

Chapter XX

Krishna is the impartial witness; God is present in all, is all; Krishna gives Arjuna a vision of God; Arjuna asks whether worship of the form or formless is more pleasing to God.

The *Gita* clearly declares that only the heart-lotus that is free from impurities, that grows in the pellucid waters of the mind, is worthy to be offered to God. That is why Krishna told Arjuna, “My dear brother-in-law, whatever activity you are engaged in, whatever gift you give, whatever food you take, do it as a dedicated offering to Me. Do everything in the dedicatory spirit as a tribute to God, for only such acts reach Me. I have no special preference for any one Name; all Names are Mine. I know neither friend nor foe. I am the unaffected Witness. I reside with all who serve Me and derive joy from that service.”

This raised some doubts in Arjuna’s mind. He asked, “Krishna! You say that you do not make any distinction, that you have neither friend nor foe. Why then are some happy and others unhappy, some strong in body and mind and others weak and sickly, some poor and others rich? What is the reason behind all this? When you yourself are above any distinctions of such type, why can’t you keep all in the same condition? Observing facts as they are, it is difficult to believe that you look upon all without any partiality.”

Krishna laughed at this “doubt” that worried Arjuna! “I give expression only to truth. I do not ‘adjust’ My speech to your approval or disapproval; I am not elated when you approve or depressed when you disapprove. I am the same in all. But all are not the same in Me. You have observed that during the cold months villagers sit around a fire at night; but only those who sit near the fire get refreshed by the warmth. Those squatting far away have also to put up with the darkness. If people stay afar and complain that they don’t receive the warmth and that they have to suffer darkness, can you ascribe it to the partiality of fire? It is meaningless to argue from this that fire treats different people differently.

“The splendour of divine vision is akin to this. If you seek to earn it, you have to approach it and stay there. Everyone has equal right to do so and to feel the fire, so that it might illumine and warm even more. Fire is impartial; in deriving its benefit and in making it grow into greater and greater capacity, there are differences. I am splendour; I have no partiality at all. All have equal chance, opportunity, and authority to experience Me and derive bliss from Me. Distinctions and differences arise as a result of the faults of the spiritual aspirants. They are not blemishes in Me.”

Did you notice the loving words of Krishna? The shower of His Grace? How true His words are! Really, people do not understand the faults in themselves; they seek faults in others. If the Lord had faults, how could the world exist or survive? The Lord sees all as equal; His Heart embraces all in Love; that is why the world has at least this much peace and prosperity. The doctor may declare that the patient has no fever just to console the sick one, but the thermometer cannot lie. God knows and reacts to the inner feeling, not to appearance. He can never go wrong, nor can He be deceived. The world considers only the outward appearance; it is guided only by that. Wade in the river; only then can you know the depth of the water. Eat, if you must know the taste. When people pronounce judgement on the depth or the taste without wading or tasting, how can their declarations be taken as true?

If the Lord Himself was affected by partiality, how could He award the bliss of spiritual union to the cow-

herd maids of Brindavan? Would He have partaken of fruits partly eaten by Sabari? Could Janaka have become a knower of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnani*)? Could Nandanar have achieved the grand vision of the Lord? Could Prahlada and Vibhishana have approached the Lord? Would Hanuman have been accepted as the messenger of Rama? Could Valmiki have written the great epic, the *Ramayana*? Do these indicate any partiality in the composition of the Lord? Or do they prove that He has no such trait? These are examples of the Lord's love, His uniform kindness to all.

The Lord has commanded, “Keep your mind steadily on Me, be devoted sincerely to Me, prostrate before Me, offering all your thoughts, words, and deeds to Me, Love Me steadfastly (*Manmanaa bhava, madbhaktho madyaajee, maam namaskuru*)”. With these words, he has indicated that what He desires most in you are a “pure mind” and “untarnished love”.

When immersed in human-ness (*manava-thathwa*), you cannot attain God-ness (*Madhava-thathwa*). You have to attain God-ness to get God-hood. To see darkness, you must have only darkness; to see light, you should have light. To understand intelligence, you have to be intelligent. If you are constantly active about human things, how can you realize the glory of divinity? To become divine, you have to dwell in the memory of the divine, act divinely, behave divinely. The state, the environment, and the feeling—all must be coordinated for that one purpose. Only then can the principle be grasped.

It is on the basis of this truth that Krishna continued thus: “Arjuna! Spiritually wise ones (*jnani*s) are superior even to the gods, who in turn are superior to people; but these wise ones are also unable to grasp the full import of God. How then can ordinary people like you ever understand it?”

At this sly dig, Arjuna bent his head in shame. He said, “Yes, I agree. Krishna, You are beyond the grasp of anyone, however intelligent one may be. You are of endless manifoldness. I am convinced. You are the Universal Absolute, I know. I believe that you created the entire universe and that you are fostering it and presiding over both the evolution and involution of the worlds, that you are the Master of creation, preservation, and destruction or merging (*srishti, sthithi, laya*). You have told Me this yourself. I am ever grateful for this, and I am happy that I was considered worthy.

“But how, in what forms, are You immanent in the universe that You brought into being? I long to hear it from You and make myself worthier to be alive,” said Arjuna. “And which among these various forms am I to meditate upon? Tell me, so that I can meditate likewise and save myself,” he pleaded.

“A pretty small question, that!” said Krishna, with a smile. “Perhaps you felt that you can easily understand the answer, if given! Right. Since the question has been put, I shall melt a little and give the answer. Listen carefully. I am the inner *Atma* in the lotus heart of each and every being. So, if you believe and direct your life on the basis of the belief that the inner *Atma* in every being is My highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*), that is enough meditation for you. See that this belief is not shaken or overthrown; stick to it steadily, practise it, apply it in your thoughts, words, and deeds. Then the experience of One-ness, of your being Me and I being you, can be achieved.

“The five elements—earth, water, fire, wind, and sky—are also My forms. I am the activity in the sun, moon, and stars. When the great destruction comes, I am the force of destruction, and I am the force that constructs again. I am everything from the microscopic to the macroscopic; I am the past, present, and future. I am the three regions and the three characteristics (*gunas*) that have shaped people and nature. There is no object that is not I, no name that is not Mine. Blood taken from any part of the body is the same as from any other part; so

too, the Divine is everywhere the same.”

Then, Arjuna joined both his palms and with uplifted hands asked, “Krishna! The whole of creation is your form, isn’t it? Knowledge, wealth, power, strength, energy, splendour—all these are expressions of Your glory, aren’t they? Well, won’t You give me the sacred chance to fulfil my life’s desire to experience You as all this creation, as the form of creation Itself (*Viswa-rupa*)? I plead with you. I pray at Your Feet.”

Knowing the anguish of his heart, Krishna replied, “Arjuna! I shall certainly satisfy you. But your physical eyes cannot see that glory. The form of creation cannot be perceived by the limited vision, which sees and grasps only this nature. Therefore, I shall confer on you the supernatural eye. Now, see!” He said and manifested Himself before him as creation and more. What great mercy! What superb experience!

While at this point, there is one subtle detail that seekers have to note. The *Vedas*, scriptures, and epics, as well as many scholars and saints and others who have a right to speak about such matters, all describe God as present everywhere and as the inner reality in every being. On the basis of this, some people argue, “If he is so present everywhere and in everything, why is He not seen by everyone?” For all such, the reply is: how can the physical eye composed of the five elements see beyond the five?

Nothing can illumine an object that does not reflect light; but a flame illumines itself and sheds light all around. God is self-luminous; He illumines all. He is beyond nature, which is but a manifestation of His glory. So He can be seen only by the eye of wisdom, an eye that can be won only by His grace. Hence, worship of God is an essential part of spiritual discipline. He who fails in seeing himself can never succeed in seeing others, in seeing anything outside him. Engage yourself in spiritual discipline that will secure the grace of God; through that grace, the eye of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-nethra*) will be granted. He is easily reachable by the path of devotion.

While experiencing the vision of God in the universe and God as the universe, Arjuna was shedding tears of joy. “Oh, Almighty God! All the gods, Brahma the Creator, all the sages and saints, all the manifold beings and objects, movable and immovable: Oh, I see every one of these. I see all . . . Oh, from Your awe-inspiring face flames of splendour emerge and spread to farthest distances. How I wish I could know the meaning and purport of this formidable form!” Arjuna exclaimed.

“Did you see, Arjuna? Have you known by this that I am the Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer of all activity and of all beings and objects? Have you realized that you cannot save anyone on this battlefield, nor can you kill anyone? You have no power to kill; nor have they the power to die by their own efforts. Living and dying are both directed by My Will. I bear the burden of the earth; I create the burden; I relieve it,” said Krishna, fondly patting Arjuna on the back and speaking softly to assuage his ecstatic excitement.

This incident is a fine example to illustrate how God is bound by sincerity of devotion and how He bends to console and encourage His devotees. Just imagine! How could this Arjuna, who was so hesitating and nervous until he got ocular demonstration like an ordinary mortal, face and conquer mighty heroes and masters of all arts like Bhishma, Drona, and Karna? They were conquered by His will.

Arjuna wiped the tears from his eyes and folded his hands in prayer. “Oh Lord, I see the form of creation (*Viswa-rupa*), which I had never before seen or heard about, or even conceived. I realize that it is a factual truth. Those terrific flames of splendour are scorching me, my body is sizzling under the impact of that glory. Present Yourself before me, once again, with the sweet smiling form of Yours; I can no longer bear this vision. Father! Resume Your form, I cannot continue to look upon this,” pleaded Arjuna.

His grace made Him agree. He said, “Arjuna! You have just seen this universeful form of Mine, a vision that no height of *Vedic* scholarship or ritual asceticism or austerity can ever hope to win. This is achieved only by devotees whose devotion does not admit of the least distraction. Such devotees see only the Lord; whatever they do, they do as worship to the Lord. They have no other form before their eyes, no other thought in their minds, no other act for their hands. At all times and places, they see only My Form, they utter only My name; they think only about Me; they feel only for Me or about Me; they are active only for My sake. It is such, Oh Arjuna, that attain this vision. I, too, ask for only this: devotion that does not admit of the least distraction.”

Arjuna asked with a smile and a little tremor of the lips, “Lord! I realize that You are pleased with undeviating single-pointed devotion. But are you pleased with contemplation of You-with-form (*sa-aakaara-upasana*) or You-without-form (*nir-aakaara-upasana*)? Which melts You more and contributes to success in getting Your blessings? Which is easier for the spiritual aspirant and more welcomed by You? Please tell me.”

Krishna was happy that this question was asked. He said, “Arjuna! I do not make any distinction between the two. I am pleased however I am worshipped, provided the mind is saturated with Me and there is steady faith in every act, word, and thought.”

Arjuna intercepted with the query, “Krishna! Are mere purity of heart and steady faith enough? Do not sex or status as fixed by caste or the stage of life form obstacles to success?”

Krishna chided Arjuna and replied, “I am surprised that you should ask such questions after going through all this experience. Don’t you realize that for those who have fixed their minds on God, who have reposed in Me, the personification of truth, eternal and pure, there will not be one iota of ‘false identification of the self with the body’. If they still have awareness of sex or caste or stage of life with all the attendant pride, humility, etc., it only reveals that they have not surrendered their minds to God. For those who have rid themselves of attachment to the body, there will not be the distraction of caste, status, etc.

“But the codes of moral conduct prescribed for those in the four stages of life (student, householder, recluse, monk) and the codes of moral conduct for the castes do not hinder in any way the discipline of fixing the mind on God or of purifying the mind of evil or worshipping the Lord through all one’s actions, words, and thoughts. The distinctions of sex or caste or status or stage of life affect only those who live in the awareness of the body as reality and who act as if the world is absolute and eternal.”

At this, Arjuna said, “Krishna! The contemplation of the formless characteristic-less (*nir-guna nir-aakaara*) is very difficult for those who identify the Self with the body, isn’t it? The worship of the formful aspect of God, which is within the reach of the ordinary people, can it yield purity of mind, purity of the inner instruments of consciousness? Please enlighten me.”