about *dhyeya*, an object of meditation; so, we view *Īśvara* as a quality that we consider desirable, a virtue. Wherever there is such a thing, it is *Īśvara*’s glory alone. This is appreciated and meditated upon.

वृष्णीनां वासुदेवोऽस्मि पाण्डवानां धनञ्जयः ।

मुनीनामप्यहं व्यासः कवीनामुशना कविः ॥३७॥

*vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo’smi pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ*  
*munīnāmapyahaṃ vyāsaḥ kavīnāmuśanā kaviḥ*

Verse 37

वृष्णीनाम् *vṛṣṇīnām* — among the *Yādavas*; वासुदेवः अस्मि *vāsudevaḥ asmi* — I am *Vāsudeva* (*Kṛṣṇa*); पाण्डवानाम् *pāṇḍavānām* — among the *Pāṇḍavas*; (अहम्) धनञ्जयः (*aham*) *dhanañjayaḥ* — (I am) *Arjuna*; मुनीनाम् अपि *munīnām api* — and among the seers; अहम् व्यासः *aham vyāsaḥ* — I am *Vyāsa*; कवीनाम् *kavīnām* — among the sages; उशना कविः *uśanā kaviḥ* — the preceptor *Uśanā*

Among the *Yādavas*, I am *Vāsudeva* (*Kṛṣṇa*), among the *Pāṇḍavas*, *Dhanañjaya* (*Arjuna*), and among the seers I am *Vyāsa*; among the sages, the preceptor *Uśanā*.

*Bhagavān* has been speaking of himself as *Īśvara*, the one who is everything. Now he talks of himself as an *avatāra*. With a physical body he is called *Vāsudeva*, son of *Vasudeva*. Among the people belonging to the *Vṛṣṇīkula*, the *Yādavas*, *ahaṃ vāsudevaḥ*, I am *Vāsudeva*. Here he is speaking of himself as *Vāsudeva* with a *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*, not as *Parameśvara*. The physical body-mind-sense complex, which was recognised among the *Yādavas* as *Kṛṣṇa* is who I am. Because of the great excellence that was there in terms of knowledge, power etc., as we see in the life of *Kṛṣṇa* in *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata*, we know that he was an exalted being. That excellence in the *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta* makes him stand out among the *Yādavas*.

Among the *Pāṇḍavas*, I am *Dhanañjaya*, the one who won many kingdoms and great wealth. *Arjuna* was considered the most accomplished among the brothers in archery, logistics, etc. That means that *Kṛṣṇa* is saying, ‘I am you.’ The prowess and versatility that you have are manifestations of *Īśvara’s* glory, My glory.

It was to *Arjuna* that the Lord chose to teach the *Gītā*. He could have chosen any of the others but he found *Arjuna* to be the most qualified. And again it was only *Arjuna* who asked for it also.

‘Among the scholars and seers, people who have the capacity to think and retain, *munīnām*, I am *Vedavyāsa*.’ It was he who wrote the *Mahābhārata*, authored the eighteen *Purāṇas* and edited the four Vedas. Originally there were many branches of the Vedas all preserved by oral tradition. *Vyāsa* collected and compiled the *mantras* into four different groups; so, they could be preserved. Each family was to retain one Veda and there was a rule that one was supposed to study one Veda and hand it over to the next generation. In dividing them up, *Vyāsa* made it easy, so, that one Veda could be studied in twelve years. He is called *Veda-Vyāsa*, the compiler of the Vedas—*vedaḥ vyasyate anena iti veda-vyāsaḥ*.

He also wrote the *Brahmasūtras*, which deal with the subject matter of *vedānta-śāstra* analytically, tackling opposing views and thereby establishing the vision of *Vedānta*. Because of this work, *Vyāsa* is called *sūtrakāra*. *Śaṅkara* is *bhāṣyakāra*. The tradition holds that Lord *Śiva* himself was *Śaṅkarācārya* and Lord *Nārāyaṇa* was *Bādarāyaṇa, Vyāsa*. We salute both of them since they are the links in this tradition. Thus *Vyāsa* occupies the most exalted place among the sages. Without him, we would not have retained anything. He is a very important person in the Vedic tradition.

*Kavi* means the one who is able to see all three periods of time, past, present and future. Among such people who are capable of seeing things beyond the human intellect, I am *Uśanā, Śukrācārya*. He was the *guru* of all the *asuras*. It was *Uśanā* that they would consult. They would not listen to him, however, so, they always ended up in trouble. *Uśanā* was also famous for his work on ethics, *śukra-nīti*.

दण्डो दमयतामस्मि नीतिरस्मि जिगीषताम् ।

मौनं चैवास्मि गुह्यानां ज्ञानं ज्ञानवतामहम् ॥३८॥

*daṇḍo damayatāmasmi nītirasmi jīgīṣatām*

*maunaṃ caivāsmi guhyānāṃ jñānaṃ jñānavatāmaham Verse 38*

दमयताम् *damayatām* — of people who enforce discipline; दण्डः अस्मि *daṇḍaḥ asmi* — I am the discipline; जिगीषताम् *jīgīṣatām* — of those who want victory/success; नीतिः अस्मि *nītiḥ asmi* — I am justice; मौनम् च एव अस्मि *maunam ca eva asmi* — and I am silence; गुह्यानाम् *guhyānām* — among the secrets; ज्ञानवताम् *jñānavatām* — of those who have knowledge; अहम् ज्ञानम् *aham jñānam* — I am that knowledge

I am the discipline of those who enforce discipline. I am justice of those who want success and I am silence among the secrets. Of those who have knowledge, I am that knowledge.

*Damayātām*, of those who enforce discipline, giving punishment to those who transgress, I am the discipline. If you have self-discipline, *Bhagavān* says, I am that very discipline. If you lack self-discipline, it has to be imposed. That one who enforces discipline I am.

*Jigīṣatām*, of those who are desirous of victory and are working for it, I am the *nīti*, the order. When you achieve victory, it must come within the framework of justice. Otherwise, it cannot be considered a victory. Success won at the cost of justice is not meaningful for a mature person, because for him, the means is as important as the end. For a morally retarded person, only the end is important. Justice is not only very important in a victory, it is essential. Before, *Bhagavān* said, 'In the victorious, I am victory.' Here he says where there is success, I am the justice, the order, which brings success.

Among the secrets, I am *mauna*, silence. Among all the devices employed to maintain secrecy, silence is the best. Any secret that you divulge will eventually come back to you—and in another form. Silence is the only sure way of keeping a secret. So, it is the best form of secrecy.

Of those who have self-knowledge, I am the *svarūpa*, the knowledge itself. Knowledge and *Īśvara* are not two different things and I am the very form of that knowledge.

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन ।

न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम् ॥३९॥

*yaccāpi sarvabhūtānāṃ bījaṃ tadahamarjuna  
na tadasti vinā yatsyānmayā bhūtaṃ carācaram*

Verse 39

यत् च अपि बीजम् *yat ca api bījam* — and also, that which is the cause; सर्वभूतानाम् *sarva-bhūtānām* — of all beings/things; तत् अहम् *tat aham* — that I am; अर्जुन *arjuna* — *Arjuna*; न तत् अस्ति *na tat asti* — there is not; भूतम् चर-अचरम् *bhūtam carācaram* — (any) mobile or immobile/sentient or insentient thing; यत् स्यात् *yat syāt* — which can exist; मया विना *mayā vinā* — without Me

And *Arjuna*, I am also that which is the cause of all things. There is no mobile or immobile/sentient or insentient thing, which can exist without Me.

*Bīja* literally means seed but is often used in the sense of cause. Since a seed is the cause for the tree, by implication it is used for cause in general. There are many causes and effects. *Bhūtānām madhye*, among the various causes, I am the cause of all beings or of all things. *Bhūtas* can be taken as the elements—*ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpaḥ*, *pṛthivī*—or as beings. That which is the seed of all these is, in other words, *jagat-kāraṇa*.

Among all the causes, each is a cause only from the standpoint of its effect. From another standpoint that cause itself becomes an effect for some other cause. So, what is the real cause, *bīja*? It should be an uncaused cause. *Prakṛti* can be said to be *sarvabhūtānām bījam*, because it has no cause. But because *prakṛti* has no existence independent of *ātmā*, *Īśvara* is the ultimate cause of everything. Therefore, he says, ‘*sarvabhūtānām bījam, (prakṛtiḥ) aham asmī*—I am the material cause for everything.’ Now to sum up the topic of *bhagavad-vibhūti*, the glory of *Bhagavān*, he says ‘Without Me there would not be any *bhūta*, neither *cara*, those that move, nor *acara*, those that do not move, at all—*na tat asti bhūtaṃ cara-acaraṃ yat syāt mayā vinā*.’ The whole creation is made up of what moves and what does not. This is one way of looking at it. In another way, sentient is *cara* and insentient, *acara*. If *acara* means merely immobile, it will include a sentient tree also., whichever way it is taken, without Me, there are no such things that could exist. That means if I am not there, there is no object at all.

If *Parameśvara* is *sat*, the efficient and material cause, which object is away from that material cause? Without Me, the *sat*, if there is an object, it will be *nirātmaka* or *śūnya*. It will have no existence at all. Wherever there is an existent object, that object is non-separate from the *kāraṇa*, which is existence. Every product entirely depends on the cause and the final cause is *Īśvara*.

*Bhagavān* has gone on listing his glories and now comes to the point where he has to say that he cannot continue because the list is endless.

नान्तोऽस्ति मम दिव्यानां विभूतीनां परन्तप ।  
 एष तूद्देशतः प्रोक्तो विभूतेर्विस्तरो मया ॥४०॥  
*nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtinām parantapa*  
*eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūtervistaro mayā*

Verse 40

परन्तप *parantapa* — O! Scorcher of enemies, *Arjuna*; मम दिव्यानाम् विभूतीनाम् *mama divyānām vibhūtinām* — to My extraordinary glories; न अन्तः अस्ति *na antaḥ asti* — there is no end; तु *tu* — but; एषः विभूतेः विस्तरः *eṣaḥ vibhūteḥ vistaraḥ* — this detailed narration of My glories; मया *mayā* — by Me; उद्देशतः *uddeśataḥ* — taking into account a few important ones; प्रोक्तः *proktaḥ* — was told

There is no end to My extraordinary glories, *Arjuna*. But this detailed narration was told by Me taking into account a few important ones.

*Kṛṣṇa* addressed *Arjuna* here as *parantapa*, the one who is always victorious against the opponents.

O! *Arjuna*, the glories not easily seen in the world, the *vibhūti*s, which are *divyas*, My brilliant manifestations, have no end—*mama divyānāṃ vibhūtināṃ na antaḥ asti*. Since there is no end to them at all, I have to end it. Therefore, I am ending it here.

What has been related here is a brief account of the vast extent of My glories. The full particulars can never be given because the list is endless. I could only tell a few things.

If that is so, why did he start? Because the intention was to make one understand *bhagavad-vibhūti*, not to complete the list of *vibhūti*s. I want you to understand that wherever there is any brilliance, that indeed is Mine. If you ask Me why I said this, it is purely to establish this general rule, which is told in the next verse.

### ANY GLORY BELONGS TO BHAGAVĒN

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥४१॥

*yadyadvibhūtimatsattvaṃ śrīmadūrjitameva vā*

*tattadevāvagaccha tvam mama tejoṃśasambhavam*

*Verse 41*

यत् यत् *yat yat* — whatever; विभूतिमत् सत्त्वम् *vibhūtimat sattvam* — existent thing that has glory; श्रीमत् *śrīmat* — that which has any form of wealth/value; ऊर्जितम् एव वा *ūrjitam eva vā* — that which is indeed distinguished, mighty; तत् तत् एव *tat tat eva* — every one of that; मम तेजोऽश-सम्भवम् *mama tejoṃśa-sambhavam* — born of a fraction of My glory; अवगच्छ त्वम् *avagaccha tvam* — may you know

Whatever existent thing there is, which has glory, which is endowed with any form of wealth, or that which is distinguished or mighty, every one of that, may you know is born of a fraction of My glory.

Any existent thing in this world that has some glory, whether in terms of knowledge, power, beauty, some brilliance, skill, or any fame, that, *Bhagavān* says, is *śrīmad*. *Śrī* can be attraction or beauty, *kānti*; it can also be justice, *nīti*; or fame, *kīrti*; wealth, *dhana*; food, *dhānya*; children, *santāna*; domestic happiness, *grha*; any sense of well-being, *saubhāgya*; a boon, *vara*; or knowledge, *vidyā*. These are the different

forms of *Lakṣmī*, known as *Śrī*. *Śrīmad* is that which has *Śrī*. It covers everything. In fact, all glories are covered by the ‘*Śrīmad*.’ That ‘*Śrīmad*’ is *Bhagavān*.

Anything powerful, distinguished, and arresting is *ūrjitam*. *Avagaccha*, may you understand that each one of them, *tat tad eva*, arises from only a part of my *tejas*. *Tejas* here means splendour, the *bhaga* in *Bhagavān*.<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavān* is six-fold, belonging to *Īśvara*, as we have seen before: *Śrī* absolute wealth; *aiṣvarya*, absolute overlordship; *yaśas*, absolute fame; *vairāgya*, absolute dispassion; *jñāna*, infinite knowledge; and *vīrya*, absolute power, the power of creation, destruction, and sustenance.

All glories are born of this six-fold sovereignty, *aiṣvarya*, which attempts to classify the infinite affluence of *Īśvara*, briefly called *bhaga*.

The creation of all these glories is from only a fraction of My *tejas*. Not *tejas* directly but from only *tejo’ṁśa*, a fraction of the infinite glory of *Bhagavān*. Only a part of that *Īśvara* is manifest in all these glories. In fact the *jagat* is nothing but an *aṁśa*, a part, of *Īśvara*. Even though the Lord is part less, because of *māyā*, it appears manifold, like partless space seems to be divided into pot-space, room-space etc., and these are called part of the total space.

The idea is that everything here is only projected by *māyā*, *māyayā kalpitam*. *Arjuna*, please understand, each one is born of only a fraction of My glory. There is no exception to this.

## ARE THINGS THAT DO NOT HAVE GLORY NOT ĪŚVARA?

Now there is one problem when we say that anything that has any glory whatsoever is born of a fraction of *Bhagavān*’s glory, meaning it is only one manifestation of *Bhagavān*, the total power of *Īśvara*. Then what about all other things? There are countless people who were born and gone, whose names are not remembered at all except by the bereaved. There are millions of people in different generations and a lot of things in the world, animals and so on, whose names are not known to anybody, which are not recognised as having some special excellence. Do you say they are not born of your *tejas*, your *bhaga*?

This we must understand well. These glories, which are a fraction of this six-fold absolute virtues—knowledge, wealth, supremacy, power, fame, and dispassion are mentioned only for meditation on *Īśvara* in these particular forms, as *āditya* etc. That is one meaning.

Another is this. These verses are meant to establish a general rule that wherever there is *vibhūti*, it is *Īśvara*’s *vibhūti*. No one particular person has gained anything, which he can legitimately claim as his own. Once it is *Īśvara*’s *vibhūti*, no person can

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the definition of the word *Bhagavān* — page 24, vol 1.

become an object of your jealousy because jealousy is possible only when he has achieved it and you have not.

Now if you look upon everything as *Īśvara's* glory, you will find that glory in many forms. Every blade of grass is *Īśvara's* glory; the sun, moon, and stars are all *Īśvara's* glory. And if anybody is able to sing or dance, or whatever, it is all *Bhagavān's vibhūti*. In one place an aspect of it manifests more and in another less, but it does not make any difference at all. It is all *Īśvara's* glory.

And if I recognise his glory, I become *Bhagavān's vibhūti*. Even the capacity to appreciate beauty is a glory of *Īśvara*. Many wonderful manifestations of *Īśvara* go unrecognised for want of people's capacity to appreciate. Unless you have that perceptive ability you are not going to see something glorious. So, many great men go unrecognised and many a good book goes unread just because the author is not known. There are countless such things that are never recognised.

Although some singers become popular, for every one of them there are many more who are equally good or better but never become known. I know one person at least who is so, accomplished in playing the *vīṇā* that she would have excelled over anybody. But she is not known. Only those in her home and those who are closely connected to her have the privilege of hearing her music. There are a number of people like this. Thus, wherever there is a manifestation of glory it is *Īśvara's* glory. Sometimes it is known, sometimes not.

## YOU CAN BE JEALOUS ONLY IF YOU CAN APPRECIATE A GLORY

To discover the glory of a person, you require a certain capacity to appreciate. If you are able to become jealous of someone, it is only because you are able to perceive the glory of that person. Otherwise, how are you going to become jealous? That capacity to see is your glory. Where is a musician if there is no *rasika*, connoisseur? Someone who enjoys that music is necessary. When you know that all glory belongs to *Īśvara*, you can no longer be jealous. You can be jealous of an individual, but not *Īśvara* because jealousy is only possible between similars, not dissimilars. You cannot be jealous of *Īśvara* any more than you can be jealous of an eagle because it soars so high. You may wish to fly like an eagle, that is possible, but you can never be jealous of the eagle. Because it is unlike you.

Similarly, *Īśvara* does not belong to the human species; so, where is the question of your being jealous of *Īśvara*? This rule helps eliminate your jealousies, the friction in your personal relationships. *Vibhūti-yoga* is a very beautiful chapter to help you discover this attitude.



If there is a person who is free from jealousy, that person is a saint, I tell you, because jealousy can appear in a hundred different subtle forms. Even among *sādhus* I see it. They are jealous of one another's popularity. In fact, I find the more popular you are, the more likelihood of your knowing less or knowing wrongly. It is difficult to be popular if you know profound things. Because when you talk it is going to be profound and that is not going to be popular. To be popular you have to tell some stories, some jokes and use some catchy expressions even though they do not mean anything. You can be a gorilla and be popular. In Milwaukee there was a popularity poll and the winner was Samson, the gorilla in the local zoo! Sitting there quietly he became popular. So, popularity is meaningless.

This chapter, *vibhūti-yoga* you must read again and again. Wherever there is any brilliance, any skill, you should be able to appreciate it as *Īśvara's* glory. Any intelligent person should be able to do that. It does not require great knowledge to see that these capacities that we have are all given to us. Nothing is really created by anybody. Simple observation of your own life, of your own powers will reveal that everything is given to you. The whole world is given. What is it that is created by you? If you have a power to create, to bring things together, that is also given. What is created by us is nothing. The more you see this, the more objective you will find your ego. And an objective ego is as good as non-existent—even if it is not enlightened. That is the devotee's ego, which is good enough to discover *ātmā*. It becomes pure and can therefore, discover *gūḍha-ātmā*.

Even if such an appreciation of *Īśvara's* glories is incomplete in the beginning, afterwards it becomes real. If you keep bringing it to mind, even though you do not see it, it becomes real—because it is a fact, not a superimposition. Even if you do not understand totally at first, later it becomes more and more clear. Though the profundity may not be very clear, that forced appreciation is good enough. As in friendship or love, suppose you are not able to discover love, if you can force yourself to say something nice, you will find yourself beginning to discover love. Any act of love will make you discover love. Similarly here, even though it is incomplete at first, it becomes real. Nothing can stop it because it has its basis in truth.

So, as a devotee you cannot be jealous of *Īśvara* and if you understand *Īśvara*, it is all you. If you step out and see the whole *jagat* as *Īśvara*, then you are that *Īśvara* because there is no *Īśvara* other than *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Therefore, it is all your glory alone.

What about those things that are not recognised as glories? In answer to this *Bhagavān* says, in fact, the entire *jagat* is nothing but My glory and is still only one fourth of My total glory, *pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni*. Three fourths is lost in your heart as *paraṃ brahma, tripādasyāmṛtaṃ divi*. In the *caitanya-ātmā* three fourths is gone. All

fourteen worlds, seven above and seven below are only one fourth. This is just an expression to say that the entire *jagat* does not account for the infinite.

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।

विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्सनमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥४२॥

*athavā bahunaitena kiṃ jñātena tavārjuna*

*viṣṭabhyāhamidaṃ kṛtsanamekāṃśena sthito jagat*

Verse 42

अथवा *athavā* — on the other hand; बहुना एतेन ज्ञातेन *bahunā etena jñātena* — by the knowledge of manifold things; किम् तव अर्जुन *kim tava arjuna* — what is accomplished for you, *Arjuna*; विष्टभ्य *viṣṭabhya* — pervading; इदम् कृत्स्नम् जगत् *idam kṛtsnam jagat* — this entire world; एकांशेन *ekāṃśena* — with just one part (of Me); अहम् स्थितः *aham sthitaḥ* — I remain

On the other hand by this knowledge of manifold things what is accomplished for you *Arjuna*? I remain pervading this entire world with one part (of Myself).

*Athavā* means, or let us put it this way. I said everything that has *vibhūti* is born of a fraction of My glory, *tejoṃśa-sambhavam*. From that you may conclude that only those things that have *vibhūti* are born of Me and others are not. So, *athavā*, means ‘to put it correctly.’

By this knowledge of manifold things, various things, *bahunā etena jñātena*—like among the trees I am the sacred ficus, among the rivers, I am the *Gaṅgā*—what is accomplished for you *Arjuna*, *kiṃ tava Arjuna*? Not much is accomplished because My *vibhūti* is endless. It is, therefore, not possible for Me to complete this list. *Śaṅkara* says it is a knowledge, which leaves a lot to be desired, *sāvaśeṣeṇa jñātena*. Since it is an incomplete knowledge of *Īśvara*’s glory, what is accomplished?

In fact, what *Bhagavān* wants to say is that you must understand just this one thing—that everything is *Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān* says, ‘All of this is only a part of Me; in fact, I remain pervading this entire world by only one part of Myself—*aham idaṃ kṛtsnam jagat ekāṃśena viṣṭabhya sthitaḥ*. I make it firm; in the form of all these beings, I remain, *aham sthitaḥ*. Otherwise how would all this exist? It is only *mithyā*, requiring Me, the *upādāna-kāraṇa*, to give reality to it.

From your own standpoint, if you just look at this world, it is nothing more than the contents of your *antaḥ-kāraṇa*. So, what you know, what you see is only a limited *jagat*. Whether subtle, *sūkṣma-prapañca*, or physical, *sthūla-prapañca*, whatever you see is only one part, *aṃśa* of yourself.

Three fourths is lost in your *buddhi*. That is the truth of yourself, the limitless, the infinite. It is not literally three fourths but an expression to indicate that this makes it complete. The three fourths is that without, which this one fourth, the *jagat*, is incomplete. Because this *jagat* is non-separate from *Brahman*, it is said to be one fourth of that whole. *Śaṅkara* quotes the *mantra* that expresses this, *pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni*. His one fourth is all this—all eyes are his eyes, etc. But still, three-fourths is beyond time and space, *tripādasyāmṛtaṃ divi*. The source is lost in the sense that it is not available for your perception. Therefore, what you see is very little *Arjuna*. What is really to be seen is the three fourths that is infinite. If you see that three fourth, which makes it complete, you will find everything is infinite, *paraṃ brahma*. There is no part at all.

*Brahman* is *niraṃśa*, not subject to division. This apparent division is created for understanding.

ओं तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे

श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे विभूतियोगो नाम दशमोऽध्यायः ॥१०॥

*oṃ tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde vibhūtiyogonāmadāśamo'dhyāyaḥ*

Thus ends the tenth chapter that is called *vibhūti-yoga*, which has as its topic, the *vibhūti*s of *Bhagavān*, in the *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā*, which is likened to the *Upaniṣads*, whose subject-matter is *brahma-vidyā*, which is also a *yoga-śāstra*, which is in the form of a dialogue between *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*. *Oṃ tat sat*.

**ABABABABAB**

## CHAPTER 11

### THE YOGA OF THE VISION OF THE COSMIC FORM

In the last verse of the tenth chapter *Bhagavān* said, 'I remain with one part of Me pervading the entire universe, *ekāṃśena ahaṃ sthitaḥ*.' On the basis of this there is a new request by *Arjuna*. When *Bhagavān* says, 'I remain in the form of this entire world,' naturally *Arjuna* wonders whether this is literally so. He has heard about what happened when *Yaśodā* asked *Kṛṣṇa* to open his mouth upon finding him eating mud. She saw within the mouth of *Kṛṣṇa*, the child, the entire *jagat*. Now *Arjuna* wants to know if he can see the entire cosmic form, *viśvarūpa*, within the form of *Kṛṣṇa* who is standing in front of him.

To understand this cosmic form properly we should understand *Īśvara's* form. As we have seen, *Īśvara* can be viewed from different standpoints. The essential nature is *caitanya*, *brahma*, the truth of *Īśvara* and of the *Jīva*. The *jīva's* essential *svarūpa* is *sat-cit-ānandam advayaṃ brahma* and the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara* is the same *Brahman*. This is one level of appreciation of *Īśvara*. Then there is another level of appreciation—*Īśvara* as the same *Brahman* conditioned by *māyā*, as the one who is the *jagat-kāraṇa*. Definitely pure limitless consciousness, *Brahman*, cannot be *jagat-kāraṇa* unless there is some other power available for that *Brahman*. As a *jīva* looking at this universe, I naturally seek the cause. *Śruti* reveals that the cause is *Brahman*, not pure *Brahman* but *Brahman* with a certain power.

In order for *Brahman* as *Īśvara* to have the status of creator of everything, omniscience and appropriate power are necessary. Appropriate power means a power in keeping with the nature of the *jagat*. Whatever is the order of reality of the world, the same should be the order of reality of the power that creates it. When we analyse this creation, we find it is *mithyā* and therefore, there must be a *mithyā* power, which has created it. That power is called *māyā*. *Mithyātva* is defined as *adhiṣṭhāna-ananyatva*.<sup>1</sup> That means the *mithyā* creation by definition has no independent existence apart from

<sup>1</sup> Any thing that is *mithyā* has no independent existence. It always depends on the *adhiṣṭhāna*, on which it seems to exist. For example, in the ocean the waves that we see can be said to be *mithyā*. The water is their *adhiṣṭhāna*. The wave has no existence apart from the water. This nature of being not different from the *adhiṣṭhāna* is called *adhiṣṭhāna-ananyatva*.

*Brahman*; its cause, *māyā*, also fulfils this definition, being not independent of *Brahman*.

Since I see *jagat* here, *Brahman* seemingly conditioned by *māyā* is looked upon as *jagat-kāraṇa*. How do we know? The *pramāṇa* for it is only the *śruti*. That *Brahman* is the cause of creation is revealed by the *śāstra*. And it also reveals that you are that *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. You can have an immediate appreciation, *aparokṣa-jñāna*, of this. Then the problem is to account for the world. For the creation of this world, there must be an inherent power, which has the same degree of reality as the *jagat*. That *Brahman* gains the status of the *jagat-kāraṇa* through an inherent power *māyā*, is also known for certain only through *śāstra*, though the existence of the power *māyā* can also be accepted by a supporting inference. Therefore, the same *caitanya*, which is the common basis for *Īśvara* and the *jīva* must have *māyā* to make it the cause for the creation. In so many words the *śruti* says, ‘May one know that *māyā* is the material cause—that undergoes a *pariṇāma*, change, to become this *jagat*. And this *māyā* has no independent existence of its own. It is *Brahmāśrayā*. Therefore, the *śruti* says, ‘*māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ vidyāt, māyinaṃ tu maheśvaram*.’<sup>1</sup> I find this *jagat* is *mithyā* and for that, there must be a *mithyā-kāraṇa*. This is an *anumāna*, inference. And it helps us to assimilate what the *śruti* says.

Thus we have two forms of *Īśvara*; one is *śuddha-caitanya*, pure, limitless consciousness, the second, *māyā-avacchinna-caitanya*. Is there a third? If *caitanya* is the *svarūpa*, which is *Īśvara*, that *svarūpa* is also available here as a *jīva*. Consciousness obtaining in your *antaḥ-karaṇa*, in other words conditioned by your *antaḥ-karaṇa*, is called *jīva*. Therefore, *antaḥ-karaṇa-avacchinna-caitanya* is another form of *Īśvara*. *Caitanya* conditioned by the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is an individual knower, *pramātā*. This is another *rūpa*.

We also have *avatāras* like *Rāma*, *Kṛṣṇa*, etc. Whether they existed or not, the concept of *Īśvara* assuming a particular form is what we call *avatāra*. *Kṛṣṇa*, *Rāma* etc., are all *avatāras* of *Īśvara*. Without the form of *Kṛṣṇa* being a *jīva*, it is a special form assumed by *Īśvara* as a result of the prayers of many people asking for action to be taken in a particular situation. We saw in the fourth chapter that in response to their prayers, *Īśvara* himself, through his own *māyā*, assumes a form suitable for the occasion. That is *avatāra*, another form of *Īśvara*.

Then we have *viśvarūpa*, which is *Īśvara* from the standpoint of the physical universe. If you look upon this entire creation as the form, the body of *Īśvara*, we have what we call *virāṭ*, *caitanya* in the form of cosmos, called the cosmic person.

How do you know that *Īśvara* is in the form of *virāṭ*? You see the *jagat* directly. It is known to you immediately, *pratyakṣa*. But that it is *Īśvara* is not known; because,

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<sup>1</sup> *Śvetaśvataropaniṣad* – 4-10.

even though the *jagat* is *pratyakṣa*, *Īśvara* is not. Therefore, that the *jagat* is *Īśvara* has to be understood only from the *śāstra*. Because of the appreciation of the cause, *kāraṇa*, being both efficient and material, *nimitta* and *upādāna*, there is appreciation of *Īśvara*. And you also understand that *Īśvara* as *caitanya* is the *upādāna-kāraṇa* that undergoes no change what so ever—it is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. And you understand from the *śāstra* that the *māyā*, the *śakti* of *Īśvara* undergoes all the changes and is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. Thus, you understand that this *jagat*, which is *pratyakṣa*, is only the form of *Īśvara*.

Here *Arjuna* wants to see the cosmic form. Because *Bhagavān* said at the end of the last chapter, ‘Pervading the entire universe with one *pāda* I remain,’ *Arjuna* wants to see that cosmic form of *Īśvara*. When the cosmos is right there in front of him, why should he want to see the cosmic form? What he means is that he wants to see *Īśvara* in the form of this entire *jagat*, all at once. Normally you see one thing at one place and time. That is not the cosmic form. You are limited by your own capacities of perception; so, all you see are limited entities. And that too, some of them are seen wrongly, like the blue sky, which is an illusion. Further, anything that is seen is seen only partially. When you see the front of it, you do not see the back. And what is out of sight is out of mind. That means you only see one thing at a time. Where is the possibility of seeing the cosmos? *Arjuna*, like a child, now wants to see the entire cosmic form. He wants to know whether in one form he can see what is behind, what is in front, what is on the left, what is on the right, and what is beyond the sky, all that is in heaven, etc. It is the desire of a child, in fact. *Arjuna* thought, ‘Why not see this?’ For which, of course, *Arjuna*’s eyes are not adequate. Since it is visual perception, he must be given a different type of eye, *divya-caṅkṣus*. Perhaps it is some sort of inner eye but whatever it is, it is possible through *Īśvara*’s *māyā* alone. And *Kṛṣṇa* reveals this cosmic form to him. We can take it as something that happened or simply as a presentation of the subject matter showing that nothing is away from *Īśvara*.

*Virāṭ* means *vividhaṃ rājate*, the one who appears in varieties of forms. That single form, which includes all forms is called the cosmic form, *virāṭ-svarūpa*. It establishes that nothing is outside *Īśvara* and upon appreciating that, you discover in yourself a devotion to *Īśvara*. This is the topic of the next chapter, *bhakti-yoga*. Because of the appreciation of this cosmic form you can understand that *Bhagavān* is in charge of everything. This does not mean you do not take responsibility for what you do, what you are. In fact the law of *karma* helps you take responsibility for your lot, your parentage etc., and happily accept it, not passing the blame to anybody. You accept responsibility for what you are because of past deeds. Other forces might have contributed to what you are, but at the same time you understand that you have a free will. You can add to or reorganise yourself, be an emotionally fragile person or a person who refuses to be fragile. All this is in your hands. At the same time, as an individual *jīva*, you are not in total control.

This appreciation of the cosmic form does create a reverence for *Īśvara*. It is described very beautifully and poetically here creating a word picture that brings all the heavens down within your perception, all the heavens and the people therein in one huge—huge is not the word—one cosmic form. It includes everything. In spite of that, *Arjuna* somehow misunderstood and sees himself as an individual separate from the whole. This we understand because he gets frightened.

Seeing the form, he finds the wheel of time destroying everybody. In the description there is a continuous dissolution, *saṃhāra*, and evolution, *śṛṣṭi*, going on. If you see all this, it is something like seeing the microscopic changes that take place in your own body as it ages. You will be frightened at all that takes place. This is what happens to *Arjuna*. When he sees this cosmic form, he finds all the people within the jaws of death because Lord Death itself is *Bhagavān*. They are all being masticated in the jaws of death, the process of change. He finds them sticking within the grip of this big mouth. There he sees the battlefield, his own people and all the people he thought were outside of him. All of them he finds within one form. Nothing is outside. But somehow *Arjuna* manages to see himself separate from the cosmic form and got frightened.

To say, 'I am this cosmic form,' you have to see from the standpoint of *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Otherwise it becomes purely magic as it is for *Arjuna*. This magical vision of the cosmic person is created purely by the grace of *Kṛṣṇa*. After seeing this he says, *Bhagavān*, I am really frightened; so, please assume your old form.' As he requests, *Kṛṣṇa* comes back to the smiling, easily manageable form that he was. Otherwise how will you manage this *Kṛṣṇa*? Whom will you address? What will you call him? So, he comes back to the particular form that *Arjuna* and others were used to.

This is the sum and substance of the eleventh chapter. *Śaṅkara* introduces it saying that the glories of *Bhagavān* have been told. Though only a few of them were mentioned, the list was complete enough to appreciate the magnitude of *Bhagavān*'s glory. *Arjuna*'s attention was caught by *Kṛṣṇa* saying, 'One quarter of Me pervades the entire world.' If the whole world is nothing but a quarter of *Īśvara*, three quarters remain hidden. This has to be understood. As only the tip of an ice-berg is visible while the rest is under water, so too here; only this much is visible; the part that is not visible is the infinite nature of *ātmā*, which obtains in the *buddhi* as *aham*. That you have to understand. *Arjuna* wants to visually see the cosmic form. You can see through words but *Arjuna* wants to see with his own eyes.

Desiring to see *Bhagavān* in the form of this *jagat*, since he had said that he exists in the form of *jagat*, *Arjuna* said:

अर्जुन उवाच ।

मदनुग्रहाय परमं गुह्यमध्यात्मसंज्ञितम् ।

यत्त्वयोक्तं वचस्तेन मोहोऽयं विगतो मम ॥१॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*madanugrahāya paramaṃ guhyamadyātmasañjñitam*

*yattvayoktaṃ vacastena mohō'yaṃ vigato mama*

*Verse 1*

अर्जुनः *arjunaḥ* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

मदनुग्रहाय *madanugrahāya* — to bless me; परमम् गुह्यम् *paramam guhyam* — the greatest secret; अध्यात्मसंज्ञितम् *adyātmasañjñitam* — known as (knowledge) centred on the self; यत् वचः त्वया उक्तम् *yat vacaḥ tvayā uktam* — which words were taught by you; तेन *tena* — on account of those (words); मम मोहः अयम् *mama mohaḥ ayam* — this delusion of mine; विगतः *vigataḥ* — is gone

*Arjuna* said:

On account of these words, which were taught by you in order to bless me with the greatest secret known as (knowledge) centered on the self, this delusion of mine is gone.

In the beginning of the second chapter *Arjuna* offered himself as a *śiṣya* and then pleaded with Lord *Kṛṣṇa* to bless him with liberation, *yat śreyāḥ syāt niścitaṃ brūhi tan me śiṣyaḥ te aham*. *Arjuna* knew what he was asking for. *Bhagavān* also taught him without any reservation. At this stage, having listened to all this, *Arjuna* says, 'madanugrahāya, to bless me, yat tvayā uktam, what was taught by you, is paramaṃ guhyam, the greatest secret.' This is so, because it is not available by any other means of knowledge except the *śāstra*. Even if the means of knowledge is available, *ātmā* can remain *guhya* because our whole orientation is to look outwards.

A lot of things are hidden, not known, but what value do they have to you? Here it is *parama-guhya*. There is nothing comparable to it in terms of value. It is a hidden treasure.

*Adhyātma-sañjñitam* means that which is known as self-knowledge, *ātma-vidyā*. This is the greatest hidden treasure. And it was taught to me by you, *tvayā uktam*. *Uktam* is not simply told, but taught. By these words—*tena vacasā*, by your words, my delusion (about what is *ātmā*, what is *anātmā*) is gone—*mohaḥ ayaṃ vigataḥ mama*. Self knowledge is nothing but *viveka*, a discriminate knowledge of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. *Arjuna's* delusion about what is *ātmā* and *anātmā*, what is *dharma* and *adharmā*, expressed as sorrow and conflict over all the people he was going to



destroy, has now gone away more or less. After these nine chapters a good part of his delusion is gone but still he has questions to ask. *Arjuna* says, 'mohaḥ ayaṃ vigataḥ mama.' And *Śaṅkara* explains that statement by saying, *aviveka-buddhiḥ apagatā*—the *aviveka-buddhiḥ* is gone. It does not mean that discrimination is complete, just that *aviveka-buddhi* is gone. There is discrimination. *Arjuna* cannot say anymore, 'I am an *avivekī*.' But his *viveka* seems to suffer from some inhibiting factors.

भवाप्ययौ हि भूतानां श्रुतौ विस्तरशो मया ।

त्वत्तः कमलपत्राक्ष माहात्म्यमपि चाव्ययम् ॥२॥

*bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāṃ śrutau vistaraśo mayā*  
*tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa mähātmyamapi cāvayam*

Verse 2

भव-अप्ययौ हि *bhava-apyayau hi* — indeed the creation and dissolution; भूतानाम् *bhūtānām* — of things; श्रुतौ *śrutau* — have been heard; विस्तरशः *vistaraśaḥ* — in detail; मया *mayā* — by me; त्वत्तः *tvattaḥ* — from you; कमलपत्राक्ष *kamalapatrākṣa* — *Kṛṣṇa*, whose eyes are like the lotus petal; अव्ययम् माहात्म्यम् अपि च *avyayam mähātmyam api ca* — and also (your) perennial glory (was heard)

Indeed the creation and dissolution of things have been heard in detail by me from you, O! *Kṛṣṇa*, whose eyes are like the lotus petal, and also (your) perennial glory (was heard).

*Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here as *kamalapatrākṣa*, a very nice expression. *Kamala* can mean the whole lotus but here it means lotus flower and *patra* is a petal. A lotus petal is very soft and shaped like an eye. Thus eyes that are soft and pleasing are likened to the *kamalapatra*. So, *Kṛṣṇa* is addressed as the one whose eyes are like the petal of the lotus, very clear and soft. You can look at it another way also. This is the fun of Sanskrit scholars. *Ka* means *sukha* and here it refers to *brahma-sukha*, *ānanda*, obtaining as the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*, *Brahman*. Then, *kam alati iti kamalaḥ*, means the one that illumines, reveals the *brahma-sukha*. So, *kamala* is that which reveals the *ānanda*, the self. It is self-knowledge. *Patra* means the one who protects one from falling, *patanāt trāyate*. Here self-knowledge saves the person from *saṃsāra*. That is, *kamala-patra* means the self-knowledge that saves you from *saṃsāra*. Then *akṣyate iti akṣaḥ*, what is gained, understood. *Īśvara* is understood only by self-knowledge. There is no other way. He is the one who is accomplished as oneself. Therefore, the one who is accomplished by that self-knowledge, which reveals *ānandā* and saves you from *saṃsāra* is called *kamalapatrākṣa*, *Īśvara*. Though this sounds far-fetched, it is possible in Sanskrit to find such a meaning. If there is a possible meaning and it does not hurt the *śāstra*, it is fun to explore that.

The chapter deals with *Īśvara* in a form in which everything here is included. There is nothing outside *viśvarūpa*, the cosmic form. Therefore, there is going to be a

lot of poetry here, and from that standpoint, it is a very interesting chapter. For devotees committed to duality, this is the greatest chapter. For a *jijñāsu*, it is something that has to be understood properly. The cosmic form *virāṭ* includes all details. Previously, *Bhagavān* said, that he is manifest in each form. Now, in one form everything is included. As the string runs through all the beads, includes all of them and holds them all together, *sutre maṇigaṇaḥ iva*, similarly *Īśvara* is in and through every being. Any glory manifest anywhere belongs to him. Now here, in one cosmic form, everything is included. There the immanence of the Lord was pointed out and here it is the very form of the Lord, which includes all the forms.

*Arjuna* says, 'Two things were heard by me; *bhava* and *apyaya* of the *bhūtas*. *Bhava* means creation. *Apyaya* is dissolution. Both the creation and dissolution of all the beings, *bhūtānāṃ bhavāpyayau*, have been heard of by me. The creation and dissolution of the *sthūla* and *sukṣma-upādhis* and also the *pañca-bhūtas*, *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpaḥ*, *pṛthivī*, were heard. How? In detail, *vistaraśaḥ*. From whom? From you, *tvattaḥ*. Because of your grace I could hear all these from you, O! Lord, not briefly, but in detail. Because in all these chapters, from the seventh chapter onwards, *Bhagavān*'s glory has been told by *Bhagavān* himself. The process of creation, the dissolution, death, what happens after death—everything has been discussed.

Then further, *māhātmyaṃ ca avyayam*, endless glories, were also heard. *Mahātmā* means the one whose *ātmā* is *mahān*; he is all-pervasive. It refers to *Īśvara* here. *Māhātmya* means the nature of the one who is *mahātmā*, that is, the glory of *Īśvara*. Therefore, *Arjuna* says here, 'Your glory, I have been hearing in all these chapters. And it is also *avyaya*.' The word *avyaya* does not mean 'eternal' here but 'perennial.' In every creation it keeps coming again and again. Your glory, your *aiśvarya* is not subject to destruction, it is *avyaya*. *Īśvara*'s qualities are absolute and therefore, not subject to time. The word *śruta*, heard, is to be added here to complete the sentence—*māhātmyaṃ ca avyayaṃ śrutam*.

*Arjuna* makes his request explicit in the next verse.

एवमेतद्यथात्थ त्वमात्मानं परमेश्वर ।  
द्रष्टुमिच्छामि ते रूपमैश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम ॥३॥

*evametadyathāttha tvamātmānaṃ parameśvara*  
*draṣṭumicchāmi te rūpamaiśvaram puruṣottama*

Verse 3

यथा *yathā* — just as; त्वम् आत्थ *tvam āttha* — you tell; आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — (about) yourself; परमेश्वर *parameśvara* — O! Lord; एवम् *evam* — in the same manner; एतद् *etad* — this; द्रष्टुम् इच्छामि *draṣṭum icchāmi* — I wish to see; ते रूपम् ऐश्वरं *te rūpam aiśvaram* — your form as the Lord; पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama* — most exalted among beings

Just as you have been telling about yourself, O! Lord, in the same manner as this, I wish to see this form of yours as the Lord, O! *Puruṣottama*.

*Parameśvara yathā tvam ātmānam evam etad āttha*—O Lord, just as you have been talking to me about yourself in this manner... The word *parama* means ‘not limited by time, space, or object,’ and *Īśvara* is the one who is the cause, the Lord of everything. *Evam etad* means this is indeed so, *yathā tvam ātmānam āttha*, just as you have been telling me about yourself, just as you have revealed yourself. *Arjuna* tells the Lord, ‘This form of yourself, about which you are talking to me, I totally accept as true.’ *Śāṅkara* adds ‘*na anyathā*,’ exactly in this manner, not in any other manner. *Arjuna* is saying, ‘I see that what you say is true and I accept it. I accept because I understand.’ That is what is conveyed here. It is not that *Arjuna* is trying to validate Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. ‘When you said of yourself, I am this, I am that etc., you told of your immanence. And I would like to see that form,’ says *Arjuna*.

Again *Arjuna* uses the vocative when he says, *puruṣottama*, because he is imploring. He addresses *Kṛṣṇa* as the one who is *puruṣa* and *uttama*, the most exalted of all beings. *Kṛṣṇa*’s form is also *Bhagavān*’s form and so, he says, ‘O! *Puruṣottama*, I would like to see that *aiśvaraṃ rūpam* of yours. *Śāṅkara* says that *Bhagavān*’s form is endowed with knowledge, over-lordship, strength, creative power, and glory—*jñāna-aiśvaryaśakti-bala-vīrya-tejobhiḥ sampannam aiśvaraṃ rūpam*. This is another definition of *Bhagavān* in the tradition, which *Śāṅkara* uses here. We have seen another popular definition of the word *Bhagavān* earlier.<sup>1</sup> This is the *aiśvarya*, that belongs to *Īśvara*, the Lord’s form. That I want to see, *draṣṭum icchāmi*. *Arjuna* knows that this is a good opportunity to ask Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, to show his cosmic form. But he is a little doubtful about whether *Bhagavān* will reveal it or not and that doubt is expressed in the next verse.

मन्यसे यदि तच्छक्यं मया द्रष्टुमिति प्रभो ।

योगेश्वर ततो मे त्वं दर्शयात्मानमव्ययम् ॥४॥

*manyase yadi tacchakyaṃ mayā draṣṭumiti prabho*  
*yogēśvara tato me tvaṃ darśayātmānamavyayam*

Verse 4

यदि *yadi* — if; मन्यसे *manyase* — you consider; तत् *tat* — that (form); मया *mayā* — by me; द्रष्टुम् शक्यम् इति *draṣṭum śakyaṃ iti* — is possible to be seen; प्रभो *prabho* — O! Lord; योगेश्वर *yogēśvara* — Lord of the *yogīs*; ततः *tataḥ* — then; मे त्वम् दर्शय *me tvam darśaya* — you please show me; आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — yourself; अव्ययम् *avyayam* — who is perennially eternal

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the definition of the word *Bhagavān* — page 24, vol 1.

If you think it is possible for me O! Lord, to see that (form of yours), then, O! Lord of the *yogīs*, please show me your perennially eternal self.

*Arjuna* wants to see, but then the choice of course is left to *Bhagavān*. When people know they are asking too much, they always start with, ‘If it is not too much to ask...’ It is a prelude to asking for a lot. Similarly, *Arjuna* says, ‘If you consider it is possible for me to see that (form), O! Lord..., *manyase yadi mayā tat draṣṭuṃ śakyam iti prabho...*’

He knows he is not qualified because the ordinary eyes he has are not enough. Some extra eye may be necessary to see the cosmic form and that is what *Arjuna* is implicitly requesting here. He addresses *Kṛṣṇa* as *prabho*. *Prabhu* is the Lord who gives everything. You will find this chapter is full of the vocative case! Again he says *yogeśvara*, the one who is the Lord among the *yogīs*. A *yogī* is one who has accomplished the end called *mokṣa* accomplished by the *sannyāsīs*. The one who has that *yoga* is called *yogī*. There are many *yogīs* and *Kṛṣṇa* is called the Lord of all of them. He is the most exalted *yogī*, the one who keeps the *yogamāyā*, the *māyā* of the Lord, under his control.

Any *yogī* at the very least keeps his body under control. That is *āsana-siddhi*. Then his health can be maintained and senses etc., can be kept under control by *yamaḥ*, *niyata*, *prāṇāyāma*, *prayātāḥ*, *dhārayan*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. This *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* will help him to achieve self-mastery. As a person he is together. Then certain innate powers in the *māyā* like *aṇimā*, *garimā*, *laghimā* etc., can be kept under control for which there is a *siddhi-prakaraṇa* in the *yoga-sūtras*. Such people seem to have existed only in earlier times. But among those people who had a few things under control Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is the one who has everything under control. He is *māyāvī*, the one who wields the *yoga-māyā*. He has said so, himself—*ātma-māyayā ahaṃ sambhavāmi*, with the help of *māyā* I come into being in this particular form. Therefore, when *Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* as *yogeśvara* it looks like a very consciously chosen word. ‘Since you are *yogeśvara*, you can, after all, lend some of your powers to me so that I can see your glorious form. So, if you think it is possible, then, *tataḥ*, for my sake, please show me, *darśaya*, your own self, *ātmānam*, which is *avyaya aiśvaram rūpam*, the perennially eternal form of the Lord,’ says *Arjuna*. Even though the time-bound *jagat* is subject to dissolution, it comes back again and again. Therefore, it is *avyaya*, eternal.

Now that *Arjuna* has made this request, *Kṛṣṇa* has to decide whether to grant it or not. He can refuse and change the subject. but he seems to see it as a good teaching opportunity—another method of revealing his cosmic form. So far he has only been speaking; but here is a chance to use a visual device; and he thought that it would be good for *Arjuna*. When *Arjuna* said, in the first chapter, ‘I don't want to cause all these problems. I will be incurring sin,’ he showed an inflated sense of his role in all of this. So, *Kṛṣṇa* perhaps thinks this is a good occasion to demonstrate how there is only one

*puruṣa* and everything 'else' is *prakṛti*. That one *puruṣa* is *puruṣottama*, which happens to be the *ātmā*. That is what the entire *śāstra* is saying. There is no second thing.

*Arjuna*'s protests against engaging in battle thinking that he would incur sin, etc., are all going to be answered simply by this visual teaching. *Bhagavān* anticipates this and therefore, decides to show him this form.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

पश्य मे पार्थ रूपाणि शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः ।

नानाविधानि दिव्यानि नानावर्णाकृतीनि च ॥५॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ*

*nānāvidhāni divyāni nānavarṇākṛtīni ca*

Verse 5

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān* (The Lord); उवाच *uvāca* — said;

पश्य *paśya* — see; पार्थ *pārtha* — *Arjuna*; मे रूपाणि *me rūpāṇi* — My forms; शतशः *śataśaḥ* — in hundreds; अथ *atha* — then; सहस्रशः *sahasraśaḥ* — in thousands; नाना-विधानि *nānā-vidhāni* — of many varieties; दिव्यानि *divyāni* — effulgent; नाना-वर्ण-आकृतीनि च *nānā-varṇa-ākṛtīni ca* — and of many colours and forms.

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

See, *Arjuna*, hundreds, and thousands of My forms of many varieties, effulgent and of many colours and shapes.

*Bhagavān* says, '*paśya*, look!' But he does not show his form immediately; so, this is only an introduction to the topic. When he says 'look!' here he means, 'You are going to see.' That is the sense in which it is used here. It means, 'You are qualified and you are now going to see.' Therefore, '*Paśya*, please look,' *Bhagavān* says, arresting *Arjuna*'s attention. And he addresses him as *Kuntī*'s son, *Pārtha*. What should he see?

*Me rūpāṇi*—My forms, which are hundreds, *śataśaḥ*, and thousands *sahasraśaḥ*, in number. The words 'hundred' and 'thousand' are not to be taken literally. They have the meaning of countless, *amīta*. And not only are they numerous in terms of quantity, they are of infinite variety, *nānā-vidhāni*, forms with all different features. Then again they include not only what you can know here but what you can never imagine, *divyāni*, things that are in heaven and other *lokas*. Not only are they of all different features but different types of physiques, *ākṛtīni*. 'You have seen only the animals and human beings, which exist on this planet. Even on this planet there are so many tribes of people and species of animals, which you have not seen. You will see varieties of forms in Me right now. Don't think that you are going to see only local things. You will see all sorts of other things that you have never seen,' says *Bhagavān*, arresting *Arjuna*'s attention.

पश्यादित्यान्वसून् रुद्रानश्विनौ मरुतस्तथा ।

बहून्यदृष्टपूर्वाणि पश्याश्चर्याणि भारत ॥६॥

*paśyādityānvasūnrudrānaśvinau marutastathā*

*bahūnyadr̥ṣṭapūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata*

Verse 6

पश्य *paśya* — see; आदित्यान् *ādityān* — the *Ādityas*; वसून् *vasūn* — *Vasus*; रुद्रान् *rudrān* — *Rudras*; अश्विनौ *aśvinau* — two *Aśvins*; मरुतः तथा *marutaḥ tathā* — as well as the *Maruts*; पश्य *paśya* — see; बहूनि *bahūni* — many (others); आश्चर्याणि *aścaryāṇi* — wondrous (forms); अदृष्टपूर्वाणि *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvāṇi*— never seen before; भारत *bhārata* — *Arjuna*

See the *Ādityas*, *Vasus*, *Rudras*, two *Aśvins* as well as the *Maruts*. See, *Arjuna*, many (other) wondrous (forms) never seen before.

*Bhagavān* says, ‘Now, *Arjuna*, you can see these twelve *āditya-devatās*, the eight *vasus*, eleven *rudras*, two *aśvini-devatās*, considered to be the *devatās* of smell, and the seven groups of *marut devatās*. All of them, have never been seen before by you or by any one else, *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvāṇi*. And many other, *bahūni*, wondrous forms, *aścaryāṇi*, which you could never see otherwise much less see in a single form.’

Not only that:

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।

मम देहे गुडाकेश यच्चान्यद्द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ॥७॥

*ihaikastham jagatkṛtsnam paśyādya sacarācaram*

*mama dehe guḍākeśa yaccānyadras̥ṭumicchasi*

Verse 7

गुडाकेश *guḍākeśa* — *Arjuna*; अद्य *adya* — today; इह *iha* — here; एकस्थम् *ekastham* — in one place; जगत्कृत्स्नम् *jagatkṛtsnam* — the entire world; सचराचरम् *sacarācaram* — movable and immovable; मम देहे *mama dehe* — in My body; पश्य *paśya* — see; यत् च अन्यत् *yat ca anyat* — and anything else; द्रष्टुम् इच्छसि *dras̥ṭum icchasi* — that you wish to see

Today, here, in My body, please see the entire world, movable and immovable, in one place *Arjuna*; and anything else, which you wish to see.

Addressing him as *Guḍākeśa*, *Bhagavān* draws *Arjuna*’s attention. *Guḍākeśa*, we have seen, is the one who has mastered his sleep. He says, ‘Here, residing in one place, in My body, please see the entire world, right now.’ The world is divided into two parts, moving and non-moving. ‘In one place, in My body, please see all this *Arjuna*. And not only that, anything else you want to see, *yat ca anyat dras̥ṭum icchasi*.’

What else can there be, when everything is in this form. The only thing remaining, *Śaṅkara* says, is the question of who is going to win this battle. *Arjuna* wondered whether his side would win or not. ‘Now you can resolve that and all other doubts,’ says *Bhagavān*, ‘You will see the future including the outcome of this war. It is all settled. *Duryodhana* by his deeds has already brought about the destruction of his clan. You need not do anything more than play your part. It is like a fruit that has already ripened. You simply have to touch it and it will fall. It would look as if you brought it down. But it is not so. It was on the verge of falling as it is. Similarly *Duryodhana* is ripe for being destroyed. All you have to do is release a few arrows. Nothing else. By his own *karmas*, he has already brought about the *phala*. That is why the war is being waged. He has sought this destruction, worked hard for it and therefore, is getting it. Who are you in all this? You are only an instrument, *nimitta*, in the whole process.’ This, *Bhagavān* is going to tell later. ‘Therefore, if you wish to see anything more, *yat ca anyad draṣṭum icchasi*, such as the outcome of this war, you will see it all here in My *deha*, My form.’

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।

दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।८।।

*na tu māṃ śakyase draṣṭumanenaiva svacakṣuṣā*  
*divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogamaiśvaram*

Verse 8

न तु शक्यसे *na tu śakyase* — but you will not be able; द्रष्टुम् *draṣṭum* — to see Me; माम् *mām* — Me; अनेन एव स्वचक्षुषा *anena eva svacakṣuṣā* — with this physical eyes of yours alone; ददामि ते *dadāmi te* — I will give you; दिव्यम् चक्षुः *divyam cakṣuḥ* — extraordinary eyes; पश्य *paśya* — please see; मे योगम् ऐश्वरम् *me yogam aiśvaram* — My wondrous power

But it is not possible for you to see Me with your own eyes alone. I will give you an extraordinary eye. Please see My wondrous power.

Even though it is possible to see all this, the problem here is your eyes are not adequate to see Me in this cosmic form. ‘The natural human eyes with, which we can see a few things are not capable of seeing something of this dimension. For that you require a special eye. You can call it the eye of wisdom or an extraordinary eye created by Lord *Kṛṣṇa* through his power of *māyā*. Either way, *Bhagavān* gave *Arjuna* the capacity to see his cosmic form. He says, ‘I give you eyes that are *divya*.’

Therefore, please see My wondrous power, *paśya me yogamaiśvaram*. *Yoga* here is the power of *māyā*, a power that is beyond compare. It holds the capacity for all knowledge, *jñāna-śakti*, all activity, *kriyā-śakti*, and all desire, *icchā-śakti*. Please see My wondrous power of *māyā* in this form. *Bhagavān* has given *Arjuna* the capacity to confront his power.

Now the scene shifts to the palace at *Hastinapura* and we are reminded that *Sañjaya* is relating this dialogue to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*. The whole dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* is a narration by *Sañjaya*. *Sañjaya* now speaks directly to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*. Because he also saw the cosmic form, he also had *divya-caṅṣu*.

*Sañjaya* says,

सञ्जय उवाच ।

एवमुक्त्वा ततो राजन्महायोगेश्वरो हरिः ।

दर्शयामास पार्थाय परमं रूपमैश्वरम् ॥९॥

*Sañjaya uvāca*

*evamuktvā tato rājanmahāyogeśvaro hariḥ*

*darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṃ rūpamaiśvaram*

Verse 9

सञ्जयः *sañjaya* — *Sanjaya*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

ततः *tataḥ* — then; राजन् *rājan* — O! King; महायोगेश्वरः *mahā-yogeśvaraḥ* — the limitless Lord of all *yogīs*; हरिः *hariḥ* — *Hari*, whose grace destroys all *pāpa*; एवम् उक्त्वा *evam uktvā* — thus having spoken; दर्शयामास *darśayāmāsa* — showed; पार्थाय *pārthāya* — to *Arjuna*; परमम् रूपम् ऐश्वरम् *paramam rūpam aiśvaram* — his wondrous all-inclusive form

*Sañjaya* said:

Having spoken thus, then, O! King, the limitless Lord of all *yogīs* whose grace destroys all *pāpa*, showed to *Arjuna* his wondrous all-inclusive form.

‘When *Arjuna* said this, O! King, then the Lord showed *Arjuna* his cosmic form,’ says *Sañjaya*. *Sañjaya* refers to *Kṛṣṇa* here as the Lord of all *yogīs*, *yogeśvara*, who is also limitless, *mahān*, and who is called *Hari* because his grace destroys all *pāpa*. The form he showed to *Arjuna* was one that includes all forms. That was *parama*. Any given form generally excludes every other form. But here it is one form containing all forms, each of which still enjoys its own form. That is the beauty. If all wax forms are rolled into one form, the individual forms are lost. But here, in one sweep of vision you can see one form consisting of all forms. This cosmic form, *Bhagavān* showed to *Arjuna*. Then *Sañjaya* who also could see that cosmic form continues with his own description of the whole thing.

अनेकवक्त्रनयनमनेकाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।

अनेकदिव्याभरणं दिव्यानेकोद्यतायुधम् ॥१०॥

*anekavaktrānayanamanekādbhutadarśanam*

*anekadivyaḥbharāṇaṃ divyānekodyatāyudham*

Verse 10



(तत् रूपम् *tat rūpam* — that form); अनेक-वक्त्र-नयनम् *aneka-vaktra-nayanam* — (was one) of countless mouths and eyes; अनेक-अद्भुत-दर्शनम् *aneka-adbhuta-darśanam* — of countless wondrous objects; अनेक-दिव्य-आभरणम् *aneka-divya-ābharaṇam* — of countless splendid celestial ornaments; दिव्य-अनेक-उद्यत-आयुधम् *divya-aneka-udyata-āyudham* — (had) countless extraordinary weapons raised for use

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम् ।

सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवमनन्तं विश्वतोमुखम् ॥११॥

*divyamālyāambaradharaṇ divyagandhānulepanam*

*sarvāścaryamayam devamanantaṁ viśvatomukham*

Verse 11

दिव्य-माल्य-अम्बरधरम् *divya-mālya-ambaradharam* — (was) wearing celestial *mālās* and garments; दिव्य-गन्ध-अनुलेपनम् *divya-gandha-anulepanam* — anointed with special sandal paste; सर्वाश्चर्यमयम् *sarvāścaryamayam* — that which is all wonder; देवम् *devam* — effulgent; अनन्तम् *anantam* — endless; विश्वतोमुखम् *viśvatomukham* — that which spans all the directions

That form consisted of countless mouths and eyes, countless wondrous objects, countless extraordinary weapons raised for use. It was wearing celestial *mālās* and garments, was anointed with special sandal paste. It was all wonder, was endless, and was one that spanned all the directions.

The form that *Bhagavān* showed to *Arjuna* and which *Saṅjaya* also saw was due to the *māyā-śakti* of *Īśvara*. It was a highly elaborate form with not one but millions of mouths, *aneka-vaktra*, and millions of eyes, *aneka-nayana*. It is all dramatically presented here. And this form consists of countless wondrous objects, which *Śaṅkara* says are awe inspiring, *aneka-adbhuta-darśana*. It has forms never seen before, each as striking as the next. And it is full of thousands of splendid ornaments that you could never think of, *aneka-divya-ābharaṇa*. And it has special instruments of destruction all ready for use, *divya-aneka-udyata-āyudha*. The weapons were not just of this world that are commonly known but those that are *divya*, not of this world. Destruction is constantly going on in this cosmic form. So, there are appropriate weapons for all forms of destruction, all being brandished and ready for use. All this *Arjuna* sees.

It is a form decked with garlands of celestial flowers beyond imagination and it is wearing celestial garments, *divya-mālya-ambaradhara*. And it is anointed with especially fragrant sandal paste, *divya-gandha-anulepana*. It is all one great endless wonder, *sarva-āścaryamaya* and *ananta*. It is effulgent, *deva*. In whichever way he looked there was no end to this form at all. No top, no bottom, no width, no end in any direction, *viśvatomukha*. *Arjuna* sees the one whose form includes all forms and who is *ātmā*, the truth of all forms.

Then *Saṅjaya* gives an illustration for the effulgence of the cosmic form.

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।

यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥१२॥

*divi sūryasahasrasya bhavedyugapadutthitā*

*yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syādbhāstasya mahātmanaḥ*

Verse 12

यदि *yadi* — suppose; दिवि *divi* — in the sky; सूर्य-सहस्रस्य भाः *sūrya-sahasrasya bhāḥ* — effulgence of one thousand suns; युगपत् *yugapat* — simultaneously; उत्थिता भवेत् *utthitā bhavet* — would appear; सा *sā* — that (effulgence); तस्य महात्मनः भासः *tasya mahātmanaḥ bhāsaḥ* — the effulgence of that great Lord; सदृशी स्यात् *sadṛśī syāt* — would be equal to

If one thousand effulgent suns should simultaneously appear in the sky, that (effulgence) would be equal to the effulgence of that great Lord.

Just think of the brightness of a blazing summer sun. Now suppose one thousand suns rise simultaneously in the sky. How effulgent would it be? Equivalent to that, *Saṅjaya* says, was the effulgence of *Īśvara's* cosmic form. It was, *Śaṅkara* says, equivalent to the effulgence of *Īśvara's* cosmic form. No example will be adequate because he transcends all comparisons. It is impossible even to imagine. That is why he said it is like one thousand suns simultaneously rising. It does not happen and it is difficult even to imagine it. If you could imagine a thousand suns rising in the sky, that would be the effulgence of *Īśvara* in this cosmic form. Here the *upamā*, illustration, is not drawn from any known experience because there is none. So, you are asked to imagine. This is known in Sanskrit literature as *sambhāvita-upamā*.

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।

अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ॥१३॥

*tatraikastham jagatkṛtsnam pravibhaktamanekadhā*

*apaśyaddevadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavastadā*

Verse 13

तदा *tadā* — then; पाण्डवः *pāṇḍavaḥ* — *Arjuna*; तत्र देव-देवस्य शरीरे *tatra deva-devasya śarīre* — there in the body of the Lord of all gods; एकस्थम् *ekastham* — remaining in one form; जगत्-कृत्स्नम् *jagat-kṛtsnam* — the entire world; अनेकधा प्रविभक्तम् *anekadhā pravibhaktam* — distinctly divided in a manifold way; अपश्यत् *apaśyat* — saw

Then, there in the body of the Lord of all gods, *Arjuna* saw the entire world remaining in a single form (but) distinctly divided in a manifold way.

There, in that *viśvarūpa*, this entire world remaining within the boundaries of one form retained the distinction of each form therein. It was divided in many ways into celestials, *devas*, humans, *manuśyas*, the manes, etc., *Śaṅkara* says. Included are the animals, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *gandharvas*, all in one form. *Arjuna* saw all this in that particular form, the body of the Lord of all the gods.

When he saw this form *Arjuna* was wonder struck.

ततः स विस्मयाविष्टो हृष्टरोमा धनञ्जयः ।

प्रणम्य शिरसा देवं कृताञ्जलिरभाषत ॥१४ ॥

*tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hr̥ṣṭaromā dhanañjayah*  
*praṇamya śirasā devam̐ kṛtāñjalirabhāṣata*

Verse 14

ततः *tataḥ* — then; स धनञ्जयः *sa dhanañjayah* — that *Arjuna*; विस्मयाविष्टः *vismaya-āviṣṭaḥ* — who was overwhelmed with awe; हृष्टरोमा *hr̥ṣṭaromā* — whose hairs were standing on end; देवम् शिरसा प्रणम्य *devam̐ śirasā praṇamya* — saluting the Lord with his head; कृताञ्जलिः *kṛtāñjaliḥ* — with hands folded; अभाषत *abhāṣata* — said

Then, overwhelmed with awe, with his hairs standing on end, *Arjuna* saluting the Lord with his head, hands folded together, said.

*Arjuna* is actually seeing this. What would be his lot? He does not know whether to laugh or to cry. Sometimes emotions are not very distinct. If it is one form of emotion you can cry, if it is another, you can laugh. But on seeing the cosmic form *Arjuna* is overwhelmed with wonder and also fear, as he is going to say later. Everything is mixed up. The impact is so great that his hair stands on end, and hence he is called *hr̥ṣṭaromā*. *Arjuna*, bowing his head, with folded hands says the following in praise of the Lord.

Here, *Śaṅkara* tells us that *Arjuna* is reporting his own experience.

पश्यामि देवांस्तव देव देहे सर्वास्तथा भूतविशेषसङ्घान् ।

ब्रह्माणमीशं कमलासनस्थमृषींश्च सर्वानुरगांश्च दिव्यान् ॥१५ ॥

*paśyāmi devāṃstava deva dehe*  
*sarvāṃstathā bhūtaviśeṣasaṅghān*  
*brahmāṇamīśaṃ kamalāsanastham*  
*ṛṣīṅśca sarvānuragāṃśca divyān*

Verse 15

देव *deva* — O! Lord; तव देहे *tava dehe* — in your body; सर्वान् देवान् *sarvān devān* — all the celestials; तथा *tathā* — so too; भूत-विशेष-सङ्घान् *bhūta-viśeṣa-saṅghān* — hosts of different types of beings; ब्रह्माणम् ईशम् *brahmāṇam īśam* — the Lord *Brahmā*; कमलासनस्थम् *kamalāsanastham* — one who seated on the lotus; ऋषीन् च सर्वान् *ṛṣīn ca*

*sarvān* — and all the *ṛṣis*; उरगान् च दिव्यान् *uragān ca divyān* — and celestial snakes; पश्यामि *paśyāmi* — I see

In your body, O! Lord, I see all the celestials as well as hosts of different types of beings, the Lord *Brahmā* (residing in *brahma-loka*), seated on the lotus, and all the *ṛṣis* and celestial snakes.

*Arjuna* says, ‘This cosmic form that you have shown, I am seeing. Within the scope of your body, I see all the celestials, *sarvān devān paśyāmi*. I see hosts of various beings enjoying different types of bodies, *bhūta-viśeṣa-saṅghān*.’ Some of them, *Śaṅkara* says, are stationary, *sthāvara*, like trees and plants, and some are mobile, *jaṅgama*, like the animals, human beings and so on. ‘Assembled in countless different ways, I see varieties of beings in you,’ says *Arjuna*.

*Arjuna* saw *Brahmajī*, *brahmāṇam īśam*, the four-faced Lord who is the creator of everything. This is not *Brahman* here because *Arjuna* is not seeing himself as *Brahman*. What he sees is all within *apara-vidyā*, though not separate from *Parameśvara*. This *Brahmajī* is the one who is seated on the lotus, in *brahma-loka*, *kamalāsanasthaḥ*. So, *Arjuna* is saying that he is seeing *brahma-loka*. ‘And,’ he says, ‘I see the *ṛṣis* existing here as *devatās*. And all the celestial snakes, *uragas*, like *Vāsuki*. *Uras* means chest and *ga* means ‘one who goes,’ so, the one which moves on its body, *urasā gacchati iti uragaḥ*, is the snake. *Vāsuki* is the most famous of them all, a celestial snake, which *Arjuna* is seeing now. Of course earthly snakes are also included but when he is seeing *Vāsuki* and other celestial snakes, they do not count.

Further,

अनेकबाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं पश्यामि त्वां सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपम् ।  
नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवादिं पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप ॥१६॥  
*anekabāhūdaravaktranetraṃ*  
*paśyāmi tvāṃ sarvato’nantarūpam*  
*nāntaṃ na madhyaṃ na punastavādiṃ*  
*paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa*

Verse 16

त्वाम् पश्यामि *tvām paśyāmi* — I see you as; अनेक-बाहु-उदर-वक्त्र-नेत्रम् *aneka-bāhu-udara-vaktra-netram* — one who has countless arms, stomachs, mouths, eyes; सर्वतः *sarvataḥ* — from every quarter; अनन्तरूपम् *anantarūpam* — one with endless forms; विश्वेश्वर *viśveśvara* — O! Lord of creation; विश्वरूप *viśvarūpa* — O! Lord of the cosmic form; तव *tava* — your; न अन्तम् *na antam* — not the end; न मध्यम् *na madhyam* — not the middle; न पुनः आदिम् *na punaḥ ādim* — and again not the beginning; पश्यामि *paśyāmi* — I see

I see you having countless arms, stomachs, mouths, and eyes, from every quarter (you have) endless forms. I see that you have no end, no middle, and again no beginning, O! Lord of creation, O! Lord of the cosmic form.

*Arjuna* continues, 'I see you having countless arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes.' *Aneka* literally means 'not one.' It can simply mean two but here it is countless. I see that you have endless forms, *ananta-rūpam*. Whatever *Arjuna* has heard of or studied in the *purāṇas*, including all the *devas*, *yakṣas* and other celestials, he is able to see now because it is all *Bhagavān's māyā*.

*Bhagavān* presents *Arjuna* with a form that includes everything he knows of either directly or indirectly. He must see everything he knows because only then will he have *śraddhā*. Whether there is a *yakṣa* or not, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* presents a *yakṣa* because *Arjuna* believes in *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *asuras*, *siddhas* and *ṛṣis*. All of them are talked about in the *purāṇas*. So, *Arjuna* has an idea of what exists in the universe and when he asks to see the cosmic form, naturally he expects all these. And he is seeing them all. In the universe as we know it, there are satellites, black holes etc. If Lord *Kṛṣṇa* were to present us today with a cosmic form, he would include the black holes etc., so that we would know that everything is included.

'I don't see an end, *na antaṃ paśyāmi*.' There is neither a top nor a bottom. Everywhere he looks it is endless. This is a relative, *āpekṣika*, end here. 'And I do not see any middle, *na madhyam*, nor any beginning, *na adi*.' *Ādi* can also be taken as the head and *anta* as the feet. In any form, however big it is, you are generally able to see its limit, but not in the *viśvarūpa*. When there is no beginning or end, there is not going to be anything in between, *madhya*. In fact, everything seems to be in the middle, *madhya*. This is the form that *Arjuna* sees, addressing *Kṛṣṇa* as *viśveśvara*, Lord of the world and *viśvarūpa*, the very cosmic form.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रिणं च तेजोराशिं सर्वतो दीप्तिमन्तम् ।  
 पश्यामि त्वां दुर्निरीक्ष्यं समन्ताद् दीप्तानलार्कद्युतिमप्रमेयम् ॥१७॥  
*kirīṭinaṃ gadinam cakriṇam ca*  
*tejorāśim sarvato dīptimantam*  
*paśyāmi tvāṃ durnirīkṣyaṃ samantād*  
*dīptānalārkadyutimaprameyam*

Verse 17

त्वाम् पश्यामि *tvām paśyāmi* — I see you (as); किरीटिनम् *kirīṭinam* — one who has a crown; गदिनम् *gadinam* — who has a mace; चक्रिणम् च *cakriṇam ca* — and who has a disc; तेजोराशिम् *tejorāśim* — as a mass of brilliance; सर्वतः दीप्तिमन्तम् *sarvataḥ dīptimantam* — as the one who has light on all sides (effulgent); दुर्निरीक्ष्यम्

*durnirīkṣyam* — difficult to see<sup>1</sup>; समन्तात् *samantāt* — from all sides; दीप्त-अनल-अर्क-द्युतिम् *dīpta-anala-arka-dyutim* — who has the brilliance of a conflagration and the blazing sun; अप्रमेयम् *aprameyam* — who is not knowable as a limited object

I see you as one who has a crown and a mace and a disc, as a mass of brilliance with light on all sides and (therefore,) difficult to see, from every angle (I see you having) the brilliance of a conflagration and the blazing sun and as one who is not knowable as a limited object.

*Arjuna* says, ‘I also see you in the form that we invoke and worship, wearing a crown, *kirīṭa*, and wielding a mace, *gadā*, in one hand and a disc, *cakra*, in another.’ his third hand extended, offering refuge and safety, *abhaya*, the fourth is pointing towards his feet asking you to come there, as though saying, ‘If you come and surrender to Me, I protect you.’ The other two hands are for destroying. This is why *Viṣṇu* or any other form of *Īśvara* is depicted with four hands. You need not be afraid of anything because *Bhagavān* has all the missiles necessary to protect you. *Gadā* is meant to take care of a threat that is nearby or at close quarters. And *cakra* is for remote danger, remote in terms of both place and time. *Cakra* is a very great weapon; it will travel miles and destroy. Thus *Bhagavān* gives you *abhaya*. In order to protect you, he has to destroy the danger of *saṃsāra*, both immediate and remote. For that he has these two types of weapons. *Arjuna* also sees *Kṛṣṇa* within the cosmic form in the same form people invoke Lord *Viṣṇu*.

He sees it as a column of brilliance, *tejorāśi*. Anywhere you look, *Śaṅkara* says, you see nothing but one *caitanya*. Within that alone is everything. A form of such blinding brilliance can only be seen with difficulty.

The light is from all sides, *samantāt*, like the light of fire, the sun, or lightning, *dīpta-anala-arka-dyuti*. A brilliance, *dyuti*, equal to a conflagration, *dīpta-anala*, and the blazing sun, *dīpta-arka*, is what *Arjuna* is seeing here.

And it is *aprameya*. *Śaṅkara* makes it clear how it is *aprameya*. *Prameya* is an object of your knowledge. What happens when you gather a piece of knowledge like that of a flower? The flower is limited, *paricchinna*, by a *vṛtti*. Because the flower has a form, your *antaḥ-karaṇa* is able to objectify that, excluding every other object. The flower becomes ‘loaded’ in your mind. Every other object is omitted and you can see this object, the flower, distinctly. Therefore, the word *prameya* refers to a discreet object. Or *prameya* can mean something that is to be understood as yourself, which is not an object. But here, *Arjuna* is objectifying the cosmic form, even though, it is too vast for him to contain in a single *vṛtti*. So, it is *aprameya*. *Śaṅkara* defines it carefully here as that which cannot be circumscribed, *aśakya-pariccheda*. It is not available for

<sup>1</sup> *Because it is too brilliant.*

distinct understanding. This distinct understanding is possible for a small or even a large object. But when every object is included, how can you limit it? It is not possible to understand it in a limited form. That is why it is a cosmic form. Therefore, when *Arjuna* says, *aprameyaṃ paśyāmi* means, 'I am not able to say, "This is you," because everything is you.' Here the word *aprameya* is not used in the usual sense of 'that which is not an object of knowledge.' In that sense it is used to refer to *ātmā* because it is not an object; it is you.

*Śaṅkara* says that seeing that everything is included in the cosmic form, *Arjuna* now makes an inference.

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।  
 त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे ॥१८॥  
*tvamakṣaram paramaṃ veditavyam*  
*tvamasya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam*  
*tvamavyayaḥ śāśvatadharmagoptā*  
*sanātanastvaṃ puruṣo mato me*

Verse 18

त्वम् *tvam* — you (are); अक्षरम् *akṣaram* — imperishable; परमम् *paramam* — imperishable limitless, *Brahman*; वेदितव्यम् *veditavyam* — to be known; त्वम् *tvam* — you (are); अस्य विश्वस्य *asya viśvasya* — of this world; परम् निधानम् *param nidhānam* — ultimate basis (cause); त्वम् *tvam* — you (are); अव्ययः *avyayaḥ* — not subject to change; शाश्वत-धर्म-गोप्ता *śāśvata-dharma-goptā* — protector of the perennially eternal laws; त्वम् *tvam* — you (are); सनातनः *sanātanah* — eternal; पुरुषः *puruṣah* — the complete being; (इति *iti*) मतो *mataḥ me* — (thus is) my appreciation

It is my appreciation that you (are) imperishable, limitless, *Brahman*, the one who is to be known; you (are) the ultimate basis (cause) of this world; you (are) not subject to change, the protector of the perennially eternal laws; you (are) eternal, (you are) the complete being.

Seeing everything within the cosmic form of *Kṛṣṇa*, *Arjuna* understands him as the cause of everything, *jagat-kāraṇa*, which is *paraṃ brahma*. What he has heard from the *śāstra*, he now sees for himself as true. 'I appreciate that you are *paraṃ brahma*, the one to be known, *veditavya*, by every seeker,' says *Arjuna*.

*Śruti* says that there are two types of knowledge, one is *parā*, the other, *aparā*—*dve vidye veditavye parā ca aparā ca*.<sup>1</sup> *Parā* is the knowledge, which has as its subject matter the *akṣara-brahma*, the changeless *Brahman*. That is to be understood through the *pramāṇa* of all the Vedas, *sarvaiḥ vedaiḥ*, as oneself. It is possible to infer this

<sup>1</sup> *Mundakopaniṣad* –1-1-4

from the vision of this cosmic form. Every form is seen here; nothing is omitted. And every one of them is *drśya*; so, they all become *mithyā*. According to *śruti*, the *adhiṣṭhāna*, the essence, is *paraṃ brahma*. The only *adhiṣṭhāna* here, does not change, and in whom all these forms appear is *ātmā*. But *Arjuna* does not take his inference that far. He understands only that *Kṛṣṇa* is *jagat-kāraṇa*, the cause of the world.

*Nidhānam* is that in which something is placed or has its basis. The axle, for example, is the *nidhāna* for the spokes of a wheel. Here *Arjuna* recognises Lord *Kṛṣṇa* as the *nidhāna* of everything, that wherein everything is placed. He says, ‘I understand that you are the ultimate basis of everything—*tvam asya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam*.’ *Paraṃ nidhānam*, the ultimate basis, means cause here. Everything has its basis; the pot has its basis in clay, the chain in the gold. But the ultimate basis is ‘you,’ says *Arjuna*.

*Tvam avyayaḥ*, ‘You do not undergo any change.’ Why? ‘Since all these forms depend upon you, I infer that you do not undergo any change, you are *avyaya*,’ says *Arjuna*.

He makes another inference and says, ‘You are the protector of the eternal laws, *śāśvata-dharma-goptā*.’ *Śaṅkara* says, *nityaḥ dharmāḥ*, while explaining the word *śāśvata-dharma*. It refers to the eternal laws, the order that never changes, that because of which creation after creation comes into being in the same form. And *Arjuna* says, ‘You are the protector, *goptā* of that *dharma*.’

*Arjuna* understands now. ‘I see you as *Īśvara*.’ So, he recognises him as *paraṃ brahma* and also as *Parameśvara*.

He says, ‘You are *sanātana*, eternal.’ And further, *Arjuna* says, ‘This is my appreciation, *me mataḥ*.’ That is why *Śaṅkara* explains this statement of *Arjuna*, in his introduction to this verse, in the following manner. He says in the words of *Arjuna*, ‘O! Lord because of this vision of your *viśvarūpa*, I infer, *anuminomi*, that you are imperishable, limitless, *Brahman*...’ *Arjuna* says, ‘Now I appreciate what the *śāstra* says about you, that you are *paraṃ brahma*, the cause of creation, not subject to change, *avyaya* etc. All these words I now appreciate as true. You are the complete being, which includes all and is the basis of all.’ *Arjuna* makes an inference on the basis of his perception of the cosmic form. It is not merely an inference, however, because what he concludes is also revealed by the *śāstra*. But because he has said, *me mataḥ*, we understand that he has only *parokṣa-jñāna*. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says in his introduction to this verse that *Arjuna* is making an inference—he says, ‘*anuminomi*, I infer,’ paraphrasing *Arjuna*.

All this is set up to reveal an *Upaniṣad-vākya*. In the second chapter of the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is said *yadā hyevaīṣa etasmin udaram antaraṃ kurute atha*



*tasya bhayaṃ bhavati*.<sup>1</sup> Here, *ātmā*, the self, which is *satyaṃ jñānam anantam brahma*, the cause of everything, is being discussed. With reference to the appreciation of that *Brahman*, if anyone were to make even a fraction of a division, *udaram antaram*<sup>2</sup> *kurute*—such as *Arjuna* seeing himself different from the cosmic form—then he will have fear, *atha tasya bhayaṃ bhavati*. *Arjuna* is going to be frightened by what he saw because he did not include himself. From this we understand that what he is saying here is purely inference, based on what he has heard from the *śruti* and what he sees. The result of his cosmic vision is no more than this. But what we have to understand is, ‘I am that *paraṃ brahma*.’ That becomes immediate knowledge. If *Arjuna* had understood that, then he would have spoken differently. He would have said, ‘I am everything. I am you.’ The whole language would have been reversed, as we see at the end of *Taittirīyopaniṣad*. With unrestrained joy *Bhṛgu* says, ‘I am *annam*, all the food. I am *annādaḥ*, the one who eats the food. I am *ślokaḥ*, the creator of the Vedas.’<sup>3</sup> This is the cry of a person who appreciates the *ātmā* as himself. Earlier it was said that the one who knows himself as *Brahman* does not have the two-fold problem expressed as, ‘Why did I not do the right thing—*kim ahaṃ sādhu na akaravam*. Why did I do the wrong thing—*kim ahaṃ pāpam akaravam*’.<sup>4</sup> He is free from both of these.

But that is not *Arjuna*’s situation here. His understanding that *Brahman* is *jagat-kāraṇa* is *parokṣa* because he does not include himself. If he had, there would be no twelfth chapter.

*Arjuna* continues with his description of the cosmic form.

अनादिमध्यान्तमनन्तवीर्यमनन्तबाहुं शशिसूर्यनेत्रम् ।  
 पश्यामि त्वां दीप्तहुताशवक्त्रं स्वतेजसा विश्वमिदं तपन्तम् ॥१९॥  
*anādimadhyāntamanantavīryam*  
*anantabāhuṃ śaśisūryanetram*  
*paśyāmi tvāṃ dīptahutāśavaktraṃ*  
*svatejasā viśvamidaṃ tapantam*

Verse 19

पश्यामि त्वाम् *paśyāmi tvām* — I see you (as); अनादिमध्यान्तम् *anādimadhyāntam* — one with no beginning, middle or end; अनन्तवीर्यम् *anantavīryam* — one of limitless power; अनन्तबाहुम् *anantabāhum* — one with endless arms; शशिसूर्यनेत्रम् *śaśisūryanetram* — whose eyes are the moon and the sun; दीप्त-हुताश-वक्त्रम् *dīpta-hutāśa-vaktraṃ* — whose mouth is like the blazing fire; स्वतेजसा *svatejasā* — by his own light; विश्वम् इदम् *viśvam idam* — this world; तपन्तम् *tapantam* — as one who heats/energises

<sup>1</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-7-1

<sup>2</sup> *ut* – even; *aram* — a fraction of; *antaram* – difference.

<sup>3</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 3-10-6

<sup>4</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-9-1

I see you as one who has no beginning, middle or end, with endless arms and the moon and the sun for your eyes, and a mouth like the blazing fire, who heats/energises this world by his own light.

‘In this cosmic form I see you with no beginning nor end nor any middle between the two, *anādimadhyāntam*,’ says *Arjuna*. Anywhere he looks, in every direction, *Arjuna* finds only the *viśvarūpa*, the cosmic form. Not only that, now he sees why *Kṛṣṇa* is almighty, and says, ‘You have *anantavīrya*, a *śakti* or power that has no limit.’ Then again *Arjuna* sees him with hands (and legs) everywhere, *anantabāhu*. And he sees this cosmic form as *śaśi-sūrya-netra*—a form that has the sun and the moon as the eyes. This is part of the classic description given for visualisation and meditation upon the cosmic form. The sun and the moon are the eyes, the space is the body, heaven is the head, and *pṛthivī* the feet. If there is a cosmic form for the Lord, viewed from this planet, what could his eyes be other than the sun and moon?

*Hutāśa* means one who eats all that is offered to him. That is fire. And that fire is *dīpta-hutāśa* a very well-lighted blazing fire. ‘I see the blazing fire as your mouth, *vaktra*.’ And I also see you as heating up, energising, the entire world, *svatejasā viśvamidaṃ tapantam*.

द्यावापृथिव्योरिदमन्तरं हि व्याप्तं त्वयैकेन दिशश्च सर्वाः ।

दृष्ट्वाद्भुतं रूपमुग्रं तवेदं लोकत्रयं प्रव्यथितं महात्मन् ॥२०॥

*dyāvāpṛthiviyoridamantaram hi*

*vyāptam tvayāikena diśaśca sarvāḥ*

*dṛṣṭvādbhutam rūpamugraṃ tavedaṃ*

*lokatrayam pravvyathitam mahātman*

Verse 20

महात्मन् *mahātman* — O! Lord; द्यावा-पृथिव्योः इदम् अन्तरम् *dyāvā-pṛthivyoḥ idam antaram* — this space between heaven and earth; दिशः च सर्वाः *diśaḥ ca sarvāḥ* — and all the quarters; हि *hi* — indeed; त्वया एकेन *tvayā ekena* — by you alone; व्याप्तम् *vyāptam* — (is) pervaded; तव इदम् रूपम् *tava idam rūpam* — this form of yours; अद्भुतम् *adbhutam* — which is wondrous; उग्रम् *ugram* — frightening; दृष्ट्वा *dṛṣṭvā* — having seen; लोकत्रयम् *lokatrayam* — the three worlds; प्रव्यथितम् *pravvyathitam* — (are) shaken

Indeed, this (space) in between heaven and earth and all the quarters are pervaded by you as one (form). O! Lord, seeing this wondrous, frightening form of yours, the three worlds are shaken.

*Arjuna* sees this cosmic form of *Kṛṣṇa* pervading the entire space. He says, ‘The space between heaven and earth, called *antarikṣa*, I see is pervaded by you as one person. Similarly, all the quarters, *diśaśca sarvāḥ*, east, west, north, south, then

north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, and so on, all of them are pervaded by you alone. Anywhere I look I find your form alone.’ He sees that the whole *jagat* is *Īśvara*. Naturally, everything is going to be included.

He addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here as *mahātman*, the one whose *ātmā* is *mahān*, all-pervasive, accommodating the whole creation.

This cosmic form is *adbhuta*, something wondrous, which has never been seen before. Then again it is *ugra*, most frightening and seeing this, *dr̥ṣṭvā*, all the three worlds, *lokatrayam*, are shaken by it, *pravyathita*. It is not that they are really shaken. This is only *Arjuna*’s way of saying how frightened he is. The form is so overwhelming that seeing it, all the people in the three worlds should be shaken. How can the cosmic form be frightening? Only if it is seen separate from yourself. That is *Arjuna*’s problem. If he had included his form in that form, there would be no problem. If you are everything, who is to be frightened of what? Only from a second thing can there be fear—*dvitīyāt hi bhayaṃ bhavati*. And there would be no second thing if he had included himself. Even after seeing this vision, *Arjuna* remained basically the same. He has softened a little and understood certain things but nothing more than that. In fact he did not really have a cosmic vision. How can a vision excluding yourself be cosmic? It is like a wave seeing the ‘entire’ ocean minus itself. It is not seeing the entire ocean. *Arjuna* only saw a world within the form of *Kṛṣṇa* and, therefore, was frightened. In the next verse he talks about his fright.

*Śāṅkara* introduces this verse by reminding us of *Arjuna*’s dilemma in the second chapter. He had said that he did not know, which outcome of the war would be better, victory or defeat, ‘Killing whom, we do not wish to live, those are the people standing before me, *te avasthitāḥ pramukhe*.’<sup>1</sup> In order to resolve that, *Bhagavān* presented enough features in his cosmic form for *Arjuna* to infer a decisive victory for the *Pāṇḍava* clan and the fate of all the *Dhārtarāṣṭras*. Seeing that, *Arjuna* said the following.

अमी हि त्वां सुरसङ्घा विशन्ति केचिद्भीताः प्राञ्जलयो गृणन्ति ।  
 स्वस्तीत्युक्त्वा महर्षिसिद्धसङ्घाः स्तुवन्ति त्वां स्तुतिभिः पुष्कलाभिः ॥२१॥  
*amī hi tvāṃ surasaṅghā viśanti*  
*kecidbhītāḥ prāñjalayo gr̥ṇanti*  
*svastītyuktvā mahārṣisiddhasaṅghāḥ*  
*stuvanti tvāṃ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ*

Verse 21

हि *hi* — indeed; अमी सुरसङ्घाः *amī surasaṅghāḥ* — these hosts of good people; त्वाम् विशन्ति *tvāṃ viśanti* — are entering into you; केचित् *kecit* — some; भीताः *bhītāḥ* — frightened; प्राञ्जलयः *prāñjalayaḥ* — with hands folded; गृणन्ति *gr̥ṇanti* — pray; महर्षि-

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 2-6

सिद्ध-सङ्घाः *maharṣi-siddha-saṅghāḥ* — the group of *rṣis* and *siddhas* (*yogīs*); स्वस्ति *svasti* — ‘Let there be well-being’; इति उक्त्वा *iti uktvā* — having said thus; पुष्कलाभिः *puṣkalābhiḥ* *stutibhiḥ* — with praises full of meaning; त्वाम् स्तुवन्ति *tvām stuvanti* — worship you

Indeed, these hosts of good people are entering into you. Some who are frightened pray with hands folded. The group of *rṣis* and *siddhas* (*yogīs*), having said, ‘Let there be well-being,’ worship you with praises full of meaning.

These hosts of good people, *surasaṅghas*, *Śaṅkara* says, are the *devatās* like the *Vasus* as well as good men who have come down to remove the burden upon the earth. This burden is not the population, as the Malthusian theory claims. According to Robert Thomas Malthus, the economist, the population increases at a faster rate than its means of subsistence and unless it is checked by war, among other things, there will be widespread poverty and degradation. But it is not population that burdens the earth. It is the growth of *adharma* that burdens the earth. The company of any number of good people is not a disturbance. But if there is one problematic person, everything can be ruined. It is something like eating a bad peanut. No matter how good the other peanuts are, once the bad one enters your mouth, that is the end of it. Your mouth and stomach are spoiled.

Similarly here, the weight upon the earth is the predominance, *prācurya*, of *adharma*. That is why *Bhagavān* said that he would come whenever there is a decline in *dharma*—*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati*—not whenever there is excess population. In order to cut down the weight of *adharma*, these good people, *surasaṅghas*, come. Even individually, *adharma* does weigh you down. Whenever you do a wrong thing, it pains your heart. That is the weight. When it becomes predominant upon the earth, these people who are all born of the *devas* come here in the form of human beings. ‘All of them are entering into you,’ *Arjuna* says. All these various human beings, *manuṣyas* who have come here from the *devalokas*, are all entering into *Bhagavān*. What does it mean? It means, ‘I see them dying.’

Among those who are assembled in the battlefield, some of them, *kecit*, are frightened, *bhītāḥ*. On both sides, the soldiers, and even the chieftains and great warriors are afraid. *Droṇa*, *Bhīṣma*, *Karṇa*, *Jayadratha*, and so on are not ordinary people, yet they are afraid. Nevertheless, they have come. Either they are convinced of the cause or they have been conscripted by *Duryodhana*, the king. But even if one is convinced one should fight, when the situation finally presents itself, everything is different. The bravado with which the challenge was made dissipates in the face of the reality of the battle. All problems arise only at that time. In any challenging situation, whether it is a battle or public speaking, there is always a last-minute fright.

These frightened warriors stand with hands folded quietly saluting the Lord, *prāñjalayaḥ grṇanti*. All dressed in armour, standing in the middle of the battlefield with this very rough exterior, they are frightened inside and are offering salutations to the Lord. These are our *ārta-bhaktas*, devotees in distress. *Grṇanti*, they salute, quietly repeating all the verses they learned when they were young.

*Śaṅkara* adds that there are others who are so frightened that they are not even capable of running away. How can they, when they know that *Duryodhana* will kill them? They are also frantically imploring *Bhagavān* inside.

The sages are also praying. There are two types of sages, the *maharṣis*, like *Vasiṣṭha*, who are *vaidikas*, and the *siddhas*, like *Kapila*, who are *yogīs*. Both groups, *Śaṅkara* mentions here, are seeing bad omens on the battlefield that foreshadow the coming destruction. Therefore, they prayed, 'Let there be well-being, *svasti*,' meaning, 'Let the impending destruction not be total.' Having made this prayer, they worship you with praises that are full of meaning, *svasti iti uktvā stuvanti tvāṃ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ*, to mollify the inevitable destruction.

There are others who are also able to see the cosmic form without being given a special *divya-caḅsus*. *Arjuna* tells who they are in the next verse.

रुद्रादित्या वसवो ये च साध्या विश्वेऽश्विनौ मरुतश्चोष्मपाश्च ।  
गन्धर्वयक्षासुरसिद्धसङ्घा वीक्षन्ते त्वां विस्मिताश्चैव सर्वे ॥२२॥  
*rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā*  
*viśve'śvinau marutaścoṣmapāśca*  
*gandharvayakṣāsurasiddhasaṅghā*  
*vīkṣante tvāṃ vismitāścaiva sarve*

Verse 22

रुद्रादित्याः *rudrādityāḥ* — *rudras* and *ādityas*; वसवः *vasavaḥ* — *vasus*; ये च *ye ca* — and those who are; साध्याः *sādhyāḥ* — *sādhyas*; विश्वे *viśve* — *viśvadevas*; अश्विनौ *aśvinau* — *aśvins*; मरुतः च *marutaḥ ca* — and *maruts*; ऊष्मपाः च *uṣmapāḥ ca* — and *uṣmapās*; गन्धर्व-यक्ष-असुर-सिद्ध-सङ्घाः च *gandharva-yakṣa-asura-siddha-saṅghāḥ ca* — *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras* and *siddhas*; सर्वे — all; वीक्षन्ते त्वाम् *sarve vīksante tvām* — are looking at you; विस्मिताः (सन्) *vismitāḥ (san)* — (being struck) with great wonder; एव *eva* — indeed

The *rudras* and *ādityas*, the *vasus* and those who are *sādhyas*, *viśvedevas*, *aśvins*, *maruts*, *uṣmapās*, and the host of *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras* and *siddhas* are all looking at you being struck with great wonder indeed.

All the *devatās*, the eleven *rudras*, twelve *ādityas*, eight *vasus*, and a certain group of *devas* called *sādhyas* are looking at this cosmic form along with *Arjuna*. Also

the *viśvedevas*, the two *aśvins* and the seven groups of *marut-devatās*. Then there are the *ūṣmapās* from the *pitṛlokas*, and the group of *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, and *siddhas*. All of them see you and are astonished—*vikṣante tvāṃ vismitāḥ ca eva sarve*. *Gandharvas* are the celestial musicians some of whom have onomatopoeic names like *Hāhā*, *Hūhū*, that characterise their singing. Then there is another type of celestials called *yakṣas* headed by *Kubera*, the presiding deity of wealth. And there are *asuras*—not ordinary *asuras* because then they would not be able to see *Īśvara*, but exalted souls like *Virocana*, son of *Prahlāda* and father of *Mahābali* who underwent a dramatic conversion to proper thinking. Then there were the *siddhas* like *Kapila* etc. ‘All of them, the whole host of them see you with great wonder,’ *Arjuna* says. He sees all these exalted beings awe struck as they view the cosmic form. Then further:

रूपं महत्ते बहुवक्त्रनेत्रं महाबाहो बहुबाहुरुपादम् ।  
 बहूदरं बहुदंष्ट्राकरालं दृष्ट्वा लोकाः प्रव्यथितास्तथाहम् ॥२३॥  
*rūpaṃ mahatte bahuvaktranetraṃ*  
*mahābāho bahubāhūrupādam*  
*bahūdaraṃ bahudaṃṣṭrākarālaṃ*  
*dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitāstathāham* Verse 23

महाबाहो *mahābāho* — O! Mighty armed; ते *te* — your; महत् रूपम् *mahat rūpaṃ* — immeasurable form; बहु-वक्त्र-नेत्रम् *bahu-vaktra-netram* — of many mouths and eyes; बहु-बाहु-ऊरु-पादम् *bahu-bāhu-ūru-pādam* — of many arms, thighs and feet; बहु-दंष्ट्रा-करालम् *bahu-daṃṣṭrā-karālam* — of many projecting teeth; दृष्ट्वा *dṛṣṭvā* — seeing; लोकाः *lokāḥ* — people; प्रव्यथिताः *pravyathitāḥ* — are afraid; तथा अहम् *tathā aham* — so am I

O! Mighty armed, seeing your immeasurable form of many mouths and eyes, of many arms, thighs and feet and of many projecting teeth the people are afraid and so am I.

Your form, Lord, is *mahat*, is inconceivable, immeasurable. That is wonderful. But the problem here is, *Arjuna* is frightened. He makes it very clear here. He does not know how to deal with such a form. Suppose we see a creature from another planet. How will we respond? Even though it may be harmless, we will be frightened because our minds move in a categorical fashion. If we come across a new creature, we must categorise it. Then we feel safe. But anything we cannot categorise is a problem because it is seen as a potential threat.

Here *Arjuna* sees countless mouths and millions of varieties of eyes of all kinds of colour, some blue, some green, some yellow or red—all in one form.

It is *Kṛṣṇa*, who is addressed here as *mahābāho* and not *Arjuna*. And *Kṛṣṇa* who was earlier seen as *mahābāhu*, mighty armed, now has become *bahu-bāhu-ūru-pādam*. He has not two but many arms, *bahu-bāhu*, as well as many thighs, *bahuūru*, and feet, *bahu-pāda*. And more than that, *Arjuna* sees many canine teeth projecting from the gaping mouth of the cosmic form, *bahu-daṃṣṭrā-karālam*. That is what makes him so frightened. The *rākṣasas* typically have two canines protruding, which gives them a frightening appearance. With many canines, what fear would this cosmic form strike in *Arjuna's* heart? Besides this, there are many stomachs *bahu-udara*. Like a shark, half the body is teeth, the other half is a stomach.

‘Seeing this, people are frightened, and so am I.’ Not many people have seen this form, but whoever has, *Śaṅkara* adds, would be shaken by fear. Whether they would or not, *Arjuna* says here, ‘I am afraid.’

Later he says, ‘Your mouth seems to be always open and I see all the *Dhārtarāṣṭras*, the sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, entering into it like moths falling into the fire. They are all caught between your teeth and munched by the jaws of death called time. I see you devouring the whole lot of them and therefore, it is frightening.’ Then he asks, ‘Tell me, who are you?’ When he asked *Kṛṣṇa* to assume this form he did not know what he was in for. Now he finds that what he has asked for is too much for him to handle. So, he asks *Kṛṣṇa* to return to his original form and give him further knowledge.

At any time the creation is non-separate from the Lord. The Lord is independent of the creation, but the creation can never be independent of the Lord. Though the creation is nothing but *Īśvara*, you do not see *Īśvara*, because you are limited by your perceptive powers. The sense organs have limited capacity for perception and the further limitation of not seeing things accurately. Sometimes they even see things, which are not there. Even if your sense organs are not defective, what you see is always a part of what is there; so, you cannot appreciate the whole. Here *Arjuna* has a chance to see almost the whole (minus himself) because of the grace of *Kṛṣṇa*. Seeing the cosmic form, he is even able to make a clear inference that *Kṛṣṇa* is the cause of the creation, the one who is to be understood. Therefore, *Arjuna* has the advantage of seeing something more than what his sense organs, especially the eyes, can see.

Because he separates himself from this vision, he is afraid. That is what is pointed out here. It was said, the Lord gave him a *divya-caḅṣus*. If he had included himself in the vision, it would not be *divya-caḅṣus* but *jñāna-caḅṣus*. Had his vision been non-dual, he would have gained fearlessness, *abhaya-prathiṣṭhāṃ vindate*. There cannot be a source of fear because you can only be afraid of something other than yourself. But if there is anything other than yourself, however small, that division is enough to cause fear, fear of everything else. What is not you is so vast; it is infinite and you are so very small and insignificant. If you see something as big as the whole cosmos, minus

yourself, as *Arjuna* did, you will be even more frightened. Even what is in the range of our limited perceptive powers is too much to deal with. Everything seems to be so big.

If you look at the stars and think about the distances involved, it is staggering. If you are able to see much more than the eyes can see, you will definitely be frightened. That is what happened to *Arjuna*. Even though he wanted to see this cosmic form, he did not know what he was in for and now all he wants is some peace.

The reason for *Arjuna's* fear, *Śaṅkara* says, is told in the next verse.

नभःस्पृशं दीप्तमनेकवर्णं व्यात्ताननं दीप्तविशालनेत्रम् ।  
 दृष्ट्वा हि त्वां प्रव्यथितान्तरात्मा धृतिं न विन्दामि शमं च विष्णो ॥२४॥  
*nabhaḥsprśaṃ dīptamanekavarṇaṃ*  
*vyāttānanaṃ dīptaviśālanetram*  
*dr̥ṣṭvā hi tvāṃ pravyathitāntarātmā*  
*dhṛtiṃ na vindāmi śamaṃ ca viṣṇo*

Verse 24

विष्णो *viṣṇo* — O! *Viṣṇu*; त्वाम् *tvām* — you; नभःस्पृशम् *nabhaḥsprśam* — (as) one who is touching the heavens; दीप्तम् *dīptam* — effulgent; अनेक-वर्णम् *aneka-varṇam* — of numerous forms; व्यात्त-आननम् *vyātta-ānanam* — open mouthed; दीप्त-विशाल-नेत्रम् *dīpta-viśāla-netram* — with large brilliant eyes; दृष्ट्वा हि *dr̥ṣṭvā hi* — indeed, seeing; प्रव्यथित-अन्तरात्मा *pravyathita-antarātmā (san)* — being one whose mind is deeply disturbed; धृतिम् *dhṛtim* — courage; शमम् च *śamaṃ ca* — or composure; न विन्दामि *na vindāmi* — I do not find

Indeed, seeing you as one who is touching the heavens, effulgent, of numerous forms, open mouthed and with large brilliant eyes, O! *Viṣṇu*, I, whose mind is deeply disturbed, do not find courage or composure.

*Arjuna* saw *Kṛṣṇa* everywhere; so, he now addresses him as *Viṣṇu*, the one who is all-pervasive, an appropriate word. Here he is literally being seen as *Viṣṇu*. *Arjuna* sees *Kṛṣṇa* here as one who touches the heavens, *nabhaḥ-sprśa*. It means he sees no end to his form; everything is pervaded by him. And this form is so effulgent, *dīpta*, and *aneka-varṇa*. *Varṇa* means that by which something is understood, *varṇyate anena iti varṇaḥ*. It can mean either form or colour. Here it refers to the form. *Śaṅkara* adds, numerous frightening forms. We know a few things that invoke fear, like the reptiles and even the cockroach. And some of the sea creatures are really frightening. Many forms that we never see, *Arjuna* is seeing right now—beings of different forms and colours, some with horns, others with *daṃṣṭrās*, canine teeth. Definitely it is frightening. *Śaṅkara* says that they are of various configurations, *nānā-saṃsthānaḥ*. Their limbs are assembled in a variety of different ways. When they are put together so differently we get varieties of reptiles, flying animals, walking animals, crawling animals and



besides that, all these diverse human beings and celestial beings. Some of them are very beautiful, of course, but some of them are frightening. The one who consists of these variously assembled forms is *aneka-varṇa*. Though it is one form, *Arjuna* sees all these multifarious forms severally, and he is frightened.

*Arjuna* says, 'I see you as one whose mouth is open, *vyāṭṭa-ānana*, meaning he is swallowing everything, who is, in other words, *kāla*, time. And he sees this form as having numerous eyes that are huge and brilliant, *dīpta-viśāla-netra*. Seeing *Kṛṣṇa* in this form *Arjuna* says, 'My mind is deeply disturbed and I am *pravyathita-antarātmā*.' He is really alarmed now. *Śaṅkara* says that he is exceedingly frightened, *prabhīta*. Being so, 'I have no courage—*dhṛtiṃ na vindāmi*. He cannot bear to see this form any longer. There are both good and frightening aspects to the cosmic form but the frightening ones have overshadowed all the good. In the beginning he was awestruck by the magnificence of the cosmic form but once his attention was drawn to the frightening aspect of the creation, he became fixated upon it and saw only that. This is how the mind works. Once you begin seeing things that are wrong, it will not be long before you find that everything is wrong. The mind develops a fixation. And so, *Arjuna* says, 'I don't have the fortitude, *dhṛti*, to continue to look at you.' Moreover, 'I have no composure, *śama*.' When he first saw the cosmic form, his mind was filled with wonder. Now that is all transformed into fear. Why is this so? He elaborates in the next verse.

दंष्ट्राकरालानि च ते मुखानि दृष्ट्वैव कालानलसन्निभानि ।  
दिशो न जाने न लभे च शर्म प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ॥२५॥  
*daṁṣṭrākarālāni ca te mukhāni*  
*dṛṣṭvaiva kālānalasannibhāni*  
*diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma*  
*prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa*

Verse 25

दृष्ट्वा एव *dṛṣṭvā eva* — indeed, seeing; ते मुखानि *te mukhāni* — your faces; दंष्ट्रा-करालानि *daṁṣṭrā-karālāni* — which have protruding canines; च काल-अनल-सन्निभानि *ca kālā-anala-sannibhāni* — equivalent to the fire of dissolution; दिशः न जाने *diśaḥ na jāne* — I do not know the directions; न लभे च *na labhe ca* — and I do not get (do not have); शर्म *śarma* — peace; प्रसीद *prasīda* — be pleased; देवेश *deveśa* — O! Lord of the gods; जगन्निवास *jagannivāsa* — O! Lord, in whom the world exists

Indeed, seeing your faces, which have protruding canines and are equivalent to the fire of dissolution, I do not know the directions and I have no peace. Be pleased, O! Lord of the gods, O! Lord in whom the world exists.

'Your faces all have protruding teeth,' *daṁṣṭrā-karālāni ca te mukhāni*. All the faces within the cosmic form are made repulsive and frightening by these *daṁṣṭras*.

Even a human canine is not a very pleasant sight. But the canines of a cat or a dog, and much more so, of a wild animal, like a tiger, have a fierce appearance. Because they are meant for tearing flesh, the canines are always frightening. And here, all the faces seen by *Arjuna* have these canines, *daṁṣṭras*, exposed. Even though these creatures may be benign, their appearance is terrifying. That is a *pāpayoni*. Any body that is frightening to look at, is considered a *pāpa-sarīra*. Seeing all this, *Arjuna* is frightened.

He likens what he is seeing to the dissolution, *pralaya*, when it is said that a great conflagration will consume the entire creation. Everything will be burnt in that all-consuming fire, called *kāla-anala*. *Anala* means that which never has enough, *alaṁ na vidyate yasya iti analaḥ*. The more you feed it, the more it wants. That is *anala*, fire. Seeing all these mouths with their canines protruding, swallowing everything in sight, *Arjuna* compares it to the fire, which destroys everything at the end of the cycle.

Besides this, he says, ‘I do not know the quarters, *diśaḥ na jāne*. Seeing this form, I do not know, which is east, which is west, which is north, which is south. I have no idea, because wherever I look, you are there.’ He does not know where the sun rises, where it sets. He finds all kinds of suns and moons; therefore, he does not even know whether it is day or night. All the suns and the moons are shining at the same time and are dazzling his eyes. It is a problem for him because he says, ‘I have no happiness—*na labhe ca śarma*. In the beginning he had some amusement but not any more. There is no longer any joy in seeing this cosmic form.

Then he implores *Bhagavān* to restore his tranquillity. Addressing him as *deveśa*, Lord of all the gods, *Arjuna* says, ‘May you become pleased now, *prasīda*.’ Reinforcing his entreaty, *Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* a second time as *jagannivāsa*, the one in whom the world exists. ‘May you be pleased, so that you can bless me,’ is *Arjuna’s* prayer.

*Arjuna’s* doubt about who would win the war is resolved by what he sees now.

अमी च त्वां धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्राः सर्वे सहैवावनिपालसङ्घैः ।  
 भीष्मो द्रोणः सूतपुत्रस्तथासौ सहास्मदीयैरपि योधमुख्यैः ॥२६॥  
*amī ca tvāṁ dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ*  
*sarve sahaivāvanipālasaṅghaiḥ*  
*bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputrastathāsau*  
*sahāsmadīyairapi yodhamukhyaiḥ*

Verse 26?

वक्त्राणि ते त्वरमाणा विशन्ति दंष्ट्राकरालानि भयानकानि ।  
 केचिद्विलग्ना दशनान्तरेषु सन्दृश्यन्ते चूर्णितैरुत्तमाङ्गैः ॥२७॥  
*vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti*  
*daṁṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni*  
*kecidvilagnā daśanāntareṣu*

*sandrśyante cūrṇitairuttamāṅgaih*

Verse 27

अमी च सर्वे *amī ca sarve* — and all these; धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्राः *dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ* — sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*; सह एव *saha eva* — along with; अग्नि-पाल-सङ्घैः *avani-pāla-saṅghaiḥ* — host of kings; त्वरमाणाः *tvaramāṅāḥ* — hurriedly; विशन्ति *viśanti* — they enter;) त्वाम् *tvām* — you; अपि *api* — and also; भीष्मः *bhīṣmaḥ* — *Bhīṣma*; द्रोणः *droṇaḥ* — *Droṇa*, तथा असौ सूतपुत्रः *tathā asau sūtaputraḥ* — so too this *Karṇa*; अस्मदीयैः योधमुख्यैः सह *asmadīyaiḥ yodhamukhyaiḥ saha* — along with our important fighters; त्वरमाणाः *tvaramāṅāḥ* — hurriedly; विशन्ति *viśanti* — they enter; ते वक्त्राणि *te vaktrāṇi* — your mouths; दंष्ट्रकरालानि *daṁṣṭrākarālāni* — with projecting canines; भयानकानि *bhayānakāni* — frightening; केचित् *kecit* — some; दशनान्तरेषु *daśanāntareṣu* — between the teeth; विलग्नाः सन्दृश्यन्ते *vilagnāḥ sandrśyante* — are seen sticking; चूर्णितैः उत्तमाङ्गैः *cūrṇitaiḥ uttamāṅgaih* — with their heads crushed

And all these sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, along with hosts of kings, (hurriedly enter) you. And also *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa* and *Karṇa* along with our most important fighters hurriedly enter your frightening mouths with projecting canines. Some, are seen sticking between the teeth with their heads crushed.

As he is seeing it, *Arjuna* says, ‘All these people are hurriedly entering into your frightening mouths with projecting canines—*te vaktrāṇi daṁṣṭrā-karālāni bhayānakāni tvaramāṅāḥ viśanti*. Whom does he see? All these sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, *dhṛtarāṣṭrasya amī sarve putrāḥ*, are seen to be entering into these mouths along with the hosts of kings, *sahaiva avani-pāla-saṅghaiḥ*. *Avani* means earth and *avani-pālas* are those who protect the earth, the rulers. Various kings and chieftains have assembled for the impending battle and *Arjuna* sees all of them now entering into these mouths. Further, he sees the grand old man of the *kuru* family, the imposing, invincible *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa*, his own teacher of archery. They are both on the other side as is *Karṇa*, *sūta-putra*, the son of a charioteer. Even though he was the son of *Kuntī*, no one here knows this except *Kṛṣṇa* and *Kuntī*. Even *Arjuna* does not yet know that this is his own brother standing in the enemy's camp. Along with all these are seen his own people—whom he refers to as *asmadīyas*, our own people who are *yodha-mukhyas*, fighters who are so important in the battle’—like *Dhṛṣṭadyumna*, *Drupada*, *Abhimanyu*, *Virāṭa*, and so on.

‘All of them are entering into your mouth,’ says *Arjuna*. They are not just entering but rushing into these mouths of destruction—*tvaramāṅāḥ viśanti*, with great hurry they seem to enter. What kind of mouths are they entering into? Frightening, *bhayānakāni*, because of their rows and rows of canine teeth sticking out all over, *daṁṣṭrā-karālāni*. Some of those who have entered are seen sticking between the teeth,

*vilagnāḥ daśanāntareṣu*. 'Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Duryodhana and so on are all in the process of being devoured by you.' Lord Kṛṣṇa has shown *Arjuna*, what is going to happen. They are all being chewed up by the teeth of time. It would be something like seeing a film of your own growth on a speeded up projector. The changes would be so rapid that it would be frightening. Especially seeing yourself age so quickly. The same thing is happening here. It is similar here. The process of life is quickened and shown to *Arjuna*. These people are seen, *sandrśyante*, with their heads being crushed, *cūrṇitaiḥ uttamāṅgaiḥ*, being masticated by the mouth of time. *Uttama-aṅga* means the important part, the head.

How are all these people entering into the mouths of destruction? *Arjuna* describes this using two examples.

यथा नदीनां बहवोऽम्बुवेगाः समुद्रमेवाभिमुखा द्रवन्ति ।  
 तथा तवामी नरलोकवीरा विशन्ति वक्त्राण्यभिविज्वलन्ति ॥२८॥  
*yathā nadīnām bahavo'mbuvegāḥ*  
*samudramevābhimukhā dravanti*  
*tathā tavāmī naralokavīrā*  
*viśanti vaktrāṇyabhivijvalanti*

Verse 28

यथा *yathā* — just as; नदीनाम् बहवः अम्बुवेगाः *nadīnām bahavaḥ ambu-vegāḥ* — the many swift-moving waters of the rivers; समुद्रम् एव *samudram eva* — to the ocean alone; अभिमुखाः द्रवन्ति *abhimukhāḥ dravanti* — flow towards; तथा *tathā* — so too; अमी *amī* — these; नर-लोक-वीराः *nara-loka-vīrāḥ* — heroes of the world of men; तव *tava* — your; अभिविज्वलन्ति *abhivijvalanti* — the burning; वक्त्राणि *vaktrāṇi* — mouths; विशन्ति *viśanti* — enter

Just as the many swift-moving waters of the rivers flow towards the ocean alone, so too, these heroes of the world of men enter your burning mouths.

यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतङ्गा विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः ।  
 तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोकास्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ॥२९॥  
*yathā pradīptam jvalanam pataṅgā*  
*viśanti nāśāya samṛddhavegāḥ*  
*tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokās*  
*tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛddhavegāḥ*

Verse 29

यथा *yathā* — just as; पतङ्गाः *pataṅgāḥ* — moths; प्रदीप्तम् *pradīptam* — glowing; ज्वलनम् *jvalanam* — fire; समृद्ध-वेगाः *samṛddha-vegāḥ* — at full speed; नाशाय *nāśāya* — for destruction; विशन्ति *viśanti* — enter; तथा *tathā* — so too; एव *eva* — indeed; लोकाः

*lokāḥ* — people; अपि *api* — also; तव वक्त्राणि *tava vaktrāṇi* — your mouths; समृद्धवेगाः *samṛddhavegāḥ* — with great speed; नाशाय *nāśāya* — for destruction; विशन्ति *viśanti* — enter

Just as moths enter a glowing fire at full speed for their destruction, so too indeed, people also enter your mouths with great speed for their destruction.

All these people are rushing into the jaws of death like the many rapid river waters flowing towards the ocean, always keeping it in view, *abhimukhāḥ*. With the speed and relentlessness of river waters hurrying to the ocean, these people are entering these mouths of the cosmic form, which *Arjuna* says are, *abhivijvalanti*, ablaze. Into these burning, brilliant, devouring mouths of fire, these warriors, *amī virāḥ*, are seen entering. In the world of men, *nara-loka*, there are great courageous heroes like *Bhīṣma*. *Arjuna* sees them all entering into the inferno of these mouths of death like how the rivers enter into the ocean. The ocean here can be taken as *virāṭ* the cosmic form. Then the mouths are the point of entry of the rivers, the confluence. *Arjuna* sees all these great warriors entering into the mouths of death with great haste.

Through his *māyā*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is showing him what is to come. Everything is already decided. Whether *Arjuna* fights or not, these people are all going to die. Therefore, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is going to tell him later, ‘Just be an instrument—*nimitta-mātraṃ bhava.*’

Why are they entering into these mouths? Only for their destruction, *nāśāya*, like moths entering a flame. Moths are helplessly drawn to any light, only to perish there. With great enthusiasm and speed, they dive towards the brilliant light—for their destruction. So too, all these people enter, *lokāḥ viśanti*, into these burning mouths, never to return. Not only that, to make matters worse, *Bhagavān* seems to be enjoying all this.

लेलिह्यसे ग्रसमानः समन्ताल्लोकान् समग्रान् वदनैर्ज्वलद्भिः ।  
तेजोभिरापूर्य जगत्समग्रं भासस्तवोग्राः प्रतपन्ति विष्णो ॥३०॥  
*lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāllokān*  
*samagrān vadanairjvaladbhiḥ*  
*tejobhirāpūrya jagatsamagraṃ*  
*bhāsastavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo*

Verse 30

ग्रसमानः *grasamānaḥ* — swallowing; समन्तात् *samantāt* — totally; समग्रान् लोकान् *samagrān lokān* — all the people; ज्वलद्भिः *jvaladbhiḥ* — burning; वदनैः *vadanaiḥ* — with mouths; लेलिह्यसे *lelihyase* — you lick again and again; तव उग्राः *tava ugrāḥ* — your cruel; भासः *bhāsaḥ* — flames; तेजोभिः आपूर्य *tejobhiḥ āpūrya* — filling up with

brilliance; जगत् समग्रम् *jagat samagram* — the entire world; प्रतपन्ति *pratapanti* — burn; विष्णो *viṣṇo* — O! *Viṣṇu*

Completely swallowing all the people with your burning, brilliant mouths, you lick again and again. Filling up the entire world with brilliance, your cruel flames burn, O! *Viṣṇu*!

*Bhagavān* does not seem in any way sympathetic here. On the contrary, he seems to be relishing this destruction, smacking his lips and devouring everything in sight with great gusto. *Lelīhyase* means you put your tongue out and enjoy, like we do when we eat honey. *Bhagavān* seems to have a taste for this destruction. He is devouring them totally, *samantāt*. Who are they? The entire world of people, *lokān samagrān*, who are entering into his mouths.

How does he enjoy? Swallowing them with his *jvaladbhiḥ*, burning, *vadanaiḥ* mouths. *Arjuna* says, ‘Filling it up with brilliance, *tejobhiḥ āpūrya*, your cruel flames are burning the entire world, *tavogrāḥ bhāsaḥ jagat samagram pratapanti*.’ These scorching flames completely envelop and consume everything. This is *Arjuna*’s description of the process of destruction as he sees it taking place within the cosmic form.

When he asked for this vision, *Arjuna* expected to see something wonderful, and he did. But he was not prepared for the other side of it. *Bhagavān* is not only the one who sustains everything, but the destroyer too. What *Arjuna* is seeing here is the destruction that is constantly taking place in the creation. It is a necessary part of creation, so has to be included in a vision of the cosmos. The continuous process of destruction, creation, and sustenance is *Īśvara*. But the destructive aspect is not easy to look at.

Because he did not expect this, *Arjuna* says here:

आख्याहि मे को भवानुग्ररूपो नमोऽस्तुते देववर प्रसीद ।  
 विज्ञातुमिच्छामि भवन्तमाद्यं न हि प्रजानामि तव प्रवृत्तिम् ॥३१॥  
*ākhyāhi me ko bhavānugrarūpo*  
*namo’stu te devavara prasīda*  
*viññātumicchāmi bhavantamādyam*  
*na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim*

Verse 31

आख्याहि *ākhyāhi* — please tell; मे *me* — for my sake; कः भवान् *kaḥ bhavān* — who are you?; उग्ररूपः *ugrarūpaḥ* (who has this) terrible form; देववर *deva-vara* — O! Exalted among the gods; नमः अस्तु ते *namaḥ astu te* — salutations to you; प्रसीद *prasīda* — be gracious; भवन्तम् *bhavantam* — you; आद्यम् *ādyam* — (who are) the cause; विज्ञातुम्

*viññātum* — to know; इच्छामि *icchāmi* — I wish; हि *hi* — because; तव *tava* — your; प्रवृत्तिम् *pravṛttim* — activity; न प्रजानामि *na prajānāmi* — I do not at all understand

Please tell, for my sake, who are you, who has (this) terrible form?  
Salutations to you, O! Exalted among the gods; be gracious. I wish to  
know you, the cause, because I do not at all understand your actions.

Seeing all this destruction and seeing the future, *Arjuna* is a little confused. Therefore, he says, ‘For my sake, please tell me, who you are, who has this terrible form.’ Imploring him, he says, ‘Unto you, my salutations—*te namaḥ astu*; O! Exalted among the gods, *devavara*, be gracious.’ This time, *Arjuna* asks to know *Kṛṣṇa* specifically as the cause of the creation. ‘I want to clearly know you, as *ādyā*, the one who is at the beginning of everything—*viññātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyam*.’ Why? ‘Because I do not at all understand your actions.’ The prefix *pra* enhances the meaning of *jānāmi*. ‘You seem to be intent on destroying all these people. Who are you? I thought you were *Viṣṇu*, the one who protects everybody. Now I find you destroying everything. Are you *Viṣṇu*, the protector, or *Śiva*, the destroyer, I do not know, therefore, please tell me.’

*Bhagavān* answers:

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो लोकान् समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥३२॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho*

*lokān samāhartumiha pravṛttaḥ*

*rte'pi tvāṃ na bhaviṣyanti sarve*

*ye'vasthitāḥ pratyānīkeṣu yodhāḥ*

Verse 32

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

कालः *kālāḥ asmi* — I am time; लोक-क्षयकृत् *loka-kṣaya-kṛt* — the destroyer of people; प्रवृद्धः *pravṛddhaḥ* — expanded; इह *iha* — here; लोकान् *lokān* — people; समाहर्तुम् *samāhartum* — to destroy; प्रवृत्तः *pravṛttaḥ* — engaged; ऋते अपि त्वा *rte api tvā* — even without you; प्रत्यनीकेषु *pratyānīkeṣu* — in opposing armies; ये अवस्थिताः *ye avasthitāḥ* — those who stand; (ते) सर्वे योधाः *(te) sarve yodhāḥ* — all those warriors; न भविष्यन्ति *na bhaviṣyanti* — will not exist

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

I am time, the destroyer of people, the one who is expanded and whose activity is to destroy people here. Even without you, all these warriors who stand in opposing armies will not exist.

*Bhagavān* says this is another aspect of himself, not the sustaining aspect, which is very beautiful but the destroying aspect. He calls himself *kāla*, the time or death, the one who brings about the destruction of people, *loka-kṣaya-kṛt*. Here *loka* means people. ‘I am the time that brings an end to people, the Lord of death,’ says the Lord. Here he is expanded, *pravṛddha*, into this cosmic form. So, *Arjuna* sees in the cosmic form nothing but destruction. *Arjuna* wanted to know about his activity, *pravṛtti*. Here *Bhagavān* answers directly, ‘My activity is to destroy people here.’ ‘Here’ means at this time and place. ‘Here and now I am occupied with destroying all these people,’ says *Bhagavān*. Therefore, *Arjuna* is seeing him here as *Rudra*, the one whose task is to destroy.

What is pointed out here is that the Lord is everything. He is not only the creator and sustainer, but also the one who destroys. He is the very law that brings about creation, sustenance, and destruction. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘Even without you, *ṛte api tvā*, all these people are not going to be here, *na bhaviṣyanti*.’ *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa*, *Karṇa*, all those warriors, *sarve yodhāḥ*, who are standing here, *ye avasthitāḥ*, in these two opposing armies, *pratyānikas*, will not be here, *na bhaviṣyanti*. On both sides, those who are now standing poised for battle are not going to be there when this is all over. They are destined for destruction. It is all part of how their *karma* unfolds. No one can stop it. ‘So, even without you, *Arjuna*, they will be destroyed,’ says *Bhagavān*. Even if there is a truce, they will be destroyed in some other way by *Bhagavān* in the form of time, *kāla*, and the law of *karma*. Then they will take another birth.

This being so,

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।  
 मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥३३॥  
*tasmāttvamuttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva*  
*jitvā śatrūn bhunṅkṣva rājyaṃ samṛddham*  
*mayaivaitē nihatāḥ pūrvameva*  
*nimittamātraṃ bhava savyasācin*

Verse 33

तस्मात् *tasmāt* — therefore; त्वम् उत्तिष्ठ *tvam uttiṣṭha* — may you get up; यशः *yaśaḥ* — fame; लभस्व *labhasva* — may you gain; शत्रून् *śatrūn* — the enemies; जित्वा *jitvā* — conquering; समृद्धम् राज्यम् *samṛddham rājyam* — the prosperous kingdom; भुङ्क्व *bhunṅkṣva* — may you enjoy; मया *mayā* — by Me; एव *eva* — alone; एते *ete* — these; निहताः *nihatāḥ* — are destroyed; पूर्वम् *pūrvam* — already; एव *eva* — indeed;



निमित्तमात्रम् भव *nimittamātram bhava* — may you be merely an instrument; सव्यसाचिन् *savyasācin* — O! Ambidextrous archer, *Arjuna*

Therefore, get up and gain fame. Conquering the enemies, enjoy the prosperous kingdom. These (people) have already been destroyed by Me. May you be merely an instrument, *Arjuna*.

‘*Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha*—Therefore, may you get up. Please stand up and fight,’ says the Lord. The main idea conveyed here is ‘May you do your duty.’ This is the plea of the whole *Gītā*. Right at the start, *Gītā* makes it clear that only knowledge liberates—nothing else. If you want to be free, if you are a *mumukṣu*, you must have *jñāna*. To gain *mokṣa* there are two distinct life styles. One is a life of renunciation, *sannyāsa*. The other is *karma-yoga*, doing one's duty with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*. Sometimes that duty may be fighting a war, as it is here. This, however, is not merely a war but a fight for justice, *dharma*. The law of *karma* has made all this happen the way it has happened. *Arjuna* has not in the least sought this war. But he is a *kṣatriya* and his station in life requires that he protects the law and order of the land. Therefore, he has to fight this war; it is his duty. Therefore, when *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘Therefore, get up and fight, *Arjuna*,’ he is saying, ‘Do your duty. It is your job to protect *dharma*; so, do what has to be done.’

In so doing, *Arjuna* will get some additional benefits. ‘May you gain fame—*yaśaḥ labhasva*.’ It will be known far and wide that *Arjuna* stood up for *dharma*. That he was not intimidated by anything. Even though he had to stand against such stalwarts as *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa*, he did not back down. He stood there and fought only to establish justice. Therefore, the Lord tells him, ‘Gaining a victory over the enemies here, *śatrūn jītvā*, may you enjoy a prosperous kingdom, *bhūñkṣva rājyaṃ samṛddham*.’

*Śaṅkara* says that even though *Bhīṣma* and others are highly exalted warriors who can commandeer thousands of chariots and whom not even the gods can defeat, *Arjuna* was victorious over them. Because of that, he gained great fame. Such fame can be achieved only by people who have a lot of *puṇya*, by the *puṇya-puruṣas*, not by ordinary people. Once he has defeated these people, *Arjuna* will enjoy a prosperous kingdom—a kingdom that is not beset with rivals. *Śaṅkara* adds that it will be an unrivalled kingdom.

The Lord says, *mayā eva ete nihataḥ pūrvam* — these people are already destroyed by Me.’ This is significant. By the Lord as *kāla*, the one who presides over the law of *karma*, they are already destroyed. The time has come. Thus the Lord says, ‘Be merely an instrument, O! *Savyasācin*—*nimittamātraṃ bhava savyasācin*.’ When a fruit is fully ripe, if it falls in the wake of a gust of wind, that wind is only an instrument, *nimittamātram*. The fruit was already ready to fall.

*Arjuna* is addressed here as *savyasācin*, the one who can send arrows with his left hand too. That is he is ambidextrous. He can use his right hand, of course, and if there is

an occasion where it will be more efficient to use his left hand, he can do that too equally well. Perhaps *Kṛṣṇa* has used this epithet here to remind *Arjuna* of his prowess so that he will be encouraged to fight. ‘Therefore,’ he says, ‘may you be purely an instrument.’ All he has to do is to send some arrows. That is his part in the scheme of things. He is presented here with something, which he did not ask for and in fact did not want. So, it is very clear that it is his *prārabdha*. There is a scheme behind all this. ‘Therefore,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘do not bring your will into this and disturb the whole thing. Because, here, any decision based on your will would be *adharmā*. Your will must conform to ‘what is to be done.’ And here, ‘what is to be done’ is very obvious. Therefore, get up and be a mere instrument in the ensuing battle.’

Everything is waiting for you. All you have to do is to send some of those arrows of yours. The enemies will all fall like ninepins.

This is what is said in the next verse.

द्रोणं च भीष्मं च जयद्रथं च कर्णं तथान्यानपि योधवीरान्।  
मया हतांस्त्वं जहि मा व्यथिष्ठा युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान् ॥३४॥  
*dronaṃ ca bhīṣmaṃ ca jayadrathaṃ ca*  
*karṇaṃ tathānyānapi yodhavīrān*  
*mayā hatāṃstvam jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā*  
*yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān*

Verse 34

द्रोणम् च भीष्मम् च जयद्रथम् च कर्णम् *dronam ca bhīṣmam ca jayadratham ca karṇam* — *Droṇa*, *Bhīṣma*, *Jayadratha* and *Karṇa*; तथा *tathā* — as well as; अन्यान् योधवीरान् *anyān yodha-vīrān* — other heroic warriors; मया हतान् *mayā hatān* — who are (already) destroyed by Me; त्वम् जहि *tvam jahi* — may you destroy; मा व्यथिष्ठा: *mā vyathiṣṭhāḥ* — do not be afraid; युध्यस्व *yudhyasva* — fight; जेतासि *jetāsi* — you will conquer; सपत्नान् *sapatnān* — the enemies; रणे *raṇe* — in battle

May you destroy *Droṇa*, *Bhīṣma*, *Jayadratha*, and *Karṇa* as well as other heroic warriors who are (already) destroyed by Me. Do not be afraid; fight. You will conquer the enemies in battle.

Why does *Kṛṣṇa* single out *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa*, *Jayadratha* and *Karṇa*? *Śaṅkara* gives the reason that these are the most formidable of all the people on the other side. If they can be defeated, there is no question of conquering the rest. By mentioning these names, *Kṛṣṇa* allays any fear *Arjuna* may have about losing the battle against people of such well-known valour.

*Droṇa* was a master of *Dhanurveda*, one of the four *upavedas* like *Āyurveda*. In this there are *mantras*, which add to the efficacy of the missiles as well as the means of acquiring and using celestial weapons. More than that, *Droṇa* is *Arjuna*’s teacher. How

is he going to stand against him in battle? Then there is *Bhīṣma*, who was the beloved grandfather of *Arjuna*, who had the boon that he could decide the time of his own death. This revered patriarch of the *Kuru* clan held his own in a duel with *Paraśurāma*, an *avatāra*. Naturally *Arjuna* will have some doubt about how he is going to win against such powerful foes. *Jayadratha* had a boon from his father that anyone who should cause his head to fall to the ground would immediately lose his own head. *Arjuna*'s arch-enemy *Karṇa* who is equal to *Arjuna* in weaponry and prowess, is also standing there waiting to kill him. *Karṇa*'s only goal was to kill *Arjuna*. He was born through the grace of Lord Sun himself to *Kuntī* and had the special *astra*, *śakti*, given to him by Lord *Indra*.

These are all people who cannot be touched. And they are all the important people in *Duryodhana*'s army, the ones who are in front of *Arjuna* right now. Understandably he had some doubt as to whether he can defeat these formidable warriors.

Besides these there were other warriors, *yodha-vīras*. But *Kṛṣṇa* assures *Arjuna* here, 'They are all already destroyed by Me, and may you kill these who are already killed by Me—*mayā hatān tvaṃ jahi*.' This means that *Arjuna* does not have to do anything. They have already brought about their own destruction. *Bhagavān* simply presides over the law of *karma*, by which they will reap the destruction they have sought. Nobody can stop it. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'May you kill them—*tvaṃ jahi*.'

As was said in the last verse, only by being an instrument, *nimittamātreṇa*, may you destroy them. They are already ripe for destruction. And hence *Kṛṣṇa* continues, 'Do not be afraid—*mā vyathiṣṭhāḥ*. You will conquer these enemies in the battlefield—*jetāsi raṇe sapatnān*. *Yudhyasva*—you fight. Even though they have special powers, these great men already have an appointment with Lord Death. You are not going to stop that.'

Now *Saṅjaya* speaks again. The entire *Gītā* is nothing but *Saṅjaya* reporting to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* as to what was happening on the battle field. Most of it is the verbatim dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* but here *Saṅjaya* says in his words.

सञ्जय उवाच ।

एतच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं केशवस्य कृताञ्जलिर्वेपमानः किरीटी ।

नमस्कृत्वा भूय एवाह कृष्णं सगद्गदं भीतभीतः प्रणम्य ॥३५॥

*saṅjaya uvāca*

*etacchrutvā vacanaṃ keśavasya*

*kṛtāñjalirvepamānaḥ kirīṭī*

*namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇaṃ*

*sagadgadaṃ bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya*

Verse 35

सञ्जयः *sañjayaḥ* — *Sanjaya*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;  
 केशवस्य *keśavasya* — of *Kṛṣṇa*; एतत् वचनम् *etat vacanam* — these words; श्रुत्वा *śrutvā*  
 — hearing; कृताञ्जलिः *kṛtāñjaliḥ* — with folded hands; वेपमानः *vepamānaḥ* —  
 trembling; किरीटी *kirīṭī* — *Arjuna*, the one who wears a crown; कृष्णम् *kṛṣṇam* —  
*Kṛṣṇa*; नमस्कृत्वा *namaskṛtvā* — saluting; भीतभीतः *bhītabhītaḥ* — being very afraid;  
 प्रणम्य *praṇamya* — saluting; भूय एव *bhūya eva* — indeed again; सगद्गदम् *sagadgadam*  
 — in a faltering voice; आह *āha* — spoke

*Sañjaya* said:

Hearing these words of *Kṛṣṇa*, *Arjuna*, with folded hands (and) trembling, saluting *Kṛṣṇa*, being very afraid, and saluting (again), spoke again in a faltering voice.

*Śāṅkara* explains *Arjuna's* condition here. Stricken with pain, he is overcome with fear. And because of the rapture springing up in him, he is overwhelmed with affection. His eyes are filled with tears and his throat is choked with intense conflicting emotions. Therefore, his words are not very clear and are faltering, *sagadgada*. Then too, he is very frightened, *bhīta-bhīta*, and being so repeatedly saluting, *praṇamya*, he talks again. Fear has overtaken him again.

*Śāṅkara* makes a note here that *Sañjaya* has a motive in saying this to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*. Just now Lord *Kṛṣṇa* pointed out that *Droṇa*, *Bhīṣma*, *Jayadratha* and *Karṇa* have already been destroyed by him as have been the other warriors. So, all *Arjuna* has to do here is to be an instrument, *nimittamātra*. If these great heroes are destroyed, *Duryodhana* will have no support because his whole strength lies in them. Without these four, he would never have started the war. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* knows this. So, when he hears that they are already destroyed, he knows that his son is destroyed. Without these four, *Bhīma* will fulfil his vow and kill *Duryodhana*. *Sañjaya* expects that once *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* hears this, he would give up all hope of a victory for *Duryodhana* and therefore, seek a truce. If *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* tells *Duryodhana* to seek a truce, he has to do it, otherwise *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa* etc., will not ally themselves with him. They are waiting for such an opportunity. He has to listen to his father's words. Otherwise, *Bhīṣma* and the others will withdraw. But then, *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* did not hear. When the message was so clear, why would he not hear? Because of the force of what was meant to happen, *bhavitavya-vaśāt*. It was destiny. Otherwise *Duryodhana* would continue on, not being punished for all his wrongdoing. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra's* judgement is clouded by his attachment for his sons and he is not able to stop the war because it is destiny that *Duryodhana* be destroyed.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या जगत्प्रहृष्यत्यनुरज्यते च ।

रक्षांसि भीतानि दिशो द्रवन्ति सर्वे नमस्यन्ति च सिद्धसङ्घाः ॥३६॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*sthāne hr̥ṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā*

*jagatprahr̥ṣyaty anurajyate ca*

*rakṣāṃsi bhītāni diśo dravanti*

*sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṅghāḥ*

Verse 36

अर्जुनः *arjunah* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

स्थाने *sthāne* — it is proper; हृषीकेश *hr̥ṣīkeśa* — *Kṛṣṇa*; तव प्रकीर्त्या *tava prakīrtyā* — by singing your praises; जगत् प्रहृष्यति *jagat prahr̥ṣyati* — the world rejoices; अनुरज्यते च *anurajyate ca* — and is devoted; भीतानि रक्षांसि *bhītāni rakṣāṃsi* — the frightened *rākṣasas*; द्रवन्ति *dravanti* — run; दिशः *diśaḥ* — in all directions; सर्वे च *sarve ca* — and all; सिद्धसङ्घाः *siddhasaṅghāḥ* — the hosts of *siddhas*; नमस्यन्ति *namasyanti* — salute (you)

*Arjuna* said:

It is proper *Kṛṣṇa*, that by singing your praises the world rejoices and is devoted (to you), the frightened *rākṣasas* run in all directions and all the hosts of *siddhas* salute (you).

This is the portion, which is commonly read as a prayer. *Kṛṣṇa* is addressed here as *hr̥ṣīkeśa*, which, as we have seen before, means ‘the Lord of all sense organs, *hr̥ṣīkāṅām, indriyānām iśaḥ*, who is *paramātmā*. *Sthāne* is an indeclinable, which means ‘what is proper.’ What is proper? ‘By singing your praises, *tava prakīrtyā*, the world rejoices, *jagat prahr̥ṣyati*.’ By singing and by hearing *Bhagavān*’s glories, *Śaṅkara* says, people in this world find great joy. It is but proper, *sthāne*. *Arjuna* is able to say this because he knows now that there is no excess in praising the Lord. Excess is possible only when the object of praise has limited knowledge, power, or virtues. If you say of someone that he is an ocean of compassion, just wait. There will be an occasion when he is not. He is compassionate alright, but to say he is an ocean of compassion is an exaggeration. In praising any individual, there is always an element of flattery.

But when there is no limit to the virtues any amount of praise will not be excessive. On the contrary, any praise we offer to *Bhagavān* is going to be inadequate. From our limited knowledge, how much can we know of omniscience? Yet only if we know it, can we really appreciate all-knowledge and give due praise. Since *Bhagavān* is always more than what our praises can convey, whatever we say, we will never be guilty of exaggeration. In such praise of *Bhagavān*, people discover joy. And it is but proper

because *Bhagavān* is joy. ‘Seeing your glory one cannot but be happy,’ says *Arjuna* here.

‘Not only that, they begin to love you, *anurājyate ca*. And that also is proper because you deserve it,’ says *Arjuna*. This almighty, omniscient *Bhagavān* who can never be adequately praised is so easily accessible to everyone. There is no intermediary, no closed door. Naturally people fall in love with you. It is but proper.

He is an object of joy, *harṣa*, and devotion, *anurāga*. This is proper, *sthāne*. The other side of this is that those who do not follow *dharma* are afraid of him. That is also *sthāne*. ‘Those who go against the moral order, *rakṣāṃsi*, are afraid, *bhītāni*, and run away from you in all directions, *diśo dravanti*.’ That is also proper because *Bhagavān* is the cause for both fearlessness and fear. If he is with you, you have no fear. In understanding the Lord you become totally fearless, because there is no second thing. You are the Lord. Even at the level of a devotee there is no fear because you have someone almighty to back you up. For those who transgress the laws, however, the Lord becomes the chastiser through those laws. If you touch fire, it will burn; that is the law. It can give you warmth and cook your food but if you touch it, it will burn you because it cannot do otherwise. It is a question of knowing its nature and handling it properly. Those who transgress *Bhagavān*’s laws just melt away in different directions.

‘Those who are known as *siddhas* like *Kapila* and so on, salute you, *sarve siddha-saṅghāḥ namasyanti*,’ says *Arjuna*. That they salute the Lord is also proper, *sthāne*. Knowing the glories of the Lord and the order in his creation, these exalted beings, *siddhas*, salute the Lord, *namasyanti*. They offer no resistance to the order of the Lord.

Why should all these exalted beings salute the Lord? *Arjuna* says:

कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन्महात्मन् गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।  
 अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास त्वमक्षरं सदसत्तत्परं यत् ॥३७॥  
*kasmācca te na nameranmahātman*  
*gariyase brahmaṇo’pyādikartre*  
*ananta deveśa jagannivāsa*  
*tvamakṣaram sadasattatparaṃ yat*

Verse 37

महात्मन् *mahātman* — O! Lord; कस्मात् च *kasmāt ca* — and for what reason; न नमेरन् *na nameran* — would they not salute; ते *te* — you; गरीयसे *gariyase* — (you) who is greater (than other gods) ब्रह्मणः अपि आदिकर्त्रे *brahmaṇaḥ api ādikartre* — you who is the primal<sup>1</sup> creator of even *Brahmā*; अनन्त *ananta* — O! Limitless one; देवेश *deveśa* — O! Lord of all the gods; जगन्निवास *jagannivāsa* — O! The one in whom the world

<sup>1</sup> the first

resolves; यत् सत्-असत् *yat sat-asat* — that which is both cause and effect — त्वम् तत्परम्  
अक्षरम् *tvam tatparam akṣaram* — you are that eternal, limitless (*vastu*)

O Lord, why will they not salute you who is greater (than other gods), who is the primal creator of even *Brahmā*? O! Limitless One, Lord of all the gods, the one in whom the world exists, you are that eternal, limitless (*vastu*), which is both cause and effect.

*Arjuna* is not surprised that even the *siddhas* salute the Lord because he sees him as even greater than *Brahmā*, the creator. Therefore, he asks this question, ‘Why should they not offer their salutations unto you who is greater than all gods, and is the primal creator, *ādi-kartā*, of even *Brahmā*?’ When the Lord is the cause and the sustaining factor of even gods like *Brahmā*, *Indra* and so on, it is proper, *sthāne*, for all those who know his glories to surrender to him. In other words, the Lord is the ultimate altar of surrender. Seeing one's own accomplishments as the glories of the Lord, one becomes objective and dispassionate in one's life. There is an ego, but it is so thin that it does not cause any discordance to the harmony between the individual and the world, which is all the glory of the Lord. This is the surrender, which is *yoga*. The ultimate surrender of the ego is in the wake of the knowledge of the oneness of the *jīva* and *Īśvara* revealed by such sentences as ‘*samo'haṃ sarvabhūteṣu*—I am the same in all beings.’ Here knowledge and surrender are identical. That is why the Lord said that the *jñānī*, the fourth type of devotee, is himself—*jñānī tu ātmā eva*.

Addressing the Lord as *ananta*, *deveśa* and *jagannivāsa*, *Arjuna* has expressed his appreciation of the propriety of even the gods offering their prayers to the Lord and the *rākṣasas* running in all directions finding no place of refuge. He also expresses his understanding of the Lord saying, ‘You are that unchanging, limitless (*Brahman*), *tad akṣaram param*, which, *yat*, is both cause, *sat*, and effect, *asat*.’ In other words, ‘You are both transcendent and immanent. While you are self-existent and not limited by time and space, *akṣaram param*, the world, which is *mithyā*, *asat*, is not separate from you as the cause, *sat*. Therefore, you are both *sat* and *asat*. *Arjuna* does recognise that *Kṛṣṇa* the Lord is the cause of the world.

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराणस्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।  
वेत्तासि वेद्यं च परं च धाम त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥३८॥  
*tvamādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas-*  
*tvamasya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam*  
*vettāsi vedyam ca paraṃ ca dhāma*  
*tvayā tataṃ viśvamanantarūpa*

Verse 38

त्वम् *tvam* — you are; आदिदेवः *ādidevaḥ* — first among the gods/the Lord who was there at the beginning; पुरुषः *puruṣaḥ* — the one who fills up everything; पुराणः

*purāṇaḥ* — the one who was there even before; त्वम् *tvam* — you are; परम् निधानम् *param nidhānam* — the place of resolution; अस्य विश्वस्य *asya viśvasya* — of this world; वेत्ता असि *vettā asi* — you are the knower; वेद्यम् च *vedyam ca* — and what is to be known; परम् च *param ca* — and the ultimate; धाम *dhāma* — abode; त्वया *tvayā* — by you; ततम् *tatam* — is pervaded; विश्वम् *viśvam* — the world; अनन्तरूप *anantarūpa* — O! The one whose forms are endless

You are first among the gods, the one who fills up everything, who was there even before. You are the ultimate place of resolution of this world; you are the knower and what is to be known and the ultimate abode. O!  
The one whose forms are endless, the world is pervaded by you.

*Arjuna* continues to praise the Lord as the one who is first among the gods, *ādideva*. The compound *ādideva* can be explained differently as the one who is at the beginning and also the one who is the Lord, *ādīḥ ca asau devaḥ ca ādidevaḥ*. He is at the beginning as the cause of the world, *ādī*, and he is the all-knowing effulgent being and is therefore, called *deva*.

He is the one who fills up the entire world and is therefore, called *puruṣa*. *Purāṇa* means, the one who was there even before, and the one who continues to be as fresh as he was. The Lord is not only the cause of the *jagat*, he is also the resolving place of all that is created, *nidhīyate asmin iti nidhānam*. And he is *para*, limitless. Just as how in a dream, the dreamer is the cause of the dream world and is also its place of resolution, *Bhagavān* is the one in whom things are ultimately resolved, *param nidhānam*. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says it is the point of the complete resolution of the entire world, *nidhīyate asmin jagat sarvaṃ mahā-pralayādau*. This can be the final dissolution of the creation into its unmanifest form or it can mean the *mukti-avasthā*, either *jīvan-mukti-avasthā* or *videha-mukti-avasthā*, the place where the *jīva* resolves. The *jīvatva* is false; so, it resolves into its cause.

Then, *Arjuna* says further, ‘You are the knower, *vettā asi*. From the standpoint of *sākṣī*, *ātmā*, you are the ultimate knower of everything, and from the standpoint of omniscience, *sarvajñatva*, you are the knower of all that can be known. And you are also all that can be known, *vedyam ca*. *Arjuna* recognises *Kṛṣṇa* here as all the various things in creation that can be known. Or, alternately, ‘You are the one to be known, the ultimate object of knowledge.’

*Dhāma* is a place where you can go with enthusiasm, a desirable place. *Bhagavān* is *param dhāma*, the ultimate place to go. Wherever you go, you eventually get tired of it and leave because any place is a composite of a few things you have already seen. Even if you go to heaven from here, where will you go after that? Where is the place from where you will not want to go anywhere else? Which is that *param dhāma*, the ultimate abode? Having gone there, there is no return. That is the *mokṣa-sthāna*, where



the *jīva* resolves completely, becoming one with *Īśvara*, the Lord. *Śaṅkara* adds that it is the ultimate abode of *Viṣṇu*, *paramaṃ padaṃ vaiṣṇavam*, which means *mokṣa*. *Viṣṇu* is the one who pervades this entire world, *viśva*. *Viśva* means that which is known in a variegated way, *vividha-pratyaya-gamyam*. What a nice expression for the world! ‘This variety of names and forms, called *viśva*, is pervaded by you, *Viṣṇu*. Since you are the material cause, nothing is away from you,’ says *Arjuna*, who has no more doubt in this area because he has seen the *viśvarūpa*. He has seen that the entire *viśva* is the very form of *Īśvara*. In his cosmic form, *Kṛṣṇa* pervades every form. *Arjuna* addresses him here as *ananta-rūpa*, the one who has no limit to his forms. His form consists of every other form.

Then further,

वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुणः शशाङ्कः प्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।  
 नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्वः पुनश्च भूयोऽपि नमो नमस्ते ॥३९॥  
*vāyuryamo'gnirvaruṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ*  
*prajāpatistvaṃ prapitāmahaśca*  
*namo namaste'stu sahasrakṛtvaḥ*  
*punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste*

Verse 39

त्वम् *tvam* — you are; वायुः *vāyuh* — Lord of air; यमः *yamaḥ* — Lord Death; अग्निः *agniḥ* — Lord of fire; वरुणः *varuṇaḥ* — Lord of water; शशाङ्कः *śaśāṅkaḥ* — presiding deity of the moon; प्रजापतिः *prajāpatiḥ* — *Prajāpati*; प्रपितामहः च *prapitāmahaḥ ca* — and the ultimate great grandfather, the Creator; नमः नमः ते अस्तु *namaḥ namaḥ te astu* — repeated salutations to you; सहस्रकृत्वः *sahasrakṛtvaḥ* — one thousand times; पुनः च भूयः *punaḥ ca bhūyaḥ* — again and again; अपि *api* — indeed; नमः नमः ते *namaḥ namaḥ te* — repeated salutations to you

You are the Lord of air, Lord Death, Lord of fire, Lord of water, presiding deity of the moon, *Prajāpati*, and the ultimate great grandfather, the Creator. One thousand repeated salutations to you. Again and again indeed, repeated salutations to you.

All these are glories of *Bhagavān*. He himself is *vāyu*, air, or the God of air and also *yama*, Lord Death. He is *agni*, the Lord of fire and *varuṇa*, the presiding deity of water. All these *devatās*, *Arjuna* says, ‘are not separate from you.’ Then again *Arjuna* says, ‘You are *śaśāṅka*, the presiding deity of the moon, and you are *prajāpati*, one of the first created beings, from whom all living beings have come. And you are the *prapitāmaha*, our ultimate great grandfather, the creator. From *paraṃ brahma* Brahmaji was born. He is called *pitāmaha*, grandfather. Therefore, by saying *prapitāmaha*, great grandfather, he is saying, ‘You are *paraṃ brahma*.’ Repeated

salutations to you, ‘*namaḥ namaḥ te astu.*’ How many times? One thousand times, *sahasrakṛtvaḥ*.

*Arjuna* is not satisfied with that. So, he goes on to add, ‘Again and again, salutations to you—*punaḥ ca bhūyaḥ api namaḥ namaḥ te.*’ Once you say a thousand times, what does it mean, when you say again, ‘Again I salute you?’ It means that *Arjuna* is not satisfied. His *śraddhā* is so, great and so much devotion has been invoked in him seeing the cosmic form of the Lord, that he wants to do something. He can only prostrate. What else can he do? Therefore, he repeatedly prostrates and still finds that he is not satisfied. Whatever he does is not enough. When people are overwhelmed with appreciation they typically say things like, ‘I don’t know what to say to you. I don’t know what to do for you.’ That is *Arjuna*’s condition. He does not know what to do. And *Bhagavān* does not want anything either. All *Arjuna* can do is keep falling at his feet. And this is what he is doing. Therefore, he says, *punaḥ ca bhūyaḥ api namo namaste*—again and again salutations to you. But he cannot really do a thousand or more *namaskāras*. He has no time for all that; the war is about to begin. So, what he cannot do physically, he does verbally.

Then where should he prostrate? Generally you prostrate only at the feet, in front of the person. But *Arjuna* does not know, which is the front or back here; everything is *Parameśvara*.

नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।  
 अनन्तवीर्यामितविक्रमस्त्वं सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥४०॥  
*namaḥ purastādatha pṛṣṭhataste*  
*namo’stu te sarvata eva sarva*  
*anantavīryāmitavikramastvaṃ*  
*sarvaṃ samāpnoṣi tato’si sarvaḥ*

Verse 40

नमः पुरस्तात् *namaḥ purastāt* — salutations to you in front, (the east); अथ *atha* — then; पृष्ठतः *pṛṣṭhataḥ* — at the back, (in the west); ते नमः अस्तु *te namaḥ astu* — salutations to you; ते सर्वतः एव *te sarvataḥ eva* — indeed to you in all directions; सर्व *sarva* — O! The one who is everything; अनन्त-वीर्य-अमित-विक्रमः त्वम् *ananta-vīrya-amita-vikramaḥ tvam* — you are the one who has infinite strength and infinite prowess; सर्वम् *sarvam* — everything; समाप्नोषि *samāpnoṣi* — you completely pervade; ततः *tataḥ* — therefore; सर्वः असि *sarvaḥ asi* — you are everything

Salutations to you in front (in the east), then salutations to you at the back (in the west), indeed (salutations) to you in all directions, O! The one who is everything. You, are the one of infinite strength and infinite

prowess and you completely pervade everything. Therefore, you are everything.

Now he says, ‘*namaḥ purastāt*, salutations to you in the front i.e., in the east.’ In a temple, the Lord generally faces the east but here *Arjuna* is saluting the Lord in the eastern direction. Not only that ‘Salutations to you at the back, i.e., in the west, *atha pṛṣṭhataḥ te namaḥ astu*.’ In fact, ‘Let there be salutations to you in all directions, *te sarvataḥ eva sarva*.’ Why? Because he is seeing *Bhagavān* in all directions. He is not only in the east and west, but south, north and all the directions in between, north-west, north-east etc. *Arjuna* addresses him here as the one who is everything, *sarva*.

He goes on. ‘You are of limitless power, *ananta-vīrya*, and immeasurable prowess, *amīta-vikrama*.’ *Arjuna* recognises *Bhagavān* here as having infinite strength and infinite prowess. And he says, ‘You completely pervade everything, *samāpnoṣi*.’ The prefix *sam* added to *āpnoṣi* gives the sense of pervading without anything being left out. ‘You pervade every object in the universe. Nothing is outside you—*sarvaṃ samāpnoṣi*’ ‘Because of that, you are everything, *tataḥ asi sarvaḥ*.’ *Śaṅkara* says the intention is to say, ‘Without you there is no object at all.’ *Arjuna* is seeing that *Bhagavān* is the one who is in all these forms. All the *nāma-rūpas* are sustained by him and are him. So, without him, an object will have no existence at all.

*Arjuna* and *Kṛṣṇa* had many escapades together as youth. Remembering how lightly he treated *Kṛṣṇa* then and even recently when he asked him to be his charioteer and when he ordered him to station the chariot between the armies, *Arjuna* is having some remorse. He knew *Kṛṣṇa* was extraordinary and had even heard he was an *avatāra* but he had no idea what that really meant. He never thought he was *Parameśvara* and therefore, treated him in a way that he now regrets. Because of this reason, *Arjuna* asks for his pardon.

*Śaṅkara* comments that *Arjuna* says, ‘Because I did not know your glory, I did many things that are not to be done. Therefore, I am asking you to pardon me.’

This is said in the next two verses:

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति ।<sup>1</sup>  
 अजानता महिमानं तवेदं मया प्रमादात् प्रणयेन वापि ॥४१॥  
*sakheti matvā prasabhaṃ yaduktaṃ*  
*he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti*  
*ajānatā mahimānaṃ tavedaṃ*  
*mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi*

Verse 41

<sup>1</sup> Here the words are: सखे + इति = सखेति । This is not possible by regular sandhi rules. It is considered to be *ārṣa-prayoga*.

यञ्चावहासार्थमसत्कृतोऽसि विहारशय्यासनभोजनेषु ।  
 एकोऽथवाप्यच्युत तत्समक्षं तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम् ॥४२॥  
 yaccāvahāsārthamasatkṛto'si  
 vihāraśayyāsanabhōjaneṣu  
 eko'thavāpyacyuta tatsamakṣaṃ  
 tat kṣāmaye tvāmahamaprameyam

Verse 42

तव *tava* — your; इदम् *idam* (*imam*) — this; महिमानम् *mahimānam* — glory; अजानता मया *ajānatā mayā* — by me who is ignorant; सखा इति मत्वा *sakhā iti matvā* — thinking that you are my friend; प्रमादात् *pramādāt* — out of carelessness; प्रणयेन वा अपि *praṇayena vā api* — or out of friendship too; हे कृष्ण *he kṛṣṇa* — O! *Kṛṣṇa*; हे यादव *he yādava* — O! *Yādava*; हे सखे *he sakhe* — O! Friend; इति *iti* — thus; प्रसभम् *prasabham* — rashly; यत् उक्तम् *yat uktam* — what was said

अच्युत *acyuta* — O! *Kṛṣṇa*; विहार-शय्या-आसन-भोजनेषु *vihāra-śayyā-āsana-bhōjaneṣu* — while walking, lying down, sitting and eating; एकः *ekaḥ* — alone; अथवा *athavā* — or; तत् समक्षम् अपि *tat samakṣam api* — even in public; अवहासार्थम् *avahāsārtham* — out of jest; यत् च *yat ca* — further that which; असत्कृतः असि *asatkṛtaḥ asi* — you have been slighted; तत् *tat* — (all) that; अहम् *aham* — I; अप्रमेयम् त्वाम् क्षामये *tvām aprameyam kṣāmaye* — may I ask pardon of you who cannot be known

Ignorant of this glory of yours, thinking of you as a (mere) friend out of carelessness or, out of friendship too; what was thus said rashly by me, as 'O *Kṛṣṇa*, O! *Yādava*, O! Friend... and further,

*Kṛṣṇa*, out of jest you have been slighted, while walking, lying down, sitting and eating, alone or even, in public. For (all) that may I ask pardon of you, who cannot be known.

'Thinking of you as a mere friend—*sakhā iti matvā*, I called you, *Kṛṣṇa*, *yādava*, friend, etc.' So many times he might have put his hand on his shoulder and casually addressed *Kṛṣṇa*. Imagine that your friend with whom you have been so, intimate suddenly assumes the form of the whole cosmos. How would you feel? *Arjuna* feels that he had spoken to *Kṛṣṇa* rashly, *prasabham*. *Śaṅkara* says, mistakenly, *viparīta-buddhyā*. Not knowing who he was, he had addressed him as, 'Hey *yādava*,' or simply as '*Kṛṣṇa*' or 'friend, *sakhe*.' *Arjuna* says, 'This was said by me who is ignorant, *mayā ajānatā*, of this glory of yours, *tava idam mahimānam*.' Though the word *idam* is neuter, it is to be taken with *mahimānam*, which is masculine. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, *tava imaṃ mahimānam*. Not knowing his glory, naturally *Arjuna* spoke this way out of inadvertence, *pramādāt*, and also just out of friendship, *praṇayena vā api*. In the

freedom of friendship, he has so often addressed him as ‘Hey! *Kṛṣṇa*, Hey! *Yādava*, hey *sakhe*,’ etc. Therefore, he asks for pardon.

*Avahāsa* is ridiculing someone in jest. Having teased *Kṛṣṇa* in all sorts of situations, having made him a laughing stock purely out of fun, *Arjuna* now realises, ‘You have been slighted, *asatkṛtaḥ asi*.’ *Satkṛta* means well received, honoured, so, *asatkṛta* means he has been ill-treated. When did this happen? On all sorts of occasions, while walking, lying down, sitting and eating, *vihāra-śayyā-āsana-bhojaneṣu*. In their conversations, while wandering about to different places, or while exercising, *Arjuna* realises that he has ill-treated *Kṛṣṇa* in jest. Then sometimes lying down to rest, perhaps when they were in the forest together, he might have slighted him in conversation. Then again while sitting down or eating he might have done that. On all these occasions, *Arjuna* says, ‘You have been ill-treated by me.’ And this has been done not only when they were alone, *eka*, but even in the presence of others, *tat samakṣam api*.

For all that, *Arjuna* says, ‘I ask you for forgiveness, *ahaṃ kṣāmaye tvām*.’ Here he gives an adjective to *tvām*, the one who cannot be known, *aprameya*. The idea is, ‘Because you are not available for any *pramāṇa*, you can’t blame me. I seek pardon of you because you are not available for any means of knowledge like perception, inference and so on. I was not equipped to know you; so, I had ill-treated you in my ignorance. Now I know.’

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान् ।  
 न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतिमप्रभावः ॥४३॥  
*pitāsi lokasya carācarasya*  
*tvamasya pūjyaśca gururgarīyān*  
*na tvatsamo'styabhyadhikah kuto'nyo*  
*lokatraye'pyapratimaprabhāva*

Verse 43

अप्रतिम-प्रभाव *apratima-prabhāva* — O! Lord whose glories are unparalleled; अस्य चराचरस्य लोकस्य *asya carācarasya lokasya* — of this world of movables and immovables/sentient and insentient; त्वम् पिता असि *tvam pitā asi* — you are the father; पूज्यः च *pūjyaḥ ca* — and (you are) the most worshipful; गरीयान् गुरुः *garīyān guruḥ* — the first teacher; लोकत्रये अपि *lokatraye api* — even in the three worlds; त्वत्-समः *tvat-samaḥ* — equal to you; न अस्ति *na asti* — there is not; अभ्यधिकः *abhyadhikah* — superior; अन्यः *anyaḥ* — another; कुतः *kutaḥ* — how (can there be?)

O Lord, whose glories are unparalleled, you are the father of this world of movables and immovables (sentient and insentient) and you are its most worshipful (and its) first teacher. Even in the three worlds, there is no one equal to you, how can there be another who is superior?

*Arjuna* continues to describe the Lord, ‘You are the cause, the father, *pitā*, of this world, *asya lokasya*, consisting of *cara*, things that are moving and *acara*, things that do not move.’ Or, *cara* could mean sentient and *acara*, then refers to what is inert. He says further, ‘As the creator of the world, you are the most worshipful, *pūjya*.’ Even though many *devatās* are worshipped in many different forms of *pūjā*, all worship goes only to *Parameśvara*. Therefore, he says, ‘You are *pūjya*, the one who deserves to be worshipped. And you are a teacher, *guru*.’ And *Arjuna* adds that *Bhagavān* is not an ordinary *guru*, but the one who is more important, *garīyān*, the first teacher, the one who taught the Vedas to even Brahmaji, and is, therefore, the source of all knowledge.

*Śaṅkara* says that the Lord is the creator of all living beings, *janayitā prāṇijātasya*. He creates all the subtle and gross bodies, *sūkṣma-sthūla-śarīrāṇi*, as well as all other things like mountains and so on, which do not move. *Śaṅkara* continues to comment that the Lord is not just the father of this creation, but also the one who deserves all forms of worship and praise, that is, he is *pūjya*.

Then *Arjuna* goes on to say, ‘There is not another, *na anyah asti*, equal to you, *tvat-samah*.’ *Śaṅkara* says that there can never be two *Īśvaras*, *na hi īśvara-dvayaṃ sambhavati*. If there are two *Īśvaras*, each will have his own domain. Then neither will have complete overlordship; so, neither is truly *Īśvara*, the one who has *aiśvarya*, total overlordship. Thus there can be and there is only one *Īśvara*. And again, if there were more than one, *Śaṅkara* adds, transaction would not be possible. One *Īśvara* would create a law of gravitation whereby objects fall at 32 feet per second per second. The other *Īśvara* would want it to be 40 feet per second per second. And in this conflict nothing will happen.

A question can be asked here. What about *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Rudra*? Are all of them not *Īśvara*? If so, there are three *Īśvaras* already. This is not true. There is only one *Īśvara*. Viewed from different functions we call the same *Īśvara* as *Brahmā*, the creator, *Viṣṇu*, the sustainer, and *Rudra*, the destroyer. If you invoke them separately, they become exalted *jīvas*. Essentially all are *Īśvara*, but with reference to the *upādhi*, Brahmaji is a *jīva*, as are *Viṣṇu* and *Rudra*. Because they have no ignorance, they are *Parameśvara*. In fact, all three together we call *Parameśvara*.

‘When there is no one even equal to you, how can there be another who is superior, *abhyadhikaḥ kutaḥ anyah?*’ asks *Arjuna*. It is not possible. If there is no such person here, perhaps there is someone in another world who is superior. No, not even in all the three worlds, *loka-traye api*, is there anyone superior. Because the whole world is *Parameśvara*. There is no equivalent to *Īśvara*, and there is no one superior to *Īśvara*.

*Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here as *apratima-prabhāva*, the one whose glory is matchless. His powers are unequalled anywhere. *Pratimā* is that by which you are able to illustrate something, a replica like a statue of a person, for example. It is created to

resemble the form of a person and you recognise it as a representation of him. Suppose I want to create a *pratimā*, an equivalent of *Īśvara*. What will I create? The whole *jagat* is *Īśvara*. His glory cannot be imitated nor can a symbol be created, which will represent *Parameśvara*. We only create a *pratimā* and then let it stand for *Īśvara*. We cannot create a real *pratimā* for *Parameśvara*, because nothing is separate from him. His glory and power are incomparable. *Arjuna* praises *Parameśvara* as he has understood.

तस्मात्प्रणम्य प्रणिधाय कायं प्रसादये त्वामहमीशमीड्यम् ।  
 पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्युः प्रियः प्रियायार्हसि<sup>1</sup> देव सोढुम् ॥४४॥  
*tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ*  
*prasādaye tvāmahamīśamīḍyam*  
*piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ*  
*priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum*

Verse 44

तस्मात् *tasmāt* — therefore; कायम् प्रणिधाय *kāyam praṇidhāya* — properly laying down the body; प्रणम्य *praṇamya* — saluting; अहम् प्रसादये *aham prasādaye* — I seek the blessing; त्वाम् ईशम् ईड्यम् *tvām īśam īḍyam* — of you who are the Lord and who are worshipful Lord; देव *deva* — O! Lord; पिता इव पुत्रस्य *pitā iva putrasya* — like a father (the mistakes) of a son; सखा इव सख्युः *sakhā iva sakhyuḥ* — like a friend (the mistakes) of a friend; प्रियः (इव) प्रियायाः *priyaḥ (iva) priyāyāḥ* — (like) a beloved (the mistakes) of (his) beloved; सोढुम् अर्हसि *soḍhum arhasi* — you should forgive

Therefore, saluting, properly laying down my body, I seek the blessing of you who are the worshipful Lord. O! Lord, you should forgive (my mistakes) as a father would (the mistakes) of a son, as a friend of a friend, and as a beloved of (his) beloved.

*Tasmāt*, therefore, saluting you, *praṇamya*, properly bringing down my body, *kāyaṃ praṇidhāya*, I seek your blessing, *prasādaye*. Whom is he saluting?—the Lord, *īśa*, who is the most worshipful, *īḍya*. He says, ‘Falling at your feet I seek the blessings of you, the most worshipful Lord.’ You are capable of forgiving me because you are everything. So, you should forgive me.’ How? ‘Like a father who forgives his son's mistakes, *pitā iva putrasya*. Whatever omissions and commissions I might have committed, knowingly or unknowingly, please forgive me.’ A father is able to forgive the omissions and commissions of his son, or a friend those of his friend. He can overlook things and continue to be friendly. Or how a husband is able to forget all the omissions and commissions of his wife because of his love for her. ‘Similarly you are

<sup>1</sup> Here the words are: प्रियायाः+ अर्हसि । By regular sandhi rules it should have been प्रियाया अर्हसि । But here it is: प्रियायर्हसि । This is not possible by regular sandhi rules. It is considered to be *ārṣa-prayoga*.

capable of forgiving.’ Why does *Arjuna* give these three examples? They reflect his understanding of his relationship to *Kṛṣṇa*.

He understands that *Kṛṣṇa* is the creator of the world, while he is only like a son, *putra*, with reference to his *śarīra*. In a given *upādhi*, the *jīva* is like the son of *Parameśvara*. When *Arjuna* says *Kṛṣṇa* is his friend, he understands that *Parameśvara*, as *antaryāmī*, is always available—like a friend. He comes along in all escapades of the *jīva*. Wherever the *buddhi* goes, *ātmā* also joins, never protesting—like a friend. Therefore, because *ātmā* is the *buddhi-sākṣī*, *ātmā* is like a friend. Then *ātmā* is *ānanda-svarūpa* and therefore, the beloved, *priya*. And I am the one who seeks *ātmā*, the source of *ānanda*. *Ānanda* is *ātmā*, and therefore, I am the lover of *ānanda*. Therefore, I become the beloved. Therefore, *Arjuna* is invoking all these relationships in *Bhagavān* who is not different than *ātmā*, which is *Brahman*, *Parameśvara*.

अदृष्टपूर्वं हृषितोऽस्मि दृष्ट्वा भयेन च प्रव्यथितं मनो मे ।  
 तदेव मे दर्शय देव रूपं प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ॥४५॥  
*adr̥ṣṭapūrvam hr̥ṣito'smi dr̥ṣṭvā*  
*bhayena ca pravyathitaṃ mano me*  
*tadeva me darśaya deva rūpaṃ*  
*prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa*

Verse 45

देव *deva* — O! Lord; दृष्ट्वा *dr̥ṣṭvā* — seeing; अदृष्टपूर्वम् *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam* — what is not seen before; हृषितः *hr̥ṣitaḥ asmi* — I am happy; भयेन च *bhayena ca* — and with fear; मनः मे *manaḥ me* — my mind; प्रव्यथितम् *pravyathitam* — is afflicted; देवेश *deveśa* — O! Lord of the gods; जगन्निवास *jagannivāsa* — O! Lord of the world; प्रसीद *prasīda* — be pleased; (तव) तदेव रूपम् *(tava) tadeva rūpam* — only that (original) form of yours; मे दर्शय *me darśaya* — please show me

O Lord, seeing what has not been seen before, I am happy. And my mind is afflicted with fear. O! Lord of the gods, O! Lord of the world, be pleased. Please show me only that (original) form of yours.

This cosmic form has not been seen before by anybody, *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam*. Not only has *Arjuna* not seen it, no one else has ever seen it. *Arjuna* says, ‘I am very happy, *hr̥ṣitaḥ asmi*.’ But he has mixed feelings. It is wonderful seeing the *viśvarūpa* but seeing all the destruction, he is also frightened. ‘My mind is afflicted with fear, *bhayena ca pravyathitaṃ manaḥ me*.’ Like a Gujarati pickle, hot and sweet, this is *Arjuna*’s condition. He is really excited about seeing something nobody has seen. That is the particular feeling he mentions here, a kind of one-up-manship. This is over and above his joy at the sheer magnificence of the form. At the same time it is very frightening. Seeing this, his mind is disturbed by fear.



Therefore, he says, ‘Please show me that (original) form of yours, *tad eva me darśaya rūpam*,’ the form, which he had looked upon as a great friend. He addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here as *deveśa*, Lord of all *devas* and the one in whom the whole world exists, *jagannivāsa* and says, ‘Please bless me with the old form.’

But, before that, he wants to see something else.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रहस्तम् इच्छामि त्वां द्रष्टुमहं तथैव ।  
 तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन सहस्रबाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते ॥४६॥  
*kirīṭinam gadinam cakrahastam*  
*icchāmi tvāṃ draṣṭumahaṃ tathaiva*  
*tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena*  
*sahasrabāho bhava viśvamūrte*

Verse 46

तथा एव *tathā eva* — so too; अहम् *aham* — I; त्वाम् *tvām* — you; किरीटिनम् *kirīṭinam* — as one who has a crown; गदिनम् *gadinam* — as one who has a mace; चक्र-हस्तम् *cakra-hastam* — as one who has a disc in hand; द्रष्टुम् इच्छामि *draṣṭum icchāmi* — I wish to see; सहस्रबाहो *sahasrabāho* — O! Lord of a thousand arms; विश्वमूर्ते *viśvamūrte* — O! Lord, who is in the form of the world; तेन एव रूपेण *tena eva rūpeṇa* — as this form alone; चतुर्भुजेन *caturbhujena* — which has four hands; भव *bhava* — may you become

So too, I wish to see you as one who has a crown, a mace and a disc in hand. O! Lord of a thousand arms, O! Lord, who is in the form of the world, may you become this form alone, which has four hands.

This is a popular form in which Lord *Viṣṇu* is worshipped. He is described repeatedly in the *Bhāgavata* and other *purāṇas* as having four hands, in one a conch, *śaṅkha*; in another a disc, *cakra*; in the third a mace, *gadā*, and the fourth offers protection. *Arjuna* wants to see this form, which people worship. *Arjuna* must also have worshipped that form. He asks *Kṛṣṇa* to appear in that particular form before he returns to the form of *Arjuna*’s friend. He says, ‘Similarly, I want to see you also as *kirīṭī*, the one who has a crown, as *gadī*, i.e., the one who has a mace, and as *cakra-hasta*, the one who has a disc in his hand.

The *cakra* is for destroying all *kāmas* and *krodhas*, the enemies. *Śaṅkha* stands for the Veda, and it beckons people to come to him. *Kāma* and *krodha* may stand in your way not allowing you to accomplish it. Therefore, the same grace of *Īśvara* will destroy *kāma* and *krodha* using his *cakra*. The *gadā* is for the destruction of the *ahaṅkāra*. ‘All these you can accomplish when you surrender to Me,’ implies the fourth hand pointing to his feet. This is the form in which the Lord is invoked and which

*Arjuna* wishes to see. *Tathaiva*, so too, means he wants to see the original form, as he has requested, and he also wants to see this form.

‘*Viśvamūrte*, O! Lord who is in the cosmic form, O! Lord of a thousand hands, *sahasrabāho*, may you be, *bhava*, in that form, which has only four hands, *tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena*. *Arjuna* is familiar with two forms of *Kṛṣṇa*. One as a friend and the other, the form he was invoking for prayer. He wants to see both of these, not the *viśvarūpa*.

*Śāṅkara* introduces the next verse saying that recognising that *Arjuna* was frightened, *Kṛṣṇa* withdrew his cosmic form, consoling him with loving words.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

मया प्रसन्नेन तवार्जुनेदं रूपं परं दर्शितमात्मयोगात् ।

तेजोमयं विश्वमनन्तमाद्यं यन्मे त्वदन्येन न दृष्टपूर्वम् ॥४७॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṃ*

*rūpaṃ paraṃ darśitamātmayogāt*

*tejomayaṃ viśvamanantamādyam*

*yanme tvadanyena na dr̥ṣṭapūrvam*

Verse 47

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; मया प्रसन्नेन *mayā prasannena* — by Me who is pleased (with you); इदम् *idam* — this; रूपम् *rūpam* — form; परम् *param* — which is limitless; तेजोमयम् *tejomayam* — full of brilliance; विश्वम् *viśvam* — including everything; अनन्तम् *anantam* — without end; आद्यम् *ādyam* — original; यत् मे (रूपम्) *yat me (rūpam)* — which (form) of Mine; त्वद्-अन्येन *tvad-anyena* — by anyone other than you; न दृष्टपूर्वम् *na dr̥ṣṭapūrvam* — was never before seen; आत्मयोगात् *ātmayogāt* — through My power; तव दर्शितम् *tava darśitam* — was shown to you

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

O! *Arjuna*, by Me, who is pleased, this original form which is limitless, full of brilliance, includes everything and is without end, that (form) of Mine, which was never before seen by anyone other than you, was shown to you through My power.

This cosmic form was shown to *Arjuna* by the power of *Bhagavān's māyā*. It was a form that was all brilliance, *tejomaya*, included everything, *viśva*, with no end, *ananta*. And it is the original form *ādya*, the one into which all other forms have gone. The cosmos came first and within it, there are many other forms constantly being born. ‘It was never seen before, *na dr̥ṣṭapūrvam*, by anyone except you, *tvad-anyena*,’ says

*Bhagavān* to *Arjuna*. How did he manage to see this? *Arjuna* managed to see this form because of the grace of *Bhagavān*. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, ‘On account of My power, *ātmayogāt*, I have shown you this effulgent form, which includes every form because I am pleased with you—*mayā prasannena idaṃ rūpaṃ darśitam*. This was not seen by anybody else but you.’

*Arjuna* was frightened by the cosmic form. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* uses some consoling words to bring him back to his senses. He praises the vision of the cosmic form by saying how difficult it is to get. *Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse with *Kṛṣṇa* saying, ‘By seeing my form, your wish is fulfilled, you have become *kṛtārtha*.’

न वेदयज्ञाध्ययनेन दानेन च क्रियाभिर्न तपोभिरुग्रैः ।  
 एवंप्रुपः शक्य अहं नृलोके द्रष्टुं त्वदन्येन कुरुप्रवीर ॥४८॥  
*na vedayajñādhyayanairna dānair-*  
*na ca kriyābhirna tapobhirugraiḥ*  
*evaṃrūpaḥ śakya ahaṃ nṛloke*  
*draṣṭuṃ tvadanyena kurupravīra*

Verse 48

न वेद-यज्ञ-अध्ययनेन: *na veda-yajña-adhyayanaiḥ* — not by study of the Vedas or rituals;  
 न दानैः *na dānaiḥ* — not by charity; न च क्रियाभिः *na ca kriyābhiḥ* — not by performing rituals; न तपोभिः उग्रैः *na tapobhiḥ ugraiḥ* — not by severe austerities;  
 एवंप्रुपः *evaṃrūpaḥ* — the one who is in this form; अहम् द्रष्टुम् शक्यः *aham draṣṭum śakyaḥ* — can I be seen; नृलोके *nṛloke* — in the world of men; त्वद्-अन्येन *tvad-anyena* — by anyone other than you; कुरुप्रवीर *kurupravīra* — O! Bravest of *Kurus*

Not by study of the Vedas or rituals, not by charity, not by performing rituals, nor by severe austerities can I, in this form, be seen, in the world of men, by anyone other than you, O! bravest of the *Kurus*.

*Evaṃrūpaḥ aham*, I, in this form, *na śakyaḥ draṣṭum*, cannot be seen. The sense organs have their limitations; so, they cannot encompass the entire cosmic form. Each sense organ can only grasp a given sense object. Eyes can register form and colour; ears can perceive only sounds and so on. And all these also have a limited range. Beyond that they have no scope. Even your imagination is something dependent entirely upon your sensory perception. You cannot stretch it to cover the cosmic form. That is why it was frightening to *Arjuna*. Of course it was thrilling, but at the same time so frightening because of the destruction he saw.

Suppose I study the Veda, the scriptures, can I not see this cosmic form? ‘No,’ the Lord says, ‘not by study of the Veda, *na veda-adhyayanaiḥ*.’ Mere study of the Veda is not enough, you must have *vicāra*. Learning to recite the Vedic *mantras* from a teacher is called *veda-adhyayana*. The plural has been used here to indicate that even if you

learn all four Vedas, you will not have the cosmic vision. Study of the Veda includes study of the rituals, *yajñā-adhyayana*, so, why this separate mention of *yajñā-adhyayana*? One may know all about rituals but still not know how to perform them. There is special study of *mīmāṃsā*, analysis, for that. So, *yajñā-adhyayana* also implies a lot of *vicāra*, inquiry. Therefore, Śaṅkara says that the separate mention of the study of *yajñā* is meant only to imply knowledge of how to perform rituals, *yajñā-vijñāna*. Therefore, the Lord says, 'By mere study of the Veda and the knowledge of rituals, I cannot be seen in this form.' Only religious and spiritual practices are mentioned here because they are the most appropriate and efficacious when the Lord is the goal. But to see this form you require a lot more. That is the idea. Nor can it be accomplished by charities, *na dānaiḥ*. Charity is a great action and according to the *śāstra*, it produces a lot of *puṇya*. Still, it is not enough.

Śaṅkara says, even if it is a gift of your weight in gold, *tulāpuruṣa*, it is not enough. That is a very great gift but still not enough to see this form. Nor is the performing of rituals, *na ca kriyābhīḥ*. Not even by all the rituals mentioned in the Veda like *agnihotra*, can this vision of the cosmic form be had. Nor the most difficult ascetic religious practices, *na api tapobhīḥ ugraiḥ*. Even severe disciplines like *cāndrāyaṇa*, Śaṅkara says, are not enough. *Cāndrāyaṇa* is a discipline where *japa* is combined with a type of fasting. You start on the full moon day eating your normal amount of food. The next day you reduce it by 1/15, the next day by another 1/15, and so, until the 15th day, the new moon day, when you eat nothing. The following day you eat 1/15 of your regular food intake, the next day another 1/15 until you have reached your full food intake on the full moon day. As the moon wanes and waxes, so does your food intake. This is very difficult to do; so, Śaṅkara mentions it specially. But even by such terrible *tapas*, the vision of this cosmic form cannot be gained. In spite of doing all these heroic things, no one has had the cosmic vision. 'Except you, *Arjuna*,' says the Lord. He got it easily, merely for the asking. That is the point here. *Kṛṣṇa* addresses him as *kuru-pravīra*, the one who is the bravest in the *Kuru* family.

मा ते व्यथा मा च विमूढभावो दृष्ट्वा रूपं घोरमीदृग्ममेदम् ।

व्यपेतभीः प्रीतमनाः पुनस्त्वं तदेव मे रूपमिदं प्रपश्य ॥४९॥

*mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍhabhāvo*

*dr̥ṣṭvā rūpaṃ ghoramīdṛḅmamedam*

*vyapetabhīḥ prītamanāḥ punastvaṃ*

*tadeva me rūpamidam prapaśya*

Verse 49

दृष्ट्वा *dr̥ṣṭvā* — seeing; इदम् घोरम् रूपम् *idam ghoram rūpam* — this frightening form; मम *mama* — of Mine; ईदृक् *īdṛk* — of this type; मा ते व्यथा *mā te vyathā* — may you not have fear; मा च विमूढ-भावः *mā ca vimūḍha-bhāvaḥ* — and may you not be confused; व्यपेतभीः (सन्) — *vyapetabhīḥ (san)* — being one whose fear has gone;

प्रीतमानः (सन्) *prītamānaḥ (san)* — being pleased; पुनः *punaḥ* — again; तद् एव मे रूपम् इदम् *tad eva me rūpam idam* — that (particular) form of Mine; त्वम् प्रपश्य *tvam prapaśya* — may you see

May you not have fear and may you not be confused seeing this type of frightening form of Mine. Being free from fear and pleased again, may you see that (particular) form of Mine.

Now *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna* that he need not be afraid, seeing his cosmic form, which is sometimes frightening and cruel, *ghora*. He says, ‘Let there not be any fear for you, *mā te vyathā*.’ He means, ‘I am going to withdraw this form.’ *Arjuna* was distressed that he did not know, which was right or left, north or south. So, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘May you not be confused, *mā ca vimūḍha-bhāvaḥ te*.’ Then, with *Kṛṣṇa*’s blessing, he is *vyapetabhī*, the one from whom fear has gone. Even when one is free from fear, one may still be just in a neutral state. Not so here. Not only is he not afraid, but is also pleased.

‘Being no longer afraid and being pleased, *vyapetabhīḥ prīta-manāḥ punaḥ*,’ *Bhagavān* says, ‘May you see this very form that you wanted to see, *tadeva idaṃ rūpaṃ prapaśya*.’ He means the form with *śaṅkha* and *cakra*, the one that *Arjuna* had requested to see in addition to the original form. This is *Arjuna*’s *iṣṭa-devatā*, the particular form in which he chooses to worship the Lord. It is easy for him to relate to and becomes an altar of worship for him. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘Please see, *prapaśya*.’

Now *Saṅjaya* narrates the situation.

सञ्जय उवाच ।

इत्यर्जुनं वासुदेवस्तथोक्त्वा स्वकं रूपं दर्शयामास भूयः ।

आश्वासयामास च भीतमेनं भूत्वा पुनः सौम्यवपुर्महात्मा ॥५०॥

*saṅjaya uvāca*

*ityarjunam vāsudevastathoktvā*

*svakaṃ rūpaṃ darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ*

*āśvāsayāmāsa ca bhītamenam*

*bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapurmahātmā*

Verse 50

सञ्जयः *saṅjayaḥ* — *Saṅjaya*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

इति *iti* — thus; वासुदेवः *vāsudevaḥ* — *Kṛṣṇa*; अर्जुनम् *arjunam* — to *Arjuna*; तथा उक्त्वा *tathā uktvā* — having spoken in this way; भूयः *bhūyaḥ* — again; स्वकम् रूपम् *svakam rūpam* — his own form; दर्शयामास *darśayāmāsa* — he showed; च *ca* — and; महात्मा *mahātmā* — the Lord; पुनः *punaḥ* — again; सौम्य-वपुः *saumya-vapuḥ* — the one who

has a pleasing body; भूत्वा *bhūtvā* — having become; भीतम् एनम् *bhītam enam* — him who was frightened; आश्वासयामास *āśvāsayāmāsa* — consoled

*Sañjaya* said:

Thus, *Kṛṣṇa*, having spoken in this way to *Arjuna*, showed his own form again and consoled him, who was frightened, having once more become the Lord with a pleasing form.

*Sañjaya* says that after saying these words to *Arjuna*, *iti arjunaṃ vāsudevaḥ tathā uktvā*, *Kṛṣṇa* once more showed *Arjuna* his form in this particular incarnation, *svakaṃ rūpaṃ darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ*, and he also consoled him, *āśvāsayāmāsa ca*. *Arjuna* was afraid, *bhīta*, and *Kṛṣṇa* calmed him down by assuming his original form. He became the Lord, *mahātmā*; in the pleasing form with which *Arjuna* was familiar. Here the Lord is *mahātmā*; he is everything and he is the self of every one, *mahān ca asau ātmā*. Now he assumes a body that is very pleasing to the mind, *saumya-vapuḥ*, and thus, easy to handle. Previously *Arjuna* did not see the limits of the body—it encompassed the whole cosmos. Once he sees *Kṛṣṇa* back again, he comes to his senses and is greatly relieved. He says so here in so many words.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन ।

इदानीमस्मि संवृत्तः सचेताः प्रकृतिं गतः ॥५१॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*dr̥ṣṭvedaṃ mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ tava saumyaṃ janārdana  
idānīmasmi saṃvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtiṃ gataḥ*

Verse 51

अर्जुनः *arjunaḥ* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

जनार्दन *janārdana* — *Kṛṣṇa*; तव *tava* — of yours; दृष्ट्वा *dr̥ṣṭvā* — seeing; इदम् *idam* — this; सौम्यम् *saumyam* — pleasing; मानुषम् *mānuṣam* — human; रूपम् *rūpam* — form; इदानीम् *idānīm* — now; (अहम्) अस्मि संवृत्तः *aham asmi saṃvṛttaḥ* — I have become; सचेताः *sacetāḥ* — cheerful; प्रकृतिम् गतः *prakṛtim gataḥ* — reached my original condition

*Arjuna* said:

Seeing this pleasing human form of yours, *Kṛṣṇa* now I have become cheerful and restored to (my) original nature.

Not only does Lord *Kṛṣṇa* come back to his original form, the *Gītā* also returns to its original meter. For the most part, the *Gītā* is in *anuṣṭup* but ever since *Arjuna* began seeing the cosmic form, it has been in *triṣṭup*. Now the *anuṣṭup* meter is restored.

*Kṛṣṇa* is now identifiable as a human being. *Arjuna*, seeing this human form, *idaṃ mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā*, that was so pleasing, *saumya*, addressing *Kṛṣṇa* as *Janārdana* says, ‘Now I have collected myself, *idānīm samvṛttaḥ asmi*, I am pleased and cheerful, *sacetāḥ*, and have come back to my original disposition of mind, *prakṛtiṃ gataḥ*. Previously he was frightened and afflicted. Now, seeing this familiar form of *Kṛṣṇa* he is pleased. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* reinforces *Arjuna*’s pleased frame of mind by telling him how lucky he is.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

सुदुर्दर्शमिदं रूपं दृष्टवानसि यन्मम ।

देवा अप्यस्य रूपस्य नित्यं दर्शनकाङ्क्षिणः ॥५२॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*sudurdarśamidaṃ rūpaṃ dr̥ṣṭavānasi yanmama*

*devā apyasya rūpasya nityaṃ darśanakāṅkṣiṇaḥ*

Verse 52

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

सुदुर्दर्शम् *sudurdarśam* — very difficult to see; इदम् रूपम् *idaṃ rūpam* — this form; मम *mama* — of Mine; दृष्टवान् असि *dr̥ṣṭavān asi* — you are one who has seen; यत् *yat* — which; देवाः अपि *devāḥ api* — even the gods; अस्य रूपस्य *asya rūpasya* — of this form; नित्यम् *nityam* — always; दर्शन-काङ्क्षिणः *darśana-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ* — (remain) desirous of seeing

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

You have seen this form of Mine, which is very difficult to see. Even the gods always (remain) desirous of seeing this form.

The form, which *Arjuna* has just seen, *Kṛṣṇa* tells him, is seen only with great difficulty, *sudurdarśa*. It is not easily available for perception and is, in fact, almost impossible to see. ‘Nevertheless, you are the one who has seen it, *dr̥ṣṭavān asi tvam*. Even the gods have a constant desire to see this form, *devāḥ api asya rūpasya nityaṃ darśana-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ*.’ They are always praying for such a cosmic vision. ‘You are lucky, *Arjuna*, because you have seen something, which nobody else has seen.’ That is what *Kṛṣṇa* wants to convey here.

Why is he so lucky?

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।

शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥५३॥

*nāhaṃ vedairna tapasā na dānena na cejyayā*

*śakya evaṃvidho draṣṭuṃ dr̥ṣṭavānasi māṃ yathā*

Verse 53

न अहम् द्रष्टुम् शक्यः *na aham draṣṭum śakyaḥ* — I cannot be seen; एवम्विधः *evaṃvidhaḥ* — in this form; वेदैः *vedaiḥ* — by (study of) the Vedas; न तपसा *na tapasā* — nor by *tapas*; न दानेन *na dānena* — nor by charity; न च इज्या *na ca ijjayā* — nor by worship; दृष्टवान् असि *dr̥ṣṭavān asi* — you are the one who has seen; माम् *mām* — Me; यथा *yathā* — in this way

I cannot be seen in this form by (study of) the Vedas, nor by ascetic practices, nor by charity, nor by worship. You are the one who has seen Me in this way.

Here *Bhagavān* repeats what he has said before. Generally repetition is considered a defect but not in teaching. In this case it is an introduction to the two very important verses that follow.

‘Not by knowing the four Vedas, *na vedaiḥ*, not by great ascetic practices, *na tapasā*, not by charity, *na dānena*, and not even by ritual, *ijjayā*.’ Previously he said *yajñā*, which was *śrauta*, only includes those rituals we know from the Veda, *ijjayā*, which he uses here, can include *smārta* rituals like *pūjā*, etc. Even by all these various methods, ‘I cannot be seen in this form, *aham evaṃvidhaḥ draṣṭum na śakyaḥ*.’ In the form that *Arjuna* has been able to see him, no one else has seen in spite of great efforts. Though a repetition of the previous verse, this verse has been introduced here to provoke a question. If this vision is not attainable by all these great practices, *yajñā*, *dāna*, *tapas*, etc., how then is it possible for one to see you?

He answers this in the next verse.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवम्विधोऽर्जुन ।

ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥५४॥

*bhaktiyā tvananyayā śakya ahamevaṃvidho’rjuna*

*jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa*

Verse 54

भक्त्या तु *bhaktiyā tu* — but with devotion; अनन्यया *ananyayā* — in which there is no other; अर्जुन *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; एवम्विधः *evaṃvidhaḥ* — in this form; अहम् *aham* — I; ज्ञातुम् द्रष्टुम् च शक्यः *jñātum draṣṭum ca śakyaḥ* — can be known and seen; तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुम् च *tattvena praveṣṭum ca* — and can be entered into in reality; परन्तप *parantapa* — O! Scorcher of the enemies (*Arjuna*)

But with devotion, in which there is no other, it is possible, O! *Arjuna*, that I can be known and seen and can be entered into in reality O! Scorcher of enemies.



This is purely in keeping with the *śāstra*. There is no longer any magic here. ‘It is possible to see Me in this form,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘by a devotion that admits of no other, *ananyayā bhaktyā*.’ *Anyā* means ‘another,’ *ananya* means ‘without any other.’ Therefore, a devotion, which does not imply any other thing is *ananya-bhakti*. What does it mean? This has been interpreted to mean that only by devotion to *Kṛṣṇa*, not *Rāma* or any other god, that you get this vision of *Īśvara*. But the meaning here is a devotion in which there is only *Īśvara*, none other.

Generally we are committed or devoted to a number of things—money, one's partner, duty and so on. And there is a little bit of devotion to God also. On certain days of the week or at certain times of the day we turn our attention towards God. Because our devotion is divided among various things, God has to wait for his turn. When money-making and counting is over, when devotion to music, to this and to that is all over, *Bhagavān* gets his chance. The last chance. Then slowly a person finds that the little bit of devotion he had for the Lord has grown to cover a few more things. He finds that money also is *Bhagavān*, wife is *Bhagavān*, children are *Bhagavān*, till finally, the whole world is *Bhagavān*. That is *ananya-bhakti*. The devotion goes nowhere else except to *Bhagavān*.

That requires a lot of inquiry, *vicāra*. The more you look into it, the more you see *Īśvara* as everything. There is nothing other than *Īśvara*. Your devotion to the Lord grows as you understand who he is until you find that there is nothing outside. This is *ananya-bhakti*. If that is your devotion the whole world is *Bhagavān*. What else is the cosmic form but that? *Arjuna* had excluded himself in the cosmic vision. But here you are totally included. That is why a real cosmic vision is possible only through *jñāna*. It has to include the observer or it is not complete; it is not cosmic. *Kṛṣṇa* makes it clear by adding, *tattvena*, in reality. ‘It is possible to truly see Me in this form, only by *ananya-bhakti*.’

I can be seen and known, *ahaṃ jñātuṃ, draṣṭuṃ ca śakyaḥ*. Because he has said ‘see,’ the *jñāna* is not mere *parokṣa-jñāna* through study of the *śāstra*. It is a clear, immediate knowledge. If you understand that there is *Brahman* who is infinite and the cause of creation, it is indirect knowledge, *parokṣa-jñāna*. But if you know, ‘I am the cause,’ it is direct knowledge, *aparokṣa-jñāna*. That step is a very big step and is what they call *darśana*, vision. It is seeing it in reality, *tattvena*, because it is a knowledge, which includes the person who sees. That knowledge of the Lord, which includes the individual is what they call *tattva-jñāna*.

And what is the result? Thereby he gains *mokṣa*, he enters into and becomes one with *Īśvara*. He is no longer separate from the Lord, even when the body dies. *Praveṣṭuṃ* means ‘to enter’ but it is like a wave entering into the ocean in the sense of understanding that it is water, not a wave. That is the *praveśa*, the knowledge that

releases the wave from being a separate entity. This is called *mokṣa* and is accomplished, *Kṛṣṇa* points out here, by *ananya-bhakti*.

‘Only with an appreciation that there is no other thing except *Īśvara*, is it possible for you to see Me in this original form.’ What *Arjuna* saw was not truly the cosmic form. The real cosmic form has to be understood to include you. These are all things that must be properly understood. Otherwise you can embark upon an eternal struggle to see the cosmic form by intensifying your acts of devotion. Even if you see it, you will be as frightened as *Arjuna*. Therefore, it is important to understand that *ananya-bhakti* is seeing only *Bhagavān* and is only possible through knowledge, a knowledge that includes the knower.

In the next verse, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* sums up the chapter and also all that has been said so far. Introducing the verse *Śaṅkara* says that now the entire teaching of the *Gītā* is given in a nutshell here. This is the essence of the entire *gītā-śāstra*, which is meant for *mokṣa*. And this *mokṣa* has to be pursued with the help of either of the two lifestyles—one of total commitment to knowledge where knowledge is pursued to the exclusion of everything else or knowledge is pursued along with a lifestyle of *karma-yoga*. This includes not only what has already been said but what may be said later. This is what is said by *Kṛṣṇa*.

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।

निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥५५॥

*matkarmakṛṇmatparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ*

*nirvairāḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava*

Verse 55

सर्व-भूतेषु *sarva-bhūteṣu* — among all people; यः *yaḥ* — the one who; मत्कर्मकृत् *matkarmakṛt* — does all action for My sake; मत्परमः *matparamaḥ* — for whom I am paramount; मद्भक्तः *madbhaktaḥ* — who is devoted to Me; सङ्ग-वर्जितः *saṅga-varjitaḥ* — who is free from attachment; निर्वैरः *nirvairāḥ* — who is free from enmity; स माम् एति *sa mām eti* — he comes to Me; पाण्डव *pāṇḍava* — *Arjuna*

Among all people, the one who does all action for My sake, for whom I am paramount, who is devoted to Me, free from attachment and free from enmity comes to Me, *Arjuna*.

The one who has all the things listed here, ‘is the one who reaches Me, *saḥ mām eti*,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says here, addressing *Arjuna* as *pāṇḍava*, the son of *Pāṇḍu*. Who is that person?

*Matkarmakṛt*—One who performs action is a *karmakṛt*. Here, it is someone who performs all his daily duties, etc., not for *dharma* or *artha* or *kāma* but for *mokṣa*, which is *Īśvara-svarūpa*. He engages in all his various activities keeping *Īśvara* in the

centre because for him, the Lord is to be accomplished, nothing else. He is 'matkarmakṛt.' His *karmas* are performed not out of *rāga-dveṣas* but out of respect for *dharma* and *adharmas*. This is an important thing to understand. What does it mean to perform action for the sake of the Lord? We hear this all the time but what does it really mean?

How can I perform an action for the sake of *Īśvara*? If *Īśvara* specifically tells me to do something, for his sake I can do it. As we often do for others. But *Īśvara* does not directly ask me for anything. How am I to know what pleases him and what displeases him? Some say that one must undertake all actions saying, 'Nārāyaṇa.' But how does simply saying his name make it an offering to him? How am I to dedicate my *karma* to the Lord? Even if I say, 'Oh Lord, I dedicate this *karma* to you,' neither the action nor the result goes to the Lord. *Matkarmakṛt* is one of those vaguely understood words we find in the *Gītā*. But earlier, *Bhagavān* explained it very clearly saying *rāga-dveṣayoḥ vaśaṃ na āgacchet*, do not come under the hold of likes and dislikes, and *svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyāḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*, death in one's own *dharma* is better; the *dharma* of another is fraught with fear.

What is to be done in a given situation is *svadharmas*. Within the societal division of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *svakarma* or *svadharmas* is very clear. When that structure is absent, as is the case even in India today, then *svakarma* is the appropriate course of action in a given situation. This can conflict with what I like or do not like to do. As long as what is to be done is in keeping with my *rāga* or what is not to be done corresponds to my *dveṣa*, there is no problem. But more often than not, *dharma* and *adharmas* are pitted against *rāga* and *dveṣas*. This is the *devāsura-yuddha*, the war between the gods and *asuras*. When *rāga-dveṣas* are in keeping with what is to be done, they assume the status of *dharma*. They cannot rightly be called *rāga-dveṣas* unless they are in conflict with *dharma*. And we should know that what is against *dharma* is against *Bhagavān* because he is the moral order.

In human interaction we sense these natural laws and learn to adjust our behaviour accordingly. But the laws are not created by us, they are *Īśvara-sṛṣṭi*, which is why they are universal. Without any education every human being has knowledge of *dharma* and *adharmas*. At least we are very clear about what others should and should not do to us. That we all commonly sense. And when we all commonly sense something, that is order. Moreover, the moral order and free will are connected. We do have a faculty of choice. If we did not, there would be no necessity for a moral order because we would be perfectly programmed like the animals. But there is a free will and it is intimately connected to the moral order. Because I have a free will, I can always align it with my *rāga-dveṣas* and go against the order. It does not join *dharma* all the time.

We can understand that the moral order is the Lord's creation. Then we take it one step further. If you understand that what is created is non-separate from the Lord, you are

a *jñānī* and will spontaneously act in harmony with *dharma*. If you are not aware of this, you follow *Bhagavān's* order. Understanding *dharma* as *Bhagavān's* creation you adjust your behaviour to conform with *dharma*. Doing *karma* for *Īśvara's* sake means for *dharma's* sake, not for the sake of *rāga-dveṣas*. As a *karma-yogī* one is not interested in *dharma-ārtha-kāma*. Although he has *rāga-dveṣas*, his actions are done as a *yoga* for *mokṣa's* sake. Then he is *matkarmakṛt*. Even though someone may be worshipping the Lord, if he is doing it for heaven or some other end he is not *matkarmakṛt*. He is really doing it for the sake of his own *rāga-dveṣas*. A *matkarmakṛt* is a *karma-yogī* who is a *mumukṣu*. His pursuit is *mokṣa* but because he is not a *sannyāsī*, he has certain mandatory duties.

*Matparama* means the one for whom the Lord is the most important. *Śaṅkara* says that his attitude towards the Lord is like a servant to his master. As a servant does everything to please his master, this person does everything only to please the Lord. But performing *karma* for *Īśvara* is a little different from performing action for someone else. In doing something for someone, though you may want to please the person, you do not look upon the person as an end. Here the whole purpose of performing action for *Īśvara* is to become one with *Īśvara*, the *paramā gatih*. This is the ultimate end reaching, which there is no other end wished for or possible. That is the purpose of his *karma-yoga*. He pursues knowledge doing his duties as a *yoga*. By *karma-yoga* he gains *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and therefore, is ready for *jñāna*. *Matparama* is the one for whom *Īśvara* is the ultimate end to be reached. He does not lose sight of that.

Being *matparama*, how does he live his life? He is *madbhakta*. With his whole heart and soul he is devoted to the Lord. Whatever he does, studying *śāstra*, doing *japa*, singing the glories of *Bhagavān*, he does with great enthusiasm. It is natural because one is always enthusiastic about what one loves. He knows very clearly that *Īśvara* is the end to be accomplished, for, which he is a *karma-yogī*. When *matparama* and *matkarmakṛt* have already been said, why is it necessary to say *madbhakta*? Without devotion he will not be able to do all that is necessary to be a *karma-yogī*. He may be doing his *svakarma* but if his understanding of *mokṣa* is vague, his *bhakti* will also be vague. *Bhagavān* says *madbhakta* here to indicate his enthusiasm. It shows that his commitment is complete.

And he is *saṅgavarjita*, free from attachment. Attachment is usually to an object. *Śaṅkara* mentions a few of them here, *dhana*, wealth, *putra*, son or daughter, *mītra*, friend, *kalatra*, wife, *bandhu*, relatives. These are all things to which you can become attached. A friend can be an object of obsession; so can wealth, children etc. *Saṅgavarjita* is a person who is free from such obsessive attachment, which is really emotional dependence. He has affection, love etc., but is not dependent on any of these for his sense of well-being.

If you have *saṅga*, several other problems follow in its wake; anxiety, pain, etc. and *rāga-dveṣas* become predominant. It is an on-going problem. There is always some misunderstanding or another with a relative. No sooner do you resolve that than there is a problem with your spouse or child. The entire life gets consumed in pleasing people. It is endless because there will always be misunderstandings. So, we decide to understand the whole thing more fundamentally. We appreciate the nature of the mind and develop an awareness of what detachment is. In different degrees, everyone experiences the problems surrounding excessive emotional involvement. It is a universal problem. So, we become conscious of the fact that we are subject to emotional involvement and try to understand what it is. With that awareness we can enjoy relationships instead having them to be problematic. In fact they help us to grow.

Unless we relate, how do we know whether we have an emotional involvement? The involvement arises because of a need and it is that which creates the problems. Once the need is detected, a certain detachment is called for and that cannot come without understanding. In the process of inquiry you gather an awareness of yourself and understand your behaviour. You learn what situations you have to avoid until the time comes when you are able to interact without getting emotionally involved. Then you only give in a relationship. As long as we take, there is dependence. Without dependence you can give freely of your affection, love, and sympathy.

And he is without enmity, *nirvaira*. Sometimes people behave in a way that is inimical to you. But if you are committed to your own maturity you will question yourself, 'Perhaps I invoke enmity. Otherwise why should he be inimical to me?' I do not say we should internalise everything but we must be responsible for our emotions and actions. And each person behaves according to his or her own mind. If this is understood, problems are greatly minimised. The animals etc., including mosquitoes are all above reproach. They just do what *Bhagavān* has programmed them to do. You cannot blame a mosquito for biting. But you can keep away from it. It is much the same with human beings. Even if they are totally committed to activities, which are inimical to you, they are to be understood as human beings whose behaviour, like all other human beings, is helplessly dictated by their past. If you had the same past, you would behave in exactly the same way. Knowing this, there cannot be any enmity. We allow people to be as they are. This is dispassion, which is possible only with a certain maturity. To gain that, we keep analysing our responses.

One who has all these characteristics becomes one with Me, *mām eti*. 'I' am the ultimate, the only end for him. Suppose you have become one with *Bhagavān*, then what will you do? What can you not do? You are free; you are full. There is no isolation. This is the most desirable teaching. *Arjuna* asked for this and *Kṛṣṇa* taught him everything.

*Bhagavadgītā*

ओं तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे  
 श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे विश्वरूपदर्शनयोगो नाम एकादशोऽध्यायः ॥११॥  
*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ*  
*yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde viśvarūpadarśanayogo nāma*  
*ekādaśo'dhyāyaḥ*

Thus in the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is but *Upaniṣad*, in the dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, thus ends the eleventh chapter, which has as its topic the *viśvarūpa*, the vision of the cosmic form.

**ABABABABAB**

## CHAPTER 12

### BHAKTI-YOGA

#### INTRODUCTION

In the twelfth chapter the topic is predominantly devotion, *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is from the root *bhaj* used in the sense of service. Dedicated action to *Īśvara* who is in the form of *dharma* is called *bhakti*. One who conforms to *dharma* and avoids *adharma*, looking upon it as *Īśvara* is a *bhakta*, a *karma-yogī*.

#### ARJUNA'S QUESTION

The chapter opens with a question by *Arjuna*. It is in the same vein as all his other questions in the *Gītā*. His conflict lies in the fact that his mind is in *sannyāsa* but he is being called to duty. Everyone has such a conflict in one form or another. Even in the early morning you wonder, 'Should I get up or should I sleep in for a while?' You start the day with a conflict of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* and this continues in various forms. *Arjuna's* mind is still not settled. In the second chapter he declared that he was not interested in kingdom and comforts but preferred a life of *bhikṣā*. After using the word *bhikṣā*, he was obsessed with *sannyāsa*.

His commitment is of course for *śreyas* and he wants *sannyāsa* for that. The action he is called to is a terrible one. He has to fight a war. If it were a prayer like *sandhyā-vandana*, or a ritual like *agnihotra* it would not be a problem. His difficulty is that he has to kill all these great men like *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa* for whom he has so much respect. How can he fight against people who deserve his worship? In the same chapter he said further that it was not possible for him to engage in such a battle. He would rather live a *sadhu's* life and gather alms, *bhikṣā*. Such a lifestyle is possible for only two types of people, a *brahmacārī* or a *sannyāsī*, a renunciate. *Arjuna* cannot be a *brahmacārī* now; he is already married and has grown-up sons. He can only become a *sannyāsī*, which is exactly what he thinks is good for him now. He has said so, in so many words. 'I do not want a kingdom because I do not think it will remove my sorrow. Therefore, I want *śreyas*, I am your student, please teach me—*śiṣyaste'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam*.' *Arjuna* had a commitment for this knowledge. He wanted *śreyas*, not *sannyāsa* but he thought *sannyāsa* would be more conducive to his gaining *śreyas*.

Then Lord *Kṛṣṇa* taught him the nature of *ātmā* in the second chapter. He also told him that all the Vedas talk about ends within *saṃsāra*, not going beyond the three *guṇas*. Therefore, he said, ‘*Arjuna*, may you become one who is above these three *guṇas*, *nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna*.’ Then he told him to get up and fight, *tasmāt uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ*, and talked to him about *karma-yoga*. ‘You have choice only regarding action, never the result, *karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana*.’

Then *Arjuna* asked a question. He wanted to know the characteristics of a wise man, *sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā*. Indirectly he was asking whether a wise man would live in this world and perform all actions like any one of us. *Bhagavān* answered by saying that the one who is happy with himself is a wise man. What is day for the ignorant is night for him and what is night for him is day for the other. That means what is true to him is not true to the other and what is true to the other is not true to him. *Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṃ tasyāṃ jāgarti saṃyamī yasyāṃ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ*. When that is so, how can one describe a *sthitaprajña* to one who is not a *sthitaprajña*?

If you are not a wise man, no description is going to help you because it takes a wise man to understand a wise man. And if you are already a *sthitaprajña*, you do not need to have him described to you. Still *Kṛṣṇa* made an attempt using an example. As the waters entering into the brimful ocean bring about no change to the ocean, similarly all objects enter into a wise man leaving no trace at all. He is happy. Nothing elates or depresses him.

Then *Arjuna* had another question. He understands very well that *Kṛṣṇa* has his heart in knowledge because by knowledge alone one becomes a *sthitaprajña*. If that is so, he wonders, ‘Why are you asking me to engage in this fight? Since knowledge liberates, *Arjuna* wants to pursue only knowledge. He has no value for all these activities *Kṛṣṇa* is asking him to engage in. ‘You seem to contradict your own words, because you praise knowledge and at the same time ask me to do *karma*,’ he tells him. It is evident that *śreyas*, which is *mokṣa*, is gained by knowledge. Yet he is asked to engage in this action. And it is not an easy task; it implies bloodshed. It seems to *Arjuna* that *Kṛṣṇa* wants to deny him *śreyas* by diverting his attention in another direction. All this is implied when he asks, ‘Which do you consider better, *Kṛṣṇa*, *karma* or *jñāna*, *jyāyasī cet karmaṇaste matā buddhirjanārdana, tadekaṃ vada niścītya yena śreyo’ham āpnuyam*.’ The third chapter is the response to this. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* does not give him a definite answer. He only tells what *karma-yoga* is, and what is *sannyāsa*. Both are for *jñāna*. The difference is only in lifestyle, *loke’smin dvividhā niṣṭhā*. One is a life of renunciation, the other a life of activity with proper attitude, which is good for purification of the mind, *citta-śuddhi*. Thereby, you are able to understand what is being said.



If you are ready for *sannyāsa*, be a *sannyāsi*; if not, be a *karma-yogī*. There is no choice in this really. It is like a fifteen year old asking if next year he should be sixteen or twenty-five. *Sannyāsa* is maturity and to gain maturity you have to go through *karma-yoga*. Therefore, between *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* there is no choice. It is entirely decided by what you are ready for. *Kṛṣṇa* carefully explained *karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa* hoping *Arjuna* would not ask this question again. But, after waiting for some time, in the fifth chapter *Arjuna* asks the same question in a different form. Hoping perhaps that *Kṛṣṇa* has forgotten his original question, he asked, ‘You are praising both *yoga* and *sannyāsa*, *Kṛṣṇa*; between the two, please tell me definitely, which one you consider to be better—*‘sannyāsaṃ karmaṇāṃ kṛṣṇa punaryogaṃ ca śaṅsasi yacchreya etayorekaṃ tanme brūhi suniścitam.’* Initially he asked about knowledge and *karma*, and here he calls it *sannyāsa* and *yoga*.

It is the same question with a different terminology. Again Lord *Kṛṣṇa* does not answer directly. He says, ‘What is achieved by the *sannyāsis* is also accomplished by the *karma-yogīs*, *yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ tad yogairapi gamyate.*’ And further, ‘The one who looks at both *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* as the same (means for one common end), he alone sees, *ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati.*’

## IS THE QUESTION DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS?

Here in the twelfth chapter *Arjuna* asks the same question in a slightly different form. He wants to know, which of the two groups of people are better - those who pursue *nirguṇa-brahma*, meaning they pursue the knowledge of *ātmā* being *Brahman*, free from all attributes, or those who worship the Lord in the cosmic form, which he has just seen, in a way.

The *karma-yogī* does his duties towards the family, society, his country and even the *devatās* with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi* and meditates upon *saguṇa-brahma*. None of these duties exists for a *sannyāsi*. His life is one of dedicated pursuit of knowledge, nothing else. He also declares his pursuit with external symbols like the *kāśāya* the ochre robes, the *rudrākṣamālā*, and *kamaṇḍalu*. He takes *sannyāsa* by performing a stipulated ritual in which he takes an oath that he will no longer be a cause of fear for any living being including plants, animals, human beings and all the *devatās*. He gives *abhaya* to all of them. And he pursues *nirguṇa-brahma* to the exclusion of everything else. Though the word *upāsana* is used, *nirguṇa-brahma* cannot be meditated upon; it has to be understood. How are you going to meditate upon something free from attributes, which moreover, is the meditator's *svarūpa*? *Nirguṇa-brahma-upāsana* is the pursuit of knowledge. ‘Those who meditate upon Me as that, *taṃ ye paryupāsate*, come to Me directly, *te mām eva yānti*. They are Me, because what they are meditating

upon is *ātmā* and I am the *ātmā* of every one. Knowing that they are Me, they are non-separate from Me,' *Bhagavān* says.

Instead of phrasing his question with reference to their activity, *Arjuna* has worded it in terms of their meditation. But it is the same question. In terms of lifestyle, *Arjuna's* question was whether *sannyāsa* was better or *karma-yoga*. But here the question is asked in terms of topic of meditation. For the *karma-yogī* the topic is *saguṇa-brahma, Īśvara*; for the *sannyāsī* it is *nirguṇa-brahma*.

What is the difference between this question and *Arjuna's* questions in the third and fifth chapters? There is no difference. In the eighteenth chapter he words it differently, still asking whether *tyāga*, meaning *karma-phala-tyāga* is better than *sannyāsa*. Again Lord *Kṛṣṇa* continues to answer him until at last his questions come to an end. In the eighteenth chapter *Arjuna* says, 'My delusion is gone; I have recovered my senses and will do as you say, *naṣṭo mohah smṛtirlabdhā... kariṣye vacanaṃ tava*.<sup>1</sup>

Because this chapter is called *bhakti-yoga*, it is a common misconception that this is yet another *yoga*. *Yoga* here, as in all the other chapters, means topic. There is no independent means called *bhakti yoga*. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has made it clear that freedom is through knowledge and there are two lifestyles one can adopt while in the pursuit of that knowledge, *sannyāsa* or *karma-yoga*. Both have the same end so, what is achieved by the *sannyāsī* is also accomplished by the *karma-yogī*. The one who sees both of them as the same, a means for one common end, he alone sees, *ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of that, *Arjuna* wants to know who is better, the one who pursues *nirguṇa-brahma* meaning knowledge of *ātmā* or the one who worships the cosmic form, the *karma-yogī* who is doing *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*. The one who worships *Īśvara* as one who is in the form of the whole universe and conforms to the law of *dharma* looking upon it also as *Īśvara*, is a *karma-yogī*, a devotee.

There are a lot of people who follow *dharma* but they do not look upon it as *Īśvara*. They have understood that what they expect of others is expected of them and act accordingly to avoid conflict. Though they are in conformity with *dharma*, they are not *karma-yogīs*, if they do not accept *Īśvara* because when *dharma* is not looked upon as *Īśvara*, there is no *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*. The *karma-yogī*, however, not only offers all actions to *Īśvara*, he meditates upon *Īśvara*. Both are worshippers of *Īśvara*. Any ritual like *agnihotra* is worship. And if it is combined with *upāsana*, a mental action, it is an even more efficacious worship. Every form of worship comes under *karma-yoga*. Whether it is simple repetition of the Veda or mental repetition of a prayer, it is a

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 18-73

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 5-5

*karma*. So, *karma-yoga* is not merely service. It is any activity performed with *Īśvara* in view including prayer and meditation. *Karma* is threefold—mental, oral and physical. And if you are invoking *Īśvara* through any one of them, it is *karma-yoga*. There is no separate *bhakti-yoga*. I repeat this here because the confusion is so rampant. It is a common misconception that there are four *yogas*—*jñāna-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *haṭha-yoga*.

A *sannyāsī* renounces all enjoined duties both what is to be done daily, *nitya-karma*, and what is to be done occasionally, *naimittika-karma*, consisting mainly of rituals and prayers. Besides that he gives up all duties towards family, society, country and even *devatās*. His pursuit is purely knowledge. The *karma-yogīs*, on the other hand, are obliged to do the enjoined duties. Therefore, we have two sets of people, the *sannyāsīs*, or *jñāna-yogīs*, pursuing knowledge to the exclusion of everything else, and the *karma-yogīs* pursuing knowledge in conjunction with *karma* as a *yoga*.

Now suppose there is a *bhakti-yogī*. Does he have duties or not? He does daily *pūjā*, studies the *Purānas* etc. all of which are *karmas*. So, in what way is *bhakti-yoga* separate from *karma*? And if he is a real devotee, even when he is doing some other type of action he does not become a non-devotee. A real devotee is a devotee all the time. In order to make that a reality one does all this *pūjā* etc. How can we say that a *karma-yogī* does not have *bhakti*? For a *karma-yogī*, there is no act, which is not an act of worship. As I said, even an ethical person, however esteemed he may be, is not a *karma-yogī* if he does not accept *Īśvara*. He has to be *matkarmakṛt*, one who sees *dharma* as *Īśvara* and does all action for the sake of *Īśvara*. We can never say that this *karma-yogī* is without *bhakti*. And neither is there any *sannyāsī* without *bhakti* because *sannyāsa* is only to know *Īśvara*. There is no *bhakti-yogī*. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has said ‘*loke’smin dvividhā niṣṭhā*, in this world there are two committed lifestyles for *mokṣa*, that of a *sannyāsī* and that of a *karma-yogī*.’

Not understanding this, there are those who claim that there are four types of people, with one *yoga* for each type. They say, for those who are intellectual there is *jñāna-yoga*, for the emotional, *bhakti-yoga*, for the extrovert, *karma-yoga* and for the dullard, *haṭha-yoga*. We are all intellectual and who does not have emotions? Who is not an extrovert? Even the most introverted person has some extroverted activities. And who does not need some exercise? *Āsanās* are done by *sannyāsīs*, by *karma-yogīs* and by anybody who wants to keep his body fit. Which of these is not meant for everyone? It is very clear that the problem lies in not understanding what *sannyāsa* is, what *karma-yoga* is, what *jñāna* is and what *mokṣa* is. It is not *bhakti-yoga* that is presented here but *bhakti*, and in particular, *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*.

Introducing the chapter, *Śaṅkara* says, from the second chapter to the tenth on *vibhūti-yoga*, the pursuit of *paramātmā*, which is *Brahman* that is not subject to change, *akṣara*, in which all *upādhis* are negated and which is without any *guṇa*, was

discussed. Besides that, *Īśvara's vibhūti*s were also pointed out—his *aiśvarya*, overlordship, omniscience, and so on. That *Īśvara* who was there in the beginning and who is in the form of the entire *jagat*, was shown in the eleventh chapter as the one to be meditated upon by those *karma-yogīs* who are *matkarmakṛt*. *Arjuna* now has a question about this.

अर्जुन उवाच ।

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।

ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥१॥

*arjuna uvāca*

*evam satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvām paryupāsate*

*ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktaṁ teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ*

Verse 1

अर्जुनः *arjunah* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;

ये भक्ताः *ye bhaktāḥ* — those devotees who; एवम् सततयुक्ताः *evam satatayuktāḥ* — are constantly committed in this manner; त्वाम् पर्युपासते *tvām paryupāsate* — meditate upon you; ये च अपि *ye ca api* — and also those who; (त्वाम् पर्युपासते *tvām paryupāsate* — seek you;) अक्षरम् *akṣaram* — who is not subject to decline; अव्यक्तम् *avyaktam* — who is not available for objectification; तेषाम् *teṣām* — among them; के *ke* — who; योगवित्तमाः *yogavittamāḥ* — are the greatest knowers of *yoga*

*Arjuna* said:

In this manner, (there are) those devotees who, constantly committed, meditate upon you and also those who seek you as one who is not subject to decline and not available for objectification. Among them, who are the greatest knowers of *yoga*?

After seeing the *viśvarūpa*, *Arjuna* asked this question based upon what he saw. His question proves that the vision did not solve his problem. He still maintained a division. Here, *Arjuna* wants to know who is superior, a *karma-yogī* who is doing *upāsana* or a *jñānī*. The *karma-yogī* is doing meditation upon the *viśvarūpa*; the *sannyāsī* is contemplating on *akṣara-para-brahma*. One pursues *saguṇa-brahma* and the other *nirguṇa-brahma*. Which is better? The question has certain implications. It is not who is the more exalted among these two, but rather, who is closer to *mokṣa*.

*Evam* reveals a connection to what was said earlier. The reference, *Śaṅkarasays*, is to the previous verse in which *Bhagavān* talked about the *karma-yogī* as ‘*matkarmakṛt*,’ etc. By saying *evam*, *Arjuna* brings to Lord *Kṛṣṇa's* mind what was said in the last verse of the previous chapter.

*Satatam* means constantly; *yukta* means committed. Those who are constantly engaged in this manner, *evam satata-yuktāḥ*, performing all actions for *Bhagavān*,

living a committed life of *karma-yoga* as explained in the previous verse. They are *bhaktāḥ*, devotees, because they perform *karma* with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*, looking upon *dharma* as *īśvara*. Defining *bhaktas*, *Śaṅkara* says *ananyāśaraṇāḥ*, those for whom there is no other refuge. Others, the *arthārthīs*, use *Bhagavān* to assist them in their accomplishments. Their *śaraṇa*, refuge, is in money, power, and so on, and not in *īśvara*. But those who are desirous of liberation, who are *bhaktas*, find their refuge only in *īśvara*. Gaining him is *mokṣa* for them. Besides doing *karma*, they meditate, *paryupāsate*, upon *Bhagavān* as one who is everything as was shown in the *viśvarūpa-darśana*.

This chapter reveals many things. But it can be the most confusing chapter in the *Gītā*. Understanding it requires a lot of background. You must know what is *upāsana*, *dhyāna*, *karma*, *yoga*, and *jñāna*, to understand it. What is said here could not have been said earlier because all these things have to be covered.

The *karma-yogīs* who meditate are one group. The other group, he says, are those who pursue *Brahman* that is not subject to change, *akṣara*, and not available as an object, *avyakta*, which is the nature of *ātmā*. Of these, *Arjuna* wants to know who are the ones who are nearer to *mokṣa*.

## SAGUŪA-BRAHMA AND NIRGUŪA-BRAHMA

Throughout the *Gītā*, *Brahman* is described as *akṣara*, that which is not subject to decline, *na kṣarati iti akṣaram* and *avyakta*, that which is free from all *upādhis*, because it has no attributes. But earlier (in the tenth and eleventh chapters) it was described as having attributes, *saguṇa-brahma*. Do we have two *Brahmans*? No, we have only one *Brahman* whose *svarūpa* is *nirguṇa*, free from everything, pure consciousness. It becomes *saguṇa* because of the *upādhi* of *māyā*. *Saguṇa-brahma* has attributes, *nirguṇa-brahma* does not have; this is the difference.

*Avyakta* can mean that which is not manifest or, that which is not available as an object. What is unmanifest can be the cause, *māyā*. The *kāraṇa-māyā* is unmanifest and therefore, *avyakta*. But here *Śaṅkara* gives the meaning of *avyakta* as that which cannot be objectified, *akaraṇa-gocara*. An object of the senses or mind, the instruments of knowing, is called *karaṇa-gocara*. What is not an object of the instruments of knowing is *akaraṇa-gocara*. That is not to say it cannot be known; it is just not an object of the instruments of knowing. An object is something other than yourself, which you come to know through various means of knowledge. But this is you and therefore, not an object. Anything not available for objectification is *avyakta*. *Śaṅkara* makes a note about the origin of the word. The word *vyakta* has the meaning of that which is manifest. It is derived from the root *añj* (*vi + añj = vyañj*), which has the meaning of ‘to manifest, to be available for objectification.’ Therefore, anything that is manifest and is available for objectification is called *vyakta*. And anything that is not available for

objectification is called *avyakta*. *Ātmā* is not an object of anything; it is always the subject; therefore it is said to be *avyakta*. *Avyakta* does not mean it is unknown, only that it is not an object. It is always the *caitanya-svarūpa*, the subject.

The question is, between these *karma-yogīs* who are seeking *nirguṇa-brahma*, and the *karma-yogīs* doing their *karmas* with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi* and meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma*, who is better? In fact, the superlative affix, *tama*, is used. Who are the best? What is the meaning of ‘best’ here? What *Arjuna* wants to know is who are nearer to *mokṣa*.

### THE JŌĒNÌ IS NOT TO BE COMPARED TO THE KARMA-YOGÌ

The *Gītā* looks upon the *sannyāsī* as a *jñānī* because he is committed only to *jñāna*. And *Kṛṣṇa* has said the *jñānī* is himself, *jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam*. A comparison between him and the *karma-yogī* is not valid. *Kṛṣṇa* is going to say, ‘the *karma-yogīs*, those who meditate upon *saguṇa-brahma*, are better off.’

Introducing the next verse, *Śaṅkara* has this to say. Those, however, who are contemplating upon *akṣara-brahma* and who therefore, have a clear vision of *Brahman* and are free from the three types of desires, are to be left alone. They are already *sannyāsīs*, so, let us not talk about them here because, as *Bhagavān* has said, ‘They are Myself.’ There is no comparison between them and the *karma-yogīs* at all. It is legitimate to compare those *karma-yogīs* who are doing *upāsana* with those who are not, *kevala-karma-yogīs*. *Karma* is duty and daily worship; *upāsana* is meditation. Though *upāsana* is also worship, it is mental worship. So, we consider it separately. The *karma-yogī* has *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi* and recognises *Īśvara* as the *karma-phaladātā*, the giver of the fruits of actions, and *karmādhyakṣa*, the one who presides over the law of *karma*. Recognizing *Īśvara*, he does his *karma* but whether it is oral or physical, it is not meditation. When the action is purely mental with *saguṇa-brahma* as the object, it becomes meditation. If it were just mental activity, then worry also would be meditation. In order to distinguish *upāsana* from *karma*, it is defined as *saguṇa-brahma-viṣaya-mānasa-vyāpāra*; activity is common to both. In performing *agnihotra* there is *saguṇa-brahma-viṣaya-vyāpāra*. The difference is, in meditation it is purely a *mānasa-vyāpāra*, in a ritual, it is not. Therefore, whenever you see the word *upāsana* or sometimes *dhyāna*, it means meditation. Those who are *karma-yogīs* and combine their daily *karmas* with meditation on *Īśvara*, will be said here as *yuktātmās*.

The *sannyāsīs* are not available for such comparison. Suppose someone wants to get a degree. You cannot say those who have gained the degree are superior. You leave them out of any comparison altogether. It is the same with a *sannyāsī*. He is as good as *akṣara-brahma*, so, the question of superiority does not arise. That is the end you want to be. That is why *Śaṅkara* says *tāvat tiṣṭhantu*, leave them alone. *Bhagavān* will talk about them later. Now he talks about the two types of *karma-yogīs*, in the next verse.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।

श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥२॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*

*mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate*

*śraddhayā parayopetāste me yuktatamā matāḥ*

Verse 2

ये *ye* — those who; श्रद्धया *śraddhayā* परया *parayā* — with unflinching faith; उपेताः *upetāḥ* — are endowed; मयि *mayi* — in Me; मनः *manaḥ* — the mind; आवेश्य *āveśya* — committed; नित्य-युक्ताः *nitya-yuktāḥ* — being ever united; माम् *mām* — Me; उपासते *upāsate* — meditate; ते *te* — they; युक्ततमाः *yuktatamāḥ* — as the most exalted; मे मताः *me matāḥ* — are considered by Me

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

Endowed with unflinching faith, their minds committed to Me, being ever united (with Me), those who meditate upon Me are considered by Me as the most exalted. (This is My vision.)

Those who worship committing their mind to *Parameśvara* are *karma-yogīs*, as was said in the last chapter. *Śaṅkara* says that they are devotees of *Īśvara*, who is the Lord of all *yogīs* and all exalted *devatās*; the one who is all-knowing, *sarvajña*, and whose vision is not blinded by the afflictions of *rāga* and so, *vimukta-rāgādi-kleśa-timiradṛṣṭi*. *Timiradṛṣṭi* is vision that is obscured because of cataract. Unlike blindness, it can be corrected by removing the cataract. *Bhagavān* is described here as the one who does not have *timiradṛṣṭi*. This is only to say that he is unlike all of us. He is free from the five-fold afflictions, *kleśas*,<sup>1</sup> beginning with *rāga*, which impair our recognition of *Īśvara*. Upon this *Īśvara*, they meditate, *upāsate*.

Being *karma-yogīs*, they meditate with the utmost *śraddhā*, *parā-śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* is commitment to *śruti*. Whether they understand it or not, they give credence to the *śruti*. They know that they have to understand what it says. This provisional acceptance of the *śruti*'s veracity is *śraddhā*. What kind of *śraddhā*? *Parā* here means unflinching. Because of this they can do their *karma* properly, even though they may sometimes not fully understand. These are definitely considered by Me to be the most exalted, *yuktatamāḥ me matāḥ*. This is My vision. They are near *mokṣa*.

Although those who worship *avyaktam akṣaram brahma*, are not different from *Bhagavān* himself, he does not want *Arjuna* to emulate them. Therefore, he presents these *karma-yogīs* as the ones who are near him because he wants *Arjuna* to follow their example knowing it is good for him. Suppose a ten year old asks, which of the two

<sup>1</sup> *avidyā* (ignorance), *asmitā* (egoism), *rāga* (like), *dveṣa* (dislike), *abhiniveśa* (attachment)

books he should read, Shakespeare's original plays or stories from Shakespeare written for children, you will recommend the children's book because it is suitable for the child. He will understand it and learn something from it. That is the point here. The very fact that *Arjuna* asks, which is better indicates that he needs to follow *karma-yoga*. That is better for him. So, *Bhagavān* says *karma-yogīs* who are doing *upāsana* are *yuktātmās*. Does that mean the others are inferior?

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।

सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥३॥

*ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktaṃ paryupāsate*

*sarvatragamacintyaṃ ca kūṭasthamacalaṃ dhruvam*

Verse 3

तु *tu* — however; ये *ye* — those who; पर्युपासते *paryupāsate* — contemplate upon; अक्षरम् *akṣaram* — that which is not subject to decline; अनिर्देश्यम् *anirdeśyam* — which is not describable; अव्यक्तम् *avyaktaṃ* — not available for objectification; सर्वत्रगम् *sarvatragam* — all pervasive; अचिन्त्यम् च *acintyaṃ ca* — and not an object of thought; कूटस्थम् *kūṭastham* — which abides in *māyā*; अचलम् *acalam* — which does not move; ध्रुवम् *dhruvam* — which is eternal

However, those who contemplate upon that which is not subject to decline, not describable, not available for objectification, all pervasive, and not an object of thought, which abides in *māyā*, does not move and is eternal.

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥४॥

*sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṃ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ*

*te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*

Verse 4

सन्नियम्य *saṁniyamya* — having complete mastery over; इन्द्रिय-ग्रामम् *indriya-grāmam* — the group of sense organs; सर्वत्र *sarvatra* — always; सम-बुद्धयः *sama-buddhayaḥ* — those who are equal-minded; सर्वभूत-हिते रताः *sarvabhūta-hite ratāḥ* — those who take delight in/are disposed to (in) the welfare of all beings; ते प्राप्नुवन्ति *te prāpnuvanti* — they gain; माम् एव *mām eva* — Me alone

Having complete mastery over the group of sense organs, those who are always equal-minded and take delight in/are disposed to the welfare of all beings, gain Me alone.



Alternative meaning:

Having complete mastery over the group of sense organs, only those who are always equal-minded and take delight in/are disposed to the welfare of all beings, gain Me.

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is eloquent in answering the second part of this question. He piles up all these words just to show that *sannyāsa* is not a matter of choice; it is something to be understood. ‘All these people who worship this *Brahman* come to Me. They are Me because *akṣara* is Me, *avyakta* is Me, *anirdeśya* is also Me. When they discover the meaning of these words they discover Me and it is not going to separate them from Me.’

*Arjuna’s* question was, which of the two groups was better, those doing *karma-yoga* and meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma* for the sake of *mokṣa* or the *sannyāsīs* committed to the pursuit of *nirguṇa-parabrahma*? Who is nearer to *mokṣa*? Lord *Kṛṣṇa* said, ‘Those who are meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma* and are living a life of *karma-yoga* are *yogavittamāḥ*.’ Here he shows that the *sannyāsīs* are not available for such a comparison. You cannot compare someone who is the end itself. Those who are capable of *akṣara-brahma-upāsana* are not ordinary people. They have accomplished what these others are trying to achieve.

*Arjuna’s* question is like the one, once posed in the court of Akbar. ‘Among the rivers in India, which is the most sacred?’ Everybody said ‘*Gaṅgā*.’ But one man named Birbal said it was not *Gaṅgā* but *Yamunā*. Everyone turned against him quoting the *śāstra* to prove that *Gaṅgā* was the most sacred. Then he reminded them that the question was, ‘Among the rivers, which is the most sacred?’ and argued that it was *Yamunā* because *Kṛṣṇa* was born and raised on its banks. Since it was sanctified by his presence, *Yamunā* is the most sacred among the rivers. When asked, ‘What about *Gaṅgā*,’ he answered, ‘Who says *Gaṅgā* is a river? *Gaṅgā* is *jñāna* itself.’ It is not a river and, therefore, cannot be compared to other rivers.

Similarly, there are many types of people doing *karma*. Some are *nāstikas*; they do not believe in God at all. There are both ethical and unethical *nāstikas*, the ethical being superior to the unethical. Then there are the believers, *āstikas*, devotees who are worshipping *Īśvara* and doing their *karmas*. This appreciation of *Īśvara* only indicates a certain maturity; so, they are superior to the *nāstikas*. Among them, some resort to *Īśvara* only when they are in distress, the *ārta-bhaktas*. Better than these are others who turn to *Bhagavān* not only in distress but also when they want to accomplish something, the *arthārthī-bhaktas*. Still better are the *karma-yogīs* who want *mokṣa*, which means they want *Īśvara*. And among these are those who not only live a life of *karma-yoga*, but also do *upāsana*, meditation, on *saguṇa-brahma*. They are the best, *yogavittamāḥ*. That is the answer given by Lord *Kṛṣṇa*.

The *sannyāsīs* he treats as *jñānīs*. The *tu* here distinguishes them from all others—*Ye paryupāsate*, those who contemplate upon *nirguṇa-brahma*, meaning they pursue *nirguṇa-brahma* by *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. Which *Brahman*? *Bhagavān* repeats the very words *Arjuna* had used in his question, *akṣara*, *avyakta*. *Akṣara* means that which is not mutable. It is never subject to change. These *sannyāsīs* contemplate upon the *akṣara-brahma*. Then it is *avyakta*, not available for objectification as an object of perception. When that is so, how can you describe it? You cannot say it is like this or that; it is *anirdeśya*, not describable. That is why all these words are negative; *akṣara*, *avyakta* etc. It is not possible to describe it because it is not an object of a given word, *aśabdagocara*. Elsewhere *Śaṅkara* says, when *Brahman* is everything and is independent of everything, what word can you use? Any word will be inadequate.

### BRAHMAN IS ANIRDEŚYA, NOT AN OBJECT OF WORDS

Even saying it is *sarva-atīta*, beyond everything, is only from the standpoint of what you see. You see a world and therefore, say that *Brahman* is beyond the world. In fact, in *Brahman* there is no such thing as being beyond the world. There is only *Brahman*. From our own empirical standpoint we use words to describe *Brahman* but in reality it is *aśabdagocara*, because it is not *śabda-vācya*, the immediate meaning of any word. Still, as the implied meaning of a word, it is *śabdagocara*. That is why it is described in *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, *sarva-vedānta-siddhānta-gocaraṃ tam agocaraṃ*, that which is not available for any kind of objectification yet revealed by all the *Upaniṣads*; it is their *siddhānta*, which is *tat tvam asi*. Through that alone you understand *Brahman*, which is not an object. Consciousness, *ātmā*, is not something in which you will see *Brahman*. It is not a quality of *ātmā*, which you did not see before and then see after *Vedānta*. It is not like seeing a modern painting. At first you see only some colours. Then someone says there is a figure there sheltered in a cave in a mountain. You still do not see anything and so, he points out the nose of the figure. Once you have seen that, you look for the eyes and so on, until gradually you see the whole figure—and the mountain too. Once part of the picture is formed, the rest is easy to see. Here the error is negated and the self recognised as one free from all forms of limitation.

Some things, though they cannot be described, can be known. Like sweetness, for example. It is *anirdeśya*. With all her eloquence, even *Sarasvatī*, the Goddess of knowledge, cannot describe sweetness. The only way to know it is to taste something sweet. It is not describable but still, it is perceptual experiential knowledge. It is not so, for *Brahman* because it cannot be objectified by the senses or by the mind. It is not an object of experience but the very *svarūpa*, the nature of all experiences and is always present. Therefore, how is *Brahman* going to be seen by the *ātmā*? *Ātmā* is *Brahman*. If *ātmā* as it obtains now, in all the periods of time, is *Brahman*, then with whatever ‘I’ you are now seeing, that ‘I’ is *Brahman*. You are not going to see *Brahman* somewhere

as something. The very 'I' that is obtaining now has to be recognised as *Brahman*. Therefore, when it is said to be *anirdeśya*, it means it is not *śabda-vācya*, the direct meaning of a word, but *śabda-lakṣya*, the implied meaning of a word. This has to be understood because, if it is totally unavailable through words, then what is the purpose of the *śāstra*? If the nature of the *śāstra* as *pramāṇa* is not understood, one will conclude that the *śāstra* is only theory and *Brahman* has to be experienced. The truth is, *Brahman* is revealed by the words of the *śāstra*, not by the immediate meaning of the words but by the implied meaning. Once you say implied meaning, one can think that it can only be implied, not directly known. But the implied meaning of a word can also give direct knowledge. In the sentence, 'The white runs—*śveto dhāvati*,' the person to whom it is addressed understands that the white horse is running. In this context, white implies white horse and the knowledge that arises is immediate.

When a word is meant to imply something, it may take a moment to recognise the implied meaning. But not when the sentence is *tat tvam asi*. It is a simple statement of fact, which removes ignorance of yourself. *Brahman* is not a thing. It is yourself, the self because of which you are studying this book. That self happens to be *Brahman*. The one who is reading the book is *Brahman*. *Śāstra* makes you recognise that 'I the reader' is *Brahman*.

And this *Brahman* is *avyakta*, not manifest as an object of any *pramāṇa*. Even *vedānta-pramāṇa* does not make it an object, though through *vedānta-pramāṇa*, *avyaktaṃ brahma* can be immediately known. Upon this *Brahman*, these *sannyāsīs* contemplate, *avyaktaṃ paryupāsate*.

## WHAT IS NIRGUĀ-BRAHMA-UPĒSANA

*Śaṅkara* gives the meaning for *upāsana* in general. *Upa* means near, *āsana*, means sitting, so, *upāsana* is 'sitting near.' What is 'sitting near?' The mind, *manaḥ*. Near what? Whatever is the object of meditation, *upāsya*. The point is, it is purely mental. Mentally sitting near or dwelling upon the object of meditation is *upāsana*. To define it further, *Śaṅkara* says *upāsana* is to be done without transgressing what is said in the *śāstra*, *yathā-śāstram*. It encompasses neither less nor more than what the *śāstra* says. By mentally objectifying the object of meditation, in keeping with the *śāstra*'s unfoldment of it, you become very near the object of meditation. This is nothing but visualising and dwelling upon that object of meditation.

It is not easy to maintain a visualisation because thoughts are constantly changing. Even so, the object of each thought is the same, the object of meditation, *upāsya*. It is like the flow of oil, *tailadhārāvāt*. Just as you see the same oil at any given point, here too you see the same object of meditation in any given *vṛtti* is even though the *vṛtti* is changing. And it keeps flowing for a length of time.

Here, the *upāsya* is *pratyagātmā* as *paraṃ brahma*. The contemplation of these *sannyāsīs* is *aham brahmāsmi*. For them, *Brahman*, the *upāsya*, is non separate from the *pratyagātmā*. Thus they sit with the mind absorbed in *paraṃ brahma*, the implied meaning of *satya*, the implied meaning of *jñāna*, the implied meaning of *ananta*. It is meditation upon oneself as *akṣaram brahma*, which is *anirdeśya* and also *avyakta*. These are all negations. At the same time it is the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. Positively it is *satyam jñānam anantam*. If you understand all these, you understand *Brahman*. Upon this *Brahman* these *sannyāsīs* contemplate, *paryupāsate*.

For a *sannyāsī*, the mind dwells upon *paraṃ brahma* by *vicāra*. The object of meditation is for him, the object of understanding. It is not exactly meditation because *Brahman* is not something that is meditated upon as an object for some result. Understanding that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, '*paryupāsate*' has an entirely different meaning. It is seeing again what has been shown through the words of the *śāstra*. *Śravaṇa* becomes *upāsana*, *manana* becomes *upāsana*, as does *nididhyāsana*. Understanding the *śāstra* is *śravaṇa*. To eliminate any doubt, we have *manana* and to remove the *viparīta-bhāvanā*, the opposite attitudes or the *pratibandhakas* because of which there may be difficulty in understanding or in enjoying one's understanding, we have *nididhyāsana*. The word *upāsana* is used here for all three of these. But the sense of it is altogether different. It is still valid though because there is a *pratyaya*, a kind of cognition involved in dwelling upon *Brahman*. Yesterday's class was about *Brahman*; today's class is about *Brahman*; and tomorrow it is again about *Brahman*. Even while eating, everything is *Brahman*, *brahmārpaṇam brahmahaviḥ*... This is how the *sannyāsī* spends his time, thinking about it, *tat-cintanam*, talking about it, *tat-kathanam*, and sharing whatever he knows with others, *anyonyam tat-prabodhanam*. This is called *brahma-abhyāsa*. Because of this kind of commitment to one thing alone it is said *paryupāsate*, they are always meditating. Only the *sannyāsīs* can do this; others have other things to do.

*Pari* is prefixed to *upāsate* giving it the sense of 'totally committed.' Generally the word *upāsana* is used only for *saguṇa-brahma*, *Īśvara* with attributes like omniscience and so on, or the Lord in the form of a particular *devatā*. That is a true object of meditation. *Akṣaram nirguṇam brahma*, on the other hand, is to be known, *jñeya*. Those who meditate, *paryupāsate*, upon this *paraṃ brahma* should be understood as those who pursue the knowledge of *paraṃ brahma* with *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*.

## THESE ARE NOT BRAHMAN'S GUŪAS BUT LAKṢAŪAS

All these words describing *Brahman* are not to distinguish it from the other '*Brahmans*' but to define it. They are therefore, *lakṣaṇas*. Linguistically they are

adjectives, *viśeṣaṇāni*, but functionally they are *lakṣaṇāni*, revealing words. This is so, because there is no second *Brahman*.

*Sarvatragam* means it goes everywhere, *sarvatra gacchati iti sarvatragam*. It obtains everywhere. *Śaṅkara* says it is all pervasive like space, *vyomavad vyāpī*. Everything in creation is pervaded by space but it does not pervade consciousness. Consciousness, however, pervades space. It has its being in *caitanya-ātmā*, which is *Brahman*. Therefore, there is nothing whatsoever separate from *Brahman*, it being the cause and all this an effect, an apparent, *mithyā*, effect. Even space has its being in consciousness alone; it is entirely dependent upon it. Its presence and absence are entirely dependent upon consciousness, whereas consciousness, *ātmā*, is not dependent upon anything, even time and space. Therefore, it is all-pervasive.

And it is *acintyam*, not an object of thought. *Brahman* cannot be objectified; it is that in which all objects have their being. A thought cannot objectify *Brahman*; *Brahman* is the truth of the very thought, though it is independent of thought. Being the *svarūpa* of the thought, *Brahman* is *acintya*, not an object of any thought. *Śaṅkara* says what is accessible by the sense organs can be thought of by the mind; because *akṣaram brahma* is the opposite of that, it cannot be thought of. It is not only not available as an object of sense perception, even to the *sākṣī*, the witness, it is not accessible. Why? Because the witness is *Brahman*. If it is not available in any way as an object, how am I going to know *Brahman*? Anything that is known is an object of thought, like a pot. No knowledge is possible without a thought objectifying the object in order to know it.

## IF BRAHMAN IS ACINTYA, HOW IS ONE TO KNOW BRAHMAN?

The argument is that anything that is known, is an object of thought because of the fact that it is known, like a pot. A pot is known and it is an object of thought. True. The extension is that *Brahman* has to be known and therefore, has to become an object of thought. *Brahman* does have to be known; otherwise why study *śāstra*? Why undertake any spiritual pursuit if it cannot be known? If knowledge of *Brahman* liberates but *Brahman* cannot be known, how can I pursue that knowledge? It is like knowing that a rabbit's horn will cure cancer. It may, but I cannot start searching for a rabbit's horn when I know there is no such thing. Similarly, if knowledge of *Brahman* is going to liberate me from *saṃsāra*, but *Brahman* is not available for knowledge because it is *acintya*, how can I pursue it?

It is important to understand that *acintya* means 'not an object of a thought.' But it is yourself, the very *svarūpa* of the thought. Being yourself, it is self-evident; all that is needed is to remove the erroneous notions you have about yourself. *Ātmā* is not an object to be seen, but the subject mistaken for something else. That mistake has to be corrected. There is a particular *vṛtti*, which can give rise to the knowledge 'I am

*Brahman.* It assumes the very form of *ātmā* so, that there is no subject-object relationship. In every piece of knowledge there is a subject-object division, a knower and an object known. But here there is no such division. The subject is involved in this knowledge and not as an object. At the same time, the *vṛtti* is necessary for only that can destroy ignorance. It cannot be destroyed by consciousness. If it could, I would have no ignorance.

This is a very important thing to understand. *Svarūpa- caitanyam na ajñāna-virodhī*, consciousness, which is the nature of *ātmā*, is not opposed to ignorance—neither self-ignorance nor any other ignorance. If you are ignorant of the Chinese language, you are conscious of it but that consciousness does not affect the ignorance. That is why your self-ignorance can continue indefinitely. What is opposed to ignorance is *vṛtti-jñāna*, knowledge that takes place in the form of a *vṛtti*.

It is said, *manasā eva anudraṣṭavyam*, only by the mind is it to be known. At the same time *manasā acintyam*, it cannot be thought of by the mind. We have two statements, which together amount to saying, it has to be known by the mind even though it is not accessible by the mind. What does it mean?

It has to be known by the mind alone but no mind can ever know it. In fact it is true and it is explainable. Such statements are not meant to paralyze the reasoning like a Zen Koan<sup>1</sup> but to reveal the truth. Being the subject, it is not an object of your thought. Yet to know it, the mind must have a *vṛtti*, which destroys ignorance with reference to *Brahman*. It does not have to reveal it because every thought is revealed by that *Brahman*.

The mind has the capacity to reveal an object and its presence is necessary to know an object. Without it, there are two possibilities. Either you would see everything at the same time or nothing at all. But you do always see some given thing. Therefore, you require a mind, which has *vyañjakatva*, the capacity to reveal an object. It has to undergo a particular change to objectify a given object. With reference to *ātmā* this is not the case because *ātmā* is the one whose consciousness is enjoyed by the mind. For *ātmā* to be revealed, you do not require a means of knowledge to give rise to a thought that reveals it. The thought is seen because of *ātmā*. You are always self-evident, the only one whose existence does not require proof. If the self also requires proof, to whom is the proof to be given? There is no other self. *Ātmā* is the only thing in this creation, which is self-evident; every other thing has to become evident to the self for its existence to be proved. Because it is self-evident it does not need to be illumined; it is the illuminator. All that is required is to remove the ignorance of the self-evident self being *Brahman*—*satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. The removal of ignorance occurs in the mind and therefore, it is proper to say that it has to be known by the mind. At the same

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<sup>1</sup> Koan is a riddle in the form of paradox used in Zen Buddhism as an aid to meditation and a means of gaining intuitive knowledge.

time, it is not an object of the mind. Paradoxes like these are revealing. They are not meant to stun your reasoning.

## BRAHMAN IS KŪASTHA

*Kūṭastham*—Śaṅkara gives a meaning based on the commonly understood meaning of *kūṭa*, which is false as seen in such expressions as *kūṭarūpakam*, false testimony. Something that looks appealing externally but on closer examination is found to be otherwise is *kūṭarūpaka*; it has a false appearance. False testimony appears real when it is being presented but is, in fact, different from the truth. That is *kūṭa*.

*Kūṭastha* means that which abides in *kūṭa*, *kūṭe tiṣṭhati iti kūṭasthaḥ*. What is *kūṭa* here is *māyā*. The witness of *māyā*, that which is behind it is *kūṭasthaḥ ātmā*. This is *Brahman*, the basis or truth, *adhiṣṭhāna*, of *māyā* and the witness, *adhyakṣa*. Elsewhere<sup>1</sup> it is said *māyāṅ tu prakṛtiṅ vidyāt māyīnaṅ tu maheśvaram*, may you understand that the immediate cause (of everything) is *māyā* and the one who wields this *māyā* is the Lord. As the cause, *māyā* is all-pervasive. But it does not exist apart from *Brahman*, which means *Brahman* is necessarily all-pervasive. Because *māyā* has no independent existence apart from it, *Brahman* is the ultimate cause. Even though *māyā* appears to be real, when you look into it, it has no existence at all. It is *kūṭa*. And it is also known as *avyākṛta*, undifferentiated or unmanifest. *Īśvara* himself says, ‘My *māyā* is difficult to cross,’ *mama māyā duratyayā*. In that *māyā*, which is *kūṭa*, abides *Brahman*, *kūṭe sthitaṅ kūṭastham*. The use of the seventh case, ‘in *kūṭa*’ has to be properly understood. When we say there is water in a pot, the pot is the container and the water the contained. Can we also say that *Brahman* is contained in *māyā* where *māyā* is the basis, *ādihāra*, and *Brahman*, the based *ādheya*? If *Brahman* is based upon *māyā*, it becomes *nāma-rūpa*, one of the objects in the creation. So, the meaning here is that which obtains in the *kūṭa*, *māyā* as the *adhyakṣa*, as the rope obtains in the snake or the gold in the chain. *Brahman* is the very basis, the truth of the *kūṭa*.

Alternatively, Śaṅkara says it is in *kūṭa* like *rāśi*, a sign of the zodiac. The *rāśis* are fixed, even though the planets keep moving. From the standpoint of these stationary constellations, the movements of the planets are observed. Just as the *rāśi* is the stable basis from which all the planetary changes are measured, *Brahman* is the stable basis upon which this ceaselessly changing *māyā* is based.

Or *kūṭa* can mean anvil. Like an anvil it remains, *kūṭavat tiṣṭhati iti kūṭasthaḥ*. An anvil on which the blacksmith hammers pieces of heated iron into different shapes remains unchanged. Under the blow of the hammer, the shape of the anvil does not visibly change but it allows all changes to take place upon it. *Kūṭastha-ātmā* is the basis of *māyā*. It is all pervasive and therefore, *acala*, it does not move, *na calati iti acalaḥ*.

<sup>1</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 4-10

There is no place for it to go. Then naturally it is *dhruva*, eternal because being *kūṭastha* it does not undergo any change. Not bound by time or place, it is always the same, *nitya*.

## HOW DO THEY MEDITATE ON NIRGUŪA-BRĀHMA?

Further, what do those who pursue *akṣaraṃ brahma* do and what happens to them? The pursuit of *akṣara-brahma* includes contemplation upon *Brahman*, for which one requires a certain disposition. *Sanniyamya indriyagrāmam* means having complete mastery over the group of organs. *Indriyagrāma* includes sense organs, organs of action and the mind. *Sanniyamana* here is not only *dama*, disciplining the organs of action and perception, but also *śama*, a certain mastery over one's emotions and patterns of thinking. *Śama* must be included because we are talking about contemplation upon *akṣara-brahma*, which requires inner composure. To acquire that one must have lived a disciplined contented life and cultivated certain values and attitudes, which will bring about, among other things, an equanimity towards all beings, *sarvatra sama-buddhiḥ*.

Those who have these characteristics and are pursuing *akṣara-brahma*, *Bhagavān* says, 'They gain Me alone,' *te prāpnuvanti mām eva*. They gain the Lord who was described in the previous verse as all-pervasive, *sarvatra* always connected to all things, *kūṭastha*, the basis of everything, and *acala*, motionless.

These words describe the content of their pursuit. But they still have to live their lives. It is not that they always think about the *kūṭastha-ātmā*. They have to relate to people and the situations they find themselves in are not always pleasant even if they are *sannyāsīs*. They may be committed to *akṣara-brahma* but they still have to face the world. A *sannyāsī* has to meet various situations and take care of the physical body. This verse shows his discipline, by the phrase, *sanniyamya indriyagrāmam*, and his response to various situations, by *sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ*.

*Sarvatra* can mean in all places or at all times. There are people who have the same disposition, *samabuddhayaḥ*, in any situation, *sarvatra*. To the various situations in life, the mind has different responses. Its nature is to change. So, thoughts, attitudes, and moods are constantly in a flux. A certain situation upsets you, another elates you, another depresses or makes you angry. This is the lot of every person. But those who have undergone the discipline of a life of *karma-yoga* are not subject to these vagaries of the mind. They are *sama-buddhis*, they maintain their composure in any situation. The mind has different processes of thinking, which in themselves do not cause any problem. The problem lies only in being subject to reaction. *Sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ* are those who have neutralised *rāgadveśas* by living a prayerful life. *Īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi* is the distinguishing feature of *karma-yoga*. Through this one can achieve relative composure, *sama-buddhi*.



Further, with regard to their responses they are *sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ*, those who delight in the well-being of all creatures. This takes a lot of maturity. Generally people do not rejoice in the happiness of others. These people, however, are not at all mean-spirited. On the contrary, they have compassion. They not only rejoice in the welfare of others, they are disposed to bringing it about. Though they themselves may not get involved in the practical help a person requires, they will always do what they can to arrange for it and will naturally pray. That prayer itself makes a person *sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ*. Such people live a mature, compassionate life, which is very important for enjoying the mind required for contemplation.

*Bhagavān* mentions these qualities here to point out that one has to acquire them.

Knowing this *akṣara-brahma*, they reach 'Me' alone, *Bhagavān* says, *te mām eva prāpnuvanti*. Or, shifting the emphasis, they alone reach 'Me,' *te eva mām prāpnuvanti*. They have gone through the process of *karma-yoga* and have a sufficiently prepared mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, to know and therefore, gain 'Me.' It is such people only, *te eva*, who through knowledge gain *akṣara-brahma* without any let or hindrance. Their *viveka* is mature, so, nothing will stop them from reaching 'Me.' Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, there is nothing to say about them, *na tu teṣāṃ vaktavyaṃ kiñcit*.

Even to say they reach 'Me' is meaningless because where is the question of reaching? Is there any gap between the knowledge and the gain? No. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has already said, 'My vision is that the one who knows (Me), however, is indeed Myself,' *jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam*. It cannot be otherwise. So, these people cannot be compared to the *karma-yogīs* who meditate upon the *viśvarūpa*. One cannot be said to be better in terms of being closer to *mokṣa* because *akṣara-brahma-upāsakas* are 'Myself'; they are already free, *muktāḥ*. That is why *Śaṅkara* says, 'There is nothing to say about them.'

If this is so, why did *Bhagavān* say these *karma-yogīs* who are meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma* are *yuktātmās*, the most exalted, and then say that it is the *sannyāsīs* who are pursuing the *akṣara-brahma* that reach him? Though he said the *karma-yogīs* are the most exalted, he did not say that they reach him. Is reaching him less than doing what is required to reach him? The *karma-yogīs* are just given a nice name, *yuktātmās*, and left to labour at their *karma-yoga* while the others are quietly with *Bhagavān*. Working so hard they are still not reaching *Bhagavān* while the *sannyāsīs*, simply sitting under a tree are getting everything. What is this seeming inequity?

From the standpoint of those *nirguṇa-brahma*? who have to reach *Bhagavān*, the *karma-yogīs* who are doing *upāsana* on *saguṇa-brahma* are *yuktātmās*. The characteristics described in this verse are not acquired without a lot of *karma-yoga*. If one has them, one is almost a *jñānī*. Where is the person who is not bothered by any

situation, who is always composed? So, among those who are pursuing, in terms of qualification, *adhikāritva*, these people are *yuktātmās*.

If there is a distance to be covered and both a bicycle and a bullock-cart are available, which is the best means? It all depends. If the person who is asking is lame or does not know how to cycle, a bicycle, even though it is faster, is useless to him. For him, the bullock cart is better. Then too, it depends on the conditions. If the road is a two-foot wide mountain track on the edge of a cliff, both the bicycle and the bullock cart are of no use. Therefore, there is no such thing as 'the best.' It depends on who is fit for what.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥५॥

*kleśo'dhikatarasteṣāmyaktāsaktacetasām*

*avyaktā hi gatirduḥkhaṃ dehavadbhiravāpyate*

Verse 5

क्लेशः *kleśaḥ* — affliction; अधिकतरः *adhikatarāḥ* — greater still; तेषाम् *teṣām* — for those; अव्यक्त-आसक्त-चेतसाम् *avyaktāsakta-cetasām* — whose minds are committed to what cannot be objectified; अव्यक्ता हि गतिः *avyaktā hi gatiḥ* — because an end, which cannot be objectified; अवाप्यते *avāpyate* — is reached; दुःखम् *duḥkham* — with difficulty; देहवद्भिः *dehavadbhiḥ* — by those who are identified with the body

The affliction is greater still for those whose minds are committed to what cannot be objectified because an end, which cannot be objectified is reached with difficulty by those who are identified with the body.

## AVYAKTA-BRAHMA-DHYĒNA IS DIFFICULT

*Kleśaḥ adhikatarāḥ teṣām*, they have still greater affliction, these *akṣara-brahma-upāsakas*. Greater than what? Something can be said to be more difficult only when what is difficult is established. The *karma-yogīs* who are meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma* have *kleśa*, affliction. Painful effort, both physical and emotional, is involved. As a *karma-yogī* you cannot always do the things you like. *Dharma* and *adharmā*, not what is convenient or more pleasing, are the criteria. Very often there is a conflict between *dharma* and *rāga*, which causes affliction in the mind, *manaḥ-kleśa*. Such mental distress can result in physical affliction as well.

Now, let us look at the meditation of a *karma-yogī*, *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*, which has been said to be upon the *viśvarūpa*. It is all very well to say this, but how are you to meditate upon *saguṇa-brahma*? If you visualise any one thing, all the others are left out. If you think of the sun and stars, everything below them is omitted. By bringing all the objects in creation to mind one by one, you cannot think of the cosmic form. And

there are so many things unknown to you. That is why we choose one form and invoke all forms in that. If you know that everything is included in the cosmic form, that is all you need to know for *upāsana*. Even keeping the mind focused on one form is difficult. If you think of *Viṣṇu*'s feet, that is good enough. From the head you come to the feet and stay there. But the mind does not stay there so, keeping it there is *kleśa*.

Even though there are great difficulties for the *karma-yogī* who is *matkarmakṛt*, who is totally committed to *Bhagavān*, the difficulties of those committed to the pursuit of *akṣara-brahma* are even greater, *kleśaḥ adhikatarah*. Here *Bhagavān* uses the comparative affix, *tara*.

### IDENTIFICATION WITH THE BODY IS AN OBSTACLE FOR NIRGUŪA-BRAHMA-DHYĒNA

The affliction is even greater, because they have identification with the body, *deha-abhimāna*. This means their *ātmā-anātma-viveka* is not complete. *Sannyāsīs* cannot be contemplative if they lack *viveka*. Without it their pursuit will be improper because of confusion about what they are doing. *Dehavat* means the one who has a body. Everybody has a body, so, what it means here is those who have identification with the body. For them, meditation upon *akṣara-brahma* is almost impossible. Meditation here means contemplation, preceded by *śravaṇa* and *manana*. All these become very difficult. Why is there more difficulty? Because the *sannyāsī* is trying to give up his identification with the body. What could be more difficult?

They are called *avyakta-āsakta-cetasah*; their minds are totally committed, *āsamantāt saktam*, to the pursuit of *avyakta*, that which is not available for objectification. They have given up the life of *karma-yoga* and taken to a life of renunciation for the sake of the *akṣaraṃ-brahma*. That means they should be ready for it. If it is difficult for *sannyāsīs* to contemplate upon a self that cannot be objectified, how much more difficult will it be for *karma-yogīs*?

The end they want to accomplish, *gati*, is not available for objectification, *avyakta*. This is the *svarūpa*, the nature, of *ātmā*, which was mentioned in *Arjuna*'s question, *avyaktaṃ paryupāsate*. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has answered him using the same word, *avyakta*. This ultimate end is reached, *avāpyate*, *Bhagavān* says, with difficulty, *duḥkham*. Why is it so, difficult? It is being accomplished by those who are identified with the body, *dehavadbhiḥ*. This shows it is to be accomplished right now, here. You are *Brahman* right now. In fact, it is not even an end that has to be accomplished.

Something that is to be accomplished, like climbing Mount Everest, can be done with the proper equipment and effort. But here, it is already accomplished. The self is *Brahman*. It is simply a question of knowing it. The difficulty is this *deha-ātma-abhimāna*, which includes identification with the *sūkṣma-śarīra*. When there is this

identification with the body, there is the notion ‘I am a mortal’ and consequently the fear of death, the greatest of all fears. Whatever fears a person may have, they all pale in the face of death. Even an avowed miser will spend everything he has just to save his life. This fear of death can be reduced by a life of *karma-yoga*. But it can only go completely when he knows for certain that he is not the body; when he has no *dehābhimāna*.

Even if he has come to understand this from the *śāstra*, there seems to be a parallel line of thinking, which has nothing to do with knowledge. This is true of any knowledge that contradicts an established pattern. Suppose you know that there is no value in getting angry. Does that ensure that you will never get angry again? In spite of knowing, anger comes. Who wants depression, sorrow or any other mental pain? Even with reference to simple knowledge of *dharma* and *adharma*, there are two parallel lines. Certain patterns of thinking just overwhelm your knowledge. When you have a certain awareness of what is proper and improper, why can you not maintain that? Those patterns of thinking do not consult your wisdom. They seem to belong to another reality. This is *jñāna* with obstructions, *sapratibandhaka-jñāna*.

Giving up *deha-abhimāna*, even relatively, means having an appreciation that everything belongs to *Īśvara*, including this body. The individual, *vyāpti*, is included in the total, *samaṣṭi*. Consciously relinquishing the sense of ownership, *mamatva*, is the attitude of a *karma-yogī*. Because of this, the *dehātma-buddhi* is reduced and from there knowledge can be gained. If a person has no insight into the *svarūpa* of himself so that his *dehātma-buddhi* is complete, trying to meditate upon *akṣaraṃ-brahma* is not going to help. Since it is a thing to be known, if he is not able to see at the time of teaching, how is he going to meditate? To know that you are *Brahman*, you must be able to relax, suspending all notions about yourself, and just expose yourself to the teaching. Only then can you say ‘I am *Brahman*.’ Otherwise the question will remain, ‘How can I be *Brahman*?’

Therefore, with difficulty alone this can be accomplished by one who has identification with the body, *dehavadbhiḥ*. What does he mean ‘with difficulty?’ In fact, as long as there is identification with the body, it cannot be accomplished. Only when *deha-abhimāna* is completely given up does one discover identity with *Brahman*. It is not even something that you can give up. It is a fact that has to be known.

When he says it is difficult, he means that you have to mature. That takes time; it cannot be done by will alone. Suppose a banana has to ripen, you cannot force it to do so. Given time, it will ripen by itself; you need not do anything. Similarly, the maturity required to gain this knowledge requires time – and conscious living. Going through experiences with an attitude of *karma-yoga*, the *deha-abhimāna* lessens. But it takes its own time. From this it is very clear why he called those *karma-yogīs*, *yogavittamāḥ*, the most exalted. Their elevation is not in their superiority but in the propriety of their pursuit. It is not easy for people who are unprepared to contemplate all the time. In fact,

it is not possible. *Kṛṣṇa* is restating here what he said in the fifth Chapter. ‘Renunciation of action is difficult to accomplish, *Arjuna*, without *karma-yoga*. Whereas one who is capable of reasoning, who is committed to a life of *karma-yoga*, gains *Brahman* quickly’<sup>1</sup>

Among all those doing *karma*, the *karma-yogīs* who meditate upon *saguṇa-brahma* are *yuktātmās*, the most exalted. The *akṣara-brahma-upāsakas* are to be left out of this comparison. They are *jñānīs* who are not different from *Bhagavān*, *jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam*. They have reached the end the *karma-yogīs* are striving for; so, they are not eligible for this comparison. Only similars can be compared. It is legitimate to compare various ends but not the end with the means. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* mentions only the *karma-yogīs* who are *saguṇa-brahma-upāsakas* as *yogavittamas*.

*Dehābhimāna*, identifying oneself, *ātmā*, as the body is definitely not easy to give up. This super-imposition of the body, which is *anātmā*, upon *ātmā* is due to a failure to recognise the nature of *ātmā*. Therefore, the clear recognition of the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*, *pratyagātmāsiddhi* is very important in understanding the teaching. Unless the meaning of the word *tvam*, you, in the sentence, *ītat tvam asi*— that you are,’ is properly recognised, it is not possible to understand the meaning of this sentence. ‘That’ here is the cause of the creation, which is equated in the sentence to ‘you.’ If you know the essential nature of ‘I,’ the equation will become evident. If not, the equation will not mean anything. When I say, ‘you are the Lord, the cause of creation,’ if the ‘you’ is not properly recognised, the equation will be contradictory to your understanding of yourself based upon your experience. Because of *deha-abhimāna*, you consider yourself mortal, happy and unhappy, isolated and a product—not the author of everything.

Therefore, by those who have this identification with the body, it is difficult to accomplish, *dehavadbhiḥ duḥkham avāpyate*. With a *karma-yoga-buddhi*, the mind is prepared for the recognition. Once *pratyagātmā* is at least recognised by one who is a devotee, the recognition of the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* can follow.

Introducing the next verse, *Śaṅkara* says that later in this chapter, the behaviour of the wise who know *akṣara-brahma* is going to be described. Now we turn our attention to the *karma-yogīs* who meditate.

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि सन्न्यस्य मत्पराः ।  
 अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥६॥  
*ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannasya matparāḥ*  
*ananyenaiva yogena māṃ dhyāyanta upāsate*

Verse 6

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 7-19

तु *tu* — however; ये *ye* — those who; मत्पराः (सन्तः) *matparāḥ (santaḥ)*— being the ones for whom I am the ultimate end; सर्वाणि कर्माणि *sarvāṇi karmāṇi* — all actions; मयि *mayi* — in Me; सन्न्यस्य *sannyasya* — giving up; अनन्येन एव योगेन *ananyena eva yogena* — with a commitment; ध्यायन्तः (माम्) *dhyāyantaḥ (mām)* — meditating upon Me; माम् उपासते *mām upāsate* — worship Me

However, those meditators being the ones for whom I am the ultimate end, giving up all actions unto Me, with a commitment in which there is indeed no other, meditating upon Me, worship Me.

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।

भवामि न चिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥७॥

*teṣāmahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṃsārasāgarāt*

*bhavāmi na cirātpārtha mayyāveśitacetāsām*

Verse 7

तेषाम् *teṣām* — for those; मयि *mayi* — in Me; आवेशित-चेतसाम् *āveśita-cetasām* — whose minds are absorbed; अहम् *aham* — I; न चिरात् *na cirāt* — not after a long time (very soon); मृत्यु-संसार-सागरात् *mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt* — from the ocean of *saṃsāra* fraught with death; समुद्धर्ता *samuddhartā* — the liberator; भवामि *bhavāmi* — become; पार्थ *pārtha* — Arjuna

For those whose minds are absorbed in Me, Arjuna, before long I become the liberator from the ocean of *saṃsāra* fraught with death.

Whenever we present two verses together, it is because both are required to complete the idea. As the third and fourth verses are read together, so, are the sixth and seventh.

*Tu*, whereas, is to distinguish the *karma-yogīs* from the *akṣara-brahma-upāsakas*. *Ye matparāḥ*, Śaṅkara explains as those for whom I am the ultimate goal. *Īśvara*, the Lord, is everything for them, like the master is for the servant. By fulfilling the Lord's mandates they express their commitment to him. *Sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya*, consigning all *karmas* to 'Me,' *Parameśvara*, they meditate upon Me. There are two types of activities, religious and secular. Religious activities can be rituals or prayers that are enjoined by the *śruti*, called *śrauta-karmas* or by *smṛti*, called *smārta-karmas*. Then there are secular activities, *laukika-karmas*, daily duties, which imply activities dealing with the world. When all these *karmas* are done giving them up to *Īśvara*, *mayi sannyasya*, *laukika* activities, cease to be *laukika*. Because he says *mayi*, 'in Me,' *sannyasya* does not mean true renunciation of *karmas* by knowledge but doing them with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*, for the sake of *Īśvara*.

How do you dedicate action to *Bhagavān*? As we saw before, it is acting in accordance with *dharma* and *adharma*, right and wrong, not in accordance with *rāga* and *dveṣa*. As human beings we are endowed with the faculty of choice. We can choose to act or not to act in keeping with the commonly accepted norms. Those norms are not created by a human being. They are part of the creation; therefore, conforming to them is seeing oneself as not separate from *Īśvara*. *Dharma*, like other natural laws, is not a visible mandate from *Īśvara*. For example, we do not see the law of gravitation, only its manifestation in a falling object. Similarly, we do not see *dharma* but it is manifest in our natural urges like not wanting to be hurt. From that we understand that non-injury is *dharma*. This is why it is said that conscience is God. Conscience is nothing but *dharma* and *adharma* manifest as our own common sense appreciation of right and wrong. Conformity to that as *Īśvara* is worship. This has to be said because we also have likes and dislikes, which need not conform to our sense of *dharma*. When they are made subordinate to *dharma* and *adharma*, one becomes a *karma-yogī*.

Earlier *Bhagavān* said *svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyah paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*, death in one's own *dharma* is better; the *dharma* of another is fraught with fear, and *tayoḥ vaśaṃ na āgacchet*, do not come under their (*rāga-dveṣas*) spell. All these words reveal exactly what is being said here.

## LORD IS THEIR GOAL

Why is it worship? Because they are '*matparāh*,' their commitment is to *Īśvara*, nothing else. He is the ultimate end, not the last end but the end. These people want *mokṣa* for the sake of *mokṣa* and have ascertained that *Īśvara* is *mokṣa-svarūpa*. They know that they have to gain knowledge of *Īśvara*; that is their ultimate as well as their immediate end. If it is the only end, he will become a *sannyāsī*. If he realises he has to prepare himself for that end by gaining *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, he will become a *karma-yogī*. To neutralise *rāga-dveṣa*, he lives a life of *karma-yoga*. But the end and the pursuit of knowledge with that end in view are common to both.

It was said earlier, *yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvā ātma-śuddhaye*, the (*karma*) *yogīs* perform action giving up attachment (to results) for the purification of the mind. From this it is clear how important it is to have determined what one is seeking, *puruṣārtha-niścaya*. Everything that was said earlier about the fundamental problem continues to be relevant throughout these pages. In the thirteenth chapter when the values leading to this knowledge are told, the last value, *tattva jñāna-artha-darśanam*, is also the first value. Everything is done keeping the end result, *mokṣa*, in view. Otherwise, this gets postponed because there are always things that require immediate attention. It is endless. Unless we really know what we want, *mokṣa* will wait while we attend to hundreds of different things. Thus we focus our attention on our pursuit, the ultimate end.

Those who have ascertained this are ‘*matparāḥ*.’ Their ultimate end is *Īśvara* and everything becomes an aid, *sahakāri*, to that. If someone is cooking you may find him filling a vessel with water, cutting vegetables, clearing the counter and so on. None of these actions is cooking, which consists of putting something on the fire. Still they are all included in the act of cooking because they are connected to the main action. Similarly, if the main end is decided, anything you do in your life is connected to that.

It is not unlike the life of a scientist. Once he is gripped with a problem, his mind is committed to that. He also eats, showers, and does varieties of things, but the topic of his research is always in his mind. He does not turn his attention to it at one particular time. It is always there. Once you are committed to the pursuit of something, everything else gets connected to that. Here, all the activities of those who are ‘*matparāḥ*’ become connected to *mokṣa*. In doing *karma* they do not act according to *rāga-dveṣa* but in conformity with *dharmā-adharma* recognizing *Īśvara* as the law of *karma*. Whatever their activity may be, they never lose sight of their goal, *mokṣa*.

### THEY MEDITATE UPON ME AND WORSHIP ME

*Mām dhyāyantaḥ upāsate*, the meditators meditate upon ‘Me,’ the Lord who is the cause of everything and who is in the form of this entire world. Besides doing *karma* with *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*, they are meditating upon *saguṇa-brahma*. How?

With a commitment in which there is no other, *ananyena yogena*, meaning nothing other than *Parameśvara*. Other than the *viśvarūpa*, there is no other resting place, *ālambana*, for the mind. Because of their love for the *svarūpa*, they are able to do *karma-yoga*. Their daily prayer etc., are also for effective *dhyāna*. Since they are *karma-yogīs*, naturally *Īśvara* is in their mind. In their meditation there is nothing other than *Parameśvara*. The *vṛtti* will keep on changing, as thoughts do, but the Lord will be there in all of them. Even if he is invoked in a particular form, that too is *Īśvara*. For those who meditate in this form dedicating all their *karmas* to ‘Me,’ committed to ‘Me’ alone as the end, there is nothing other than Lord.

### THE LORD IS THEIR DELIVERER

For such people, the Lord says, ‘I become their deliverer,’ *teṣāṃ ahaṃ samuddhartā bhavāmi*. What are they delivered from? From the ocean of *saṃsāra*, which is fraught with death, *mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt*. This is a compound in, which the middle word *yukta* is missing and is called a *madhyama-pada-lopa-samāsa*. The complete compound is *mṛtyu-yukta-saṃsāra-sāgarāt*. From that ocean of *saṃsāra* fraught with death Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘I am their saviour.’ He is the one who is able to pull them out of this ocean by his grace. They are devotees after all and through their prayerful life they gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, a visible result, *dṛṣṭa-phala*. Besides that, there is *puṇya*, the *adrṣṭa-phala*, which will provide them with every opportunity



to be exposed to the *upadeśa*, teaching. They earn their grace, which provides them with everything necessary to know that *Bhagavān's ātmā* is their own *ātmā*. Thus the equation *tat tvam asi* becomes clear.

Their meditation is upon *Īśvara* and all actions are dedicated to *Īśvara* as we saw. For those who are living such a committed life, the Lord is *samuddhartā*, the one who delivers. When *Kṛṣṇa* uses *aham* in the *Gītā*, it is as *Īśvara*, not the historical *Kṛṣṇa*, son of *Devakī*. Whether he existed or not historically does not matter. We need only understand what he teaches here, which is that every form is *Īśvara's* form.

When the Lord says he is the saviour, whom does he save and from what? These *jīvas* who are devotees are saved by *Īśvara* from the ocean of *saṃsāra*, which is fraught with death. *Saṃsāra* is a life of continuous becoming, a time-bound life. Why is it likened to an ocean? *Śaṅkara* says, because it is difficult to cross. An ocean is vast and treacherous; so, is *saṃsāra*. To get out of it, therefore, is not easy. Unless *ajñāna*, ignorance, is removed, there is no possibility of crossing *saṃsāra*. Though the elimination of ignorance cannot be accomplished by any attempt, an essential thing in its removal is preparedness, which does require effort. Whether you want to remove ignorance of electronics or calculus, you have to reach a point from where you can understand the subject being taught. For that you require proper effort and perseverance. There is no difficulty in gaining knowledge other than becoming prepared. That preparedness is given by *Bhagavān*. How?

As a result of his *upāsana*, *Īśvara* will provide him with the capacity to apply his mind and for his *karma* he will gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Both are required and each enhances the other. The act of meditation produces a certain tranquility with, which one can better appreciate the laws of *karma*. That appreciation brings about further composure and changes in attitude, which manifest as mature behaviour and disposition. A mere technique cannot do this; it can only give you application. Even a criminal can be very single-minded. When he shoots someone, his concentration is excellent. That means he has application. *Rāvana* had enormous application but no *karma-yoga*, the thing that makes one mature. Mere capacity for application or tranquility is not enough. Even someone who is incapable of thinking can be very tranquil. For this knowledge to work, one requires the composure that accompanies maturity. That implies a lot of neutralization of *rāga-dveṣas*, likes and dislikes. For those who live a life of *karma-yoga* and also meditate upon *Īśvara*, there is an immediate result. Doing what is to be done, even the unpleasant, they enjoy freedom from conflict. Before doing what is unpleasant, there will be conflict because *rāga-dveṣa* can be contrary to what is to be done. Being *karma-yogīs*, they dismiss the *rāga-dveṣa* and follow *dharma* as *Īśvara-svarūpa*. Thereby they are free from further conflict. But when you act according to *rāga-dveṣa*, there is conflict before, after and during the action. There is *drṣṭa-phala* for both conformity and non-conformity with *dharma*. The *drṣṭa-phala* of meditation is a certain composure and capacity to apply the mind. Because it is a prayer, which is a

*karma*, there is also an *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, which is what we call *Īśvara's* grace. That is what brings about situations conducive for gaining this knowledge.

How long will it take? *Kṛṣṇa* says *na cirāt*, not after a long time. It all depends upon the person. There is no fixed timetable in this because you are already liberated. If something is to be produced, a timetable can be given. If you are already free, it is a question of maturing and knowing. The word *na cirāt*, though it is not specific, says that it will not take long. When a person has *karma-yoga* and *upāsana*, what will stop him from knowing?

Who are they again? those whose minds are absorbed in 'Me,' *Parameśvara*. These are people who are committed only to *Parameśvara*. Their mind gets absorbed in *Parameśvara* not only in meditation, but also in daily activities. Thus, 'For them I become the rescuer.' To be rescued means to be free, *mukta*. Does it mean there is another way of becoming free?

## IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OF BECOMING FREE

Throughout the *Gītā* it has been said that freedom is by knowledge, *jñānāt mokṣa*. Here it seems that by *karma-yoga* and *upāsana* there is *mokṣa*. That would mean there are two different paths, knowledge, *jñānāt mokṣa*, and *karma, karmaṇaḥ mokṣa*, because *upāsana* is also a *karma*, a mental *karma, mānasaṃ karma*. This is where people commit mistakes. Whether it is mental, oral, or physical, action is action and any *karma* implies an agent, *kartā*. This *kartā* cannot be negated without *jñāna* and without the negation of the *karma*, there is no freedom. It is the sense of agency that is the cause of all problems. Who has *īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*? It is the *kartā*. When they say, 'Surrender to God,' who is to surrender? And what can you surrender when everything belongs to him? You can only give what you consider to be yours. Even if you appreciate that what you have has been given by *Bhagavān*, who says this? At this level of *karma-yoga*, the maximum you can give up is the sense of 'mine,' *mamatā*. But *ahaṅkāra*, the I-notion, will remain. How will the conclusion 'I am a *saṃsāri*' go unless the *ahaṅkāra* goes? *Ahaṅkāra* is one thing you cannot surrender because it is the surrenderer. When someone says, 'Surrender your ego,' who is addressed? Is it *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* or *ahaṅkāra*? *Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* has no ego, nor can it be addressed because it is not an object. *Ahaṅkāra* is the ego; how can it surrender itself? That is why it does not work. People have been trying to surrender for ages. The *ahaṅkāra* cannot surrender. You can do anything but as long as there is ignorance and you look upon *Īśvara* as someone separate from you, there is no surrender. It is fine to have devotion. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* himself says the *karma-yogīs* who are worshipping him are *yogavittamāḥ*. No doubt they are mature, but still, *ahaṅkāra* remains.

Therefore, *mokṣa* is possible only by knowledge, *jñānāt eva*, not by *karma* or anything else. You are already non-separate from *Īśvara* and recognition of that fact is

freedom, *mokṣa*. If that is not *mokṣa*, there is no *mokṣa* because if you are not limitless right now, there is no possibility of becoming limitless. There is a Tamil proverb that says that if your thumb develops a whitlow, it will not swell to the size of a pumpkin; it can swell to the size of a lemon perhaps. Similarly, let the *ahaṅkāra* amass any amount of grace or experience, any kind of beatitude, it is going to be only the *ahaṅkāra*'s beatitude, not *ānanda*, limitlessness. If I am bound by nature, isolated from everything, I am bound forever. However, isolation is really not possible, if you think about it. Anything that is physical belongs to the physical world and anything subtle to the subtle world. How can you extract one physical body from the physical world while remaining in the physical world, and say that it is separate from the physical world? It is something like a branch of a tree saying it is independent of the tree. No physical object can claim independence from the physical world; what is physical belongs to the physical world. Isolation is not possible at any level. All you have to do is understand that there is only one thing and you are that one thing. It is already accomplished. To be free, you have only to shed ignorance and know *jñānāt eva mokṣa*.

### WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE LORD IN GAINING MOKṢĀ

When the Lord says that he is their liberator, *teṣam ahaṃ samuddhartā*, he means that he gives the knowledge that liberates. Here again, we must understand what this means. There are some people who want to be taught directly by *Bhagavān*, not by any mortal. This is a problem in understanding the nature of the teaching and the teacher. *Īśvara*'s grace is nothing but providing opportunities for teaching. Once you have all the proper attitudes, you require only an opportunity to be told that you are *Brahman*. When you are no longer in the hands of *rāga-dveṣa*, you have *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, the result of *karma-yoga*. And as a result of *upāsana* you have the capacity to apply yourself. Then all you require is teaching. The teaching also will be given by *Bhagavān* through *śruti*. Once you are ready, you will have your teacher; that automatically comes next. It has to work that way. Then when these qualifications are there, what is taught becomes real. What was previously a vague idea or a possibility, or even some insight, gains increasing clarity as one lives a life of *karma-yoga* and *upāsana* while pursuing knowledge. Thereby, *Bhagavān* says, 'I am their liberator from the ocean of *saṃsāra* that is fraught with death,' *mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt teṣām ahaṃ samuddhartā bhavāmi* — through knowledge, *jñāna-pradānena*. This is not a saviour that saves you from the original sin and takes you to heaven and keeps you there. Without *jñāna* there cannot be any *mokṣa*.

**TEĀĒM AHAĒ SAMUDDHARTĒ, MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THIS  
DOES THE LORD GIVE MOKĀA DIRECTLY?  
MOKĀA GIVEN IS ANITYA**

One commentator rightly makes the point here that *Īśvara* does not give liberation. *Mokṣa* cannot be handed out because it is not an object. Moreover, it is always established. Some argue that God can give anything because he is almighty. But even almighty God cannot give you a head over your shoulders. If he is sympathetic, he will take the time to make you realise that you have a head over your shoulders but he cannot give what is already there. Similarly, *mokṣa* is already attained. If it is something that can be given, it is *anitya*. It was not with you before and now you have it. If that is so, you will have to protect it because anything that is gained in time will be lost in time. If you are interested in a temporary *mokṣa*, well, you have that everyday when you go to sleep.

**IS MOKĀA UNION WITH THE LORD BY HIS GRACE?**

Further, *mokṣa* is not a union of the *jīva* with *Īśvara* as a result of *Īśvara's* grace. Anything that gets united tends to fall apart. That is the law. This concept of union, *sāyujya*, is baseless. There can be no unity between *jīva* and *Īśvara* because it is already accomplished. If it is unaccomplished, no power in creation can keep them together. When they are already one, you cannot say there is union with *Īśvara* due to his grace, *Īśvara-anugrahāt sāyujyam*. What you require for that 'union' is *jñāna*.

**DOES PRATYAGĒTMĒ JOIN WITH PARAMĒTMĒ**

If it is maintained that the *ātmā* of the *jīva* is *pratyagātmā* and of *Īśvara*, *paramātmā*, that is not so, either. The 'I' of the *jīva* is *paramātmā*. The notion of being bound is centred on this one 'I.' It does not belong to *anātmā* because that is inert, *jaḍatvat*. The body does not tell you, 'I am a *saṃsārī*. Please take me to a Swami.' It does not know anything, *deho na jānāti*. Neither is *ātmā* a *saṃsārī*; it has no birth or death, *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*. A *saṃsārī* is something in between, a product of *ātma-anātmā-aviveka*. If you say that by *Īśvara's* grace you gain knowledge, that is perfect. We do not discount *Īśvara's* grace but we must be very clear about what that grace can do. Through knowledge alone is freedom. A combination of *karma-yoga* and meditation, can win *Īśvara's* grace to create the condition for *jñāna*, which is *mokṣa*.

The *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya* gained by meditation and the *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* gained by *karma-yoga* make one qualified for *jñāna*. A vague *jñāna* becomes very clear. *Īśvara* cannot give *mokṣa* directly because *Īśvara* is the *svarūpa* of the person. He can only give *jñāna* and he need not assume a special form to do that. Any teacher who knows this is as good as *Īśvara*. What *Īśvara* can give is an

opportunity for knowing. It is the *adr̥ṣṭa-karma-phala* of your prayers. That gives you a situation free from obstructions and thereby you gain the *jñāna*.

By living a life of *karma-yoga*, which is an expression of *bhakti*, one gathers a lot of *punya*, which brings the *anugraha*, grace, of *Īśvara*.

### IS MOKṢĀ REMOVAL OF DUḤKHA BY THE LORD'S GRACE?

Accepting that *mokṣa* is not created but is already accomplished, perhaps we can say that the grace of *Īśvara* destroys *duḥkha*. *Mokṣa*, after all, is freedom from the undesirable. And any form of pain is undesirable. This is also invalid. If you are inherently imperfect, *Īśvara* has to rid you of that imperfection and give you some beatitude. Your suffering is removed because of *Īśvara's* grace. But *ātmā* is already *ānanda-svarūpa*. Does the destruction of sorrow take place in *ānātmā* or in *ātmā*? If the nature of *ātmā* is *duḥkha*, how are you going to destroy that without destroying *ātmā*? If *duḥkha* is not the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*, there is no sorrow there to destroy. *Ātmā* is *ānanda*. You cannot say that because of its association with the mind etc., *ātmā* becomes *duḥkhi*. If it is *asaṅga*, how can it ever be attached to anything, much less gather anything to itself? So, to say that the grace of *Īśvara* destroys *duḥkha* is also without foundation. *Īśvara-anugraha* is meant for *jñāna*. That is what is established here.

There are situations that can produce a particular *vṛtti* because of which there can be *sukha*. But *duḥkha* is purely born of *aviveka*. Provisionally we can accept it as a property of the mind, *mano-dharma*, but it does not belong to *ātmā*.

### DOES THE LORD GIVE SOME KIND OF BEATITUDE?

Another concept is that the *jīva* knows only a small amount of intermittent *sukha*. But due to the grace of *Īśvara*, he gathers infinite bliss, *brahmānanda*. *Brahmānanda* is not handed out by *Īśvara*. It is gained already because the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* is *Brahman*. Moreover, if it is something that you are given, you will also lose it.

Accepting that *brahmānanda* is myself, perhaps because of the grace of *Īśvara*, which I gather through my prayers, I am able to stay with myself. This is also nonsense. When does anything ever get away from its *svarūpa*? What *anugraha* is necessary for ice to be cold or fire to be hot? Or what kind of effort is required to make the fire hot? *Svarūpa* being what it is, it always remains without requiring anybody's grace, including *Īśvara's*. The idea that *Īśvara's* grace is necessary to abide in oneself is pure imagination due to not understanding what *śāstra* says. Even before knowledge you are *brahmānanda*. That is why *śruti* does not say you will become *Brahman*. It says you are *Brahman*.

**MOKṢĀ IS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE ALONE**

*Śāstra* addresses the one who does not know he is *Brahman*. When the teacher says ‘You are *Brahman*,’ does he see the person as *Brahman* or not *Brahman*, *abrahma*? If he is *abrahma*, how can he tell him he is *Brahman*? Then it becomes *bhrama*, delusion, not *pramā*, knowledge. Only if *ātmā* is *Brahman* can he say, ‘You are *Brahman*.’ That is *jñāna* and therefore, grace, *anugraha*, is only in gaining *jñāna*, not *mokṣa*.

Even before knowledge he was *Brahman*, which was why it could be said ‘You are *Brahman*.’ Then again, what is the *svarūpa* cannot be lost. The truth of *ātmā* happens to be *Brahman*; it is always *Brahman*. When we say he remains in his *svarūpa*, there is no one going somewhere and remaining there. *Ātmā* is *Brahman*. Nor was *ātmā* originally *ānanda*, then changed into something else, and now has to get back to itself. *Ātmā* is *avikriya*, it does not undergo any change. *Ātmā* is *nitya-ānanda*. How can it be eternal and be something else that you have to acquire? If one understands *ānanda* as something that has to be acquired, there is a problem in understanding the nature of *ātmā* and of *mokṣa*.

**ĪŚVARA'S GRACE IS REQUIRED**

*Īśvara*'s grace is manifest even when you are seeking to know the identity between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. To merely accept the possibility of non-duality requires *Īśvara*'s grace, *Īśvara-anugrahāt eva puṃsām advaita-vāsanā*. Even to discern that non-duality is the solution to the problem of *saṃsāra* and to get the right person to help you out requires grace because this ocean of *saṃsāra* is vast.

The grace of *Īśvara* can provide a situation necessary for *jñāna*; it cannot be a cause for *mokṣa* because *mokṣa* is not created. The cause of *saṃsāra* is ignorance of reality like the cause of the serpent is the ignorance of the rope. By knowing the rope, the perception of the serpent and all the attendant fear goes. Similarly, by knowing the truth of *ātmā*, *anātmā-buddhi* and the *saṃsāritva* based upon that goes.

Those whose discrimination is robbed away, superimpose *ātmā* upon *anātmā* and *anātmā* upon *ātmā*. Once some *viveka* arises, they begin to lead a life of *karma-yoga*. This is not an ordinary thing and is achieved only because of their *bhakti*. As the *karma-phaladātā*, *Īśvara* rewards them for this. By his grace they get the right association, *saṅga*, and the teaching necessary to enhance their *viveka*. With that *ātmā-anātmā-viveka* the superimposition is removed and thereby the *jīva* gains knowledge of his *svarūpa*.

In this way it looks as though *Bhagavān* gives them *mokṣa*. In fact, they earn all the conditions for *mokṣa* by invoking *Īśvara*'s grace. There is no ultimate rescuer. You take responsibility for your life and the results will follow. Seeking *Īśvara*'s grace is part

of taking charge of your life. If you are not well, you go to a doctor and if you are not able to go to a doctor, you can get somebody to take you. That is intelligent living. *Īśvara-anugraha* does not come in some peculiar form. It is the result of your own efforts. That is what *Bhagavān* means when he says, 'I am their rescuer,' *teṣam ahaṅ samuddhartā*— through giving knowledge. This is an important thing to understand.

To be released from the ocean of *saṃsāra* fraught with death, what do we have to do?

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।

निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥८॥

*mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya*  
*nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ*

Verse 8

मयि *mayi* — in Me; एव *eva* — alone; मनः *manaḥ* — the mind; आधत्स्व *ādhatsva* — may you place; मयि *mayi* — into Me; बुद्धिम् *buddhim* —the intellect; निवेशय *niveśaya* — may you enter; अतः ऊर्ध्वम् *ataḥ ūrdhvam* — thereafter; मयि एव *mayi eva* — in Me alone; निवसिष्यसि *nivasiṣyasi* — you will abide; न संशयः *na saṃśayaḥ* — there is no doubt

In me alone may you place the mind; into me may you make the intellect enter. Thereafter there is no doubt that you will abide in me alone.

## COMMIT YOUR BUDDHI AND MIND TO ME

*Mayi eva*, in Me alone. This 'Me,' Śaṅkara says, is *Īśvara* as the cosmic form, *viśvarūpa*. 'May you commit your mind to Me,' '*mayyeva mana ādhatsva*.' Both *manaḥ* and *buddhi* mean the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, so, when they are used together, as they are here, each has a restricted meaning. Though both are *antaḥ-karaṇa-vṛttis*, there is a difference based on the process of thinking involved; *manaḥ* is fluctuating between certainty and uncertainty, *saṅkalpa-vikalpa-ātmakam*; *buddhi* is the function that leads to a well-ascertained conclusion, *niścayātmikā*. Both must be 'in Me,' *Bhagavān* says. Why should he mention each separately? When the mind is placed in *Īśvara*, is the *buddhi* also not necessarily placed there? That may not be so, at all. One may not have the commitment that arises from a well-assimilated understanding of what one wants, *puruṣārtha-niścaya*. What is *Īśvara*? Why am I doing this? What is the *phala* that I am seeking? The ascertainment of all this is involved in the *niścayātmikā buddhi*. Then when you place your mind in *Īśvara*, it will stay there. Otherwise, when there is vagueness about the very pursuit and the nature of *Īśvara*, other interests are equally compelling and naturally the mind will stray. But if you have determined what you really want, your pursuit is directed and meaningful. That is why the value *tattva-jñānārtha-*

*darśana* is pointed out in the next chapter. Constant study of *vedānta-sāstra*, *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*, is also a value mentioned there but that alone is not enough. As a value it can be very vague and therefore, he says the study should be done keeping in view that the purpose is knowing the truth of oneself, *tattva-jñānārtha-darśana*. This is *puruṣārtha-niścaya*.

What I am really seeking in life is *mokṣa*, which is the result of *tattvajñāna*, knowledge of the truth. These two things have to be connected. It must be clear that what you want is freedom. And if you only understand that you want to be free, that alone is not adequate. In the search for freedom from pain, people resort to all kinds of things. What they do has nothing to do with what they really want because the nature of *mokṣa* and the means for it is not very clear. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says *tattva-jñānārtha-darśana*. For this it must be clear that *mokṣa* is the nature of *ātmā*, which is not separate from *Īśvara-svarūpa*, the very *Īśvara* that appears in the form of this world. It cannot be a vague notion of a God who is located somewhere administering reward and punishment. This kind of *Īśvara* is replaced by *Īśvara* as *saguṇa-brahma*. Therefore, 'May you commit both your mind and *buddhi* to *Īśvara*.' This is one meaning.

Or we can say, 'Having chosen Me, let your mind dwell upon Me and your *buddhi* enter into Me.' Making the *buddhi* enter into *Īśvara* is done only through inquiry, *vicāra*. And the inquiry must be proper. If you keep on asking, 'Who am I?' what answer will you get? Only what you already know about the person who is asking. The more you ask, the more apparent is your confusion. *Ātmā* is not going to reveal itself because it is already evident in the questioner. It is not for want of questioning that the essential nature of *ātmā* is not revealed. The most that can happen through this kind of inquiry is an absorption, *laya*, of *ahaṅkāra*, as in deep sleep or a moment of joy. That is purely a condition, not knowledge. You emerge from it knowing nothing more about yourself. The maximum you can get when you ask the question 'Who am I?' is *laya*. How can there be *jñāna*? If somebody coughs, the *ahaṅkāra* returns and the *samādhi* ends because the *ahaṅkāra* continues to exist in a subtle form. If, however, there is total absence of identity with the *ahaṅkāra* because you know differently, there cannot be any coming back. In spite of the presence of the *ahaṅkāra*, there is no real *ahaṅkāra* because the self, *ātmā*, is free from *ahaṅkāra*, though *ahaṅkāra* is not free from the self. Then no problem is posed by the *ahaṅkāra*. That is *jñāna*. How do you get it?

*Ātmā* cannot be any more evident than it is now and it is not opposed to ignorance of yourself either. *Ātmā* will not protest. As light is not opposed to what you read, similarly *ātma-caitanya* is not opposed to what you think. If you think 'I am a monkey,' it will illumine that thought as well as any other. If ignorance is there, consciousness is there; if ignorance is not there, consciousness will still be there. Only a *vṛtti* that occurs in the *buddhi* revealing the nature of *ātmā* is opposed to self-ignorance. *Ātma-caitanya*, consciousness, which is the nature of *ātmā* is not opposed to ignorance. Therefore, simply asking 'Who am I?' will not work here. You need an appropriate



means of knowledge, a *pramāṇa*. Here the problem is a non-recognised and therefore, mistaken *ātmā*. To correct the mistake you require *jñāna* of *ātmā* and to gain the *jñāna* of *ātmā* you require a *pramāṇa*. Perception and inference can reveal only *anātmā*, not *ātmā*, as we have seen. Therefore, you seek the answer to the question ‘Who am I?’ not within yourself but in the *śāstra*, which is the *pramāṇa*. When you study *śāstra*, you commit yourself to *Parameśvara*. *Mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya* means may you inquire into *Parameśvara*. This is nothing but *vedānta-vicāra*, which reduces to an inquiry into sentences like *tat tvam asi*. The idea is to set your mind upon *saguṇa-brahma* and live a life of *karma-yoga*, and commit your *buddhi* to *vicāra* of *Īśvara*. Then there is nothing that can stop you from knowing ‘Me.’

Thereafter you shall live or abide in ‘Me’ alone, *ataḥ mayi eva nivasiṣyasi*. Does the *jīva*, the devotee, live in *Īśvara* like an amoeba in the stomach? If that is so, he will still be separate. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, ‘You shall enter into Me in the form of Myself.’ There is no longer an *Īśvara’s ātmā* and *jīva’s ātmā*, only one limitless self as the *jīva* resolves its notion about itself; that is entry into *Īśvara*. This is the result of meditation supported by inquiry and a life of *karma-yoga*.

Thereafter there is no doubt, *ataḥ ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ*, that you will enter into ‘Me.’ ‘Thereafter’ can be, after this knowledge, or after death. There will no longer be any doubt because there is no *jīva*, only *Īśvara*. Even after death one is not born again, *na punarāvartate*. We can put it in another way. While living, if you are with ‘Me,’ then who dies? Unless *Īśvara* dies, you cannot die because you are *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is *nitya*, so, there is no possibility of death for you.

Once the subject matter has been taught, it is very clear what you should do. So clear that there is no reason for doubt. Still it is necessary to say *na saṃśayaḥ* because *Arjuna* asked the question here. That means he has doubts. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, ‘If you live like this, you shall enter into Me; there is no doubt about that.’ *Arjuna* wanted to know who are better in the sense of being nearer to *mokṣa*, those who pursue *nirguṇa-brahma* or those who follow a life of *karma-yoga* with meditation upon *saguṇa-brahma*. *Kṛṣṇa* answered that these *karma-yogīs* meditating upon *Parameśvara* as the *viśvarūpa* are nearer to the Lord. They are *yogavittamas*. He did not want to talk about those who pursue *nirguṇa-brahma* because they are not available for comparison. They are *jñānīs* for they have all the requisite qualifications, which are gathered only by *karma-yoga*.

Addressing the *karma-yogīs* he said, ‘Let your mind be set upon Me; let the *buddhi* have a commitment backed by understanding, *niścaya*, about Me.’ In this way if you contemplate upon *Parameśvara* you will have the right *antaḥ-karaṇa*, and thereby you will remain one with ‘Me,’ meaning you will discover the oneness that exists between you and *Īśvara*.

A devotee is a *karma-yogī* for the sake of the *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* required to gain knowledge. He wants to quicken the process by meditating upon *Īśvara* but he is not able to do so. Then the Lord said, you can get your mind into the object of meditation if you follow the steps below.

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।

अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छासुं धनञ्जय ॥९॥

*atha cittaṃ samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram  
abhyāsayogena tato māmichchāptum dhanañjaya*

Verse 9

अथ *atha* — then; मयि *mayi* — in Me; चित्तम् *cittaṃ* — your mind; स्थिरम् *sthiram* — steadily; समाधातुम् *samādhātum* — to absorb; न शक्नोषि *na śaknoṣi* — (if) you are not able; ततः *tataḥ* — then; अभ्यासयोगेन *abhyāsayogena* — through the practice of *yoga*; माम् आप्तुम् *mām āptum* — to reach Me; इच्छा *iccha* — may you seek; धनञ्जय *dhanañjaya* — *Arjuna*

Then, (if) you are not able to absorb your mind steadily in Me, then through the practice of *yoga* may you seek to reach Me, *Arjuna*.

*Mayi*, in *Parameśvara*, the Lord as *saguṇa-brahma*. If it is not possible for you to place your mind in ‘Me’ steadily, for a length of time, which is called *dhyāna*, meditation, what should you do?

‘Then may you desire to reach Me through *abhyāsa-yoga*,’ the practice of *yoga*. *Abhyāsa* means doing the same thing again and again, *punaḥ punaḥ*. Not mechanically but with an alertness. Any skill depends entirely on *abhyāsa*. Whether you want to drive a car or pilot a plane you require hours of proper practice.

It is the same here. The mind is not able to remain with a chosen object of meditation because of lack of *abhyāsa*. We have not learned how to keep it there. All our lives we have been wool gathering. Unless we forced it to, the mind does not stay focused on anything. And in meditation, nobody forces us. Although we have acquired many other skills, if asked to sit quietly for a few minutes, we cannot manage it. We get restless. This is the problem of a human mind. Yet when it is compelled to do something, it will. When you understand a newspaper article, it is because your mind finds the topic compelling and remains there for a length of time. If you open a thriller, you can read it from cover to cover even sacrificing your sleep. Your attention is drawn and the mind does not stray. But when you choose an object of meditation you find your mind wanders everywhere.

Therefore, the Lord considers the case when, *na śaknoṣi*, you are not able, *mayi cittaṃ samādhātum*, to absorb your mind in ‘Me.’ If you can commit your mind to a given object and without effort are able to dwell upon it, that is *cittasamādhāna*. If that

is not possible, undertake *yoga-abhyāsa*. *Yoga* here means *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. Because a *karma-yogī* is being discussed, we know that he already has *yama* and *niyama*. All he has to do is *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇa* to gain the capacity to contemplate, *dhyānasiddhi*. In order for this to happen, he follows the prescribed steps.

*Āsana* means any one of the postures in which you can sit and meditate. The capacity to sit for a length of time, *āsana-siddhi*, can be acquired through practice. *Prāṇāyāma* is discipline with reference to breathing. You deliberately inhale and exhale in given proportions and retain the inhalation or refrain from it for given lengths of time. *Pratyāhāra* is withdrawing the mind from the external world of objects. And it does not automatically happen unless one has consciously cultivated the discipline of absence of greed. We should know how to avoid grabbing, and also how to get rid of useless things. First we have to clean the junk out of our own room. This we find difficult because we always think it is going to be useful some time. It has been there for ten years and has been of no use whatever but still you cannot get rid of it. The practice of *pratyāhāra* starts here. Similarly one should have a mind that is relatively free of conflicts. Only then *pratyāhāra* can take place. *Dhāraṇa* is the practice of concentration. This has to begin with things you love. If you concentrate on what you like to dwell upon, you will find it is not difficult.

All these steps, called *abhyāsa-yoga* lead to *dhyāna*, meditation. You follow these disciplines to help you gain the capacity to meditate and you also meditate and study the *śāstra*. Being a participant in the creation, naturally you find yourself in situations, which warrant certain actions. The action called for is duty, being in conformity with the moral order, *dharma*. Looking upon this *dharma* as a form of *Īśvara* is *karma-yoga*.

*Śāṅkara* gives us the definition of *abhyāsa-yoga* — again and again bringing the mind back from everything else to one object of meditation. Why does he say again and again, *punaḥ punaḥ*? Because the mind will stray. The definition of meditation is repeatedly bringing the mind to the object of meditation. We cannot complain that the mind wanders in meditation because that is what makes it meditation, *dhyāna*. If the mind remains absorbed, it is called *samādhi*. In meditation the mind will wander and whenever it does, you bring it back to the chosen object. If it drifts away again, bring it back again. This is *abhyāsa*. *Āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇa* can be considered constituents of *dhyāna*. ‘Therefore,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘seek to reach Me through the practice of *yoga*, *Arjuna*.’ *tataḥ abhyāsa-yogena māmāptum iccha*.

Then the Lord says:

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।  
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥१०॥

*abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava  
madarthamapi karmāṇi kurvan siddhimavāpsyasi*

Verse 10

अभ्यासे अपि *abhyase api* — even for the practice (of this *yoga*); असमर्थः असि (चेत्) *asamarthaḥ asi (cet)* — (if) you do not have the capacity; मत्कर्मपरमः *matkarmaparamaḥ* — one for whom action dedicated to Me is paramount; भव *bhava* — may you become; अपि *api* — even; कर्माणि कुर्वन् *karmāṇi kurvan* — doing actions; मदर्थम् *madartham* — for My sake; सिद्धिम् *siddhim* — success; अवाप्स्यसि *avāpsyasi* — you will gain

Even if you do not have the capacity for the practice (of this *yoga*), may you become one for whom action dedicated to Me is paramount. Even doing actions for my sake you will gain success.

Suppose even this is not possible. To sit and do anything is almost impossible. Then set aside this meditation on *saguṇa-brahma*, and do your daily prayers and duties dedicating them to 'Me.' Dedication is nothing but conformity with *dharma*, looking upon it as *Īśvara*. Later, in the eighteenth chapter, he tells us:

*yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānāṃ yena sarvam idaṃ tatam  
svakarmanā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ Gītā 18-46*

*Tam abhyarcya*, worshipping that (Lord), *yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām*, from whom all elements and beings have come, *yena sarvam idaṃ tatam*, by whom all this is sustained, *svakarmanā*, by his own duty, *siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*, a man finds success. The entire creation, *jagat*, is non-separate from *Īśvara*. With an awareness of this, *svakarmanā abhyarcya*, worshipping with one's own *karma* meaning doing what is called for at any given time and in any particular situation. A particular act of worship is not what is meant here but the awareness of *Īśvara* as *dharma* and conformity to that. By this he says, *siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*, a person gains success. Success here is *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, a prepared mind through, which one can gain knowledge. The real success is *mokṣa*.

Therefore, if you cannot meditate, do not condemn yourself. As long as you continue doing what you are doing as a *karma-yogī*, that is enough. You will gain everything. If it is not possible to look upon *dharma* as *Īśvara*, in the following verse, the Lord offers another alternative. Perform all your actions fulfilling your likes and dislikes in conformity with *dharma*. When the result comes, offer it to 'Me' and then take it. This is common practice in India. Even though people may not know what is behind it, they do it. After cooking food, they first offer it to the Lord, and then eat. If they build a house, they first offer it to him and then enter it. Anything new is offered to the Lord. A newborn child is offered to the Lord and therefore, becomes *prasāda*, what comes from the Lord. This is something anybody can do. These alternatives are not

really very different from one another. The emphasis is just shifted. One thing is clear though; if a person lives a life of *karma-yoga* along with meditation upon *Īśvara* as *saguṇa-brahma*, he is *yogavittama*, the best in the sense of nearest to *mokṣa*.

*Tataḥ mām āptum icchā*, may you desire to meditate upon ‘Me.’ *Āptum* means to gain but in the context it should be taken as *dhyātum*, to meditate. Finally it is a gain; so, translating *āptum* as ‘to gain’ is also correct. By meditation and gaining knowledge may you desire to gain ‘Me.’

If you are not capable of even this practice, *abhyāse api asamarthaḥ asi*, you can live a life of *karma-yoga*. That is good enough. May you become one for whom *karma* done for ‘Me’ is the ultimate, *matkarmaparamo bhava*. It is the ultimate in the sense that it is the means that he commits himself to, for the *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi* required for *jñāna*.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PERFORM ACTION FOR THE SAKE OF ĪŚVARA?

What does it mean to perform action for the sake of *Īśvara*? Does *Īśvara* need your *karma* like a master needs the services of his servant? The master gives the orders, telling exactly what has to be done and the servant obliges in return for some payment. Both stand to gain from the transaction. Does the Lord also tell you to do specific things whereby he is going to accomplish something? Does he expect to benefit from your activity? If so, he is not *Īśvara*. Doing something for the sake of *Īśvara* cannot be for his benefit because *Bhagavān* by definition is *pūrṇa*, complete. He has all that one could wish for in absolute measure. So, it is not for his sake. Suppose you do it for your sake. Then it is not *karma-yoga*. You become a *karmaṭha*.

Doing *karma* for *Īśvara*’s sake is doing it as an expression of your devotion to him. This is *īśvarārthaṃ karma*. Further, *Īśvara* is in the form of *dharma*. *Sanātana-dharma* is a name for the Vedic tradition. This *dharma*, which is unfolded by the *Vedas* is eternal, *sanātana*, *sanātanaśca asau dharmah*. Here we view *Īśvara* as the *upādāna-kāraṇa* recognizing that the very order in the world is *Īśvara*. Or we can say it is the *dharma* of the one who is eternal, *sanātanasya dharmah*. In this, *Īśvara* becomes the *nimitta-kāraṇa*. Conformity to his order is *īśvarārpita-karma*. Either you think, ‘I perform this action for the sake of *Īśvara*’ or ‘In conforming to *dharma* I am worshipping *Īśvara*.’ Both are similar.

Thirdly you can cultivate a certain attitude, which comes from recognizing, ‘This *karma* is done by *Īśvara*, not by me.’ In that you deflate your *ahaṅkāra* and attribute the very *karma* to *Īśvara*. That is also ‘*madarthaṃ karma*.’ Through his *vibhūti* alone my legs are able to move, my tongue is able to talk, this mind is able to think; it is all *Īśvara*. My body, senses and mind are all instruments for *Īśvara* to play his symphony

of life. One who appreciates this is also 'matkarmaparama.' *Īśvara* has *prakṛti* under his control and that *prakṛti*, which is my nature, is not created by me. It is all *Īśvara*. The creation and the Creator being non-separate, *Īśvara* in the form of *prakṛti* does everything. *Īśvara* as the sun, shines; *Īśvara* as the earth, bears life and so too, *Īśvara* as the senses, body, mind, etc., does various actions. I perform no action.

All this requires conformity to *dharma* rather than to *rāga-dveṣa*. *Rāga-dveṣa* are rooted in the *ahaṅkāra* whereas *dharma* is rooted in *Īśvara*. Therefore, when you act according to *dharma* and in contradiction to your *rāga-dveṣa*, you are suppressing your ego and uniting yourself to *Īśvara*. This is the worship, which we call *karma-yoga*. Though your own likes and dislikes, which are purely centred on yourself are initially suppressed, in time they are sublimated. Once you have a value for *dharma*, the *rāgadveṣas* get naturally relegated to the background. Then it is not suppression but success in the form of maturity and elevation of the person. It is suppression only if there is no understanding of *dharma* and no possibility of expressing *rāga* and *dveṣa*. Suppose a child has a lot of anger and yet the rules in the home prohibit the expression of anger or crying or saying certain things, that child is going to be suppressed. Anger is the product of pain and pain is due to non-fulfilment of *rāga-dveṣa*. That is why when you express your anger there is an aftermath of sadness, the basis for the anger. When you obey rules that you do not understand it amounts to suppression. This is why it is so important to understand the value of values. It amounts to simple maturity.

Growing up implies appreciation of *dharma*. Every day we have to make choices and if we are confused about what is right and wrong, it is better to be an animal. An animal is not confused nor does it have any conflict. Maturity in a human being implies the appreciation of *dharma*. Then there is no suppression. Because *dharma* is rooted in *Īśvara*, love for *dharma* becomes love for *Īśvara*. That is *bhakti*. When the action you do is for the sake of *Īśvara* who is *dharma*, not for fulfilment of *rāga-dveṣa*, you are a *matkarmaparama*. To live a life of *karma-yoga* you must have an awareness of *Īśvara* being in the form of *dharma*. It is a very alert life.

*Karma-yoga* is not doing a lot of things. Though a *karma-yogī* may be very active, that is not what makes him a *karma-yogī*. If you go to Wall Street in New York, you will see frantic activity. A broker may be handling eight phone calls at a time. It is not the amount of activity but the attitude that makes a person a *karma-yogī*. Though he may be very busy, a *karma-yogī* has no anxiety about what he is doing. He has no fear or conflict and goes about doing what is to be done with an inner relaxation. All that he does is for *Īśvara*. That is *karma-yoga*. The *ahaṅkāra* gets deflated and *rāgadveṣas* get neutralised.

If *dharma* is protected, it protects you, *rakṣitaḥ dharmah rakṣati tvam*. How does *dharma* protect you? *Rakṣati* means it protects, not your life but your *sukha*, your peace of mind. Protecting merely your longevity is meaningless. What is the point of

living ten more years in distress and causing another ten years of distress to others as well? With a restless mind you are not going to radiate *śānti*. Even someone who has a degree of *śānti* will lose it in the presence of a disturbed person. When *dharma* is not protected, the *ahaṅkāra* inflates and the *rāgadveṣas* become destructive. Because you cannot have your way all the time, you are going to be angry, frustrated, depressed, etc. That *ahaṅkāra* will increase and clash with the surroundings but if *dharma* is followed, there is harmony. Whether you are able to conform to *dharma* or not, the attempt to do so, is enough. If the people around you are educated enough to also attempt to conform to *dharma* with some awareness of what they are doing, you will find there is an atmosphere conducive to everybody's growth. But if everyone's attention is focused on 'me' and 'mine,' growth will be stifled. Individuality has its beauty but it also creates strong personal *rāgadveṣas*, which become so important that we cannot really accommodate anything else. When they are so highly pronounced they demand to be fulfilled; yet you cannot have your own way all the time so, there are bound to be conflicts. In a world of individuals, each one wants to have his own way. Unfortunately what the other person wants is often exactly the opposite of what you want. In this situation how are you going to fulfil your *rāgadveṣas*? It is impossible. And if the ego demands it, what kind of *śānti* are you going to have? And without *śānti*, where is happiness, *aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham*?

Therefore, protecting *dharma* will protect your *sukha* and thereby your *puruṣārtha*, what you want to accomplish. With the protection of *dharma*, your *jñāna* is also protected. Otherwise you will be fanning *rāga-dveṣa*, which can never be satisfied. Like fire they are called *anala* because they never say, 'Enough.' The more you feed them the more they want.

If you cannot meditate, *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna*, be a *karma-yogī* performing all actions for the sake of 'Me,' *madarthaṃ karmāṇi kurvan*, you will gain success, *siddhim avapsyasi*. What can be the success for a *karma-yogī*? *Siddhi* means *mokṣa*. Here *Śaṅkara* says it is through the gain of knowledge.

Merely performing actions for *Īśvara's* sake does not ensure *siddhi*, success. But in performing all actions for *Īśvara*, your *ahaṅkāra* will be deflated and *rāga-dveṣa* neutralised. That will bring increased composure and enable you to meditate to gain *jñāna*.

## EVEN BY DOING KARMA FOR MY SAKE YOU WILL REACH ME

If you meditate on *akṣara-brahma* you will reach 'Me'; if you meditate on 'Me' and do *karma-yoga* you will reach 'Me'; if that is not possible, do *karma-yoga* and then also you will reach 'Me.' It may seem from this that there are alternate 'paths' for *mokṣa*. To dismiss that notion *Śaṅkara* uses the word, *yoga-jñāna-prāpti-dvāreṇa*

*avāpsyasi*, gaining maturity by *karma-yoga*, through knowledge you will gain *mokṣa*. We must be very clear; there cannot be any accommodation in this.

The practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is to develop enough composure and concentration to hold an object in one's mind for a length of time. This *dhāraṇa-śakti* is the aim of *abhyāsa*. Thereby one can meditate upon the *viśvarūpa*. So, *abhyāsa* is part of *viśvarūpa-dhyāna*, meditation upon the Lord as *saguṇa-brahma*. If even that is not possible, do your action for the sake of *Īśvara* and you will gain success, *siddhi*. *Siddhi* here is first *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, purification of the mind, which is freedom from the hold of *rāga-dveṣa*. When they are no longer an obstruction for you, you have *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Since you have no *pratibandha*, you can gain *jñāna*. Here *Śaṅkara* points out the dependence of knowledge and meditation upon mental preparedness.

When you are prepared, you have the capacity for *dhyāna* and *jñāna* and therefore, you will gain *siddhi*, success, which here means *mokṣa*. Being a *mat-karmaparama* the one for whom *Īśvarārpitakarma* is most important, is not easy either. For that you must have an awareness of *Īśvara* when you perform actions and a capacity to make your own personal likes and dislikes subserve *dharma* and *adharma*. Even though you may be able to follow *dharma* and *adharma*, you cannot dedicate all *karmas* to *Īśvara* when you have personal interests. If you need to fulfil various likes and dislikes for your own security and pleasure and yet want *mokṣa* also, that means preparedness, which is maturity or *vairāgya* is lacking. When *vairāgya* is inadequate, it is very difficult to dedicate all *karma* to *Īśvara* because of self-interest. What shall we do about that? If you find that is not possible, that the *rāgadveṣas* themselves control you, don't worry. *Bhagavān* offers an alternative in the next verse.

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥११॥

*athaitadapyaśakto'si kartuṃ madyogamāśritaḥ*  
*sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*

Verse 11

अथ *atha* — then; मद्योगम् आश्रितः *madyogam āśritaḥ* — being one whose practice/commitment is dedicating all actions to Me; एतत् अपि *etat api* — even this; कर्तुम् *kartum* — to do; अशक्तः असि (चेत्) *aśaktaḥ asi* — (if) you are not able; ततः *tataḥ* — then; यतात्मवान् *yatātmavān (san)* — being one whose mind is disciplined; सर्व-कर्म-फल-त्यागम् कुरु *sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṃ kuru* — give up the results of all actions (to Me)

Then, even if you are not able to do this, being one whose practice/commitment is dedicating all actions to Me, then being one whose mind is disciplined give up the results of all actions (to Me).



## SARVA-KARMA-PHALA-TYĒGA

*Bhagavān* says even if you cannot be committed to offering all actions to ‘Me,’ *atha etad api aśakto’si kartuṃ madyogam āśritaḥ*, there is still no problem if you have a disciplined mind, that is if you are a *yatātmavān*. If your mind is undisciplined and turbulent this does not apply. You have to clear that up first. But if you have some mastery over yourself yet cannot give up all *karmas* to *Īśvara*, he says, ‘Then give up the results of all action,’ *sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru*. Impelled by your likes and dislikes, go about doing your *karma*. Even if they are self-centred, fulfil them as long as they do not transgress *dharma*. But when the results come, renounce them all in the sense of graciously accepting them as *prasāda* from *Īśvara*.

*Kṛṣṇa* is not talking about renunciation of all *karma* here; that is *jñāna-sannyāsa*, which, as we saw in the fourth chapter, is possible only by the knowledge that *ātmā* is *akartā*. With that knowledge one does not give up activity but while performing action he knows he is free from all action. Then there are the *karma-yogīs* who perform all *karma* offering it to *Īśvara* and also take the *karma-phala* as given by *Īśvara*. At both levels *Īśvara* is involved. This is true *karma-yoga*. If the first part is not possible, you can do the second part, *sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṃ kuru*, renounce all results of action. How does one renounce all the results of action? Whatever result comes, you take it as given by *Īśvara*. You become the *kartā* and *Bhagavān* the *karma-phala-dātā*, the one who gives the results of action. There are two functions for *Īśvara*. One is *karmādhyakṣa*, the Lord who presides over the laws of *karma*, without whom no *karma* is possible. With that appreciation you will have very mild *rāga-dveṣa*. If they are predominant so, that it is not possible to offer all *karmas* to *Īśvara*, when the *karma-phala* comes to you, take it as something from *Īśvara*. That means you have offered the *karma-phala* to him. This is very common in India. While cooking the food they may not think of *Īśvara*. Certainly when they flavour the food they are not thinking of *Īśvara*’s taste but of the people who are going to eat. After cooking it, however, they offer the food to *Īśvara*. The way in which the food turns out is determined by the laws of *Īśvara*. These ingredients put together in this way produces a given result. Therefore, you cannot say, ‘The laws have changed; so, my food is not good.’ There can be a *doṣa*, a mistake in your *karma* because of some difficulty but the laws do not commit any mistake. Therefore, the *karma-phala*, the food that comes to you after cooking, is from *Īśvara*. This much awareness is not very difficult to acquire so, *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga* is relatively easy.

In *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga* there is an awareness of *Īśvara* as the *karma-phala-dātā*. I perform the action to fulfil *rāga-dveṣa* but the *karma-phala* comes according to the laws of *Īśvara*. Therefore, I accept it without protest and thereby it gets dedicated to *Īśvara*. The action also gets dedicated to *Īśvara* indirectly because unless *karma* is dedicated to *Īśvara*, *karma-phala* is not seen as something that comes from

him. By accepting *karma-phala* from *Īśvara* you automatically dedicated your *karma* to him.

When you take it as *karma-phala* coming from *Īśvara*, it neutralises your *rāga-dveṣa*. How? Normally, if the result is desirable, there is elation; if it is undesirable, depression. This is the nature of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. It is subject to inflation and deflation, otherwise called *aśuddha-antaḥ-karaṇa*, the outcome of *rāga-dveṣa*. Even though you do not want depression, it comes because a *dveṣa* has a hold over you. *Rāgadveṣas* account for every emotional difficulty. To overcome them, when the *karma-phala* comes I take it graciously as *prasāda*. Though *rāgadveṣas* continue to exist, they do not have the capacity to create elation and depression. They simply become the basis for all your activities, which, of course, conform with *dharma*. Because of *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*, they get neutralised and there is an equanimity no matter what the result is. This evenness of mind, *samatva*, which characterises a *karma-yogī*, is possible only by *prasāda buddhi*. Otherwise it becomes an ideal, which creates other problems.

So, you need not offer the *karma* to *Īśvara*; you can simply take the result from him. It is not inferior to offering the *karma* to *Īśvara* because it amounts to the same thing. What is important is *tyāga*, renunciation. That is what is being praised here. *Sarva-karma-phala-tyāga* amounts to renunciation of desires, *kāma-tyāga*. When they are all offered to *Īśvara*, *rāgadveṣas* have no hold on you. *Rāga-dveṣa* is *kāma* and the *kāma* itself is renounced because you are accepting the result regardless of how well it matches your *rāga-dveṣa*. When that is so, *kāma* is as good as given up. It has no grip over you, which is all that is required for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Then, through that *antaḥ-karaṇa* you will gain *jñāna*. Therefore, give up the results of all actions, *tataḥ sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṃ kuru*.

Being a disciplined person, *yatātmavān*, his *karma-phala-tyāga* is as good as *madyoga*, *karma-yoga* in which the action is performed for the sake of *Īśvara* and the result is taken as *prasāda*. Here, if you think about *Īśvara* when the result comes, that is good enough. When you pull on to the road, think of *Īśvara*; when the car stops, think of *Īśvara*; when you reach your destination, think of *Īśvara*. When you arrive in one piece, think of *Īśvara*; if you sustain some injury, thank God you are still alive. Thus every *karma-phala* is taken as something that comes from *Īśvara*. Thereby your *rāgadveṣas* get neutralised. We have to act this out. It is not simply a matter of understanding here. Though understanding is necessary, the attitude stays with you when you keep on acknowledging that *karma-phala* is from *Īśvara*. If you repeat it to yourself, not simply mechanically, you develop the attitude of *prasāda-buddhi*. Like when you make it a habit to say ‘Thanks,’ you develop an attitude of gratitude. Even though it may sometimes be mechanical, it has to be repeated to cultivate the attitude, which is the important thing here. When you say ‘Thanks,’ it may not always carry much meaning. Somebody opens the door for you or moves aside so, you can pass him on the escalator

and you say ‘Thanks’; may be purely mechanical, but if you give it up altogether, the attitude may disappear. Therefore, that form has to be retained. Only then can the spirit be discovered. And it can be discovered because it is always there in some degree. You cannot say ‘Thanks’ without some element of gratitude.

Similarly here, ‘This is *prasāda*’ or its equivalent, has to be repeated. We must consciously acknowledge that everything that comes is from *Īśvara*. The awareness that he is the *karma-phala-dātā*, has to be maintained by somehow expressing it so, that *karma-phala-tyāga* becomes a reality. In the process, *kāma-tyāga* also occurs. But *karṭva-tyāga*, renunciation of doership does not, which is why it is not *jñāna*. As long as there is doership, only *karma-yoga* is possible. And through *karma-yoga* you can gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which makes you ready for the knowledge.

*Karṭva*, however, can be eliminated in one stroke by *śāstra*. Once the *rāga-dveṣas* are neutralised, the *ahaṅkāra* has no backbone. All you need is to be told, ‘You are *Parameśvara*.’ If that *jñāna* has no obstruction, *pratibandha*, there is no further problem.

Just because he has said, ‘If that is not possible, do this,’ *karma-phala-tyāga* is not in any way inferior. When you are allergic to aspirin you take Paracetamol but that does not mean it is inferior. The effect is the same. If you cannot handle certain foods, you take others. Both nourish the body. If you cannot do one type of exercise you do another. Both keep the body fit. It is the same thing here. One is not inferior or superior. *karma-phala-tyāga* is as good as anything else. Pursue your *rāga-dveṣa* but renounce the results of your actions to *Īśvara*, *karma-phala-tyāgaṅ kuru*. One good thing about this is that the Lord being all-pervasive has no place to keep the results you offer, Thus they remain with you; they are only mentally offered. This is *sarva-phala-tyāga*. Even though it is said lastly, it is not any way less than any of the other things suggested because it will lead to the same thing. In fact in the next *śloka* it is declared as better than what has been told. This is a *praśaṃsā*, a praise of *karma-phala-tyāga*.

Now praising *karma-phala-tyāga*, *Bhagavān* indicates that though it is said lastly, it is in no way inferior to the things already mentioned because with it you gain *śānti*.

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद् ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥१२॥

*śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsājjñānād dhyānaṃ viśiṣyate*  
*dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgacchāntiranantaram*

Verse 12

ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — knowledge; श्रेयः *śreyaḥ* — is better; हि *hi* —indeed; अभ्यासात् *abhyāsāt* — than the practice of *yoga*; ध्यानम् *dhyānam* — meditation; ज्ञानात् *jñānāt* — (as compared) to knowledge; विशिष्यते *viśiṣyate* — is superior; कर्म-फल-त्यागः *karma-*

*phala-tyāgaḥ* — renunciation of the results of actions; (is better) ध्यानात् *dhyānāt* — than meditation; त्यागात् *tyāgāt* — because of renunciation; शान्तिः *śāntiḥ* — (there is) peace; अनन्तरम् *anantaram* — immediately

Knowledge is better indeed than the practice of *yoga*; meditation is superior to knowledge; renunciation of the results of actions (is better) than meditation. Because of renunciation (there is) peace immediately.

*Sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*, he says, is better for you, *śreyaḥ*, than the practice, *abhyāsa*, of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, up to but not including *dhyāna*. Śaṅkara qualifies this as an *abhyāsa*, which is not preceded by discrimination, *avivekapūrvaka*, a purely mechanical practice of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* etc., without clarity about what one is doing it for, i.e., *puruṣārtha-viveka*, or about what is temporal and what is not, *nityānityavastu-viveka*. Since the *viveka* is inadequate, so is his *vairāgya*. He is not able to pursue or even ascertain what he really wants. The *jñāna* here refers to knowledge of *puruṣārtha*, i.e., knowledge of what is to be done and what is not to be done. Since he does not have such *jñāna*, he lacks *viveka* and therefore, his practice, *abhyāsa*, also lacks *viveka* about what exactly he is seeking and what he is doing to achieve it.

The *abhyāsa* of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* does not necessarily require *viveka*. Most people who practice what is commonly known as *yoga* have no *ātmanātma-viveka* or *nityānityavastu-viveka*. Often their *puruṣārtha* is purely the appearance or condition of the body. They can as well do aerobics though *āsanas* are better for them because they need not eat as much as they would to do vigorous exercise. And *yogāsanas* also come to us from the *ṛṣis*; so, they have a certain sanctity about them. But if you inquire into the *yogī's* concept of *mokṣa* you will find it problematic. Therefore, you need not know what *mokṣa* is or have any *viveka* for *abhyāsa*, which can mean any discipline. Even discipline, however, is better than the lack of it for in following a discipline you undergo pain, which can be a basis for growth. Any routine involves pain because there are times when it is difficult to follow and in overcoming those difficulties you grow. But a discipline followed without *viveka* is inferior to the *viveka* and therefore, *Bhagavān* says *śreyaḥ hi jñānam*, knowledge is better. *Jñāna* here is not *ātma-jñāna* but knowledge of *puruṣārtha*.

Mere *puruṣārtha-jñāna* accompanied by *abhyāsa* is also not enough. It is to be understood that both *jñāna* and *abhyāsa* are retained in the progression. Therefore, he says, meditation (upon *Īśvara*) is better than (mere) knowledge (of *puruṣārtha*), *jñānāt-dhyānaṃ viśiṣyate*. *Dhyāna* includes *karma-yoga* as was already mentioned. Meditation, *dhyāna*, with *karma-yoga* is still better, *viśiṣyate*, than knowledge of *puruṣārtha*, *jñāna*, combined with practice, *abhyāsa*, of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, etc.

Finally he says that even better than *dhyāna* is renunciation of the results of action, *karma-phala-tyāga*. Even though he mentions it lastly, implying it is the easiest, it is the best. Why? Because of the result it produces.

*Tyāgāt śāntiḥ anantaram*, because of renunciation, there is peace immediately. The moment you recognise something as *Īśvara-prasāda*, there is a cheer, a composure, *śānti*, which in turn qualifies you for immediate appreciation, *aparokṣa-jñāna*, of *ātmā*. Since there is no hindrance, *akṣara-brahma* becomes a reality. Further, the *śānti* gained by *karma-phala-tyāga* is gained immediately, *anantaram*, not later. If you receive all *karma-phala* as *prasāda*, you have an antidote to sorrow, *duḥkha*, gain and loss, *lābhālābhau*, success and failure *jayājayau* because you are not subject to elation or depression. Success is *prasāda* and not getting what you wanted is *prasāda* as well as just as a sweet *laddu* is as much *prasāda* as ashes, *vibhūti*. That *prasāda-buddhi* is what is praised here as *karma-phala-tyāga*. Such a *buddhi* has *śānti* and is capable of knowing.

Though the renunciation of *karma-phala* is praised here, it looks as though it is meant for the person who can not accomplish anything else. It is last in a sequence in which each recommendation of *Bhagavān* is followed by, *aśakto'si yadi*, 'if you are not capable of doing this...' But *Bhagavān's* phrasing here is in keeping with *Arjuna's* question as to who is better, meaning who is nearer to *mokṣa*, the one who pursues *akṣara-brahma* or a *karma-yogī* meditating upon the *viśvarūpa*.

In answer to *Arjuna's* question, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* first said that the one who meditates upon *saguṇa-brahma* and pursues a life of *karma-yoga* is definitely nearer to *mokṣa*. But the other is already *mukta* in as much as the *śāstra* considers a *sannyāsi*<sup>1</sup> almost liberated, a *muktapurūṣa*. Being a *sannyāsi* he is mature and therefore, his knowledge will be unhindered. For this reason he is spoken of as a *jñānī*, who cannot be compared to the ignorant. These *jñānīs*, *Bhagavān* went on to say, necessarily become one with 'Me.' Then he speaks again about the *karma-yogī* saying, 'I become the saviour for them, *teṣām ahaṃ samuddhartā*.' Because of their *upāsana*, which is an action, he must, as the *karma-phala-dātā*, give the result. Thus he provides them with opportunities for this knowledge and makes them qualified for it, indirectly becoming a saviour.

The *akṣara-brahma-upāsaka*, however, does not require the intervention of *Īśvara* because *Īśvara's* grace is already with him. That is why he is pursuing this. We have seen that a person has an inclination for *advaita* only because of the grace of *Īśvara*, *puṃsām advaita-vāsanā īśvarānugrahād eva*. It is because he has earned the grace of *Īśvara* that he even has the *saṃskāras* for this pursuit. Such a person no longer requires an intervening *Īśvara* because he is non-separate from *Īśvara* and has

<sup>1</sup> *vividiṣā-sannyāsi*

discovered that there is no problem. Therefore, a *jñāna yogī*, otherwise called a *sannyāsī*, is one with *Īśvara*, whereas the other person requires the grace of *Īśvara*, in order to gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*. For him, *Īśvara* becomes the saviour. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is saying, ‘The *jñānīs* become one with Me and for *karma-yogīs*, I am the *samuddhartā*, the saviour.’ This is the difference between the *ajñānī* and the *jñānī*.

In this verse he is talking only about the ignorant, not the *jñānīs* whom he has left out of this discussion because they cannot be compared to the ignorant. Later he will come back to them.

*Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse noting that in this meditation upon *saguṇa-brahma*, accompanied by *karma-yoga*, the difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara* is accepted. Both *karma-yoga*, which is doing *karma* for the sake of *Īśvara*, *īśvarārthaṃ-karma-anuṣṭhāna*, and meditation in which there is a meditator and an object of meditation, are for the person who has this *bheda-jñāna*, the conclusion that he is different—from *Īśvara*, from the world and from other individuals. He may accept non-difference, *abheda*, as a matter of faith but he has no knowledge of it. If that appreciation is not possible for you, *aśakto’si yadi, Bhagavān* then gives some options.

The choice is only regarding various means for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*, not with reference to *mokṣa*, which is *jñāna*. Choice can only exist where there is a possibility for it. If you want to see a colour, can you choose whether to see it with your eyes or your ears? Here you have no choice. Similarly, *mokṣa* is only through knowledge, *jñānāt eva mokṣa*. The self is already liberated. It cannot and need not be accomplished by any *karma* including a mental *karma* like *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*. This meditation is not a means to remove ignorance but to win the grace that will give you steadiness of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*. And for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, there is *karma-yoga*. Being in the thick and thin of the world with all your *rāga-dveṣas*, you can neutralise them with the right attitude and grow in the process. So, for inner maturity, which is called inner purity, you require *karma-yoga* and for the sake of *naiścalya*, the steadiness of the mind, you require *upāsana*. This is what is praised here. And the one who does this was praised earlier as the best of the *yogīs*, *yogavittama*. Again, this whole section only deals with the *ajñānī*.

When he says that if you cannot gain knowledge you can do *karma-yoga*, it looks as though there are independent paths for *mokṣa* and you can choose one among them. There is no such thing. If you are already liberated, it is a matter of knowing and if you are not, there is no possibility of getting liberated. If the self is bound, it is forever bound and if it is free, it is free even now. But if it is free and you think that it is not, your problem is one of ignorance. To remove that, you require *vedānta-pramāṇa*, nothing else. Choice applies only in gaining *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, etc., for which there are a number of possibilities including prayer. If, on the basis of this, one were to claim that

all religions lead to the same goal, he is speaking only within the framework of *ajñāna*, ignorance. Whether you pray to *Kṛṣṇa*, *Rāma*, *Śiva*, Allah or any other god, there is division and that has nothing to do with *jñāna*.

Choice is only within the framework of division where there is an attempt to gain something that is removed from you in terms of time or distance or get rid of something you now have and it is to be accomplished through action, *karmasādhya*. Suppose you want to accomplish an end like gaining money. For that you require effort, which can be any of a hundred different things including buying a lottery ticket. It is a *karmasādhya*, something that is not with you now and is to be gained by you for which you require *karmas* done either in this life or a previous life. We have to include the *karma* of previous lives to account for inheritances, lottery tickets, stock market gains, etc. They are also earned. The point is that in anything that is to be accomplished by *karma*, choice is always involved. You can do it, you need not do it or you can do it differently, *karma kartuṃ śakyam*, *akartuṃ śakyam*, *anyathā vā kartuṃ śakyam*. But that is not so in knowledge. What choice do you have if you have to see the colour of an object? You have to open your eyes. And having opened your eyes, if they are not defective, you will see only the colour of the object, not any other colour. Knowledge does not lend itself to choice. It is as true as the object, provided the means of knowledge is appropriate.

Therefore, all the choices *Bhagavān* has given in these verses are only within the framework of ignorance. They have nothing to do with *jñāna*. If you are not able to meditate then do *yogābhyaśa* so that your mind will gain the composure to meditate. If even that is not possible, then live a life of *karma-yoga*, doing all your *karma* for the sake of *Īśvara* meaning conforming to the law of *dharma* recognizing that law as *Īśvara*. If that also is not possible, give up the results of *karma*, *karma-phala-tyāgaṃ kuru*, graciously accepting whatever comes as a result of your actions. Thereby you will get *śānti*. So, *karma-phala-tyāga* is not to be considered inferior to any other pursuit because the result, *śānti*, makes the mind ready for *mokṣa* by *jñāna*.

The entire *śāstra* says, '*tat tvam asi*, you are *Brahman*.' That is why you are liberated. If you are anything other than that, there is no freedom because there is isolation from *Īśvara*. And, therefore, *jñānāt mokṣa*. It is not just said in the *Gītā*. All the *purāṇas*, and even *itihāsas* repeatedly say the same thing as does *śāstra*, which of course is the *pramāṇa*.

*Śaṅkara* once again makes it clear. All comparisons are among the means of self-purification etc. for the *ajñānī*; the *jñānīs* are to be left alone in this, *te tāvāt tiṣṭhantu*. Among these means, one is prayer, which brings about a definite result regardless of its form. Whether it is a highly sophisticated prayer or that of a tribal person, it invokes the same *Īśvara*. Both the sophisticated and the primitive are ignorant,

praying to *Īśvara* with the belief that he is listening to him. There is no difference whatsoever.

The difference comes only when the Lord has said, ‘I am you.’ With a basic *śraddhā* in that, there is a provisional difference in the prayer of a *jījñāsu*. He does not accept division as a reality even though for the time being it appears to exist. His prayer is that he will discover the reality. Though he does not have the vision of non-duality, *abheda-buddhi*, because of his *śraddhā* he pursues the study of *śāstra* to discover that. In this pursuit, the whole approach is different, including prayer. That is why the ‘package’ of a religion is also important. It should allow for the pursuit of *abheda* because that is the final end. Even in a ritual, the intent, *sañkalpa*, will be in keeping with this end. The religious aspect becomes as important as *vedānta* because it allows *vedānta* to become a reality. Religion is not mere prayer. It includes a theology and if the theology is rooted in *bheda* and considers it blasphemous to think that you are *Īśvara*, it can vitiate the whole pursuit. If, on the other hand, the prayer comes from a heart, which knows from the *śāstra* that it is praying only for *abheda*, the whole approach is different. And although any form of prayer is ignorance, it is still needed to help one get free from that ignorance.

In prayer, will is used and, in fact, is expressed in its highest form. If you have the will to earn money it is not surprising because money will immediately produce a difference in your life. Similarly, if you want name, fame, power, etc., and you exert your will to get it, there is nothing extraordinary about that. But in prayer there is no immediate result. Yet you still pray very earnestly.

That means it is the highest expression of will, pure will. The *jñānīs*, through prayer etc., gained a certain disposition that made *jñāna* possible. A *mumukṣu* follows their example. *Arjuna* here is a *mumukṣu*. He wants *mokṣa* and *Kṛṣṇa* gives him all these choices, which are only for *mumukṣus*. In *mokṣa*, however, there is no choice because it is *jñāna*.

Having talked about the choices, he makes it clear that the result of all of them is the same, *śānti*, with which you can gain *jñāna*. As an *upāsaka*, meditating and living a life of *karma-yoga*, you gain that *śānti*. *Karma-yoga* will give you the *śānti* born of freedom from conflict and meditation will also give you *śānti*. As a simple *karma-yogī* with *karma-phala-tyāga*, *prasāda-buddhi* is predominant and anything that comes is recognised as coming from the Lord who is the *karma-phala-dātā*, giver of the fruits of action. You understand that you can only do, not create. Creation, including the creation of the result of an action takes place according to the law, which is *Īśvara*.

Now the characteristics of the one who has *jñāna* are described again for *Arjuna*. The *jñāna* itself is *mokṣa* and giving the characteristics, *lakṣaṇas*, of a *jñānī*, *Bhagavān* shows how he is one with him. The real definition of a *jñānī* is—the one who has *jñāna*. It has nothing to do with his appearance or style of talking etc., but there are



certain characteristics of his interaction with the world in terms of his attitude towards things like his own hunger, thirst, and situations he confronts. The way in which he interacts, not only with people but all other beings, becomes *sādhana* for *mumukṣus*. As *sādhana*s they are to be understood and pursued.

Some verses describing the *jñānī* were given in the second chapter when *Arjuna* wanted to know the description of the *sthitaprajñāḥ*, the wise man. Now here is a further description, which is useful for a *mumukṣu* because what is natural to a *jñānī* he can try to understand and assimilate as a value. These values are natural because they are in keeping with *dharma* and are therefore, *Īśvara*. Any virtue is an expression of a particular law of the creation and is to be understood. Things like love, sympathy, compassion etc., are not at all what we commonly experience because the limitation of our understanding vitiates their expression. Even though they are experienced by all they have to be assimilated.

An appreciation of and conforming to the things that are going to be told here makes a person mature. Thereby he can gain the knowledge. The way in which a *jñānī* expresses himself in life is a *sādhana* for the ignorant, the seekers. But they are ornaments for him.

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥१३॥

*adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca*

*nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī*

Verse 13

अद्वेष्टा *adveṣṭā* — the one who has no hatred/ill-will; सर्वभूतानाम् *sarvabhūtānām* — for all beings; मैत्रः *maitraḥ* — the one who has the disposition of a friend; करुणः *karuṇaḥ* — the one who is compassionate; एव च *eva ca* — and indeed; निर्ममः *nirmamaḥ* — free from possessiveness; निरहङ्कारः *nirahaṅkāraḥ* — free from the 'I' notion; सम-दुःख-सुखः *sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ* — equal in pleasant and unpleasant (circumstances); क्षमी *kṣamī* — one who is naturally accommodative

The one who has no hatred for all beings, who has the disposition of a friend, who is compassionate, free from possessiveness, free from 'I notion,' equal in pleasant and unpleasant (circumstances), and indeed, one who is naturally accommodative.

These verses from here till the last but one in the chapter talk about the person who is a *sannyāsī*, a *jñānī*. Even though later he says, 'That devotee is beloved to Me,' *sa bhaktāḥ me priyaḥ*, he is not talking about the devotee that we commonly understand, the one who makes a division between himself and *Īśvara* due to ignorance. If a devotee had this notion of difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, he would not have the

qualifications mentioned in this verse. These are attributes only of a person who is a *kṛtakṛtya*, who has found fulfilment through knowing that by nature he is free from any limitation. Because of that knowledge he is spontaneously free from hatred, *dveṣa*, etc. So, these qualifications are meant to describe a wise man, not a devotee or a *karma-yogī*. But they are told with the seeker in view. If you want to be free from hatred, well that happens to be the nature of *ātmā*. If there is no doubt or vagueness that the nature of *ātmā* is fullness, *ānanda*, the expression in interacting with the world will be based in that *ānanda* and will express as love, the one basic emotion that modifies into compassion, friendliness etc., as the situation requires. These are all expressions of one *ānanda*. Though these qualities describe a wise man, they are not meant to judge whether a person is wise or not. They are purely a description of those values and attitudes that a seeker should cultivate.

### ADVEṢṬĀ SARVABHĪTĒNĒM

*Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtanām*, the one who is free from hatred, *adveṣṭā* towards all beings, *sarvabhūtanām*. This is one of the most important qualifications of a *sannyāsī*. *Śaṅkara* says even though a person may cause him some pain, the *jñānī* does not entertain any hatred or ill-will towards the person. For him this is very natural because he sees all creatures as himself. Though this is an expression in keeping with the *śāstra*, psychologically speaking, this is how it works. Hatred arises only when someone can make you unhappy. If someone cheats you and you feel cheated, naturally you will hate the person. You have been deceived and feel outraged. If you depend upon the world, you will definitely divide the world into objects of *rāga* and *dveṣa*. An object, which you think makes you unhappy you will naturally hate. But if you have inner freedom concerning your dependence upon the world for your fullness, your vision is purely objective and love is your natural expression. You have no resistance to a person being as he or she is. You may not be able to change them even though you know a change would have changed the entire society. Even a wise man may have many people around him, some of them his own disciples, whom he cannot totally change. That is because it is very difficult for people to change. They will praise the wise man attributing all that is good to him and not to themselves—and all the time the teacher is saying, ‘You are everything.’ But if you project all that is good onto someone else, you can continue to be as you are. And that is easier than changing because change is very painful.

Then again, if you do not change, it is also painful. So, we pray to invoke the grace for the necessary changes to take place. The commitment to change expressed in that prayer will take care of it. If you say a wise person does not hate, it is not a sanction for the ignorant to hate. The point is, no person has a reason to hate another in as much as a person is what he is because he cannot be otherwise. If he could, he would certainly change. Behaviour that causes pain to others also causes pain to the one who inflicts it. Naturally a person would want to change such behaviour. The fact that he does not,

shows very clearly that he cannot. It is foolish to want the world to be entirely according to our wishes, even though they may seem valid. The changes you may wish for a person may definitely be good for him and those who relate to him. The problem is, the person may not share your values and even if he does, changing to conform to them is not a simple matter of will. Certain things, where an action is involved, you can change by will. You can decide to walk a mile a day and then do it. You can always force yourself to do an action. But inner change is a different matter. Will only confuses the issue here. Commitment to change is fine but by simply willing, one does not change. It is something like somebody asking you to love him; you cannot do anything about it. It is something that has to happen. Only by prayer can people hope to change.

If you can understand that a person behaves as he does because he cannot help it and if you see yourself from that person's point of view, you will find that you have to change. We always think that the other person should change. Well he is equally free to think that you should change. If you analyse it, you find that you have no right to will others to change. The maximum you can do is to change yourself. Then, if you really let others be what they are, you find there is no hatred. Hatred comes, as I said in the beginning, only when somebody makes you unhappy. The truth is, nobody makes you unhappy.

The problem comes from internalising the behaviour of others. If somebody does or says something disagreeable to you, you get angry. But if somebody complains to you of a headache, you do not get angry and yet it is the same situation when an emotional problem causes certain types of behaviour. The problem belongs to the person. You are responsible for your own actions and emotions, not those of others. Only if you could control things could you be totally responsible for them and since you have no control over your own emotion, where is the question of assuming responsibility for others' actions? If you have done something intentionally or unintentionally, you can own it up and make amends. When you are honest about your feelings, that is the beginning of change. You can make amends for your omissions and commissions. But what about those of others? How are you responsible for them? Yet someone else's omissions and commissions seem to affect you to a great extent emotionally because you at once internalise it. Certain behaviour or words trigger old patterns of thinking like self-criticism stemming from your background. If you analyse it properly, hatred is meaningless for any person, leave alone for a wise man. Hatred and anger etc. arise from a desire to control. Many people have tried to 'Save' the world but in the end they are destroyed, often by some microscopic creatures. The only change you can hope to bring about is a change in yourself. And because you are free, you can change, as can others—if they want to. Everyone is a potential saint because saintliness is an expression of the nature of yourself. If you see this, you will find you have no problem of control or ill will. You have freedom and nothing to quarrel about, only pragmatism. What is possible you do. What is not possible you just accept.

A person, who understands this, does not have even a small degree of hatred or anger for any living being, *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*. Seeing himself as all, he is a free person whom nothing can hurt. Unlike the ignorant, he does not helplessly set up situations where he will be hurt but sees that all situations are shining after him. This fact is very real to him making him naturally free from ill will towards all beings, *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*. You cannot hate unless you get hurt and you cannot get hurt unless someone can objectify you. Once you objectify something, you can do anything to it, including hurting it. But *ātmā* cannot be objectified. Who can objectify the consciousness, in which everything else shines as an object? A hurtful action is simply a *karma*, which shines after you who is *asaṅga*. How does consciousness get affected? Actions, therefore, remain simply actions and your responses are pragmatic.

Such a person will naturally have the disposition of friendliness. He is called *maitraḥ*. Why does he put in the abstract sense rather than saying ‘a friend,’ *mitra*? Anyone can be a friend, even a pet. He makes an abstract noun out of *mitra*, which means the state of being a friend, *mitrasya bhāvaḥ maitrī*, friendliness. One who has *maitrī*, friendliness is called *maitraḥ*. He bears no ill-will towards anyone, yet he is not aloof; he is friendly. Aloofness is an indication of anger or fear of facing people. It is an obstruction to growth because we can only perfect ourselves in the midst of people. Removing yourself from people will only aggravate the problem in the midst of people because you require various kinds of interactions to invoke every aspect of your personality. Only then will you understand yourself. The *jñāni* is not only friendly towards people, he is not afraid as he will tell later. He knows that *ātmā* is *ānanda* and when that fullness gets related it becomes various emotions. Friendliness is one of them.

## **JØËNÌ HAS FRIENDSHIP AND COMPASSION**

*Karuṇaḥ* is the one who has compassion. He can condone other's omissions and commissions. The same *ānanda* that expresses as love or friendliness takes the form of sympathy for those who are in pain. *Śaṅkara* adds that he is one who gives refuge to all, a *sannyāsī*. With the sun, the *guru*, and all the elements as witnesses, a *sannyāsī* openly declares to all beings, ‘Do not be afraid, *mā bhaiṣṭa*.’ He will not be the cause of fear for anyone because he does not covet any of their wealth or position. Not even a plant or animal need be afraid of him anymore. He gives *abhaya* to all beings. If he does not have *karuṇā*, how is he going to teach anybody? In the vision of a teacher who really knows what he is talking about, you are *saccidānanda* and have no problem. He has no problem and neither does anyone else in his vision. If the pain of another does not move him, how is he going to see a necessity to teach? How is he going to help his *śiṣyas* in getting relieved of their pain? *Ānanda*, which is so natural to him, transforms into sympathy. He is not oblivious to people's behaviour. In fact he is much more sensitive than others but his response is one of compassion. In a wise man it is absolute. It is not that because he is *ānanda* and sees no problem he has no emotions and therefore, does

not teach. If that were so, the tradition of teaching would come to a standstill. Teaching would be done by those who do not know what they are talking about and those who know would not teach. When the *śiṣya* says, 'O! *Guru*, please teach me I am in pain,' the *guru* does not say, 'You are *saccidānanda*; you have no problem.' Nor does he become so identified with the sorrow of a *saṃsārī* that he becomes sorrowful. This is another erroneous notion. If anyone says such a thing of a *mahātmā*, he is not praising him but belittling him.

The Lord is also represented as one who is all compassion. In his essential form you can look upon him as *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* or you can regard him as an ocean of compassion etc. It is the same for a wise man. He has spontaneous friendliness and affection towards people. Because he has no ill-will or hatred, he always wants to do something good for people. Helping becomes very natural.

This compassion is greater than that of even a religious person. He may use a certain plant in a ritual but a *sannyāsī* could never cut that plant. Nobody will be afraid of a *jñānī* because he is absolutely harmless. He does not demand anything from society and more than that, gives *abhaya* to all. He tells *Indra* and other *devas* and even the trees, 'Hereafter do not be afraid of me.' To reach that point he must be mature; then if he has *jñāna* it will prevail, whatever happens. Because of that *abhaya*, he is fearless like an innocent child. This is one of the two expressions often used to describe a wise man. The other is a madman, *unmatta*. The similarity is that he is happy for no reason at all. At least from our standpoint there is no reason. But his happiness does not arise from any situation; it is his nature, *svarūpānanda*. And like a child he is free from *rāgadveṣas*. Just as we are not afraid of a child, likewise we are not afraid of a wise man, one who considers *sukha* and *duḥkha* as equal, one who can forgive.

The *jñānī*, then, is one who has no hatred towards any being but who, on the other hand, has friendliness and total compassion. All these are not simply attitudes and values, *sādhana*s, but rather, because of the context, they are characteristics, *lakṣaṇa*s. In the next chapter, certain *sādhana*s, like *amānitva*, *adambhitva*, *ahiṃsā*, are given as means for gaining knowledge, *jñāna-sadhana*s, and therefore, to be cultivated. But they are the expressions of a wise man who knows that the nature of the self is freedom, fullness. When he interacts with the world, he expresses himself as *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*, etc.

## JŌĒNĪ HAS NO AHA×KĒRA AND MAMAKĒRA

*Nirmamaḥ*, one who is free from the sense of 'mine,' the sense that something belongs to him. This notion can remain even if one gives up all possessions, even if one is a *sannyāsī*. He may not have any real estate or a bank account but he can still have the sense of 'my body,' 'my *mālā*,' 'my *kamaṇḍalu*.' This sense of ownership, *mamatva*, goes only when *ahaṅkāra*, which expresses as 'I am this much alone' goes. As long as

the sense of 'I' is placed in the physical body, *dehe ātma-buddhi*, there is the notion of oneself as an isolated individual. Once that is there, the idea of 'mine,' *mama-pratyaya*, is impossible to avoid. You can give up as many things as you like but his *mama-pratyaya* will not totally go until the *ahañkāra* goes. What goes, in fact, is not the *ahañkāra* but the notion of the reality of the *ahañkāra*. Once a person has *jñāna*, there can be no notional *ahañkāra* because the notion stems from self-ignorance.

*Ahañkāra* and *mama-kāra* support each other's existence. Unless you say 'these things are mine,' *ahañkāra* cannot really be sustained. But even relatively speaking there is nothing one can claim to own if you analyse it. A mature person looks upon everything as belonging to *Īśvara*. He finds himself endowed with a few things towards, which he has the attitude of a trustee and does not suffer from the inflated notion that he has accomplished everything he has, a notion rooted in ignorance. This is a person who through *viveka* has gained maturity and is relatively free from a sense of insecurity. The fact that what will happen will happen, is well known to him and thus he enjoys a certain relaxation and readiness to face things as they come. There is trust in himself, trust in *Īśvara* and therefore, a lot of inner freedom. That is a mature *ahañkāra*, but still not enlightened. A kind of *mama-kāra* remains though not to the degree we generally see in people. He is a *karma-yogī*, a *bhakta*.

In this verse, however, the person talked about has no notion of 'I,' *ahañ-pratyaya*, as the body etc., a notion that comes from self-ignorance. On inquiry, with the help of *śāstra* and the *guru*, he has discovered himself to be free from being one physical body and sees that he is, in fact, everything. His vision is *aham idaṃ sarvam*, 'I am all this' and, therefore, the individual 'I' sense has gone. This can only be *ajñānī*, not a *bhakta* in the popular sense of the word who is necessarily an *ajñānī* because he makes a division between himself and the *Īśvara* he worships.

That does not mean that a *jñānī* cannot be a *bhakta*. As we have seen, he is included in the four types of devotees, the *ārta* who worships only when he is in distress, the *arthārthī* who enlists *Bhagavān's* help to accomplish his various ends, the *jijñāsu* who wants to know who is *Bhagavān* and finally the *jñānī* who appreciates *Īśvara* as essentially non-separate from himself. He is, in fact, the only real *bhakta* because his *bhakti* is fulfilled. All the others are qualifying themselves to become real *bhaktas*. Though they are all dear to *Īśvara*, 'the *jñānī*,' he says, 'is Myself alone,' *jñānī tu ātmā eva*. That is, who is being discussed here.

## JŌĒNÌ IS EQUAL IN SUKHA AND DUĒKHA

*Sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ*—The one for whom *sukha* and *duḥkha* are equal. How can one be the same in *sukha* and *duḥkha* when in order for there to be *sukha* or *duḥkha* the mind must undergo a modification? If you are to have emotional pain, your mind cannot be the same as it was when it was peaceful; it must undergo a change.

Similarly, you cannot experience *sukha*, without the mind undergoing a change. Yet it is said here that this person is equal in *sukha* and *duḥkha*. It looks like a contradiction. In saying this, there seems to be an acceptance of *sukha* and *duḥkha* for the *jñānī*. If he has these, how can he be equal? They both imply a change with which one identifies to say of oneself, 'I am happy' or 'I am sad.' There can be no *sukha* or *duḥkha* without the 'I' sense. Perhaps, then, when the mind has *sukha* or *duḥkha* the *jñānī* just witnesses it as *sākṣi*. But if he is a *sākṣi*, his experience cannot be called *duḥkha* or *sukha*. There appears to be some difficulty here. We should understand that *sukha-duḥkha* means situations that generally cause *sukha* and *duḥkha*, occasions that normally call for condolences or congratulations. If there is a death we offer our condolences because as a society we consider that death makes those who are left behind unhappy. Each society has commonly accepted situations, that are a cause for sorrow, *duḥkha-prāpaka*, or rejoicing, *sukha-prāpaka*. When such situations occur, a person who is *sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ* is the same, neither getting elated nor depressed which is possible only when you do not depend upon situations in order to be happy. If you do, you are going to be emotionally unstable, elated when things are conducive for you and dejected when they are not. This is not the case for the one whom they call *sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ*.

It is easy to say, you should be equal to *sukha* and *duḥkha* but this is not a piece of advice. The point is that a person who is dependent upon situations for his well-being will be subject to emotional ups and downs. And one who does not, has discovered that the self is fullness, *pūrṇa*, which therefore, cannot be improved upon and absolutely secure and timeless, being *satya-ātmā*. Knowing that the self is *sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa* he is *sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ*. In situations that cause *duḥkha*, not conducive to his comfort, he does not become a *duḥkhi*. It is not a question of merely enduring a difficult situation. Anybody can do that. What is different about a *jñānī* is that he does not become a *duḥkhi*. This is not a matter for behaviour modification but a fact to be understood and quietly recognised, which takes inquiry. It is because of his *jñāna* that he is equal, not because he is following a mandate.

Mandates like 'Be equal in conducive, *sukha-kāraka*, and non-conductive, *duḥkha-kāraka*, situations,' create conditioning and therefore, a psychological pressure to which you eventually must succumb or lose your sanity. Therefore, even though such statements have relative truth, it is important to understand them properly. Mandates like this create an ideal from which people necessarily distance themselves. The ideal is 'I should be like this' but the reality is I am not. And the greater the list of 'shoulds' and 'should-nots,' the greater is a person's estrangement from himself. If finally one day you can drop these ideals, you will discover that you are fine. You can have goals; that is different. But if you decide to achieve one goal today and tomorrow you choose another, it does not matter. If you want to accomplish something in two years, you plan for that. But it is not an ideal. Tomorrow in the wake of new knowledge you might totally give up the pursuit or extend it for another five years. That readiness to reshuffle your ideas and

objectively face challenges as they come is sanity. Being the same in the face of *sukha* and *duḥkha* is not valid as an ideal because it is not possible when there is self-ignorance. But *sukha-duḥkha* situations can be faced with relative equanimity. That is *yoga*—*samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*. You take the results of actions as *prasāda*, as we have seen, and thereby acquire a manageable mind, the mind of a *yogī*. But for a person who has knowledge, it is different. Knowledge makes one free from dependence on situations for his well-being, security, and happiness.

### JØËNÌ HAS KÂAMË

And therefore, he is *kṣamī*, one who has forbearance, forgiveness and can retain his composure in spite of hostile situations. This again is not an ideal. If you take it as such, it only creates pressure, which will vitiate your very pursuit. Just drop *kṣamā* as an ideal and understand what it takes to have *kṣamā*. Condemning yourself for not having *kṣamā* is another form of idealizing, which will only cause you anxiety and keep you struggling and seeking. If there are no ideals but rather certain things to understand in life, you will find you are a seeker, a *jīñāsu*. It is a small shift but it makes such a big difference.

Absolutely, this is the natural expression of a *jñānī*. As a thing to be understood and assimilated, it is a *sādhana*.

What is *kṣamā*? What does it take to remain composed under all hostile situations? Only when you are ready for the worst is it possible and the worst that can happen is death. This can be handled only by a *jñānī* who knows that though time, *kāla*, devours the entire creation, he devours time in the sense that he knows he is free from time, and thus devours the whole *jagat*. Facing death is not an issue for him because there is no death. If you say the body dies, he will say it is dying all the time. The cells are constantly changing and since the body is objectifiable, its nature is to be destroyed, *dr̥ṣṭa-naṣṭa-svabhāvaḥ*. It is not going to die on one particular occasion; it is always changing. The mind is also constantly dying because a thought is always momentary, *kṣaṇika*. *Ātmā*, on the other hand, is not subject to change because it is not subject to time. Therefore, 'I' does not die. Right at the outset Lord said *nāsato vidyate bhāvaḥ nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*, there is no (independent) existence for the apparent and *ātmā*, which is existence, *sat*, does not have *abhāva*, non-existence, which means that it never dies. What dies alone is dying and this is generally accepted. Only if 'I' dies is there a problem. When the sun sets we do not mourn its passing because we know that it is the nature of things to change. Once you understand the nature of something, you do not expect it to be different. There is no complaint that sugar is sweet or vinegar is sour because that is their nature. The body is changing and so, is the mind; it is their nature. But *ātmā* never changes; again because that is its nature. *Ātmā* can never be made to change and the body cannot be stopped from changing. Since you cannot change the



course of events, why grieve over it? A wise person is unruffled because of this knowledge. Even if a *jñānī* is physically injured, he understands that only his body is harmed. There is no sense of being injured or, if the injury is deliberate, insulted. The physical body may be black and blue but inside, being awake to the fullness that is the nature of *ātmā*, he is free from emotional bruises.

Relatively *kṣamā* is an attitude based on understanding, which can also be seen as forgiveness. We can see how natural this would be for a wise man but as a value it is a dangerous concept. Who are we to forgive? The whole world has forgiven us, allowing us to live as we are. This whole notion of forgiveness just creates distance. There is nothing to forgive. Again, we only have to understand one another. All of us are different because of differences in our thinking and backgrounds and are all in the process of maturing. If you understand that you will find that nobody is bad or good. Therefore, *kṣamā*, means one who is naturally accommodative.

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मे भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥१४॥

*santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ*

*mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo me bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

Verse 14

सन्तुष्टः *santuṣṭaḥ* — the one who is completely satisfied; सततम् *satataṃ* — always; योगी *yogī* — one who is united; यतात्मा *yatātmā* — who has mastery over his mind; दृढनिश्चयः *dṛḍhaniścayaḥ* — whose ascertainment is firm; मयि अर्पितमनोबुद्धिः *mayi arpita-mano-buddhiḥ* — whose mind and intellect are resolved in Me; यः मद्भक्तः *yaḥ madbhaktaḥ* — he who is My devotee; सः मे प्रियः *saḥ me priyaḥ* — he is beloved to Me

The one who is completely satisfied, who is always united, who has mastery over his mind, whose ascertainment is firm, whose mind and intellect are resolved in Me, who is My devotee, is beloved to Me.

## SUCH A JØËNÌ IS MY BELOVED

Such a *jñānī*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘is My beloved, *me priyaḥ*.’ The use of the sixth case is exactly as it is when you say *mama ātmā*, which means simply me, *ātmā*. Similarly when he says *me priyaḥ*, ‘He is beloved to Me,’ it means, ‘He is one with Me.’ An example often used to illustrate this kind of genitive is ‘*rāhoḥ śiraḥ*’ *itivat*, like *Rāhu*’s head. In Indian astrology *Rāhu* is a shadow planet consisting only of the head of a dragon. Even though there is no real possession possible here because there are not two things, one of, which can possess the other, we have the expression *Rāhu*’s head. Similarly, *me priyaḥ*, My beloved is, more accurately, My *ānanda*. The most

beloved thing in the world is *ātmā*, for whose sake everything becomes pleasing, *ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*. Previously *Bhagavān* also said the *jñānī* is 'Myself' alone, *jñānī tu ātmā eva*. Here he says, *saḥ me priyaḥ*, which is the same thing, only here he says *bhakta* and there he used the word *jñānī*.

## JØËNÌ IS ALWAYS SATISFIED

*Satataṃ santuṣṭaḥ*—the *jñānī* is always satisfied. *Satataṃ* is an important word here. Everybody is *santuṣṭa*, happy occasionally or with reference to some conducive situation. You may be happy with your job, your partner, your children but if I keep on extending the list, it will come to something you are not happy about. As a *saṃsāri* one is happy only with reference to certain things, but not *satataṃ santuṣṭaḥ*, not one who is always happy. This describes a *sannyāsī*, a *jñānī* who Śaṅkara says has a sense of adequacy, *alampratyaya* with reference to everything. He does not take issue with himself, the world and God on any account and is happy with himself. Generally we have not resolved our issues of contention even with God let alone with the world where we have numerous things to settle with various people and situations. And with regard to our own mind, body and senses, we have many accounts to settle. In this condition, it is not possible to have a constant *alampratyaya*.

There are only two things about which one can really say 'enough.' One is food. No matter how much you may like something, after you have eaten a certain quantity, you say *alam*, enough. That is why they say giving food is one of the two best acts of charity. If you feed somebody, he will eventually say 'enough'; whereas money, for example, is never *alam*. Nor is any other thing except *brahmajñāna*. Even empirical knowledge, *aparāvidyā* can never be *alam* because the more you know, the more you realise the extent of your ignorance. The sense of *alam* can only come when you know that you are *pūrṇa*, complete, because that alone cannot be improved upon. Of these two acts of charity *vedānta-vijñāna* is greater because it creates an *alampratyaya*, which, unlike that created by having enough food, is not temporary. *Santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ* is a person who has settled all his issues of contention. As a *sannyāsī*, all he has to do is maintain his body for which he requires food etc. If it is there he is satisfied; even if it is not, he is satisfied. And whether he gets something nutritious and palatable or quite the opposite, he is happy. By mere practice one can acquire this capacity; but it is very natural for a person who has settled account with himself.

*Satataṃ* can also be taken as qualifying *yogī*. There are two meanings for *yogī* based on the two meanings of the root *yuj*. If the root is taken in the sense of 'to master or control, *nirodhane*,' a *yogī* is one who has *yoga*, which is defined as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, control over the thoughts. The second meaning of the root *yuj* is 'to unite.' That is the sense in which it is used here. He is a *yogī* because of his *jñāna* of his identity with *Īśvara*. He is also a *yogī* with reference to his mind in that he has

tranquillity, *citta-samādhāna*, but not by the force of his will. The once restless mind was made relatively composed by *viveka* and *karmayoga*, then when it was exposed to *vedānta-pramāṇa*, it fulfilled its purpose in the recognition of the truth of itself. It poses no problem for him since he does not identify with it as 'I.' Being very clear about the fact that he is not the mind, he does not judge himself on the basis of mental conditions. He is *satataṃ yogī*, always a *yogī*. Everybody has experiences of tranquillity, *citta-samādhāna*, and in that sense is a *yogī* occasionally. Here *Bhagavān* is describing a *jñānī*, which is why he can say *satataṃ yogī*.

The word *satatam* is placed between the two words—*santuṣṭaḥ* and *yogī*—in order to modify both. This technique is called *kākākṣi-nyāya*, the analogy of the crow's eye. The eye of a crow does not move in its socket so, when it turns its head to see, it can look as though a single eyeball goes to the other socket. It is the same here. A single modifier placed between two nouns can modify the meaning of both nouns. Another analogy for the same situation is that of a lamp on the threshold, *dehali-dīpa-nyāya*. It simultaneously lights up the inside and outside. Similarly here, *satatam* simultaneously modifies *santuṣṭaḥ* and *yogī*.

### HE IS ALWAYS TRANQUIL BECAUSE HE HAS A MASTERY OVER HIS MIND

*Satataṃ yogī*—is one whose tranquillity, *citta-samādhāna*, is constant, which is possible only because he has nothing to do with his mind. He is also *yatātmā*, the one who has a mastery over his mind. Here *ātmā* refers to the mind and his mind is *yata*, mastered. And he is *satataṃ yogī*, because he is *yatātmā*, one who has mastery over his mind. The nature of the mind is to be restless and easily affected by external situations. When the mind is resolved in himself and therefore, not subject to this nature, the one who has such a mind is called *satataṃ yogī*.

### HE IS ONE WHOSE KNOWLEDGE IS WELL DETERMINED

*Dṛḍhaniścayaḥ*—one whose knowledge is very well determined. He has a clear ascertainment, *niścaya*, of the nature of *ātmā* and that is firm, *dṛḍha*, in the sense that it is free from doubts. This is not adamancy but rather a clarity about the nature of the self.

When he sees clearly that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, the knot of the heart, *hṛdayagranthi*, is cut, *bhidyate*. Between *ātmā* and the *deha* there is a *granthi*, a tie, brought about by *avidyā*, ignorance. From that comes *kāma* followed by *karma*, old and new. By this three-stranded string, *avidyā-kāma-karma*, together called *hṛdayagranthi*, an individual is bound and is released when that knot is untied. Doing varieties of things only makes it more knotted since action stems from a failure to understand the original problem. As in untying a tangled ball of yarn, pulling at the

wrong threads will only make the ball more tangled; you must get the ‘hang’ of it; then the knot will resolve. Spiritually also, you must first understand that seeking a solution within *saṃsāra* is only complicating the problem. The problem is ignorance and to determine that you need *viveka*. *Dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* are the four strands hanging from the tangled ball of *saṃsāra*. If you pull on the first three, you are tightening the knots. Pursuing *artha* and *kāma* only creates further problems and though *dharma* resolves the problems to an extent, it does not untie the fundamental knot, *hr̥dayagranthi*. For that you have to remove *avidyā*. When you do, the knot resolves because there is no longer any doubt about whether *ātmā* is *Brahman* or limited, *kartā* or *akartā*, *bhoktā* or *abhoktā*. These are to be seen severally because there is one contention that even though *ātmā* is *akartā* it is still a *bhoktā*. And another that *ātmā* is *aṇu-parimāṇa*—of the size of an atom. Even if you say that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, does it have attributes, is it *saguṇa*, or is it free from them, is it *nirguṇa*? And even if you know it is *nirguṇa-brahma*, should you do *karma* for the sake of *mokṣa* or not? These are some of the many possible doubts. None of them exist for the one who is a *dr̥ḍhaniścayaḥ* with reference to *ātmā*.

*Mayyarpitamano buddhiḥ*—*manas* and *buddhi* have two distinct functions and are therefore, mentioned separately here. The nature of the mind is to vacillate between one thing and its opposite, *saṅkalpa-vikalpātmakam manaḥ*. *Buddhi*, on the other hand, is characterised by resolve or determined knowledge. Both of these, *Bhagavān* says, are surrendered to ‘Me, *mayi arpite*.’ All doubts are resolved in the wake of the knowledge of *Parameśvara*. *Manas*, *buddhi*, everything is placed in *paramātmā*. That is, there are no doubts because the person is awake to *paramātmā*. This is the reason for his *dr̥ḍhaniścaya*. Similarly, he is a *yogī* because he is *yatātmā*. This cause-effect relationship between two words is called *hetu-hetumad-bhāvaḥ*. The cause, *hetu*, is that he is a *mayyarpita-manobuddhiḥ*, the result of that, the thing that has the cause inherent in it, *hetumat*, is his *dr̥ḍhaniścaya*. This is one of the technical expressions used to help us understand the *śāstra*.

## SUCH A JOËNÌ IS MY DEVOTEE AND IS VÈRY DEAR TO ME

The one who is like this, *Bhagavān* says, is ‘My devotee,’ *madbhaktaḥ*. Whenever *Bhagavān* uses the word ‘My,’ there is a potential problem. It implies that there is something different from *Bhagavān* as when you say, ‘my servant,’ the servant is different from you. When he says he is ‘My’ devotee, *madbhaktaḥ*, and is beloved to ‘Me,’ *sa me priyaḥ*, it looks as though the Lord is partial to those who praise him like anyone else who is vulnerable to flattery. If sugar were personified and you were to say, ‘O! Sugar, you are so sweet,’ it would not get flattered because it is sweet by nature. If you tell a person he is sweet, however, he can feel good about it because he knows how many problems he has and for the time being he can forget them.

Praise of *Bhagavān* is always inadequate. When we say he is all compassion and yet have very little understanding of compassion, how much weight can those words carry? With our small fraction of compassion we stretch our imagination to all compassion. It is the same for omniscience or any other absolute virtue. Since we do not know anything about it, our talking about it has little meaning. It is like Einstein's driver telling him what a wonderful scientist he is. Such praise only has meaning if it comes from a colleague or superior. Otherwise it always conveys something less than what he is. Praising *Bhagavān* with a limited knowledge, the individual mind cannot even approach what he deserves. If he gets flattered by that, he has a problem. But *Bhagavān* does not get flattered because he knows that he is much more than what you can say — whatever you say.

If this is understood, how can the Lord say, 'He is beloved to Me; he is My devotee.' This is the basis for all sects of duality. In this expression there are no two separate entities called *Kṛṣṇa* or his devotee intended. The person he is talking about is *santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī*. That can only be a *jñānī*. If he is a simple devotee, a *karmayogī*, he will be a *santuṣṭaḥ* relatively but not *satataṃ santuṣṭaḥ*. He can also be a *yogī* to some degree but not *satataṃ yogī*. And he cannot be a *ḍḍhaniścayaḥ* at all because as a devotee he will be plagued with doubts about his identity with *Īśvara*. He is speaking only of a *jñānī* here, not a *bhakta*. The *jñānī* is beloved to *Bhagavān* in the sense that he is non-separate from himself. When someone is beloved to you, where do you see this belovedness? It does not exist in any given attribute of the person but in your attitude. In his or her presence or even at the thought of the person you experience yourself as totally accepting and accepted. Two individuals resolve in love and each becomes an object of love for the other. There is unity and that emotional identity is revealed by the word *priya*. Saying someone is beloved to you is saying he is one with you. Here, even though the *jñānī* is recognised as an individual with one mind, one set of senses, still *Bhagavān* says he is essentially one with 'Me.' Therefore, My devotee is beloved to me, *madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*.

In the seventh chapter he said, I am the most beloved for the wise man, *priyaḥ hi jñānīnaḥ atyartham aham*.' Here he makes it complete by saying *sa me priyaḥ*, 'He is the most beloved to Me.' It has to be understood both ways; then it is a *mahāvākya*. Otherwise, it would mean, I may be *Bhagavān* but *Bhagavān* is not me *Bhagavān* like how the mind is me but I am not the mind. Here, not only am I *Brahman*, *Brahman* is myself. Therefore, we say both, *ahaṃ brahmāsmi* and *brahma aham asmi*, which means there is no division.

There is also a prayer to understand the oneness of *Īśvara* and myself, which says *mā ahaṃ brahma nirākuryāṃ mā mā brahma nirākarot*, 'May I not reject *Brahman*; may *Brahman* (as *Īśvara*) not reject me.' As long as I see myself as separate, *Īśvara* becomes the giver of grace and I invoke that grace to know the identity of *jīva* and *Īśvara*. In that I can discover what is said here, *sa me priyaḥ*.

Beloved is a figurative expression here. In the creation there is nothing dearer than yourself. If someone is beloved to you it is only because he makes you happy and what you really love is the pleased you and you are always searching for that which will invoke that person. Only *ātmā* is *priya* and when *Bhagavān* says *sa me priyaḥ*, it means he is 'myself,' *ānandaśvarūpa*. That is the real me and there is no other thing in the world that is *priya*. Therefore, *me priyaḥ* here means *mama svarūpaḥ*.

Further describing the *jñānī* *Bhagavān* says:

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।

हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥१५॥

*yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ*

*harṣāmarṣabhayodvegairmukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ*

Verse 15

यस्मात् *yasmāt* — the one because of whom; लोकः *lokaḥ* — people; न उद्विजते *na udvijate* — do not get disturbed; च यः *ca yaḥ* — and who; लोकात् *lokāt* — because of people; न उद्विजते *na udvijate* — do not get disturbed; यः च *yaḥ ca* — and the one; हर्ष-अमर्ष-भय-उद्वेगैः *harṣa-amarṣa-bhaya-udvegaiḥ* — from elation, intolerance, fear and anxiety; मुक्तः *muktaḥ* — who is free; सः मे प्रियः *saḥ me priyaḥ* —he is beloved to Me

The one because of whom people do not get disturbed and who does not get disturbed by people, and who is free from elation, intolerance, fear and anxiety, he is beloved to Me.

## PEOPLE DO NOT GET DISTURBED BY HIM NOR DOES HE GET DISTURBED BY THEM

*Yasmāt na udvijate lokaḥ*, the one because of whom, *yasmāt*, people, *lokaḥ*, do not get disturbed, *na udvijate*. *Lokaḥ* is the collective singular here. This is a person who is not a source of agitation for any living being. Further, he himself does not get disturbed by the world, *lokāt na udvijate ca yaḥ*. This spontaneous expression of a *jñānī* is an important *sādhana* for the *mumukṣu*.

He is not afraid of the world, which, though it is a great accomplishment, is not enough. Even a tyrant does not seem to be afraid of the world but he is not one from whom the world has no fear, *yasmāt na udvijate lokaḥ*. Both have to be said. Fear of the world and therefore, dependence upon it is largely based on self-judgement. What one thinks about oneself is one aspect of it but what others think is an integral part of self-judgement. Then there is the further complication of the difference between what others think and what you think they think. You can see how much we live in our own thought world. Let us see the fallacies of some of this thinking. What I think about

myself is negated by the *śāstra* as not true and what others think about me, I do not really know. They view me through their own projections of which I have no knowledge and my objectivity is obscured by my own fears and anxieties. If my estimation of myself is not very great, my conclusions about what others think of me is not going to be difficult to predict. Conditioned by my own thinking about myself, I draw conclusions about what others think of me. And what others think seems to be very important. We spend so much time and energy convincing others that we are not what they think. This is all because our security and happiness depend upon the world in the form of opinions of others. Their frowns and smiles seem to determine when we are happy or unhappy. Here, however, is a person who has no fear of being disturbed by the world. A foolhardy person also may respond fearlessly to situations but he will eventually be disturbed. The fearlessness that *Bhagavān* is talking of here is not that of a tyrant or of foolhardiness.

You can be disturbed by others only to the extent that you allow them to disturb you. And others will be disturbing as long as you depend on them for a sense of well-being. If a person thinks he is mortal and subject to limitations, imperfections and inadequacies, all these form his self-identity and it is impossible for him not to be dependent upon situations. He even wants to please God. Though we may be in the good graces of the people we know, we find they cannot help us much. Therefore, we want the grace of *Bhagavān*. The fundamental notion of a sense of imperfection centred on oneself is the basis for disturbance. That situation cannot be altered until I am released from the sense of imperfection by the knowledge of 'I.'

Here *Kṛṣṇa* is talking about the one who is pursuing the knowledge of *akṣara-brahma* as identical with *ātmā*. He is free from any sense of imperfection in spite of the fact that the body, senses and mind are imperfect because the self does not have any of these features. They belong to *anātmā*, which is *mithyā* and thus do not in any way condition the self, which is the *satya* from, which they draw their very existence. In the wake of this knowledge, one is not disturbed—*lokāt na udvijate*.

This can also be viewed as a *sādhana* in, which case the statement *yaḥ lokāt na udvijate* is to be understood to mean one who does not worry about what others think. You are responsible for your emotions and actions, not those of others. It is a matter of not internalising the behaviour of others without ruthlessness or lack of care. You do take care to make sure that your behaviour does not disturb, which is all that you can really take care of. In spite of that, others will sometimes get disturbed but you are not responsible for that nor can you do anything about it except pray. So, as a *sādhana* you assume responsibility for your actions and emotions and do not let yourself get disturbed by those of others.

And the world should not be afraid of you, which is unavoidable if you are a competitor. That is why it is said the *jñānī* is a *sannyāsī*. Since he is free and happy with himself, he has no need to prove himself by acquiring things. Any attempt to

acquire necessarily involves competition and a person who is competing in society is bound to disturb one person or the other. Therefore, to be a person from whom the world has nothing to fear, the *sannyāsī* takes a vow of *ahiṃsā*, as we saw. Even the gods and celestials are called by name and are openly told, ‘Do not be afraid. I am not coveting your position.’ This is his primary vow, an assurance to all living beings from the gods to the trees that he will never harm them in any way. Then he is given *sannyāsa*. Wanting to gain the knowledge of *akṣaram brahma*, the *sannyāsī* gives this *abhaya* to all living beings and pursues his studies. You can understand what kind of life it is—a very alert life making sure that no one gets disturbed.

Though you may not disturb others, you may get disturbed. Unpleasant situations can provoke anger and if you cannot express it, it gets repressed and your whole personality gets distorted. Just imagine yourself as a person who does not get disturbed by the world. No matter what happens or what anyone says or does, you do not get disturbed but keep doing whatever is to be done without disturbing anyone. Think of what kind of person you would be. You will find you are a free person. Freedom is nothing but that which is centred on yourself. Not disturbing others and not being disturbed by others is possible only when the *ahaṅkāra* is resolved in the wake of the knowledge that the self is *akartā*, *abhoktā*, because *ahaṅkāra* alone is responsible for all *kartrtva* and *bhoktrtva*. Unless this is very clear, it is not possible to accomplish this totally. As a value it can be pursued to improve your tolerance level but it is only total in the wake of the knowledge of *akṣaram brahma*.

## THE JŌÈNÌ IS FREE FROM EXULTATION, INTOLERANCE, FEAR AND PAIN

Further he says *harṣa-amarṣa-bhaya-udvegaiḥ muktaḥ yaḥ*—the one who is free from elation, intolerance, fear and anxiety, *sa ca me priyaḥ*—he is beloved to me. *Harṣa* is the state of mind that ensues when you achieve something you had wanted very much. There is an exultation, which *Śaṅkara* says is indicated by horripilation and shedding tears. When you reach such an extreme of joyous emotion, its opposite is not going to be far away.

*Amarṣa* is an intolerance, which is often rooted in jealousy, if someone is able to do something well or is happy and your appreciation of that invokes pain in you, you are suffering from jealousy, *mātsarya*. *Amarṣa* can also express as *asūyā*, overlooking a person's virtues and finding fault. When someone has a good quality, why not enjoy it? Someone who has *asūyā* will disregard the virtues and try to discover the person's faults. And everyone has faults. *Mātsarya*, and *asūyā* are together called *amarṣa*. When things do not go as you would like them to and you find you cannot tolerate yourself or the world that you feel has deceived you, that is *amarṣa*.



The *jñānī*, however, recognises any accomplishment as his own glory. With his knowledge he can say along with *Kṛṣṇa*, ‘I was *Manu*. I am *Indra*. There is nothing separate from Me and therefore, anyone’s glory is My own glory.’ *Īśvara*, to whom all glories belong, is non-separate from *Brahman*, which is non-separate from *ātmā*, therefore, any *vibhūti* anywhere is your own. Since *Īśvara*’s glory is infinite, with this knowledge you can keep on discovering his glories, which are non-separate from yourself. And this is why there is no *amarṣa*, jealousy or intolerance.

He is also free from fear, *bhaya*. At the level of the *jīva* who is a *karma-yogī*, he trusts in the order, which is *Īśvara* and therefore, conducts his life free from fear. The more you are aware of *Īśvara*’s role in your life, the more you find you are able to relax. You can let go of all that happened in the past and of all that may happen in the future and just do what is to be done without concern for what others think. This is a unique attitude, which comes of prayer. The more you recognise *Īśvara*, the less fear you have, relatively. Absolute freedom from fear is only possible with the knowledge that there is no second thing because fear is only generated by a second reality equivalent to myself. Even if I am *paraṃ brahma*, if there is another *paraṃ brahma* there will be fear because then there is the possibility of isolation, division and separation. Fear of being overpowered, cheated, and so on, exist only when there is a second thing. Even God becomes a source of fear as a punisher. The very one who is a source of fearlessness, *abhaya*, becomes the cause for fear if you see him as a second thing. If you see him as yourself, there is no source of fear because there is no other source. In *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is said that the wind blows, the sun rises, *Agni* and *Indra* and even Lord Death do their jobs because of fear, *bhīṣā asmād vātaḥ pavate, bhīṣā udeti sūryaḥ, bhīṣā asmād agniḥ ca indraḥ ca mṛtyuḥ dhāvati pañcama iti*. All the phenomenal forces behave as they do because of some mandate. The idea is individuals do things out of fear—fear of being punished, fear of being ridiculed or rejected, fear of losing, and finally, fear of other. Elsewhere it is said, ‘The one who sees a seeming multiplicity, goes from death to death, *mṛtyoḥ mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nānā iva paśyati*.’ But for the one who sees the truth, any way he looks at it, there is only one thing. From the standpoint of the self there is no second thing because everything has its being in the self. And if he looks at it as a whole, the whole cannot be many because infinity can have no parts. Thus fear does not exist for the one who has this non-dual vision.

Pain, *udvega*, of course, is not possible because *ātmā* is *asaṅga* and further, being *ānanda*, pain is not possible.

The one who is free from all these, *harṣa-amarṣa-bhaya-udvegaiḥ muktaḥ* is *priyaḥ*, beloved to ‘Me’ meaning identical with ‘Me.’

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥१६॥

*anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ*

*sarvārambhaparityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

Verse 16

अनपेक्षः *anapekṣaḥ* — the one who has no dependence; शुचिः *śuciḥ* — the one who is clean; दक्षः *dakṣaḥ* — the one who is able; उदासीनः *udāsīnaḥ* — the one who is neutral; गतव्यथः *gatavyathaḥ* — the one from whom fear has gone; सर्वारम्भ-परित्यागी *sarvārambha-parityāgī* — the one who has completely given up all initiation (of actions); यः मद्भक्तः *yaḥ madbhaktaḥ* — the one who is My devotee; सः मे प्रियः *saḥ me priyaḥ* — he is beloved to Me

The one who has no dependence, is clean, s able, and neutral, from whom fear has gone, who has completely given up all initiation (of actions), and who is My devotee is beloved to Me.

## HE IS NOT DEPENDENT ON ANYTHING

*Anapekṣaḥ*, Śaṅkara says, is someone who does not depend upon the relationship between the physical body, sense organs and sense objects for his sense of well-being. He knows he is self-existent, not dependent upon any other factor and does not suffer from the delusion that he is only alive if the body is alive. The *prāṇa*, which keeps the body alive is dependent upon him and, moreover, *ātmā* does not breathe. Since only something that breathes will die, he is always alive. *Ātmā* is pure existence, *satya-vastu*, and therefore, does not depend upon *prāṇa*, *manas*, *buddhi* or anything else for its existence. Further, all things depend upon *ātmā* for their coming to light but *ātmā* is self-evident, not depending upon anything for the establishment of its existence. In order to be full and free from any sense of imperfection *ātmā* depends upon nothing because it is the content of any experienced happiness. Therefore, one who knows this is *anapekṣa*, free from dependence in every way.

Concerns about externals such as ‘Where will I live?’ do not exist for the one who knows himself because he knows that everything is located in *ātmā*, which is the *adhiṣṭhāna*, the basis, of the entire *jagat*. This is not merely verbal; he sees that it happens to be the nature of *ātmā* and thus has no dependence at all upon situations.

## HE IS A ŚUCI

*Śuciḥ*—the one who is endowed with *śauca*, cleanliness, both outer and inner. Outer cleanliness, *bāhya-śauca*, begins with your physical body and extends to your clothes, the place where you live and the environment in general. Inner cleanliness,

*āntaraśauca*, is accomplished by various means. One of them is *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*, deliberately bringing in a disposition that is the opposite of a negative one. By deliberately cultivating a positive disposition towards a given person, your hatred, anger, jealousy, and so on, are neutralised. These do not exist in the natural expression of a wise man who is absolutely harmless.

## HE IS A DAKṢĀ

*Dakṣaḥ* here means one who is capable of understanding things as they are. Relatively, he can quickly assess a situation and do what is to be done. The action called for in a given situation depends entirely upon your estimation of it, which, if it is to be objective, cannot be prejudiced by your anxieties and fears. A wise man is a *dakṣa* because he can give a dispassionate consideration to any situation. He is also *dakṣa* in the absolute sense because he knows the cause as cause and all the effects as mere name and form, *nāma-rūpa*, which are *mithyā*. For him they have only an empirical existence, which has no impact on him because it does not challenge him as another reality. He knows that all of them are himself, that nothing at all is separate from him because the seeming difference of subject-object is entirely sublated, *bādhita*. Even though the inquiry begins with subject-object, later we negate the reality of this division. The difference is only an apparent one since there is no reality in the situation except 'I.' So, *dakṣa* can also be one who is identical with *Īśvara* in that he understands the essential identity between himself and the Lord. One of the names for the Lord is *dakṣa*, the one who is capable of creation, sustenance and withdrawal, *sr̥ṣṭi-sthiti-saṃhāra-samartha*. Or *dakṣa* is the one who has expertise in Vedic knowledge, the *purāṇas*, and *itihāsas*, *śruti-smṛti-purāṇa-itihāsādiṣu dakṣaḥ*. A number of meanings are given for *dakṣaḥ*, a very beautiful word.

## HE DOES NOT TAKE SIDES

*Udāsīnaḥ* is one who does not take sides with a friend, *mitra*, or an enemy, *śatru*. Any issue is relative whether it is with reference to an economic system, a political system, a life style or any discipline. All of them have their advantages and disadvantages depending upon how you look at them. Therefore, it is not wise to take a stand on relative issues and a wise person, though he can give cogent arguments for either side, is neither on one side or the other. He is *udāsīnaḥ*. As a *sādhana* for *Vedānta* this is very important because *Vedānta* can only be understood by a mind that does not move in extremes. We are interested in realities and for that, the mind must be very dispassionate. If you take a side on an issue, the other side is obscured from your view but if you are in between you can see both. Therefore, only a person who is dispassionate enjoys objectivity, a very important factor in understanding reality. There

is always an element of truth in any position. One who is *udāsīnaḥ* sees this and is, therefore, highly dispassionate on relative issues.

### HE HAS NO AFFLICTIONS

*Gatavyathaḥ* is the one for whom fear, or affliction of any sort is gone. Using the word *gata*, gone, *Bhagavān* indicates that fear was once there. In the wake of knowledge it is gone. Fear, as we saw, comes from separateness, so, the *karmayogī* cannot be called a *gatavyatha*. He can be only relatively free from fear whereas a *gatavyatha* is free from any type of fear, including the fear of death, which is possible only in the wake of knowledge.

### HE HAS NO NEED TO BEGIN ANY ACTIVITY

*Sarvārambha-parityāgī* is another important word. *Ārambha* here is what is planned and initiated. All *karmas* are *ārambhas* in that they begin because of a *sañkalpa*. *Śaṅkara* writing the *bhāṣya* began at some point and even *Kṛṣṇa* began teaching *Arjuna*. No one is without *ārambha*, the cause for which is *kāma*, desire. Various *karmas*, whether *vaidika*, *smārta*, or *laukika* are done to produce results here and in the hereafter. A *karmayogī* also performs these *karmas* and though he does them for the sake of *mokṣa*, he is still not *sarvārambha-parityāgī* but a *sarva-karma-phala-tyāgī* who performs actions dedicating them to *Īśvara*. One can only be a *sarvārambha-parityāgī* by giving up *kartṛtva*, which is possible only in the wake of *jñāna*. However hard you may try, there is no method by which you can give up *kartṛtva* because the *kartā* is required to employ that method. Who is this *sarvārambha-parityāgī*?

*Sa madbhaktaḥ*, he is ‘My’ devotee, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, and he is *me priyaḥ*, ‘My’ beloved because he is ‘Myself,’ *mama ātmā*, the most beloved. If we take this relatively, the seeker who is not yet a *jñānī* becomes the recipient of *Īśvara*’s grace, which will pave the way for his gaining knowledge. All these qualities, which are so natural for a *jñānī* are *sādhanas* for the seeker.

Further, he says,

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः ॥१७॥

*yo na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati*

*śubhāśubhāparityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

Verse 17

यः *yaḥ* — he who; न हृष्यति *na hr̥ṣyati* — does not get elated; न द्वेष्टि *na dveṣṭi* — is not hostile; न शोचति *na śocati* — does not grieve; न काङ्क्षति *na kāṅkṣati* — does not desire; यः शुभ-अशुभ-परित्यागी *yaḥ śubhā-śubhā-parityāgī* — the one who has

completely given up good and bad (*karma*); भक्तिमान् *bhaktimān* — the one who has devotion; सः मे प्रियः *saḥ me priyaḥ* — he is beloved to Me

The one who does not get elated, is not hostile, does not grieve, does not desire, who has completely given up good and bad (*karma*), who has devotion is beloved to Me.

### HE IS NOT ELATED OR HOSTILE

*Yaḥ na hr̥ṣyati*, the one who does not get elated when his desires are fulfilled. A *jñānī* has only *prārabdha-karma* because his free will is consumed in the wake of knowledge. *Prārabdha* is three-fold. *Karma*, which unfolds in the form of a desire in the mind of the person who initiates it is *icchā-prārabdha*. If an action is prompted by a desire that arises not in his own mind but in someone else's, that is *parecchā-prārabdha*. Teaching and writing, for example, are often done only upon request. The results of such actions are sought not by the person who does them but by the person who wants them done. The third type of *prārabdha* is desired neither by the person who experiences it nor by anyone else. It can be, but rarely is it an *iṣṭa*, desirable or pleasant. More often, it is not very pleasant, it is *aniṣṭa* like disease. No one wishes it but it happens anyway. When the *jñānī* gains the desirable, he is not elated, *na hr̥ṣyati*, and when something undesirable happens, he is not hostile, *na dveṣṭi*. He does not suffer over or regret anything that happens.

### HE DOES NOT GRIEVE NOR DOES HE WISH FOR ANYTHING

When something very beloved to him is gone, he does not grieve, *na śocati*. Recognizing that losses are a necessary part of creation, he does not suffer when things that are dear to him are taken away. In his vision, that is also part of the whole scheme of things, losses occur every day; somewhere somebody is always mourning. But we often do not recognise this unless we experience a great personal loss. The grief that follows such a loss also does not exist for the person being described here. He may have sympathy but not grief. It is important to understand that *Gītā* is not saying, 'Do not have grief.' If there is grief, it must be acknowledged and processed or you will develop psychological problems. But for the person spoken of here, *Gītā* says there is no grief. It is a fact.

*Na kāṅkṣati*—He has a sense of, 'enough,' *alam-pratyaya*. The first thing that comes to a wise man when he is offered something is, 'No.' That is the nature of *alam-pratyaya*. Therefore, the Lord says, 'He does not wish or long for, *na kāṅkṣati*, anything that he does not have.

## HE HAS GIVEN UP BOTH AUSPICIOUS AND INAUSPICIOUS

*Śubha-aśubha-parityāgī* is one who completely gives up what is auspicious and inauspicious. He does not accumulate *śubha-karma*, *puṇya*, much less *aśubha-karma*, *pāpa*. He will do a lot of *puṇya-karma*, like teaching, for example, but not to get *puṇya*. Whether he teaches because of *parecchā-prārabdha* or *icchā-prārabdha*, the *śubha-aśubha-parityāgī* does not perform action for the sake of *puṇya*. And nobody performs *karma* to get *pāpa* but in the process of acquiring various things they want, people do some *pāpa-karma*. The wise man, however has no reason to do *pāpa-karma* because he has nothing to gain. And there is no reason to get *puṇya* because *puṇya* is for *sukha* and in his vision, the *sukha-śvarūpa* is himself. All *puṇyas* have resolved in his *jñāna*. Therefore, he is a *śubha-aśubha-parityāgī*.

*Yaḥ bhaktimān*, the one who has *bhakti*, is beloved to ‘Me,’ *sa me priyaḥ*. He is the *ātma*, ‘Myself.’

समः शत्रो च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।

शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥१८॥

*samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ*  
*śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitah*

Verse 18

समः *samaḥ* — the one who is the same; शत्रो च मित्रे च *śatrau ca mitre ca* — with reference to an enemy and a friend; तथा *tathā* — similarly; मान-अपमानयोः *māna-apamānayoḥ* — with reference to honour and disgrace; शीत-उष्ण-सुख-दुःखेषु *śīta-uṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu* — with reference to cold, heat, pleasure and pain; समः *samaḥ* — the same; सङ्गविवर्जितः *saṅgavivarjitah* — free from attachment

The one who is the same with reference to an enemy and a friend, so too, honour and disgrace; the same with reference to cold, heat, pleasure and pain (and) free from attachment...

## HE IS SAME TOWARDS A FRIEND OR AN ENEMY

*Samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca*—he is the same with reference to an enemy and a friend. Someone who desires your well-being out of affection for you is a friend, *mitra*. *Śatru*, an enemy, is one who wants to hurt you in some manner. The question here is, how can a *jñānī* have a *śatru*? Why should he first create an enemy and then be equable towards him? A *jñānī* does not create enemies, but they arise nevertheless just by his being himself. Suppose all he does is sit under a tree. There will always be someone who is jealous because he is not capable of sitting under a tree. Whether a *jñānī* has a big palace or is simply sitting under a tree, someone will be jealous. There are so many

reasons for enmity. You need not do anything at all — even the shape of your nose can be good enough. That is motiveless enmity. Something about you reminds him of someone who once harmed him and that invokes enmity. But how are you going to deal with those enemies? *Bhagavān* says he is *sama*, the same. There is no change in the *antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti* whether a friend or an enemy approaches. The enemy creates no disturbance and the friend does not make him more secure or happy. He is *sama*, the same to both.

Similarly, he is the same when he receives *māna*, respect, or *apamāna*, the opposite. Whether he becomes an object of worship or is disrespected, even shamed, he is the same.

### HE IS NOT SWAYED BY THE PAIRS OF OPPOSITES

*Śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ*, in cold and hot, pleasant and unpleasant situations, he is the same unlike a *samsārī* for whom even the weather is a constant source of complaint. In summer we go on about how hot it is and when winter comes we complain about the cold. When it rains we complain and also when it is dry. Then, if the weather is just perfect, we complain that we can't get out; we have to work. The wise man, however, remains equal to all these opposites. It is not that he experiences them any differently; hot is hot and cold is cold for him also. But his mind is undisturbed with regard to them.

### HE IS FREE FROM ANY ATTACHMENT

*Saṅgavivarjitaḥ*, the one who is free from any kind of attachment. There are many possible attachments. Even a *sannyāsī*, though he has given up wife and children etc., may still worry about them. One who is *saṅga-vivarjita* has no emotional dependence upon people or things. This extends even to his own body. You may not have other dependencies but everything can get focused on the body, as it does for bodybuilders and the like. It is healthier to have some dependence on others than to have such an extreme dependence on the body. From there it extends outwards to wife, children, house, carpet, furniture etc. The *jñānī*, however, is free from any type of dependence, *saṅga-vivarjita*.

This is the concluding verse describing the person who has wisdom, which is knowledge of *ātmā*.

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित्।

अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः॥१९॥

*tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit*

*aniketah sthīramatirbhaktimānme priyo narah*

Verse 19

तुल्य-निन्दा-स्तुतिः *tulya-nindā-stutiḥ* — one who is equal to censure and praise; मौनी *maunī* — disciplined in speech; सन्तुष्टः *santustaḥ* — satisfied; येन केनचित् *yena kenacit* — by whatever (he gets); अनिकेतः *aniketah* — the one who has no place to call his own — स्थिरमतिः *sthiramatiḥ* — whose knowledge is firm; भक्तिमान् नरः *bhaktimān narah* — the man who has devotion; मे प्रियः *me priyaḥ* — is beloved to Me

The man who is equal to censure and praise, disciplined in speech, satisfied by whatever (he gets), who has no place to call his own, whose knowledge is firm, and who has devotion is beloved to Me.

### HE IS SAME IN CENSURE AND PRAISE

In the previous verse he showed that the wise man is the same in respect, *māna*, and disrespect, *apamāna*. Here he says he is the same, *tulya*, in censure, *nindā*, an assault of criticism and demeaning words or actions, and in praise, *stuti*. Praise and censure of a wise man by someone who is ignorant are meaningless. Whatever praise one may give, the wise man knows he is more than that because he is not different from *Paramēśvara*. Since he has no sense of want, nothing will flatter him and if people criticise, well, they have every freedom to do so.

Both praise and censure are the same to him in the sense that neither creates any appreciable change in his mind. Some change is possible because we accept *dr̥ṣṭa-sukha* and *dr̥ṣṭa-duḥkha* even for a *jñānī*. As a result of a situation there can be a *vṛtti-viśeṣa*, a particular mental condition. A *jñānī* can laugh as well as be serious. But the reality behind all these mental conditions is *pūrṇa*, which is why the mind of a wise man is likened to the ocean. Sometimes it is calm; sometimes it has a roaring fullness, sometimes a rippling fullness, but it is always full without depending upon the entry of waters from different rivers, much less the rain. The ocean enjoys its 'oceanness' without depending upon any other water source. Similarly the wise man is subjected to *dr̥ṣṭa-sukha-duḥkha* but behind it there is no *ajñāna*; so, the mental condition is not taken as himself. His identification with the mind is not from any lack of discrimination, *aviveka-tādātmya*, but with discrimination, *viveka-tādātmya*.

### HE IS A MAUNI

*Maunī*—This is a great qualification of a wise man. It does not mean that he does not talk—if he did, there would be no teaching—but that his organ of speech is well disciplined so that his speaking is measured and what he says, he means. This is not a mandate but again, a very natural expression for him. He has no need to chatter because chattering is an expression of restlessness. The pressure builds up and you find you have to talk. And it is good to talk. But for the wise man, this pressure does not exist; so,



talking is not necessary. This can also be practised as a *sādhana* as long as it is not made an ideal. Talking should be fruitful and judicious—neither too much nor too little.

## HE IS HAPPY WITH ANYTHING

*Santuṣṭaḥ yena kenacit*, with any given thing he is happy—because he is happy with himself. He will do what is necessary to take care of the body but he has no scheme to manipulate the world in order to benefit from it. The few things that are necessary for any living person are all he bothers with. Whatever they are and in whichever form they come, he is *santuṣṭa*, totally happy. He is a non-complaining person.

*Śaṅkara* reminds us here of another *vākya* from the *Mahābhārata*<sup>1</sup>, which expresses the same thing. ‘All the gods call him a *brāhmaṇa* whose clothes can be ragged, who is satisfied with whatever food he gets and wherever he finds shelter to lie down and rest.’ The idea is you do not need to provide him with comforts to keep him happy. People generally require many things to keep them cheerful. Certain types of music, food, company, even conversation topics must all be to one's taste or one gets disconcerted. Some people cannot bear to be in a conversation in which they cannot participate. Even the clouds must be kept away to keep some people cheerful. A wise man, on the other hand, is already pleased with himself; so, he is easily pleased with whatever he has. If you are pleased with yourself, the world need not do much to please you, nor can it displease you.

*Aniketaḥ*, he has no dwelling place—and he is happy. This does not mean that he should have no roof over his head but that there is no place, which he calls his own. The one for whom there is no *mamabuddhi* is called *aniketaḥ*.

All these words reveal the person but lastly he says the real *bhakta* is a *sthiramatiḥ*. Previously he said *dṛḍhaniścayaḥ*, the one whose understanding leaves nothing to be desired, and he concludes repeating the same thing. *Sthiramatiḥ* is one whose understanding is firm in that it is complete. There is no vagueness or doubt.

One may ask whether someone has a total commitment to making money, is he not also a *sthiramatiḥ*, but with regard to money? There, and with anything other than *ātmā*, the *mati* is always *asthira* because *sthiratā* is possible only when what one dwells upon is *sthira*, constant. It should be *nitya*, not subject to change and also complete, *pūrṇa* in order for the *mati* to be *sthira*. The *śvarūpa* of *ātmā* is the very *śvarūpa* of the mind and therefore, once the mind is awake to the truth of *ātmā*, the person does not undergo any change. The *mati* is *sthira* because the object is *sthira*. He is awake to the *paramāṛthavastu*, the thing that is real, *satya*. That is only *Brahman*, which is *ātmā*. Up to this point all that has been said is the expression of the person. It

<sup>1</sup> *yena kenacidācchanno yena kenacidāśitaḥ*

*yatra kvacana śāyī ca taṃ devā brāhmaṇaṃ viduḥ – śantiparva 245.12*

can be absolute, in which case he has *sthiramati*. Or the expression of these qualities may be only relative, as we do see in some ethical, balanced people who are not necessarily *jñānīs*. Thus we have no real features to distinguish whether a person is wise or not. Finally, only *sthiramati* determines whether he has wisdom. His knowledge of the fact that *ātmā* is *Brahman* is firm, never assailed by doubts.

*Bhaktimān sa naraḥ*—that person is a devotee. The popular meaning, *rūḍhyartha*, of *nara*, is simply person but its etymological meaning is the one who does not die — *na rīyate iti naraḥ*, an epithet for *paramātmā*. Because of his knowledge of *ātmā*, this person has become a *nara*.

He is further called *bhaktimān*, the one who has *bhakti*, which means *jñāna-svarūpa-bhakti*. And he is beloved to ‘Me,’ *me priyaḥ*, which means, as we have been seeing, ‘He is My *ātmā*. He is not separate from Me.’ Here *bhaktimān* is used in the sense of *jñānī*. We have seen the four types of *bhaktas*, the *bhakta* in distress, the one who is a *bhakta* when he wants something, a *mumukṣu* who is pursuing knowledge and the *jñānī* who *Bhagavān* declares as himself. That is the *bhakta* described here. Let us maintain the word *bhakta* as the word devotee can be problematic. The root *bhaj* from which it comes means to pursue and also to gain.

Now *Bhagavān* concludes. Introducing this last verse *Śaṅkara* says that the (list of the) group of attributes of those *sannyāsīs* who have clear knowledge of the real *vastu*, who have freed themselves from the threefold desire for wealth, progeny, and the hereafter, and who are committed to the pursuit of *akṣara-brahma*, which was initiated is now concluded.

All the qualities taught so far are summed up in this last verse.

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।

श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥२०॥

*ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṃ yathoktaṃ paryupāsate*  
*śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāste’tīva me priyāḥ*

Verse 20

ये तु *ye tu* — however those who; पर्युपासते *paryupāsate* — follow; धर्म्य-अमृतम् इदम् *dharmya-amṛtam idam* — this life that is in keeping with *dharma*, leading to immortality; यथोक्तम् *yathoktam* — as was told; श्रद्धधानाः *śraddadhānāḥ* — who are endowed with *śraddhā*; मत्परमाः *matparamāḥ* — for whom I am the ultimate; ते भक्ताः *te bhaktāḥ* — those devotees; अतीव *atīva* — exceedingly; मे प्रियाः *me Priyāḥ* — beloved to Me

However those who follow this life that is in keeping with *dharma* leading to immortality, as was told, who are endowed with *śraddhā* and

for whom I am the ultimate, those devotees are exceedingly beloved to Me.

## THEY ARE MOST BELOVED TO ME

*Dharmyāmṛtam*—*Dharmyam* is that which does not move away from *dharma*, *dharmāt anapetam*. And it is *amṛta* because it is the cause for *amṛtatva*, immortality. This life of *dharma*, which consists of conducting oneself in keeping with the description of a wise man that was just told, *yathokta*, and meditating, upon *akṣara-brahma*, is the means for liberation. The wise man's natural expression, friendliness, *maitrī*, compassion, *karuṇā*, absence of *dveṣa*, etc., become the values of those who seek this wisdom. Those *mumukṣus* meditating upon *akṣara-brahma* also pursue these values relatively.

They are able to pursue this well and with great enthusiasm because they are *śraddadhānāḥ*, they are endowed with *śraddhā* in themselves, the teacher, the *śāstra* and *Īśvara*. The grace of all four is required. Through prayer we gather the grace of *Īśvara* and one manifestation of that grace, *īśvarakṛpā*, is the very *śraddhā*. Because of *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*, there is *śāstra-kṛpā*, whereby what the *śāstra* says is understood properly. Otherwise *śāstra* will be interpreted differently, which is why we have so many schools of thought arising from the same *śāstra*. Thirdly you require the teacher's grace, *gurukṛpā*, and finally, your own, *ātmakṛpā*. When they are all there, you will have conducive situations and atmosphere, trust in yourself and, therefore, this knowledge. *Śraddhā* is a very comprehensive word. Those who have it are *śraddadhānas*.

Because *Kṛṣṇa* is summing up here, he makes it very clear by saying *matparamāḥ*, those whose commitment is to 'Me.' If you are invoking the grace of the Lord for the sake of health or economic welfare or any other reason, then your commitment is to those things and not to *Īśvara*. There is nothing wrong with that but the one who is, *matparama* wants to know *Īśvara*, which is an entirely different thing. He is a *mumukṣu* because there is no *mokṣa* other than *Īśvara* who is *mokṣa-śvarūpa*. Therefore, you have to recognise *Parameśvara* for which you must necessarily be *īśvaraparama*.

To make it clear that this is not a meditation upon the cosmic form, *viśvarūpa-upāsana*, *Śaṅkara* says that when Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says *aham* here, the meaning is *akṣara-ātmā*, the self that is not subject to destruction, who is the *paramā gati*, the ultimate end. It is also the immediate end. If it is only the ultimate end you can postpone it but when the ultimate and the immediate ends are the same, the commitment is complete. This is possible because the end is incomparable, *niratiśayā gati*. His pursuit is backed not by a simple faith but by a clarity about what he wants and the nature of what he is seeking.

They are called *bhaktas* whose *bhakti* is characterised by knowledge of what is real, the *paramārtha-vastu*. The *jñāna* is also real because it is not subject to sublation. Of those who have this knowledge, *Bhagavān* says, ‘They are the most beloved to Me’ *te atīva me priyāḥ*. His use of the word *atīva* makes it clear that he is speaking here of the *jñānī*, not any other *bhakta*. Though the *karmayogīs* are also dear, the *jñānīs* are absolutely dear to *Bhagavān* because they are not different from himself. Their *bhakti* has fulfilled itself in the form of knowledge and since fulfilled *bhakti* is also *bhakti*, the *jñānī* is called a *bhakta*. In the beginning his pursuit is *jñāna* and in the end it is again *jñāna*.

Whatever effort is required to do *śravaṇa* and foster these values in himself, he does. They do not automatically take care of themselves; you have to apply your will to cultivate these values and keep yourself, in a position where you can gain this knowledge.

Because of the nature of the pursuit, it may not look as though the person is doing very much at all. It is something like trying to solve a mathematical problem. Once the mind is seized with it, even though one may get vexed or tired and stop actively trying to solve it, he goes on puzzling over it sub-consciously. On the surface he is doing various other things but subconsciously he keeps analysing the problem and one day, the solution strikes him. This is what is commonly called intuition. A person who has not been seized with this problem will never have such an ‘intuition.’ Only the person who discerns the problem will discover the solution as only the mathematician will discover the solution to a mathematical problem, not someone who has not gone to elementary school.

These things do not happen by accident; they require effort. You have to know and you are not going to stumble upon this knowledge. You need a means of knowledge. And to discover the proper means of knowledge, you require grace, which is earned. Why should you be directed to it while another passes it by or another, even having heard it, disregards it? Again it comes down to effort. There is some *saṃskāra* for *advaita*, which is a *karma-phala* of great *punya*. Therefore, you must exercise to overcome certain difficulties, which may arise. In any pursuit there are difficulties and the pursuit of knowledge is no exception. People lose their enthusiasm and even give up in the face of obstacles, only because they are not clear about what they want. With some effort and will the difficulties can be faced and, as I told you, prayer is the ultimate expression of will. The one who wants to reach the ultimate end, which is the most beloved and not different from himself, must make effort, *yatna*.

ओं तत्सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे

श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे भक्तियोगो नाम द्वादशोऽध्यायः ॥१२॥

*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ*

*yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde bhaktiyogo nāma  
dvādaśo'dhyāyah*

*Oṃ tat sat.* This is the twelfth chapter in which the topic is *bhakti*, in *Śrīmad-bhagavadgītā*, which is *brahma-vidyā* and *yoga-śāstra* in the form of a dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*.

Both the one who is meditating on *akṣara-brahma* and one who is pursuing *karmayoga* combined with meditation on *saguṇa-brahma* are *bhaktas*. The word *bhakti* is used diversely in this chapter and thus the topic of the chapter is *bhakti*.

There is no separate discipline called *bhakti-yoga*. *Yoga* here, as in all the other chapters, means a topic. Both *bhakti* characterised by the knowledge of what is real, and that characterised by a devotion to and meditation upon *Parameśvara* are mentioned here. At the end Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says *te atīva me priyāḥ*, 'They are for Me the most beloved.'

**ABABABABAB**

## CHAPTER 13

### THE NATURE OF THE KNOWER AND THE KNOWN

#### INTRODUCTION

The tradition looks upon the entire *Gītā* as having its subject matter in the *mahāvākya*, ‘*tat tvam asi*—you are that.’ This statement contains the whole teaching. ‘You’ means the person who is addressed, the *jīva*, who wants to be enlightened. ‘That’ is *Īśvara*, the Lord, to whom the individual is equated in this statement, *tat tvam asi*.

In the first six chapters, the *Gītā-śāstra* unfolds the meaning of ‘you, *tvam*.’ The first chapter reveals *Arjuna*’s sadness. The individual, *jīva*, is always sad; sometimes acutely, otherwise chronically. Chronic sadness is managed through various routes of escape like dance, music, movies, accomplishments, exhibition of skills, and so on. But sometimes it becomes acute as it has for *Arjuna*. He no longer wants to resort to any mode of escape but wants to address the problem. Thus, in the second chapter we saw *Arjuna* discovering in *Kṛṣṇa* a teacher and seeking a solution and placing himself at the Lord’s feet as a disciple. And Lord *Kṛṣṇa* accepted him as a disciple and began teaching him, not simply advising him. Thus the teaching began. Knowledge of the real meaning of the word *tvam*, the *pratyagātmā*, was unfolded as *avināśī*, not subject to destruction, *nitya*, eternal, *aja*, the one who is unborn and not subject to change, *avyaya*, who cannot harm nor be harmed, that is, one who is neither subject nor object—*veda avināśinaṃ nityaṃ ya enam ajam avyayam, kathaṃ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṃ ghātayati hanti kam*.<sup>1</sup> It was also said: weapons do not cut him; fire does not burn him—*na enam chindanti śastrāṇi, na enam dahati pāvakaḥ*.<sup>2</sup> In these various *vākyas* the nature of the *pratyagātmā*, which is equated to *Īśvara*, was unfolded.

Though they are one, there is a seeming contradiction between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is omniscient, *sarvajña*, and the cause of everything, *sarva-kāraṇa*, whereas the *jīva* is *alpajña*, of limited knowledge and bound by the various laws, and so on. How are these to be equated? You have to understand what is meant by the word ‘you’ and therefore, *Bhagavān* unfolds the *pratyagātmā*, as the real meaning of the word ‘you.’

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* -2-21

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* -2-23

In the second chapter Lord *Kṛṣṇa* presented the means, *karma-yoga*, that will aid in gaining this knowledge. Then *Arjuna* expressed a doubt in the third chapter about whether he should adopt a life of *sannyāsa*, or continue with *karma-yoga*, both of which are for the *jīva*.

Then the fourth chapter unfolds the real nature of *sannyāsa* as the giving up of action through knowledge, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*, again revealing that *pratyagātmā* is not an agent of any action, it is *akartā*. The one who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is the one who has discrimination, who is united to *Īśvara* and has done all that is to be done—*karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyēt akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ, sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karmakṛt*.<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth chapter, *sannyāsa* is further unfolded showing that the *pratyagātmā* is neither a doer—*akartā*, nor an enjoyer—*abhoktā*. Even seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, letting go, grasping, winking, and so on, the knower of the self does not perform any action—*paśyan śṛṇvan spṛśan jighran aśnan gacchan śvapan śvasan pralapan viśṛjan grhṇan unmiṣan nemiṣan api, indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartante iti dhārayan, naiva kiñcit karomi iti yukto manyeta tattvavit*.<sup>2</sup> In the sixth chapter contemplation upon the *pratyagātmā* is advised: ‘having made the mind alive to the self, one should not dwell upon anything else (as separate from the self)—*ātmasaṁsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet*.<sup>3</sup> This again is predominantly *tvam-padārtha* even though the equation is shown. Thus the first six chapters are centred on the word ‘you’ in the sentence ‘That you are.’

The whole emphasis changed dramatically even in the initial verses of the seventh chapter where *Bhagavān* talked about *Īśvara*, the meaning of the word ‘that,’ *tatpadārtha*, as the cause of the entire world, *jagat*. In the tenth chapter he talked of the glories, *vibhūtis* of *Īśvara*; in the eleventh chapter he showed his cosmic form, *viśvarūpa*, and in the twelfth chapter, *Kṛṣṇa* talked about *upāsana*s. When *Īśvara* is discussed, the *jīva* becomes a devotee. Thus the second group of six chapters, *dvitīya-ṣaṭka* deals predominantly with *Īśvara*.

The third *ṣaṭka*, the last six chapters of the *Gītā*, talk about the identity of the *jīva* and *Īśvara* and the means, *upāya*, for achieving that identity. Accordingly, certain values and attitudes are going to be discussed in these chapters.

*Śaṅkara*’s long introduction to the thirteenth chapter is an indication of the importance of this chapter of the *Gītā*. It reveals the identity between the *jīva* and *Īśvara* and clearly discusses some terms, which are vague. Some editions begin with the following question. In others, including the manuscript that *Śaṅkara* had, it is omitted.

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –4-18

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* –5-8, 9

<sup>3</sup> *Gītā* –6-25

If this verse had been there, Śaṅkara's introduction would have been quite different. The verse, in the form of a question from *Arjuna* reveals the various topics discussed in the thirteenth chapter. This verse probably was a later addition but it is still a very intelligent way of introducing the entire thirteenth chapter of the *Gīā*.

अर्जुन उवाच ।  
 प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च ।  
 एतद् वेदितुमिच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ॥  
*arjuna uvāca*  
*prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ caiva kṣetraṃ kṣetrajñameva ca*  
*etat veditumicchāmi jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ ca keśava*

अर्जुनः *arjunaḥ* — *Arjuna*; उवाच *uvāca* — said;  
 प्रकृतिम् *prakṛtim* — the nature; पुरुषम् चैव *puruṣam caiva* — and indeed the person;  
 क्षेत्रम् *kṣetraṃ* — field; क्षेत्रज्ञम् एव च *kṣetrajñam eva ca* — and indeed the knower of the  
 field; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — the means of knowledge; ज्ञेयम् च *jñeyaṃ ca* — and what is to be  
 known; एतद् वेदितुम् इच्छामि *etat veditum icchāmi* — this I wish to know; केशव *keśava*  
 — O! *Keśava*

*Arjuna* said:

This I wish to know, O! *Keśava*, (what is the) nature and indeed the person, the field and indeed the knower of the field, the means of knowledge and what is to be known.

What *Arjuna* wants to know is grouped as three pairs of words. They are, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*—*prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ ca eva*, *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*—*kṣetraṃ kṣetrajñam eva ca*, and *jñāna* and *jñeya*—*jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ ca*. He wants to know what is meant by *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. This terminology of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* is common to both *Sāṅkhya* school of thought and *Vedānta*. Similarly, he wants to know what is meant by *kṣetrajñā*, the one who knows the *kṣetra*. So too, he wants to know what is *jñāna* and *jñeya*. *Puruṣa*, *kṣetrajñā* and *jñeya* happen to be identical as do *prakṛti* and *kṣetra*. Because *Arjuna* has some confusion about these words, he asks for their definitions.

What is *jñeya*? *Jñeya* means *jñāna-yogyā*, that which must be known in one's life; that is not other than the *kṣetrajñā*, the *puruṣa*, *Brahman*; thus *jñeya* is *Brahman*. And if one has to know, *Arjuna* also wants to know through what kind of mind, *jñāna*, can one know. Here the word *jñāna* refers to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the instrument with which one can know. It has to be endowed with values like *amānitva* etc., for *Brahman* to be known. That by which something is known is also called *jñāna*, as he will explain very clearly later.



The entire thirteenth chapter is nothing but the answers to these questions. Because Śaṅkara did not have that verse, he introduced the chapter as follows:

In the seventh chapter, two types of *prakṛtis*, meaning nature of *Parameśvara* were mentioned briefly. One *prakṛti* consisting of three qualities, *triguṇātmikā* and divided into eight factors, *aṣṭadhā bhinnā*, is called *aparā prakṛti*, because it is the cause of *saṃsāra*. The other, *parā prakṛti*, is the essential nature of the *jīva*, characterised as the knower of the field (of experience), and the very nature of the Lord. Previously it was described as indestructible, *akṣara*, limitless, *parama*; and not subject to any modification, *avyaya*. Because of these two *prakṛtis*, *Īśvara* gains the status of creator, sustainer, and destroyer of this world. The word *prakṛti* means both nature, *svabhāva*, and cause *kāraṇa*. Both *ātmā* and *māyā* are called as *prakṛti* because both are the cause of creation, *jagatkāraṇa*. *Ātmā* alone is not *jagatkāraṇa* nor is *māyā* without *ātmā*. Therefore, both are called *prakṛti*, the cause. Together they are called as *prakṛti* that is divided in a two-fold way. One, *aparā prakṛti*, comprises the three *guṇas*, *triguṇātmikā*, and the other, *parā prakṛti*, is *saccidātmikā*. This two-fold *prakṛti* accounts for *Īśvara* being the cause for this entire *jagat*. Another word for *aparā prakṛti* is *kṣetra* and for *parā prakṛti* is *kṣetrajñā*, the knower of the field. This is one of the traditional methods of unfoldment, *prakriyā*, in *Vedānta* known as the seer-seen methodology, or the subject-object *prakriyā*, that is used to show the nature, *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. Śaṅkara has to say this because in his manuscript, the chapter opens abruptly with a new topic, not preceded by the question, which appears in later editions.

Towards the end of the twelfth chapter, beginning with ‘*adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*,’ up to the end of the chapter, the expression of the renunciates, the knowers of the truth, is told. And the Lord says that such *jñānīs* are very dear to him, *sa me priyaḥ*. Then again, endowed with what knowledge does one become so dear to *Bhagavān*? That this knowledge is nothing but knowledge of the identity of the *jīva* and *Īśvara* has to be shown and thus, the thirteenth chapter is begun.

Further, the *prakṛti* comprising of the three *guṇas* and undergoing modifications is assembled in the form of the body-mind-sense-complex of a person for the purpose of accomplishing the enjoyment of *karma-phala* or for gaining *mokṣa*. This is the *aparā-prakṛti*, which undergoes modifications and gives the physical and psychological body to a *jīva* for *bhoga* as well as *mokṣa*. Therefore, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* starts with *idaṃ śarīram* to begin the unfoldment of what exactly is the *svarūpa* of this *kṣetrajñā* and *kṣetra* using the subject-object method of inquiry, *dṛg-dṛśya-viveka-prakriyā*.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥१॥

*śrībhagavānuvāca*  
*idaṃ śarīraṃ kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhīyate*  
*etadyo vetti taṃ prāhuḥ kṣetrajñā iti tadvidaḥ*

Verse 1

श्रीभगवान् *śrībhagavān* — the Lord; उवाच *uvāca* — said;  
 कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! Son of *Kuntī*, *Arjuna*; इदम् शरीरम् *idaṃ śarīram* — this body;  
 क्षेत्रम् इति *kṣetram iti* — as field; अभिधीयते *abhidhīyate* — is called; एतत् यः वेत्ति *etat*  
*yaḥ vetti* — the one who knows this; तम् *taṃ* — him; तद्विदः *tadvidaḥ* — the knowers of  
 that; प्राहुः *prāhuḥ* — speak of (call); क्षेत्रज्ञः इति *kṣetrajñāḥ iti* — the knower of the field

*Śrī Bhagavān* said:

O! *Arjuna*, this body is called ‘field.’ Those who know that (knowledge of the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*) call him, who knows this, as ‘the knower of the field.’

## KĀETRA AND THE KĀETRAJŪA

In his answer, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* reorganises the whole question. Instead of defining *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, even though they were mentioned first in the question, he chooses to define *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* because they have the same meaning as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. The terms, *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* are less confusing as they do not have the connotations imposed upon *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* by the *Sāṅkhyas* and can therefore, be more easily understood. Therefore, we can assume that Lord *Kṛṣṇa* chooses to address first *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, and then *jñeya* and *jñāna*. Finally, he talks about *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Arjuna* is addressed here as *kaunteya*, son of *Kuntī*. In Sanskrit, people are named not only according to their paternal lineage but also, as here, according to their maternal lineage because it was understood that both are important.

*Idam śarīram* means this body. The word ‘this’ is used only for an object, which is not remote in time or place. Only what is right in front of you can be referred to by the word ‘this.’ *Kṛṣṇa* may have even touched his own body and said, ‘This body, *idaṃ śarīram* is called *kṣetra*.’ Then he says that they call the one who knows, *yaḥ vetti*, this, *etat*, referring to this *śarīra*, as *kṣetrajñā*. Who are they? *Tadvidaḥ*, those who know the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* distinctly. Here a lot has to be unfolded but let us first see the meaning of *kṣetra*.

*Kṣetra*—a place, specifically a place of pilgrimage or a place of cultivation, generally a place where you reap fruit. The *Gītā* opens with *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre*. This body is called *kṣetra*, the place wherein you can reap the fruits of *puṇya* and *pāpa* and is therefore, a *dharma-kṣetra*. And it is a *karma-kṣetra* because, being endowed with a free will, you are qualified to do *karma*. One more word has to be added here, *idaṃ manuṣya-śarīram* is what is called *kṣetra*. Later he is going to expand on this to

include any object. That being so, why does he confine the definition to *idaṃ śarīram* here? It is easy to understand that any object is a *kṣetra* but not so with the body. I take it as *kṣetrajñā*, the knower of all things. In other words, I take the body as 'I' *ātmā*, not as *anātmā*. Therefore, I have to distinguish the *kṣetrajñā* only from the body because I do not take any other object other than this body-mind-sense-complex as *ātmā* and suffer from its limitations. I do not take the pumpkin as myself and so, no *viveka* is necessary. I do not need to be told very seriously, 'You are not a pumpkin.' Only where there is *aviveka* does one require *viveka*. No one has such a lack of discrimination between an object, other than the physical body, and himself. Since there is no confusion of taking the object as himself, no *viveka* is necessary. *Bhagavān* begins right at the locus of the *aviveka*, the physical body, which is taken as *ātmā*. Even though a table, for example, is also a *kṣetra*, it is not mentioned here at all because it is not mistaken for *ātmā*.

The *kṣetrajñā* also has to be defined because people generally take the physical body as the *kṣetrajñā*. Then, who is the *kṣetrajñā*? If we say it is the one who knows the *kṣetra*, then even a rat looking at my physical body is a *kṣetrajñā*; but that is not so. The *kṣetrajñā* is the one who looks at this body from within, that is, the one who objectifies this body from within, just as he objectifies the world outside. Here, in this verse, this physical body is *kṣetra*, and the one who sees this physical body as an object from within, the *dr̥k*, seer, is the *kṣetrajñā*.

*Śarīra* is that which is subject to disintegration *śīryamāṇa-svabhāvaṃ śarīram* otherwise called *deha*, that which is subject to be burnt, i.e., cremated, *dahana-yogyaṃ śarīram*. The entire physical, physiological, psychological complex including the causal, subtle and physical bodies is called *kṣetra* and the one who knows it is *kṣetrajñā*. *Śaṅkara* has a few things to say.

By the pronoun *idaṃ*, 'this,' *Bhagavān* qualifies the word *śarīra* and then defines it as *kṣetra*. We have seen the popular meanings of *kṣetra*. Here *Śaṅkara* gives the etymological meaning, *vyutpattiyartha*.<sup>1</sup> The human body is a *kṣetra* because it saves you from falling down, *kṣata-trāṇāt*. With this human form, one is capable of following *dharma* and therefore, gathering *puṇya*, which will save you from falling into the body of a lower life form. It can give you *mokṣa* also. That is why this body is a place of

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<sup>1</sup> *Śaṅkara* gives the etymological meaning of the word *kṣetra* by giving four possible meanings. They are as follows:

1. *kṣata-trāṇāt kṣetram* — because it protects one from falling (into *saṃsāra*), it is called a *kṣetra*.
2. *kṣayāt kṣetram* — because it undergoes *kṣaya*, destruction, it is called *kṣetra*.
3. *kṣaraṇāt kṣetram* — because it is subject to disintegration, it is called *kṣetra*.
4. *kṣetravat kṣetram* — because one reaps the fruits of one's actions through this body, it is like a cultivable land through which one harvests the crops one has sown and is therefore, called *kṣetra*.

pilgrimage. It helps you save yourself from falling into lower wombs and with this same human physical body, which is alive and in which there is a mind etc., you can also save yourself from *saṃsāra*. Whether it helps you save yourself relatively or absolutely from *saṃsāra*, it deserves to be called a *kṣetra*.

The *Gītā* opens with the following verse:

*dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ  
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya*

This verse can also be explained subjectively. This body is a *dharmakṣetra* because it is brought into being by *puṇya*, which is the result of *dharmā*. A human birth is very difficult to attain, *narajanma durlabham*, and can only come about as a result of *puṇya*, and therefore, the human form is called a *dharmakṣetra*. Or, it is a form in which *puṇya* rather than *pāpa* is predominant and is therefore, *dharmakṣetra*. It is also a *dharmakṣetra* because only with the human form can you create *puṇya*. Because of this, it is also called *kuru-kṣetra*, a place where you can gain *puruṣārtha* whether it be *dharmā*, *artha*, *kāma*, or *mokṣa*. In this *dharmakṣetra*, which is also *kuru-kṣetra* two groups have assembled desiring to fight, *samavetāḥ yuyutsavaḥ*. The mind is the arena of this battle. Of the two armies that have assembled, one belongs to the descendants of *Pāṇḍu*, which means white and it symbolises proper discrimination, *viveka*. The descendants of *viveka* are all the proper way of thinking, values etc., born of discriminative knowledge, *viveka-jñāna*. The other army is, as *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* paraphrases it, ‘*māmakas*—those that belong to ‘me,’ consisting of all likes and dislikes born of *ahaṅkāra*, which has its roots in ignorance. These hordes of ignorance-born likes and dislikes are in conflict with *viveka-jñāna*. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* wants to know what is the outcome of the struggle between these two forces that is taking place in this body. And what follows is the entire *Gītā*.

Here it is important to understand that this is not purely a subjective interpretation. In order for such a battle to be waged externally, it is first fought in the mind. Otherwise it would never manifest. All external conflicts arise first in the mind. When Hitler declared war, the battle was already being fought in his mind. We do not say that nothing happened externally, just that it happened internally first. What is outside is, after all, an expression of what is inside; so that, anything that takes place outside can be viewed subjectively also. This is important to understand because in the subjective treatment of the *Mahābhārata* there is a danger of dismissing history, which we need not do.

This body is a *kṣetra*. Even though it is subject to disintegration, as a human body, its purpose is not merely to disintegrate but to serve as a *kṣetra*. It is called *kṣetra* because it can save you from destruction *kṣatāt trāyate*, that is, it helps you to overcome *duḥkha*. Or like a field of cultivation this body is also a *kṣetra* since in it you can reap the fruits of *karma*.

The one who knows this body as a *kṣetra* is a *kṣetrajñā*. How does one know? *Śaṅkara* says from the sole of the feet to the top of the head, *āpāda-tala-mastaka*, the entire body up to the extremities is known as conscious because one sense organ, the sense of touch, is all over the body. It reveals the *caitanya-ātmā*, which is exactly the *svarūpa* of the *kṣetrajñā*, because of whom alone the body is also an object of knowledge. The *kṣetrajñā* is the one who objectifies this body in terms of knowledge. Further, *Śaṅkara* points out that he does this very naturally, *svābhāvikenā*, without being taught. Alternatively, his capacity for this objectification may be *aupadeśika*, born of the teaching of the *śāstra* and the *guru*. Though it can be arrived at without being taught because it is an observable fact, still, the help of a teacher may be required to point out the distinction between the body and the observer of the body. Otherwise the body is taken to be the *kṣetrajñā*, the *ātmā*. In order to distinguish the *ātmā* from the *śarīra*, teaching is helpful and sometimes even necessary. So, *Śaṅkara* adds the word *aupadeśika* here. The one who is able to objectify every part of this body as an object of knowledge either because of the teaching, or through his own observation, is called the *kṣetrajñā*.

By whom is he called this? Those who know about this, *tadvidah*, who know about the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*.

But they are known only to this extent. The one who knows this body, which includes the mind and senses, as the *kṣetra* is the *kṣetrajñā*. This is not all that is to be known. About this *kṣetrajñā*, a fact has to be revealed by the *śāstra*.

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥२॥

*kṣetrajñāṃ cāpi māṃ vidधि sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*

*kṣetrakṣetrajñāyōrjñānaṃ yattajjñānaṃ matam mama* Verse 2

च अपि *ca api* — and also; माम् *mām* — Me; सर्वक्षेत्रेषु *sarvakṣetreṣu* — in all the bodies; क्षेत्रज्ञम् *kṣetrajñam* — as the knower of the body; विद्धि *vidधि* — may you know; भारत *bhārata* — O! Descendant of *Bharata, Arjuna*; यत् *yat* — that (which is); क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोः *kṣetra-kṣetrajñāyoh* — of the body and the knower of the body; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — knowledge; तत् ज्ञानम् *tat jñānam* — that is (truly) knowledge; मतम् मम *matam mama* — (this is) My vision

O! Descendant of *Bharata, Arjuna*, and also, may you know Me as the knower of the body in all the bodies. That (which is) knowledge of the body and of the knower of the body, is (truly) knowledge. (This is) My vision.

## I AM THE KĀETRAJŌA IN ALL THE KĀETRAS, SAYS THE LORD

Here, indeed, is what the *śāstra* has to reveal. ‘May you know Me, *Īśvara*, as the *kṣetrajñā* in all the *kṣetras*.’ Everything else in the verse is praise. That *kṣetrajñā* who knows the *kṣetra*, the physical body-mind-sense complex, is to be understood by you as ‘Me,’ *Parameśvara*. This is the sense in which *Kṛṣṇa* uses the first person singular here. Who is that *Parameśvara*? *Śaṅkara* says—the one who is not subject to *saṃsāra*. Everyone understands the *kṣetrajña* to be a *saṃsārī*, but here, he says, the *kṣetrajñā* is identical with *Īśvara*, the Lord.

And the Lord is not just the *kṣetrajñā* in one given body but in all, *sarvakṣetreṣu*. Wherever one says, ‘This is my body,’ there is this *kṣetrajñā*, the *caitanya* that obtains in every body. That, *Bhagavān* says is ‘Me,’ ‘*sarvakṣetreṣu*, in all the bodies, I am the *kṣetrajñā*.’ In other words, he is saying, ‘You are Me. Every person is Me, *Parameśvara*.’ *Śaṅkara* explains that this one *kṣetrajñā* is seemingly divided into countless forms beginning from Brahmaji to a clump of grass. Why seemingly divided? Only by the *upādhi* is it divided, not essentially. When one sun is reflected in many mirrors, although it looks as though there are many suns, there is in reality only one. Similarly, one *Parameśvara* alone is the *kṣetrajñā*, seemingly divided because of the *upādhis* as Brahmaji, *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Agni*, *Gandharvas*, *Yakṣas*, humans, animals, microbes, trees, plants, etc. In reality, that *kṣetrajñā* is not divided at all. It is free from all differences brought about by the *upādhis*. In all the *kṣetras* there is only one *Parameśvara*, which is *ātmā*—you. Further, *Śaṅkara* says that it cannot be known by words that indicate what is *sat*, existent, or *asat*, non-existent. A pumpkin is *sat*; it is evident to you as an existent thing. Whereas its beard is *asat*; also evident to you as a non-existent thing. The knowledge of both ‘Is’ and ‘Is not’ is generated by a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. And you, the one who operates this *pramāṇa* is distinct from the object known. But here, it is not known to you as one of the existent objects, but is that, because of which everything exists, and is by nature self-evident and self-existent. Please understand Me as that *kṣetrajñā*—*kṣetrajñam māṃ viddhi*.

*Arjuna* is addressed as *Bhārata*, which can mean simply, the one born in the family of *Bharata*. Here, however, in light of the topic, an etymological meaning is appropriate—the one who revels in *brahmavidyā*. *Bhā* is *brahmavidyā*; *tasyāṃ ramate iti bhārata*. Here *brahmavidyā* is indicated by *bhā*, that which is in the form of effulgence. *Ātmā* is *caitanya*, which is known as *Brahman*. Knowledge of *ātmā* as *Brahman* is *brahmavidyā* and the one who revels in the exposure to this *brahmavidyā*, is called *Bhārata*.

## THIS ALONE IS KNOWLEDGE

### KĀETRAJŌA, YOU, THE INDIVIDUAL, IS NON-SEPARATE FROM ĪŚVARA

Knowledge of *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajna* alone is knowledge. This is *Īśvara*'s vision, *yat tat jñānaṃ mataṃ mama*. *Mata* here is not contention or opinion but recognition of a fact. Whenever such an expression is used in the *śāstra*, it is a final verdict, not a matter of contention.

Other than this knowledge of the truth of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, which is *Īśvara*, there is nothing remaining as an object of knowledge because *Īśvara* is everything. Not only is the physical body *kṣetra*, the mind, senses, etc., and the entire physical world is also *kṣetra*. All this is implied here and will be unfolded in the verses to come. We thought the physical body was *ātmā*, the *kṣetrajñā*. Now we discover that not only the world, which we know very well is *kṣetra*, but our physical body and all that is within it—mind, senses, etc., are also *kṣetra*. Therefore, everything is *kṣetra* and what remains to be known are the *kṣetrajñās*, of which there is only one, though we think of them as many. *Kṣetrajñā* and *kṣetra* together cover everything. Nothing is left out. Therefore, the knowledge of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* alone can be considered knowledge because in this, nothing remains to be known. *Kṛṣṇa* explains this further. Because it does not omit anything, it is the knowledge of the whole. Any other form of knowledge is only partial *jñāna*, and therefore, ignorance, *ajñāna*, in as much as it is sullied by ignorance. Once you know the *kṣetrajñā* as *Īśvara* and also the *kṣetra*, you know the whole. That is the vision of *Īśvara*.

*Kṣetra* implies this entire world, as will be told later, and this three-fold body, *sthūla*, *sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa*. The one who is a witness of all these, the *pratyagātmā*, is here called *kṣetrajñā* and identified as being not different from *Īśvara*. Thus this verse is a *mahāvākya*. *Bhagavān* says, 'In all *kṣetras*, may you know me as the *kṣetrajñā*, *kṣetrajñāṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*.' That means there are not many *kṣetrajñās*; there is only one and that is not separate from *Īśvara*, who is not a *saṃsārī* and is the cause for the entire world. May you understand, *viddhi*, that knowledge of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*. This has to be said because there is confusion. The *kṣetra*, the physical body, is taken as *kṣetrajñā*, the knower of the *kṣetra*. Therefore, the knowledge of the *kṣetrajñā*, the 'I' being identical with *Īśvara*, the Lord, and of everything else being *kṣetra* depending upon that *kṣetrajñā*, is called *jñāna*. Anything else is called *ajñāna*. If *Īśvara* is looked upon as someone separate from yourself, there is *ajñāna*, ignorance, because the truth is that *Īśvara* and the *jīva* are identical. That is the vision of *Īśvara*.

Because this verse is a *mahāvākya*, it is very elaborately commented upon by *Śaṅkara*. *Kṣetrajñā*, you, the individual, is non-separate from *Īśvara* and that *Īśvara* is one, which means, there is only one *kṣetrajñā*, *ātmā*, not many. Therefore, in the vision

of the *śāstra*, everything is one. You are the whole in that there is nothing separate from *Īśvara* and essentially you are *Īśvara*—*sat-cit-ānandam advayaṃ brahma*. This being the vision, there is a necessity, *Śaṅkara* feels, to unfold it as the vision of the entire *śāstra* and he, therefore, has an elaborate inquiry here. He begins with the view of an opponent to this vision, *pūrva-pakṣa*, because *vicāra* is required when there is something to be known, and there are varying contentions about it. Within the realm of ignorance there can be any number of contentions, all of which have to be answered in order to understand the vision. That which was declared as *jñāna* is established in the discussion that follows.

It is important, first of all, to understand that the one who knows the *kṣetra* is the one who illumines it as *sākṣī, ātmā*. That is what is equated to *Īśvara* by the statement *kṣetrajñāṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu*.

### THE KṢETRAJÑĀ CANNOT BE THE SAME AS ĪŚVARA, AN OBJECTION<sup>1</sup>

An objection is raised about the statement of identity of the *kṣetrajñā* and *Īśvara*. When he says, ‘In all the *kṣetras* understand the *kṣetrajñā* to be myself, *kṣetrajñāṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu*,’ does *Bhagavān* really mean that the *kṣetrajñā*, the ‘I’ is *Īśvara*? And if so is the identity of *kṣetrajñā* with *Īśvara* pointed out or some kind of relationship between the *kṣetrajñā* and *Īśvara* indicated? The basis for the latter contention is that the *kṣetrajñā* can be included in *Īśvara* but *Īśvara* need not be the *kṣetrajñā* as a tree is included in the forest, but the forest is not a single tree. Similarly, you can say the ocean is nothing but drops of water, but a drop of water is not the ocean. In the same way, they claim, the *jīva* is only a fraction of *Īśvara*.

### IS JĪVA ONLY A FRACTION OF ĪŚVARA?

Those who hold this view substantiate it with verses like that from the fifteenth chapter of *Gītā* where *Bhagavān* says, *mamaivāṃśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ*—only a fraction, *aṃśa* of Me is there in the world of the *jīvas*. Similarly, there is a verse in *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* beginning with the words, *dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*, that says, ‘There are two birds in the tree of *saṃsāra*; one goes about eating the fruits, i.e., *karma-phala*, and another, without eating, watches the other bird eating.’ The *dvaitī* will say the one who does not eat is *Īśvara*; he is above everything, and the one who eats is the *jīva*. By *Īśvara*'s grace this *jīva* gains entry to heaven where he enjoys some kind of

<sup>1</sup> From here a lengthy discussion is presented by *Śaṅkara* answering all the questions raised by all the dualists and establishing that there the individual, *kṣetrajñā*, is essentially not different from *Īśvara*. *Swamiḥi* elaborately explains all the arguments here and therefore, this section has to be studied carefully and repeatedly.



beatitude. The basic premise is that as a *jīva* you are forever different from *Īśvara* who by his grace can save you by calling you to a better place where there are no afflictions. This is the essence of the theology of any dualistic religion. They use *mantras* such as these to support their view of duality, *dvaita-siddhānta*, trying to interpret all the *mahā-vākyas* as revealing duality and supporting their arguments with citations from *Padmapurāṇa*, *Kūrmapurāṇa*, etc. But however much they may argue for it, duality is something that is problematic in everybody's experience.

### ĒTMĒ IS ĪĀVARA<sup>1</sup>

As the *śāstra* says, even if one makes a small division, *udaram antaram kurute*—between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara*, the *jagat* and *jīva*, *jīva* and *jīva*—then he has fear, *atha tasya bhayaṃ bhavati*. In *advaita* alone is there *abhaya*, freedom from fear. Fear, especially fear of mortality and fear of loss, in general, is the cause of all problems. Every individual is frightened; only the degree of fear varies. You start as a child, frightened of the enormity of the world with which you have to cope with. Everything is so big—even an apple is a very big thing to have to put into your mouth. And when you see the power of the forces at work in the world, naturally you are frightened. This is the nature of every *jīva*. Among them, some can handle snakes, some cockroaches, and some fellows cannot handle anything beyond a house fly! This is *saṃsāra*. This is an important thing to understand. Fear is *saṃsāra*. As long as one is a mortal, one is a frightened, isolated individual. What I am, is so infinitesimally small in the scheme of things and what I am not, is infinite. I am always at the mercy of the world and the forces therein.

It is obvious that in *dvaita*, duality, there cannot be any solution. In spite of this, the dualists try to seek some solution. If you win his grace, then *Īśvara* will bestow on you some beatitude amounting to the gain of some special world or experience, *lokaprāpti*. This is generally the contention of these dualists.

### IF JĪVA AND ĪĀVARA ARE IDENTICAL THEN ĪĀVARA WILL BECOME A SAĒSĒRĪ SAYS THE DVĀITĪ

If in all bodies there is an *ātmā*, 'I,' which is one, non-dual *Īśvara*, then other than that *Īśvara*, there is no other person. That being so, there is no, enjoyer, *bhoktā*, nor is there a doer, *kartā*, because *Īśvara*, being *sat-cit-ānanda* and not subject to *saṃsāra*, is neither a *kartā* nor a *karma-phala-bhoktā*. If you say this *ātmā*, 'I,' is *Īśvara*, that means I am not a *bhoktā*, which is not my experience of myself. If, on the other hand, you say that *Īśvara* is also a *bhoktā*, by knowing that I am that *Īśvara*, there is no gain. I continue to be the same *saṃsārī*. But *Īśvara* is always presented as the one who is not

<sup>1</sup> This is the reply of the *advaitī*.

subject to *saṃsāra*. If that *Īśvara* is *aham*, there is no separate *bhoktā*. Until now I considered *ātmā* to be a *bhoktā*. I am the one who is the enjoyer of my *sukha* and *duḥkha*; all my experiences tell me that I am the enjoyer. Now you say *ātmā* is *Īśvara*. So, in addition to knowing very well that I am a *saṃsārī*, I now know that *Īśvara* is also a *saṃsārī*. If the *jīva* is equated to *Īśvara* and if there is no other enjoyer, *Īśvara* becomes a *saṃsārī*.

Either *Īśvara* becomes the *saṃsārī* or there is no *saṃsāra* at all. Both are unacceptable. If the Lord becomes a *saṃsārī* because he is identical with the *jīva*, there will be no *mokṣa*. If there is no *mokṣa*, there is no bondage either because they are mutually dependent. But this is incompatible with our experience. We do experience a sense of bondage. If *Īśvara* is also a *saṃsārī*, the maximum you can achieve is union with him and union of a *saṃsārī* with a *saṃsārī*, however exalted, does not solve the problem of *saṃsāra*. Fluctuating emotions, subject-object problems, fear, birth and death will all remain. You are eternally bound, which is highly undesirable.

#### IF THERE IS NO SAṂSĀRA FOR THE JĪVA THEN THE ŚĀSTRA WILL BECOME USELESS<sup>1</sup>

If, on the other hand, *Īśvara* is not a *saṃsārī* and there is identity of the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, there is no *saṃsāra* for the *jīva*. In that case, what is the purpose of the *śāstra*? The study of *śāstra* is declared as being for *mokṣa*, freedom from *saṃsāra*, which is bondage. The *śāstra* is a *pramāṇa* because of which there is knowledge and that knowledge liberates you. Here, however, we have the very unfortunate situation of the *śāstra* being useless because when there is no *saṃsāra*, no bondage, there is no necessity for release. And if we accept that we do not require *śāstra* because there is no *saṃsāra*, that implies that there is no rebirth, no *karma*, no *puṇya* or *pāpa*, no *sukha* or *duḥkha*. There is no duality whatsoever because there is no subject-object relationship. But that is not what we experience and we have to account for our experiences. Any teaching should speak of our experiences, analyse them and reveal the truth about them; but it cannot go against our experience. Conclusions based on that experience can change in the light of knowledge but not the experience itself. Similarly, a stick placed in a glass of water appears to bend. Perceptually it is true; factually it is not.

Knowledge can explain away a particular perception but no *śāstra* can say something, which contradicts the *pramāṇas* like *pratyakṣa*, perception, *anumāna*, inference, and so on. It can reveal that there is a heaven, for example, which is not against *pratyakṣa* or *anumāna* because it is not within their scope. But if it were to say that after having gone to heaven you can lie there eternally, we would have a problem because that is against all reason, *anumāna*, etc. Perception is two-fold—witness perception and sense perception.

<sup>1</sup> *dvaitī's argument*

*saṃsāra* is characterised by pain and pleasure and their causes, success and failure and the pairs of opposites like heat and cold. A *saṃsārī* is always concerned about the future unlike a *sādhu* who lives from moment to moment. The existence of *saṃsāra* for a *jīva* cannot be denied because it is experienced by his own means of knowledge like perception. By witness-perception you experience what happens in your mind, *sukha-duḥkha*, the essence of *saṃsāra*. The causes for it, like heat and cold, are sensorial. All the things that are desirable as well as undesirable are experienced by you and cause *sukha* and *duḥkha*. Therefore, you cannot say that there is no *saṃsāra*.

Further, *saṃsāra* can be inferred from the number and variety of *jīvas* that exist. Why do we see so many varieties of *jīvas*? There must be some cause. One person is wealthy by birth, another is poor. One, though poor at birth becomes rich, another remains poor throughout his life. We find varieties of circumstances in terms of wealth, health, marriage, children, citizenship, talents, career and so on. All these are not totally self-planned and achieved. From this we surmise that there are a variety of underlying causes. Otherwise, how can we account for these differences? Even the genetic model can be traced to the more fundamental model of *karma*. This is an *anumāna* in keeping with the *śāstra*, which talks about a *jīva* independent of the physical body who survives death and assumes a new birth in various situations determined by its own set of *karmas*. The *jīva* is not feminine or masculine and may assume either a male or female body depending on which set of *karmas* need to fructify. That means each *jīva* is a *bhoktā* and a *kartā*, so, *saṃsāra* caused by *puṇya* and *pāpa* resulting from *dharma* and *adharma* is inferred.

All these become necessarily untenable when *ātmanā*, the *kṣetrajñā* and *Īśvara* are identical. Until then, these problems persist. The absence of *saṃsāra* is contradicted by your own perception and inference. It is against all our *pramāṇas*.

### THIS ARGUMENT IS NOT VALID SAYS ŚAṅKARA

This argument, Śaṅkara says, is not valid. If the *jīva* and *Īśvara* are identical, the *jīva* has no *saṃsāra*. This is exactly what the *śāstra* says. Until you recognise that identity, you have *saṃsāra*. Everything is proper. Knowledge and ignorance being entirely opposed to each other, under the spell of ignorance this is all possible. We have to find out, which accounts for what. To explain, Śaṅkara quotes a number of *vākyas*. In *Kāthopaniṣad*, it is said, ‘These two paths, ignorance and what is known as knowledge, are far removed from and opposed to each other.’<sup>1</sup> Earlier, the same *Upaniṣad* shows the difference between these two in terms of result, by saying *śreyas* and *preyas* are different.<sup>2</sup> *Preyas*, the result of *avidyā*, means something desirable like heaven, etc. Because of the ignorance, ‘I am the *kartā*, I perform *karma* taking myself

<sup>1</sup> *Kāthopaniṣad* – 1-2-4

<sup>2</sup> *Kāthopaniṣad* – 1-2-2

as the agent and, if everything goes well, the result will be *preyas*, a *karma-phala*. The result of *vidyā* is just the opposite, which is *mokṣa*.

As a link in the *saṃpradāya*, generally, we quote *Vyāsa*, as *Śaṅkara* does here: He quotes from the *Mahābhārata*, *dvau imau atha panthānau*—there are these two [paths].<sup>1</sup> One is knowledge, *jñāna-mārga*, leading to *śreyas*, the other is *karma-mārga*, leading to *preyas*. Under the spell of ignorance, the *jīva* is seen as different from *Īśvara* and one falls prey to the notions of doership and enjoyership, *puṇya-pāpa*, *sukha-duḥkha* experiences and so on. This is all invalidated with knowledge. But when there is ignorance there is bondage and a *mokṣa-śāstra* becomes valid as do *karma-phala* and experiences of *sukha-duḥkha*. Even in the *Gītā* the two types of pursuits are discussed—one leading to *mokṣa*; the other to rebirths. So the basis of *śruti*, *smṛti* and proper reasoning, one understands that this argument—that if the *jīva* is *Īśvara*, *Īśvara* becomes a *saṃsārī*, or if *Īśvara* is not a *saṃsārī* there is no *saṃsāra*—is not proper.

Comment: Check out this reference.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

To claim that *Īśvara* is a *saṃsārī* contradicts the definition of *Īśvara* and denies the possibility of *mokṣa*. *Īśvara*, the one who is the Lord of everything, cannot be a *saṃsārī*. If the *jīva* is identified as *Īśvara* and *Īśvara* is free from *saṃsāra*, then the *jīva* is free from *saṃsāra*—which is against our experience. But there is no difficulty in this if one takes into consideration knowledge and ignorance. The opponent's argument is that if he is *Īśvara* there should be no *saṃsāra*. That is true. If you are *Īśvara*, there is no *saṃsāra*—if you know this. If you do not know, you will definitely know yourself as a *saṃsārī*. 'I am *Īśvara* but still I am a *saṃsārī*' you can never say. Therefore, knowledge and ignorance make all the difference.

The opponent is led to make this argument because he does not understand what is meant by the *jīva* being equated to *Īśvara*, the Lord. Therefore, he says if the *kṣetrajñā*, the subject, the known meaning of the word 'I' is equated to *Īśvara*, the Lord becomes a *saṃsārī* because of his identity with one who is subject to pain and pleasure, numerous limitations and finally, birth and death. This is inconsistent with his being the Lord who is defined as omniscient, omnipotent and so on. On the other hand, if the Lord is not a *saṃsārī* and still has identity with the *jīva*, there will be no *saṃsāra*. I would have no limitations, which is against my experience. *Śaṅkara*, having raised the objection, says, all this is possible because of ignorance and knowledge. You are identical with *Īśvara* but you have to know it as such. If you do not know, you have *saṃsāra*. All limitations are purely incidental, not intrinsic to the self, the 'I' who is the Lord. There can only be one infinite, limitless whole, not two and consequently, you cannot be separate from the limitless, nor can it be made up of parts. Thus, the answer—knowledge and ignorance account for this peculiar situation—is valid.

<sup>1</sup> *Mahābhārata Śāntiparva* – 242-6

### THE LIMITATIONS ARE DUE TO IGNORANCE AND CAN BE REMOVED BY KNOWLEDGE

If one says that in spite of being identical with *Īśvara*, one experiences oneself as having limitations, that is understandable. And that is due to not recognising oneself as identical with the 'self' or the Lord. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says that this ignorance along with its effects, which are the limitations, has to be removed by knowledge. For this, we have *śruti*, the Veda, supported by non-vedic texts like *Gītā* that corroborate the *śruti* and also reasoning, *nyāya*, that supports the *śruti*. All the three are important. The *śruti* is the source book for this knowledge, which can be acquired here now in this birth. If you know that the self is identical with *Īśvara*, the Lord, you are free from the sense of limitation. The body, mind, and senses will continue to have their limitations but they do not cause the self to be limited. That the body is limited is not the problem because it does not look upon itself as limited. The mind is purely a thinking faculty, which can function in the form of cognition, memory, emotions etc., but it has no sense of limitation. The sense of limitation is centred on the I-notion.

On inquiry, this 'I,' the *ahaṅkāra*, the subject, reduces itself not to another thought form, but to the content of the thought form, which is consciousness. The one who recognises that 'I,' the *pratyagātmā* as identical with *Īśvara* sees that he is already free from any form of limitation. He knows that he is the truth of everything and therefore, the *śruti* says, if one were to know (this) here, there is truth, *iha cedavedīt atha satyam asti*. On the other hand, if one were not to know here in this life, *na ced ihaavedīt*, the loss is immense, *mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ*.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the loss is infinite because what you are losing is the infinite, exactly what you want to accomplish. Freedom from limitations is an already accomplished fact. Not knowing that, you have to take yourself as other than limitless, which can only be limited. Experience and interaction confirms that and one cannot help but experience the pain of limitation. Thus the endless struggle to be different begins, not realising that, no matter what one does, one will be the same limited person. From the *śruti* we understand that if there is ignorance, the person is bound; if there is knowledge of the self, he is free. Another *śruti* says, 'The one who knows that in this way becomes immortal here, *tam evaṃ vidvān amṛta iha bhavati*.'<sup>2</sup>

### THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE SELF AS BRAHMAN IS IMMORTAL

The one who knows this self in this manner as identical with *Brahman* is immortal. Previously he considered himself subject to time and therefore, mortal. With the discovery of himself as timeless, he is no longer under the misconception that he is bound by time. Here time stands for every sort of limitation. Even though the body

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<sup>1</sup> *Kenopaniṣad* – 2-5

<sup>2</sup> *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* – 3-12

continues to be bound by time, he knows that essentially he is not. The notion of being a mortal is completely nullified and therefore, the 'I' is free from the limitations caused by time, etc. And this liberation is *iha*, here in this birth, not after death. If the individual soul survives death, it will continue to be an individual soul, which cannot by definition be free of the sense of limitation. Since this knowledge can be gained now, while in a human form, that means it is a form that is eligible for this knowledge.

### THERE IS NO WAY OTHER THAN KNOWLEDGE FOR MOKĀA

*Śruti* herself makes it clear that there is no other way than knowledge to gain this freedom, *nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*,<sup>1</sup> for freedom—from being a limited person—another path does not exist. When the whole problem is one of ignorance, what other way is possible? If I do not know something and knowing it is going to mean my freedom, I must know. Experience is not going to accomplish that freedom for me. The self is always experienced and moreover, all experiences happen because of this awareful self. Any type of experience, whether subjective or objective—in relation to an object external to the senses, implies the presence of consciousness.

A perception of a form, for example, is nothing but consciousness plus whatever constitutes the perception. Similarly a sound, smell, taste, or touch perception or anything you imagine or dream are all nothing but one consciousness, which does not differ. It is not necessary to specially experience the self because it is always self-evident and because of which the self you experience everything else. Therefore, freedom is a matter of recognition—a matter of knowing the self. The fact is, freedom is identical with yourself; it is not something that is created and can therefore, be lost. If there is such a thing as freedom, it can only be intrinsic to the person who is seeking freedom and can be gained through the discovery that the seeker and sought are identical. It cannot be said more directly than it is in this *vākya*, *nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*. It appears in the *Yajurveda* in *puruṣa-sūkta* and is expressed differently in many other *śruti* texts. *Taittirīyopaniṣad* says, *ānandaṃ brahmaṇo vidvān na bibheti kadācaneti*, the one who knows the *ānanda* of *Brahman* is never afraid. Everybody knows *ānanda* in some form. Different types and degrees of pleasure from different sources will all reveal one fact—that in spite of limitations one can be happy. This means that whatever *ānanda* you experience is nothing but a taste of what the self is. What does it mean then, when we say one knows the *ānanda* of *Brahman*? *Brahman* is not an object but the self, and therefore, this is the *ānanda* of oneself, the limitless, the whole.

The one who knows this is naturally not afraid of any other thing because there is no other thing. It is not possible to be limitless and at the same time encounter the presence of a second thing. The limitless plus something is incidental, name and form,

<sup>1</sup> *Śvetāśvatropaniṣad* – 3-8

*nāma-rūpa*. The essential truth of all names and forms is yourself. Space, time, all names and forms are the self; yet the self is independent of all of them while they are not independent of the self. With this knowledge, one is no longer afraid. Like one wave, which has understood that it is water, and that every other wave, in fact the whole ocean, is water, knows that it need not be afraid of a breaker. It understands that the breaker itself is another form, both forms being purely incidental.

*Śaṅkara* quotes numerous *śruti* passages stating that freedom lies only in knowledge of the self. Then he quotes passages confirming this by stating the condition of a person who is under the spell of ignorance. In *Taittiriyaopaniṣad*, in the same section, it is said, '*atha tasya bhayaṃ bhavati*,' thus he has fear. Preceding to this statement it is said, 'When one makes even a small division in this self, there is fear—*udaram antaraṃ kurute atha tasya bhayaṃ bhavati*' This 'small division' may be the notion that the limitless includes me but I am not limitless, just as the ocean includes the wave, but the wave doesn't have the status of being the ocean and thus somehow 'belongs' to the ocean. That is true if you are looking at the wave as one entity and the ocean as another. If you are looking at water; in the objects called 'wave' and 'ocean,' you see only one water appearing in different forms. The form has a truth about it, which is water, and therefore, the status of the reality of ocean or wave is *mithyā*. You cannot say the wave is non-existent, nor you can say it exists independently apart from water. Similarly, the individual and the Lord are one and the same essentially. When that is appreciated you can play any role without fear or grief. As an individual, of course, you have a history. You were born at a given time, grew and aged, were sometimes successful, sometimes not. All that is possible for the form, but not for the essence of that form, which is one changeless consciousness. If however, one were to make the small division that the Lord is himself but he is not the Lord, no matter where he goes or what he does, there is no possibility for any freedom from fear. As an individual he cannot avoid fear of mortality, fear of isolation, fear of being overwhelmed by the world. Inner leisure is not possible for him because he has so many cares.

To know a wise man, you must be wise. And it is only by some grace that one studies under a teacher who knows the truth of the self. What happens more often is that one chooses a teacher who does not know and this amounts to the blind leading the blind. Though a person may have some insight or even be very learned about the *śāstra*, or under the spell of some delusion he may think that he knows the truth and is in a position to teach others. Unless you know the truth yourself, how can you determine whether he really knows or not? And if you can determine it, you know the truth and do not require a teacher. So, it is not difficult to understand how one can fall into the hands of a teacher who does not know.

The problem often is that one takes a charismatic approach to learning. If someone is renowned, there is often an assumption that he is worthy of being followed. Suppose Prince Charles were to abdicate his position as heir to the throne and undertake a

spiritual pursuit. Even if he does not know anything you will find many people wanting to follow him. *Siddhārtha* walked out, and look, what happened. Even the neighbouring king, *Bimbisāra* told him that if *Siddhārtha* discovered some truth, he, the king, would be his disciple. In order to have a following, he did not need to know anything; his renunciation was enough because he was a prince. People renounce their lives for a spiritual pursuit everyday and nobody pays any attention. But if a celebrated person does it, it is the front page news. This is called reflected glory. And people seem to find it very difficult to distinguish between glory and wisdom. So, when they follow such people, it is the blind leading the blind.

As we saw, the problem of *saṃsāra* is rooted in ignorance and its solution lies only in knowledge. *Śaṅkara* quotes another *śruti*, '*brahma veda brahma eva bhavati*—he who knows *Brahman*, is *Brahman* itself.'<sup>1</sup> The knower of limitless *Brahman* is necessarily limitless because limitlessness is not an object, which by definition, excludes the subject. It is yourself or it does not exist. This is in contrast to the *śruti*, which says, 'Saying, "He is one, I am another," he does not know.' He is just like an animal in this way for the gods—*anyo'sau anyo'ham asmīti na sa veda yathā paśureva sa devānām*.' Thinking he is different from the Lord, that person becomes exactly like a cow, meant to perform a variety of services. In an agricultural society, as the Vedic society was, the cow provided milk, bullocks tilled the fields and were used as beasts of burden. Just as these animals served human beings, human beings serve the gods if they see themselves as different from the Lord. The gods here are *Agni*, *Varuṇa*, *Indra* and so on, to whom these people offer various oblations. The idea is, they are *karmaṭhas*. They can only please the *devas* and get some small reward. Like the animals working all day for some fodder, these people perform various rituals for some *puṇya* and thus become like tools or pets for the gods. As you keep on pampering a pet because it is always available for your beck and call; so, the gods keep on rewarding human beings who serve them. There is nothing wrong with that, but it will not solve the problem of *saṃsāra*.

There is a sentence in *Śvetāśvatropaniṣad*, which says, 'When one can roll the space as one does a sheet of skin (leather), then there can be the cessation of sorrow without knowing the self being the Lord.'<sup>2</sup> That is to say that there is no end to *saṃsāra* without self-knowledge. Whereas, as the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* says, 'The one who knows (thus), becomes all this, *sa idaṃ sarvaṃ bhavati*.'<sup>3</sup>

Here *Śaṅkara* is pointing out that there are thousands of *śruti* passages saying that knowledge, *vidyā*, accounts for release and ignorance, *avidyā*, accounts for bondage. And in equating the individual with the Lord, the Lord does not become a *saṃsārī*. This fact is

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<sup>1</sup> *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 3-2-9

<sup>2</sup> *Śvetāśvatropaniṣad* – 6-20

<sup>3</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 1-4-10



revealed to remove *saṃsāra*, not to prove that the Lord is a *saṃsāri*.<sup>1</sup> The essential nature of the Lord, which is the meaning of the word ‘you,’ *tvam*, is also arrived at, and thus the essential identity is revealed by the sentence—‘That you are—*tat tvam asi*.’ Therefore, there is no contradiction. Knowledge and ignorance alone account for all these problems.

*Śaṅkara* also quotes *smṛti*, the supporting books of the *śruti*, which are remembered and written independently as saying the same thing. From the fifth chapter of *Gītā* he cites *ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*, this knowledge (*buddhi*) is covered by ignorance. Because of that, the beings are deluded, meaning they subject themselves to sorrow.

Then, *‘ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣāṃ sāmye sthitaṃ manaḥ*—here, by them whose mind is established in that which is the same, creation (*saṃsāra*) is won over.<sup>1</sup> *Sāmya* is that which is the same in all beings, which does not differ at all, and is the same in terms of time and therefore, limitless. Those whose mind is established in that are *jñānaniṣṭhas*.

Later in this chapter, *Kṛṣṇa* will say, ‘*samaṃ paśyan hi sarvatra*, indeed, seeing the same everywhere,<sup>2</sup> he does not destroy himself by his own ignorance and is therefore, liberated.

From the first *smṛti* quote we understand that the problem is ignorance and from the second that knowledge liberates. The *vākya* continues with ‘*na hinasti ātmanā ātmānam*, he does not destroy himself by himself.’ From this it is clear that if he does not see, if he does not have that knowledge, he destroys himself.

### ONE CAN SAVE ONESELF WITH KNOWLEDGE

Then *Śaṅkara* supports this with *nyāya*, reasoning. He quotes a verse from the *Mahābhārata* giving an illustration. The example reveals a postulate, otherwise known as an invariable concomitance. If you say, for example, ‘Anything that is seen is subject to destruction, like a pot—*yad yad dṛśyaṃ tat tad anityaṃ ghaṭavat*,’ this is a *nyāya*. From this, we can reason that the body is also subject to destruction because, like a pot, it is seen. The verse says, ‘Knowing there are snakes, *kuśa* grass with sharp tips and so too a pond, (below the water weeds) people walk around; (whereas) there, some, due to ignorance, fall. See the special result of knowledge.’

सर्पान् कुशाग्राणि तथोदपानं ज्ञात्वा मनुष्याः परिवर्जयन्ति ।

अजानतस्तत्रपतन्ति केचिज्ज्ञाने फलं पश्य यथा विशिष्टम् ॥ शान्तिपर्वः २०१-१७

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –5-19

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* –13-28

*sarpān kuśāgrāṇi tathodapānaṃ jñātvā manuṣyāḥ  
ajñānatastatra patanti kecitjñāne phalaṃ paśya yathā viśiṣṭam  
Mahābhārata—śāntiparva 201-17*

The idea is, you can save yourself with knowledge. Without it you could fall into a pond not knowing that it had water-weeds covering the water; so, in this case, knowledge makes the difference between life and death. The example illustrates that just as one can fall into a well due to ignorance, so too is the fall into *saṃsāra* possible. From the *śruti*, *smṛti* and also *nyāya* we understand that the one who has the 'I-notion' in the body, mind, senses etc., is ignorant and naturally full of *rāga-dveṣas*, anger, fear, etc. There will certainly be a sense of isolation, sorrow, insecurity, mortality and incompleteness. All these conclusions are unavoidable and are the driving force behind *rāga-dveṣas*. In order to fulfil them, a person will do proper and improper *karmas* and accumulate *puṇya* and *pāpa*. Then, because of the *puṇya-pāpa*, there is birth and death. This is the *nyāya* for the *āstika*, the one who believes that there is a self that is distinct from the body.

For the one who does not believe this, the *nāstika*, we have to prove that there is *puṇya-pāpa* and subsequent births, *janmāntara*. Problems of pain and pleasure are, of course, obvious to non-believers also.

Even logicians, *tārkikas*, accept that when *rāga-dveṣas* are gone, one gains *mokṣa*. So, *Śaṅkara* uses the same argument. When the person knows he is no longer limited, how can there be *rāga-dveṣas*? Since his likes and dislikes have been destroyed or neutralised, there is a resolution of the pursuit of *puṇya-pāpa-karmas*. Resolution, *upaśama*, is a very appropriate word here. When a fire is burning, what happens to it when the fuel is exhausted? It dies but the heat remains for some time. That is what we call *prārabdha-karma*. When there is knowledge of the self as full, the *rāga-dveṣas*, the fuel for various pursuits, is gone and thus the pursuits are resolved. The person is liberated. This cannot be refuted by anyone.

#### SAĒSĒRITVA FOR THE KĀETRAJŅA IS DUE TO ERROR

Even though the *kṣetrajñā* is not different from *Īśvara*, due to ignorance one superimposes the attributes of the *upādhis* on the *kṣetrajñā*; and because of this, it looks as though the *kṣetrajñā* is a *saṃsārī*. To illustrate the effect of ignorance, *Śaṅkara* says, it is like mistaking a stump of a tree for a man. Once that error is there, there can be fear, if, for example, he thinks it is a thief. Similarly, seeing the attributes of the physical body, mind and senses superimposed upon the self, one becomes a *saṃsārī*.

#### OBJECTION, THE EXAMPLE IS NOT TENABLE

#### THE ERROR OF SUPERIMPOSING THE PURUĀA ON THE STHĒŪ

### IS NOT THE SAME AS SUPERIMPOSING ANĒTMĒ ON THE ĒTMĒ

The opponent now objects that the illustration of mistaking a stump for a man to show that between *ātmā* and *anātmā* there is *adhyāsa*, superimposition, is not appropriate. He argues that the superimposition between the *ātmā* and the body is not the same as that between the stump and the man. In the case of the stump and the man, both are objects of knowledge, neither of which is recognised as oneself. Due to some defect in the means of knowledge, one sees in a given object something that is not there. *Adhyāsa* is defined as *atasmin tadbuddhiḥ*—thinking of one as the other. Here our opponent says that this definition for *adhyāsa* applies only to the *adhyāsa* between the self and not-self. Therefore, the illustration given of the stump and the man, of *adhyāsa* between not-self and not-self, is improper because no one mistakes something other than himself for himself. A stump of a tree is not mistaken for myself.

In his introduction to the *brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara argues that in *adhyāsa* there is no such rule. Anything can be taken for anything else; such is the nature of ignorance. It is capable of producing anything out of anything.

### DUE TO SAĒYOGA THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE BODY ARE ASSUMED BY THE KNOWER

Here the opponent accepts that something like fatness, though it is an attribute of the body, and is known, becomes the knower's attribute. This is because, unlike the stump and the man where both are *anātmā*, here, one is *anātmā* and the other is *ātmā*. In taking the physical body's attributes as his own, there is no error involved but rather, an appreciation of a certain fact. Due to *saṃyoga*, association, the attributes of the body are assumed by the knower, *kṣetrajñā*. This is like how water, which is pure when it is released from the clouds becomes dirty once it reaches the earth due to association. Or this is similar to a thread used to string flower gains the fragrance of the flowers—not due to *adhyāsa* but due to association. Similarly here, the individual self, even though distinct from the body, is in association with the body, and therefore, assumes the attributes of the body like old age, death etc. This is the stand taken by the opponent.<sup>1</sup>

### THE STAND TAKEN BY THE OPPONENT

Here the claim is that though birth and death etc., belong to the body, by association the person gathers all these properties. From this we understand that *ātmā* is

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<sup>1</sup> This is the position of the *naiyāyika* who takes the *ātmā* as an agent and enjoyer, *kartā*, *bhoktā*. The *Sāṅkhya* looks upon the self as *asaṅga* and at the same time imputes enjoyership, *bhoktṛtva*, to it. For the *mīmāṃsaka*, the *ātmā* is always an agent, *kartā*, because, in his view, everything is centred on action.

a *saṃsārī*, due to its association with the body, which is subject to *saṃsāritva*. If *ātmā* is a *saṃsārī*, it cannot be identical with *Īśvara* and thus *Īśvara's* grace becomes necessary to gain a better world after death. When this is the concept of *mokṣa*, the way one understands the words of the *śāstra* will be entirely different.

### ĀĀ×KARA ANSWERS NEGATING THIS SAĒYOGA

Therefore, though it sometimes seems that there is not much difference in what the opponent says, it is important to understand the difference thoroughly or one will end up with a different pursuit based on a different concept of *mokṣa*. *Śaṅkara* answers him briefly by saying that this is not correct because it results in the undesirable consequence of absence of consciousness. He explains. If by association, the *ātmā* gains the properties of the body, then because the body is by nature inert, which we surmise from the fact that a dead body is inert, *ātmā* will become inert through its association with it. If the self is inert, it will have no need for liberation. It will have no experience of the world because there is no possibility of perception or inference and once the world is not there, there is no *saṃsāra*. This, of course, is entirely against even the opponent's experience. It is only because he is conscious that he is able to advance this argument. Similarly, if *ātmā* assumes the qualities of the body, it will also become *anitya*. Then it would undergo change, which would mean that there is no possibility of *mokṣa*. Further, we would not be able to distinguish between *ātmā* and *anātmā* and it would be impossible to handle the body as we do. We do treat the body as an object and under this view a subject-object relationship is not possible between the body and the *ātmā*. So, it contradicts our experience. And it contradicts the *śāstra*, which tells us that the self is witness, consciousness, non-dual and free from any kind of attributes—*sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca*.

Another person may argue that not all of the attributes of the *kṣetra* are assumed by the *ātmā*. Some are intrinsic and some are superimposed on *ātmā*. To account for certain indisputable facts about the self he has to say this. To account for consciousness in the self, he has to say that the inertness of the body is not assumed by the self. He says further that, things like pleasure and pain, delusion, like and dislike, however, are also said to be the natural attributes of the self. Even though these are known as conditions of the mind, they are not considered to be superimposed, but natural to the knower because he is a *saṃsārī*. He also accepts that, the thinking, 'I am fat; I am old,' is due to ignorance because he accepts the presence of a self other than the physical body. The result of this thinking is that, *ātmā* becomes a *saṃsārī* that survives death because *ātmā* is other than the physical body.

In response to this argument, *Śaṅkara* now says that a special reason has to be given for saying that some properties of the body like fatness, old age, death etc., are superimposed on the self and others like pleasure, pain etc., are not. Otherwise it is not

tenable to say so. After saying this he goes on to negate the possibility of superimpositions of the attributes of the *kṣetra* on the *kṣetrajñā*.

### THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE KĀETRA CANNOT BE SUPERIMPOSED ON THE KĀETRAJŌA

His first argument against this is that the properties of the *kṣetra* belong only to the *kṣetra*, not to the knower of the *kṣetra*, the *kṣetrajñā*. This is so, because, as he argues in the very first sentence of his *sūtra-bhāṣya*, there cannot be any kind of combination between the subject and object as they are opposite in nature. One is the knower, who is conscious and the other is an object of knowledge and therefore, inert. The *kṣetra*, the object is established only by a means of knowledge; but the *kṣetrajñā*, the knower is self-evident. Between the one which illumines and the one which is illumined there cannot be any combination at all and yet there seems to be a combination—due to ignorance, *avidyā*.

### ONE CANNOT SAY ONE ATTRIBUTE IS SUPERIMPOSED AND ANOTHER IS INTRINSIC

Thus there is no reason for saying that one particular attribute, like mortality, is superimposed upon the *kṣetrajñā*, and another, like sorrow, is intrinsic to it. It is defective reasoning called, *ardhāṇḍanyāya*, which is saying that one half of the egg is for eating, the other half for hatching. *Śaṅkara* extends the opponent's own argument to refute him, pointing out that both are superimposed due to ignorance.

### AN INTRINSIC PROPERTY CANNOT BE GIVEN UP

Secondly, any intrinsic property cannot be given up. The nature of the self is consciousness. Can you give that up and be sometimes conscious, sometimes not? It is not possible. But *sukha* and *duḥkha*, joy and sorrow, come and go while you remain. It is clear that they are not essential properties of the self. And further, they are opposites. One thing cannot have two essential properties, which are mutually contradictory. If *ātmā* is *sukha-svarūpa*, there is no possibility of it having *duḥkha*. And if *sukha* and *duḥkha* come and go while I remain, neither of them belongs to me. Just as sometimes I am awake, sometimes in deep sleep, sometimes dreaming, and therefore, not the sleeper, waker or dreamer but someone who is invariable in all the three. Similarly here, I am not a happy person or a sad person but one who is inherent in both.

The *sukha-vṛtti* does not belong to the self but in *sukha* there is *ātmā*, as in *duḥkha* there is *ātmā*. And without *ātmā* there are no *sukha-duḥkha vṛttis* yet *ātmā* remains free from the *vṛttis* as they come and go. Thus one reason for concluding that they are superimposed is that they can be given up or assumed. If desire, for example, is

the nature of *ātmā* it is not possible either to have a single discrete desire or to give one up. There will only be one vague absolute eternal desire that cannot be fulfilled. A desire, as we know, is centred on an object and lasts only until the desired object is gained or I grow out of it totally. It arises and disappears in time. If I say, 'I am the desirer,' that is due to *avidyā* because desire is the property of the *kṣetra*, not *ātmā*. If it belongs to *ātmā*, I can neither give it up nor pick it up because it is me. How am I to give up or pick up myself?

### DOERSHIP AND ENJOYERSHIP CONSTITUTE SAṂSĀRA

Therefore, Śaṅkara concludes, *saṁsāra*, obtaining in what is known and characterised by doership and enjoyership is imposed upon the *ātmā* due to ignorance and thus, the *ātmā* is not at all tainted by that. As long as you are a doer, you do *karma* because of which there is *karma-phala* and therefore, *bhoga*. These, even though they belong only to the *kṣetra*, are superimposed on the witness-consciousness, the *ātmā* due to *avidyā*. Anything superimposed upon something else cannot affect it either positively or negatively. The mother-of-pearl mistaken for a silver coin has no purchasing power and the rope mistaken for a snake will not bite you either. Nor does the mother-of-pearl or the rope undergo any change just because it is mistaken for something else. Similarly, because *sukha* and *duḥkha* etc., the properties of the *kṣetra* are superimposed upon *ātmā*, *ātmā* does not become a *saṁsārī*. It remains free from *saṁsāra* and therefore, is not different from *Īśvara*. Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa says here, 'May you know me as the knower of the *kṣetra* in all *kṣetras*, Arjuna.'

This is addressed to the one who believes that *ātmā* survives death but is not identical with *Īśvara* and is therefore, a *saṁsārī*. This includes all dualists—the *viśiṣṭa-advaitīs*, *dvaitīs* like *Hare Kṛṣṇas*, Christians and all others who believe in the existence of a deity other than themselves and the survival of the soul after death. Anyone who does not accept *Īśvara* as the *ātmā* will end up as a dualist including the Buddhist, the *śūnyavādin*. His basis for everything is non-existence, *śūnyatā*, which cannot be established and thus 'everything,' which he claims as *mithyā* becomes *satya*. The ontological status of *mithyā* requires having a basis upon, which it is dependent. If the world that we experience is *mithyā* and the underlying truth is said to be *śūnya*, which cannot be established, there is no basis on which the *mithyā* is dependent and thus there is no *mithyā*. The world remains exactly as perceived, dualistic, i.e., pluralistic.

To prove that *ātmā* is a *saṁsārī*, one has to prove that even though mortality etc. are superimposed upon *ātmā* due to *avidyā*, other things like *sukha-duḥkha* are intrinsic properties of the knower. Otherwise *ātmā* will be free from qualities and identical with the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. As Śaṅkara pointed out, no reason can be advanced for saying that the sense of mortality is superimposed upon *ātmā* while *sukha-duḥkha* etc., are not. Further, *sukha-duḥkha* also are not intrinsic to *ātmā* because if

they were, they could not be given up or assumed. And since they are opposites, they cannot reside in the same locus. It is like saying, 'Remaining, he goes, *tiṣṭhan gachhati*.' Either he remains or he goes but he cannot simultaneously be doing both. Similarly, since *sukha* and *duḥkha* are opposed to each other, when *sukha* is there *duḥkha* is not. Since, when one is there the other is not, they come and go. This being so, they cannot be intrinsic to *ātmā* because what is intrinsic cannot be given up. *Sukha* and *duḥkha* keep changing and therefore, *ātmā* is free from both.

*Samśāra* also implies *punarjanma* including going to heaven. This *saṃsāra*, characterised by doership and enjoyership is superimposed upon the knower and wherever there is superimposition there is *avidyā*, unless it is deliberate. In a crystal you can invoke the Lord or on a flag you can superimpose the entire constitution deliberately. Therefore, it is necessary to say that this superimposition is due to ignorance. Because it is a mere superimposition, there is no change in *ātmā*, it is the same *caitanya*, just as the sky, which we see as coloured does not become coloured at all.

### IN ALL KṢETRAS ĪŚVARA EXISTS IN THE FORM OF KṢETRAJŪA

On the basis of this conclusion, *Śaṅkara* makes a further statement. This being so, in all the *kṣetras* it is *Bhagavān*, *Īśvara* that exists in the form of that *kṣetrajūa*. The *pratyagātmā* is non-separate from *Īśvara* who is the cause of creation, *jagat-kāraṇa* because the implied meaning of *kṣetrajūa* and the implied meaning of *Īśvara* is one *paraṃ brahma*.

*Śaṅkara* says, there is not even a whiff, *gandhamātra*, of *saṃsāra* for *Īśvara* who happens to be *kṣetrajūa*. This is a very beautiful expression. Suppose you live in a palatial building, which is in the midst of a slum. Even though your house is spotless, the odour of the slum will pervade it. But here, even though in your *antaḥ-kāraṇa* there is the presence of *ātmā* as the content, the *svarūpa* of every thought, there is not even a whiff of *saṃsāritva* for the *kṣetrajūa*, *ātmā*. Therefore, it is possible to establish that the *kṣetrajūa* is *Īśvara*.

### COMING BACK TO THE EXAMPLE OF SEEING THE STHĒU AS THE PURUĀ

Extending his answer to the objection that seeing a man in a stump is not a proper example for superimposition upon the self, *Śaṅkara* says that the objection is not valid because, whenever you use an illustration you must know the commonality of the properties, *sādharmya*, in what one intends to convey, the *vivakṣita*. If I say, a bison is like a water-buffalo, so that you can recognise a bison if you come across one, I am drawing your attention to those features of a water-buffalo that are similar to a bison. I

do not expect you to look for something that is identical to a water buffalo. Then we would have two names for the same thing, Any illustration, *dṛṣṭānta*, only resembles the thing it is illustrating, *dārṣṭānta*, in part. We have to find out what the commonality, *sādharmya*, is.

When I say the man, *puruṣa* is superimposed upon the stump exactly like how the properties of the *kṣetra* are superimposed upon the *kṣetrajñā*, we have to determine what is the common feature in both, that causes the error. Any illustration is used only in a given sense. If there were absolute commonality it would no longer be an illustration but an establishing of identity. From the illustration we extrapolate a conclusion to what is being illustrated. A stump of a tree is mistaken for a man due to ignorance and consequent superimposition. One fails to see what is there and thus sees it as something else. Here also, there is non-recognition of the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* being identical with *Īśvara*. Then all the attributes of the body, mind senses are superimposed upon *ātmā*. What he intends to convey by the example is that the superimposition is caused by ignorance, and in that respect, there is no contradiction between the illustration and what is illustrated.

If you consider that there is a contradiction with reference to the knower in that there is no *sādharmya* between a superimposition on the knower, *ātmā* and a known thing like a stump of a tree, he recalls his previous argument. There is no difference between superimposing properties of the body like age etc., and superimposing attributes of the mind like *sukha* and *duḥkha* on the self because both are instances of superimposition due to ignorance.

As mentioned earlier, *Śaṅkara* shows in his *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*<sup>1</sup> that there is no rule that a superimposition be confined only to what is in front of you. All that is required is that it be evident and that there be ignorance. *Ātmā* is self-evident. Nothing is required to know that I exist. And if I do not know my identity with *Īśvara*, all the requirements for superimposition are fulfilled. So, this conclusion that superimposition can occur only upon objects while the subject and object cannot be mistaken for one another has to be re-examined.

The *śāstra* says that the *saṃsāra* is superimposed upon *ātmā* due to ignorance. Now, to whom does this ignorance belong? From our analysis so far, it belongs to *ātmā*; but once you accept ignorance, *avidyā*, for *ātmā*, *ātmā* has the status of being a *saṃsārī*. Ignorance itself is not *saṃsāra* but is the cause for *saṃsāra*. And thus the *saṃsāra* is the effect. Since the cause, ignorance, cannot be in the effect, *saṃsāra*, the only remaining locus for ignorance is *ātmā*. If *ātmā* becomes the locus for ignorance, then its product, *saṃsāritva* also exists in *ātmā*. Not only does ignorance have its basis in *ātmā*, the whole creation is based in *ātmā* including the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Ignorance, *Śaṅkara* says, is a condition of the mind in which *tamas* prevails. *Tamas*

<sup>1</sup> *The introductory portion of the bhāṣya to the brahmasūtras by Śaṅkara.*



has a capacity to cover. It accounts for *agrahaṇa*, the non-perception of an object, and it creates *saṃśaya*, a doubt about what the object is, and it makes you perceive it as other than what it is—*viparīta-grahaṇa*.

Before the stump is perceived, there is no knowledge of it. On perceiving it, a doubt arises about whether it is a stump or a man, which resolves into an erroneous conclusion that it is a man. All this is due to ignorance. Similarly, there is a doubt about whether *ātmā* is *Brahman* or not. If you say it is not, then there is *agrahaṇa*. But when there is discriminative knowledge, there is no ignorance. They are mutually exclusive like light and darkness. This discriminative knowledge occurs only in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* as a *vṛtti* born of a valid means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. It destroys ignorance, *avidyā*. *Śaṅkara* gives an example using the eyes, which are capable of sight, erroneous sight and no sight. If the sight is totally impaired by a cataract, the moon will not be visible. If it is partially impaired, one moon will appear as two. If the cataract is removed there will be accurate perception of the moon provided there is no other defect in the eye. Similarly, the *antaḥ-karaṇa* has a cataract-like ignorance in the form of this *tāmasa-pratyaya*.

Both the eyes and the mind are instruments of knowing. If there is a covering factor in the mind, *ātmā* is not recognised. Being self-evident, one knows, 'I am,' i.e., 'I exist.' This fact is known without any means of knowledge and this fact cannot be covered by ignorance. But if *ātmā* is not known as *Brahman*, then the mistake of taking it as the body-mind-sense-complex is unavoidable. Positively speaking, when there is discriminative knowledge, there is no ignorance. On the other hand, if there is no discriminative knowledge, the ignorance will be there as the one that covers this self-evident *ātmā*, *svapṛakāśa-ātmā*. This defect—of being susceptible to the *āvaraṇa-śakti* of *avidyā*—belongs to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the instrument.

**IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT BECAUSE IGNORANCE IS A  
PROPERTY OF THE KĀETRAJŪA, HE IS A SAĒSĒRĪ  
IGNORANCE AND IT'S DEFECTS BELONG TO THE INSTRUMENT,  
ANTAĒKARAŪA**

This being the case, the opponent now argues that ignorance is a property of the knower, *kṣetrajñā*, and therefore, he is a *samsārī*; he cannot be equated to *Īśvara* who is not a *samsārī*. *Śaṅkara* refutes this, saying that the defect of having a cataract is recognised only in the instrument, the eye. Only the means of knowledge for sight has the defect born of cataract, not the knower. To correct the defect, surgery is done upon the eye and not on the knower. The defect of not seeing or seeing defectively is in the eyes, not *ātmā* the perceiver. Even though the perceiver is involved in the misperception, it is not directly the property of the perceiver. When the defect is removed by some treatment to the eye, there is no longer any misperception etc. Thus the

problem is only in the instrument, not the knower. This being so, in all places, non-perception, misperception, and doubt is caused by the instrument.

Further, these defects—of *agrahaṇa*, non-perception, *viparīta-grahaṇa*, misperception and *saṃśaya*, doubt—do not belong to the knower because they are objects of knowledge. When, to the question, ‘Do you know that *ātmā* is *Brahman*?’ you respond, ‘I don’t know,’ the ignorance of this fact is known to you. *Sukha* and *duḥkha*, being a doer and an enjoyer, and various doubts about yourself are also known to you because of which you consider yourself to be a *saṃsārī*. They are objects of knowledge, which is like the light of a lamp. *Śaṅkara* gives this example rather than that of a pot, because, light is an instrument that illumines objects just as the sense organs and the *antaḥ-karaṇa* do. Just as the light, which illumines a pot is also known, so is the eye, which illumines a form or the ear, which makes one know a sound. They are instruments, which are capable of lighting up an object and yet they do not become attributes of the knower, *jñātā* because they are known to him. Even though the mind and sense organs are means of knowledge that make one know various objects, they are also lighted up. Therefore, they do not have the status of being an attribute of the knower.

Anything other than *ātmā* has the status of being an object simply because it is known. No other reason is required. Something is identified as an object because it is objectified by me and therefore, other than me, *anātmā*. That covers everything including ignorance. They all have the status of being objects of knowledge and therefore, do not belong to the knower.

All schools of thought have a concept of *mokṣa*. A Buddhist has the concept of *nirvāṇa*, which is *mokṣa* for him; and even a *cārvāka* considers death as a sort of *mokṣa* because according to him there is no *ātmā* that survives death. And therefore, there is no one to suffer the consequences of *puṇya-pāpa* etc. Whatever their concept of *mokṣa* may be, none of them say that after gaining *mokṣa* the *jīva* comes back. The release of the person from a sense of individuality is called *mokṣa*. Even if going to heaven is *mokṣa*, there one is free from likes and dislikes, *sukha-duḥkha* and all other attributes of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the senses and the body. If these are the real properties of the knower, they have to be negated, somehow, by *Īśvara*. This, they claim is possible because *Īśvara* is almighty.

Even so, if these form the intrinsic nature of the knower, it will not be possible for even *Īśvara* to negate them. Then, he has to destroy the *jīva* to destroy these intrinsic qualities of the *jīva*. Then, if he destroys the *jīva*, for whom is *mokṣa*?

According to them, when ignorance and all the instruments, that is, the mind and senses, are resolved, there is no rebirth. None of them accepts the *jīva* as having ignorance etc., when there is *mokṣa*. If being a *saṃsārī* is intrinsic to *ātmā*, like heat is intrinsic to the fire, then separation from it is not possible. Nothing can be separated

from its intrinsic property. Therefore, if the nature of the knower is, being a *saṃsārī*; *mokṣa*, release from it, is not possible. If it is something that you superimpose due to ignorance and is not the intrinsic property of the knower, there is no problem. Any concept of *mokṣa* other than this is not *mokṣa* at all. And anyone, who says that the knower is already free and identical with the Lord and only has a notion that he is not, and that this is due to ignorance, is saying the same thing as what *vedānta-śāstra* says. The only method for solving this problem is removal of the superimposition.

### THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF ASSOCIATION OR DISSOCIATION FOR ĀTMĀ

Then he points out the impossibility of association or dissociation for *ātmā* because it is not subject to change and, being free from form, like space, is all-pervasive. But space is only relatively all-pervasive because it has no existence without *ātmā* while *ātmā* is entirely independent of space. Any type of association or dissociation is impossible for something that has no form. For example, with what can space associate itself? And being all-pervasive, it can never dissociate itself from anything or be associated with a particular thing to the exclusion of something else. Similarly, the *jñātā* has no attribute and does not assume attributes due to association. Not only does he not gain mortality, fatness etc., due to association with the body, he does not enjoy happiness and sorrow, desire and aversion or any other attribute of the mind.

Being all-pervasive and formless, space cannot associate with anything. Unless there is some rudimentary form, there cannot be any contact and thus, gaining an attribute by contact is not possible. If even space cannot be polluted, how can *ātmā*, in which space resides, be tainted by any type of contact? *Ātmā* is the only thing here, the basis upon, which everything is superimposed and what is superimposed does not come in contact with, or enjoy the same order of reality as its basis. What kind of association does the rope have with the snake? Between something real, *satya*, and its dependent reality, *mithyā*, there is no question of any association.

The self remains free from any attribute and is indeed not different from *Īśvara*, the cause of creation. Thus the fact that *kṣetrajñā* is not different from *Īśvara* is established. The *smṛti*, quoting *Kṛṣṇa* as *Īśvara*, says the same thing. 'Because it is beginningless and free from attributes, *anāditvāt nirguṇatvāt*, this limitless self, which is not subject to decline, even though obtaining in the body, does not act and is not affected (by action), *Arjuna—paramātmā ayam avyayaḥ śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate*.<sup>1</sup> The one who obtains in the body as the essential nature, *svarūpa*, of the knower, neither does any action, nor is he affected by the result of action. Being always *asaṅga*, unassociated, he is neither *kartā*, the agent, nor *bhoktā*, the enjoyer. Since *Śaṅkara* quotes *Īśvara* directly, not only the *smṛti* but the *śruti* is also implied. The statement of the *Upaniṣad* says, '(the self is) witness, consciousness, non-dual and

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –13-31

without attributes—*sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca*.<sup>1</sup> This statement, because it belongs to the *śruti*, is as good as a statement by *Īśvara* himself.

The nature of ‘I’ for *Īśvara* and the *jīva* is one and the same. Individuality is only a point of view, which is incidental, not intrinsic to *ātmā*, which is by nature free and limitless. This being identical to the nature of *Īśvara*, *ātmā* is not other than the cause of creation.

## OBJECTION BY AN ĒTMAVĒDĪ

### IF KĀETRAJŌA IS FREE FROM SAĒSĒRA THEN ĀĒSTRA WĪLL BE USELESS

A question is raised here by an *āstika*, a person who accepts the Veda as a *pramāṇa*, and therefore, believes in *puṇya* and *pāpa* and the survival of the soul after death. He is also called an *ātmavādī*. His contention is that if the *kṣetrajñā* is essentially free from *saṃsāra*, then the *śāstra*etc.,<sup>2</sup> will be useless. Since his condition of being a *saṃsārī* is superimposed due to ignorance, *ātmā* is already free from *saṃsāra*. This being so, there is no scope for a *śāstra*, which is meant to release the individual from *saṃsāra*, the experience of limitation from which one suffers. When you are already liberated, there is no subject matter for the *śāstra* at all. Since every *jīva* is already *kṣetrajñā*, *Īśvara*, in the vision of the *śāstra*, there is no bondage.

If *śāstra* is accepted as a *pramāṇa*, this has to be accepted as the truth. When this is so, why would there be any pursuit of freedom by the study of the *śāstra*? Or why would there be any practice of the rituals enjoined by the *śāstra*? If you are already *Īśvara*, what are you going to gain from that? If there is bondage and liberation, then, *śāstra* has a subject matter. If not, there is no necessity for a *guru* because there is nothing to teach, no *upadeśa*. There is no *sādhana*, because there is nothing to be gained, *sādhyā*, if you are already *Īśvara*. This is a serious fault. If *śāstra* has no purpose, he can ask further, why write this commentary on it?

## ĀĀ×KARA ANSWERS

### THE SAME DEFECT WĪLL BE APPLICABLE TO YŌU TOO

*Śaṅkara* answers that this is not a valid objection for him to make because he himself, and all *ātmavādīs* accept the *śāstra* as a *pramāṇa* for release from bondage. Therefore, this fault is applicable to them also. When one gains *mokṣa* there will be no

<sup>1</sup> *Śvetāśvatropaniṣad* – 6-11

<sup>2</sup> Here it is said ‘*śāstra*, etc.’ It is said so, to include the *śāstra*, the *upadeśa*, the teaching, and the *guru*—*śāstrādi*.

*saṃsāra* and *śāstra* is no longer useful; it has served its purpose. By all those who believe that *ātmā* survives death and that there is bondage and release, this fault of the uselessness of *śāstra* is incurred. Even a Buddhist has to say the same thing. If even after gaining *mokṣa* one continues to study *śāstra*, that *mokṣa* has no meaning. Śaṅkara says, ‘Only one of us has to address this because we both have the same problem. And it is true that once liberated, there can be no bondage and the *śāstra*, which is a means for the release from bondage, becomes useless.

**THIS DEFECT IS NOT APPLICABLE TO ALL THE OTHER  
OPONENTS,  
SAYS THE ĀTMAVĀDĪ**

Then the *ātmavādī* does not accept this and says that it is not acceptable to all the opponents at all. His claim is that *śāstra* is useful because it gives *mokṣa*, but it is not correct to say that there is no *saṃsāra*; only the *advaitī* says that and therefore, only for him *śāstra* is useless after *mokṣa*—this is the stand taken by the *ātmavādī*.

Most of these *ātmavādas* are religions and therefore, they must necessarily present a concept of *mokṣa*, a release for the soul. This release, the absence of *saṃsāra* is the desired end. But, they do not accept that the *śāstra* is useless. But once the desired end is achieved, it has no further use to that person who has gained *mokṣa*. Once the *kṣetrajñā* realises his identity with *Īśvara*, the *śāstra* has fulfilled its purpose and is of no further use to him. It is like a boat that helps you cross the river; once you are across, you have no further use for it. Similarly *śāstra*, having given you the *vr̥tti* necessary for destroying the ignorance of *ātmā* being *Brahman* and thereby the superimposition upon the self, is no longer required. When *śāstra* is addressing an ignorant person it has a purpose.

Even for the dualists, only in the state of bondage is *śāstra* useful, and not in the state of liberation. For them these two states are real. The individual is seen as a real entity separate from every other individual, from *Īśvara* and from the world. This bondage is real, and therefore, he is enjoined to do some real *karma*, whereby he earns real grace, through which he gets real *mokṣa*, which is conceived of as some beatitude bestowed upon him by *Īśvara*. Accepting for the time being his concept of *mokṣa*, Śaṅkara says that both of the—the *ātmavādī* and the dualist, *dvaitī*—have to agree that the *śāstra* has no usefulness when there is no bondage, *saṃsāra*.

## THE DVAITI'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE USEFULNESS OF THE ŚĀSTRA

### BOTH BONDAGE AND MOKṢĀ ARE REAL THEREFORE, ŚĀSTRA IS USEFUL

The *dvaitī*, dualist denies that they have the same position on this. His argument is this: for the *advaitī* there is no bondage or freedom; both are *mithyā*; therefore, he can say that the *śāstra* is useless after *mokṣa*. For this person, both states are very real and can therefore, be given up or gained. He does not consider that he is being bitten by a rope-snake but a real snake and therefore, has to be freed from that. Bondage is to be rejected and *mokṣa* is to be gained for which some means, *sādhana*, is necessary, which is generally considered to be gaining the grace of *Īśvara*, by meditation etc. And in order to avoid *saṃsāra* you have to avoid varieties of *adharma* following the injunctions like, 'May one not hurt, *hiṃsām na kuryāt,*' or 'May one not drink alcohol, *surām na pibet,*' so, that you will not gather *pāpa*. To gain *mokṣa* you have to gather *puṇya* by worshipping *Īśvara*, doing acts of charity, etc. Thus, his contention is that only when all of these are real does the *śāstra* gain meaningfulness.

For the *advaitī*, however, duality only has a reality that is created by ignorance. It is important to understand that when *Śaṅkara* uses the word *advaitī*, he is not presenting it as another school of thought. *Advaya*, non-duality is yourself, a fact that can be known through a means of knowledge. It is not something that can be argued through and then rejected or accepted; it is a fact to be seen. Nor is it something one would want to refuse. When the *śāstra* says that you are *Brahman*, limitless *ānanda*, why would you refuse that? This entire duality consisting of knower, knowledge, known, is created by ignorance and therefore, not absolutely real. When the state of bondage for the self and the whole of duality is *mithyā*, whom is the *śāstra* going to address and for what purpose? The *kṣetrajña* is already *Īśvara* so, *śāstra* has no subject matter. It can not even ask you to do a ritual like *agnihotra* because there is no *kartā*, agent to do it and therefore, no enjoyer of the results. There will be no interest in the results either, like a bald person has no interest in a shampoo advertisement. For the one for whom bondage and *mokṣa* are real states, *śāstra* is useful. For the one for whom *saṃsāra* is *mithyā*, the *śāstra* is useless because there is no subject matter. This is the argument of the dualist.

### ŚĀKARA DISMISSES THE DUALIST

#### BOTH BONDAGE AND FREEDOM CANNOT BE REAL

In reply to this, *Śaṅkara* at first dismisses the argument of the dualist that both bondage and *mokṣa* are real and then shows how the *śāstra* is useful for us. There is no

tenability of *ātmā* being subject to different states like bondage and liberation because if there were, they would have to obtain in the *ātmā* either simultaneously or successively. Because bondage and liberation are opposed to each other, it is not possible for them to exist simultaneously in the *ātmā* like how one cannot say ‘being stationary, he moves—*tiṣṭhan gacchati.*’ They are opposed to each other and therefore, cannot simultaneously exist in the same place. Either the self is bound or free, but not both. If he says that the self has these two states not simultaneously but successively, we must ask whether the change in state from bondage to liberation is due to a cause or not. If there is no cause, either external or internal, but something that takes place naturally, there will be no *mokṣa*.

#### **BOTH BONDAGE AND FREEDOM ARE MITHYĒ AND ONLY ĒTMĒ IS REAL**

If without any reason, what is now bound gets liberated, it can just as arbitrarily get bound again. If *mokṣa* is dependent upon a cause other than itself, *mokṣa* becomes *mithyā*. *Mithyā*, as we have seen is that which has no reality of itself. The dualist cannot counter that it is acceptable to him that it is not real because his whole argument is dependent upon both bondage and freedom being real. In accepting this he negates his original stand and accepts ours. We say, both bondage and *mokṣa* are *mithyā* because *ātmā* is already free and has always been free. There only seems to be bondage as long as you have ignorance. Therefore, gaining *mokṣa* is always *mithyā*, because *mokṣa* is not ‘gained.’ When the ignorance, which is also *mithyā* is removed, the bondage, which is also *mithyā*, is gone and there is *mokṣa*. The removal of the apparent bondage is purely the removal of ignorance by means of knowledge.

#### **IF BOTH BONDAGE AND MOKĀA ARE REAL THEN ĒTMĒ BECOMES ANITYĀ**

Further, if bondage and *mokṣa* are real, *ātmā* becomes non-eternal, *anitya*. Even if he does not accept that, bondage and freedom are unreal, he cannot accept that *ātmā* is *anitya*, because even his concept of *mokṣa* requires that *ātmā* be eternal.

And again, in ascertaining what is before and what is later, it has to be assumed that the state of bondage precedes *mokṣa*. If *ātmā* is subject to the state of bondage before *mokṣa*, *mokṣa* has a prior non-existence, which amounts to the existence of a state of bondage. The bondage must necessarily end and not only that, it must not have a beginning. Otherwise, there is no *mokṣa*. For him the state of bondage is real but if it has a beginning, it cannot be established as being present prior to *mokṣa*. If it is not prior to *mokṣa*, then *mokṣa* is followed by bondage and we have the difficulty of there being no real *mokṣa*. Therefore, he has to say that the state of bondage has no beginning. An objection is made that this line of reasoning is against all *pramāṇas*. Within empirical reality, anything that has an end also has a beginning, like a pot, so, you cannot say that bondage has an end and at the same time has no beginning, if it is real. Nor can a *mokṣa*

that has a beginning be eternal. Anything that begins comes to an end. We say the same thing but for us, bondage is *mithyā* so, these problems do not arise. Considering bondage as real, having an end but no beginning, is against all *pramāṇas*. Nor is there any support for this in the *śāstra*.

#### **DUALITY IS NOT ESTABLISHED BY A MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE; IT IS PURELY AN ERRONEOUS CONCLUSION**

*Śāstra* does not say that *ātmā* is *mithyā* but that it is absolutely real and is the witness, consciousness, that is non-dual and free from all attributes—*sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇasca*. Nor is *śāstra* required to establish an existent thing. According to the dualist, what is perceived as real is real even though its reality cannot be established by any means of knowledge. But it is not correct to conclude so. Perceptually, the sun does rise in the eastern sky and set in the western sky; but if you conclude from this observation, that the sun travels while the earth is stationary, you are mistaken. What is perceptually true is not necessarily a revelation of an absolute fact. A stick in a glass of water appears bent due to an optical illusion. And a colourless crystal appears to be coloured, taking on the colour of an object nearby. In both these situations, the fault is not in the sense organs; they mechanically report the perceptual world according to immutable laws. The difficulty lies in what one concludes on the basis of those reports. Duality is not, as the dualist claims, established by a means of knowledge like perception. It is purely an erroneous conclusion.

Because he thinks duality is established by a *pramāṇa*, the state of *mokṣa*, according to him, is real but within his own system this is contradicted by *pramāṇa*; because in the real world we do not see anything, which has only a beginning but not an end. Because it has begun, it is bound by time, and therefore, keeps changing in time. *Mokṣa* that begins at a given time is time-bound and will certainly come to an end.

#### **IF MOKṢĀ BEGINS THEN ĀTMĀ CANNOT BE NITYĀ**

On the basis of this, *Śaṅkara* says further that if *ātmā* has both the state of bondage and the state of liberation, it becomes one who has states and goes from one state to another. This being so, it is not possible to establish that *ātmā* has the status of being eternal. If the state, which belongs to *ātmā* changes, *ātmā* also changes because if the state is real, it is part of *ātmā*. For example, if potness is an attribute to the substance pot and the potness undergoes a change then the pot undergoes a change. If *ātmā* has a state, which is real and that state undergoes a change, *ātmā* undergoes a change. That means *ātmā* is subject to time; it is *anitya*, non-eternal. Those who speak of *mokṣa* as an experience are only talking of a state. *Mokṣa* is not a state of experience but the very nature of the self, which happens to be free from bondage. Knowledge of that is *mokṣa*. *Ātmā* does not undergo change to become free and the gain of freedom is only from the



standpoint of bondage, which is *mithyā*, and which is superimposed upon the self due to ignorance. When ignorance goes, bondage also goes.

If *mokṣa* is understood in any other way, *ātmā* becomes non-eternal, *anitya* and so, does *mokṣa*.

To avoid the fault of *ātmā* being non-eternal, we say that the states of bondage and *mokṣa* are not for *ātmā*; *ātmā* is always free from *saṃsāra*. For a dualist it is the opposite. *Ātmā* is always a *saṃsārī* because if *ātmā* is *nitya* and is bound, bondage is also eternal and there is no *mokṣa*. If they retreat from their original stand so that they can claim that there is *mokṣa*, they have to say that after gaining *mokṣa*, *śāstra* is no longer useful. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says that even for him the defect of the uselessness of the *śāstra* has to be remedied. Both the dualist and the *advaitī* have this problem. This is his first stand.

#### FOR THE DVAITI ĀĀSTRĀ BECOMES USELESS EVEN IN BONDAGE

Then *Śaṅkara* goes further and he says that, at least for the *advaitī*, during bondage, *śāstra* is useful but for the *dvaitī*, even during bondage, it is useless because there is no *mokṣa* for him. He does not accept that *ātmā* is *Brahman* and anything short of that is not *mokṣa*. Bondage is real for him and thus there is no release. *Śāstra* addresses the person who is ignorant and that ignorance is very natural. One is born with self-ignorance as well as ignorance of the world. One is provided with various means to remove ignorance of the world to some extent; but to remove the ignorance of the self, we have only the *śāstra*. Its object is addressing the person who is not aware of the nature of *ātmā*, so, *śāstra* is useful because the world is full of people who are ignorant and this ignorance alone is the cause of bondage.

#### ĀTMĀ HAS ALWAYS BEEN FREE

*Śāstra* says that you are not bound but are and always have been inherently free. Like the rope is not and has never been a snake nor from its own stand-point does it have the feeling of being a snake. Similarly, *ātmā* has no sense of being bound. The bondage is purely from the standpoint of the one who is ignorant of the self and is removed by the removal of that ignorance through knowledge. So, *śāstra* is very useful for us. For the one who is not informed, seeing the self in the not-self, which is the cause for actions and the results of actions, the *śāstra* is very useful in correcting that error. This physical body becomes the cause for assuming another body (in heaven) because it is this body, which does the *karmas* to earn that heavenly body. Though both are *anātmā*, he looks upon them as *ātmā*.

For the wise people who look upon future bodies as well as this body as *mithyā* and the *ātmā* as *satya*, the entire *śāstra*, both the part that enjoins action, i.e., the

*karma-kāṇḍa* and the part that gives knowledge, i.e., the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* are useless because they have served their purpose. For the people, known to us here, who are *avivekīs* and at the same time accept *ātmā* as other than the body, there is another life and also *karma-phala*.

For those who have the knowledge of *ātmā* as distinct from the physical body etc., there is no more any connection to their own *karma-phala*, which causes results such as a celestial body, enjoyment in heaven, etc. And again for them, seeing the self as this physical body as well as other bodies that they may acquire in the future is not possible. The meaning of the word 'I' is not placed in the physical body or in any other future body that they would receive as the result of their good *karmas*. He gives an example. Even one who is totally deluded does not see water and fire as the same. Then, how will the one who has the knowledge of the self mistake *anātmā* for *ātmā* knowing well that they are opposed to each other? Even though *anātmā* depends upon *ātmā*, they are totally opposed to each other. *Ātmā* is free from time; *anātmā* is time bound, *ātmā* is consciousness; *anātmā* is inert; *anātmā* is subject to modifications (being subject to time), whereas *ātmā* is not; *anātmā* has connection to other things; *ātmā* is completely free from any association. The bondage is due to these properties of *anātmā* being superimposed upon *ātmā*.

#### THE ŚĀSTRA THAT ENJOINS ACTION IS MEANT FOR THE IGNORANT, ONE WHO HAS KARTĪTVĀ AND ĒTMĒ HAS NO KARTĪTVĀ

Therefore, the *śāstra* that enjoins the performing and avoidance of actions is meant for the ignorant. Even a semblance of an injunction for *mokṣa* in sentences like 'The self, my dear, is to be seen, listened to, reflected and contemplated upon, *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ*,' is not meant as an injunction to action but to turn the mind's attention from its natural tendency to go towards external objects as a solution to problems. Such sentences are meant to help the seeker discover that the problem is centred on 'I' and therefore, the solution also has to be centred on 'I.' Even though, it is just to turn your attention towards yourself, technically according to the *pūrvamīmāṃsaka* it still has the status of an injunction, *vidhi*. Therefore, we say that *vidhis*, not even these, are meant for the one who has the vision of the *ātmā* as distinct from the result, *karma-phala*, and its cause, the physical body. In his vision, the self is neither a doer, *kartā* nor an enjoyer, *bhoktā*. When there is no *kartā*, there is no one to do the actions much less someone to enjoy the results; so, the *śāstra* enjoining and prohibiting actions is useless to him.

He points this out with an example. When one person, *Devadatta*, is told to do something, another, *Viṣṇumitra*, does not engage himself in that action because in his vision, he is not enjoined to do it. Similarly the one who looks upon himself as fullness itself, free from agency or any other attribute, is not impelled to do any of the variety of

actions enjoined for any of the *āśramas* or *varṇas*. All these injunctions depend upon the superimposition of agency upon the *ātmā* due to ignorance. Only then can one heed to all these injunctions about *karmas*. Otherwise they are, as I told you, like the shampoo commercial for a person who has no hair on his head. They do not draw his attention at all even though he hears the command, like *Viṣṇumitra*, who even though heard the command did not respond because it was addressed to *Devadatta*. If there is not this very clear understanding of the nature of the self being distinct and free from the not-self, there will be the pursuit of a result, *phala*, through action.

### ĪTMĒ PERFORMS ACTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH PRAKĪTI, SAYS THE DUALIST

Now, the dualist argues that even though *ātmā* itself may not perform any action, by association with *prakṛti* in the form of a given physical body-mind-sense complex, it can perform action. Even saying, ‘I am not the doer,’ is an oral action. Because of this association, the subject matter of the Veda becomes meaningful. Even though one has the knowledge of *ātmā* being distinct from result and its cause, the physical body, i.e., he does not look upon himself as *kartā* or *bhoktā*, he does engage in actions that bring a desirable result and refrains from those that do not. Sentences of the *śāstra* such as, ‘Speak the truth, *satyaṃ vada*,’ and ‘Do not hurt, *hiṃsāṃ na kuryāt*,’ are meaningful for a wise man also. Even though he is not a doer, he is associated with the body, mind, senses, etc., and therefore, mandates, though not directly addressed to *ātmā*, pertain to the mind-body-sense complex with which it is associated. To illustrate this, he says that even though father and son both know that they are distinct from one another, because of the connection between them, the father performs certain *karmas* for the sake of the son and vice versa. Similarly *ātmā*, which is *akartā* is not addressed directly by the *śāstra* but because of its association with the body-mind-sense complex, it is enjoined to perform a certain *karma*.

*Śaṅkara* answers this argument by saying that, only before the gain of the knowledge that *ātmā* is distinct from *anātmā* and there is an identification of oneself as the body, mind and senses and therefore, an injunction to act. *Gītā* says, ‘Performing action he performs no action—*kurvan api na karoti*.’ In all sensory and physical activities like seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, talking, even in opening and closing the eyelids, the knower of the truth of himself does not perform any action. Therefore, *ātmā* is not really associated because the association is purely *mithyā*. Once you know the truth, even though it still appears to exist, it is sublated. Because there is no real association, *śāstra* does not address the knower of the truth.

Further he adds that the one who gains the knowledge of *ātmā* being distinct from *phala* and *hetu* (*bhokṛtva* and *karṛtva*), already has knowledge of what is enjoined and what is prohibited by *śāstra*. First he becomes an *āstika*, one who accepts the Veda

as a *pramāṇa*, and understands that the *jīva* has no beginning and that because of some *puṇya* he now finds himself with a human body endowed with the faculty of choice. Because of this, all the *puruṣārthas*, *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, are open to him. As *Śaṅkara* will say later, the natural pursuit is generally towards *artha* and *kāma*, not *dharma*. Because of some *puṇya*, he gains *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* and through that, this knowledge of what is enjoined and what is prohibited. Even though he has inclinations, *rāga-dveṣas*, that are contradictory to these mandates, he acts according to *dharma*; and because of this, has a certain composure born of freedom from conflicts. With this disposition, fundamental questions begin to arise in him that are triggered by the very *śāstra* upon, which he has based his actions.

That *śāstra* says that there is something more, *mokṣa*, that can be realised in this very life. *Śāstra* knows what is to be done first and what to say later. First it sets down prayer, values and meditations and then teaches realities. If there is any obstruction in understanding that, ways and means are given to prepare the mind. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says after knowledge there is no real association of the self with the body etc. Thus, in this manner it is established that *the śāstra*, consisting of injunctions and prohibitions, has in its view only the one who *has* no knowledge of *ātmā* and *anātmā*.

Now there is a further objection. These two sentences, ‘The one who desires heaven should perform a ritual, *svargakāmaḥ yajeta*,’ and ‘Do not eat meat, *na kalañjam bhakṣayet*,’ are examples of injunction, *vidhi*, and prohibition, *pratiśedha*, respectively. Those who have knowledge of *ātmā* as other than the body etc., have no pursuit with reference to any of these because they do not look upon themselves as an agent, *kartā*, having come to know that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, which is *akartā*. Now the person who takes the body or senses or mind alone as *ātmā*, not accepting that there is an *ātmā* that survives the death of the body, is not going to follow any of these mandates either. If there is no further birth, or even unseen results of action, *adrṣṭa-phala*, in this birth, the laws of *karma* are meaningless. A mandate like ‘Do not hurt, *hiṃsāṃ na kuryāt*,’ does not interest him; because for him, convenience is the rule. If you argue that he should not do it because he will be caught and punished, he can just say that he accepts the risk. That argument is over. Then if you say that the laws of *karma* will penalise him, he can say that he does not believe in them because they are unseen. Only what is perceptible exists for him. Therefore, such a person does not follow *śāstra* and nor does the *jñānī*. When there is no one to follow its mandates, *śāstra* becomes useless.

*Śaṅkara* says it is not true. The one who accepts an *ātmā* other than the body etc., and yet does not know that *ātmā* is not a doer is addressed by *śāstra*. If he believes in *śāstra* as a means of knowledge, he will be impelled to do what it enjoins and he will refrain from doing what it prohibits. His belief is that the self is an agent, *kartā*, who is other than the physical body etc., and survives the demise of the body. But he has no knowledge of the self being identical with *Īśvara*, non-separate from anything yet independent of everything. Therefore, he has a longing for results like heaven, etc.

Knowing that he is going to survive death is a relief but then, where he will end up becomes a matter for concern. Therefore, he has a desire to better his situation not only in this life but in the next as well. To fulfil this desire he engages in action, not for the sake of the action itself, but to fulfil his longing. Therefore, the *śāstra* is useful for him

A *mumukṣu* also does *karma* enjoined by the *śāstra*, knowing full well its limitations, for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. And then through the *śāstra*, which is a *pramāṇa*, he gains *mokṣa*. Therefore, *śāstra* is useful for him too.

*Śaṅkara* further answers negating the contention that *śāstra* is useless. He says that, just because one person is enlightened through *śāstra-pramāṇa*, it does not mean that the whole society is enlightened. It is true that once a desire is fulfilled, what was required to fulfil it as a means becomes useless. Once someone is enlightened, *śāstra* is no longer useful to him. But only one among millions will get enlightened; so, there is no problem of *śāstra* being useless just because it has served its purpose for someone. Even in *Rāma*'s time there was *Rāvaṇa* and even in *Kṛṣṇa*'s time there was *Duryodhana*. *Śaṅkara* says that now too, there are so many deluded people, who have no discrimination, who do not follow the conduct of the wise anyway. This is because what impels any one to engage in action is not what a wise person does and does not do but one's own *rāga-dveṣas*. Even though there may be wise persons in society, we do not necessarily follow them. In fact, we see people doing things that a wise man would never do like rituals meant to destroy one's enemies, *ābhicāra-karma*.

For the ignorant, likes and dislikes alone are the motivation for all actions including *vaidika-karmas* etc. As we saw in the fifth chapter, one's very nature is to pursue these *rāga-dveṣas*—*svabhāvastu pravartate*.<sup>1</sup> The whole system is set up for it. The Lord has turned the sense organs outwards and therefore, one sees what is external, and not the inner self, *parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ tasmāt parāñ paśyati nāntarātman*.<sup>2</sup> Naturally people are disposed towards sense pursuits. This is the expressed form of ignorance from, which arises the sense of limitation and the attempt to be free from that. How it expresses depends on one's inborn tendencies, upbringing, culture etc. It has very little to do with the conduct of the wise. A few people who have value for his wisdom will try to follow him but the majority will not.

After answering all the objections presented so far, *Śaṅkara* now picks up the original thread and reminds us that *saṃsāra* is created by ignorance. A further objection is raised. Whether *saṃsāra* is created by ignorance or something else, the effect is the same. The fear invoked by a snake falsely superimposed on a rope is the same as that invoked by a real snake. Thus whether *saṃsāra* is created by ignorance or by *Īśvara*, whether it is *satya* or *mithyā*, it would affect the *kṣetrajñā*, thus argues the objector.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 5-14

<sup>2</sup> *Kāthopanīṣad* – 2-1-1

To this, Śaṅkara responds by saying that for the *kṣetrajñā* in its essential form, there is neither real ignorance nor its product, *saṃsāra*. The *kṣetrajñā* remains as *sat-cit-ānanda* and is not at any time affected by or associated with ignorance. Neither is there the product of *avidyā* called *saṃsāra* for the *kṣetrajñā*. If you say that the self suffers from *saṃsāra* due to ignorance, later Śaṅkara will raise the question, ‘To whom does this ignorance belong? To *ātmā* or to the *jīva*?,’ and will himself answer it.

We will see Śaṅkara’s response to this later. Here he says that erroneous knowledge is incapable of affecting what is true. How can the imagined snake affect the rope? It is purely superimposed on what is real, the rope, which remains completely untainted by the properties of a snake. What is absolutely real, *paramārtha-vastu*, always remains as it is. This is a very important thing in the *śāstra*. It is precisely because *ātmā* does not change that, the *upadeśa* ‘*tat tvam asi*’ possible. Otherwise *śāstra* cannot say that you are *Brahman*. If there is any change whatsoever in *ātmā* *śāstra* will have to say that you will be *Brahman* if you do certain things.

The statement, ‘You are *Brahman*,’ is entirely different, it is a statement revealing an already existent reality, which is never affected by your ignorance. Śaṅkara gives an example. Just as how mirage water will not moisten a parched desert, ignorance, which is *mithyā*, cannot affect what is real. There are two definitions for *mithyā*. They are: That which has its basis in something else, *adhiṣṭhāna-ananya* is *mithyā*. Or that which cannot be defined as absolutely existent or non-existent, *sad-asadbhyām anirvacanīya*, is *mithyā*. We cannot say that ignorance is real because if it were *sat*, one could not remove it, *sat cet na bādhyeta*, yet we see that in the wake of knowledge ignorance does disappear. Nor can we say that it does not exist, *asat*, because until knowledge removes it, it remains as something opposed to knowledge. Every question reveals its existence. It is important to understand that ignorance is not absence of knowledge. There is absence of knowledge in a pot also but we do not say the pot is ignorant. Only the one who is capable of knowledge is now ignorant.

Ignorance is some ‘thing’ that is opposed to knowledge and can be destroyed by it. Because it cannot be dismissed as non-existent, nor can it be accepted as *satya*. It is therefore, something in between—*mithyā*. When ignorance is *mithyā*, so is its product, *saṃsāra*. Neither of them has any reality for the *kṣetrajñā* and therefore, do not in any way affect it just as how the mirage water does not at all affect the desert with its wetness. The locus of a superimposition is not affected by what is superimposed upon it. Therefore, the *kṣetrajñā*, which is *ātmā* identified as *Īśvara* is not affected by ignorance or its product at any time. It always remains the same. Because the *kṣetrajñā* is never affected by ignorance and its product, *Īśvara* with whom the *kṣetrajñā* is identified, is also not a *saṃsārī*.

If *kṣetrajñā* is *Īśvara*, one may ask, ‘Why do people behave as *saṃsārīs*?’ As *Bhagavān* has already said, ‘The intellect is covered by ignorance, and because of that,

people are deluded—*ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*.<sup>1</sup> Because of this *Bhagavān* says, ‘May you know me as the *kṣetrajñā*, *kṣetrajñāṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi*.’

A further question is asked here. If *ātmā* appears as a *saṃsārī* due to ignorance, how do we account for the experience of the one who has studied the *śāstra* and is informed and yet identifies with only a given physical body, mind etc.? The *śāstra* reveals that the whole universe is his body, if at all he has a body; yet he conducts his life as though he has one given body of a particular nature. Why is this so? *Śaṅkara*’s response is to ridicule the scholarship of such a person. If, after knowledge, a person were to think that he is circumscribed by a given body-mind-sense complex, what kind of scholarship is that? The ignorant person also has the same vision of himself. He may be a great scholar and have *apara-vidyā*, knowledge of linguistics etc., but still we consider him ignorant because here we are talking about *para-vidyā*. If he is really a scholar in this sense, and still refers to a given body as his body, it is only figurative, *upacāra*, because his knowledge has sublated the reality of such a notion. We call it *bādhita-anuvṛtti*.

Now the objection is raised that if he sees himself as the *kṣetrajñā*, who is not subject to any change, he would have no desire to do anything in order to gain some enjoyment or better himself in some way. Yet *paṇḍitas* have done a lot of work in the form of teaching, writing etc., which indicates that they have their own desires for recognition etc. If so, they are ignorant. If they do not have such desires and are aware of the truth of *ātmā*, which is identical with *Īśvara* and not subject to change, how can they desire a change in *ātmā*? Generally one performs various actions in order to bring about a change in himself that will better his status in some way either by getting rid of *duḥkha* or by gaining some *sukha*. This is all based on looking upon *ātmā* as a *kartā* who engages in action in order to enjoy the result so that *ātmā* can be a *bhoktā*.

Both enjoyment and action imply modification. Action always brings about a change and thus if I am impelled to do an action, I must necessarily have the notion that *ātmā* is subject to change. Now I am in one condition, *duḥkha*, and engage in action in the hope that I will become a *sukhī*. This will then imply that it requires a change on the part of *ātmā*. Whereas, if I were to know that I am not subject to change, how can there be any possibility of *pravṛtti*, engaging in action or *nivṛtti*, giving up actions? Only when this doership and enjoyership are taken as the attributes of oneself, can one desire to do an action. If that very *ātmā*, to which the doership and enjoyership are ascribed, is understood to be free from doership and enjoyership, all the actions a person does are only figurative, *upacāra*. *Karma* is *mithyā* for him.

Knowing that the self is not subject to change, he knows that it is impossible for the self to be a doer, *kartā*, or enjoyer, *bhoktā*. This being so, it is not possible for him

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* -5-15

to engage in an action for the purpose of enjoying its result. The ignorant alone engages in all such activities, whether scripturally enjoined or secular. This is because it is he who has the status of desiring the various results. The one who has the vision of *ātmā* as not subject to change cannot have a desire to do *karma* in order to bring about a change for himself. That kind of activity is resolved and because of his lack of pursuit he appears to have a *nivṛtti*. But this also is only figurative. There is no real withdrawal, but rather a natural lack of pursuit, which from the standpoint of pursuit is called *nivṛtti*.

Only activities due to his *prārabdha-karma* remain; there are no self-motivated activities. He does not think that he is refraining from all activities. For that he would require will and a sense of doership in which case *ātmā* would remain a *kartā* engaging in *nivṛtti-karma*. *Kṛṣṇa* has already said that inactivity is not actionlessness because there is an agent involved who desists from action. The wise man does not look upon this withdrawal from pursuit as an action on his part. It is a very natural thing for him because there is no condition of being the desirer of a result. He does not impose his will upon the body-mind-sense complex in order to make it stop. It naturally ceases like a pendulum, which, after swinging to and fro, finally comes to rest.

Those people who have knowledge of the Veda and perform various rituals, though they are *vaidika-pañḍitas*, are not considered *pañḍitas* in *para-vidyā* because they do not have the clear vision of *ātmā* as being not subject to change.

Then there are the dualists who, even after studying a verse in which *Īśvara* says clearly, *ḷṣetrajaṅṅaṅ cāpi māṅ viddhi sarva-ḷṣetreṣu bhārata—O! Descendant of Bharata, may you know Me as the knower of the body in all the bodies,* conclude that the *jīva* is not only other than the *ḷṣetra*, but other than *Īśvara* as well because he is very well known as *sukhī* or *duḷkḷhī*, subject to birth and death. But even the *dvaitī* cannot accept *sukha* and *duḷkha*; so, his pursuit is to resolve *saṅsāra* and gain *mokṣa*. For him the doership and enjoyership of the *jīva*, the world and *Īśvara* are all real. To get rid of *saṅsāra* he resorts to *Īśvara*, knowing that no other *jīva* can help him. *ḷṣetra*, according to him, is what is created by the *ḷṣetrajaṅṅa* who is *Īśvara*. According to him the only way of being free of *saṅsāra* is to go to *Īśvara* by meditation upon him. And the purpose of scripture is to give knowledge of *ḷṣetra* and *ḷṣetrajaṅṅa*. Because the more you know about *Īśvara*, the more you can meditate upon him. And *śāstra* is required to know *Īśvara* because *Īśvara* alone can reveal himself. First you gain knowledge, *vijṅāna*, then you make use of it by doing meditation, *dhyāna*, in which you visualise *Īśvara* as described in the *śāstra* and through his grace gain the qualities, like beatitude etc, of *Īśvara*. And finally go to heaven to be with *Īśvara*. And this is *mokṣa*, freedom from *saṅsāra*.

There are several difficulties in accepting this. When the *jīva* meditates upon *Īśvara*, does he give up his condition of being a *jīva* or not? If he does, is the condition of being a *jīva* real or unreal? If it is real, how can he give it up? If it is not real, then,



you are accepting that there is only *Īśvara* and no *jīva* in reality and duality is negated. If, on the other hand, the *jīva* is real, whatever he gains will be in keeping with being a *jīva*. We have a Tamil proverb that illustrates this. If your finger swells, it can swell at the most to the size of a lemon. It is not going to become as large as a pumpkin. Then too, when the cause for the swelling disappears, it is going to deflate again. Similarly, the *jīva*'s attaining the qualities of *Īśvara* will be conditioned by the limitations of being a *jīva*. A small wavelet because of its meditation upon the ocean cannot become more than a great breaker. Similarly, a *jīva*, a limited individual, no matter how inflated he becomes, is going to remain limited.

Those who think otherwise have not understood Lord *Kṛṣṇa*'s statement, *kṣetrajñam cāpi māṃ viddhi*. *Śaṅkara* calls such people lowly *paṇḍitas* destroying what *śruti* says and imagining what it does not say. In order to make the *śāstra* useful, the dualist thinks that *mokṣa* must be real and for that, *saṃsāra* must be real. Not knowing the consequences of this position, he destroys himself, says *Śaṅkara*. If *saṃsāra* is real, how is he going to get rid of it? Since he has studied Veda, logic and language etc., others are going to look upon him as a scholar and come to learn from him. Being deluded, he will also delude others with the notion that the *jīva* is different from both the *kṣetra* and *Īśvara* and that you have to meditate upon *Īśvara* to gain what they call *aīśvarya*. That is *mokṣa*. Even though he has studied *śāstra*, *Śaṅkara* says, he is devoid of the meaning of the *śāstra* that is held by the tradition, *sampradāya*. From the beginning of creation down to *Vyāsa* and then to *Śaṅkara*, there is a *sampradāya*, which states that the vision of the *śāstra* is that you are *Īśvara*. Only by following the *sampradāya* can you get that vision. Without it, every sentence becomes different from every other sentence making it impossible to get the total vision.

A dualist selectively focuses on statements that can be interpreted to support his position and then struggles hard to justify his stand whenever he has to deal with statements like, *tat tvam asi*. No matter how hard they struggle, they can never establish *dvaita* because it is not true. And at the end of it he gets nothing. He struggles so hard only to find out finally that he is a *saṃsārī*. His original complaint was that he was a *saṃsārī* and at the end of all his inquiry he concludes that he really is a *saṃsārī* and at the end of it he gets nothing. Then he hopes that through his meditation he will be able to go to heaven, *vaikunṭha*. Destroying what is said in the *śāstra* and imagining what is not said, not only are they deluded, they delude others too. The one to be resorted to solve the problem of *saṃsāra* is the *sampradāyavit* who understands that the *jīva* is uncreated and is non-different from *Īśvara* who is not other than all that is here.

All this is to establish the usefulness of *śāstra*. But the validity of *śāstra*, its having the status of being a *pramāṇa*, is not established by saying that the *jīva* etc., are real. As a *pramāṇa*, it must be *anadhigata*, i.e., it should produce knowledge, which cannot be gathered by sense organs and other *pramāṇas* based upon perception, and *abādhitā* that cannot be negated. If it can be negated it is not *jñāna*. The validity of the

*śāstra* depends on whether it produces knowledge or not. When you say that there is a difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, it is not something that you perceive. You do not see *Īśvara* as another person because of which you conclude that he is different from you. So, by what means of knowledge do you establish a division? The duality is purely imagination. You may say that you feel that you have a sense of individuality but you cannot say that you are separate from *Īśvara* unless you see two individuals and identify yourself as one of them but not the other. If you say that between *jīva* and creation, *jagat*, there is a difference, we can analyse that and see how much of a difference there is. But if you say there is a difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, when did you see *Īśvara* to arrive at this conclusion? *Śāstra* is the only *pramāṇa* for *Īśvara* and *śāstra* says that there is no difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*.

Even the *jīva* as the one who indwells physical body has no particular form that you can identify and distinguish as different from *Īśvara*. Based upon form, it is not possible to establish a difference as we can between a pot and a cloth. What about establishing the difference in terms of property? A lump of camphor and a lump of salt are indistinguishable in form but have very different properties. Similarly, though there may not be any difference in form between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, perhaps there is some difference in quality. The *śāstra* says that *Īśvara* is omniscient and omnipotent and our experience of ourselves as individuals is of having limited knowledge and power. There seems to be a difference in qualities. But the *śāstra* also says that *Īśvara* is free from all attributes and of the nature of *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. It goes on to say that *ātmā* also is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* and is, therefore, not separate than *Īśvara*. The difference in knowledge, power etc., between *jīva* and *Īśvara* does not establish a difference because that can be established only when there are two different entities. If the two, in truth, are one and seem different because of the *upādhi*, that does not constitute a real difference.

*Īśvara* cannot be a separate entity and still be omniscient, *sarvajñatva*, because a separate entity requires a body and a mind of his own. If he has a mind, he will have only one thought at a time and ignorance of everything else and therefore, cannot have omniscience, *sarvajñatva*. Similarly, omnipotence cannot be established if *Īśvara* is an entity separate from you, because then he does not have your power. Now he argues that though they are different neither in form nor in quality, they may still be two different entities, like two identical pots. If *Īśvara* is an entity, however, he cannot be, as *śāstra* says, one alone and non-dual, *ekam eva advitīyam*. It is only through *śāstra* that we know *Īśvara* and *śāstra* gives no room for *Īśvara* being an entity or for there being any second thing. In fact, if you begin to analyse it, you cannot prove the existence of another object at all in this world. The existence of another entity is all from a point of view.

Let us take the physical body. Is it separate from the physical universe? If not, how can you show that it is one entity and the physical universe another? So, it looks as

though it is separate from the physical universe. But in the physical universe, what is it that you are aware of which is separate from the very *vr̥tti*, because of which you are aware of it? The object is not separate from the *vr̥tti* because of which you are aware of the object. In this way you definitely cannot establish a second entity. If you then try to establish a difference between the knower, *jñātā*, and the *vr̥tti*, you have to establish that they are really two different things. But once you are able to appreciate that the nature of both the *jñātā* and *vr̥tti* is one consciousness, where is the second thing?

Perhaps though they are the same, they have their own qualities like space and air. Both of these are elements but air has its own property, touch, *sparśa*, and space has its own property of sound, *śabda*. Similarly *Īśvara* has all auspicious qualities, *kalyāṇa-guṇas* while the *jīva* has only some. This raises the same difficulties we saw before. If *Īśvara* has qualities, he becomes another entity. And *śāstra* offers no support for the idea that *Īśvara* has qualities but on the other hand says he is *nirguṇa* as is *ātmā*. Since there are no qualities, there is no possibility of there being a difference in terms of quality.

Then he suggests that though there is no difference in terms of form or quality, perhaps there is a difference in name as between a *ghaṭa* and *kalaśa*, both of which mean pot. Yes, that is acceptable. With reference to one *upādhi*, limitless consciousness is called *Īśvara* and with reference to another, he is *jīva*. It is exactly like the same person being called father from one standpoint and son from another. Similarly the same *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* conditioned by a given *antaḥ-karaṇa* is called *jīva* and conditioned by *māyā-upādhi* is called *Īśvara*. The difference, however, does not mean anything because you reckon only the *vastu* and not the *avastu*. Thus there is no tenability of a difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*.

As a further argument he says that the very fact that you find it necessary to establish that there is non-difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara* presupposes your acceptance of difference. We answer this by saying that our acceptance is only provisional, however. Because difference has been advanced, there is an occasion to show that there is non-difference. From the vision of the ignorant, there can be a difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara* and as long as there is this ignorance, there will be the occasion for *śāstra* to remove it.

Next he argues that when we say that *Īśvara* is consciousness conditioned by *māyā* or endowed with the *upādhi* called *māyā* while the *jīva* is the same consciousness conditioned by *antaḥ-karaṇa*, we are accepting difference. To this, we respond by saying that pure consciousness does not assume any attribute, no matter what 'conditions' it. When we say the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is an *upādhi*, it must be understood that the *upādhi* is not another entity. Being *mithyā* it has no existence without *satya-ātmā*. Limitless consciousness cannot be limited by *antaḥ-karaṇa* or any other *upādhi*. It is only seemingly limited like limitless space is seemingly limited by a pot. If *ātmā* is

*pūrṇa*, whole, how is it going to be limited by the *antaḥ-karaṇa* or anything? It always remains whole. You place your 'I' in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* you then say, 'I am limited,' but if you put your 'I' in consciousness, where is the limitation? Therefore, the limitation on the whole is not real because the difference created by a pot or a room does not make any real difference to space. Similarly if *māyā-upādhi* is different from *antaḥ-karaṇa-upādhi*, the difference is in the *upādhi* alone and not in the *vastu*. No *vastu* is made different by *upādhi*. That is why it is called *upādhi*. If a crystal appears red because it is near a red flower, the flower has not created any real change in the crystal. If it does cause a change, it is not an *upādhi*.

Here we should note that when we dismiss the notion that there is a difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, we are not criticising a person who is prayerful and is worshipping *Īśvara*. There is no problem in that. The difficulty is only in trying to establish the reality of the difference. When a person is committed to that view and to convincing the others of it, it has to be discussed because the assimilation of the vision of non-duality does imply the dismissal of duality, *dvaita*.

Now *Śaṅkara* wants to introduce another topic. To do that, he first sums up what has been said so far, because, on that basis a further argument is going to be raised. The objection was raised earlier that if there is identity between *Īśvara* and the *kṣetrajñā*, then *Īśvara* will become a *saṃsārī*. On the other hand, if there is this identity and *Īśvara* is not a *saṃsārī*, there will be no *saṃsāra*, which is against perception. These two 'defects' were already answered by *Śaṅkara* and here he summarises the situation in one sentence. All this is possible because of the difference between knowledge and ignorance. Even though *jīva* and *Īśvara* are one and neither is a *saṃsārī*, if there is ignorance of this fact, there is *saṃsāritva*. Therefore, there is no defect, *doṣa*, and the whole objection falls apart. It is in order to make the *jīva* recognise that he is not a *saṃsārī*, that *Bhagavān* says, *kṣetrajñā cāpi mām viddhi*. The one who knows this does not look upon himself as a *saṃsārī*. So, the difference between knowledge, *vidyā*, and ignorance, *avidyā*, is the difference between *saṃsāritva* and *asaṃsāritva*. By a limitation, which is imagined due to ignorance, the *vastu* that is real is not affected. He again cites the example of the mirage water by which a desert land is not rendered wet. Similarly, if you imagine that there is *saṃsāritva* for *ātmā* due to *avidyā*, that *saṃsāritva* does not affect *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is *Īśvara* before and after knowledge of that fact. If you know, there is no *saṃsāritva*. But it is not that *Īśvara* becomes a *jīva* and is then released from *saṃsāra* by knowledge. Even at the time of ignorance *ātmā* is not affected nor does *saṃsāritva* become its property. But as long as there is ignorance, *ātmā* is mistaken to be a *saṃsārī*.

This repetition is an accepted method of teaching according to the maxim called *siṃha-aparokṣa-nyāya*. When a lion walks, it takes a few steps forward and then looks back over its shoulder. Similarly, after making a point, you look back and recapitulate or say the same thing in a little more detail before you proceed.

Only due to *avidyā* is there a *saṃsāra* for the *kṣetrajñā*. In order to make this knowledge more firm there is a further discussion here according to the *sthāṇu-nikhanana-nyāya*, maxim of shaking a pole. In order to erect a pole, you place it in a hole and fill the hole with earth. To make it firm, you shake the pole and add more earth. Similarly, when you establish a fact, you shake it a little bit by challenging it and meeting that challenge.

*Śaṅkara* repeats all this here because he wants to clear another point by raising the following objection. If you say *saṃsāritva* is all projected by ignorance, *avidyā-kalpita*, to whom does it belong? If *avidyā* belongs to the *kṣetrajñā*, how can this person who has *avidyā* be identical with *Īśvara*?

In accepting that there is *saṃsāra* due to *avidyā*, you are accepting that the *kṣetrajñā* has *avidyā*. That is a defect because once there is *avidyā*, there are all the things that are created by it — *sukhitva* and *duḥkhitva*, birth, death, etc. Everything that is directly experienced by us and that we complain about. Because of ignorance alone we have these problems and thus if the *kṣetrajñā* has ignorance, it is a defect.

*Śaṅkara* asks, ‘Is this *avidyā* known or unknown?’ If you know that *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma*, you have no *avidyā*, if not, you have it; and if that is so, is it known to you or unknown? If it is known, it is an object of knowledge and as was previously shown, what is known is other than the *kṣetrajñā*, the one who knows. ‘I have ignorance,’ is a fact that is known to you and therefore, belongs to the *kṣetra*. It is not self-effulgent but inert and therefore, known to you like a pot. Later, when *Kṛṣṇa* describes the *kṣetra* in detail he includes *avyakta*. This is *māyā* or *avidyā*. Anything that is known to you belongs to the *kṣetra*. There is no defect of it being an attribute of the knower, *kṣetrajñā* or affecting the knower. It is not possible.

Let us consider the physical body. It is subject to ageing but there is no ageing for *ātmā*, the *kṣetrajñā* because what belongs to the *kṣetra* is the property of the *kṣetra*. It does not affect the *kṣetrajñā*, the one who is conscious. As the sun is not affected by what it illumines, the *kṣetrajñā* is not affected by what it illumines, including *avidyā*. It remains always *asaṅga*, *Śaṅkara* elaborates. Any little thing in the host of defects, which does not exist at all in the *kṣetrajñā*, that you create, is the property of the *kṣetra*, not the *kṣetrajñā*, because it is known. Whatever you impose upon the *kṣetrajñā*—*sukha* or *duḥkha*, mortality or fatness—cannot possibly belong to the *kṣetrajñā* because it is known and therefore, an object.

When you complain about a being a *saṃsāri* and having of *sukhitva*, *duḥkhitva*, *kartṛtva*, *bhokṛtva* etc, are all these various defects that you superimpose upon *ātmā* known to you or not? If they are unknown to you, as in deep sleep, you have no problem. If they are known to you, you have no problem because those defects belong to the *kṣetra*, not to you, the knower. Then how is it that we experience ourselves as having *saṃsāra*? That problem is due to lack of understanding of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. The entire

group of limitations, which is superimposed upon the *kṣetrajñā* has the status of being known. That being so, it is purely the property of the *kṣetra*, not the *kṣetrajñā*.

Perhaps it is possible due to association. Water, for example, even though it is odourless and colourless, takes on the properties of the earth by association. Similarly, perhaps the *kṣetrajñā*, even though free from the *kṣetra*, can take on its properties because of association. The *kṣetrajñā* is available in the body, the *kṣetra*, after all. Could its properties not get transferred to the *kṣetrajñā*? No. You are conscious of not only *avidyā* but of everything that is created by it and the one who is conscious, the *kṣetrajñā*, is not affected by anything that he is conscious of. Although we give the example of the sun not being affected by what it illumines, there is no example that is adequate to illustrate this because the *kṣetrajñā* belongs to one order of reality, *satya* and what is known, the *kṣetra*, to another, *mithyā*. How is *mithyā* going to affect *satya* upon, which it depends for its very existence? There is no association possible between an object that is known to you and the truth of the knower. It is like an association between you and your shadow. It is not possible because one is real and the other apparent, *mithyā*.

Further, they are opposed to each other. What relationship can there be between two things that are mutually contradictory? Between the meaning of the word ‘I,’ and the meaning of the word ‘this,’ there is no association, because one is conscious and the other is inert. The light that illumines an object does not combine with and assume the characteristics of that object. On the other hand, because of the light the object is seen. Whether you do a *pūjā* or commit a homicide under the light, none of the consequences fall to the light. Therefore, even by association, there cannot be any problem for the *kṣetrajñā*. Further, if there is an association, the object of knowledge becomes one with the knower and the knower becomes known. When that is so, who is to know what? Any kind of association or identity is not possible at all because there will be no knower. Suppose having *avidyā* and its products, *duḥkhitva*, *sukhitva* etc., are the attributes of *ātmā*, then how, as the opponent claimed earlier, are they directly experienced? *Ātmā* is the one who knows everything else. How can it be the knower and at the same time the known? You cannot say that these things are directly experienced and at the same time are the properties of *ātmā*, the *kṣetrajñā*.

Simply expressed, what we have to understand, *Śaṅkara* says, is *jñeyaṃ ca sarvaṃ kṣetram*, *kṣetra* is everything that is known. When it is ascertained that ignorance and the status of being *duḥkhi* etc., are the property, *dharma* of the *kṣetrajñā*, then to say, ‘It is directly experienced by me and is not possible. It is a contradiction, which arises purely due to *avidyā*. When you say you are a the *saṃsārī* says, it is due to *avidyā*. The *saṃsāra* is centred on *ātmā* and has its basis only in *ātmā*. Everything, the entire *kṣetra*, has its basis in *ātmā*, *ātmā* being *satya* and everything else being *mithyā*. They are not parallel realities but only one *vastu*—*satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. Being dependent upon *ātmā*, the *vastu*, ignorance is *mithyā*.

Otherwise It would not go. We are not saying that *avidyā* has no existence. Depending upon the *ātmā*, it exists as long as it is there. And being self-ignorance, it cannot go by any *pramāṇa* other than *śruti* because any other *pramāṇa* is handled by the knower. He has only perception, *pratyakṣa*, and inference, *anumāna*, both of which can operate only with reference to objects, *anātmā*. To know the *svarūpa* of the knower, *ātmā*, you are equipped with no means of knowledge and therefore, *śruti* alone is the *pramāṇa*.

Another question is raised here. If the *kṣetrajñā* has the attributes of *sat-cit-ānanda*, are they not known as objects? If they are not known by the *kṣetrajñā*, they become non-existent. *Sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, as we have seen are not the attributes of *ātmā*. They are *ātmā*. The word *ānanda*, which is synonymous with *ananta* is a source of great confusion here. *Ānanda* is not bliss but limitlessness. Wherever there is *sukha* there is a certain fullness, which is the *śāstra*'s intended meaning of the word *ānanda*. It is not the *dharma* of *ātmā* but its very *svarūpa*. The *śruti* also points out that *ātmā* is free from attributes, *nirguṇa*. Further, if *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* become the attributes of *ātmā*, what is the locus for these attributes? There must be another *ātmā* for that. Then what is its *svarūpa*? We have the same problem. The *svarūpa* of *ātmā* is existence, consciousness that is limitlessness.

The problem arises because *ānanda*, in the sense of happiness is experienced by the knower. This *ānanda* cannot be the *svarūpa* of the *kṣetrajñā* because it involves the duality of the experiencer and the experienced. Wherever there is *ānanda* in the sense of real fullness, there is no second thing. If there is, it is less than fullness. In fullness there is no question of saying, 'I experience *ānanda*,' in the way that one can say, 'I see a pot,' because *ānanda* never becomes an object. It is always the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. Even in deep sleep or coma there is no knower, known and knowledge, so that, what is 'experienced' there is nothing but *ātmā*, which is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. But it is not recognised as 'I,' because there is no corresponding *vṛtti* in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Otherwise, to get enlightened, you have only to go to sleep. Because the *vṛtti* is not there, one does not know, but at the same time there is only the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* without the three-fold knower-known-knowledge difference set up by the *antaḥ-karaṇa*.

Whenever there is the experience of being pleased or happy, however, it is a function of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, because it assumes the form of a *vṛtti* in which the seeker-sought division is temporarily resolved. At this time the *sukha* experienced is a property of *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Whereas the *ānanda* that is present there is the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. It is the same with any experience. The *vṛtti* of a pot is the *antaḥ-karaṇa-dharma* and the consciousness, *caitanya*, pervading the *vṛtti* is the *svarūpa*. The *nāma-rūpa* belong to the *antaḥ-karaṇa* but the existence, *satya*, belongs to the *svarūpa*. *Ānanda* that is present in any *sukha-vṛtti* is also *svarūpa*. Further, *ānanda* is always present; it is not experience of bliss. Any such experience is a particular *vṛtti* of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* in which *ānanda*, limitlessness, is to be recognised as the *svarūpa*.

Though we define *ātmā* as *sat-cit-ānanda*, it is purely an object-free consciousness in which there is no knower-known knowledge. It has no particular attribute and is invariable in all forms of experience. *Sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* are not attributes of because attributes are invariably *nāma-rūpa*, which are dependent upon *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. They are not known because they are riot objects. If anyone says that the *kṣetrajñā* is affected by the *kṣetra-dharma* that is purely due to *avidyā*.

The questions, whose *avidyā* is it, where does it exist, is it connected to *anātmā* or *ātmā*, are all raised by the dualist in an attempt to dismiss *avidyā* as the cause of *saṃsāra*. This is because if all *saṃsāra* is due to *avidyā*, everything becomes *mithyā* and *advaita* is automatically established. But if *avidyā* is not accepted as the cause for all this *saṃsāra*, then *dvaita* can be established and it therefore, becomes important for him to show that *avidyā* does not exist and the world is created by *Bhagavān*. An entity called *avidyā*, he will argue, cannot be located in *ātmā* because *ātmā* is defined as *asaṅga*, not attached to anything and therefore, cannot be the locus of *avidyā*. Further, the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* is *jñāna*, consciousness or knowledge as such, which is opposite in nature to *avidyā* and therefore, cannot be the locus for it. Thus there cannot be any relationship between *ātmā* and *avidyā*. We also accept that. But for us this fact is an ornament, *bhūṣaṇa*; for him it is a defect, *dūṣaṇa*. Since *avidyā* is not connected in any way to *ātmā*, and it exists only as long as it is there, it is *mithyā*. Because there is no connection, he argues, you cannot say it is dependent upon the *ātmā*. Then further, it cannot be located in *ātmā* because it is inert and *avidyā* can exist only in a conscious being. A table does not have any sense of being ignorant because to know one's ignorance, one must be conscious. Since *ātmā* is pure consciousness it has no connection to ignorance and since *anātmā* is inert it cannot be the location for ignorance, which is possible only in a conscious being. Therefore, it is neither in *ātmā* nor in *anātmā*. Its existence cannot be denied, however, and therefore, it exists in its own right as does *ātmā* and we have two parallel realities. This is how he argues to establish *dvaita*.

*Śaṅkara* gives a very drastic answer to this. He says that this *avidyā* belongs to the one who recognises it. He does not say here that it is located in *ātmā* or *anātmā*, but simply says that it belongs to the one for whom the *avidyā* is seen. It is located only in him. Then the opponent asks who that person is for whom it is seen? *Śaṅkara* responds that this question is meaningless. *Avidyā* belongs to the person who sees it, meaning, it is located in that person by whom it is recognised. If ignorance, is seen, the seer of the ignorance, the one who has *avidyā*, is also recognised. Whether you say, 'I have ignorance' or 'He has ignorance,' ignorance is seen. If you see someone with a stick in hand, you need not ask who has the stick. The question is meaningless because both the stick and possessor of the stick are seen simultaneously. Similarly, if the ignorance is seen, the one who has it is also recognised. If you see the ignorance, you have it and to ask to whom does this ignorance belong is improper. *Śaṅkara* gives an example. When



you see someone with a herd of cows, the question, 'To whom do these cows belong,' does not arise. Similarly, once *avidyā* is recognised by you, you become the one who has it. The very recognition of the ignorance is recognition of the person who has it.

Now an objection is raised against this example. When I see a man with cows, I see both the possessor, the man, and the possessed, the cows. Whereas ignorance and the one who has it are not seen directly by me. Then we ask how does he know that there is ignorance. If they are directly perceived, he claims, the question will be meaningless. But they are not. Naturally I want to know to whom does this ignorance belong. How can you say my question is meaningless? *Śaṅkara* responds to this with a question of his own. If I answer your question and the connection between the ignorance and the ignorant becomes known to you indirectly through my words, what is accomplished by you? To which the opponent answers that if all *samsāra* is due to *avidyā*, it should be removed and therefore, he wants to know. Then *Śaṅkara* says, 'Since you do not see ignorance directly, why do you bother about it? Whoever sees ignorance directly has to remove it.' Then the objector acknowledges that *avidyā* belongs to him and he wants to remove it. That being so, *Śaṅkara's* original statement stands. You know *avidyā* and therefore, you are the one who has it. How do you know you have it? If you see it directly it certainly belongs to you and it is not legitimate to ask to whom does it belong. If you ask how to remove the *avidyā*, that is a valid question. Any ignorance whether it is the *avidyā* that is the cause of *samsāra* or *avidyā* of a particle will go in the wake of knowledge. Therefore, all you need to ask is, 'What is this *ātmā*.'

If you say that you know you have ignorance, even though you do not see it directly, because you infer it through its products like pain, etc., still you recognise both ignorance and the ignorant. How do you arrive at the connection between *avidyā* and the *ātmā* that has the ignorance? *Ātmā* becomes ignorant only when there is a connection between the *avidyā* and the *ātmā*. One should be the locus and the other should be placed on it. In other words, the ignorant has ignorance. To recognise *ātmā* as having ignorance, ignorance cannot be an object. If it is, it is not connected to *ātmā*. To know that it is connected to the *ātmā*, *ātmā* has to be known by you as having this ignorance. If you recognise *ātmā* as having ignorance by inference, it implies the presence of another knower. For there to be a knower of the ignorant *ātmā* you require another knower and so on. This will lead to the fault of infinite regression, *anavasthā-doṣa*. *Śaṅkara* is driving him to accept that is self-evident. If the knower is self-evident, there is no problem. You are self-evident and *avidyā* is seen by you and exists as long as you have it. Because you are the one who is aware of the *avidyā*, it is also *mithyā* and does not in any manner affect the one who is conscious.

An infinite regression cannot be avoided if the knower is known. But *ātmā*, the knower is not known, it is the knower of everything. The knower is always the knower, *jñātā*, and the known is always the known, *jñeya*. One does not become the other. When

this is so, ignorance and all its products like sorrow, etc., do not in any way affect the *ātmā*, who remains *asaṅga*.

*Avidyā* appears as an object of knowledge for the witness, *sākṣi-bhāsyā*, and exists only as long as it appears. The self-evident nature of *ātmā* is established by the fact that there is an object seen, not by any means of knowledge—neither by inference nor by perception. When you say, ‘I am ignorant,’ *ātmā* is self-evident and ignorance, though known by you, is superimposed upon *ātmā* to enable you to make this statement.

Ignorance is not located in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which is *anātmā*, because it is its product. Though it is not literally located in *ātmā*, it is dependent upon it and is, therefore, *mithyā*. Only when *avidyā* is taken as *satya* do we have to find its location and otherwise account for it. Because it is *mithyā*, it has its location in *ātmā* as do all other forms of *anātmā*. It is not the property, *dharma*, of *ātmā*. Due to *avidyā*, *ātmā* is taken as the *kartā*, *bhoktā* and *saṃsārī* and therefore, *śāstra* is resorted to for the destruction of the *avidyā*.

We are not seeking knowledge of *avidyā* but of the *vastu* of which we are ignorant. I take myself to be a doer and enjoyer. the *śruti* tells me that I am *sat-cit-ānandam advayaṃ brahma*. Thus we have two different visions. But what the *śruti* says is highly desirable and therefore, I either want to know if it is true or accept that it is true and seek to understand it. Either way, inquiry begins.

The *Gītā* says, ‘Understand the Lord as the *ātmā*, the *kṣetrajñā*, in all the physical bodies.’ This being so, I should try to understand it. If I have the experience of *saṃsāra*, it is due to ignorance of this fact—my ignorance. Thus it is not appropriate to ask to whom does the ignorance belong. It is clear that it belongs to the one who is asking the question. This is not a dismissive answer but a very appropriate one because we are not trying to establish ignorance here. We are trying to remove it. We are Inquiring into the *vastu*.

Further, Ignorance is not a substance. It has only some sort of existence as long as it is there, like everything else that is *mithyā*. It is a substance, we can analyse it and questions of its location, etc. have some validity. Moreover, ignorance is always ‘of something,’ the original ignorance being that of *ātmā*. We call it ‘original’ because it sets up the problem of my taking myself to be a knower. You cannot inquire into ignorance because it is not a substance. You can only inquire into the *ātmā-vastu*. Ignorance of that *vastu* is allowed to exist only by lack of inquiry, *vicāra*. The real question to be asked is, ‘Am I a knower?’ When *Kṛṣṇa* says that the *kṣetrajñā* is the knower it is only a figurative knower that is meant here. The nature of *ātmā* is pure knowledge, *jñāna*; but because everything else is taken as known, *jñeya*, we call it knower, *jñātā*, which is to be understood as *caitanya-ātmā*. Anything regarding the *jñātā* that is recognised by you such as the seer, thinker etc., becomes known, *jñeya*. The real *jñātā* is *caitanya* and the word knower is purely figurative.

Ignorance is not definable as absolutely existent or non-existent, *sad-asadbhyām anīrvacanīya*. You can not say ignorance does not exist because a rope does get mistaken for a snake. Its power not only to conceal but to create is proof of its existence. Ignorance is not mere absence of knowledge but something, which has projected the entire creation. Absence of something, including knowledge, cannot produce anything. Because it is capable of producing, we have to concede that it has some existence. It does not substantiate itself, however, but has to depend upon something else for that and therefore, *avidyā* is not independently existent. Like everything else, we cannot say it is *satya*, because it is not independently existent, nor is it non-existent because it creates. It is purely *mithyā* and is therefore, located in the *sadvastu, ātmā*, which is the only thing that can really be defined because, for one thing, it has no parts. If it had parts you could always discover new parts and never arrive at one absolute substance. Final knowledge is not possible except with reference to *ātmā* being *Brahman* and that knowledge is complete because it is knowledge of the whole. It is not subject to improvement or alteration.

Thus, if the conclusion that one is a *saṃsārī* has to go, *avidyā* has to be removed. That conclusion is located in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which in turn is located in *avidyā* and *avidyā* is located in *ātmā*. That *avidyā* has to be removed for which a *vṛtti* is required. Vedanta produces the *vṛtti* that removes self-ignorance. *Ātmā* is self-evident and *avidyā* is known and, like everything else, is located in *ātmā*.

Now another objection is raised. The *kṣetra* is full of defects. The body has the problems of old age and pain, etc, the sense organs have their limitations, as does the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which in addition suffers sorrow. As *ātmā* goes on looking at the *kṣetra* with all these limitations, is it not like a father seeing a son who is a criminal? When he looks at him, his blood pressure goes up. Similarly the *kṣetra* will be disturbed seeing the *kṣetra* so full of defects. Any *kṣetra* has problems and therefore, he argues, the *kṣetra* looking at the *kṣetra* cannot be very happy. He is bound to be affected by the very sight.

*Śaṅkara* says that this is not true. Though *ātmā* knows the *kṣetra*, it is only a figurative knowing, *upacārika-jñāna*. Because it cannot undergo any change, there is no act of knowing for *ātmā*. It is an action, then *ātmā* must undergo a change in order to know. The *svarūpa*, nature, of *ātmā* is changeless consciousness and simply by nature it illumines the *kṣetra*. It does not perform the action of illumining. *Śaṅkara* says, it is like fire burning. Fire does not perform the action of burning but because it is hot by nature, it burns. If it were an action it could sometimes burn, sometimes not. But any object that comes into contact with fire invariably is burned or at least heated. Wherever there is fire there will be heat. Saying that, fire burns, is what we call *upacāra*. The expression is relevant but not literal. Just as how fire burns without performing an action, *ātmā* illumines the entire *kṣetra*. It does not decide to illumine and then do it; it just illumines because its nature is consciousness. Any object will be illumined by it. When

we say that *ātmā* is a knower, it is important to understand that it is the knower's *svarūpa*. We call it knower because it illumines but since it undergoes no change, it performs no action and therefore, does not have the problem of knowing. Seeing something pleasant or unpleasant does not affect it in any way.

*Bhagavān* has shown elsewhere in the *Gītā* that *ātmā* has no action, has none of the factors necessary for performing an action and has no result accruing to it, *kriyā*, *kāraṇa* and *phala* do not belong to *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is not the object of any action, *nainam chindanti śastrāṇi*, weapons do not cut it, nor is it an agent, *nāyaṃ hanti*, it does not destroy, nor does it enjoy any result in the form of *sukha* or *duḥkha*; *nādatte kasyacit pāpaṃ na caiva sukṛtaṃ vibhuḥ*—the all-pervasive one does not take onto itself the result of anyone's wrong-doing or good action. He does not become the recipient, meaning he is not in any way affected by the result of any action, either *puṇya* or *pāpa*. As you cannot pollute or beautify the space because being without form and all-pervasive it is not, available for such actions, so too, no *pāpa* or *puṇya* is taken on by *ātmā*.

When one of these exists in *ātmā*, one becomes a *kartā*, etc., only due to *avidyā*. But even when you think, due to *avidyā*, that *ātmā* is a *kartā*, *ātmā* does not undergo any change. *Bhagavān* has said ‘*ya enam vetti hantāraṃ yaścainam manyate hatam, ubhau tau na vijānito nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate*, the one who looks upon this *ātmā* as the destroyer or the one who looks upon the *ātmā* as one which is destroyed—both of these do not know.’ *Ātmā* is neither the agent nor the object of an action. Then again, ‘*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*, all the *karmas* (are being done) by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*.’ Actions are performed by the *guṇas* of the *upādhi* alone. There can be an activity born of *sattva* and backed by *rajas*, an activity born of *rajas* and backed by *sattva*, one born of *rajas* backed by *tamas* or one born of *tamas* backed by *rajas*. All our actions can be divided into these four categories, all driven by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. The *puruṣa*, *ātmā*, obtaining in the *upādhi* called *prakṛti*, performs no action.<sup>1</sup>

The one who knows *ātmā*, does not perform any action. Actions only take place. He says, ‘*paśyan sṛṇvan sprśan jighran aśnan gacchan svapan svasan pralapan viśṛjan grhṇan unmiśan nimiśan api indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartante iti dhārayan ahaṃ na kiñcit karomi iti manyeta tattvavit*—Even seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, breathing, talking, letting go, grasping, opening and closing the eyelids, the sense organs move about among the sense objects, thus contemplating, the knower of the truth would consider, ‘I do not do anything.’<sup>2</sup> The *Gītā* also says in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, ‘*karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu*, he who sees inaction in activity and he who sees action in inactivity, he

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 5-13

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 5-8, 9

among men is wise.<sup>1</sup> That I am a *kartā* and the *Bhagavān* is the creator of the world is all figurative, *upacāra*. I do not undergo any change at all and hence do not perform any action. Similarly, *Bhagavān* says, '*tasya kartāram api mām viddhi akartāram avyayam*—understand me as the *kartā* of it (this entire creation), also understand that I am changeless and I am not an agent.'

In various places in the *Gītā* this was shown by *Bhagavān* and again explained by *Śaṅkara* and all the teachers of the *sampradāya*. All say the same thing because knowledge is involved here. There is no 'way' of looking at it. It has to be understood. One final problem is now raised, which echoes an earlier objection. When there is no action, or things such as agent that are associated with action, nor any result, for *ātmā* these being purely superimposed upon *ātmā* due to *avidyā* who is to perform the *karmas* enjoined by the *śāstra*. Only those who are ignorant will be eligible to perform them and yet we see that *pañḍitas* perform *karmas*. Therefore, he says again, *śāstra* is useless in that it is only for the ignorant.

To which *Śaṅkara* responds by saying that this is correct. *Karma* enjoined by the *śāstra* is meant only for the *avidvān*, not the *vidvān*. The same *śāstra* that asks one to do various *karmas* for varieties of results also says that if you want to get rid of this *puṇya* and *pāpa* and the whole circle of *karma*, you have to get rid of doership, *kartṛtva*. That is not accomplished by surrender because the one who surrenders is himself the *kartā*. In the wake of the knowledge that *ātmā* is *akartā*, *kartṛtva* is surrendered. For the one who knows this, there is nothing to be done. '*Ātmani eva ca santuṣṭaḥ tasya kāryaṃ na vidyate*—for the one who discovers well-being in *ātmā* itself, there is nothing to be done.' That is fulfilment. Everything that is to be done is done.

The first verse, which said that this body is the *kṣetra* and the one who knows this body is the *kṣetrajña* is a cryptic statement and therefore, has to be explained. Does it mean that the body alone is *kṣetra* or is the world also *kṣetra*? Does it mean the physical body or the subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*? There are two verses now explaining this further and later there will be some more.

तत्क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक्च यद्विकारि यतश्च यत्।

स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत्समासेन मे शृणु ॥३॥

*tatkṣetraṃ yacca yādṛkca yadvikāri yataśca yat*

*sa ca yo yatprabhāvaśca tatsamāsenā me śrṇu*

Verse 3

तत् क्षेत्रम् यत् च *tat kṣetram yat ca* — and what is that *kṣetra*; यादृक् च *yādṛk ca* — and of what sort (is it); यद्विकारि *yadvikāri* — what modifications does it have; यतः च यत् *yataḥ ca yat* — and from what (has it come); स च यः *sa ca yaḥ* — and who is he (the

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 4-18

*kṣetrajñā*) यत् प्रभावश्च *yatprabhāvaśca* — and of what glory he is; तत् समासेन *tat samāsenā* — that in brief; मे शृणु *me śṛṇu* — listen from Me

And what is that *kṣetra*, of what nature, of what modifications, from what has it come and who is the *kṣetrajñā* and what is (his) glory—(for) that in brief, listen to me.

Now the nature of *kṣetra* is going to be told as to, of what sort it is, *yādṛk*, is that *kṣetra*, which was said in the first verse to be *idaṃ śarīraṃ*. Its nature is going to be explained by describing its constituents. Not only that, what type of modifications is it subject to, *yadvikāri*, from what does it arise, *yataśca yat*, what cause-effect relationships there are within the *kṣetra* itself, and what glories, what *śaktis* are there for the *kṣetrajñā* with the *upādhi*, *sa ca yo yat prabhāvaḥ ca* are all going to be told. We know *yaḥ* refers to *kṣetrajñā* here because the masculine gender is used and *kṣetra* is neuter. The *kṣetrajñā* is purely *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. It has no power to create but with the *māyā-upādhi* it becomes everything. Who is that *kṣetrajñā* with all these glories born out of various *upādhis*? All that *Bhagavān* is going to tell briefly, *samāsenā*, here. He says to *Arjuna*, ‘Listen to me.’ He says this so that *Arjuna* will be attentive and understand because he is going to be very brief.

In order to enthruse the mind of the listener regarding what he has to say about the nature of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, he now relates a verse of praise.

ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक् ।

ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः ॥४॥

*ṛṣibhīrbahudhā gītaṃ chandobhīrvividhaiḥ pṛthak  
brahmasūtrapadaiścaiva hetumadbhīrviniścitaiḥ*

Verse 4

ऋषिभिः *ṛṣibhiḥ* — by the *ṛṣis*; बहुधा *bahudhā* — in many ways; गीतम् *gītam* — it is sung; छन्दोभिः *chandobhiḥ* — by the Vedas; विविधैः *vividhaiḥ* — differently; पृथक् *pṛthak* — as distinct; (गीतम् *gītam* — it is sung;) हेतुमद्भिः *hetumadbhiḥ* — by those that are endowed with reasoning; विनिश्चितैः *viniścitaiḥ* — by those that are without doubt; ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैः च एव *brahma-sūtrapadaiḥ ca eva* — and is indeed (explained) by the sentences, which reveal *Brahman* by implication

In many ways it is sung by the *ṛṣis*. It is also sung by the sentences of the Vedas as something that is varied and also as something that is distinct. And it is indeed explained by the sentences of the Veda, which reveal *Brahman*, without doubt, by implication, and with reasoning.

*Gītam*, it is sung, meaning it is said in *mantras* or by using pleasant words, *bahudhā*, in many ways by the *ṛṣis*. How have they said it? Through the Veda,

*chandobhiḥ*, *Chandas* means meter and because the Veda is composed metrically, *chandas* becomes a name for the Veda. By the *mantras* of all four Vedas this is said, *vividhaiḥ*, in different ways. The *Taittirīyopaniṣad* speaks of the creation beginning with the five elements as the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*, as *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. In other *Upaniṣads* the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā* are presented differently but all of them speak of the nature of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* as distinct, *pṛthak*. One is *ātmā* the other is *anātmā*. One is cause, the other effect. One is *satya*, the other *mithyā*.

It is revealed by the words of those sentences, which reveal *Brahman* by implication, *brahma-sūtrapadaih*. *Pada* is that by which you understand something, *padyate, jñāyate anena*. These words indicate the nature of *Brahman* but then what they say is to be assimilated and understood without doubt. For that the *Upaniṣad* itself gives a method of reasoning. It does not merely give a statement but it backs it up with reasoning and thus the statements are *hetumat*—they have reasoning. The *Taittirīyopaniṣad* does not merely state but proves that *Brahman* is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. To prove that *Brahman* is *satya* and the world is *mithyā*, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* uses the examples of a pot and clay, ornament and gold, nail cutter and iron showing how the form is *mithyā* and the substance is *satya*. Wherever example is given, reasoning is involved. This is seen when the *śāstra* puts forth the arguments for establishing the means of knowledge. The *śāstra* says, *‘yathā iha karmajito lokaḥ kṣīyate tathā amutra puṇya-jīto lokaḥ kṣīyate*—just as here (in this world) any result of action is found finite, so too the results of action *puṇya*, in another world, are destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Whatever you do, the result will perish and thus action does not solve the problem.

How one gains this knowledge is illustrated in *Chāndogyopaniṣad* by a story of a man from the city of *Gandhāra* who is abducted by dacoits, blindfolded, bound and left in the forest. Luckily someone happens come that way and see him and out of compassion for him removes his bonds and tells him how to get back to *Gandhāra*. Being a thinking person, a *medhāvī*, he is able to follow the sparse directions meeting difficulties as they rise and reach *Gandhāra*, his home, which symbolically represent *mokṣa*. With this example, the *Upaniṣad* illustrates how one is released from bondage. Thus in the Vedas, along with reasoning, not only the essence of the teaching but various methods and things that are necessary for *mokṣa* are pointed out.

By statements without any doubt, *vinīcitaiḥ*, the Veda talks about the nature of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*. They are *vākyas*, which are capable of imparting definite knowledge that *aham brahma asmi*. The fact that the *kṣetrajñā* is *Īśvara* can be clearly understood. The glory, *prabhāva*, of the *kṣetrajñā*, he is going to tell later and so, what *Arjuna* is asked to listen to here is complete.

<sup>1</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 8-1-6

Having drawn his attention, *Bhagavān* now says:

महाभूतान्यहङ्कारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च ।

इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः ॥५॥

*mahābhūtānyahaṅkāro buddhiravyaktameva ca  
indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ*

Verse 5

महाभूतानि *mahābhūtāni* — the (five) subtle elements; अहङ्कारः *ahaṅkāraḥ* — *hiraṇyagarbha*; बुद्धिः *buddhiḥ* — *mahat-tattva, samaṣṭi-buddhi*; अव्यक्तम् *avyaktam* — unmanifest cause (*māyā*); एव च *eva ca* — and indeed; इन्द्रियाणि दश *indriyāṇi daśa* — the ten organs; एकम् च *ekam ca* — and one (mind); पञ्च च इन्द्रिय-गोचराः *pañca ca indriya-gocarāḥ* — and the five sense objects

इच्छा द्वेषः सुखं दुःखं सङ्घातश्चेतना धृतिः ।

एतत्क्षेत्रं समासेन सविकारमुदाहृतम् ॥६॥

*icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṅghātaścetanā dhṛtiḥ  
etatkṣetraṁ samāseṇa savikāramudāhṛtam*

Verse 6

इच्छा *icchā* — desire; द्वेषः *dveṣaḥ* — aversion; सुखम् *sukham* — pleasure; दुःखम् *duḥkham* — pain; सङ्घातः *saṅghātaḥ* — the physical body; चेतना *cetanā* — cognition; धृतिः *dhṛtiḥ* — fortitude; एतत् क्षेत्रम् *etat kṣetram* — (all) this is *kṣetra*; समासेन *samāseṇa* — briefly; सविकारम् *savikāram* — along with its modifications; उदाहृतम् *udāhṛtam* — is stated

The (five) subtle elements, the *hiraṇyagarbha*, the *mahat-tattva* or the *samaṣṭi-buddhi*, the unmanifest cause (*māyā*) and indeed the ten organs<sup>1</sup> and one (mind) and the five sense objects, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the physical body, cognition, fortitude—(all) this is *kṣetra*, which is stated briefly along with its modifications.

<sup>1</sup> *Five jñānendriyas and the five karmendriyas put together make ten.*

*The five jñānendriyas are, śrotra – the ears, the cakṣu – the eyes, tavak – the sense of touch, rasana – the sense of taste, and ghrāṇa – the sense of smell.*

*The five karmendriyas are, vāk – the organ of speech, pāṇi – the hands, pāda – the feet, pāyu – the organ of excretion, upastha – the organ of reproduction.*



## THE DEFINITION OF KĀETRA

### THE EIGHTFOLD PRAKĪTI

These two verses together define the *kṣetra*. Earlier in the seventh chapter *Bhagavān* had said that his *prakṛti* was eight fold. Now he enumerates them first when he defines *kṣetra*. The five subtle elements, *mahābhūtāni*, the *ahaṅkāra*, the *buddhi* and *avyakta*, together form the eightfold *prakṛti*—*aṣṭadhā bhinnā prakṛti*.

### THE SĪKĀMA-MAHĒBHĪTAS

*Mahābhūtāni*—here we understand that he refers to the subtle elements, *sūkṣma-mahābhūtas*, those that have not undergone the process of *pañcīkaraṇa*, because later he mentions the gross elements, *sthūla-mahābhūtas*, as the objects of the sense organs, *pañca indriya-gocaras*. The adjective *mahat* is used because the creation is nothing but these elements and in this way they are all-pervasive. Further, being the subtle elements, they are the cause for the gross elements; so, the adjective *mahat* is used to indicate their status as cause, *kāraṇa* for everything that is going to come.

### AHA×KĒRA, HIRAŪYAGARBHA

*Ahaṅkāra* here does not refer to the individual ego, the sense of doership but to the *samaṣṭi-ahaṅkāra*, *hiraṇyagarbha*. And because the creation is going to come now, *Īśvara*, *hiraṇyagarbha*, Brahmaji, himself is called *ahaṅkāra* here. And this *ahaṅkāra* is said to be the cause for the five *mahābhūtas* is of the nature the I-sense, *aham-pratyaya-lakṣaṇa* at the cosmic level.

### THE SAMĀĀŪI-BUDDHI, MAHAT-TATTVA

The cause of this *ahaṅkāra* is the *buddhi*, the *mahat-tattva*. Here again the word *buddhi* does not refer to the individual *buddhi* but to the *samaṣṭi-buddhi* also called the *mahat-tattva*. The *sṛṣṭi* is always said to occur in the following manner in the *śruti*. It is said first there was the *saṅkalpa* on the part of *Īśvara*—*so'kāmayata bahusyāṇ prajāyeya*, he desired, 'Let me become many.' Then he brought to his attention all the knowledge that is required for this creation—*sa tapo'tapyata*. Then after bringing the knowledge to his attention created all this—*sa tapastaptvā idaṃ sarvam asṛjata*.<sup>1</sup> This same *saṅkalpa* of *Īśvara* is said as *tadaikṣata* in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*.

Before the creation everything was unmanifest, *avyākṛta*. For the creation to manifest it self there should be a starting point. And that starting point is this *saṅkalpa*, which is due to this *samaṣṭi-buddhi*. The question that arises here is, 'Why should it all start?' It could have remained so; i.e., as *avyākṛta*, unmanifest. Then this manifest world

<sup>1</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-6-1

as we see it would have not been there! And all the problems of this world and the individual *jīva* would have not been there! There is answer to this question. That is how things are. We cannot ask *Īśvara* as to why he woke up from his sleep, *nirvikalpa-avasthā*, in which the creation was unmanifest. Why talk about *Īśvara*? We can never say why we wake up from our sleep on any given day. We have no freedom to decide whether we should wakeup or not! We wake up from sleep driven by the *karma-phalas* that are to be enjoyed by us on that day. Similarly the *samaṣṭi-karma-phala* of all the *jīvas* that are waiting for fulfilment make *Īśvara* wake up from his sleep and make this *saṅkalpa*. How does this thought arise. It may be because, *Īśvara* being *sarvajña*, may decide that the time has come for the creation to manifest or the thought may just arise.

The thought that arises is, '*atha bahu syām*—now let me become many.' Once this thought arises there is need for knowledge for the creation to manifest. And knowledge requires an *upādhi*. And that *upādhi* of *Īśvara*, which has the knowledge is the *samaṣṭi-buddhi*, the *mahat-tattva*. Only with this *upādhi* does *paraṃ brahma* become *Īśvara*, *hiraṇyagarbha*, who is ready for creation, who is called *ahaṅkāra* here.

The entire *jñāna* of how the previous creation was is present in this *samaṣṭi-buddhi*. This knowledge is called *tapas* by the *śruti* when it says, *sa tapo tapyata*. The word *tapas* here does not mean physical austerities. It is *jñāna-mayaṃ tapaḥ*. It is just seeing the knowledge that is required, just bringing it to attention, so that, this creation is exactly the same as what was before. Then the *śruti* continues and says, *sa tapstaptvā*... and goes on to give the *ṣṣṭi-krama*. This does not mean that *Īśvara* kept doing one thing after another like how we do. It is just to point out the order of creation, the cosmic order. Thus the *upādhi* that is required to bring in the knowledge that is necessary for the creation, the *samaṣṭi-buddhi*, the *mahat-tattva* is called the *buddhi* here.

#### AVYAKTA, THE KĒRĀŪA OF MAHAT-TATTVA

The cause of even this *mahat* is *avyakta*—*mahataḥ api kāraṇam*. *Avyakta* is said to be the cause of everything, *sarvasya kāraṇam*. It is said to be so, only because, before creation, everything is in an unmanifest form, *avyakta* form. The creation is nothing but *avyakta* becoming *vyakta*, therefore *avyakta* is said to be the cause of everything. This *avyakta*, or *avyākṛta* is *Īśvara's upādhi*, *īśvarasya śakti*. It is also called *māyā*. *Śaṅkara* quotes here from the seventh chapter where *Bhagavān* says, '*mama māyā duratyaya*—my *māyā* is difficult to cross.' The quotation here is to show that this *avyakta* or *māyā* is *Īśvara's śakti*. Only because of this *śakti* does *paraṃ brahma* become *Īśvara*. And only then the *jagat-ṣṣṭi* is possible. Only then can we ask for *īśvara-anugraha* within the *ṣṣṭi*. *Sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma* is *Īśvara*. The individual is also not different from that *Brahman*. But when one does not know that

thinks of oneself as the created then *Īśvara* comes in to the picture. The status of being *Īśvara* of *paraṃ brahma* is due to *māyā*, *avyakta*, and that is why this cosmic order is given here with reference to the *śṛṣṭi*.

### THE SĪĀŪI-KRAMA

The order indicated here is as follows. Before creation, there is only *sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma*. Everything else is *avyākṛta* and the *iccā*, or the *saṅkalpa* for creation is born. Then, out of the *avyakta* comes the *samaṣṭi-buddhi* or the *mahat-tattva* and then comes *Īśvara* and from *Īśvara* are born the five *sūkṣma-mahābhūtas*. Out of these *mahābhūtas* come the entire *sūkṣma* and *sthūla-prapañcas*, i.e., this entire manifest creation. From *avyakta*, which is the cause of everything at one level up to the *mahābhūtas* is called the *prakṛti*, which was mentioned as the *aṣṭadhā bhinnā aparā prakṛti* by *Bhagavān* in chapter seven.<sup>1</sup> This is described here in the first line of verse 5. The second line and the next verse talk about the *vikṛti*, or *vikāra*, or the further modifications, which form the entire creation, is mentioned. And the lord says that this *prakṛti* along with the *vikṛti*, *savikāra* is called the *kṣetra* in short—*etat kṣetraṃ samāsenā savikāram udāhṛtam*.

Starting from the *avyakta* up to the manifest creation is the *kṣetra*. The *kṣetrajñā* is the cause for even the *avyakta* and is the *parā prakṛti*<sup>2</sup> that *Bhagavān* mentioned in the seventh chapter and that is going to be told very beautifully later in this chapter by *Bhagavān*.

The *avyakta* undergoes a modification, *pariṇāma* to become the *mahābhūtas*, which in turn become the cause for the *sūkṣma-prapañca* and the *sthūla-prapañca*. Once the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is there, we then have the five sense organs, the five organs of action and one mind, *indriyāṇi daśa ekaṃ ca*. The words *ekaṃ ca* refer to the mind. Without the mind these *indriyas* cannot function and therefore, it also works as an instrument. It is another means for knowing, which undergoes the change in keeping with the sense perception reported by the sense organ. And here when we say the mind, the individual *buddhi* is also included. Then we have the objects of the five senses, *pañca indriya-gocaras*, which constitute the physical elements, *sthūlabhūtas*. With this, everything is included. The sun, the moon, everything perceived as well as anything inferred or believed to exist in the universe is *indriya-gocara*.

Then he enumerates some of the modifications of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, so that we understand that they are also *kṣetra*, not the self as we commonly mistake them to be. The *kṣetrajñā* is free from all these attributes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* –7-4

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* –7-5

### THE ANTAĒKARĀŪA-VĪTTIS ARE ALSO PART OF KĀĒTRA ALONE

Desire, *icchā*, is a *vṛtti* belonging to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Combining this with 'I one thinks, 'I am a desirer,' and therefore, *Bhagavān* wants to point out that it is only the *kṣetra*. Dislike, *dveṣa*, also belongs to the *kṣetra*, though one's behaviour is as though it belongs to the *kṣetrajñā*. The experience is not that the *kṣetra* has a desire, but 'I have the desire,' not that the *kṣetra* has a *dveṣa* but 'I am disgusted.' The word *cetanā* here means a given piece of knowledge such as the cognition, 'This is a pot.' *Dhṛti* is fortitude or courage. Along with this we should understand fear, *bhaya*, shyness, *hrī*, and all other emotions. *Saṅghāta* is the assemblage of all the organs of action and the anatomical aspects of the sense organs together, the physical body.

In these verses the subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, physical body, *sthūla-śarīra*, and the *avyakta*, the cause or *kāraṇa śarīra* as well as the world, *indriya-gocara*, have all been included in the *kṣetra*. Even though it is stated very briefly, nothing has been omitted. All that remains is the one who knows the entire *kṣetra*, and who is the basis, the reality of every aspect of the *kṣetra*. This *kṣetra*, with its modification, *savikāra*, is stated briefly, *udāhṛtam*.

In these two verses, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* describes the *kṣetra* in general and after giving the qualifications for knowledge, which are also called *jñāna*,<sup>1</sup> he talks about the *kṣetrajñā* in response *Arjuna*'s question.

### THE VALUES AND ATTITUDES THAT ARE NECESSARY, ALSO CALLED JŌĒNA

Rearranging the elements in *Arjuna*'s question, *Kṛṣṇa* now addresses the part of the third question, 'What is *jñāna*?' The obvious meaning of *jñāna* is knowledge. But the word *jñāna* is also used to mean, the means of knowledge. Here not only the *pramāṇa* but the entire *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the place where knowledge has to be gained is called *jñāna*. With the presence of certain characteristics in the mind, a person becomes qualified for the knowledge that the *kṣetrajñā* is *Īśvara*, the cause of creation, *jagat-kāraṇaṃ brahma*. Because these characteristics, consisting of certain values and attitudes, help you gain this knowledge, they are also called *jñāna*.

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।

आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ॥७॥

*amānitvamadamāhitvamahiṃsā kṣāntirārjavam*

*ācāryopāsaṇaṃ śaucaṃ sthairyamātmavinigrahaḥ*

Verse 7

<sup>1</sup> *jñāyate anena iti jñānam, i.e., means of knowledge—they are the indirect means for knowledge.*

अमानित्वम् *amānitvam* — absence of conceit; अदम्भित्वम् *adambhitvam* — absence of hypocrisy; अहिंसा *ahiṃsā* — harmlessness; क्षान्तिः *kṣāntiḥ* — accommodation; आर्जवम् *ārjavam* — straightforwardness; आचार्योपासनम् *ācāryopāsanam* — reverence for the teacher; शौचम् *śaucam* — cleanliness; स्थैर्यम् *sthairyam* — steadfastness; आत्म-विनिग्रहः *ātma-vinigrahaḥ* — self-discipline

Absence of conceit, absence of hypocrisy, harmlessness, accommodation, straightforwardness, reverence for the teacher, cleanliness, steadfastness, self-discipline...

### AMĒNITVA

*Amānitvam* is the absence of *mānitva*. The nature of *amānī* is *mānitva*. A *mānī* is one who has *māna*—*mānaḥ asya asti iti mānī*. *Māna* means self-praise, *ātmanaḥ ślāghanam*. The *mānī* is one who makes his virtues known to others and demands to be respected for them. That he has qualifications is fine but why should others acknowledge them? Only someone who has a value for a given set of qualifications will acknowledge them—if he has no other problem. A pickpocket is not going to value your knowledge of *Gītā*. Your skills and accomplishments are going to be valued only by those who have a value for them. There is no reason why others should acknowledge them.

Many of our problems are due to others not acknowledging our virtues. Wanting recognition is very common and there is some legitimacy to it. If you have some qualification, it is good for it to be recognised. The problem comes in demanding that recognition. Since others also want recognition, if I insist on always being the recipient of recognition, I am not in a position to recognise others properly and there is constant tension in my relationships. Any respect must be naturally forthcoming. If I demand it, I have an emotional problem.

Why should I demand that anybody acknowledge my accomplishments? It is because, in my own opinion, I do not think I have really accomplished anything. Though objectively I know what I have accomplished, underneath, there is a feeling of not having succeeded, which is carried over from childhood. This feeling persists because of unhealed wounds caused by parental criticism, criticism by a teacher or any number of things, which impaired the development of a healthy self-image. With a low self-image, it is very difficult for me to acknowledge my own worth and often, a relentless striving for accomplishments ensues to prove my worth. If others whom I consider very important do not acknowledge my worth, I cannot handle it. This is to be intimately appreciated. That I have *mānitvam* is not a matter for condemnation and further damaging of self-image. It is something to be understood. Why should I demand respect from others? It is not necessary at all. Intimately seeing this will help to diminish the demand for respect.

If I command respect, whether others give it or not is not a problem because I respect myself. If I analyse as to what is lacking in me, I find, essentially *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda* and nothing is superior to that. Everything else is *anātmā* including all these accomplishments. In *apara-vidyā* somebody can know more, somebody can know less, but there is always a limit. You will be skilled in one thing; another person skilled in another. One can write, another can sing. Who is superior, who is inferior? These are all potentials that are given to me and much depends on what I have and whether I use the opportunity to develop them. But whatever the gifts, may be, they belong to the *kṣetra* and are by nature limited. No matter how much I develop a particular capacity, there is always a limit that I cannot exceed. Even if I become the world heavy-weight champion, I cannot lift a mountain. Similarly, because the *buddhi* has the capacity to know, I can always learn something more but never everything. Even a person who has committed his life to the pursuit of knowledge will die with many books unread. It is always incomplete. This *kṣetra*, the physical body, endowed with mind and senses has some powers but they are limited.

If I understand that, there is no comparison on the basis of which I will make a judgement about myself. This body-mind-sense complex is something I am endowed with. It has a limited potential to know, *jñāna-śakti*; to desire, *icchā-śakti*; and to do, *kriyā-śakti*, some of which I have tapped and therefore, have accomplished a few things. Who is better or worse in all this? Different people tap different potentials; that is all. You can develop the physical body or even the mind to a certain degree but all that really counts in life is how mature you are. That is what makes you a person to be reckoned with. A great scientist who is fretting and fuming because nobody acknowledges him or because he did not get the Nobel Prize is just a child. Children love to show off their accomplishments when others are watching. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with developing your potential. You have certain gifts and they are meant to be expressed as glories of *Īśvara*; but that expression alone does not make you a mature person. That comes from doing something because you love doing it. If you do it in the hope that others will acknowledge you and through their eyes you are going to be somebody, that is childish.

I must be somebody in my own eyes and that will be so, only when I am mature. That is exactly what makes me a person, not whether I have money, etc., or not. It is how I look at myself that counts. I respect my body; I respect my mind; I respect my senses— if this is my self image then I have no need to show off my accomplishments. This *kṣetra* is a beautiful instrument that is given to me and that is enough reason for me to respect it completely. This is not simply ‘self-respect’ in the psychological sense but a gratitude for something beautiful that has been given to me. There is a prayerfulness about it. The body is a work of art. The skeletal structure is an engineering masterpiece, the liver is a chemical plant, the skin an air conditioner, and the mind is just extraordinary. We praise a computer for its capacities but it is the human mind that has

created that computer. The entire physical, sensory, mental complex is a beautiful creation, which I have every reason to enjoy as it is and therefore, respect myself. Once I respect myself, I do not demand respect. I accept it totally with a prayerful appreciation. Prayerful to whom? *Īśvara*, the Lord. We know that all that is glorious in this creation is nothing but *Īśvara's* glory. Knowing this, there is a prayerful appreciation.

If I get into the details, I find this body has a beauty of great complexity. From a simple undifferentiated form, this complex intelligent body arises. Everything is encoded in the original material, which differentiates into a multiplicity of forms. The liver cells are different from the brain cells and each of them is organised into separate organs. If some brain cells had gone to the liver or liver cells to the brain, there would have been serious problems. Then the brain requires a special protective covering and for that we have a skull. When I see all this, it is meaningful poetry for me. With this simple appreciation of *Īśvara's* glory, I begin developing respect for myself and find that there is no necessity to condemn myself.

This body is but an *upādhi* and if you accept it as such, there is nothing wrong with it; if you do not accept it, nothing is enough because it is limited. But even the limitations are a part of its beauty; because it is within limits that can be handled. Suppose you want an ornament of precious stones. How big can those stones be and still be something beautiful that you can wear? You cannot wear a stone weighing half a kilo around your neck. What is beautiful is always something that you can gracefully handle. This physical body, small and limited as it is, is a beautiful piece. Beauty is never determined by magnitude. A mountain is a beautiful piece of creation but so is a small diamond. The whole cosmos is infused with beauty once you see the meaningfulness and intelligence in it. Thus the entire physical body, however limited, is a beautiful piece. If that is accepted, I am acceptable to myself. *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* is acceptable by its own nature and the body also is acceptable because it is beautiful. If this is recognised, there is spontaneous *amānitva* born of *jñāna*. The *kṣetra* has certain powers, which I develop but I do not require to prove anything to anybody. Each one has his or her own *kṣetra* through, which he or she is able to express himself or herself but the form of the expression is different—and perfect—for everyone. What is really important is acceptance of that, for that is maturity, the thing that makes a person beautiful. With that acceptance one will never demand respect.

I want to repeat here that this is not to be made an ideal on the basis of which you can condemn yourself. This is not for judgement but for understanding. Just see what it takes to have *amānitva* and it will become part of you without judging, without words, without labelling. It is very easy to see the difference between people who idealise and judge and those who do not. A person may be highly *dhārmika* but is very conscious that he is so, and has all his ideals itemised. There are Indian ashrams where you will see slogans written on the walls such as: 'Silence is better than speaking,' 'Control of the mind is better than control of a kingdom,' 'Service before the self,' followed by 'The one

who serves more gains more.’ The second slogan contradicting the first! We are not interested in converting words into ideals here but simply understanding them without labelling. I just try to understand what it takes to have *amānitva*.

### ADAMBHITVA

Then there is *adambhitvam*. Again, we first need to understand *dambha* and then see what it means for it not to be there. *Śaṅkara* says that *dambha* is declaring one's own glories that one does not have. Unlike *mānitva*, it is demanding to be respected without any qualification for it. This is done in small ways and big ways, making known to others one's own imagined glories in order to gain approval and recognition. If one needs to feel rich one will have rings on every finger even though everything belongs to the bank. All this is because, one is not rich but needs to feel that one is. With actions, with dress, with language presenting myself as something more than what I am is *dambhitva*. Absence of *dambhitva* means having no pretensions. Any pretension also expresses a non-acceptance of myself and if I do not accept myself, even others accepting me because of what I pretend to be, is not going to reach me. This problem also resolves only in the acceptance of myself.

### AHIṂSĒ

*Ahiṁsā* is not hurting the living beings. This begins with your own body and extends to all living beings, even plants and trees. *Ahiṁsā* is the principal vow of a *sannyāsi*. Eating meat, for example, is impossible for someone who has taken this vow. It is a difficult value to observe because it requires a great deal of understanding. There are situations where you have to destroy, like war, for example, the situation here in the *Gītā*. *Kṛṣṇa* himself tells *Arjuna* to do his *dharma*, which implies a lot of destruction. *Ahiṁsā* is a very dynamic concept and has to be interpreted from time to time and situation to situation; but the basic spirit is to be very clearly understood. Do not deliberately, for your own sake, hurt another being. That is *ahiṁsā*.

How does *ahiṁsā* help you gain the knowledge that you are *Brahman*? *Brahman* means the whole and to understand this, the mind must be as big as *Brahman*, at least relatively. One's mind must be sensitive enough to understand others' pains. No human heart is incapable of empathy but we generally shut it out. Just observe someone who wins a tennis tournament. At the moment of victory he will throw his tennis racket in the air and cry out in jubilation. In this state of ecstasy he approaches the net to shake hands with his opponent. Just observe his expression as his eyes meet the face of the loser. The smile goes. The ecstasy goes. He looks as though he is very sorry that he has won. Why? Because the other person is sad and there is not a human heart, which is incapable of understanding another's pain. He knows what it is like to lose, so, it is impossible for him not to pick up that pain however momentarily. When we experience another's pain,



however, often it is put aside through rationalising and slowly a justification for *hiṃsā* develops. We become unmindful of the pain of another person purely because of a certain kind of thinking overlaying the original sympathy, which is an expression of *ānanda*. Fullness related to another person becomes sympathy and that is manageable only when you have mastered your own emotions. Otherwise, that pain becomes your pain. *Ahiṃsā* is an appreciation of others' pain that gives you a profound respect for life and allows you to let other living beings live as they were meant to. It is not even that you allow them to live because that is not something over, which you have any say. Nor is it a policy but something born of one's own understanding that every living being has an inherent right to live. You live and enjoy others living. Then you find that *ahiṃsā* is very simple. It makes you a person with a very high degree of sensitivity in whom the original emotions of sympathy, etc., are not clogged by some wrong thinking contingent upon your own priorities.

### KĀĀNTI

*Kṣāntiḥ*, Śaṅkara says, is remaining unchanged when one is wronged by another. Whether verbally or by an action, which is against *dharma*, when one is harmed in any manner, there is an impulse to retaliate. This reaction is called *vikriyā*. It first occurs as a mental modification and then is expressed in the form of either an oral or a physical action. The absence of such a reaction is *kṣānti*. How can anybody remain without a reaction when he has been wronged in his perception? Psychology will say a reaction is legitimate. It is true in one way; but here we are going one step further. When we are trying to gain *ātma-jñāna* such reactions are not appropriate at all. We do not say that you should suppress anger but look into how you can get past the reaction. This is possible only when you have an intimate understanding of the other person. What has prompted him to act in this way? Each person acts or reacts in a given way because he cannot act differently. If he could, he certainly would have. Generally we avoid people whose behaviour we find difficult to handle. But that does not solve the problem of my reaction. I have to look into myself and see why I am not able to allow the other person to be what he or she is. Reaction happens only because of intolerance or, looking at it in another way, internalisation. When I feel hurt because of someone's action I internalise that behaviour as though I had some responsibility for it. The reality is that as an adult I am responsible only for my own emotions and actions. If they are wrong I can always correct them. But I cannot afford to take responsibility for the emotions and actions of others. The only thing I can do is accept each person with whom I am required to relate exactly as he or she is. Every person comes from a given background. With the same background, I would do the same thing. That consideration of another's background as the basis of his or her responses is maturity.

There are laws governing the behaviour of the human mind. That is why it is possible to have a discipline of knowledge called psychology. Certain backgrounds

result in certain types of behaviour. Who is responsible for that? If I can appreciate that, I will have compassion, understanding, and a capacity to listen. Any action on my part in response to what has happened will be born of an understanding of the person. This requires great patience because it is not easy to understand another person. Sometimes it takes years. People married for twenty years separate because there is a failure in understanding. To understand another person we must be open to him and most of us are not able to be so because of our own fears and anxieties. As a result, the communication is not totally honest and consequently, neither is the relationship. Each one remains closed in some areas and the behaviour is based on an anxiety to maintain the relationship. Instead of making you mature, an intimate relationship causes further problems unless you are able to be open and understand the other person. That openness is what is called accommodation, *kṣānti*. If you give that a very important place in your value structure, you will find that you are open and easily able to understand people.

Then your action will be appropriate. If, for want of data, it proves to be wrong, you can always correct it, but in a reaction there is no correction because there is no learning, It just happens even against your understanding. In action, however, we can learn. We cannot count on being informed enough to make every action successful but we can always learn. With great intention I may deliberately act out of sympathy but the other person need not take it as an act of sympathy. He can always misinterpret and think that I am patronising. At this level, further communication is not easy. Even the most communicative people find it difficult to communicate in this situation. But you have to try. I can perfect the action or change the course of it as long as I am ready to understand another person. And understanding another person is possible only when I have accommodation, *kṣānti*.

The example I always give for *kṣānti* is the baby kicking his father. The father not only does not complain, he is so proud that he shares with his wife, the joy of being kicked. But if the child were to kick him fifteen years later, he would have an entirely different response. There was no reaction to the baby kicking him because there was an appreciation of the background from, which a baby kicks. The background is innocence. Even when the older boy kicks there is a background. He may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs; there may be a hundred different reasons but if I do not have accommodation, I can never understand that background; I only react. This value is not an ordinary one. I would say it should occupy the most important place in the value structure. If a person has *kṣānti*, he is a saint. All other values—*amānitva*, *adambhitva*, *ahimsā*, etc., will follow because that person tries to understand and not make judgements about others or himself. If you are not critical of yourself, you can understand others without being critical and if you can be kind to yourself, you can be kind to others. To be kind to yourself you just have to enjoy yourself as a person. There is nothing wrong with you as you are. Then, when *Vedānta* says that in spite of the limitations of your body, mind, senses, you are *pūrṇa*, totally acceptable, it is

meaningful because psychologically you do not oppose that fact. If that vision is understood thoroughly there is no problem. Any correction required in the behaviour pattern is possible without self-condemnation.

Saint becomes a very big word because we give a saint an exalted stature so that we can continue to be what we are. Everyone has to become a saint in as much as a saintly person is a mature person. I have to take responsibility for my actions and emotions and acknowledge that there is no outside force that influences me any more than what I allow it to. I am the devil and I am the angel impelling my actions. I am responsible for all my emotions and actions and others are responsible for theirs. If I think their behaviour can be better, it is because I have not understood their background. Seeing that is the only way to become mature.

If you go to a doctor with a headache, he does not treat you as a good person or a bad person. He treats a problem. Even if you are an alcoholic he cannot sit in judgement of your diseased liver. Or, if a person in the delirium of a high fever insults the doctor, he cannot take offence and refuse to treat the patient. In exactly the same way a saint responds to a person who has some behavioural problems. He does not judge because he understands very clearly that nobody is bad or good. Everybody is a mixture of countless different things—neither good nor bad. There are certain behaviour patterns based on given backgrounds, which are highly predictable. With a certain kind of father, mother, society, schooling, there will be a certain behaviour. But one great thing about a human being is that this programming can be undone. As an adult I can create an antidote to habitual behaviour patterns rooted in my childhood. That antidote is my value structure. Understanding it intimately, I give priority to a value like *kṣānti*, accommodation. I consider this the most important value in the modern world where there is so much tension and competition and therefore, rancour. The only answer is to have a primary value like *kṣānti*. That is the way to become mature.

## ĒRJAVA

*Ārjava* comes from the word *ṛju*, which means straight. When there is an alignment of thought, word and deed, this is *ārjava*. The action is in keeping with the word and the word with the thought. The alignment is only in this direction. I need not say or act upon every thought I have but my actions must be consistent with my words and with my thoughts. This alignment is a value because with it there is freedom from conflict. Whenever we say one thing and do another or think one thing and say another, there is a conflict within ourselves, which we call *vakratva*, crookedness. *Ārjava* is its opposite. One aspect of it, *satya*, speaking truth is considered to be such a great value that it is even mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. I expect others to be truthful to me and I reciprocate. This is *ārjava*.

**ĒCĒRYOPĒSANA**

*Ācāryopāsana* is a very important value for a student. The word *ācarya* means one who himself understands, *svayam ācarati*, and makes others understand or follow, *anyān ācārayati*. Suppose the teacher says that anger is an enemy to you and yet he himself gets angry, then what he says would not carry weight with the student. He must understand what the *śruti* says and follow through behaviour so that not only by his words but by example he makes others understand and follow. During his period of study the student resides with the teacher and as an expression of gratitude for the knowledge he is receiving, serves his teacher. This *gurukula-vāsa*, living in the family of the *guru*, implies necessarily sharing whatever work that is there to be done. Let us see why this is a value.

**BETWEEN THE ŚRUTI-PRAMĀṆA AND THE STUDENT IS THE TEACHER  
HE CARRIES THE SAMPRADĀYA**

The *śruti* is the *pramāṇa* and between the *śruti* and the student who wants to understand the *śruti*, is the teacher. He conveys the meaning of the *śruti* sentences according to a well-established methodology, *sampradāya*, and without him, the *śruti* cannot be properly understood. In fact, it is said that *jñāna* without the *guru* is never adequate for *mokṣa*, because it is not the *śruti* that conveys but the *sampradāya*. Without it, the *śruti* sentences will seem contradictory. The words have to come from a person who sees what he talks. Then alone do they convey the meaning with such clarity that both the person and the words disappear; the meaning alone remains. While reading a book, however, you are operating the intellect as an agent, *kartā*, yet it is this very *kartā* that has to be sublated by knowledge.

**YOUR WILL IS NOT INVOLVED HERE**

In the operation of *śruti-pramāṇa*, you are not the *kartā* or even the listener. It operates like the eyes. If they are open and there is adequate light and an object, without any will or sense of individuality, you will see the object. There is only the *pramāṇa* and the object. Will does not enter into it. All the senses operate similarly and even in inference, once the invariable concomitance is there, the conclusion takes place immediately. If you go outside and find water everywhere, you understand at once that it has rained. This is how a means of knowledge operates. *Śruti* is also a *pramāṇa* but it does not really convey unless it is handled by someone who knows the *sampradāya*.

**AN IMPLICIT ŚRADDHĀ KEEPS THE AHAŪKĀRA IN CHECK**

An implicit trust in that teacher is required because when you are listening with *śraddhā*, your *ahaŪkāra* is under check. If the teacher knows what he is talking about

there is no possibility of him having *ahañkāra* so, there is no interference in the operation of the *pramāṇa*. *Ahañkāra* remains only until you start inquiring. The moment you turn your attention towards it, it disappears, like the uninvited guest at a marriage feast. He will last only as long as no one inquires into his identity. The body does not feel, 'I am the *ātmā*,' nor do the sense organs or the mind, all of which are means of knowledge. *Ātmā* is pure *caitanya*; so, what is this *ahañkāra*? The moment you start the inquiry, the first casualty is the inquirer. While listening, if the *ahañkāra* does not interfere, the *pramāṇa* operates to negate its reality. The capacity to listen like this is established by *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* and the teacher. That keeps the *ahañkāra* suspended for the time being, which is essential because it has no role to play here. *Ahañkāra* has a function only when a *karma* is to be done but if it interferes here where it has no role, it vitiates the operation of the *pramāṇa*. The atmosphere wherein the *ahañkāra* can be kept suspended is provided by *śraddhā*. If the *ahañkāra* is operating, we only understand what we already know, not what the *pramāṇa* has to offer. *Śraddhā* must be cultivated here because this is a *pramāṇa* coming from outside, unlike a *pramāṇa* that is with you, in which you have an intrinsic *śraddhā*. When you see a form, you do not question the validity of your eyes as a means of knowledge to see. Even if the form you see is distorted, you understand that some correction is required but still you know that the eyes are the means for seeing. Just because you see a distorted image with your eyes does not mean you will then try to see it with your ears. You have complete *śraddhā* in your eyes as the means for seeing.

#### YOUR ŚRADDHĪ IN VEDĀNTA AS A PRAMĪ, IS SIMILAR TO YOUR CONFIDENCE IN THE FACT THAT YOUR EYES CAN SEE

Since *Vedānta* is a *pramāṇa*, in order for it to work, you require exactly as much *śraddhā* as you have in your eyes. In fact it goes one step further. Your eyes, even without being defective, can misinterpret situations. They see a blue sky, which is not there at all. Or they can fail to see things, like microbes, due to their own inherent limitations. But *Vedānta*, because it reveals the *vastu*, which is not subject to negation, is a *pramāṇa* that deserves absolute *śraddhā*. Because it is talking about the limitless, it cannot be improved upon and since it is not reducible to something else, it is not a point of view. While perception is the root *pramāṇa* because all other *pramāṇas* depend upon it, *śabda* is considered to be the last *pramāṇa*. All others, I operate; whereas this one comes from outside. If at all there is any 'I' that has listened to the *śāstra*, it is one that is imbued with *śraddhā*. The importance of *śraddhā* cannot be overestimated. Here in the *Gītā* *Kṛṣṇa* makes a very bold statement about it—'*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*,' the one who has *śraddhā* gains knowledge. And in the *Upaniṣads* it is said, *ācāryavan puruṣo veda*, the person who has a teacher knows. One who has a teacher and who has *śraddhā* in the teacher and in the *śruti* cannot fail to know the truth of *Śruti*.

When the *vastu* and *pramāṇa* are both there with nothing to interfere, as the knowledge emanates from the teacher it is just absorbed by the student who is all attention without anxiety or indifference. With a love to know and a deep respect for the source of knowledge he has everything necessary for knowing. This is *ācārya-upāsana*. Literally it means sitting with the teacher. *Upāsana* is also meditation wherein the object is kept in view and one remains always connected to it by *śraddhā*. Respect and love together is *śraddhā*. If there is intellectual respect for the teacher's scholarship but you do not look up to him as a person or there is love alone and no value for his learning, there is no *śraddhā*. When there is *śraddhā*, however, absorption takes place naturally because the *ahaṅkāra* does not interfere. And to keep the *ahaṅkāra* suspended, we require *śraddhā*. And suspending the *ahaṅkāra* is essential because the whole teaching is meant to falsify the *ahaṅkāra* through the discovery of its own true nature, *svarūpa*. This is a 'catch - 22' situation. Unless the *ahaṅkāra* is suspended, at least for the time being, there is no knowledge and unless there is knowledge, there is no elimination of the *ahaṅkāra*. The problem is circumvented completely by introducing *śraddhā*. That keeps the *ahaṅkāra* under check, so that, it does not interfere with the operation of the *pramāṇa* and knowledge just takes place. Afterwards, you find that the *ahaṅkāra* is not there in reality, that it is *mithyā*.

#### ŚAUKA, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

*Śauca* means cleanliness or purity internally and externally. External cleanliness begins with the external environment, your dwelling place, physical body and clothes. Every day they gather dirt and therefore, have to be cleaned. Anything that is used becomes dirty whether it is a car, your body, clothes or a vessel. Since the mind is also being used constantly it is also subject to *aśauca*. But while it is a simple matter to keep the body etc. clean with varieties of cleaning agents, how are we to achieve inner cleanliness?

First let us see what is inner *aśauca*. Generally, this is anything that is not liked by you or by others anger, greed, selfishness, hatefulness, and so on. The mind that is exposed to various experiences naturally gathers some of these things. How do you clean it?

#### GAIN OF INNER ŚAUKA IS THROUGH PRAYER

One way is through prayer. Any prayer that is meaningful to you and is done with the express intent of being freed from all the things that cause pain to yourself and others, like jealousy, dishonesty, miserliness etc., is purifying. One that is commonly done in India is to repeat after bathing while taking three sips of water, *acyutāya namaḥ*, *anantāya namaḥ*, *govindāya namaḥ*. Salutations to *Acyuta*, the Lord who never wanes, who does not undergo any change. Unto that Lord who is eternal, my

salutations. Salutations to *Ananta*, the one who has no end, who is limitless and appears in the form of the entire creation. How do we know he is *Acyuta* and *Ananta*? By the words of the *śāstra* and therefore, salutations to the Lord who is known through words, *Govinda*. Another prayer is, *oṃ bhūḥ oṃ bhuvāḥ oṃ suvāḥ oṃ mahāḥ oṃ janaḥ oṃ tapaḥ oṃ satyam oṃ tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*. As you repeat this mentally you breathe in through one nostril and out through the other, generally ten times. This is called *prāṇāyāma*. It brings about a certain quietude and cleanliness of the mind.

### PRATIPAKṢĀ-BHĪVANĪ

Another method to remove jealousy, hatred and various other painful emotions is to bring in their opposite, *pratipakṣabhāvana*. Suppose you feel hatred towards a person and want to be free from that; then you deliberately cultivate a liking for him. The problem is, when you hate someone, how can you like him? Try to see what it is about the person that you hate. His nose? His eyes? You will find that there are a lot of things about him, which you do not hate. Even in terms of behaviour, you will find that only a certain behaviour invokes your hatred. Then, if you go one step further, why should you hate a behaviour? You may say that it is wrong and that you do not know how to handle it, but that does not mean you have to hate it, much less the person that has it. A person is not a particular behaviour. If you say something hurtful while dreaming or in a delirium, it is not fair to draw a set of conclusions about you based on that. Generally you can question whether an action was appropriate or not; but not always. This analysis of our behaviour can be useful but more often it is a nuisance because it leads to self-criticism. In different degrees everyone has critical thoughts about himself or herself. How do you manage them? First bring in the opposite. Find out the features in yourself, which are definitely appreciable. Be kind to yourself. This self-criticism is a habit developed in childhood and like any habit, especially a habit of thinking, it is a die-hard. We have to learn how to be kind to ourselves because we have been taught to be hurtful to ourselves. It does not help. How kind you can be to yourself can be very nicely appreciated if you see your responses when you hurt your hand. First you will cry out from the pain but then you are so tender and caring to your own fingers. This is exactly how your mind has to be to your own patterns of thinking. Being critical is inimical to your psychological well-being; so, you remove that by its opposite. Because a habit dies hard, I must understand that it is a habit and not condemn myself on the basis of it. I initiate a process of introducing the opposite in order to remove the habit. It is not easy, but it has to be done. This is inner cleanliness.

### EXTERNAL ŚAUCĀ

External *śauca* is something over, which we have a better control and is important as the beginning point of cleanliness. Once the environment is in order, it brings about a

certain order in the mind. As a prerequisite to inner cleanliness, it is essential because you cannot sit in a place where things are lying in disarray and meditate or pray. Do you feel like going to the garage and meditating? Nobody comes there, it is a quiet place, why not? You know it is not conducive to meditation because it is dirty and filled with junk. There is no inspiration there. Although you close your eyes, something tells you, you are sitting in the garage. Your nose tells you. The dust tells you. That is why external cleanliness is so important. In the sixth chapter we saw that for meditation the body is to be placed in a place, which is clean. This is necessary whether you want to write, read or sit and meditate. The place should be such that as you enter, you feel like doing something reflective. When things are all in a mess, you feel like getting out.

So, I keep the physical environment clean, including my body, to provide conducive conditions to bring about inner *śauca*, cleanliness of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the instrument I require for *śravaṇa*.

### STHAIRYĀ

*Sthairyam* is commented upon in two different ways. *Śaṅkara* says it is steadiness in one's commitment to the pursuit of *mokṣa*. By analysis of varieties of *puruṣārthas*, a person who has *sthairya*, has arrived at a well-ascertained conclusion that *mokṣa* is the only thing that is important for him. He has discerned the human problem and has determined that this is what he needs. It is a definite conclusion, which is not shaken by anything. Such a person is likely to become a Swami because *sannyāsa* is nothing but this determination. You declare to yourself and the world that *mokṣa* alone is what you want. The mind behind that, has, what is called *sthairya*, steadfastness. He may do a hundred different things but behind it all, his pursuit is not in any way compromised. Everything is for *mokṣa*. That is called *sthairya*.

Another meaning for *sthairya* would be commitment to one's own duties. However difficult it is, I do the thing that is proper. This is one aspect of *karma-yoga*, our conformity to *dharma*, the other aspect being our attitude towards *karma-phala*. In *karma-yoga* we use *karma* not to fulfil but to neutralise *rāga-dveṣa*. This is another meaning for *sthairya*. Once I establish *mokṣa* as the thing to be accomplished, I will do everything else necessary for that and *sthairya* in terms of *karma* naturally comes into the picture. *Sthairya* is the ascertainment that *mokṣa* is the thing I want and the steadiness in that is what makes my life into *yoga*. Once my commitment is clear, anything I do towards it becomes *yoga*.

### ĀTMĀVINIGRAHA

*Ātmavinigraha* is control over the body-mind-sense complex so that, it is helpful to you. Suppose you want the body to get up in the morning for study and it refuses. Then you need to train the body-mind-sense complex to behave in a way that is useful to



you, so that, you do what is to be done for *mokṣa*. *Kālidāsa* at one place says, ‘*idaṃ śarīram ādyaṃ dharma-sādhanam*—this body is first, a means for *dharma*.’ Everything else is dependent upon this. By nature there is a certain slothfulness due to *tamas*, which is a part of the body. The overcoming of this is *ātmavinigraha*. *Tamas* expressing as procrastination, laziness, etc., is very natural. To overcome it we can get out and run, do some *āsanas* and be intelligent about our diet. Whatever is necessary, we do. If the body is inimical, we bring it to a condition in which, it is helpful. By nature we want to do a lot of things. But there is only a certain amount of time available and something very important to accomplish. If I spread myself thin, not only will I not do any of my undertakings well, I will miss what I set out to accomplish. So, I do one thing and do it well. Instead of dissipating my energies in different pursuits, I focus them in what *Śaṅkara* calls the way of the wise, *sanmārga* and eliminate everything else. The organs of action are all well-disciplined so that my energies are not wasted in unnecessary activities and I can focus my attention where I want it. Again and again we have to do this, because the pursuit of *mokṣa* is against the natural pursuit of the body, mind and senses.

*Ātmavinigraha* is setting this body-mind-sense complex on the track left by the wise, *sanmārga*, following their example. Or we can say *sanmārga* is the way of inquiry into *sadvastu*. If your mind and energy are engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, this is *sanmārga*. Naturally, it implies withdrawal from other pursuits but this is not a withdrawal based purely on will. If it is, what you want to do is one thing and what you profess to is quite another. You may be convinced that *sanmārga* is proper for you but the desires also have to coincide with the conviction. If that conformity is lacking, the resulting inner conflict vitiates this pursuit, which requires so much inner leisure. One has to educate oneself with reference to priorities.

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।

जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥८॥

*indriyārtheṣu vairāgyamanahāṅkāra eva ca*

*janmamṛtyujarāvyaḍhiduḥkhadoṣānudarśanam*

Verse 8

इन्द्रियार्थेषु *indriyārtheṣu* — with reference to the sense objects; वैराग्यम् *vairāgyam* — dispassion; अनहङ्कारः एव च *anahāṅkāraḥ eva ca* — and indeed absence of pride; जन्म-मृत्यु-जरा-व्याधि-दुःख-दोषानुदर्शनम् *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam* — seeing clearly the defects of pain in birth, death, old age and disease

... dispassion with reference to the sense objects and indeed absence of pride and seeing clearly the defects of pain in birth, death, old age and disease...

**VAIRĒGYA TOWARDS THE SENSE OBJECTS**

Through analysis of what is important in life, we gain an understanding that leads to maturity in behaviour and a natural dispassion towards sense pursuits. Following *sanmārga* is possible only when there is this dispassion, *vairāgya*, the condition in which longing has gone away. One may have a desire but there is no longing based on the belief that something is going to make one happy or more secure. The person from whom that longing is gone is a *virāga* and his state of mind is called *vairāgya*. If you have understood properly that no object is going to solve the problem, you may still have a desire for an object but not a longing.

Some people are committed to money as though it is going to solve their problems. Others have money but are ready to spend it in order to have power, thinking that it will solve everything. All this is *śobhanādhyāsa*, a superimposition of a value upon a thing, which it unfortunately does not have. Money is useful but if you think it is going to solve the problem of inadequacy, unhappiness, restlessness, etc., you are going to be disappointed. It is not the money that disappoints but an expectation projected upon it that it cannot fulfil. We respect money because it is *Lakṣmī* but it has its limitations. If one pursues it as though it is going to solve a problem, it is due to a value, which is purely subjective.

In this world, there is nothing that can disappoint you except your own projections. Suppose, looking at the sky, you conclude that it is going to snow and plan a ski-trip. When it does not snow, it is not the weather that has disappointed you but your own projections. The weather did not oblige your projection. If our projections happen to be well-based, there is less likelihood of a disappointment. If they are ill-founded, there will be repeated disappointments. Longing is generally due to projecting a value, which it does not have, upon something. As you remove the projections there is increasing *vairāgya*. It is important to understand that *vairāgya* is not aversion to an object. That only shows that one does not have a value for it. *Vairāgya* means understanding things as they are for which inquiry is necessary. Nor is *vairāgya* the state of mind that often arises when someone dies. Glimpsing the transitoriness of life, the distaste for meaningless pursuits that follows is most often not real *vairāgya*. That will usually dissipate as time goes on and regular affairs resume. *Vairāgya* is an objectivity that arises from a proper inquiry into and evaluation of priorities. Neither is *vairāgya* born of disenchantment. Someone who has failed in his pursuits in life and having lost everything decides to be a *sādhu* does not have *vairāgya*. One may start like that, but real *vairāgya* is that which is accomplished by removal of all false projections, *śobhanādhyāsa*. *Vairāgya*, translated as dispassion, means a degree of objectivity. It can only be complete when there is *jñāna*.

A certain objectivity is reached as one realises more and more clearly that *mokṣa* occupies the first place in one's life. At a given time in our life, our top priority may have

been education, then perhaps money or success. *Mokṣa* was somewhere down the list. With *satsaṅga*, analysis of experiences etc., it gradually occupies a higher and higher position. As the desire for freedom intensifies, *rāga-dveṣas* get neutralised and as they do, *mokṣa* becomes increasingly predominant until finally it is the top priority. The desire for freedom gains a depth and dimension that becomes all-consuming so that everything subserves that. Then you have *vairāgya*.

When *mokṣa* is predominant, life becomes a process of growing. You make a conscious effort to ensure that you are growing and this growth manifests in the form of dispassion with reference to objects of the senses. You are able to make an intelligent evaluation of the worth of sense objects both here and elsewhere. You understand that they do not solve the fundamental problem. The most they can do is to keep you in good humour for which you must always pay the price. The real problem of self non-acceptance remains unsolved.

*Śaṅkara* glosses *indriyārthāḥ* as enjoyments both seen and unseen. Whether it is something you see yourself or something you hear about, it has no appeal as a solution to your basic problem. *Vairāgya* is not an aversion to sense objects either, but it is an intelligent evaluation.

#### ANĀHA×KĒRA

The *ahaṅkāra* is the sense of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine.’ The absence of these notions is only possible in the wake of knowledge. Since *anahaṅkāra* is presented as a value here, it cannot be the total absence of *ahaṅkāra*, which is the aftermath of *jñāna*. *Anahaṅkāra* in the limited sense used here is absence of pride. What makes a person proud? One may have physical beauty or accomplishment, or a good mind or some possessions. Presenting oneself in the reflection of their glory is pride. A young man wearing an unbuttoned shirt to show off his broad chest adorned with a gold chain is proud. The chest he inherited from his father and the chain was given to him by his mother; his only accomplishment is not buttoning the shirt. Because of some artistic or intellectual endowments, which are purely in-born gifts, you may have some pride. Or it may be because of some knowledge or skills you have acquired. If you find you have nothing to boast of, you can talk about the greatness of your ancestors. All this arrogance is born of ignorance of the fact that everything I have is given to me. The body, mind and senses are given to me to develop the potentials that are given to me. Potentially I am capable of knowing and the faculty of thinking and a world full of things to know are given to me. What I have accomplished is really nothing. When I understand this, there is what we call absence of pride, *anahaṅkāra*.

Lack of thinking alone makes a person proud. With even a little understanding you are left with a sense of wonder, not pride. You will wonder, who has given you all this. A very simple believer will say that it is God. That appreciation can be more informed

until finally he understands what God is. An agnostic will simply wonder who or what has given all this and if he wants to know who that person is, that wonder converts him into an inquirer, *jijñāsu*. If he knows from his cultural background that the *śāstra* says that *Brahman* is the cause of the world, he becomes a *brahma-jijñāsu*. The direction of the inquiry depends on how informed one is. Where is *ahaṅkāra* in this? There is only inquiry involving a learning person, a doing person, an enjoying person and nothing else. Pride has no place and thus there is *anahaṅkāra* in a limited sense.

### SEEING THE LIMITATIONS OF LIFE IN GENERAL

The next value is seeing clearly that in birth, death, old age and disease, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi* there is the problem of *duḥkha*. *Anudarśana* means seeing again and again very clearly. It is not simply a process of thinking but very intimately seeing the limitations of all these. Thereby the desire for *mokṣa* becomes more predominant. This is not cultivating a morbid view of the natural processes of life but seeing the limitations of the human condition and making the most of the fact that one is alive and functioning now. I appreciate that as a matter for celebration and thereby have a positive outlook towards the moment.

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।

नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ॥९॥

*asaktiranabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu*  
*nityam ca samacittatvamiṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu*

Verse 9

असक्तिः *asaktiḥ* — absence of ownership, अनभिष्वङ्गः *anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ* — absence of excessive affection; पुत्रदारगृहादिषु *putradāra-gṛhādiṣu* — regarding son, wife, house; नित्यम् च *nityam ca* — and always; समचित्तत्वम् *samacittatvam* — evenness of mind; इष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु *iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu* — regarding the gain of the desirable and the undesirable

... absence of ownership, absence of excessive affection regarding son, wife and house and always evenness of mind regarding the gain of the desirable and the undesirable...

### ASAKTI

*Sakti* is attachment, in general, and it can also be longing or a sense of ownership. *Asakti* means absence of ownership. This is a very interesting and important value. Ownership is different from possession, something that no one can avoid. For one who appreciates himself to be independent of the body, or even one who believes that he survives the body etc., the body, mind and senses are possessions. For a *sannyāsī*, the

few things he has, like a *rudrākṣamālā*, his books and a *kamaṇḍalu*, form his possessions. So, while one cannot avoid possessions in one's life, one can totally avoid a sense of ownership.

In fact, all we really have are possessions. If you have a piece of property and the state decides to confiscate it, do you have ownership or possession? There is no such thing as ownership, only temporary possession. Ownership is purely a sense based on your relationship to an object. You can look upon yourself as its owner or you can see it as something placed in your possession for the time being.

The problem with ownership is that it is only one side of the coin. If I am the owner of an apartment in a Co-op Society, in a particular area in a city, the other side of that is I am not the owner of all the other apartments in that apartment building, all the buildings in that area, all the areas in that city, all the cities in that country, all the countries in that continent, all the continents on the planet, all the planets in the system and all the systems in the universe. How am I going to feel about myself? That feeling is not ordinary; and therefore, we have to look into ourselves and see whether there is a sense of ownership with reference to anything because embedded in it is the sense of being small and isolated. It does not go away completely until knowledge is clear but it can be reduced to a very great extent by recognising the fact that I am not the owner of anything; I am only a possessor. Everything has been given to me and because it has been given, it can be taken away at any time. I am only a managing trustee of my body, mind, senses and the few other things I find myself endowed with. Nothing is authored by me and unless I totally author something, cannot say I am its owner. I cannot claim total authorship of even my confusion, because there are so many others involved in it! When I am not the author, I am not the owner in whom smallness, fear and anxiety are all implied. I get rid of this sense of ownership by repeatedly looking at the fact that I only happen to possess a few things; I am not the owner of anything. This is a mature, objective way of looking at the facts.

#### **ANABHĪVA×GA, ABSENCE OF EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT TO POSSESSIONS**

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* mentions a few of these possessions, *putra-dāra-grhādi* son, wife, house, etc. *Śaṅkara* adds the servant to this list and you can add a few more like car, stocks etc. These are the things that are very dearly possessed by you and with whose well-being your happiness and sorrow are connected. That is *abhiṣvaṅgaḥ*. There is so much identity with them that when they are doing well you are happy, when they are not you are miserable. Even when the person dies you feel that you might as well be dead. This is *abhiṣvaṅga*, excessive attachment. It is not simply affection but an affection that smothers you and the other person because there is too much emotional dependence. In order to bring up a child or maintain an intimate relationship you must have care and affection. These are healthy positive expressions that help a person to grow. The problem is not affection but emotional dependence. *Arjuna* is not a *sannyāsī* and over his

shoulders, *Kṛṣṇa* is addressing all householders here. Although there is no affection for the house there can be great care. This excessive caring for house, car, furniture to the point of anxiety is *abhiśvaṅga*. It is a misplaced value. We have to understand how much care is appropriate and where the care ends and the attachment begins. When it causes you any kind of pain, it is attachment; not caring.

First we must see our absence of ownership. Then for some possessions there is a natural affection because they require my care. It is here that I must be careful not to develop attachment. Love and care are fine but not more than that. When it becomes emotional dependence it creates a problem for me and for others. The one who is loved becomes a source of pain. It is easy to talk about these things but in reality we must be alert. There is a very fine line between attachment and caring, which is not easy to discern. Our reactions are the indicators in this. This is all part of *vairāgya*.

#### SAMACITTATVA, EQUANIMITY

Then in terms of attitude we have *nityam samacittatvam iṣṭa-anīṣṭa-upapattiṣu*, always the sameness of mind in the gain of the desirable and the undesirable. We saw before that sameness, *samatva*, is *karma-yoga*. This sameness is not with regard to *karma* because neither *karma* nor its result can be the same. It is your mind that responds to the *karma-phala* and there can be an evenness in that response whether desirable or undesirable things come to you. There are different levels of desirable and undesirable things—people, situations, health, food and even weather. At one level things are fine, at another they are not. Ultimately everything is not fine because even if all is well now, you know it may not be tomorrow. Generally, if the situation is desirable, the mind, *citta*, is cheerful and if it is not, it is sorrowful. Things keep changing and if the mind also changes along with them, becoming elated with the desirable and depressed with the undesirable, there is continuous reaction. The problem with this is that the reacting mind is not available for learning and our whole pursuit is one of learning. No matter what the situations are, desirable or undesirable, you try to maintain a composure. To enjoy composure, you do not require desirable or undesirable things. If you know how to swim, does it matter what the depth of the water is? Similarly, if you have composure of mind it does not matter whether the situation is desirable or undesirable. It must be there in any situation.

That composure is born of your acceptance of *Īśvara* in your life by which you get *prasāda-buddhi*, knowing that it is given to you to act and the results come as they do from *Īśvara*. This is not an ordinary attitude and yet there is no other way of bringing about *samacittatva*.

Therefore, the next line is

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।

विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥१०॥

*mayi cānanyayogena bhaktiravyabhicāriṇī*  
*viviktadeśasevitvam aratirjanasaṃsadi*

Verse 10

मयि च *mayi ca* — and in me; भक्तिः अव्यभिचारिणी *bhaktiḥ avyabhicāriṇī* — an unswerving devotion; अनन्ययोगेन *ananyayogena* — not connected to anything else; विविक्तदेश-सेवित्वम् *viviktadeśa-sevitvam* — the disposition of repairing to a quiet place; अरतिः *aratiḥ* — no longing for; जनसंसदि *janasaṃsadi* — the company of people

... and an unswerving devotion to me that is not connected to anything else; the disposition of repairing to a quiet place, no longing for the company of people...

### AVYABHICARINĪ BHAKTI, UNSWERVING DEVOTION

*Mayi*, in me, the Lord, is a *bhakti*, devotion that is *avyabhicāriṇī*, unswerving. When there is devotion to something and yet the mind moves away from it, that is *vyabhicāriṇī bhakti*. A contradiction also is called *vyabhicāra*. *Avyabhicāriṇī bhakti* is an abiding, unflinching devotion in which there is no moving away from the object of devotion. You can look upon *Īśvara* as totally separate from yourself or as the one who is the cause of everything and non-separate from everything, even if it is not yet properly understood. Because we are talking about *jñāna* here, the devotion is to *Īśvara* who is *sarvajña*, all-knowing, *sarvaśaktimān*, all-powerful and the creator and sustainer of the entire creation as well as the one who resolves everything back unto himself.

### THIS DEVOTION IS WITH TOTAL COMMITMENT TO ĪŚVARA

This devotion is called *ananyayogena bhaktiḥ*. *Śaṅkara* says this is the devotion to the Lord that is backed by the understanding that there is no one who is superior to *Vāsudeva*. He is not caused, he is the limitlessness beyond whom there is none. Another meaning is, a *bhakti* that is backed by the knowledge that there is no refuge other than *Vāsudeva*, in the sense that I want only to gain the knowledge of what *Īśvara* is. The mind is committed to general form of prayer. While there is nothing wrong with that, here we are talking about a means, *sādhana* for gaining knowledge of *Paramēśvara*. The other *puruṣārthas*, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, for which a religious person invokes *Īśvara*, are resolved into *mokṣa* for which I require *ātma-jñāna*, which is *īśvara-jñāna*. Therefore, for me, the Lord alone is the refuge and end of my pursuit. In this value, two things are indicated. It shows that the *puruṣārtha-niścaya*, ascertainment of what one really wants, is clear and because of this *viveka*, the *ahaṅkāra* is not predominant. If *Īśvara* is the only refuge then one recognises one's own limitations. and this recognition

keeps the *ahaṅkāra* under check. That can make one feel lowly but if one understands that there is *Īśvara*, one feels supported, as it were. It releases one from the sense of helplessness. He understands that everything is given—the body, senses, mind, the world—and therefore, there is nothing to worry about. Only if I am the author, can I be a failure. When I am not the author of anything, there is no sense of failure or helplessness and that helps in the gain of *samacittatva*.

#### RELINQUISHING THE NEED TO CONTROL THE SITUATIONS AND SURRENDERING TO ĪŚVARA GIVES EQUANIMITY

When *Īśvara* is recognised as the one who presides over all actions and gives their results, the problem of controlling and manipulating situations to suit my needs disappears. Even though we have no control over anything in reality, we want to control because of fear of failure stemming from deep insecurity. No one wants to give up control because there is a sense of being a loser. The truth is, it is not a sense, it is a fact. Every individual is a born loser because there is no possibility of controlling all situations so that they are to his advantage. When that is so, it is better to relinquish control. Leave it to *Bhagavān*. He is the creator of all this and he can take care of it. I do what I can, for that is also *Bhagavān* after all, but there is no necessity to attempt to control. As an individual I have some free-will, which I can exercise in performing an action but once I have decided upon a course of action, the result is taken care of by the laws. Recognition of *Īśvara* as the giver of the results loosens me from a sense of failure and the necessity to control situations. Then *samatva* is possible.

#### THERE IS NO OTHER WAY OF ENJOYING COMPOSURE

There is no other way of enjoying composure. Although psychological pragmatism will give you a degree of composure, we have to go a step further here because we are interested in reality and the reality with reference to *karma* is that the Lord is the giver of the results of actions. Acknowledging this makes life easy and simple because it is a fact. When you rub against a fact, you always get rubbed in the process. Eventually you learn to accept the fact that *Bhagavān* is the giver of results. More and more intimately you realise that you are the agent and he is the ordainer of the results of your action the more composed you are, until you understand that everything is *Īśvara*. To gain this understanding you require a composed disposition. Seeing that you are the agent and *Bhagavān* is the giver of results permits you to have *samatva* and an unflinching devotion, *avyabhicārinī bhaktiḥ*. Without one the other is not possible. Evenness of mind, *samacittatva*, is possible only when it is backed by devotion.



### VIVIKTA-DEŚASEVITVA, SEEKING A QUIET UNDISTURBED PLACE

*Vivikta-deśa*, Śāṅkara says, is a place, which is by nature free from causes for fear. The one who repairs to such a place has *vivikta-deśasevitva*. So, do not go to a forest that is infested with reptiles and wild animals or you will be distracted in meditation by fear, constantly on the alert for predators. It should be a quiet place but one in which you have no fear. It can be a forest, which is more like a large park, or the bank of a river, or a mountain or in India it can be a quiet temple. These are the situations that a human mind generally accepts objectively, not wanting them to be different. Or you can create a quiet place and if that is not possible, there is always a time when everything is quiet. A place like this is required because you do not have to deal with it. When you see a mountain, you do not want it to be different and therefore, you do not have to deal with it. You enjoy it as it is, whether it is a bald mountain, or one covered with trees. In situations, which you naturally accept, the mind gains a certain quietude. The one who has a tendency to repair to a quiet place is called *vivikta-deśasevī* and his state of mind is called *vivikta-deśasevitva*. Because of that, the mind becomes cheerful and disposed to contemplation. With a cheerful mind alone you can think of *ātmā* because you have leisure. In the beginning it is a luxury and afterwards it becomes your bread-and-butter. When I have so many things to do, thinking about *ātmā* is a luxury. But when you have nobody to contend with, you have so much time with yourself and your mind will naturally go towards yourself to understand what this I is. Then, study of the *śāstra* and contemplation is all possible. That disposition to enjoy a contemplative life is *vivikta-deśasevitva*. It is something that one has to cultivate because generally we seek the company of people, *jana-saṃsad*.

### ARATIĒ JANASAĒSADI, SEEKING SOLITUDE

We have a need to talk to someone because there is such a build up of psychological pressure. Sometimes it is necessary. But then that becomes a habit because you are not able to sit with yourself. It indicates a tendency to escape from oneself. *Aratiḥ janasaṃsadi* means not longing for company. The word *arati* means 'not having interest' and *jana-saṃsadi* means 'in the company of people.' Thus *aratiḥ janasaṃsadi* means 'not having an interest in the company of people.' It is not an aversion to people but rather a lack of longing. Being afraid of company or needing the company of people both indicate a problem of facing oneself. The one who seeks people wants to escape from himself and the one who is afraid of people also does not want to confront himself because, in the company of others he is uncomfortable with his own sense of smallness. The disposition we want is to be neither afraid of people nor seeking people. That means you can be with yourself. And you are not going to be disturbed when people are around.

If you are able to be with yourself, that means, you are not afraid of yourself and are ready to face your problems. Only when you can acknowledge your problems can you hope to solve them. If you want to escape from a problem, and yet make a conscious effort to face it, you have already begun to gain a victory over it. Then it is a question of understanding. Thus, *vivikta-deśasevitva* is a very important means for *jñāna*.

### VALUE OF SATSAṅGA

*Aratiḥ janasaṃsadi* does not mean going away from people but, *Śaṅkara* says, avoiding the company of people who are a disturbance to your pursuit. Their ways of thinking and values will not help you grow; because in their company, you can be confused. Generally they are arrogant and often agnostic and can damage your *śraddhā* with their arguments because you will not have all the answers to them. While such company is to be shunned, one should not avoid the company of people who have education and qualities like *śama*, *dama*, etc., for, they will help you grow. *Satsaṅga*, the company of the good, as we have seen, is very conducive for knowledge. Not keeping the company of people who do not help you, who deter you, and maintaining an association with other seekers and with teachers is very good. It is not that others are bad; they are just not good for us now. While we are learning, we require a reflective mind and as we find ourselves absorbed in the analysis of what the *śāstra* says, there is not much inclination to deal with the atmosphere, which is not good for our pursuit. Afterwards too, it tends to be the same. Even the *mahātmās* created colonies in Rishikesh, Hardwar etc., so that they could be in the company of fellow seekers. Even if you went there out of curiosity or some despair or frustration, you might become a *sādhu* because of that atmosphere. It was once a place of learned *sannyāsīs*, any one of whom, you could sit and study with. That is *satsaṅga*.

These attitudes and values, which make the *antaḥ-karaṇa* mature are *jñāna* because with them knowledge is possible. But they do not make a person free. Now *Bhagavān* points out the real means for *mokṣa*.

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम् ।

एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा ॥११॥

*adhyātma-jñānanityatvaṃ tatvajñānārthadarśanam*

*etajjñānamiti proktamajñānaṃ yadato'nyathā*

Verse 11

अध्यात्म-ज्ञान-नित्यत्वम् *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam* — always (dwelling upon) knowledge centred on the self; तत्त्व-ज्ञान-अर्थ-दर्शनम् *tattva-jñāna-artha-darśanam* — keeping in view the purpose of knowledge of the truth; एतत् ज्ञानम् इति *etat jñānam iti* —this is knowledge; प्रोक्तम् *proktam* — told; अज्ञानम् *ajñānam* — ignorance; यत् अन्यथा *yat anyathā* — what is opposite; अतः *ataḥ* —to this

... always (dwelling upon) knowledge centred on the self, keeping in view the purpose of knowledge of the truth—(all) this that was told is the means to knowledge, what is opposite to this is ignorance...

### THE REAL MEANS FOR MOKĀĀ, ADHYĒTMA-JŌĒNA-NITYĀTVĀ

*Adhyātma-jñāna* is knowledge centred on the self—*ātma-viṣaya-jñāna*. It can refer to knowledge of one's body, *prāṇa*, mind or, as it is here, *pratyag-ātmā*, which is *sat-cit-ānanda*. Here it refers to the knowledge that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. This knowledge comes only through the *śāstra*. Therefore, *pramāṇa-pravṛtti*, i.e., operating the *pramāṇa*, is necessary. Therefore, in the discussion of *jñāna-sādhana*s, after enumerating the values and attitudes necessary for preparing the mind, this *sādhana* of *pramāṇa-pravṛtti* is mentioned. Even if one has all the qualities like *amānitva*, etc., *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva* in the form of *śāstra-paṭhana*, with the help of the teacher is necessary. Here, this *śāstra-paṭhana* is referred to as *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*, and is mentioned as *jñāna*, *jñāna-sādhana*. The pursuit is thus well defined. There is no room for vagueness here. And the word *nityatva* has the meaning of *niratatva* here. *Niratatva* means, being constantly engaged in something with total commitment. The *śruti* says, *paunaḥ punyena śravaṇaṃ kuryāt—śravaṇa* has to be done repeatedly. Each time it becomes clearer and clearer. There is a growing clarity. That is why the topic of *jñāna-sādhana* is not complete without the mention of this *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*. The qualities like *amānitva*, etc., will make you a mature complete person and having these is an accomplishment in itself. But knowledge is required for *mokṣa*. And that knowledge is gained only through *śāstra-paṭhana* with the help of the teacher. Understanding this, and having a value for this, and being constantly engaged in this *śāstra-paṭhana*, is what is meant by *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*. Thus the one whose attention is directed constantly towards the knowledge of this *ātmā*, which is *Brahman*, has *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*. He is always engaged in *śravaṇa* or *manana* or *nididhyāsana*. He exposes himself to the teaching, analyses his understanding in group discussions with peers and shares what he has learned with others who want to know, *tat-cintanaṃ tat-kathanam anyonyaṃ tat prabodhanam*. That is the traditional pastime of one who wants to gain clear knowledge of *ātmā*.

The process of repeated dwelling upon this *vidyā* does have an effect, even though, the content of the first lesson is also that of the last. The first lesson is that you are *Brahman*, as is the last, and all the lessons in between. It never changes. Constant exposure and thinking about this *vidyā* is required. That is why we have so much literature on this subject. Our predecessors who had *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva* went on writing texts after texts as a *sādhana*, just to keep themselves exposed to the knowledge. Besides this there is the vast literature of those who knew and were moved to write for our benefit. Thus we have enough material to spend as much time with the teaching as we require. Even though the *pramāṇa* works immediately, not gradually, we do see a

growing clarity as we spend more and more time exposed to the teaching. The fruit of this *adhyātma-jñāna* is *adhyātma-jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Śaṅkara does not say much on this, but he does say that while the values like *amānitva* are the means for *jñāna*, the knowledge of the truth, *tattva-jñāna*, is the means for maturity. When these values are in place, *vedānta-śāstra* will give the knowledge and because of *vedānta-śāstra* the values also become mature and the knowledge fructifies. Because of this reciprocal relationship, there is increasing clarity. As one matures in the values, the knowledge becomes clearer, and as the knowledge becomes clearer, one gains maturity in terms of values. They are like two wings of the same bird.

### TATTVA-JŃĀNA-ARTHA-DARŚANA, CONSTANTLY KEEPING MOKṢĀ IN VIEW

This *adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva*, the total commitment to the pursuit of the knowledge can be there, only if *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana* is present. *Tattva-jñāna* is the *ātma-jñāna*, the knowledge of the truth of the self. *Tasya arthaḥ*, its result or *phala* is *mokṣa*, the total freedom from all sense of limitations. *Tasya darśanam*, is seeing very clearly that result, i.e., keeping in view this total freedom that can be gained as a result of this *tattva-jñāna*. If this result, *phala*, of *tattva-jñāna*, the infinite freedom is kept in view, then to put in the required effort towards gaining the qualities like *amānitva*, etc., is not difficult. All these values and qualities will become very natural, and even if some of them are lacking, gaining them will not seem difficult because the end in view is well worth the effort. This is very clear to the person. This is *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana*. Thus, *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana* is nothing but *mumukṣutva*. And this *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana* creates *jijñāsā* in the seeker.

*Amānitva* etc., are also meant for the same thing. But *amānitva* etc., culminate in *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana* and then, *tattva-jñāna-ārtha-darśana* culminates in *tattva-jñāna* and one gains *mokṣa*, which is in the form of cessation of *saṃsāra*. This is said in so many words by Śaṅkara<sup>1</sup> when he says, when the *amānitva* etc., are cultivated adequately, *bhāvanā-paripāka*, the required degree of maturity of the disposition is gained by the person. And this *bhāvanā-paripāka* is the *hetu, nimitta*, cause, for *tattva-jñāna*. And the *ārtha*, result, of that *tattva-jñāna* is *mokṣa, saṃsāra-uparama*, cessation of *saṃsāra*. Repeatedly seeing this fact, and again and again bringing this fact to the forefront, whenever the mind seems to swerve away from this pursuit, is called *darśana, ālocana*, here. The end is never kept away from view. This is the final and the most important of all the *jñāna-sādhana*s listed in this section because, when there is this constant dwelling on the value of pursuit, the seriousness involved there, there is great commitment towards gaining the other values like *amānitva*, etc.

<sup>1</sup> अमानित्वादीनां ज्ञानसाधकानां भावनापरिपाकनिमित्तं तत्त्वज्ञानम्। तस्य अर्थः मोक्षः संसारोपरमः। तस्य आलेचनं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम्। शा० भा०।।

The commitment to the pursuit of the knowledge, through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, also increases and one is ready to do any thing and everything that is necessary.

This desire for liberation has to be kept in view because there are so many other desires in life that can consume your time and energy. Care must be taken to see that *mokṣa* is never lost sight of, by continuing to analyse what you are really seeking, so that the secondary things do not overwhelm the primary one.

Summing up, *Bhagavān* says, this, which has been told, *etat proktam*, beginning from *amānitva* to *tattva-jñāna-artha-darśana* is *jñāna*. They are called *jñāna*, individually, and together as a group, because they are a means for *jñāna*. All of them embellish the *antaḥ-karaṇa* and form an indirect means for *tattva-jñāna*.

### THE VALUES AND ATTITUDES THAT ARE OPPOSED TO THESE ARE CALLED AJŌĒNA,

Having said it positively, he restates it in the negative—the opposite of this is ignorance, *ajñānaṃ yad ato'nyathā*. The word *anyathā* has the meaning of 'that which is opposed to' rather than 'other than' because there are some good qualities, which are not mentioned—like compassion, *dayā*, friendliness, *maitrī*, etc. The opposites are *mānitva*, *dambhitva*, *hiṃsā*, *akṣānti*, etc. These are not the means to knowledge, and are to be negated. The values like *amānitva* cannot be cultivated because they are the nature of your self. It is a matter of removing *mānitva*, etc. It is not that we develop *ahiṃsā* but that we remove the tendency for *hiṃsā*. *Śaṅkara* says, they are to be removed because they are the cause for the pursuit of *saṃsāra*. Just look at a person who does not care for these values. He cannot escape from a tendency to hurt. Even a poor butterfly will be destroyed just because it has entered his living room. He wants the whole world to behave according to his dictates; this is *akṣānti*, and there is no integrity in his life; this is *anārjava*. He does all sorts of things that are not to be done, and is impelled indiscriminately into various sense pursuits by his likes and dislikes; this is *asthairya*. He does not learn from difficulties in life but complains about them ceaselessly. He is deeply possessive of his wife, son, car, carpet, hair, etc. His mind is buffeted about by the ups and downs of his life; and he is devoted to money or power, not *Bhagavān*; and he is always in clubs, theatres, etc., constantly seeking attention and company because he is not able to be with himself. Even if he goes to the countryside, he will take a few people with him. This is a very sad state of affairs. To understand the value of maturity, even without the desire to know *ātmā*, is a great blessing. Eventually, that desire will arise in a mature mind because these qualities are the cause for a natural withdrawal from *saṃsāra*.

By these qualifications, which are also called *jñāna*, what is it that is to be known, *jñeya*? These various behavioural norms alone do not constitute knowledge in that, what

is to be known cannot be known by them because they do not reveal a particular object. They are all attributes of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Further, by a piece of knowledge, of which the object is pot, another object, like fire, is not known. Thus, what is to be known is not known by knowing the values like *amānitva*, so, how can they be called *jñāna*? *Śaṅkara* answers that they are a cause for *jñāna* because the mind endowed with all these virtues will be able to gain this knowledge.

The maker and the material are the two main causes in any creation. Besides these two there are instruments employed like the wheel in making a pot. They are aids. In knowing, *pramāṇa* is the main cause and these values are aids.

Now he has to tell what is to be known, *jñeya*.

ज्ञेयं यत्तत्प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वामृतमश्नुते ।

अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्त्रासदुच्यते ॥१२॥

*jñeyam yattatpravakṣyāmi yajjñātvāmṛtamāśnute*  
*anādimatparaṁ brahma na sattannāsaducyate*

Verse 12

ज्ञेयम् यत् *jñeyam yat* — what is to be known; तत् प्रवक्ष्यामि *tat pravakṣyāmi* — that I will tell clearly; यत् ज्ञात्वा *yat jñātvā* knowing which; अमृतम् *amṛtam* — deathlessness; अश्नुते *aśnute* — one gains; अनादिमत् *anādimat* — that which has no beginning; परम् *param* — limitless; तत् ब्रह्म *tat brahma* — that *Brahman*; न सत् *na sat* — is not existent (as an object); न असत् *na asat* — and not non-existent; उच्यते *ucyate* — is said

What is to be known, that I will tell clearly, knowing, which one gains deathlessness, that *Brahman*, which, it is said, has no beginning, is limitless, neither existent (as an object) nor non-existent.

## WHAT IS TO BE KNOWN IS BRAHMAN

*Jñeya*, what is to be known, is *Brahman*. Although any object to be known is called *jñeya*, in the context and also from the standpoint of what is really to be known and what really can be known, *jñeya* here is *Brahman*. That, *Bhagavān* says, 'I will tell you clearly.' There are varieties of things to be known in this world, but knowing this, one gains deathlessness, *amṛtam aśnute*. This restricts the meaning of *jñeya* to *Brahman*. Deathlessness here means not just freedom from death but freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Though this body will die, there will be no rebirth and consequently, no death. Only the one who dies can be reborn but the one who is eternal, the *ātmā*, will not die. If knowing this, there is freedom from birth and death, what is known, *jñeya*, must be beyond the scope of time, eternal. But if you know an eternal object other than yourself, how will you be free from death? By knowing something eternal you do not become eternal. If by knowing something you are to gain

deathlessness, that something can only be yourself. *Ātmā* happens to be eternal and knowing that, you discover that you are eternal.

## ONE NEED NOT CONSULT ANYONE TO KNOW THAT ONE EXISTS

### IN MY UNDERSTANDING I AM A MORTAL AND IN THE VISION OF THE ĀRUTI I AM ETERNAL

The difficulty here is that the one thing everybody knows is *ātmā*. There is no need to consult anybody about your whereabouts or your existence. But what you know about yourself, is the opposite of what is said here. You know yourself as mortal. You do not seek the help of the *śāstra* to establish that you exist, as you do, to help you establish whether there is a heaven or not. *Śāstra* just establishes that *ātmā* alone is eternal.

In the next line he says, how *ātmā* is eternal, that is, free from death, *amṛta*. What is *jñeya* is *anādimat*, it has no beginning. What has no beginning need not have no end but here it is *para*, limitless, and therefore, without end also. It is absolutely free from time. In other words, eternal. That *brahma* is to be known as *ātmā* And this *paraṁ brahma*, he tells us further, is *na sat*—not an existent thing and *tat na asat*—nor non-existent. All our cognitions are in term of ‘It is’ or ‘It is not.’ My hand ‘is’ but the pot on it ‘is not.’ If it is something absolutely non-existent like a man's horn, there is no purpose in saying it is *jñeya* and then giving a description of it. That I cannot know and need not know.

## BRAHMAN IS NEITHER SAT NOR ASAT

### IF IT IS NEITHER SAT NOR ASAT, IT CAN ONLY BE MYSELF

Therefore, he says it is not non-existent, *na asat*. By saying it is not ‘*sat*,’ all existent objects are negated and we are made to understand that this is not an object. *Śaṅkara* says, neither *sat* nor *asat* apply here because it is not an object for which there is a cognition attended by either ‘is’ or ‘is not.’ *Ātmā* is not an object that your senses or mind can objectify. If it is merely *na sat*, there is nothing for you to know but since he says *na asat*, you have to give it some thought. It is very clear that the only thing left is you. Everything in the entire creation is either an object that ‘is’ or ‘is not’ both of which are known to you. If what is to be known is neither, all that remains is the one who says ‘it is’ or ‘it is not.’

THAT THIS SELF EVIDENT ĀTMĒ IS BRAHMAN IS KNOWN BY  
ĀBDA-PRAMĒŪA ALONE

GAINING THIS KNOWLEDGE ONE GAINS FREEDOM FROM DEATH,  
AMĪTATVAM AĀNUTE

The self-evident *ātmā*, which is not the object of the cognition, ‘it is’ or ‘it is not’ is presented here as *Brahman*, the cause of creation. This fact, though it cannot be known through the sense organs etc., is revealed by the *śāstra*, which is independent means of knowledge in the form of words. If it is beyond the senses etc., and yet it has to be known, how am I to know it? *Śabda* is the *pramāṇa* and though it operates in the mind, because that is where all knowledge takes place, the mind alone cannot arrive at it since it is not an object of inference. The *śruti*, through *śabda*, creates the *vr̥tti* in the *buddhi*, which removes the ignorance of *ātmā* being *Brahman*. It is not like a pot, which is available for both ‘is’ and ‘is not’ cognitions. It is the subject, which happens to be *Brahman* and is revealed as such by the *śāstra*, and therefore, *jñeya*. It is to be known because with that, one gains freedom from death, *amṛtam aśnute*. Though it is neither *sat* nor *asat*, because it is not an object of inference or perception, still it is to be known, and for that we have *śabda-pramāṇa*.

An objection can be raised that even *śruti* says, it is beyond the known and unknown, *tad viditād ato aviditād adhi*,<sup>1</sup> so, how can it be *jñeya*? When what I have to know, knowing, which I am free, cannot be known, nor is it unknown, how can I ever know? *Śaṅkara* says, it is like someone who, having begun a *yajñśāla* to perform a ritual to go to another world, reads in the *śāstra*, ‘Is there another world or not?’ Similarly, *śruti* says that there is something to be known and then says, it is neither known, *vidita*, nor unknown, *avidita*. *Śaṅkara* answers that such sentences are committed to showing the definite meaning whereas sentences like ‘Is there another world or not?’ are statements that are parts of an injunction. All words, he continues, are meant to reveal some sense. When the words are heard by the listener, he is able to recognise an object, which is revealed by the word as belonging to a certain category of objects—*jāti*, an action—*kriyā*, an attribute—*guṇa*, or a relationship—*sambandha*. The word cow, for example, reveals a species; cooks—an action; white—an attribute; and cattle-owner—a relationship. *Brahman* is not any of these. It does not belong to a species and therefore, you cannot say ‘it is’ or ‘it is not.’ It is free from attributes, *nirguṇa* and undergoes no change to perform an action, it is *niṣkriya*. Nor is it connected to anything because it itself is not an object and there is no second thing to which it can connect. When this is the nature of what has to be explained, what words you will use? It is neither *sat* nor *asat*.

<sup>1</sup> *Kenopaniṣad* – 1-3



It cannot be revealed by any particular word, and that is why *śruti* says, 'From, which words return having not reached, *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*.<sup>1</sup> Having made their attempt and finding it not possible, words become silent. Where words fail, the mind can appreciate certain things, like emotions. But here, along with the words, the mind returns, *manasā saha*. To know the *ātmā* the mind has to reverse itself. When it turns towards *ātmā* it disappears in the sense that the mind is nothing but *vṛttis* and the *vṛtti* with which *ātmā* is known has no form, *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*. The mind itself cannot make an attempt to know *ātmā*, nor can it have any experience of *ātmā* because the mind is *ātmā*. To destroy the ignorance about *ātmā* you require a simple *vṛtti*, which itself goes away having dispelled the ignorance. That *vṛtti* is created by the *vedānta-vākya*. Thus, when it says *na sat tat, na asat*, there is no contradiction. Though the negation is complete with this, still positively it has to be revealed.

### BRAHMAN IS THE CAUSAL UPĒDHI OF ALL BEINGS

*Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse, saying, when it is not an object of the word *sat*, as a pot is, there can be a doubt that it is non-existent. To remove that doubt, he shows the existence of that which is to be known, *jñeya*, by saying that, it is the causal *upādhi* of all beings.

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।

सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥१३॥

*sarvataḥ pāṇipādam tatsarvato'akṣiśiromukham*

*sarvataḥ śrutimalloke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati*

Verse 13

तत् *tat* — that; सर्वतः पाणिपादम् *sarvataḥ pāṇipādam* — the one who has hands and feet on all sides; सर्वतः अक्षि-शिरोमुखम् *sarvataḥ akṣi-śiromukham* — the one who has eyes, heads and mouths (faces) on all sides; सर्वतः श्रुतिमत् *sarvataḥ śrutimat* — the one who has ears on all sides; लोके *loke* — in the people; सर्वम् आवृत्य *sarvam āvṛtya* — pervading everything; तिष्ठति *tiṣṭhati* — it remains

That (*jñeyaṃ brahma*), the one who has hands and feet on all sides, the one who has eyes, heads and mouths (faces) on all sides, the one who has ears on all sides in the (bodies) of the people remains pervading everything.

Here *Brahman* is presented not as one of the objects in creation but, with *upādhi*, as all objects revealing how it is *na asat*. In the next verse he will show how it is *na sat*.

<sup>1</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-4

Through superimposition and negation the entire creation becomes *mithyā* and *Brahman* its truth, *satya*.

### WHEN YOU SAY SOMETHING EXISTS, THE EXISTENCE BELONGS TO BRAHMAN

The world is taken as existent, as something that ‘is’ and the existence, because of which the world appears as empirically true, is *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, *paramārtha-satya*. Because of this *satyaṃ brahma*, which provides the existence for everything, the world is never taken as non-existent. This *Brahman*, which is to be known, *jñeya*, and has been revealed as having no beginning, *anādimat*. Therefore, it is said here, *tiṣṭhati*, it remains without motion. This one word tells everything. It is *pūrṇa*, whole, as was said before, limitless, *para*. Being neither *sat* nor *asat* it is *ātmā*. This world is non-separate from this *Brahman*, which we know from the next line, is without attributes, *nirguṇa*. From this we understand that the creation is a superimposition upon *Brahman*.

### BRAHMAN EXISTS IN THE FORM OF EVERYTHING

The names and forms have no existence of their own, all their existence being supplied by *Brahman*. If you analyse any given object, it will resolve into *Brahman*, consciousness, *ātmā*. First, it is established that *Brahman* exists, but not as one of the objects in the world. It is the whole *jagat*. Therefore, *tiṣṭhati*, without motion *Brahman* remains. All motions take place within that, while it does not change, does not have any motion. Being without motion, it remains pervading everything, *sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati*. With *māyā-upādhi*, *Brahman* is transformed, as it were, into this creation. When you analyse what any given object is, it disappears and consciousness alone remains. Therefore, we understand that the whole thing is superimposed upon consciousness that is *Brahman*. And this consciousness can shake off everything and still be, while nothing can shake off consciousness and have a being.

That *Brahman*, which is to be known and which has already been unfolded as *na sat na asat anādimat paraṃ brahma*, is said to have hands and feet on all sides, *sarvataḥ pāṇipādam*. Wherever there are hands and feet they are the hands and feet of *Brahman*. One consciousness appears as the whole creation in the form of the five elements, which have themselves become hands, legs, etc. Thus, all these are nothing but *paraṃ brahma*. In *puruṣasūktā*, the same thing has been said elaborately—he has countless heads, eyes and feet, *sahasra-śīrṣā-puruṣaḥ-sahasrākṣaḥ-sahasrapāt*. *Sahasra* has the same meaning here as *sarvataḥ*. All hands and legs including mine and those of a mosquito are nothing but *Brahman*. Then again, it has *sarvataḥ akṣiḥ*, eyes on all sides. As many eyes as there are, not only on this planet, but elsewhere also are his. And all the heads, and mouths or faces are his—*sarvato’kṣi-śiromukham*; as well

as all ears in the world—*sarvataḥ śrutimat loke*. Wherever there is a physical body, which is nothing but an assembly of various limbs, that is *Brahman*. The mention of eyes and ears implies not only the physical body but also the subtle body, and therefore, the entire gross and subtle world is included. Pervading all this, *Brahman*, which is *ātmā*, exists; *sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati*. Therefore, we understand that it is *pūrṇa*. Although everything cannot be mentioned, the entire vision is given in a few broad strokes by saying that all the hands, legs, eyes and ears are *Brahman*'s. Any vision, including the vision of *Vedānta*, is always created in a few quick strokes. Gradually, we analyse it afterwards. *Śaṅkara* says here that by the *upādhis* such as body, mind and senses, the existence of the *kṣetrajñā* is established. Why has he chosen only the living beings, why not mountains etc? If he includes mountains, rivers, etc., here, he has to make the point that it is not inert. By saying living beings, he establishes consciousness for *Brahman*.

### BRAHMAN ALONE IS SATYĀ, EVERYTHING ELSE IS MITHYĒ

All *upādhis* are by nature *mithyā* because there is no conditioning factor, *upādhi*, without the thing that is conditioned, *upahitavastu*. A crystal, for example, is conditioned or transformed, as it were, by a coloured cloth, the *upādhi*. By establishing the existence of the *upādhi* of all hands, feet, etc., for *Brahman*, the existence of *Brahman*, the *kṣetrajñā*, is established and its non-existence negated. Because of *kṣetra* alone it is called *kṣetrajñā*. And it is not just one *kṣetra* because he has already said, 'Know me in all the *kṣetras*, *sarvakṣetreṣu māṃ viddhi*. When in all the *kṣetras* there is only one *Brahman*, and that is *satya*, everything else becomes *upādhi*.

Because of a host of particular attributes, the varieties of bodies, each having its own peculiarity created by the differences in the *upādhis*, which are *mithyā*, *Brahman* appears to be manifold. Since they are created by the *mithyā-upādhis*, they are also *mithyā* like a crystal appearing to have a colour because of the proximity of the cloth. Here the colour in the crystal is *mithyā* while the crystal is *satya*, relatively; but the limitation of this example is that, ultimately the crystal is *mithyā* too. We cannot therefore, extend this to say that the attributes of the *upādhis* are *mithyā* while the *upādhi* is *satya*. The *upādhi* is as *mithyā* as its attributes. The only point here is that the attributes created by the differences in *upādhis* are *mithyā*. Because of these differences in the physical bodies, minds and senses, there appear to be differences for *ātmā*. One *Brahman* appears in the form of all the bodies with their attributes. This *Brahman* is the reality of the *kṣetra* consisting of the body, mind and senses, which has already been proved as *mithyā*. The physical body is reduced to cells and the cells to DNA. You can keep on going until you arrive at pure existence, which cannot be reduced. That alone is *satya*, everything else is *mithyā*. Once we understand that these various attributes are *mithyā*, we are negating the *mithyā* and appreciating the *satya*.

**WHAT IS MITHYĒ IS ALSO BRAHMAN**

Clay has varieties of forms. When you see that all the forms are *mithyā*, clay becomes *satya*. Similarly, when you see that all the *upādhis* and their attributes like hands, legs, eyes, ears etc., are all *mithyā*, the *vastu*, *Brahman* remains as the *satya* of this *mithyā* world. This is *na sat, na asat*. Even though what is *mithyā* is presented, because *mithyā* cannot exist without *satya*, *satya* is also revealed. Whatever is *mithyā* has its basis in what is real, its nature being such that it has to depend upon another thing for its being. By presenting the world as the *upādhi* of *Brahman* the existence of *Brahman* is presented. All the eyes and all the ears etc., being *Brahman* means that none of them is separate from *Brahman*, but at the same time, they are not the intrinsic *dharman* of *Brahman*. They are purely incidental *dharman* superimposed upon *Brahman*. Those who know the teaching tradition, *sampradāyavits*, say the same thing; *adhyāropa-apavādābhyāṃ niṣprapañcaṃ prapañcyate*, by the means of superimposition and negation, that which is free from this five-fold world, is revealed. All our hands, legs etc., are superimposed as though they are *Brahman's* qualities and then negated.

**IT SEEMS CONTRADICTORY**

Here, there is an apparent contradiction. *Brahman* was first presented as neither *sat* nor *asat*, which means, it has to be free from all attributes, *nirguṇa*. Any object, which you appreciate as 'is' must have attributes. If it is neither an existent nor a non-existent thing, we know that it is not zero because he has already said it is *jñeyaṃ brahma*. Thus we understand this is *ātmā*, which is free from attributes. Then he says this *Brahman* has all hands and legs, all eyes and ears, etc., and remains without motion in the form of the whole creation.

**THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION****THESE ARE LIṅGAS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF BRAHMAN**

*Śaṅkara* says, these are all *liṅgas*, indications for the existence of *Brahman* and its powers. The hands and legs are not mere limbs ornamenting the body. They enjoy certain powers and are meant for the sake of execution of certain tasks. So too, with the eyes, ears etc.; each of them has a certain power, *śakti*. In *Brahman*, the cause of everything, is a three-fold creative power of *māyā*—*jñāna-śakti*—the capacity to know, *icchā-śakti*—the capacity to desire—*kriyā-śakti*, the capacity to act, which manifests in the product, *kārya*. The hands are an expression of *kriyā-śakti*, the sense organs, that of *jñāna-śakti*. The very fact that we see these *śaktis* indicates that they exist in their cause. An effect must have the properties of the cause. If there is a live being, it is born of life. If it is a clay pot, it is produced from clay and has the properties of clay.

## EVERYTHING CAN BE REDUCED TO SATYAÊ BRAHMA

In the various instruments that everyone has, such as the mind, the senses, and the organs of action, all these powers are expressed and must necessarily be preceded by the powers obtaining in the cause. By the powers expressed by the eyes, ears etc., the powers in the cause are inferred. Therefore, *Brahman* that has these powers exists. If all hands, legs, etc., are *Brahman's*, *Brahman* exists not as any one object in the creation but as the whole creation. It pervades everything without moving. This is not pantheism wherein the cause becomes the effect. It is true that the whole creation is the Lord but the Lord is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* and therefore, free from all this. We do not say that the cause has become the world but that, there is no world separate from its cause. What we call the world is *mithyā*. When time-space is *mithyā*, where is the question of everything, that falls within the time-space framework, being anything but *mithyā*? For the word 'body,' for example, there is no particular object. The skin, flesh, nerves, bones, marrow, each has its own object. If you take away those objects there will be no physical body at all. Then each of these objects is also reducible to its own substance. If you analyse marrow, only the substance that constitutes marrow remains as *satya*. Everything will end up in particles, in concepts. What remains alone is *satya*.

What obtains at this moment when you see an object? For an object to be seen there must be a *vṛtti*, a thought, and there is a certain time involved for that *vṛtti* to occur and go. If you just look at the length of time of now, this moment, it reduces to no length of time at all. That is the truth. In between, certain things happen, and that we call *māyā*, the reality of which is *mithyā*.

The following verse makes this point clear.

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।

असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥१४॥

*sarvendriyaguṇābhāsaṃ sarvendriyavivarjitam*

*asaktaṃ sarvabhṛccaiva nirguṇaṃ guṇabhokṭṛ ca*

Verse 14

सर्वेन्द्रिय-गुणाभासम् *sarvendriya-guṇābhāsam* — appearing as the attributes of all the organs; सर्वेन्द्रिय-विवर्जितम् *sarvendriya-vivarjitam* — free from all the organs; असक्तम् *asaktaṃ* — unattached; सर्वभृत् च एव *sarvabhṛt ca eva* — and sustainer of all; निर्गुणम् *nirguṇam* — free from the (three) qualities; गुणभोक्तृ च *guṇabhokṭṛ ca* — and the experiencer of the three qualities

(That *Brahman*) appears as the attributes of all the organs, is free from all the organs, is unattached and is the sustainer of all, is free from the (three) qualities and is the experiencer of the (three) qualities.<sup>1</sup>

## **BRAHMAN APPEARS IN THE FORM OF ALL UPĒDHIS AND THEIR GUŪAS**

All the organs will include the *jñanendriyas*, sense organs and also *karmendriyas*, organs of action. We also include the *antaḥ-karaṇa* with its functions of mind and intellect because neither the sense organs nor the organs of action can function without it. The ears, and eyes, etc., become *upādhis* for you to gain perception, with the help of the *upādhi* of *antaḥ-karaṇa* alone. The conscious mind must first be there and that mind must identify with the senses before they can gain their individual capacities.

*Śaṅkara* mentions a few of these *guṇas*. The particular feature of the *buddhi* is ascertainment. Uncertainty, *saṅkalpa* and *vikalpa*, is the feature of the mind; the resolve following this uncertainty, the *nīścayātmikā antaḥ-karaṇa-vṛtti* is the *buddhi*. What shines, *avabhāsate*, in the form of the attributes or expressions of all these *indriyas* is *jñeyam brahma*, which has already been revealed as *ātmā*. Where is *Brahman*? In every expression of the eyes, ears etc., *Brahman* shines in that form. When you see, *Brahman* shines as the seeing function of the sense organ, eyes.

First it was said that *Brahman* appears as all the *upādhis* and here it is shown that it appears in the form of *upādhi-guṇas* also.

## **HOWEVER, IT IS FREE OF ALL OF THEM**

The difficulty now is, if *Brahman* is always expressed in these forms, if all these attributes are intrinsic to *Brahman*, and *ātmā* is *Brahman*, I can never shake off seeing or hearing or talking. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, *sarvendriya-vivarjitam*, free from all organs; it is free from all the senses, organs of action and the mind. That is why they are called *upādhis*. If a stone is naturally blue in colour then the blueness is not due to *upādhi*. But suppose it is a crystal near a blue object. Then that object is *upādhi* to the crystal accounting for its blue appearance. The attribute here is *upādhi*. *Brahman* appears with the attributes of all the *indriyas* and at the same time free from all the *indriyas* and their attributes. It is a paradox but the truth is such that it can be unfolded only in this form. If the *ātmā* is free from the body etc., how do I have a body? These paradoxes exist only when you do not understand. This is all explainable and once it is explained, there are no paradoxes. But these seeming paradoxes are important to reveal the nature of infinite *Brahman*, which is not subject to time and upon, which everything

<sup>1</sup> *sattva, rajas and tamas*

else depends for its existence. Firstly, by *adhyāropa*, by superimposing the attributes of all the organs, by saying *sarvendriya-guṇa-ābhāsam* and then, by negation, *apavāda*, showing that it is free from all organs, *sarvendriya-vivarjitam*, the truth of *Brahman* is revealed.

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SATYĀ AND MITHYĀ IS ALWAYS PARADOXICAL

Through the activities of all the *indriyas*, *Brahman*, which is inactive, is seemingly active. Elsewhere *śruti* says that *ātmā* ‘as though’ meditates, *dhyāyati iva*, and is ‘as though’ agitated, *lelāyati iva*.<sup>1</sup> Both are *mithyā*. This extends to all activities without exception. *Brahman* eats, as it were because it is ‘as though’ hungry. The paradoxes arise because the whole thing is the connection between *satya* and *mithyā*, where there is no possibility of connection. Though *ātmā* is not active, it appears to be active through the expressions of the sense organs, organs of action and the mind. These expressions are not possible without the presence of *ātmā*. That does not mean that there are two entities and that you have to transcend all these *indriyas* to get to the *ātmā*. *Ātmā* remains transcended in spite of being active. That is why it was presented as *ābhāsa*. It appears active in the form of the expressions of senses, mind etc. It appears active but is itself not active. The difference must be very clearly seen; otherwise we will have a duality of one entity, which is active and the other, which is not. These *indriyas* do not exist without the existence, *sattā*, of *ātmā*, and do not express without the consciousness, *caitanya*, of *ātmā*. The senses etc., partake of the consciousness, that is the *ātmā*, and the existence of any one of them is not away from the existence that is the *ātmā*.

*Śaṅkara* explains further that *Brahman*, which is *ātmā*, is not to be understood as always as that which has activities. If that were so, you could not stop the activities and still be. But you do stop and you also switch from one activity to another. That is possible because *ātmā* is not active. *Śruti* also says, ‘Without hands and feet (*ātmā*) runs and grasps, without eyes he sees, *apāṇipādo javano grahītā paśyatyacakṣuḥ*.’<sup>2</sup> That means, it is free from all the *upādhis* but always the expression is in keeping with the *upādhi*. With the hands it becomes ‘the one grasps,’ with the legs, ‘the one who walks,’ etc., with the ears ‘the one who hears.’ Thereby, the expressions *sarvendriya-guṇa-ābhāsam* and *sarvendriya-vivarjitam* are both perfect. There is no contradiction; but until the meaning is understood, there appears to be one. Because we are dealing with *satya* and *mithyā*, *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*, is to be done. From the standpoint of the *upādhi*, it performs all activities, from the standpoint of its *svarūpa*, it is free from movement.

<sup>1</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 4-3-7

<sup>2</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 3-19

When, what *śruti* says does not seem possible then, we have to see the context. We know that the sentence is meaningful because it is a statement of the *śruti*, so, it is just a question of correct understanding. If an intelligent person says, 'The white runs,' I cannot dismiss this statement as meaningless. By seeing the context I understand that he is saying that the white horse is running. His original statement is one of implication, a *lakṣaṇa-vākya*. We understand *sarvendriya-guṇa-ābhāsa* as a *lakṣana* for the *lakṣya*, which is *sarvendriya-vivarjita*.

### **BRAHMAN IS ASAKTA**

Because it is free from all *indriyas*, it is *asakta*, totally detached. You are not connected to your mind or senses, and therefore, are not connected to the world through the mind and senses. Physically you can attach one thing to the other, like a ring to a finger. Then, we have other forms of attachment to the world, like emotional attachments. These are inevitable in life. But if, without a particular object, life seems empty, we must understand that the object has become an obsession. First it is an acquaintance, then an object of friendship, then love, then obsession. Up to it being an object of love, we have no problem. It is the obsession that we call *saṃśleṣa*, attachment. We get attached to the world through the body, mind and senses, but *ātmā* is *sarvendriya-vivarjita*. Since it is free from all senses etc., it has no way of getting attached to anything. It is *asakta*.

### **EVEN THOUGH IT IS DETACHED, IT SUSTAINS EVERYTHING**

Though it is detached, it is attached to everything, *sarvabhṛt ca eva*, in that, it sustains everything, *sarvaṃ bibharti*, like the rope sustains the snake in the sense that without it, there is no snake. All *mithyā* is dependent upon *satya*. When the mind is functioning, consciousness is present there; so, it sustains the mind. It also sustains the senses and the whole creation, being the *adhiṣṭhāna*, the basis, for the entire creation.

Everything has its being in *sadātmā*, because in everything that you know, or do not know, there is the 'is' cognition. First 'is' is established and only then, can anything else be established. That 'is' is self-established, and everything else is only an object of cognition dependent upon that existence. *Śaṅkara* says that even an imagined thing, like mirage water, is not without basis. The snake that you see on the rope depends upon the rope in that, the existence of the rope is the existence of the snake. Thus, because everything is sustained, there must be a sustaining factor. That is *Brahman*.

### **BRAHMAN IS NIRGUṂA**

Now the problem that arises is that, since *māyā* has its basis in *Brahman*, and since *māyā* consists of the three *guṇas*, then, would not *Brahman* also have the three



*guṇas*? To negate this, he says, it is *nirguṇa*. With the *triguṇātmikā māyā*, *Brahman* is the cause of creation, no doubt. But the *svarūpa* of *Brahman* is *satyaṃ jñānam anantam*. *Māyā*, the modifying cause for the *mithyā* creation is also *mithyā* and thus *Brahman* remains free from all the *guṇas*, and is *nirguṇa*.

### AT THE SAME TIME IT IS GUṂA-BHOKTĪ

At the same time, *jñeyaṃ brahma* is the experiencer of the *guṇas*, *guṇa-bhoktr*. The three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, create different types of experiences through the organs of perception. *Sattva* can create some *sukha*, some pleasure or peace; *rajas* can account for all kinds of agitation and *tamas* for delusion and dullness. *Ātmā*, which is *jñeyaṃ brahma*, is the enjoyer of all the various modifications of the *guṇas*. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* cannot be enjoyed directly. It is their modifications that we enjoy. This means that we need not wait for *Brahman* to become something else in order to know it. Even when we are enjoying any particular experience, that experience is also *jñeyaṃ brahma*. It is because of *Brahman* alone that the experience is possible. Its existence is because of *sat*, the experience of it is *cit*, and any pleasure that is there is *ānanda*. Elsewhere it is said, *asti bhāti priyaṃ rūpaṃ nāma ca iti aṃśapañcakam...*<sup>1</sup> These are the five ‘parts’ of *Brahman*, it is *asti*, it is known *bhāti*, it is dear *priyam*, and there is a form and a name *rūpaṃ, nāma ca*.

### THE NĒMA-RĪPAS VARY BUT BRAHMAN IS INVARIABLE

There is nothing that is outside of this because everything is *Brahman*. The first three are invariable because they are the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*. The last two vary but the first three invariably inhere in them. A flower, for example, exists, is known, is loved and has a name and form. Even things that are not loved are *priya* because your aversion to them only reflects the fact that the absence of *ānanda* is against your nature. This *asti bhāti priyam* is common in all objects; what differs is the *nāma-rūpa* called *jagat*. It is, because of *sat*, known because of *cit*, and imbued with joy because of *ānanda*. Therefore, in any object, there is *sat-cit-ānanda*. You need not wait for *nirguṇaṃ brahma* to arise because you are not away from *Brahman*, the experiencer of all experiences. There is no transcending everything to experience *Brahman*. Whether you are *sukhī*, *duḥkhī* or anything, it is all *jñeyaṃ brahma*.

Here we have a number of seeming paradoxes. A logical paradox can exist only when we are dealing with two things of the same order of reality. Because these deal with *satya* and *mithyā*, they are not true paradoxes. We will see two more such paradoxes in the following verse.

<sup>1</sup> *Dṛgdrśyaviveka* – 20

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।

सूक्ष्मत्वात्तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत् ॥१५॥

*bahirantaśca bhūtānāmacaraṃ carameva ca*

*sūkṣmatvāttadavijñeyaṃ dūrasthaṃ cāntike ca tat*

Verse 15

बहिः *bahiḥ* — outside; अन्तः च *antaḥ ca* — and inside; भूतानाम् *bhūtānām* — of beings; अचरम् *acaram* — what does not move; चरम् एव च *caram eva ca* — and indeed what moves; सूक्ष्मत्वात् *sūkṣmatvāt* — because it is subtle; तत् अविज्ञेयम् *tat avijñeyam* — that is not known; च तत् *ca tat* — and that; दूरस्थम् *dūrastham* — (is) far; च अन्तिके *ca antike* — and near

And that (*jñeyaṃ brahma*) is outside and inside of the beings, it is that which does not move and indeed what moves. Because it is subtle, it is not known and it is far as well as near.

## **BRAHMAN IS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE**

Generally, if something is inside, that means, it is not outside. Here, the *jñeya-vastu*, the thing to be known, is both inside and outside. The terms inside and outside have no meaning unless you establish a reference. A car, for example, may be outside the house but inside the compound.

When he says that *jñeyaṃ brahma*, which is *ātmā*, is both inside and outside, with reference to what, is it inside and outside? *Śaṅkara*, very beautifully says here that, ‘outside’ is what is excluded from ‘I,’ keeping the body, up to the skin, as the limit. This is what anyone refers to, generally, when he says, something is outside of him. Keeping the physical body as the limit, what is inside, is *antaḥ*, the *prāṇamaya* etc. This is a set up for the *jīva* and the *jīva* takes his body with the skin as the outer limit as his ‘self-I,’ and everything outside of this limit as ‘not I-not self.’ *Brahman* as *jagat-kāraṇa* is thought to be outside the physical body of all beings, *bhūtānām bahiḥ*, i.e., the entire external world, known and unknown. But *Brahman* is not different from *ātmā*. Thus *Brahman*, the *caitanya-ātmā*, is both inside and outside. Being limitless and the cause of everything, as the rope is the cause for the snake, whatever is outside is *paraṃ brahma*, whatever is inside is also *paraṃ brahma*, giving its existence and consciousness to everything.

## **BRAHMAN IS BOTH CARA AND ACARA**

But the physical body itself has been omitted. By saying *acaraṃ carameva ca*, he covers everything. *Acara* is that which does not move volitionally, like the mountains etc. The whole cosmos is moving in fact, but the movement that is meant here is that

caused by volition. All the creatures, human beings and animals move, but not the trees. They do have a particular movement due to growth or the wind; but they are rooted in one place. Similarly, a river moves but we cannot say it is *cara*, because it does not move of its own volition; it is a mechanical movement. When a mosquito flies, however, this is *cara*. The physical body is also *cara* so, now, there is nothing left out. The *sūkṣma-śarīra* is identified with the physical body, and therefore, it is available for volitional motion. The dead physical body, however, becomes *acara*. As is said in *puruṣasūkta*, *puruṣa* indeed is all this, whatever was and whatever will be, *puruṣa eva idam sarvam yad bhūtaṃ yacca bhavyam*. There is nothing that can stand outside existence, *sat*. Once I say an object 'is,' that 'is' is *Brahman*. How does it exist? As a pot, as space, as time, as the sun, as the moon; this is a qualification, *nāma-rūpa*, which is superimposed upon *Brahman*, like the snake upon the rope, or the pot on the clay. The whole pot is nothing but clay, but then there is such a thing as *nāma-rūpa*. Similarly, the entire creation has its being in *sadātmā*, which is *satyaṃ brahma*. This is how *Brahman* is to be recognised.

### EVEN THEN BECAUSE IT IS SĪKĀMA, IT IS NOT KNOWN

*Śaṅkara* then raises the following question. When I see a clay pot, I see the pot as well as its cause, the clay. Here, however, I see only space, time, and various objects in the time-space framework; I don't see *Brahman* anywhere. If *Brahman* is everything as the cause of everything, how is it that I see everything except *Brahman*? *Śaṅkara* says that everything that is available for transaction is known. Then, why is this *Brahman* not understood by all? Because *Brahman* is not 'this-*idam*,' it is 'aham-'I,' as well as *idam*. But unless you understand the *aham*, you will not understand that *idam* also is *aham*. If *aham* is not understood, the body-mind-sense complex alone becomes *ātmā* and everything else will be opposed to it, distinct from it. Therefore, you have to count yourself as one among the many.

How will you understand? Because it is in the form of *aham*, *Kṛṣṇa* says, being subtle it is not known, *sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyam*. Among the elements, space is considered the most subtle because it has no particular form and has no parts. That is why it is all-pervasive and also not affected by anything. This *ātmā* is even subtler than space. There can be nothing more subtle than *ātmā*, which is pure consciousness, because of which everything is, and is recognised. When an object is known, it is *caitanya*, consciousness, plus name and form, *nāma-rūpa*. Where is *Brahman*? *Brahman* being *ātmā*, where is it not? It is everywhere.

## TO ASK, WHERE IS BRAHMAN? ONE SHOULD HAVE ALREADY CONCLUDED WHERE IT IS NOT

To ask, 'Where is *Brahman*?' one must have already concluded where it is not, that is, that it is not locally available. When that is so, I would ask 'What is *Brahman*?' If you understand that it is existence and the cause of everything, there is no question of 'where?' When every place is *Brahman*, where is the place that *Brahman* is not? It is something like asking 'Where is space?' Space is everywhere, it has no location, other than, as a concept in your consciousness. *Brahman* is your own self-evident *svarūpa*. But when you look for it, how will you recognise it? It is not an object, it is yourself, and it is all objects too. If you see something, that is *Brahman*. So is the sight and the seer. The *vṛtti* is *Brahman*, it is nothing but a name and form of consciousness. And the knower of this *vṛtti*, whose nature is nothing but consciousness, is also *Brahman*.

## IT IS BOTH FAR AND NEAR

Being the most subtle, it cannot be known, *avijñeya*, meaning you cannot know it as an object. It is yourself. It is far, *dūrastha*, if you look upon it as an object and near, *antike*, if you know, it is yourself. It is *dūrastha*, far, for the one who looks for *ātmā* as an object. *Śaṅkara* says, it is far because it is not recognised as yourself. When you do not recognise *Brahman* as yourself, how long will you look for it? If it is other than you, you may stumble upon it but what is the possibility of stumbling upon yourself? Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, even in one thousand crore<sup>1</sup> years, it is not gained. It is always far away, like the horizon. As you go towards it, you do not come any nearer to it. If you are a seeker of *Brahman*, you will be seeking forever because the notion that you are the seeker will never go. Whether you look for *Brahman* inside or outside yourself, you will not find *Brahman* because the one who looks for *Brahman* is *Brahman*. Thus, it is not only *dūrastha*, far, but *antike*, near, because it is *ātmā*. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, for the wise, 'I am all this,' and '*Brahman* is all this,' are the same thing.

This recognition has taken place, by a means of knowledge, the *śāstra-pramāṇa*. For the wise, *vidvān*, it is eternally known, because there is no question of memory being involved here, only the removal of ignorance. An equation like  $E = MC^2$  is a formula that you can always forget. But *satyaṃ jñānam anantam* is not a formula. It is yourself and your nature, *svarūpa*, which does not depend on memory, which has its very basis in that *svarūpa*. Only the removal of ignorance is involved. *Brahman* is not only the *ātmā* of the wise, it is the *ātmā* of the ignorant as well, and is therefore, the nearest even for him. But because of ignorance, it is far away. For the *vidvān*, there is nothing more near, for the *avidvān*, there is nothing farther away.

<sup>1</sup> A crore is ten million

How the same thing can be near and far away, at the same time, is illustrated in the following story. Two men were sharing a compartment on an overnight train journey. One had a lot of money and was counting it openly in the presence of the other one who resolved to steal it. The thief waited for the wealthy man to retire and then searched all his belongings but to no avail. In the morning, after returning from the bathroom he saw his fellow-traveller sitting on the bunk counting his money again. In frustration he asked him outright, where he had hidden his money during the night. The wealthy man responded ‘Under your pillow.’ For the thief the money was very near, *antike*, right under his own pillow, and yet it could not have been farther away, *dūrastha*, because he did not know it. Similarly, *Brahman* is the very nearest because it is yourself, and yet nothing can be further away, if you do not know it.

Further,

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम्।

भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च॥१६॥

*avibhaktaṃ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktamiva ca sthitam*

*bhūtabharṭṛ ca tajjñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca*

Verse 16

तत् ज्ञेयम् च *tat jñeyam ca* — and that is to be known; अविभक्तम् च *avibhaktam ca* — and undivided; भूतेषु *bhūteṣu* — in the beings and elements; विभक्तम् इव च *vibhaktam iva ca* — and seemingly divided; स्थितम् *sthitam* — remaining; भूतभर्तृ *bhūtabharṭṛ* — the sustainer of the beings; ग्रसिष्णु *grasiṣṇu* — the devourer; प्रभविष्णु च *prabhaviṣṇu ca* — and the creator

And that is to be known as the one who remains undivided in the beings and who is seemingly divided, who is the sustainer of the beings and elements, and who is the devourer and the creator.

## IT IS UNDIVIDED BUT LOOKS AS THOUGH DIVIDED

It is undivided in all the beings, like space. Even though space seems to be divided by the various conditioning factors like the walls of a room etc., it remains undivided, relatively all-pervasive. Then, it is seemingly divided because of the conditioning factors, *upādhis*. It is the ‘seemingly’ that makes the difference between knowledge and ignorance. If you say, ‘seemingly divided,’ you know; if you say ‘divided,’ you do not. This means that we need not remove any divisions that may be perceived, because there are no real divisions.

## IT IS THE CREATOR, SUSTAINER AND THE DESTROYER OF EVERYTHING

That *Brahman* is to be understood, *jñeya*, as the one who sustains everything, all beings and elements, *bhūtabhartr*. He is the devourer, *grasiṣṇu*, the one who can devour this entire world, meaning, at the time of dissolution everything goes back to this cause. Then again, he is the creator, *prabhaviṣṇu*, the one from whom all this comes forth. Not only is he the devourer and the creator but also the sustainer, *bhūtabhartr*. So, this *Brahman* that is to be known is *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Rudra*, being the cause out of which everything has come, by which everything is sustained, and unto which everything goes back.

*Jñeyaṃ brahma* is unfolded by these verses, which are very precise and complete. If you analyse them, you will see that the whole *śāstra* can be unfolded in these verses. The paradoxes reveal *satya* and *mithyā*, the content of *Vedānta*. These verses also determine the intention, *tātparya*, of the *Gītā*. *Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse with a question. If *Brahman* is available everywhere, in all situations, because there is no time, place, or object, which is away from *Brahman*, and yet it is not perceived, is it some kind of darkness, *tamas*?

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥१७॥

*jyotiṣāmapi tajjyotistamasah paramucyate*

*jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ jñānagamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam* Verse 17

तत् *tat* — that (*jñeyaṃ brahma*); — light; ज्योतिषाम् अपि ज्योतिः *jyotiṣām api jyotiḥ* — the light of lights; तमसः परम् *tamasah param* — beyond darkness (ignorance); उच्यते *ucyate* — is said; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — knowledge; ज्ञेयम् *jñeyam* — to be known; ज्ञानगम्यम् *jñānagamyam* — what is arrived at by knowledge; हृदि सर्वस्य *hṛdi sarvasya* — in the mind of all; विष्ठितम् *viṣṭhitam* — present

That (*jñeyaṃ brahma*), the light of lights, is said to be beyond ignorance. It is knowledge, it is that which has to be known, it is that which is arrived at by knowledge and it is present in the minds of all.

## ĪTMĒ IS THE LIGHT OF ALL LIGHTS

That *Brahman* that is to be known is the light of all lights, *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*. The sun, moon, stars and various other sources of light provide the basis for visual perception by the eyes. You cannot visually perceive an object unless, that object itself is a source of light or reflects light from another source. This situation, which we know is now

converted into an analogy to reveal the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. An opaque object cannot reveal itself. It requires a source of light. A source of light does not require another source of light to illumine it, so, visually we can perceive a source of light by itself. Even a glow-worm in the night reveals itself without the help of another light. Now, is a source of light self-revealing? If it is, it should reveal itself even if you close your eyes. But even the sun, such a powerful source of light, is not able to do that. No source of light is self-revealing. Then how do you arrive at its existence? Only by perception. It becomes an object, which is illumined by another source just as an opaque object is. What is that source? The light in your eyes. The source of light is illumined by the light in your eyes and therefore, is not self-evident. The eyes themselves are not self-evident because if they are not backed by the mind, they will not see anything. An inferred object like a particle also depends entirely upon your inferring mind. Then, what is self-evident? The mind is not self-luminous, because if it were, it would not be able to change and you would not be able to perceive any object. To see an object you must have a *vṛtti* in the form of the object. Therefore, the mind also has to be illumined by something else.

What is the final source, which is self-evident, self-effulgent, *svaprakāśa*? That can only be *ātmā*. That *jñeyam brahma* is the *ātmā*, which is of the nature of light. All other lights depend entirely upon it. 'The light within, the light without, the innermost light, which is beyond anything else, the light of lights, I am light, the self is light, I am *śiva*, *antarjyotiḥ bahirjyotiḥ pratyagjyotiḥ parāt paraḥ jyotirjyotiḥ ahaṃ jyotiḥ ātma-jyotiḥ śivo'smyaham.*' By repetition you come back to the same point again and again. That is *nididhyāsana*.

This is the light that is said to be beyond ignorance, *tamaśḥ param ucyaṭe*. *Tamas* is not darkness here. Light is the opposite of darkness; they are mutually exclusive. This light of consciousness, however, allows everything, including darkness, to exist. It is the light because of which you are aware of darkness. *Ātmajyotiḥ* is not opposed to ignorance, much less knowledge. It will illumine both knowledge of a pot and ignorance of the particles that constitute the clay. It is above the opposites, illumining and lending its existence to both. It illumines ignorance with the same efficiency as it illumines any *vṛtti* of knowledge. It does not stand opposed to anything. *Ātmā* is the seer that never wanes, *aluptadṛk*. Whether the mind goes to sleep, is dreaming, is bringing in a sound or a taste, it illumines. And when the subtle body leaves the physical body and also disintegrates; *ātmā* is ever illumining as pure consciousness. Therefore, it is the light of all lights that is above the darkness called ignorance.

That light is *jñāna*, which is above knowledge and ignorance, meaning pure consciousness. It is also *jñeya*, to be known as *paraṃ brahma*, the cause of everything. And it can be arrived at through knowledge, *jñāna-gamya*, consisting of the values and attitudes already mentioned together with *śāstra-pramāṇa*. Where can it be known? As

present in various forms, *viṣṭhita*, in the intellect, *hṛdi*, without being affected by any of the many things that take place, it remains as pure consciousness.

In order to sum up what has been said so far, there is the following verse.

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः ।

मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥१८॥

*iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ  
madbhakta etadvijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate*

*Verse 18*

इति क्षेत्रम् *iti kṣetram* — thus the *kṣetra*; तथा *tathā* — so too; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — (means of gaining) knowledge; ज्ञेयम् च *jñeyam ca* — and what is to be known; उक्तम् *uktam* — has been told; समासतः *samāsataḥ* — in brief; मद्भक्तः *madbhaktaḥ* — the one who is devoted to me; एतत् विज्ञाय *etat vijñāya* — knowing this clearly; मद्भावाय उपपद्यते *madbhāvāya upapadyate* — is fit to gain the condition of being me

Thus the *kṣetra*, so too, the (means of gaining) knowledge and what is to be known has been told in brief. The one who is devoted to Me, knowing this clearly, is fit to gain the condition of being Me.

Here, *Bhagavān* says that the following things have been told in brief, *samāsataḥ*. They are: the *kṣetra*, that was said to be consisting of the five elements, *ahaṅkāra*, *buddhi* and the unmanifest, *avyakta*, etc., extending to the entire creation; *jñāna* consisting of values like *amānitva*; and *jñeya*, that which is to be known; *param brahma*, which has no beginning and which is neither existent or non-existent. Here, he does not mention the *kṣetrajñā* separately because he has already established that it is identical to *jñeya*. Now *Śaṅkara* says that he is summing up in this verse, the meaning of the entire Veda and also of the *Gītā*.

## MY DEVOTEE IS QUALIFIED TO GAIN ME, SAYS BHAGAVĀN

For this vision of *jñeyam brahma*, who is qualified? *Madbhakta*, the one whose devotion or commitment is to 'Me,' *Paramēśvara* who is all-knowing and the ultimate *guru*. Because he is the initiator of this knowledge, he is the original and final *guru*. The one who has given his entire mind, senses, everything to the pursuit of the knowledge of *Bhagavān*, is called *madbhakta* by *Bhagavān*.

When you want everything, you have to give everything. That is how it is. Even in gambling, if you are very sure you are going to win, you will stake everything. But here, there is no gamble because what you have to accomplish is already an established fact. Therefore, there is no question of losing. Here, to the extent you give up, to that extent you gain in the sense, that the more contented you are, the more you are able to give up.



The more dissatisfied you are, the less you can give up. Here, giving up is really growing out of something, so that, every time you give up something you have grown out of it, and therefore, there is no loss involved. Generally, whatever is given up is not lost in the sense that it is subsumed in the knowledge of *satya* and *mithyā*. Thus, everything is given up and the one who is ready to give up everything in order to gain this knowledge, is called *madbhakta* by *Bhagavān*.

## BY OFFERING EVERYTHING UNTO BHAGAVĒN HE GAINS BHAGAVĒN

He offers everything to the Lord—whatever he sees, whatever he hears, whatever he touches etc. His mind is overwhelmed or pervaded by the appreciation that everything is *Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān* says that such a person, knowing this clearly, *etad vijñāya*, knowing this *jñeyam brahma* that was told in the previous verses, becomes fit to gain Myself—*madbhāvāya upapadyate*. *Madbhāva*, as said by *Bhagavān*, is being *paramātmā*, recognizing one's identity with *Īśvara*. This is accomplished by *madbhakta*, like the tenth man 'becoming' the tenth man, once he knows he is the tenth man.<sup>1</sup> In order to know *paramātmā*, you must have love for *paramātma-jñāna*. Everybody loves *ānanda*, which happens to be *ātmā* but in spite of this, rarely does one love *ātma-jñāna*. This is what distinguishes a person as a *jijñāsu*, and this is the *bhakta* meant here, who is much more than a simple *bhakta*, who appeals to *Bhagavān* to assist him in his pursuits within *saṁsāra*.

Comment: check out thisa crosreference

Love for the knowledge of the Lord, nothing less, is real love. That love for the knowledge of *paramātmā* is what takes you to *paramātmā* because already you are *paramātmā*. What else can take you to, what is disowned by ignorance, except the love of the knowledge of that? That love will bring in everything else, all the qualifications etc., necessary for the knowledge to take place. You are not going to take anything less, and therefore, you will create all the necessary conditions. That is love of knowledge. Even if someone loves an object in this world, he will cross mountains in order to get it. Naturally, once you have a love for this knowledge and know how precious it is, what will you not do to gain it? In fact the love for *jñāna* is so, great that nothing is really given up.

Useless things are left behind with a great relief, there is no sacrifice involved at all. It is an all-consuming love for knowledge and anything inimical to it just drops off. To such a person, this knowledge cannot be denied.

*Śaṅkara* connects the next verse with the previous section, reminding us of the two forms of *prakṛti*, *parā* and *aparā*, discussed in the seventh chapter. We saw that

<sup>1</sup> See pg no 121

together they account for the whole creation. In this chapter, the *kṣetrajñā-ātmā*, which is identical with *Brahman* is *parā prakṛti*, and *aparā prakṛti* is the *kṣetra*.

Now, the question is raised as to how are the *kṣetra* or *prakṛti* and *kṣetrajñā* or *puruṣa*, the two causes for everything? The following verses answer this question. If we take *Arjuna's* question into account, these verses answer what is *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, and in the process, explain a few things, which were not explained while dealing with the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*.

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि ।

विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसम्भवान् ।।१९।।

*prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ caiva vidhyanādī ubhāvapi*

*vikārāṃśca guṇāṃścaiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān*

Verse 19

प्रकृतिम् पुरुषम् च एव *prakṛtim puruṣam ca eva* — indeed *prakṛti* and indeed *puruṣa*; उभौ अपि *ubhau api* — both also; विद्धि *viddhi* — may you know; अनादी *anādī* — (are) beginningless; विद्धि *viddhi* — may you know; विकारान् च *vikārān ca* — and the modifications; गुणान् एव च *guṇān ca eva* — and indeed the qualities; प्रकृति-सम्भवान् *prakṛti-sambhavān* — are born of *prakṛti*

May you know that both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are indeed beginningless.  
And may you know that the modifications, and indeed the qualities are born of *prakṛti*.

## THE PRAKṚITI AND PURUṢA BECOME THE CAUSE FOR EVERYTHING

*Prakṛti* means that which is completely available for creation, *prakarṣena kṛti-yogyatvāt prakṛtiḥ*. Clay, for example, cannot be really said to be the *prakṛti* for earthenware. It is a cause, which has a certain potential. While it can be the cause for a pot, it cannot be the cause for a mirror. *Prakṛti* however, means that which has the potential to create everything, not alone, but with the *puruṣa*, which provides the very existence, *sattā*, of creation. Together, as *Īśvara*, these two are the causes. Though both have the status of being cause, *puruṣa* is the basis of *prakṛti*, *māyā*.

### BOTH ARE ANĒDI

Both, *Bhagavān* says here, are without beginning, *anādī ubhau*. *Puruṣa* has neither beginning nor end because it is not bound by time. *Prakṛti*, because it has its basis in, and is entirely dependent upon this *puruṣa*, also has no beginning. If *prakṛti*

had a beginning, prior to its beginning there would have been an absence of *prakṛti*. If that is so, out of what was *prakṛti* created? This leads us into an infinite regression and the impossibility of creation. Therefore, *prakṛti* is also *anādi*. From the standpoint of the creation, it is *mayā* accounting for the apparent, *mithyā* creation; and from the standpoint of the individual, we call it *avidyā*. When the dissolution of creation takes place, all that remains is *Brahman* with the unmanifest condition called *prakṛti*. Both are beginningless.

### THE PRAKṚTI CONFERS ON ĪŚVARA THE STATUS OF JAGAT-KĒRAŪATVA

What makes *Īśvara* the Lord is his status of being the twofold cause for the whole creation. If *Īśvara* is only *puruṣa*, the efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, and the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, *prakṛti*, is other than *Īśvara*, then, *Īśvara* is dependent upon another factor. We can no longer call him *Īśvara* because he has lost his status of being all-powerful and all-pervasive. *Īśvara* enjoys his status of being *Īśvara* because both *prakṛtis* are with him. The ultimate cause, giving existence, *sattā*, to everything and remaining unchanged, and the *māyā* that undergoes change, are both *Īśvara*. One, the *puruṣa*, being *caitanya-ātmā*, is the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. The other, *māyā*, is its *svabhāva*. You can also say *sat-cit-ānanda* is your *svarūpa*, and while being a doer, your *svabhāva* is that of an enjoyer. Because of these two *prakṛtis*, *Īśvara* becomes the cause for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world. Together they are the cause for *saṃsāra* and neither of them has a beginning.

### THIS IS NOT WHAT THE SĒ×KHYAS SAY

The *Sāṅkhya* will also say *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* account for the creation but in his view, *puruṣa* is the experiencer, *bhoktā* and *prakṛti* is the agent, *kartā*, which creates everything. They remain separate and both account for *saṃsāra* in that the *puruṣa* thinks he is the *kartā* while in fact, *prakṛti* is the *kartā*. For freedom from *saṃsāra* the *puruṣa* has to appreciate that he is only a *bhoktā*. According to him, *puruṣa* is *ātmā*, and is *asaṅga*. And there are many *ātmās*, each one different from the other. *Prakṛti*, the cause for creation, on the other hand, is one. Behind each *antaḥ-kāraṇa*, which is a product of *prakṛti* and is inert, is *ātmā*, which is conscious. In dissolution, the constituents of *prakṛti*, namely *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, are in equilibrium. When the time comes for creation, this equilibrium is disturbed.

The question is, who creates this disturbance? It cannot be *prakṛti* because it is inert; nor can it be *puruṣa* because he is *asaṅga*. And there is no other thing. Further, if *prakṛti* is *nitya* and it creates everything, once it is created, creation cannot dissolve. If it is dissolved, it will remain dissolved. Therefore, *mokṣa* is not possible. In fact, *mokṣa* is not necessary. *Prakṛti* is inert and does not require *mokṣa* and *puruṣa* is already eternal, *nitya*, and is free from any association— is *asaṅga*.

If however, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* both constitute *Īśvara*, there is no problem. That means you are *Īśvara* and the knowledge of that releases you from bondage. That is why the *śāstra* is meaningful. The *Sāṅkhya's* interpretation, however, is useless except as a sparring partner.

### THE JAGAT APPEARS TO BE MANIFOLD BECAUSE OF PRAKṚITI

#### THE PRAKṚITI HAS NO INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE

Then *Kṛṣṇa* says, we must know the various modifications, *vikāras*, and qualities, *guṇas*, arising from *prakṛti*, *prakṛti-sambhavān ca guṇān ca viddhi*. Later he will list some of these modifications like *buddhi*, sense organs, etc., and the *guṇas*, which express as various modes of the *antaḥ-kāraṇa* like pleasure, pain, delusion, etc. All of them, one must understand, are born of *prakṛti*. It is *Īśvara's* power to create, otherwise called *māyā*, which has inherent in it the qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This *māyā* is the cause for the various modifications like the body, etc., and the manifold expressions, like perception for the eye. They are all born from *Īśvara's prakṛti*. Lastly, *Śāṅkara* says, *prakṛti* is *Īśvara* as the material cause that modifies into the world, *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. *Puruṣa* is also the cause for the whole creation, but it is so, without itself undergoing any change—it is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. These two causes abide in *Īśvara* in that, *Īśvara* is *puruṣa*, and *prakṛti* is not separate from him. *Gītā* makes it clear here that it is *prakṛti* that undergoes change—*vikārāṅśca guṇāṅścaiva viddhi prakṛti sambhavān*, understand the *guṇas* and the modifications as those born of *prakṛti*. This *prakṛti* depends upon *puruṣa*, the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

Introducing the next verse, *Śāṅkara* asks, what are the modifications and qualities born of *prakṛti*?

कार्यकरणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।

पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥२०॥

*kāryakaraṇakartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate*

*puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānāṃ bhokṛtṛtve heturucyate*

Verse 20

कार्य-करण-कर्तृत्वे *kārya-karaṇa-kartṛtve* — in the creation of the physical body and the instruments; हेतुः *hetuḥ* — the cause; प्रकृतिः उच्यते *prakṛtiḥ ucyate* — is said to be *prakṛti*; सुख-दुःखानाम् *sukha-duḥkhānām* —of pleasure and pain; भोक्तृत्वे *bhokṛtṛtve* — in the state of being the experiencer; पुरुषः हेतुः उच्यते *puruṣaḥ hetuḥ ucyate* — *puruṣa* is said to be the cause

*Prakṛti* is said to be the cause in the creation of the physical body and the instruments, *puruṣa* is said to be the cause with reference to the state of being the experiencer of pleasure and pain.

#### THE PRAKṚITI IS THE CAUSE FOR THE PHYSICAL BODY

*Kārya* in general means effect but here, specifically, with the reading, *kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve*, it means the physical body. This includes the five elements out of which the body is made because they are also an effect and also the world of sense objects. These are all born of *prakṛti*. *Kāraṇas* are the sense organs, organs of action, the intellect, *ahaṅkāra* and memory. All these are instruments, *kāraṇas*, obtaining in the physical body. The various attributes, which, as we saw in the previous verse, such as pleasure, pain, delusion, etc., are expressions of the of mind, which is also a *kāraṇa*, an inner instrument and are therefore, included in this expression. The cause for the creation of all these is *prakṛti*.

A second reading for this verse is that *prakṛti* is said to be the cause in the creation of cause and effect, *kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve*. *Śaṅkara* defines the *kārya* as the modified form of the *kāraṇa*, just as clay is the *kāraṇa* for the *kārya*, pot. The cause-effect relationship as we know it, is a very fluid one. The same thing from one standpoint is a cause and from another is an effect, like clay from the standpoint of a pot is a cause but from the standpoint of particles is an effect. Here, he says that the cause, *hetu*, of the entire cause-effect world that we know is *prakṛti*.

#### THE PURUṢA IS THE CAUSE FOR JĪVA BEING AN ENJOYER

*Puruṣa*, on whom this *prakṛti* depends, is also not away from creation. Not only does he create, he enjoys. The *puruṣa*, the conscious being that obtains within *prakṛti*, beginning with the mind, is the cause for being an enjoyer of pleasure and pain, which are the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is the set-up and the one who enjoys the set-up is the *puruṣa*. *Śaṅkara* says, the *jīva*, *kṣetrajñā*, and *bhoktā* are all synonyms of *puruṣa*. Being an enjoyer implies being a knower too. The knower of this entire creation, the *puruṣa*, is the one who becomes the *kartā* and consequently the enjoyer. He is the one who becomes, in other words, seer, hearer, thinker, doubter etc. There is no *kartā* or *bhoktā* without the *puruṣa*, but as we have been seeing, the *puruṣa* exists independently of *kartā* or *bhoktā*. *Puruṣa* and *prakṛti* together are the cause of *saṃsāra*.

#### BUT FOR THE PRAKṚITI THERE WOULD BE NO SAṂSĀRA

*Śaṅkara* says here that if *prakṛti* has not modified to become the physical body, senses, world, the various attributes of the mind like pain and pleasure, and if there is no conscious being to experience all of them, there is no *saṃsāra* at all. That is why in sleep there is no experience of *saṃsāra*, and also why sleep is very inviting. If *prakṛti*

had not undergone these changes, there would be no world, no senses to report it. *Puruṣa* must also be there, otherwise there is no conscious being, but then, what kind of connection can there be between the two? The nature of the *puruṣa* is *asaṅgatva*, not being connected to anything. Between *puruṣa*, consciousness, and the mind, for example, what is the connection? A *vṛtti* in consciousness is like a whiff of cloud hanging in space. It leaves no trace upon consciousness but at the same time has no being of its own. Then again, the *vṛtti* is inert.

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PRAKĪTI AND PURUṢA IS MITHYĒ

Between the conscious *puruṣa* and the *vṛtti*, a modified form of inert *prakṛti*, what connection can there be? Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says that the connection is due to *avidyā* and is thus *mithyā*. The whole thing is superimposed. Because they are connected by *avidyā*, whatever happens in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* seems to be happening to me, and thus, there is *saṃsāra*. *Puruṣa* accounts for gaining the experience of knowing etc., and *prakṛti* accounts for what we experience. It is a perfect set up for a life of *saṃsāra*.

Now *Śaṅkara* asks another question. What is this so called *saṃsāra*? He describes it as the acute experience of *sukha-duḥkha*. The one who enjoys *saṃsāra* is called a *saṃsārī*, and therefore, it seems, the *puruṣa* becomes a *saṃsārī*. How does this *puruṣa* who is a conscious being, unconnected to anything, become a *saṃsārī*?

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान् गुणान् ।

कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥२१॥

*puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhukṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān*  
*kāraṇaṃ guṇasaṅgo'sya sadasadyonijanmasu*

Verse 21

हि *hi* — because; पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थः *puruṣaḥ prakṛtisthaḥ* — the *puruṣa* (enjoyer, *jīva*)<sup>1</sup> obtains in *prakṛti*; प्रकृतिजान् गुणान् *prakṛtijān guṇān* — the attributes born of *prakṛti*; भुङ्क्ते *bhukṅkte* — (he) enjoys; अस्य गुणसङ्गः *asya guṇasaṅgaḥ* — his attachment to the attributes; सद्-असद्-योनि-जन्मसु *sad-asad-yoni-janmasu* — for births in higher and lower wombs; कारणम् *kāraṇaṃ* — (is) the cause

<sup>1</sup> Here the word *puruṣa* refers to the *jīva* as *Śaṅkara* says:

पुरुषः, भोक्ता, प्रकृतिस्थः—प्रकृतौ अविद्यालक्षणायां कार्यकारणरूपेण परिणतायां स्थितः प्रकृतिस्थः—प्रकृतिम् आत्मभावेन गतः इत्येतत् । शा० भा० ॥

The *puruṣa*, the enjoyer obtains in the *prakṛti*, which is of the nature of ignorance and takes himself to be the (modification of the) *prakṛti*.

Because *puruṣa* (enjoyer, *jīva*) obtains in *prakṛti*, (he) enjoys the attributes born of *prakṛti*. His attachment to the attributes is the cause for births in higher and lower wombs.

### BECAUSE OF IGNORANCE, THE JĪVA BECOMES A SAĒSĒRĪ

The *puruṣa*, the *kṣetrajñā*, obtains in the *prakṛti*, which has undergone change to become the physical body, the sense organs and mind, and indeed the world. Just because he obtains in the *prakṛti*, he does not become a *saṁsārī*. For that, one must take the *prakṛti* as the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. Even though he is *asaṅga* and not really involved with anything, because of ignorance he identifies with the mind-sense-body complex and takes himself as the *bhoktā* and *kartā*. Then, because *prakṛti* has become the *ātmā* for him, he enjoys, *bhūṅkte*, the various conditions of the mind like *sukha-duḥkha*, that are born of *prakṛti*. He does not experience them as this happiness or this pain but as 'I am happy. I am in pain.' Because of an association due to *avidyā* alone, he takes the *sukha-duḥkha* experiences as himself. There are further delusions, Śaṅkara says, like, 'I am deluded, I am a scholar.'

The basic cause for these delusions is *avidyā*. But what is the immediate cause for assuming a particular incarnation? Why does this physical body have certain problems and not others? Why this parentage and not another? There must be some particular cause aside from the general cause of *avidyā*. There should be another level of cause-effect and that level is what is called *karma*. The unique set of causes, because of which a particular body is born, is called *yonī*. Some like the Gods, are born of pure *puṇya*, *sadyonī*, others, like the animals, of pure *pāpa*, *asadyonī*. A human being is born of a mixture of *puṇya* and *pāpa*, and thus, is *sad-asad-yonī*. Because of *puṇya*, a human being enjoys the faculty of choice. This is general. Then, there are other particular endowments and comforts that are accounted for by an individual's *puṇya*. The cause for these is his association with the *guṇas*.

### IGNORANCE IS THE CAUSE OF SAĒSĒRA

The root of this attachment to the *guṇas* is the notion that one is the body and because of that there is *kartrtva*. Then, because the *prakṛti-guṇas* are taken as oneself, the desire for *sukha* etc., is taken as oneself. In order to become a *sukhī*, there is already a conclusion that he is not a *sukhī*, and that conclusion is due to *avidyā*. He can act to accomplish this *sukha*, either in keeping with *dharma*, in which case he gathers *puṇya*, or by circumventing *dharma*, and thereby gathering *pāpa*. Either way, this *puṇya-pāpa* has to fructify, for which he must be born with another body. When he wants to become a *sukhī*, and avoid being a *duḥkhī* he has to do *karmas* and because of *karma-phala*, he gains births in higher and lower wombs, *sad-asad-yonī-janmasu*. Therefore, this wheel of *saṁsāra* continues and the cause for it is association with the *guṇas*,

*guṇasaṅga*. This has to be negated only by knowledge of *ātmā*, which is attended by dispassion, an objective evaluation of things.

Since the identification of the *puruṣa*, due to ignorance, with the modifications of the *guṇas*, is called *saṁsāra*, it is clear that *saṁsāra* does not belong to the *puruṣa* who is *ātmā*. *Prakṛti* cannot have *saṁsāra* because it has no *bhokṛtva*. Only *ātmā* can be a *bhoktā*, because it alone is conscious; but being *asaṅga* and *nirguṇa* how does *ātmā* become the *bhoktā* with reference to the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*? It is only because of identifying himself with them due to *avidyā*. The negation of *saṁsāra* takes place when this false identification resolves in the wake of knowledge.

## KNOWLEDGE OF THE PURUṢA FREES YOU FROM SAṂSĀRA

Therefore, knowledge of the *puruṣa* is necessary and that is given in this verse.

उपद्रष्टानुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः ।

परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः ॥२२॥

*upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ*  
*paramātmēti cāpyukto dehe'sminpuruṣaḥ paraḥ*

Verse 22

उपद्रष्टा *upadraṣṭā* — ultimate seer; अनुमन्ता *anumantā* — permitter; च भर्ता *ca bhartā* — sustainer; भोक्ता *bhoktā* — enjoyer; महेश्वरः *maheśvaraḥ* — limitless Lord (creator); परमात्मा च उक्तः इति *paramātmā ca uktaḥ iti* — and called 'limitless self'; देहे अस्मिन् अपि *dehe asmin api* — in this body also; पुरुषः *puruṣaḥ* — the person; परः *paraḥ* — limitless

The ultimate seer, permitter, sustainer, enjoyer, limitless Lord (creator), and also called 'limitless self,' is the person who is limitless, in this body.

This *puruṣa* is *upadraṣṭā*. A *draṣṭā* is a seer and the prefix *upa* means close, so, he is the seer who is close. *Śaṅkara* gives an example. In a ritual, there is a *yajamāna*, the one who is having the ritual done and who has some actions to carry out in the performance of the ritual. Then, there are the *ṛtviks*, the officiating priests who do the ritual. Besides these there is another person sitting there who knows exactly how the ritual is to be performed but does not do anything himself. Though he remains very close to all the activity, he does not perform any action. Similarly, the *puruṣa* is not active himself but in his presence all activities of the physical body, mind and senses take place. The prefix *upa* is important here because it indicates that *puruṣa* is never away. That is why, elsewhere it is called *śrotrasya śrotram*, ear of the ear etc. Its presence is there behind all the senses, organs of action, and the mind without itself performing any action. This is *ātmā*.



A second meaning for the word *upadraṣṭā* is the seer who is close in the sense of innermost. The physical body is a seer in the sense that the sense of touch pervades it and it can detect heat and cold etc. Similarly, the eye as a sense organ is a seer. The mind is the seer of the senses, without which they cannot function. But the one who sees the mind is the real seer, because of which the mind senses, etc., all see. That is the final seer beyond whom there is no seer and who is called *upadraṣṭā*. A third meaning is the one who lights up the knower, knowledge, and known, *jñātā*, *jñāna* and *jñeya*, because it is always near and at the same time, the seer of everything. All meanings are equally applicable.

*Anumantā* is the one who is the permitter, the one who approves. Whatever the mind does, *ātmā* is satisfied. Being fullness by nature, it never lacks and is always relaxed and happy, no matter what changes the mind is undergoing. Secondly, while *ātmā* performs no action, it is as though an accomplice to all the activities of the mind, senses and body because without *ātmā* none of them can be active. The third meaning given by Śaṅkara for *anumantā* is the one who supports all the activities of the body, mind and senses by lighting them up. It does not stand opposed to anything but is the great permitter, the one who does not resist at all. If the mind is restless *ātmā* will light up the restlessness. When the mind is pleased, it will light up the pleased mind. It is not against any condition because its nature is luminosity like the sun.

*Bhartā* is the one who sustains. The body, mind and senses exist and are conscious due to *ātmā*. The eyes function as instruments of sight and the ears as instruments of hearing because of *ātmā*. It gives existence not only to this body but to the entire *prakṛti*. That *prakṛti*, which is the cause of everything, is sustained by the *puruṣa* who is *caitanya-ātmā*. This consciousness is the sustainer of not only this body-mind-sense complex but of the entire creation.

*Bhoktā* means the one who finally enjoys everything, being the very *svarūpa* of the *bhoktā*. If *ahaṅkāra* is the *bhoktā*, *puruṣa* is the one that sustains that *bhoktā*. Another meaning is, the one who devours everything, *saṃharaṇa-kartā*. Everything is dissolved in deep sleep, except *puruṣa* and also at the dissolution of the entire creation, everything is resolved into the *puruṣa*. All the *nāma-rūpas* are resolved into the *prakṛti-upādhi*, which is rooted in the *puruṣa*. Therefore, *puruṣa* is called *bhoktā*, the devourer, *saṃharaṇa-kartā*.

*Maheśvaraḥ* is the one who is limitless and is *Īśvara*, *mahān ca asau īśvaraḥ*, in whose presence alone all activities take place. *Īśvara* is also the creator; thus the *puruṣa* with the *prakṛti* is not only the sustainer-*bhartā*, the dissolver-*saṃharaṇa-kartā* and the enjoyer-*bhoktā*, but also the creator of all this as the *nimitta-kāraṇa*.

In the *śruti*, this *puruṣa* is also called *paramātmā*, the one who is limitless and who is the self. *Kaivalyopaniṣad* says, 'Knowing *paramātmā* he becomes

*paramātmā*.<sup>1</sup> He is also the one who obtains in this physical body, *dehe asmin puruṣaḥ*, and is limitless, *para*, being the very basis of *prakṛti*. Being limitless there is only one self, not many in spite of the fact that there are many physical bodies. This *puruṣa* who is the sustainer, destroyer and creator of the entire creation is *paramātmā*. It is limitless and it is 'I.'

Thus *puruṣa* who is 'I,' the one who dwells in this body and is fullness, *pūrṇa*, is also the ultimate seer—*upadraṣṭā*, the great permitter—*anumantā*, and the sustainer, destroyer and creator of all this —*bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ*.

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह ।

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥२३॥

*ya evaṃ vetti puruṣaṃ prakṛtiṃ ca guṇaiḥ saha*  
*sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate*

Verse 23

यः *yaḥ* — the one who; पुरुषम् प्रकृतिम् च *puruṣam prakṛtim ca* — *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* गुणैः सह *guṇaiḥ saha* — along with its attributes; एवम् वेत्ति *evam vetti* — knows in this manner; सर्वथा *sarvathā* — in all ways; वर्तमानः अपि *vartamānaḥ api* — even though engaged; सः *saḥ* — he; भूयः *bhūyaḥ* — again; न अभिजायते *na abhijāyate* — is not born

The one who knows in this manner, *puruṣa*, and *prakṛti* along with its attributes, even though engaged in all ways, he is not born again.

## THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE PURUṢA AND PRAKṚTI IS NOT BORN AGAIN

The one who knows this *puruṣa* as just described is not reborn because he knows that *ātmā* is not subject to time. Generally, when one knows something, there is the object of knowing, *jñāna-karma* and the agent of knowing, *jñāna-kartā*. Whenever a verb is used, as it is here, there must be an action and if there is an action, there must be an agent. For that action, there will also necessarily be an object if the verb is transitive. The verb 'to know' is transitive and thus, there is the one who knows and the object of such knowledge. If one knows *ātmā*, does *ātmā* become an object of knowledge entirely different from the knower? If so, who is the knower? How can I be the knower when the object of my knowledge is myself? This is why, it is more accurate to say that with reference to *ātmā*, there is no ignorance, because knowledge of *ātmā* has removed that ignorance. Once the ignorance has gone, *ātmā* is revealed as *upadraṣṭā anumantā*

<sup>1</sup> *Kaivalyopaniṣad* – 27

*bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ paramātmā*. All these words are meaningful to me as the truth of myself.

Not only does he know the *puruṣa* in this way, he also knows *prakṛti*, along with its *guṇas*, properties. As we have seen, *prakṛti* accounts for the body-mind-sense complex, *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*. The one who knows *prakṛti* and its *guṇas* and knows *puruṣa* as *upadraṣṭā* etc., even though engaged in an activity, *sarvathā vartamānaḥ api*, is not born again, *na sa bhūyaḥ abhijāyate*. If he is a king, he may continue to rule, like *Janaka*; if he is a *sādhu* he may teach or not; if he is a *grhastha* he may remain with his family or walk out like *Yājñavalkya*. After gaining this knowledge, he may live any type of life but the *karmas* done in living that life do not touch him at all. Once his body has fallen, he does not assume a birth in another form because he knows that he has no form and is free from time.

### HE IS FREES FROM ALL KARMAS AND THEREFORE, IS NOT BORN AGAIN

While he remains in this body his *prārabdha-karma* takes over and whatever is there, will occur without any interference from his will. There is no *adrṣṭa-phala* of these actions for him because there is no agent performing the actions, to whom the results can accrue. The past accumulated *karmas*, *sañcita-karma*, have already gone with the negation of the *kartā*. All that remains is the *prārabdha-karma*, which will naturally get exhausted. The one who recognises that the nature of the *puruṣa*, the *ātmā*, is actionlessness and that the *prakṛti* performs action, is freed from all *karma* and therefore, has no rebirth.

### AN OBJECTION: THE SAŪCITA-KARMAS CANNOT BE DESTROYED THEREFORE, HE WILL BE BORN AGAIN

An argument can be put forth that before knowledge there was a good amount of *karma* gathered in this life for which he would have to take, if not many, at least one birth to exhaust. Then, there is the vast amount of *sañcita-karma* accumulated in countless prior births. These cannot be destroyed without fructifying because they have already been initiated. Once an action is performed there is bound to be a result. Even though he has knowledge, because of *prārabdha-karma* he continues to live. Extending the same logic to the *sañcita-karma* that he has already accumulated, should he not reap their results? What is the difference between his *prārabdha-karma*, which keeps him going and the other *karmas* that he did before? If the *prārabdha-karma* can keep his body going then, *sañcita-karma* should bring him a new body. Then again, whatever he did in this life before knowledge should be accounted for and even what he does after the knowledge will produce some result for which a birth is required.

**IF KARMA IS DESTROYED WITHOUT RESULTS WHY SHOULD ONE DO KARMA?**

If *karma* can be destroyed without producing a result, why should anyone do any *karma*? If you say that sometimes it produces a result and sometimes it destroys itself, that undermines belief in the *śāstra*, which says that for a specific *karma* there is a specific result. The *kartā* must necessarily believe that he will enjoy the *karma-phala* in order to have *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*. Further, the entire *karma-kāṇḍa-śāstra* would become useless if *karma* can be destroyed without producing a result.

**ANSWER: ĀĒSTRA ALONE IS THE PRAMĒŪA FOR THIS**

Our answer to this lies only in the *śāstra*. The very *śāstra* that tells us about unseen results in the form of *puṇya-pāpa* also says, ‘His *karmas* are destroyed in that vision of the limitless, *kṣīyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare.*’<sup>1</sup> And the *smṛti* says ‘The fire of knowledge destroys all *karmas*, *jñānāgniḥ bhasmasāt kurute.*’<sup>2</sup> Once he comes to know that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, all the *karmas* are destroyed and he is not reborn. *Śruti* also says, ‘The one who knows *Brahman* is *Brahman* itself, *brahma veda brahma eva bhavati.*’<sup>3</sup> Since *Brahman* is *nitya*, there is no possibility of being born for the one who knows this as the truth of himself because he is not within the scope of time. And it says ‘The knower of *Brahman* gains the limitless, *brahmavid āpnoti param.*’<sup>4</sup> Being limitless, he has no form that can take a birth, nor is there any place where he is not, to be born therein. The destruction of all *karmas* for the one who knows himself as *Brahman* is stated everywhere in the *śruti* and also here in the *Gītā*. When the *śāstra* says that, *sarva-karmāṇi*, all *karmas*, are destroyed, there is no reason to restrict the meaning to only the *karmas* done after knowledge. When there is no basis for restricting the meaning, *sarva-karmāṇi* means, literally, all *karmas*.

**KARMA-PHALAS ARE ONLY FOR THE KARTĒ**

Reasoning also supports this. All *karma* and *karma-phalas* are for the one who has ignorance. With that as a basis, there is a *kartā*, the *ahankāra*, who performs various *karmas* that are the causes for new births for him. Only for the one who has the notion, ‘I am the doer,’ do the *karmas* produce results in the form of a birth, and the experiences gained through that. But the *karmas* done without that notion do not produce any results. Such *karmas* can produce a *dr̥ṣṭa-phala*, an immediate seen result, but no unseen result, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, in the form of *puṇya-pāpa*. They have to accrue to the *kartā* and when that *kartā* is not there, there can be no *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Muṇḍkopaṇiṣad* – 2-2-8

<sup>2</sup> *Gītā* – 4-37

<sup>3</sup> *Muṇḍkopaṇiṣad* – 3-2-9

<sup>4</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-1

### SAŪCITA-KARMAS AND PRĒRABDHA-KARMAS ARE NOT SIMILAR

Further, he answers the argument that since *prārabdha-karma* is not destroyed because it has already begun, the *sañcita-karma*, which has also been initiated, would also not be destroyed. This physical body is like a released arrow. If the person becomes a *jñāni*, then, like an arrow that has already released, continues on its trajectory even though he has no identification with it. The human body is meant for *mokṣa*. Once that is achieved, how long it travels after that depends upon its momentum, the *karmas* that have brought this body into being. When that is exhausted, then alone it stops. Even though its purpose is accomplished and its existence is no longer really necessary, still, the *karma* that has brought the body into being will run its course because knowledge can only destroy an error, not an empirical reality. Knowledge that the sun does not rise does not destroy the perception of it rising in the eastern sky. It does, however, destroy any wrong conclusion born of ignorance. Nor will knowledge of a mirage destroy the appearance of the mirage because the causes for that belong to *Īśvara*. Knowledge need not destroy these appearances either because it has already destroyed their reality. They are recognised as being *mithyā*. Once the reality of the creation is destroyed, the reality of duality is destroyed. That does not mean the perception of duality is destroyed, nor does it need to be. If the duality were real, it could not be destroyed either. The so called duality is destroyed because the truth of the object known, *jñeya*, the instrument of knowledge, *jñāna*, and the knower, *jñātā*, are all revealed as one *paraṃ brahma*. All the three continue to exist but their reality, and hence the reality of their division, has been falsified. It does not and need not destroy the *jñātā*, *jñāna*, and the *jñeya*. This body, brought into being by *karma*, will continue as it was before knowledge, undergoing experiences until the force of that *karma* is exhausted.

What about *sañcita-karma*? That *karma* is in the name of the *kartā*, who has been dismissed by knowledge, and therefore, it has no place to which it can fasten itself. They are like the actions done in a dream. Once the person wakes up he is no longer accountable for them. *Śaṅkara* uses another example to illustrate this. Suppose an arrow is not released because the archer has lost interest in shooting. What will happen? The arrow has no more targets to reach. Similarly, these various *karmas*, which have their basis in the *kartā*, who is negated by knowledge, are also negated. They are rendered incapable of producing any birth etc. Therefore, when the physical body of the wise man falls, he is not reborn.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।

अन्ये साङ्ख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥२४॥

*dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecidātmānamātmanā*

*anye sāṅkhyena yogena karmayogena cāpare*

Verse 24

ध्यानेन *dhyānena* — by contemplation; आत्मनि *ātmani* — in the mind; पश्यन्ति केचित् *paśyanti kecit* — some see; आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — the self; आत्मना *ātmanā* — with self (the prepared mind); अन्ये *anye* — others; साङ्ख्येन योगेन *sāṅkhyena yogena* — by knowledge; च अपरे *ca apare* — and others; कर्म-योगेन *karma-yogena* — by *karma-yoga*

By contemplation in the mind some see the self with the self (the prepared mind), others by knowledge and others by *karma-yoga*.

## THE MEANS FOR MOKṢĀ

*Śaṅkara* introduces this verse saying that regarding the vision of *ātmā*, *ātma-darśane*, there are many optional methods and these are cited here. *Śaṅkara*'s use of the word *darśana*, vision, is important and deliberate. The context is a dialogue in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* between *Yājñavalkya* and his wife *Maitreyī*. He has decided to distribute his wealth to his two wives and live a life of *sannyāsa* for the purpose of gaining *mokṣa*. *Maitreyī* asked him whether with all the wealth he was leaving her, she could also gain *mokṣa*; and he responded that there was no hope of getting *mokṣa* by wealth. Then she asked him for the means for *mokṣa*.

## ĀRAVAŪA, MANANA AND NIDIDHYĒSANA

First, he makes her understand that love for anything is for one's own sake, and finally, it is the self that is the most beloved. Therefore, he tells her, 'Indeed, my dear, *ātmā* has to be seen, *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*.'<sup>1</sup> *Draṣṭavya*, it has to be seen, means, it has to be known clearly as if it were seen. For that what should be done? How am I to see myself? Since any known means of knowledge is inappropriate to know oneself, the knower, *Yājñavalkya* says, 'Indeed, my dear, *ātmā* has to be listened to, *ātmā vā are śrotavyaḥ*.' Listening, in the context, is inquiry into the *vedānta-śāstra* with the help of a teacher. Since I am here already, *ātmā* cannot be gained unless it is in terms of knowledge, and therefore, this *pramāṇa* is necessary. After listening, there can be doubts put forth by my own intellect or by others. A Buddhist will say that *ātmā* is *śūnya* and I have to see for myself, very intimately, how that is wrong; otherwise it is my doubt also. Anything that is said against the vision of the *śruti*, which I have to come to understand by proper *śravaṇa*, has to be very closely analysed and met with. Therefore, *Yājñavalkya* says 'Indeed, my dear, the self is to be reflected upon, *ātmā vā are mantavyaḥ*.' Then, even if everything is very clearly understood, the orientation that one is the body can still remain. This has been there for countless births, so that, even though I know that I am not the body, being hostage to the past, the orientation does not

<sup>1</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 2-4-5

immediately get corrected. This knowledge is what we call knowledge with obstructions, *sa-pratibandhaka-jñāna*. Therefore, I have to contemplate upon this *pratyagātmā* that was unfolded by the *śāstra*. *Yājñavalkya* says, ‘Indeed, my dear, the self is to be contemplated upon, *ātmā vā are nididhyāsitaḥ*.’ It is to be done purely for the sake of removal of obstructions. How long? How do you know when to stop eating? This is the same. It will stop itself, you need not exercise your will to stop it.

### SOME PEOPLE REQUIRE NIDIDHYĒSANA

This is the contemplation that is talked of in this verse when he says, ‘By contemplation some see the self, *dhyānena paśyanti kecid ātmānam*.’ Again the word ‘see,’ *paśyanti*, is used. Contemplation is specifically mentioned here because it is very rare for a *mumukṣu* not to require it. Every person has obstructions to knowledge and the majority have to spend time in contemplation upon *pratyagātmā* being *sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma*. *Śaṅkara* describes *nididhyāsana* here as resolving the sense organs from the sense objects into the mind, and the mind into *pratyagātmā*, which is nothing but consciousness, and dwelling upon that with a single-pointedness. That is *dhyāna*. As an illustration of how it is to be done, he says that one should meditate without moving from that which is contemplated upon, just as a crane with its beak in the water waiting for something to move, or like the mountains on the earth standing motionless, seems to meditate.

Dwelling upon *pratyagātmā* can be two-fold. As you see any object, either perceptually or in your mind, you turn your attention towards *pratyagātmā* who is *śākṣī*. This is *dṛṣya-anuviddha-savikalpa-dhyāna*. Then you bring in words that are true to the nature of *pratyagātmā*, like *caitanya*, *pūrṇa*, and see how meaningful they are for you. This is *śabda-anuviddha-savikalpa-dhyāna*. How I can be *pūrṇa*? If I am the body or a thought I cannot be *pūrṇa*. In order to meditate upon *ātmā*, you first have to know what *ātmā* is, and that knowledge is gained from the *śāstra*. Meditation will not reveal *ātmā* because the meditator is *ātmā*, and therefore, whatever you know about yourself will be the *ātmā* that is meditated upon. So, *śravaṇa* is not an option here at all. Because of that alone, these words are meaningful. We meditate purely for the removal of obstructions to our clear understanding of *śāstra*, and therefore, it is a part of *śravaṇa*. The *dhyāna* mentioned here is not *upāsana* or prayer. That is something entirely different and is meant for gaining a steadiness of mind and a certain grace. Because *Bhagavān* has said, ‘They see the self by the self (prepared mind), *ātmanā ātmānaṃ paśyanti*,’ *dhyāna* here is *nididhyāsana*.

If *dhyāna* is taken as *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*, then *Śaṅkara* says, it is like the flow of oil. As a ribbon of oil consistently flows from one vessel to the other, so too, in *dhyāna* there is the consistent undisturbed flow of the same *vṛtti* or *vṛttis* that belong to the same species, *sajātīya-vṛtti-pravāha*. This can be *japa* or any type of meditation

upon *Īśvara*. This is also *dhyāna*, and can precede *nididhyāsana*, if necessary, in order to steady the mind. Along with this, he continues to do *śravaṇa*.

*Ātmani* means, in the *buddhi*. There, they see the *pūrṇa-ātmā*, which means they recognise *ātmā* as being *pūrṇa*. By seeing one by one that it is free from any particular limitation—like being a seer, hearer, thinker, etc., free from all doership, enjoyership, etc., and is pure existence, pure consciousness, and limitlessness—they see the *pūrṇa-ātmā*. All this they see, as it was taught with a mind, *ātmanā*, that is well-prepared. *Ātmā* is not an object of the *buddhi* by its very nature, and therefore, cannot be seen as we literally understand it. All you have to do is, to negate all the notions about the *ātmā* and recognise the implied meaning, *lakṣyārtha*, of the words revealing the nature of *ātmā*. Thereby the notions of being limited, happy, sad, etc., are negated. In contemplation we bring in the opposite of these notions until they finally drop off.

#### IF ONE IS READY ONLY VICĀRA IS REQUIRED

If one is ready, only inquiry, *vicāra*, is required. Thus *Bhagavān* says, ‘Some see the self by knowledge... *ātmānaṃ paśyanti... kecit sāṅkhyena yogena*’ By *śravaṇa* alone they know the reality of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, and are liberated by that knowledge. They have no other problem.

Since *karma-yoga* is mentioned separately in this verse, we have to understand these people as *sannyāsīs* or qualified people who do not have any obstruction in gaining this knowledge. That means, there is discriminating capacity, *viveka*, dispassion or objectivity, *vairāgya*, and all the other qualifications like *śama*, *dama*, etc. Then you have an ideal situation for gaining this knowledge. All you have to do is *śravaṇa*. *Śaṅkara* says, such a person sees the self as eternal, distinct from the properties of the *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and in the form of a witness of their *kārya*. When he begins to yawn, he sees it as an effect of *tamas*, when he is agitated, that is *rajas* and when he is very appreciative or contemplative, it is *sattva*. Since these are seen by him, it is clear that he is distinct from all of them. *Ātmā* does not yawn, much less does it get agitated or become quiet. It is always quiet, in fact, it is free from any change. All the three *guṇas* are seen expressing as qualities of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Not only that, they account for the entire creation. The five gross elements, *pañca-bhūtas* are born of *tamas* of the subtle elements, which is why they are inert, *jaḍa*. The organs of action and the *prāṇa* are born of *rajas*; and organs of perception, *jñānendriyas* and *antaḥ-karaṇa* are born of *sattva*. Then, there are different *vṛttis* brought about by these *guṇas*. *Ātmā* is the witness of all these various products of the *guṇas*, which amounts to the entire creation. And it is *nitya*, which means it does not come into being. *Ātma-caitanya* is always a witness, *sākṣī*, with reference to something to be witnessed; in and of itself, it is of the nature of pure consciousness. And being distinct from all the *guṇas*, they do not bind him at all. This *viveka* is called *sāṅkhya*.



Since the next one is *karma-yoga*, this one and the one who must also do contemplation, *nididhyāsana*, should be taken as *sannyāsīs*. They have nothing else to do but *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. Among them are those who have obstructions, and those who do not. Those who have a strong orientation of being the body have to eliminate that obstruction in order to recognise this clearly, and therefore, they do *nididhyāsana*. Those who do not, need only inquiry, *śravaṇa* and *manana*.

### SOME REQUIRE KARMA-YŪGA

Then, there are those who require *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and for that the means is *karma-yoga*. They may also be doing *śravaṇa* and *manana* but in addition, they continue to perform *karma*, offering all their actions and the results of the actions to the Lord. How can *karma-yoga* be the means for seeing the *ātmā*? It helps to prepare the mind, so that in time they will see. *Karma-yoga* is not an alternative path. Those who do *karma-yoga* also have to pursue knowledge. That must be always emphasised. Their *karma* is an offering to *Īśvara* because it is not motivated by their own likes and dislikes but by the situation. Then, when the results come, they are received as coming from *Īśvara*. Thus, likes and dislikes get neutralised, and with their obstructions removed, knowledge takes place.

Both, the *sannyāsī* and the *karma-yogī*, have to understand the *śāstra*'s vision of *ātmā*, and both suffer from the orientation of being the body, which is the opposite of what they have understood, *viparīta-bhāvanā*. Therefore, there is no option in *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. The 'object' of seeing, *darśana*, is *ātmā*, whose nature is *sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma*. This can only be seen in the intellect as the content of every thought. As in all the notes of a flute, the sound of the flute is recognised, similarly in every *vṛtti*, you recognise *paramātmā*.

Because he says, they see, *paśyanti*, it implies that *paramātmā* itself is recognised by a *vṛtti*. But it is not like the *vṛtti* with, which a pot etc., is recognised. This *vṛtti* itself has no form, it is the *akhaṇḍa-ākara-vṛtti*, and thus, the content of this *vṛtti* can assume any form. Consciousness is present in every cognition, and if you see that this limitless consciousness is 'I,' that recognition eliminates all the limitations from consciousness. Having destroyed the ignorance with reference to *ātma-caitanya* being limitlessness, that *vṛtti* also goes away.

### THOSE WHO DO JUST WHAT THEY ARE TOLD, ĀRUTIPARĒYAŪĒĒ

Then, there are others who have no *viveka*. They do not know what is *ātmā* and *anātmā*, and when you try to teach them, they do not understand; yet they want *mokṣā*. For them, we advise various disciplines to prepare the mind. Those who follow such advice are called *śrutiparāyaṇas*, those whose commitment is to what they have been told. The teacher who gives the advice may be a great *vedāntī* but if he finds the student

does not have adequate intellectual discipline to understand the *śāstra*, he will advise him to study grammar or logic, and then teach him later. Or he may require some *upāsana* or *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* to steady his mind. This is told in the following verse.

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।

तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥२५॥

*anye tvevamaajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate*

*te'pi cātitarantyeva mrtyum śrutiparāyaṇāḥ*

Verse 25

अन्ये तु *anye tu* — but others; एवम् अजानन्तः *evam ajānantaḥ* — not knowing in this manner; अन्येभ्यः श्रुत्वा *anyebhyaḥ śrutvā* — having heard from others (their teachers); उपासते *upāsate* — follow; ते अपि च *te api ca* — and they also; श्रुतिपरायणाः *śrutiparāyaṇāḥ* — who are committed to what they have heard; मृत्युम् *mrtyum* — death; अतितरन्ति एव *atitaranti eva* — indeed cross

But others, not knowing in this manner, having heard from others (their teachers), being committed to what they have heard, follow, and indeed, they also cross death.

*Tu* is to distinguish this type from the three that were mentioned in the previous verse. They may be *karma-yogīs* or even *sannyāsīs* but the pursuit of knowledge is not possible for them. Since the pursuit of knowledge is necessary, how should you advise them in order to make them qualified to do *vicāra*? If they do not have the type of mind capable of enquiring into *ātma* and *anātmā*, they are advised to follow what they have heard from their teachers. Here ‘what they have heard’ should be taken as the advice of the teacher. Often, the advice may not seem to have any connection with *ātma-jñāna*. If he/she is asked to do a particular *āsana* daily, that may keep the body fit, but how, one may wonder, is it going to help the person in listening to *śāstra*? Or if one is put on a diet, or sent on a pilgrimage, or asked to do *pūjā* or *japa*, or *upāsana*. What has that got to do with *ātma-jñāna*? Generally, the seekers are advised to do *Gāyatrī-puraścaraṇa*, which is repetition of the *Gāyatrī-mantra* one lakh (100,000) times, the number of syllables in the *mantra*. In the *Gāyatrī-mantra*, there are 24 syllables, and thus, they repeat it twenty four lakh (24,00,000) times. Chanting daily four to five hours, one can complete it in two or three years.

Though the connection between this and *ātma-jñāna* is not obvious, they do it because they are committed to what they have heard from their teachers *śrutiparāyaṇāḥ*. In time, they acquire the necessary mental discipline, and the teacher begins teaching. Gaining knowledge, they also cross death—gain *mokṣa*. Because he has used the word ‘also,’ it implies how much more efficacious this is for those who have no obstacles. These are the discriminative ones who have no hindrance at all in understanding the *pramāṇa*. This connects to what he said in the beginning; ‘I will teach

you what is to be known, knowing, which you will gain immortality, *jñeyaṃ yat tat pravakṣyāmi yajñātvā amṛtam aśnute.* The knowledge that the *kṣetrajñā-ātmā* is in reality *Parameśvara*, releases you from death, and therefore, from birth—in other words, from *saṃsāra*.

How is that possible? By knowledge, some would argue, you can get bound. Before knowing something, you would not have had a desire for it, but once you come to know something very desirable, you can get completely obsessed by it. The argument is that knowledge is binding because it creates desires in you. Once you have desires, you have to fulfil them and in trying to fulfil them, there are always obstructions. To remove them, you may go against *dharma* and incur *pāpa*, the results of which have to be experienced. Therefore, how do you get liberated by knowledge? Knowledge is the basis for desire, and desire is the cause for the action, for which you must reap the result.

The next verse is to show the reason why, by the knowledge of the identity of *kṣetrajñā* and *Īśvara*, one gains *mokṣa*.

यावत्सञ्जायते किञ्चित्सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात्तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥२६॥

*yāvatsañjāyate kiñcitsattvaṃ sthāvarajaṅgamam*

*kṣetrakṣetrajñāsaṃyogāttadviddhi bharatarṣabha*

Verse 26

यावत् *yāvat* — as long as; किञ्चित् सत्त्वम् *kiñcit sattvaṃ* — any existent thing; स्थावरजङ्गमम् *sthāvarajaṅgamam* — mobile or immobile; सञ्जायते *sañjāyate*—is born; तत् विद्धि *tat viddhi* — that, may you know; क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञ-संयोगात् *kṣetra-kṣetrajñā-saṃyogāt* — because of the connection between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*; भरतर्षभ *bharatarṣabha* — *Arjuna* (foremost of the *Bharatas*)

As long as any existent thing, mobile or immobile, is born, that may you know, *Arjuna*, is because of the connection between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*.

As long as something that exists, whether mobile or immobile, is born, understand that birth is because of the connection between the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*. The separation, *viyoga*, between the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* is what is called *mokṣa*. How does this connection take place? The *kṣetrajñā* is *ātmā* and the *kṣetra* is *anātmā*. What kind of association is possible between *ātmā* and *anātmā*?

## SAĒYOGA BETWEEN THE KĀETRA AND KĀETRAJŌA IS NOT POSSIBLE

### THE KĀETRAJŌA IS PARTLESS AND NOT AVAILABLE FOR ANY CHANGE

*Śaṅkara* says, it cannot be an association like that between a rope and a pot, both of which have a definite form and have parts. A rope has two ends, which you can tie to the neck of the pot and thus bring them together. This kind of *saṁyoga* is not possible between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*, which part of the *kṣetrajñā*, which is pure formless consciousness, will you connect to the *kṣetra*? It would be like trying to attach space to an object. It cannot be done because it is free from parts. This kind of association of two different objects each having its own features is not possible for *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*. Nor can we say that there is an association like that between the cloth and the threads because the cloth is the thread. Similarly, there is no association between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* because essentially, they are not two different things. Nor does the *kṣetrajñā* undergo a change to become the *kṣetra* because it is not available for any change. If consciousness is blue, slowly it can turn into grey but consciousness is formless, and thus, has no features that it can change.

### THE KĀETRA IS THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE AND KĀETRAJŌA IS THE SUBJECT

#### THE APPARENT ASSOCIATION IS ONE OF SUPERIMPOSITION

Further, *kṣetra* is an object of your knowledge, and is inert; and the *kṣetrajñā* is the subject, *ātmā*, which is pure consciousness. Between them there is no possibility of a connection because, as *Śaṅkara* has said elsewhere, they are opposite in nature like light and darkness. Yet one is mistaken for the other and the properties of one are mistaken for the properties of the other. The *kṣetrajñā* and its nature are taken as the body, and the attributes of the body are taken for the *kṣetrajñā-ātmā*. This apparent association is one of superimposition, *adhyāsa*, due to *avidyā*. It is purely a false cognition. When you say, 'I am' meaning the body, the existence and consciousness of the body belong to *ātmā*. Then again, when you say, 'I am fat,' etc., the properties of the body are superimposed upon *ātmā*. This is all due to *adhyāsa*, the cause of which is the absence of discrimination between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*. That establishes the connection immediately. If there is no discriminative knowledge of an oyster shell, it is mistaken for a piece of silver. Similarly, a rope is mistaken for a snake. Two different objects, the rope and snake, have seemingly become one. How? By a connection, due only to superimposition. Similarly, the association of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* is in the form of *adhyāsa*, superimposition, characterised by false knowledge. It is born of ignorance.

### WITH THE HELP OF THE ĀĒSTRA ONE SEPARATES THE KĀETRA FROM THE

## KĀETRAJŌA

The *śāstra* reveals the nature of the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*, and with this knowledge, one is separated from the other. Previously, it was pointed out that the *kṣetra* is the body, the five elements, the *ahaṅkāra*, the organs of action, the sense organs, the sense objects, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, and so on. Anything other than the *kṣetrajñā ātmā* is called *kṣetra*. With the help of the *śāstra*, one separates *kṣetrajñā* from the *kṣetra*, like one separates the stalk from the sharp edged *muñjā* grass—with alertness and care. In any object, one component is *kṣetra*, another is *kṣetrajñā*. The name and form of the object are *kṣetra*, while its existence is *kṣetrajñā*. In the mind also, the *vṛtti* aspect is the *kṣetra*, and consciousness is myself, the *kṣetrajñā*, upon which the *vṛtti* is superimposed. Every moment the *kṣetrajñā* and the *kṣetra* are together and available, and therefore, have to be carefully separated.

*Kṣetrajñā* has to be recognised as *Brahman*, which is free from all the attributes of the *upādhi* and which was said to be neither an existent thing nor a non-existent thing but the basis of all concepts of existence and non-existence. The one who recognises this fact also recognises that the *kṣetra* is born of *māyā* and has no real existence, like a wooden elephant, *Śaṅkara* says. This is a famous example to illustrate *māyā*. While walking in the forest, a student saw a large elephant and cried out to his *guru* who was with him, expecting the *guru* to stop. But the *guru* kept walking, and walked right up to the elephant and started stroking it. Then the *guru* called to the student also to approach the elephant. Out of *śraddhā*, he went towards the elephant and upon coming near it, discovered that it was made of wood. In the knowledge of wood, the elephant disappeared. This is *mithyā*. An object seen in the dream, or a city that you see in the clouds, is also *mithyā*. Once you see the truth of it, it ceases to exist as a reality. It is not independently existent. If you analyse the physical body, it reduces from one thing to another and finally just melts away in your understanding, until all that is there is consciousness. The whole creation is the same. It has its being in consciousness, the *sadvastu*, alone. When you see the creation, the *sadvastu*, the *kṣetrajñā*, is there; but in the *kṣetrajñā* there is no creation.

For a person for whom this is very well ascertained, false knowledge, being opposed to this clear vision, goes away. He does not have the confusion of the *kṣetra* being *kṣetrajñā*, and the *kṣetrajñā* being *kṣetra*, and therefore, the cause for birth, which is the connection between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā* is gone. It was said before that the one who knows what is *puruṣa* and what is *prakṛti* along with its *guṇas* ... is not born again, *ya evaṃ vetti puruṣaṃ prakṛtiṃ ca guṇaiḥ saha... na sa bhūyo' bhijāyate*. He knows that *puruṣa* is *paraṃ brahma*. Everything is superimposed upon the *puruṣa*, which is *kṣetrajñā*, and there is no real connection, whatsoever, between it and the *kṣetra*, the *kṣetra* being *mithyā* while the *kṣetrajñā* is *satya*. For the person for

whom this is very clear, the cause for birth, which is false knowledge, is gone. He is released.

Because the cause for *saṁsāra* is the association, *saṁyoga*, between the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, the release from *saṁsāra* requires their disassociation, *viyoga*. Death cannot accomplish this because, in death, you are released, only from one aspect of the *kṣetra*, your physical body. There is no dissociation from the subtle body, and therefore, there will be rebirth. The dissociation of the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā* takes place only by the clear knowledge of *kṣetrajñā* and *kṣetra*. The result of this knowledge is the removal of ignorance and because false knowledge produced by that ignorance, also goes when its cause goes, *saṁsāra* goes away. This is *mokṣa*.

The vision of the person, who has this knowledge, is unfolded in the following verse.

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।

विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥२७॥

*samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram*  
*vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*

Verse 27

सर्वेषु भूतेषु *sarveṣu bhūteṣu* — in all beings; समम् *samaṁ* — the same; तिष्ठन्तम् *tiṣṭhantaṁ* — remaining; विनश्यत्सु *vinaśyatsu* — among the things that are perishing; अविनश्यन्तम् *avinaśyantaṁ* — as one who is not being destroyed; परमेश्वरम् *parameśvaram* — the Lord; यः पश्यति *yaḥ paśyati* — the one who sees; सः पश्यति *saḥ paśyati* — he sees

The one who sees the Lord, remaining the same in all beings, as the one who is not being destroyed, among the things that are perishing, he alone sees.

## THE ONE WHO SEES IS THE ONE WHO SEES

*Yaḥ paśyati saḥ paśyati*. ‘The one who sees is the one who sees,’ is an expression to indicate that he sees something different from what others see. What does he see? He sees *Parameśvara*, the one who is limitless, *param*, and the cause of everything, *Īśvara*, not an entity situated somewhere in particular but the one who abides as the same in all beings, *samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ*. In the very beginning of this chapter, *Bhagavān* said the same thing, *kṣetrajñāṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*. Here *sarvakṣetreṣu* is replaced by *sarvabhūteṣu* and *mām* by *parameśvaram*. The meaning is the same. The one who remains as *sama*, equal, without any attributes, in all beings, is the *Parameśvara* who is unfolded by the *śāstra*

as *satya*, that which exists and is the existence of everything in the form of *jñāna*, consciousness, which is *ananta*, limitless.

### IN ALL PERISHABLES HE IS THE IMPERISHABLE

Then again, among all these time-bound things that are continuously getting destroyed, *vinaśyatsu*, he remains as the one who does not die, *avinaśyat*. The body dies; the mind dies as the thoughts keep dying one after the other; the whole time-bound existent world dies. What does not die is *satya*. Only an object, *nāma-rūpa* dies away, not the existence that sustains both its presence and its absence. When a pot exists, it 'is'; when it is broken, the broken pot 'is.' That 'is' is existence, which is *Parameśvara*; it never goes away; it is always with one thing or the other. In the midst of all the things that get destroyed, that which remains not dying is *Parameśvara*. Not dying, includes all the changes, an existent thing undergoes, death being the last one. Any existent thing is born—*jāyate*, grows—*vardhate*, metamorphoses—*vipariṇamate*, declines—*apakṣīyate*, and finally dies—*vinaśyati*. The one that does not die among the dying, does not decline among the declining, does not metamorphose among the metamorphosing, does not grow among the growing, and among the things that are born is not born, but remains the same in all of them, not undergoing any change, is *Parameśvara*.

It is not another object that prevails as others keep perishing; but is like the water, which does not die among all the waves, which are born to grow and die. Similarly, among all these things, which are dying, *Parameśvara* is that which does not undergo any change whatsoever. It is not born assuming a particular form whereby it can be said that 'it is existent,' because it is always existent. It does not grow or metamorphose into something, nor does it decline to die away. It is free from all change because it is not time-bound. This is the very basis of time and all things in time. From the standpoint of creation, it is the cause, *jagat-kāraṇa*, which is limitless *ātmā*.

The one who sees this alone sees. The vision of others, *Śaṅkara* says, is like that of a person who has a cataract. Where there is one moon he will see two. Similarly here, because of ignorance, others see duality, which has no reality at all. Once there is duality he sees himself as one thing, and the world as another, and being such an insignificant creature in such a vast universe, he is on an endless pursuit to try and eradicate his sense of limitation through various accomplishments and acquisitions. The problem is, any accomplishment is limited, and is not going to remove his sense of limitation. That is possible only in seeing that he is the only one, the one who is the imperishable in the perishables, *vinaśyatsu avinaśyat*.

*Śaṅkara* introduces the next verse, saying that the clear vision of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, otherwise called *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, as it was just described, is to be praised by telling its result.

समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् ।

न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥२८॥

*samaṃ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitamīśvaram  
na hinastyātmanātmānaṃ tato yāti parāṃ gatim*

Verse 28

समम् *samaṃ* — the same; समवस्थितम् *samavasthitam* — the one who obtains in the same form; ईश्वरम् *īśvaram* — the Lord; सर्वत्र *sarvatra* — everywhere; पश्यन् हि *paśyan hi* — because of seeing; आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — himself; आत्मना *ātmanā* — by himself; न हिनस्ति *na hinasti* — he does not destroy; ततः *tataḥ* — therefore; याति *yāti* — he goes; पराम् गतिम् *parāṃ gatim* — to the ultimate end

Because of seeing the Lord as the same, the one who obtains in the same form everywhere, he does not destroy himself by himself. Therefore, he goes to the ultimate end.

## HE SEES ĪŚVARA WHO IS SAME IN EVERYTHING

In all beings, he sees *Īśvara*, the Lord, as the one who obtains very well, *samavasthitam*, *samyag avasthitam*, as the *ātmā*, and is therefore, in the same form, *samaṃ avasthitam*, in all beings. Without undergoing any change, *Īśvara*, the Lord of the entire creation, is recognised as the *ātmā* of all beings. Seeing this, he sees himself non-separate from *Īśvara*, and thus, does not destroy himself by himself. Because of that, he goes to the ultimate end, which is *mokṣa*. It is the ultimate end in the sense that it does not come to an end and there is no further end beyond that.

## HE DOES NOT DESTROY HIMSELF BY HIMSELF

*Śaṅkara* explains what is meant by saying that he does not destroy himself by himself. In the world, we see that nobody destroys himself by himself; so, what is the purpose of saying this here? Only when there is a possibility of something, is there a necessity to negate it. For example, there is no sentence in the Veda, saying not to drink fire. It will say, not to drink alcohol because there is a possibility of it but there is no necessity to prohibit the drinking of fire. Here *Śaṅkara* cites the *vākya*, *na pṛthivyām na antarikṣe agniḥ cetavyaḥ*. There is no prohibition for the sacrificial fire such as, ‘do not set the fire on earth, in space, in the sky, etc.,’ because the possibility for this is on earth alone, not elsewhere.

Similarly what is the necessity to say that he does not destroy himself by himself, unless others destroy themselves by themselves. What we see is just the opposite. Everybody wants to live. Even a person who commits suicide really wants to live but he cannot bear his unhappiness, and therefore, he puts an end to this body, thinking, that



will put an end to his sorrow. Everybody wants to live and live happily; nobody wants to destroy himself. When that is clear, what is the purpose of saying, 'He does not destroy himself by himself?' Śaṅkara answers that this is not a problem because it is proper to say that all those who are ignorant are completely indifferent to the *ātmā*, and therefore, are destroying themselves.

Everything else can stray from your sight but never *ātmā*; it is always self-evident and never becomes remote. In spite of it being eternally present, because he is ignorant, a person completely sets it aside, taking the *anātmā*, the body-mind-sense complex, as the *ātmā*. Naturally, he becomes the *kartā*, and therefore, a *bhoktā*. Being a frightened limited *kartā*, he is always doing both good and bad *karma*, and therefore, accumulating *puṇya* and *pāpa*. Once his life here is over, he has accomplished nothing, and therefore, has destroyed himself. Because of the *puṇya-pāpa* he assumes another body, which also he destroys in time.

In Tamil, there is a verse, which says that in this great beautiful park, the world, a beggar, the *jīva* went on asking the pot-maker, *Īśvara*, to make for him a pot, the human physical body. Because of his prayers he was given a good body, a vessel, which is meant to be filled with knowledge. He was so ecstatic about the pot that he put it on his head and began dancing. Naturally it fell down and broke. He did not fill it up with knowledge. Assuming new bodies, one after the other, the ignorant person keeps destroying them because of abuse of his free will, the very endowment, which can release him from *saṃsāra*. It is something like a person who is bound up in ropes, being given a knife, instead of cutting loose his bonds, he cuts his own throat. He destroys himself by himself. Even though *ātmā* is the absolute reality, the only thing that is, due to ignorance he is destroyed. This is because the result, *mokṣa*, that is already obtaining as centred on *ātmā*, himself, he has denied himself.

On the other hand, the one who has the clear vision of *ātmā* does not destroy himself. He has made use of his body and has not failed to recognise his identity with *Īśvara* and therefore, gains *mokṣa*.

## EACH INDIVIDUAL IS DIFFERENT, AN OBJECTION

Now an objection is raised that it is not proper to say that one recognises *ātmā* as the same in all beings because each person is different. Each one is a *kartā* and does his own actions, which produce their own unique results for him to enjoy as a *bhoktā*. Each one enjoys his own *karma-phala*, both past and present. There are numerous *kartās*, each one distinguished from the other by his own attributes of *puṇya-pāpa*. The following verse answers this objection.

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।

यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥२९॥

*prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ*  
*yaḥ paśyati tathātmānamakartāraṃ sa paśyati*

Verse 29

च *ca* — and; प्रकृत्या एव *prakṛtyā eva* — by *prakṛti* alone; सर्वशः *sarvaśaḥ* — in all ways; कर्माणि *karmāṇi* — actions; क्रियमाणानि *kriyamāṇāni* — are being performed; यः पश्यति *yaḥ paśyati* — he who sees; तथा *tathā* — so too (he sees); आत्मानम् *ātmānam* — the self; अकर्तारम् *akartāram* — as a non-doer; (च *ca* — and; यः पश्यति *yaḥ paśyati* — he who sees); सः पश्यति *saḥ paśyati* — he sees

And he who sees that by *prakṛti* alone, actions are being performed in all ways, and so too, (he who sees) the self as a non-doer, he alone sees.

## THE ONE WHO SEES ONESELF AS AKARTĒ ALONE SEES THE TRUTH

*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* says, ‘*māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ vidyāt māyinaṃ tu maheśvaram*—may one know *māyā* to be the cause, whereas the one who wields that *māyā* is *Īśvara*.’<sup>1</sup> *Māyā* is the material cause that undergoes change, *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. *Īśvara*, *Brahman* is the cause upon which this *māyā* is based and which undergoes no change at all, *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. By this *prakṛti* alone, *Bhagavān* says, actions are performed. By saying *eva*, alone, he emphasises that it is not by anything else. All the various *karmas*, both religious, *vaidika*, and secular, *laukika*, are being performed by *prakṛti* alone. And they are being done in various ways, i.e., by various organs of action. *Māyā* itself does not perform action but has undergone, change to become *hiraṇyagarbha*, the total subtle body, and *virāṭ*, the total physical body. At the individual level *prakṛti* has modified to become the physical body, senses and mind. Therefore, when a person performs any action, it is because of *caitanya*, consciousness, though consciousness itself performs no action. Because of the *puruṣa*, which remains in *prakṛti* without performing any action, *prakṛti* gets vivified and performs all actions. Thus, we have this peculiar connection, *saṃyoga*, which, as we saw before, is a superimposition, *adhyāsa*, due to *avidyā*.

Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says, the *karmas*, which are initiated by the organ of speech, the physical body sees that *ātmā*, the *puruṣa*, who is pure consciousness, does not perform any action. *Ātmā* remains independent of all the *upādhis*, meaning, their properties do not belong to *ātmā*. This one verse states clearly, all that has been said here. The one who sees this sees things as they are.

<sup>1</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 4-10

## THERE IS NO PRAMĒŪA TO SAY ĒTMĒS ARE MANY

*Śaṅkara* adds here that there is no means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, to show that there are different *ātmās*. There is no tenability of a *pramāṇa* for differences in a self that is not a doer and is without qualities and attributes, like space. Being free from any limbs it does not perform any action and being the same, non-dual there is no *pramāṇa* to establish differences in *ātmā*. Even your own perception denies this because what you can objectify is the body and you cannot say, 'I am the body and at the same time I am the one who is aware of the body.' On the contrary, *śāstra* says *ātmā* is witness consciousness. It is free from attributes. *Śākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca*.<sup>1</sup> And what the *śāstra* says cannot be denied because *ātmā* is you, self-evident pure consciousness. It is free from attributes and not an object but the essence, the subject of everything. An attribute is something because of which you recognise a substance and that which distinguishes one object from another. How can you distinguish *ātmā* from any object, when it has no attributes, and there is no object, which is separate from *ātmā*?

In different words he says the same thing in the next verse.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।

तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा ॥३०॥

*yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvamekasthamanupaśyati*

*tata eva ca vistāraṃ brahma sampadyate tadā*

Verse 30

यदा *yadā* —when; भूतपृथग्भावम् *bhūtapṛthagbhāvam* — the condition of distinction in the beings; एकस्थम् *ekastham* — as having its existence in one (*ātmā*); अनुपश्यति *anupaśyati* — one sees clearly; तदा *tadā* — then; ततः एव च *tataḥ eva ca* — and from that alone; विस्तारम् *vistāram* — its projection; ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते *brahma sampadyate* — he gains *Brahman*

When one sees clearly, the condition of distinction in the beings, as having its existence in one (*ātmā*), and from that alone is its projection, then he gains *Brahman*.

## ALL BEINGS EXIST IN ĒTMĒ ALONE

First *Bhagavān* said, 'The one who sees the *ātmā* as the same in all beings,' which means the immanence of *ātmā* is recognised. In this, the beings may be construed as separate from the *ātmā*, so, now he has to resolve that in order to show non-duality. Here he says that he also sees this duality of the beings, as having their being in the

<sup>1</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 6-11

*ātmā* alone. Once you say *ātmā* is one and the same, all the minds and senses etc., have their being in and are non-separate from that *ātmā*. The existence of each one of them is non-separate from the existence, which is *ātmā*; only *nāma-rūpa* is different. Every *nāma-rūpa* reduces to existence alone, and therefore, he says they all have their being in one *ātmā*.

*Anupaśyati* Means, he sees in keeping with the *śāstra* as taught by a teacher. He recognises himself being all, as it is revealed in the statements of *śruti* like, ‘the self indeed is all this —*ātmaiva idam sarvam*.’<sup>1</sup> That means, the status of existence for this entire creation consisting of varieties of things has its being in the *ātmā* alone.

Not only does it have its existence in *ātmā*, from that alone is its coming into being, its projection, *tataḥ vistāram*. Like pots have come from clay, all the *nāma-rūpas* have come from *ātmā* alone. All this creation blossoms forth from *ātmā*. Therefore, *ātmā* is not only the conscious intelligent cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, but also the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. Thus, all this is nothing but *ātmā*. *Śaṅkara* quotes a sentence here that says, from the *ātmā* is *prāṇa*, from the *ātmā* is hope, from the, *ātmā* is memory, ‘From the *ātmā* is space, from the *ātmā* is fire, from the *ātmā* is water, from the *ātmā* is coming into being and disappearance, from the *ātmā* is food—*ātmataḥ prāṇa ātmata āśā ātmata smara ātmata ākāśa ātmata teja ātmata āpa ātmata āvirbhāvatirobhāvātmatō’nnam*.’<sup>2</sup> In this way, everything is born of Me alone, has its being in Me and disappears into Me. There is no other *Īśvara* separate from me sitting somewhere and creating something.

When a person is able to see this clearly, he gains *Brahman*, *brahma sampadyate*, meaning he understands that he is *Brahman*. Seeing ‘Of me everything has come, I sustain everything existing in the form of everything, and everything resolves into me,’ is gaining *Brahman*. He does not become *Brahman* because even before knowing it, he was *Brahman*. That is why, knowledge is all that is required. Because he did not know that he is *Brahman*, *śruti* had to say, ‘You are *Brahman*.’ It did not say, ‘You will be *Brahman* later.’

It has been clearly shown that *ātmā* is one non-dual consciousness in all the *kṣetras*, and nothing is separate from *ātmā*, which obtains in all the bodies and all the bodies, are non-separate from *ātmā*. Then, by association, will *ātmā* not have the limitations of the body-mind-sense complex? In answer to this is the next verse.

अनादित्वाग्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः ।

शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥३१॥

<sup>1</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 7-25-2

<sup>2</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 7-26-1

*anāditvānnirguṇatvātparamātmāyamavyayaḥ*  
*śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate*

Verse 31

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* — O! *Kaunteya*; अयम् *ayam* — this; अव्ययः *avyayaḥ* — imperishable; परमात्मा *paramātmā* — limitless self; अनादित्वात् *anāditvāt* — being beginningless; निर्गुणत्वात् *nirguṇatvāt* — being without attributes; शरीरस्थः अपि *śarīrasthaḥ api* — even though obtaining in the body; न करोति *na karoti* — he does not do; न लिप्यते *na lipyate* — he is not affected

O! *Kaunteya*, being beginningless and without attributes, this limitless self is imperishable. Even though obtaining in the body, it does not perform action, and is not affected (by results of actions).

## ĀTMĒ HAS NO BEGINNING

A physical body is born, it has a beginning whereas *ātmā* is without a beginning, *anādi*, and therefore, does not have the problems inherent in something that begins. Anything that has a beginning declines and is destroyed; because if it has a beginning, it is subject-to time. What it was the previous moment is entirely different from what it is now; so, for anything subject to time, destruction is inevitable. *Ātmā*, however, is free from time. Or, *anādi* can mean it has no cause, since it is the cause of the entire creation. What is there in the beginning is the cause with reference to any creation. Before the creation of the pot, there was clay, and thus, clay is its cause. Similarly, before the creation was this *ātmā*, and thus, it is the cause that itself has no cause. That means it is not an effect, and therefore, is not born.

## IT HAS NO ATTRIBUTES

Then again, this limitless *caitanya-ātmā* has no attributes, *nirguṇa*. If it has any quality, then by contact it can become different. Milk, for example, has its own attributes and if you pour some water into it which also has its own attributes, the milk becomes thinned. Any object, which has an attribute, will change due to the attributes of another object, which is in conjunction with it. For that to happen, it must be a substance enjoying its own attributes. Then, because of association it will gather the attributes of the object with which it is associated. But first that nucleus, which is a substance with qualities is required. Now *ātmā* is entirely without attributes. Consciousness is not an attribute and neither is eternity. If consciousness were an attribute, there should be another substance in which consciousness is based. Is that substance consciousness or non-consciousness? If it is non-consciousness, consciousness cannot be its attribute. Moreover, anything you think of becomes an object of consciousness, and therefore, there cannot be a substantive, for which consciousness is an attribute. Nor is

consciousness a substantive because it is an attribute-free *vastu*. Everything else is an object, and therefore, has attributes. Even *māyā* has the attributes of the three *guṇas*, and therefore, is subject to change. *Ātma-caitanya*, on the other hand, has no attributes. *Māya* is also witnessed, *sākṣya* while *ātmā* is the witness, *sākṣi*. When even space cannot take on any attributes, how can consciousness, the very basis of space, assume attributes? Even though the mind is not separate from it, the problems of the mind cannot be transferred to the *ātmā*. Nor can those of the body, the senses or the world with its varieties of problems. There is no nucleus to attract them. Thus *ātmā* does not undergo any change. It is *avyaya*. If it were a substance with qualities, then those qualities could change. A body, for example, which was once young is now old because having attributes, it changes. *Ātmā*, having no attributes, does not change and can therefore, never be destroyed.

**THEREFORE, EVEN THOUGH PRESENT IN THE BODY, IT DOES  
NO ACTION  
IT IS NOT TOUCHED BY ANYTHING**

This being so, even though it obtains in the body, *ātmā* does not perform action, *śarīrastho'pi na karoti*. When everything is *ātmā*, why is it said that *ātmā* is obtaining in the body, *śarīrasthaḥ*? That is because the body is the place where *ātmā* can be recognised, the *upalabdhi-sthāna*. Generally, when action is performed by the body we think *ātmā* is engaged in action. This is an error, as we have seen. *Ātmā* is *akartā* and has no action whatsoever centred on it, though in its presence, all activities take place. Thus, even though it obtains in the body, it performs no action.

When it performs no action, it will not be affected by the result of action, *na lipyate*. It remains illumining the results of all actions. As a desire arises, *ātmā* illumines the desire, while having no desire itself, and it illumines the actions taken to fulfil the desire, all performed by the *upādhi* with the various instruments at its disposal. When the result comes, whether it is as expected or not, *ātmā* will just illumine it, not being affected at all.

*Śāṅkara* makes a statement here that the one who does an action is the one who is affected by its result. If you think you are a *kartā*, you are accountable for your actions and will have *puṇya-pāpa, sukha-duḥkha*, the entire *samsāra*. In other words, the doer is the enjoyer. In other words, as you sow, so shall you reap. Now when *ātmā* performs no action, the next question is, 'Who does this *karma*? Is there another *ātmā* that performs action while this one does not? If that is so, we have two *ātmās* and therefore, duality. Then the problem is, sentences like, 'Know me as the *kṣetrajña* in all *kṣetras, kṣetrajñam cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu*,'<sup>1</sup> 'One alone, non-dual,

<sup>1</sup> *Gītā* – 13-2

*ekamevādvitīyaṃ,*<sup>1</sup> ‘All this is this self, *idaṃ sarvaṃ yad ayam ātmā,*<sup>2</sup> ‘All this is indeed *Brahman*, *sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma,*<sup>3</sup> will have no meaning. Not only that, how are you going to establish a second *ātmā*? If there is a seeing *ātmā* and a *kartā ātmā*; in which one will you place ‘I’? Is the *kartā* known to you or not? If it is not known, how can you call yourself *kartā*? If you are aware of the *kartā*, how can you say the *kartā* is you? There is only one *ātmā* and that ‘I’ cannot be placed elsewhere except in consciousness.

The experience is, ‘I am the doer, I am the enjoyer,’ and *śāstra* confirms that the one who does is the one who enjoys the fruits of action. Now *ātmā* does not perform any action. But somebody is doing it. *Bhagavān* himself said it is the nature of *prakṛti* to engage itself in action, *svabhāvastu pravartate*. *Prakṛti*, blessed by *ātmā*, enjoys the consciousness that is reflected in the *buddhi*, and because of that, assumes the form of a desirer, and then a *kartā*. Therefore, clearly, doership belongs to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. When a person says, ‘I do,’ it is due to *avidyā*, ignorance, and that doership as well as the enjoyership is only for the ignorant person, not for the *ātmā*.

If *ātmā* is understood as *akartā*, he understands that he performs no action but the sense organs, mind, organs of action all do their jobs. If he is ignorant, they and their activities are superimposed upon the *ātmā* and he will think that he performs action and is affected by the result. In reality, there is only one *paramātmā* in which there is no action.

Those who understand this vision and have commitment in it, do not have notions of the *ātmā* being a doer and enjoyer, and therefore, have no qualification for action. Even though the Veda enjoins *karma*, it is only for the person who has ignorance, not the one who knows *ātmā* is *akartā*. Even if he performs action, he knows he does not perform any action, ‘Doing, he does not do, seeing, he does not see, hearing, he does not hear, *kurvannapi na karoti paśyan na paśyati śṛṇvan na śṛṇoti.*’ The results of such actions definitely do not affect the person who recognises the truth that *ātmā* is *akartā*.

The next verse illustrates how he does not act and is not affected.

यथा सर्वगतं सौक्ष्म्यादाकाशं नोपलिप्यते ।  
सर्वत्रावस्थितो देहे तथात्मा नोपलिप्यते ॥३२॥  
*yathā sarvagataṃ saukṣmyādākāśaṃ nopalipyate*  
*sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate*

Verse 32

<sup>1</sup> *Sad eva somyedam agra āsīd ekamevādvitīyaṃ.*

*Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 6-2-2

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 2-4-6

<sup>3</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 3-14-1

यथा *yathā* — just as; सर्वगतम् *sarvagatam* — all-pervasive; आकाशम् *ākāśam* — space; सौक्ष्म्यात् *saukṣmyāt* — being subtle; न उपलिप्यते *na upalipyate* — is not affected; तथा *tathā* — so too the self; सर्वत्र *sarvatra* — in all states; अवस्थितः — *avasthitaḥ* — abiding; देहे *dehe* — in the body; न उपलिप्यते *na upalipyate* — is not affected

Just as all-pervasive space, because it is subtle, is not affected, so too, the self, abiding in all states in the body is not affected.

### LIKE SPACE ĀTMĀ IS UNTOUCHED

Space being subtle, meaning it has no form, is not affected by anything that happens in it. You can erect walls, even throw debris, but space remains unstained. It has no limbs or attributes, and therefore, is not affected by anything that takes place within it. Having no form, it is also all-pervasive. Similarly, *ātmā* obtaining in the body in all states, is not affected. Whether the mind is pleased or displeased, has a longing or aversion, is angry or frustrated, the one who obtains in all these states, though never away from them, remains unaffected. There is no necessity for the mind to be quiet, or for thoughts to be dismissed, for *ātmā* to reveal itself. It obtains in all states, and at the same time, is not affected at all. You may have any thought; it makes no difference to *ātmā*. Therefore, no matter what the *upādhi* is undergoing, I am not affected. To illustrate how one *ātmā* can illumine all the *kṣetras*, *Bhagavān* gives the following verse.

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः ।

क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत ॥३३॥

*yathā prakāśayatyekah kṛtsnaṃ lokamimaṃ raviḥ*

*kṣetraṃ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṃ prakāśayati bhārata*

Verse 33

भारत *bhārata* — O! *Arjuna* यथा *yathā* — just as; एकः रविः *ekah raviḥ* — one sun; इमम् कृत्स्नम् लोकम् *imam kṛtsnam lokam* — this entire world; प्रकाशयति *prakāśayati* — illumines; तथा *tathā* — so too; क्षेत्री *kṣetrī* — the one who obtains in the *kṣetra*; कृत्स्नम् क्षेत्रम् *kṛtsnam kṣetram* — the entire *kṣetra*; प्रकाशयति *prakāśayati* — illumines

O! *Arjuna*, just as one sun illumines this entire world, so too the *kṣetrī* (*ātmā*), one who obtains in the *kṣetra*, illumines the entire *kṣetra*.



## LIKE THE SUN ĀTMĀ ILLUMINES THE ENTIRE KṢĒTRA

One sun alone illumines the entire system. Similarly, the *kṣetrī*, the one who obtains in the *kṣetra*, illumines the entire *kṣetra*. *Kṣetrī* is *ātmā*, the one for whom the body is a *kṣetra*. This *pratyagātmā* is *paramātmā*, illumining the entire *kṣetra*, which includes the mind, senses, body and this entire world. There is only one *ātmā* illumining all this. Anything that you consider to be a second *ātmā* is only the *kṣetra*. When you count another person what is it that you are really counting? It is only the body, not *ātmā*. *Ātmā* illumines not only this body but that body also. Then again, if you are aware of your mind, that is *kṣetra*, and if you are aware of someone else's mind, that is also *kṣetra*. In no instance do you objectify another consciousness because it cannot be objectified, in as much as, anything objectified is an object of consciousness; while the conscious is the who objectifies, and is always the subject. If you try to establish a difference between yourself and some person, the division between that body and your body is arrived at by space, and that space itself is objectified by both of you. More accurately, in consciousness is the objectification of space. Spatially there cannot be a division for consciousness because when space itself is an object of consciousness, how can it divide consciousness? All spatial divisions must exist within space, and consciousness is not within space, but is the very basis for space.

## THERE IS ONLY ONE CONSCIOUSNESS

The mind is also within time-space; there is no mind without a thought and there is no thought that does not have consciousness as its content. Then, all the elements are also from the same *caitanya-ātmā* alone, and are objectified by *caitanya*. Also, there is no second consciousness. There is no *pramāṇa* for it and *śāstra* also makes it very clear that there is only one consciousness, *ekaṃ caitanyam*. If you have any doubt, just close your eyes and see how many consciousnesses are there. Anything you think of is going to be an object of *caitanya*. Therefore, all that is there is one consciousness. Just as the sun illumines the entire world that is seen by you right now, so too the one who indwells the *kṣetra* illumines the entire *kṣetra*, all the subtle and gross elements, everything that is known and unknown. As there is only one self-luminous sun, there is only one self-effulgent *ātmā*. Then again, it is unaffected by whatever it illumines. If it illumines the *Gītā*, the sun does not become more exalted; and if it illumines Playboy, it does not shrink. Similarly, *ātmā* is not in any way affected by what it happens to illumine. Since it is not subject to objectification, nothing in this creation can affect the *ātmā*. In order for something to be affected, it has to be objectified by something else; and *ātmā* is the one that illumines everything, and which nothing else can illumine. Nothing can touch it.

This last verse sums up the entire vision that was unfolded by this chapter.

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेवमन्तरं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।

भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षं च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम् ॥३४॥

*kṣetrakṣetrajñāyorevamantaraṃ jñānacakṣuṣā*

*bhūtaprakṛtimokṣaṃ ca ye viduryānti te param*

Verse 34

ये *ye* — those who; एवम् *evam* — in this manner; क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञयोः *kṣetra-kṣetrajñayoḥ* — between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*; अन्तरम् *antaram* — the distinction; च *ca* — and; भूत-प्रकृति-मोक्षम् *bhūta-prakṛti-mokṣaṃ* — freedom from *prakṛti*, the cause of all beings; ज्ञानचक्षुषा *jñānacakṣuṣā* — through the eye of wisdom; विदुः *viduḥ* — know; ते परम् *param* — ultimate end; यान्ति *te yānti* — they go

Those who, in this manner, know the distinction between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā* through the eye of wisdom and (know) the freedom from *prakṛti*, the cause of the beings, they go to the ultimate end.

### THOSE WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KĀETRA AND KĀETRAJÑĀ REACH THE ULTIMATE END

The difference between the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* is to be known, *evam*, in the manner that has been shown in this chapter. This is important to note because everybody knows that *kṣetra* is the world and oneself is the knower of it, *kṣetrajñā*. This is not enough. When you say, 'I am *kṣetrajñā*,' this 'I' has to travel to *ātmā*, the one who has been shown to be the same in all the *kṣetras*, who is fullness, *pūrṇa*, and out of whom everything has come, the one that illumines everything and itself is free from everything. We have to know, in which way, *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* are non-different, and in which way they are different, as it has been shown in this chapter.

By what do they know? By the eye of knowledge, *jñāna-cakṣuṣā*. *Bhagavān* says, 'the eye of knowledge' because when you see something with your own eyes, your perception is considered final. Even in a court case, the report of an eye-witness is conclusive evidence. *Śaṅkara* defines *jñāna-cakṣu* as the cognition by which you recognise the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. How does it take place? He says, it is born of teaching, through the grace of the *śāstra* and the teacher. Through the teacher the *śāstra* becomes a *pramāṇa*, whereby you gain immediate recognition of *ātmā*. The grace of *Īśvara* is necessary for the teacher and student to come together; and then, the grace of the *śāstra*, teacher, yourself and *Īśvara* are necessary for you to be able to understand the meaning of the *śāstra*. That knowledge alone is *jñāna-cakṣu*. The eye is a good analogy here because like an eye that has a cataract, the mind also is covered by ignorance. The opening of the eye of wisdom is the removal of the cover of ignorance, which corrects the person's vision.

This vision must be complete, and that is pointed out here by saying that they gain release from the cause of all the beings and elements. For all the *bhūtas*, the *jīva*, the cause is *māyā* or *prakṛti* or *avidyā*—they are all synonymous. The cause for an individual to continue to be born again and again is *avidyā*. That means, even if the entire creation is dissolved, and all the *karmas* of the *jīvas* are unmanifest, there is no release from *saṃsāra*. That occurs only by *jñāna*. The knowledge of the difference between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* must be such that it releases one from the cause of the beings.

Those who know this, go to the ultimate end from which there is no return. Usually when you go somewhere, you come back or keep going. But *param* means that from which there is no coming back, or going elsewhere, and this can only be in the form of knowledge. Knowing that he is the *kṣetrajñā*, and that the *kṣetra* is non-separate from him, there is no question of his coming back. He does not take another birth. Living, he is liberated, which is what we are interested in, but then, he does not return, which means, from the standpoint of others, he is in the form of *Īśvara*, while from his own standpoint, there is only *param brahma*. All that he wanted to be, he is.

ओं तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे

श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञविभागयोगोनाम त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः ॥१३॥

*oṃ tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde kṣetrakṣetrajñāvibhāgayogo  
nāma trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ*

*Oṃ tat sat.* This indicates the end of the chapter. *Oṃ* means *Brahman*. *Tat sat*—that alone is truth. *Iti srimad-bhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu*, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is equivalent to *Upaniṣads*, because it is a work revealing the identity of *ātmā* and *Brahman*, *brahmavidyāyāṃ*, in this *brahmavidyā*, a *śāstra* whose subject matter is *brahmavidyā*...

And it is not only *brahmavidyā*, which deals with realities, it is a *yoga-śāstra*. It talks about the *antaḥ-karaṇa* and *karmas* etc., telling what one has to do for purification of the mind. And *dharma*, all disciplines, values, prayer etc., come under *yoga-śāstra*. In this *yoga-śāstra*...

And this was in form of a dialogue that took place between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* — *Kṛṣṇa-arjuna-saṃvāda*. In this dialogue, *Kṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde*, is this *trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ*, thirteenth chapter, dealing with the topic (*yoga*), of separation of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* or the discrimination between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*.

**ABABABABAB**



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