

# **BHAGAVAD GITA**

**The Global Dharma  
for the Third Millennium**

## **Chapter Ten**

Translations and commentaries  
compiled by Parama Karuna Devi

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# Chapter 10: Vibhuti yoga

## The Yoga of powers

The word *vibhuti* contains many meanings, such as "powers", "opulences", "glories", "magic".

Every living being has some of such "magic powers" - a special ability, or strength, or beauty - but not everyone has the same powers, or a power to an absolute degree. Among the materially embodied beings, such powers are always conditioned by circumstances and exhausted when they are used.

Through the correct practice of *yoga*, a *sadhaka* can develop special *vibhutis* up to the level of *siddhi* ("perfection"), usually listed as being able to become extremely small (*anima siddhi*), extremely large (*mahima siddhi*), extremely light (*laghima siddhi*), reconfiguring the patterns of material atoms (*vasitva siddhi*), materializing things by attracting atoms from other places (*prapti siddhi*), controlling the minds of others (*isitva siddhi*), assuming any shape or form (*kamavasayita siddhi*), and manifesting all kinds of wonders (*prakamya siddhi*). Another of such powers consists in entering and controlling the body of another, living or dead (*parakaya pravesa*). Also, the knowledge of genuine *yoga* enables the serious *sadhaka* to control the material elements (such as fire, water, air etc), control the weather (call or dispel storms and lightning, bring or withhold rain, etc), travel in different dimensions and planets without any vehicle, call the dead back into their old body (usually temporarily), and so on.

In verse 7.25, Krishna, the original teacher of *yoga*, declared that the human-like body that he manifests in his adventures is fundamentally different from the material bodies of ordinary individuals, because it can take any form and intrinsically possesses all the qualities of mystic perfections (*siddhis*). He said, "I do not show myself to everyone, but I remain veiled by my own *yoga-maya*. Foolish people remain unable to understand that I am unborn and eternal."

In this chapter, Krishna elaborates more on this particular point, offering many examples, so that we can become able to really understand his supreme nature of Bhagavan, manifested by his *shaktis* particularly in this material universe, of which we all have some direct experience.

The *Bhagavad gita* is meant to instruct - through Arjuna - the people living in this world so that they will learn to know, worship and serve God and elevate themselves to the spiritual world. Therefore it offers terms of comparison chosen from the manifestations that we can find in this universe, but highlighting the fact that the divinity is not in the specific manifestations themselves, but rather in their characteristic of preeminence or superiority in respect to other things.

The word *bhagavan* - "having all *bhagas*" - is explained by Parasara Rishi as "perfect in the 6 opulences, that are beauty, fame, wealth, strength, knowledge and renunciation". In this sense, sometimes the definition is applied to great saintly Personalities that are representing God as his manifestations, *avatars*, or direct servants in the administration of the universe. These are called the *vaibhava prakasa* of God and include all the *avatars*, *amsas* etc.

The word *bhaga* also means "parts", as a synonym of *amsa*. In this sense, Bhagavan is he who possesses or emanates "parts" or secondary manifestations, and/ or has "quotas" of power. In *Bhakti*

*rasamrita sindhu*, Rupa Gosvami elaborates on this point, stating that Krishna is 100% Bhagavan, while Narayana is 94%, Shiva is 84% and all *jivatmas* - starting from Brahma downwards - are only up to 78% of Bhagavan.

Vaishnavas often quote verse 1.3.28 of *Bhagavata Purana* in this regard: *ete chamsa kalah pumsah krishnas tu bhagavan svayam*, "All these (*avataras*) are *amsas* and *kalas* (emanations and emanations of emanations), but Krishna is the supreme Bhagavan."

The measure of such "Godhead" is expressed in *bhagas*, or *vibhutis*.

But Krishna is not simply a greater and more powerful being, that excels the others in powers. God is supreme, but not simply because he is more powerful than anyone else in the universe: he is the very essence of supremeness, therefore his Personality cannot really be compared to other personalities. People who have not realized the meaning of transcendence (Brahman) remain unable to understand Paramatma, and it is totally impossible for them to even start to imagine what Bhagavan really is, so they simply project their own limited material concepts and they create a "God" that is in their likeness or image, and that agrees with their limited understanding. But that is not really God.

God is not merely an exceptional person: *he is the characteristic of exceptionality* that gives such powers to the individual souls. He is their transcendental DNA, so to speak: pure Consciousness that has the power to manifest any form and any opulence. And Krishna is the supreme "concentration" of such transcendental identity, from whom all other transcendental existences emanate.

In this chapter Krishna himself, on the specific request expressed by Arjuna, continues to describe how one should meditate on him as the Supreme Consciousness and the Sum total of all Reality,

source and foundation of everything that exists. Whatever is great, glorious, wonderful, beautiful, powerful, constitutes a prominent manifestation of the Supreme, for the very fact that it is supreme among all things.

This thread was started in chapter 7 and will culminate in chapter 11, where Krishna manifests the direct vision of the universal form of Consciousness as requested by Arjuna.

## VERSE 1

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

śrībhagavānuvāca ।

भूय एव महाबाहो शृणु मे परमं वचः ।

bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ ।

यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ॥ १०-१ ॥

yatte'haṁ prīyamaṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā ॥ 10-1 ॥

*sri*: the wonderful; *bhagavan*: Lord; *uvaca*: said; *bhuyah*: again; *eva*: certainly; *maha-baho*: with mighty arms; *srinu*: listen; *me*: to me; *paramam*: supreme; *vacah*: speech; *yat*: that (which); *te*: to you; *aham*: I; *priyamanaya*: considering you dear; *vakshyami*: I will tell; *hita-kamyaya*: for your benefit.

**The wonderful Lord said,**

**"O mighty armed Arjuna, listen to me. I will tell you the supreme explanation (about Transcendence). I will do this for you, because you are very dear to me/ it gives great pleasure to me."**

The expression *hita kamyaya* ("desiring the benefit") may be applied both to the benefit of Arjuna's understanding, or - at a deeper level - to the benefit of all those who will study *Bhagavad gita* in the future, including us.

Because Arjuna is very compassionate to conditioned souls, Krishna is offering him the opportunity to become the medium and cause for the distribution of such transcendental knowledge. This is confirmed by Adi Shankara (*avatara* of Shiva) in his *Gita mahatmya* ("Glorification of the *Bhagavad gita*") when he says, *sarvopanishado gavo dogdha gopala-nandanah, partho vatsah sudhir bhokta dugdham gitamritam mahat*, "Comparing all the *Upanishads* as a cow, Krishna the son of the cowherd chief is the milkman, Arjuna the son of Pritha is the calf, and the intelligent people will enjoy the great nectar of *Bhagavad gita* as the milk."

Arjuna is also Shiva's *avatara* and eternal companion of Krishna. This is confirmed in *Bhagavata Purana* for example in 4.1.59: *tav imau vai bhagavato harer amsav ihagatau, bhara vyayaya ca bhuvah, krishnau yadu-kurudvahau*, "That same Bhagavan Hari has appeared in a twin form together with his emanation, to alleviate the burden of the world, as the two Krishnas: the best of the Yadavas and the best of the Kurus." There are also other verses in *Bhagavata Purana* in this regard, that we will examine more thoroughly in the commentary to verse 10.37.

The word *priyamanaya* ("taking delight") further clarifies this point. It can apply both to Krishna and Arjuna, who are very compassionate and extremely pleased to deliver the transcendental science to the people in this world. This is certainly the highest

devotional service that one can render to God, and the greatest source of pleasure for the devotee as well, compared to which all the material pleasures of this world simply become dim and disappear.

The expression *bhuyah eva* ("yet again") refers to the fact that Krishna has already presented a similar description, starting from chapter 7, where he stated, *mattah parataram nanyat*, "there is nothing superior to me" (7.7).

Krishna describes these examples as *paramam vacah*, "the supreme explanation", or "the supreme teachings", although they do not describe his human-like form of the Vrindavana lila. After clearly saying that a devotee should worship him only in his *tad rupa* ("direct form"), Krishna is here describing his *vibhutip* as a higher instruction, because we need to understand very clearly that God is never cheap.

## VERSE 2

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।

na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na maharṣayaḥ ।

अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥ १०-२ ॥

ahamādirhi devānām maharṣīṇām ca sarvaśaḥ ॥ 10-2 ॥

*na*: not; *me*: me; *viduḥ*: (they) know; *sura-gaṇaḥ*: the hosts of *devas*; *prabhavam*: the manifestation; *na*: not; *maharshayah*: the great Rishis; *aham*: I; *adīh*: the origin; *hi*: certainly; *devanam*: of the *devas*; *maharshinam*: of the great Rishis; *ca*: and; *sarvasaḥ*: in everything.

**"Not even the Devas and the great Rishis are able to ascertain my origin, because I am the origin of everything, including the Devas and the Rishis."**

This verse is confirmed by the first text of *Bhagavata Purana* (1.1.1):

*janmady asya yato 'nvayad itaratas carthesv abhijnah svarat  
tene brahma hrda ya adi kavaye muhyanti yat surayah  
tejo vari mrdam yatha vinimayo yatra tri sargo 'mr  
sa dhamna svena sada nirasta kuhakam satyam param dhimahi*

"I offer my respect to Bhagavan Vasudeva, from whom the creation/ birth etc of this (universe, body, manifestation) proceeds. He is fully independent, fully conscious of purpose, directly and indirectly. He inspired *brahman* (Vedic knowledge) in the heart of the first poet (Brahma). His nature/ existence/ energy of illusion overpowers even the *suras* (*devas* and *rishis*), (just like) with the optical illusions created by heat, water and earth. In this way by action and reaction he always manifests himself as the 'almost reality' of the three creations and all their objects/ places of existence. I meditate on (him), the supreme truth, always self-sufficient, of whom illusion is just the absence of perception."

The *devas* and the *rishis* mentioned in this verse are the most advanced beings in the universe, as they constitute the highest concentration of consciousness/ awareness that can be attained by an individual soul. All the *jivatmas* start from the same basic level as *anu atmas* ("atomic souls") and then develop gradually through the cultivation of knowledge and consciousness. As their level of consciousness and knowledge rises, they are able to build and manage more and more sophisticated bodies, endowed with greater powers (*vibhutis* or *bhagas*). In all the original cultures of the world, such greatly evolved beings are called Gods and worshiped or honored in some religious rituals.

Human beings who have a lower level of personal development and understanding are only able to see such Gods in their individual forms, as greatly powerful beings and even personifications of the powers of nature, or teachers and well wishers capable of granting various types of blessings. However, the more one associates with such great beings, the more one develops the same qualities and tendencies (*guna* and *karma*), and at some point in our eyes the Gods even become models and ideals to be followed, and then we become able to see them as manifestations of a greater and more transcendental Reality - Consciousness, the origin and container of all *vibhūtis*.

When Krishna says *na te viduh*, "they do not know", obviously he is meaning that *devas* and *rishis* cannot know him *fully* - they cannot perceive his origin, because he is beyond time and space - but they do know him at least partially, and that is why they worship him as their supreme Self. This is why in verse 10.14 Arjuna will declare that the word of the Rishis and the Devas about God is the most authoritative.

From the level of transcendental Brahman realization, genuine *bhakti* can really develop (18.54), because we can really know Krishna "in truth" (*janma karma ca me divyah... vetti tattvatah*, 4.9) and not as some folkloristic mythological fairy tale.

Krishna had already explained his transcendental identity and nature of pure Consciousness in verse 4.6: *ajo 'pi sann avyayatma, bhutanam isvaro 'pi san, prakritim svam adhisthaya, sambhavamy atma mayaya*, "Although I am unborn and imperishable, and although I am the Supreme Lord of the creatures/ states of being, I am present in/ I control this *prakriti* that belongs to me, and I manifest myself out of my own power".

He will reiterate it in verse 10.8: *aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate*, "I am the existence of everything, and from me

everything emanates". Krishna is thus the origin and foundation of everything: he is Existence and Reality himself.

The "great *rishis*" mentioned in the verse are a category to which the most evolved personalities among the sages can be added. The *sapta rishis* ("seven *rishis*") that inhabit the higher planetary system also known as the Great Dipper are chosen among the famous Angirasa, Bhrigu, Kandu, Markandeya, Mudgala, Pippalada, Digatasama, Atri, Kratu, Vasistha, Vyasa, Pulastya, Marici, and several others. For more about this, see the commentary to verse 10.6.

The *devas* are the incarnation of the elements that constitute the universe. We call them "personalities" rather than "persons" because each of their identities constitutes a position that could be covered from time to time by different persons (individual souls). This difference that we apply between the two words "personality" and "person" also explains how, at the human level, there can be multiple personalities within the same one person.

### VERSE 3

यो मामजमनादिं च वेत्ति लोकमहेश्वरम् ।

yo māmajamanādīṃ ca vetti lokamaheśvaram ।

असम्मूढः स मर्त्येषु सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ १०-३ ॥

asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate ।। 10-3 ।।

*yah*: a person who; *mam*: me; *ajam*: non-born; *anadim*: without origin; *ca*: and; *vetti*: (s/he) knows; *loka maha isvaram*: the great ruler of all planets/ people; *asammudhah*: free from illusion; *sah*:

s/he; *martyeshu*: among the mortal beings; *sarva-papaih*: from all faults; *pramucyate*: becomes free.

**"A person who knows/ understands/ realizes me as the Reality that is non-born and without origin, (sees me as) the great ruler and controller of all the planets and people. Such a person, although still living in a mortal body, is free from all illusion and becomes purified from all negativities."**

Pure Consciousness is never born. In conditioned beings who live in a material body, consciousness existed before birth, and continues after birth and after death: it merely moves from one body to the other. In Krishna, who is the supreme Consciousness without any material limitations, there is not even such passage from one body to another, because the supreme Consciousness simultaneously contains and controls all forms at all times and in all places, beyond the scope of time and place.

Krishna's bodies are not controlled by the laws of material nature, but they are manifested directly by the spiritual nature of consciousness. We study in nuclear physics that all matter is composed of sub-atomic particles that are a condensed form of energy, vibrating at different frequencies and densities, and thus forming atoms of the various material elements.

Such sub-atomic particles are sensitive to magnetic fields, including those created by life or consciousness; the stronger the consciousness is, the more it can control the alignment and movements of matter. Even ordinary souls can develop this power through the correct practice of *yoga*, and thus manifest what are known as *yoga siddhis*.

Krishna - God, the Supreme Brahman - is the most powerful Consciousness, and perfectly controls all manifestations, spiritual and material. Spiritual manifestations are called *para*, "superior",

because they are a form of greater and more powerful consciousness, while material manifestations are characterized by more dullness.

A person who comes to understand this totally transcendental nature of Krishna as the supreme Consciousness is immediately freed from illusion and contamination, because consciousness is also the transcendental nature of the *jiva*. One who realizes his/ her own identity and nature as pure consciousness cannot be conditioned by the material body or by material considerations. Even if s/he still lives in a material body, s/he does not need one any more, so at the time of death s/he will not take another one, but will remain as a fully developed spiritual body. The same point was already stated in 4.9: *janma karma ca me divyam evam yo vetti tattvatah, tyaktva deham punar janma naiti mam eti so 'rjuna*, "O Arjuna, one who truly knows the divine nature of my births and activities does not have to take another birth after leaving this body, but comes to me."

In this view, we will be better able to understand verse 5.29 as the description of the supreme Consciousness that is present in - but not limited to - all beings: *bhoktaram yajña-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram, suhridam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim ricchati*, "(One who) knows me as the enjoyer/ beneficiary of *yajna* (sacrifice) and *tapas* (austerity), the great Lord of all the worlds /all people, and the dearest friend of all beings, attains peace."

Less evolved forms of religion cannot bring peace into the world because they are unable to teach that God is simply Existence itself, present everywhere as Consciousness. This is the definition of Brahman, and its nature is existence, consciousness and happiness. Of course this understanding is difficult to achieve for those who identify with the material body and mind, so the real path of religion starts with the genuine study of the transcendental

science of *atman/ brahman*. From the beginning, *Bhagavad gita* (2.29) clearly says, *ascarya-vat pasyati kascid enam ascarya-vad vadati tathaiva canyah, ascarya-vac cainam anyah srinoti srutvapy enam veda na caiva kascit*, "Some see this (*atman*) as amazing, some others describe it as amazing. Some hear (of it) as amazing, and some remain unable to understand it even after hearing about it."

Understanding the *atman* is the foundation for understanding the *brahman*. Verse 2.25 says, *avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikaryo 'yam ucyate, tasmad evam viditvainam nanusocitum arhasi*, "It is said that this (the soul) is invisible to material eyes, inconceivable to material intellect, and not affected by change. Therefore, knowing this (soul), you should not worry."

And also:

*nasato vidyate bhavo nabhavo vidyate satah, ubhayor api drishto 'ntas tv anayos tattva-darsibhih*, "Those who see the truth know that what is illusory/ temporary/ bad will not (continue to) be, while what is real/ eternal/ good will never be destroyed. They have carefully observed both things and reached this conclusion." (2.16)

*avinasi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tatam, vinasam avyayasyasya na kascit kartum arhati*, "Know that it is an imperishable (spirit) that pervades all this (universe of bodies). And no one will be able to destroy what is imperishable." (2.17)

*na jayate mriyate va kadacin nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah, ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*, "(The soul) never takes birth and never dies at any time. It eternally exists, without beginning or end. This (soul) that is in the body is unborn, eternal, imperishable, immensely ancient, and cannot kill or be killed." (2.20)

*na tv evaham jatu nasam na tvam neme janadhipah, na caiva na bhavishyamah sarve vayam atah param*, “Certainly there was never a time when I did not exist, and you and all these chieftains of men have always existed as well. Also, none of us will cease to exist in the future.” (2.12)

This is also the message contained in the center of the *Bhagavata Purana*, also called the *chatur (4) sloki Bhagavata*, that consists of 4 verses (2.9.33, 34, 35, 36) and that is often connected to the central verses of *Bhagavad gita*, called the *chatur (4) sloki Gita*. We will quote them in the commentary to verse 10.11.

#### VERSE 4

बुद्धिर्ज्ञानमसम्मोहः क्षमा सत्यं दमः शमः ।

buddhirjñānamasammohaḥ kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ ।

सुखं दुःखं भवोऽभावो भयं चाभयमेव च ॥ १०-४ ॥

sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavo'bhāvo bhayaṁ cābhayameva ca ॥ 10-4 ॥

*buddhih*: intelligence; *jñanam*: knowledge; *asammohah*: freedom from confusion; *kshama*: forgiveness; *satyam*: truthfulness; *damaḥ*: self-control; *samaḥ*: mental balance; *sukham*: joy; *duhkham*: sadness; *bhavah*: existence; *abhavah*: non-existence; *bhayam*: fear; *ca*: and; *abhayam*: freedom from fear; *eva*: also; *ca*: and.

**"Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from confusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, self-control, mental balance, joy, sadness, existence and non-existence, as well as fear and freedom from fear (are arranged by me)."**

This verse and the next one are usually studied together because the verb supporting both is contained in the second one. The qualities and principles listed here are not all "positive" or "desirable" in their conventional practical application: for example sadness, non-existence and fear. In the next verse, *ayasah* ("infamy") will also be mentioned.

However, a little more meditation on these two verses will lead us to wonder why Krishna has deliberately chosen to list them together with other more "positive" and "desirable" qualities and concepts, that are also requirements for progress in spiritual life.

We may remember that in the very first chapter of *Bhagavad gita*, Arjuna expressed his sadness about the situation created by Duryodhana and the need to engage in the horrible fratricidal battle. On that occasion, Krishna expertly utilized Arjuna's concern and anguish to direct his mind towards a higher level of consciousness, thus creating the scene for the wonderful discussion of the *Bhagavad gita*.

In the commentaries to that chapter, we observed that dissatisfaction with the material world - that has been specifically created as a place of misery and impermanence (*duhkhalayam asasvatam*, 8.15, *anityam asukam*, 9.33) - is the beneficial wake up call that we need to become detached from illusion.

Only a person that has realized the suffering caused by the defects inherent to the process of birth, death, old age and disease can really overcome the attractiveness of the good and pleasurable sattvic life offered by Vedic society and attain detachment and freedom from material identifications. This is confirmed in verse 13.9: *indriyartheshu vairagyam anahankara eva ca, janma-mrityu-jara-vyadhi-duhkha-doshanudarsanam*, where Krishna describes the factors that constitute knowledge (*jnanam*).

This does not mean that we should deliberately try to increase our sufferings, or that the principle of suffering is characteristically spiritual or religious, while the principle of pleasure is characteristically material. Such extremist ideas are never entertained by the *rishis* and *acharyas* that compiled the Vedic scriptures and offered their valuable teachings to mankind. According to abrahamic ideologies, pain and suffering are glorified as "penance" and considered indispensable for the purification of the soul from material contamination, therefore a religious person is expected to strictly avoid all sense gratification and pleasures, to the point of sensory deprivation and even self-torture.

The Vedic path is not a punitive one. It does not give suffering an absolute value in itself, but it explains why life cannot be all play and fun. Vedic knowledge offers many remedies to alleviate the pain and increase pleasures - through a comprehensive medical system, scientific arrangements for social harmony, wonderful technology and crafts, and especially a perfect method for karmic success. However, the four fundamental defects of materially embodied life cannot be totally eliminated by materially devised solutions. Still there will be death, albeit a serene and almost painless one. Disease and old age can still leave us reasonably healthy and able to function and enjoy the natural and virtuous pleasures of life. Birth and infancy can be made easier and happier when the parents are more knowledgeable, balanced and responsible. On the higher planetary systems, the *devas* face only a very minimal version of these sufferings, and yet all material bodies must have a beginning and an end, and a few troubles in between, just to remind us that this universe is not our real home.

The same consideration applies to existence and non-existence, and fear and lack of fear: these all serve as a stimulus for progress, to find the answers to the really important questions in life. This does not mean that we should cultivate fear or worship non-

existence: it simply means that we should face each problem as an opportunity, and find the ways to use it to our better advantage - like "a blessing in disguise".

In this verse, the word *sama* (that could also be written as *shama*, with a slightly different "s" that is a separate letter in the Sanskrit alphabet) means "control" and is different from the similar word *sama* or *samata*, meaning "equal vision". This self-control applies to the external and internal sense organs, where *dama* specifically refers to the external actions and *sama* to internal (mental) activities.

## VERSE 5

अहिंसा समता तुष्टिस्तपो दानं यशोऽयशः ।

ahimsā samatā tuṣṭistapo dānaṁ yaśo'yaśaḥ ।

भवन्ति भावा भूतानां मत्त एव पृथग्विधाः ॥ १०-५ ॥

bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānām matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ ॥ 10-5 ॥

*ahimsa*: freedom from hatred; *samata*: equanimity; *tushtis*: contentment; *tapah*: austerity; *danam*: charity; *yasah*: good fame; *ayasah*: bad reputation; *bhavanti*: become/ happen; *bhava*: existence/ natural characteristic; *bhutanam*: of the beings; *mattah*: by me; *eva*: certainly; *prithag-vidhah*: various types.

**"Freedom from hatred, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, good fame and also bad reputation: all these manifest as the natural situations of the beings, and are devised by me."**

The second part of the statement is given in this verse, complete with the verb supporting the sentence. All these different situations are controlled by Krishna.

The exact expression (*mattat eva prithak vidhah*) means, "are variously divided by me", referring to their assignment of the different situations in life as per "destiny" to each individual in a particular time and place. Why? Because in order to grow and develop, we need to face a number of lessons in life, and a lesson is only useful if it presents the exact amount of difficulty suitable for our particular level of realization.

By analyzing these two verses, we will be able to understand what the biggest lessons in life are. Intelligence, knowledge and freedom from confusion are the first and foremost tools in this task, and we definitely need to develop them more and more, as a first lesson that will help us succeed in the rest of the training. The next group of qualities are the second step in personal evolution, and while the first group was connected with the intellect, these are connected with the emotions and the choices of life - forgiveness, truthfulness, self-control, mental balance.

The proper use of intellect and emotional management will enable us to navigate various tests of ups and downs - joy, sadness, existence and non-existence, fear and fearlessness. The duality of existence and non-existence here refers the loss of something (2.38, *labha alabhau*, "getting and not getting", *jaya ajayau*, "victory and defeat") and must be kept in the proper perspective with the correct use of the previously acquired tools - those regulating the intellect and those regulating emotions and choices.

In this verse we make a further step forward.

*Ahimsa* is a compound word consisting of the "privative" *a*, and the noun *himsa*, of the same root of the verb *himsati*, "to hate". The usual translation of "non-violence" is therefore rather simplistic, as it does not explain how a *kshatriya* can remain perfectly situated in *ahimsa* while he is doing his job of protecting the innocent and good *prajas* from the aggression of criminals. Coupled with the

mythical vision that many uninformed people have about the policies of MK Gandhi, often called "the apostle of non-violence", as well as about the history of India in the last 1200 years, this imprecise rendition of the Sanskrit concept of *ahimsa* can really cause serious misunderstandings.

We need to clarify that the Vedic idea of *ahimsa* is not cowardice, absenteeism, irresponsibility, callousness or the delusional hope that "evil" will simply disappear if we choose not to look at it. Real *ahimsa* is directly connected to *samata* or equanimity: it is about being free from prejudice and hatred, and about looking straight at reality to take the required measures without any selfish motivation.

The next group of characteristics are contentment, austerity and charity, that enable us to live a happy life in this world and in the next, without expecting anything from anyone and therefore without the danger of being frustrated. *Tusti* means "contentment", "satisfaction", and is actually an inner quality, measured by how happy we can make ourselves by counting our blessings instead of only noticing what we do not have.

*Tapah* or austerity simply consists in the voluntary acceptance of those difficulties that come to us spontaneously in the course of our work or journey; it does not mean that we should go deliberately looking for troubles or for sufferings, or worse, torture our bodies and minds with unnecessary deprivations or damage.

The most difficult lesson in life consists in becoming able to serenely face good fame and defamation - two things that are not necessarily referred to our actual qualities and deeds. The verse uses the terms *yasa* and *ayasa*, "good reputation" and "lack of good reputation", which are synonyms of *kirti* and *akirti*, used by Krishna in 2.33, 34, 35, 36 to warn Arjuna about the bad rumors that his enemies would have circulated if he had decided not to

engage in the battle. Anyone who has been falsely slandered by envious people knows that bad reputation comes even to perfectly innocent people, as it is demonstrated many times in history. Sometimes it is difficult or impossible to dispel bad rumors, especially when they have been cleverly fabricated by exploiting the prejudice and fears of the ignorant people who will listen to such envious defamation.

The very nature of slandering is based on envy, and envy is stimulated by the apparent success of a person: this is why defamation campaigns and bad rumors often appear together with great glorification and appreciation of the same person. Especially if the person in question is very straightforward and seriously engaged in fighting *adharma*, s/he will have to expect lots of both - insult and praise - and remain untouched by either.

## VERSE 6

महर्षयः सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा ।

maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavastathā ।

मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमाः प्रजाः ॥ १०-६ ॥

madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ ।। 10-6 ।।

*maharshayah*: the great *rishis*; *sapta*: the seven; *purve*: before (them); *catvarah*: the four; *manavah*: the Manus; *tatha*: as well; *mat-bhavah*: created by me; *manasa*: from the mind; *jatah*: born; *yesham*: of them; *loke*: in the world; *imah*: these; *prajah*: creatures.

**"The great seven Rishis, the four (who were born) before them, and the Manus, were all created by me and generated through the mind. All the creatures in this world descend from them."**

This verse lists the most prominent early descendants of Brahma, who were generated from his mind with the purpose of expanding the creation of the universe. The Great Rishis had already been mentioned in verse 10.2.

The four (Rishis) before them are the *chatuh sanah* ("the 4 Sanas"), namely Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana and Sanat kumara, the first generated sons of Brahma. These four great Rishis did not want to engage in procreation to populate the universe, therefore they chose to remain always in a child-like form (hence the name *kumaras*, "boys").

The Manus mentioned in the verse are the administrators of the planet Earth in the various periods of Brahma's day. There are 14 in the present day: Svayambhuva, Svarocisa, Uttana, Tamasa, Raivata, Chaksusa, Vaivasvata, Savarni, Dakshasavarni, Brahmasavarni, Dharmasavarni, Rudra putra, Rocya or Devasavarni, and Indrasavarni.

These are all great and glorious personalities, from whom we should be proud of descending. In fact, it is interesting to think that not only the great *gotras* of "high class brahmins" descend from these wonderfully qualified personalities, but also all human beings and even all the other creatures of the universe can trace their family lineage directly to them.

Of course in this verse Krishna is speaking about the bodies, and not about the individual *jivatmas* that go to occupy these exalted positions in the administration of the universe. It is important to understand that such prestigious posts come equipped with a full set of mind/ senses/ body organs meant to execute the required functions; therefore whenever a *jiva* develops the suitable *guna* and *karma*, he can take birth in that situation and perform its duties.

There are apparently contradictory lists of the names of these Sapta Rishis, but this is due to the fact that they can change from one *manvantara* to the other. In chapter 13 of canto 8 of *Bhagavata Purana*, we find the description of the future Manus.

Under the present one (the 7th), named Sraddhadeva, the main *devas* are the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Visvedevas, Marutas, Asvini kumaras and Ribhus; the seven *rishis* are listed as Kashyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Vishvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Bharadvaja. The Vishnu *avatara* assisting the *devas* is Vamana, the younger brother of Indra.

Under the next Manu (the 8th), named Savarni, the *devas* will be the Sutapas, Virajas and Amritaprabhas; the post of Indra will be occupied by Bali Maharaja, the son of Virochana, who previously was the king of the *asuras* - the passage will be performed through a *lila* manifested by the *avatara* Sarvabhauma, son of Devaguhya and Sarasvati. The Sapta Rishis will be Galava, Diptiman, Parasurama, Asvatthama, Kripacharya, Rishyashringa and Vyasadeva, who are presently living on Earth.

Similarly, under Daksha Savarni Manu (the 9th), son of Varuna, the *devas* will be the Paras and the Maricigarbhas, the position of Indra will be occupied by Adbhuta, and a new group of Sapta Rishis will be headed by Dyutiman (*Bhagavata Purana*, 8.13.19). The Vishnu *avatara* assisting the *devas* will be Rishabha, son of Ayushman and Ambudhara.

In the subsequent verses (up to verse 36, the end of the chapter) the other future sets of *devas* and *rishis* are described, up to the 14th and last Manu in this day of Brahma.

## VERSE 7

एतां विभूतिं योगं च मम यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।

etāṁ vibhūtiṁ yogam ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ ।

सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ॥ १०-७ ॥

so'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṁśayaḥ ॥ 10-7 ॥

*etam*: this; *vibhutim*: power; *yogam*: union; *ca*: and; *mama*: my; *yah*: a person who; *vetti*: knows; *tattvataḥ*: in truth; *sah*: s/he; *avikalpena*: without distraction; *yogena*: by *yoga*; *yujyate*: is engaged; *na*: not; *atra*: here; *samsayah*: (there is) doubt.

**"A person who truly understands this, and knows this *vibhuti yoga*, is certainly engaged in (the proper) meditation, without any doubt."**

Here Krishna clearly states that *yoga* and *bhakti* must be solidly based on the consciousness of the supreme powers and glories of God, otherwise they will not be performed properly. How and why God is great? Not because he is older, taller or he lives upstairs as a landlord, or because he has the power to kill people or send them to hell. The danger, as we have discussed previously, is to take Krishna cheaply as in *prakrita sahajyism*, or "materialistic simplism", and to miss the entire scope of transcendental realization.

In this regard, we should give special attention to the definition *avikalpena*, "without distraction" from the purposed goal. This type of distraction normally happens with fairy tales or adventures of great men, because it is not possible to continue indefinitely to concentrate on material stories with the same or greater interest.

So the only safe way to remain genuinely fixed in *yoga* and *bhakti* is to actually attain the level of *brahma bhuta*, or transcendental

realization, demonstrated by overcoming all material identifications and attachments (*ahankara* and *mamatva*). At that point, our contemplation and meditation on Krishna will be solidly based on the understanding and realization of his transcendental glories and nature (as described in these precious verses of *Bhagavad gita*) and thus it will only increase and not decrease.

The *bhakti* literature clearly speaks of a *chaya rati*, "shadow attachment" or "reflection attachment", that can be compared to a mirage of water created by the extreme heat on the surface of the desert. This initial artificial/ sentimentalist attraction is beneficial because it will trigger an interest for the process of devotional service and the discussion of the names, qualities and activities of Krishna, but it should not be considered the ultimate goal, because it is not.

In *Jaiva dharma*, Bhaktivinoda says through the declaration of his character Raghunatha dasa Babaji, "*Kanistha* devotees who have limited knowledge and realizations may experience some ecstatic symptoms when they come in contact with holy places or other manifestations of the Lord. Such reflection of ecstasy is called *chaya rati abhasa*, and is born from previous good merits (*punya*), but because it is temporary, its waning and disappearance will cause perplexity and suffering."

At this point, when the first reflection of *bhakti* disappears, we are facing the most important choice in our development: we can become serious and rise to the level of actual transcendental realization (*brahma bhuta*) through the meditation offered so clearly here by Krishna, and in this direction our journey will take us to the real (*para*) attachment to Krishna and genuine devotion, through the *madhyama* and the *uttama* levels.

If we fail to take this very crucial step, and we remain attached to material considerations - identifications, affiliations, possessions,

expectations, and duality - we will remain on the *kanistha* platform, that can easily degenerate into materialistically motivated organized religiousness. As a result, we will become materially proud and arrogant, and we may commit the disastrous mistake of evaluating other persons, especially devotees, according to the wrong parameters - grossly materialistic parameters, based on physical identification such as gender, birth, race, nationality, age, shape of the body, etc, and social position such as wealth, erudition, hierarchical status (or more importantly, lack thereof), etc. As true devotion has nothing to do with material identifications, affiliations, and physical appearances, it is extremely easy to become offensive and therefore lose any chance to progress in spiritual life.

## VERSE 8

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।

aham̐ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate ।

इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ॥ १०-८ ॥

iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ ॥ 10-8 ॥

*aham*: I (am); *sarvasya*: of everything; *prabhavah*: the origin of existence; *mattaḥ*: from me; *sarvam*: everything; *pravartate*: emanates; *iti*: like this; *matva*: thinking; *bhajante*: they worship; *mam*: me; *budhah*: the intelligent; *bhava-samanvitah*: with great attention.

**"I am the origin of existence of everything, as everything emanates from me. Intelligent people remember this, and worship me with intense attention."**

In verse 10.2, Krishna had already said, *aham adir hi devanam*, "I am the origin of all the *devas*".

Again Krishna repeats this extremely important point: only those intelligent people who actually realize Krishna's transcendental glories and position will be able to worship him properly, with the required attention and consciousness. The others will simply be licking the exterior of the honey jar and imagine they are tasting the supreme sweetness.

There are innumerable texts from various scriptures confirming the fact that Narayana is the origin of everything. The first and foremost source in this regard is the *Bhagavata Purana*, that speaks almost exclusively of Vishnu/ Krishna, but there are also 5 more *vaishnava Puranas* (*Vishnu Purana*, *Brahma Purana*, *Brahmanda Purana* and *Brahma vaivarta Purana*) and 13 *vaishnava Upanishads* - *Vasudeva*, *Avyakta*, *Advaya taraka* and *Tarasara* in *Sukla Yajur Veda*; *Kali santarana* in *Krishna Yajur Veda*; *Nrisimha tapani*, *Mahanarayana*, *Rama rahasya*, *Rama tapani*, *Gopala tapani*, *Krishna*, *Hayagriva*, *Dattatreya* and *Garuda* in *Atharva Veda*.

However, also all other *Puranas* and *Upanishads* recognize the supreme position of Vishnu, although they do not deal with this topic preeminently. The *shaiva Puranas* and *Upanishads* actually refer to Vishnu/ Narayana when speak of Sadashiva ("the eternal Shiva"), because Shiva is a temporary manifestation of Vishnu that descends into the material universe as Param Atman.

The *Varaha Purana* is quoted to say, *narayanah paro devas tasmaj jatas caturmukhah, tasmad rudro 'bhavad devah sa ca sarva-jnatam gatah*, "Narayana is the Supreme *deva*, from him the four-faced (Brahma) was born, from him Shiva proceeds, and all the *devas* and all that is worth knowing."

The *Maha Upanishad* (1) says, *eko vai narayana asin na brahma na isano napo nagni-samau neme dyav-aprithivi na naksatrani na suryah*, "(In the beginning) there was only Narayana - not Brahma nor Isana (Shiva). There was no water, fire, moon, sky, earth, stars or sun."

The *Narayana Upanishad* (1) says, *narayanad brahma jayate, narayanad prajapatih prajayate, narayanad indro jayate, narayanad astau vasavo jayante, narayanad ekadasa rudra jayante, narayanad dvadasadityah*, "From Narayana, Brahma was born. From Narayana, the Prajapatis were generated. From Narayana, Indra and the 8 Vasus are born; from Narayana, the 11 Rudras and the 12 Adityas were born."

The *Bhagavata Purana* (11.5.33) also shows Narayana worshiped (*nutam*) by Shiva and Brahma (*siva virinci*). However, the same *Bhagavata* (4.7.50) clearly states that there is no difference or separation (*avisesa*) between these Personalities of God, that are the supreme cause of the universe, the witness and the self-sufficient Lord of the *atman* (*aham brahma ca sarvas ca jagatah karanam param, atmesvara upadrasta svayan drg avisesanah*).

## VERSE 9

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।

maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam ।

कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥ १०-९ ॥

kathayantaśca mām nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca ।। 10-9 ।।

*mat cittah*: with their consciousness focused on me; *mad-gata-pranah*: having dedicated their energy and life to me; *bodhayantah*: help to understand; *parasparam*: each other;

*kathayantah*: they discuss; *ca*: and; *mam*: me; *nityam*: always; *tushyanti*: find satisfaction; *ca*: and; *ramanti*: find pleasure; *ca*: and/ as well.

**"They concentrate their consciousness on me, dedicate all their energies to me, and always discuss to help each other to better understand (me). In this, they find great pleasure and satisfaction."**

There are several important points in this verse.

The first and foremost is that the discussion (*katha*) about Krishna must be accompanied by sincere dedication to his service (*gata prana*) and by intense concentration (*citta*). This means that mechanical and superficial recitation by materialistic people will not have the expected effects. The expression *mad gata pranah* is referring to all *pranas*, as it appears in the plural; this means that a devotee spontaneously serves the Lord with all the activities of his/her body and mind. The word *citta* ("awareness/ attention") shares a common root with the words *chaitanya* ("consciousness") and *chaitya guru* (the voice of conscience as the *antaryami paramatma* that is always ready to instruct us for our benefit).

It is a traditional practice among Indian Hindus to attend social gatherings where the *lilas* of Krishna and Rama are recited or played (especially by actors or dancers), mostly episodes from *Bhagavata Purana*'s 10th canto, *Ramayana*, or *Mahabharata*.

While it is always commendable to hear and remember the activities of the Lord, we should be careful not to become confused by the materialistic tendencies of professional reciters and entertainers, who cleverly pick only the passages that can attract most customers and skip over the transcendental instructions that are contained in the original texts. Although the activities of the Lord and his direct servants are always beneficial in themselves,

we must remember that they are enacted in this world precisely to attract people to listen to the spiritual teachings and the transcendental knowledge that they contain.

On the occasion of the many religious festivals in the Hindu calendar, religiously-minded people assemble in temples or in private homes, sometimes for one entire night, as for example on Shiva ratri. This vigil is called *jagram*, and it is meant for such spiritual discussions, as well as for *bhajana* and *kirtana* etc.

We should be careful not to remain stuck on the primitive level of material and social religiosity, where people devoid of sufficient sincerity convince themselves that a little theory is sufficient to keep them in a position of "good standing". This is particularly dangerous when the misunderstanding is compounded by the delusional idea of automatic qualification through some material consideration, such as birth in the caste system, or official affiliation to some registered hierarchical organization.

The discussion about God's activities and teachings must always be about practical application as well, as the *Vedas* clearly and repeatedly recommend: *asato ma sad gamaya*, "from *asat* lead me to *sat*", where *asat* refers to the temporary and illusory level of material identifications and attachments, while *sat* refers to the permanent and happy realization of transcendental Reality.

The other important point is that the recitation must include sufficient explanations for the proper understanding and application. The expressions *bodhayantah parasparam* and *kathayanti* clearly show that the discussion of the Lord's activities should not be a mere monologue offered by a lecturer, but an interactive program where all the members actively participate.

Of course there are different degrees of participation, based on the levels of knowledge and realization of the devotees who attend the

program. From time to time, some will ask questions and elaborations, some will offer different perspectives, and some will debate on the applications and implications. In any case, when the participants are sincere, attentive, and dedicated to the loving service of the Lord, they derive the greatest happiness and satisfaction in discussing about God to understand and make understand his activities and teachings. This is confirmed by another famous verse in *Bhagavad gita* (2.59), that speaks about the "superior taste" (*param drstva nivartate*) that will make us forget material pleasures (*rasa varjam*).

The word *ramanti* is particularly interesting, as *rama* is the pleasure of a loving encounter, especially on the romantic level. So the devotees actually fall in love with Krishna, and like all lovers do, they are always anxious to speak and hear about their beloved. We must be extremely careful to avoid confusion on the very delicate issue of the *madhurya* or *sringara rasa*, the sentiment of romantic and erotic love expressed especially in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition in pursuance of Chaitanya's teachings and example.

The danger is that immature people, still trapped by the materialistic concepts of bodily identification, social conventions, duality and sectarianism, will approach the most intimate activities of Krishna with some measure of false pride, considering themselves as "exclusive devotees" members of an elite group or club, simply because of their official affiliation and selective object of meditation. Under the pretext of *aikantiki bhakti* or exclusive devotion to the most intimate form of the Lord, they claim that they only need to think about his erotic activities with the *gopis*, and they disregard all the numerous philosophical statements and instructions that accompany the descriptions of such *lilas* in the genuine scriptures, as well as the other transcendental activities of the Lord in his various manifestations.

The solution to this problem is not difficult. We must remain humble and appreciate all the activities and instructions of the Lord, without applying materialistic discriminations of "lower", because on the spiritual platform there is no "lower".

## VERSE 10

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।

teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prītipūrvakam ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥ १०-१० ॥

dadāmi buddhiyogaṁ taṁ yena māmupayānti te ॥ 10-10 ॥

*tesam*: for them; *satata-yuktanam*: always united in *yoga*; *bhajatam*: worship; *priti-purvakam*: in a loving way; *dadami*: I give; *buddhi yoga*: the *yoga* of intelligence; *taṁ*: that; *yena*: by which; *mam*: to me; *upayanti*: (they) approach; *te*: they.

**"To those who are always connected to me by serving me with love and devotion, I give the *buddhi yoga*, the engagement in intelligence, by which they will come to me."**

Krishna gives great value to the exercise of intelligence. He had already mentioned *buddhi yoga* specifically in several verses of chapter 2 (39, 49, 50, 51, 52), and will mention it again at the end of the *Bhagavad gita*. The *yoga* of intelligence is the first description of *yoga* in *Bhagavad gita*, and refers to making the proper choices to progress in life and become free from karmic bondage, so that we can become permanently situated in Krishna consciousness (*mat cittah satatam bhava*, 18.57).

*Buddhi*, "intelligence", is the highest faculty and includes the powers of understanding, discernment, doubt, determination, reasoning and will. Several more times the text of *Gita* mentions *buddhi* ("intelligence") as a crucial factor in spiritual life: 1.23, (2.39), 2.41, 2.42, (2.49, 2.50, 2.51, 2.52), 2.53, 2.63, 2.65, 2.66, 2.73, 3.2, 3.26, 3.40, 3.42, 3.43, 4.18, 5.11, 5.17, 5.20, 5.28, 6.9, 6.21, 6.25, 6.43, 7.10, 7.24, 8.7, 10.4, (10.10), 12.3, 12.8, 12.13, 13.6, 15.20, 16.19, 18.16, 18.17, 18.29, 18.30, 18.31, 18.32, 18.37, 18.49, 18.50, 18.56 (and 18.57).

*Katha Upanishad* (1.3.12) also states: "The *atman* is hidden in all beings and its radiance can be perceived only by those who are able to see subtle things by focusing *buddhi*".

*Bhagavata Purana* (4.28.41) clearly states that God is the real *guru* for everyone, and can directly instruct any person with the pure and enlightening spiritual knowledge.

This is again confirmed by 1.1.1 (*tene brahma hrida*, "revealed to Brahma through his heart"), 1.2.17 (*hrdy antah stho hy abhadrani vidhunoti*, "situated within the heart, he destroys all bad things"), 3.5.4 (*hrdi stithah yacchati jnanam sa tattva adhigamam*, "situated in the heart, he gives the knowledge by which one can understand the truth"), 3.15.26 (*tad visva guru adhikritam bhuvanaika vandyam* "the universal *guru*, who is the original maker, worshiped by all"), 3.25.38 (Kapila tells his mother that his devotees consider him as son, friend, *guru*, and *ista daivam*), 4.8.44 (Dhruva meditating on Vishnu as the *guru* of all *gurus*), 4.21.36 (Prithu telling his subjects that Hari is the supreme *guru*), 8.24.50 (king Satyavrata addressing Vishnu as his *guru*), 10.69.15 (*jagat guru tamah*, "the supreme *guru* of the universe"), 10.80.44 (Sudama's prayers to Krishna).

We may ask ourselves, what is the meaning of the expression "always connected" (*satata yuktanam*) if only after realization

they will be able to approach Krishna? On the material level, one first approaches a person, and then it becomes possible to remain connected to him.

But here we are not on the material level.

The first approach to God is through the *sadhana* of meditation on the glories of Krishna, his names, forms, activities, teachings etc. This effectively puts the sincere devotee in touch with God, and through the regular and consistent engagement in cultivating the transcendental knowledge and consciousness, the spiritual intelligence (*buddhi yoga*) develops and the devotee becomes able to understand Krishna as he really is - and not just an imaginative projection.

## VERSE 11

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।

teṣāmevānukampārthamahamajñānajaṁ tamaḥ ।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥ १०-११ ॥

nāśayāmyātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā ॥ 10-11 ॥

*tesam*: for them; *eva*: certainly; *anukampa artham*: for the purpose of kindness; *aham*: I; *ajnana-jam*: born from ignorance; *tamah*: darkness; *nasayami*: I destroy; *atma-bhava-sthah*: situated in the existence of their Self; *jnana-dipena*: with the lamp of knowledge; *bhasvata*: radiant.

**"Out of my kindness for them, I destroy the darkness of ignorance from within their hearts, by (shining forth with) the radiant lamp of knowledge."**

The explanation continues: *buddhi yoga* is the genuine transcendental understanding of the Personality of God, illuminated by the light of true knowledge. The darkness of ignorance is the material mentality, based on bodily identification, that covers the perception of the *atman/ brahman*, that is the true reality. The *atman* is the individual soul, that participates to the universal existence of *brahman* because they are both made of consciousness (*cit*), transcendental to circumstances and therefore ever existing (*sat*) and inexhaustible sources of happiness (*ananda*). There is no qualitative difference between the *atman* and the *brahman*: the only distinction is quantitative, as the *brahman* includes all the *jivatmas* and more.

The expression *atma bhava stha* refers to the sentiment of the self identification as it is present in the *bhava* (existence) of *atman*. The material self identification is the darkness, and the spiritual self identification is the light; the entire process of Self realization is to move from the material level to the spiritual level: *asato ma sad gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrityor ma amritam gamaya*, "from what is temporary lead me to what is eternal, from darkness lead me to the light, from death lead me to eternal life". This famous verse from *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* (1.3.28) is the refrain (*adhyaroha*) of the *stutis* called *Pavamanas*.

Krishna states that he will personally enlighten his sincere and dedicated devotee, from within the heart. Now, some lazy and superficial people may imagine that there is no need to actually study, because we can get knowledge directly from inside our hearts, especially since in the *shastra* we can find several other declarations that give greater importance to *bhakti* (love and devotion) compared to *jnana* (knowledge), and that glorify the quality of simplicity and humility condemning the pride and arrogance that often comes with a material attachment to erudition and scholarship.

While it is true that academic qualifications are not relevant in the process of true *bhakti*, we absolutely need the genuine light (*jnana dipa*) of transcendental knowledge and realization. Krishna is stating here that he will provide this light to those sincere devotees who are constantly engaged (*satata yujtanam*) in *buddhi yoga* - the constant effort to better understand Krishna.

This fundamental requirement for sincerity and effort automatically excludes lazy and superficial posers, materialistic simpletons, sentimentalistic fools, and all the other delusional imitators.

We should not forget that those passages glorifying simplicity and humility are contained in the scriptures and written in Sanskrit, therefore they are addressed to those who actually study the scriptures and know Sanskrit well enough.

They are directed not to illiterate and ignorant people, but to those who could become proud of their scholarship and erudition, therefore they should never be taken as a glorification of ignorance and disrespect towards the scriptures and the genuine *guru* who teaches them.

This is the last of the four central verses of *Bhagavad gita*, called *chatuh sloki gita* (10.8 to 11), that are situated exactly in the middle of the text.

For their importance, they are often compared to the *chatuh sloki bhagavata* (2.9-33-36), that we quote here for reference:

*aham evasam evagre nanyad yat sat asat param, pascad aham yad etac ca yo 'vasisyeta so 'smy aham*, "I am what existed before the creation, and all that will ever exist. I am the *sat* and the *asat* (the supreme cause and effect), up to the end (of the universe), and I am what remains after all these (creations) and everything else (are dissolved)",

*rite 'rtham yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta catmani, tad vidyad atmano mayam yathabhaso yatha tama*, "Whatever appears to be of value or without value, is only in relationship with me. You must know that everything (in this world) is just the shadow of my Maya, like darkness is a shadow (of light)",

*yatha mahanti bhutani bhutesucchavacesv antu, pravistani apravistani tatha tesu na tesv aham*, "Just like the elemental powers (ether, air, fire, water, earth) are contained in all beings, both great and small, and at the same time they are not limited to them, similarly I am in all beings, and yet I am not (limited to them)",

*etavad eva jijnasyam tattva jijnasunatmanah, anvaya vyatirekabhyam yat syat sarvatra sarvada*, "This (that I have now said) is the most important subject of transcendental knowledge, the *tattva* that should be researched directly and directly, at all times and places and in all circumstances".

## VERSE 12

अर्जुन उवाच ।

arjuna uvāca ।

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।

param brahma param dhāma pavitram paramam bhavān ।

पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥ १०-१२ ॥

puruṣam śāśvataṁ divyamādidevamajam vibhum ॥ 10-12 ॥

*arjunah*: Arjuna; *uvaca*: said; *param brahma*: the Supreme Brahman; *param dhama*: the supreme abode; *pavitram*: purifier; *paramam*: supreme; *bhavan*: you; *purusham*: the Purusha;

*sasvatam*: eternal; *divyam*: divine; *adi devam*: the first of the *devas*; *ajam*: non-born; *vibhum*: powerful.

**Arjuna said,**

**"You are the supreme Brahman, the supreme abode, the supreme purifier. You are the eternal and divine Purusha, the first of the Devas, non-born and all-powerful."**

These prayers offered here by Arjuna express his understanding of the meditation recommended by Krishna, and validate it through references to the teachings of great Rishis that Arjuna deeply trusted.

The definition *param brahman* indicates that the personal form of Krishna, as *sa-guna* ("with qualities") *brahman*, is superior to *nir-guna* ("without qualities") *brahman*, or the non-manifested Narayana (*narayanah parah avyaktat andam avyakta-sambhavam*) from whom the manifested universe has been generated. This is confirmed in 14.27 by the declaration, *brahmano hi pratistha aham*, "I am the foundation of *brahman*".

This non-manifested form has already been explained in verse 9.4, "All this universe is pervaded by me in my non-manifested form. All beings exist in me, but I am not in them." (*maya tatam idam sarvam jagad avyakta-murtina, mat-sthani sarva-bhutani na caham tesv avasthitah*).

The expression *avyakta murti* ("non-manifested form") appears to be a contradiction in terms, but it is not, if we understand the deep meaning of *avyakta* as "transcendental" as opposed to "manifested on the level of the material senses". This can become easier to understand if we contemplate the meaning of similar expressions such as *avyakta mulam*, "the invisible root of the universe" (3.8.29) and *avyakta lingah* (4.4.21, 5.10.20) as applied to Shiva Mahadeva, the manifestation of Vishnu that interacts with the

material energy. Further light on the topic is shed by the *Bhagavata Purana*:

"I offer my respect to the power of scientific knowledge (*vijnana virya*), that has taken the form of this body, accepting the distinct modality of passion/ action, born from the non-manifested matrix" (*namah vijnana viryaya mayaya idam upeyuse, grihita guna bhedaya namas te 'vyakta yonaye, 3.15.5*)

"The universe is situated within the senses of the supreme *brahman* through the *vishnu maya* ("the illusion of Vishnu"); it is separated by time from the non-manifested existence" (*visvam vai brahma tan matram samsthitam visnu mayaya, isvarena paricchinnam kalena avyakta murtina, 3.10.12*)

"The *avyakta brahman* is like a great ocean where all the beings rest after the dissolution of the universe; it is like the belly, the heart and the mind of the Virat Purusha" (*avyakta rasa sindhunam bhutanam nidhanasya ca, udaram viditam pumso hridayam manasah padam, 2.6.11*).

The meditation system offered by Krishna in *Bhagavad gita* is meant to lead us to the Brahman realization, because only on this level we can truly develop spiritual devotion (*para bhakti*).

This is the conclusion of *Gita* in verse 18.54: "(A person who is situated in the) Brahman realization is always satisfied in the self, never complaining or running after desires. S/he is equally disposed toward all beings and states of being, and thus attains my spiritual devotion" (*brahma bhuta prasannatma na socati na kanksati samah sarvesu bhutesu, mad bhaktim labhate param*).

This Brahman realization is not as difficult as one may think: it just boils down to truly abandoning all the false material bodily identifications and attachments (*neti neti*, "I am not this, I am not that").

This leaves us with the simple, naked and wonderful beauty of our real spiritual identity.

From this platform, where we really perceive ourselves as spirit souls, we become able to actually perceive the supreme Spirit - God.

*Bhagavad gita* establishes the importance of this crucial step in God realization:

"One who is constantly serving me in *bhakti yoga* comes to transcend all the material influences (the *gunas*) and is elevated to the level of Brahman" (*mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena bhakti yogena sevate, sa gunan samatityaitan brahma bhuyaya kalpate*, 14.26). The meaning of this verse (14.26) is exactly the same of verse 10.10.

The *Bhagavata Purana* (4.30.20) also confirms: "Those who are engaged in spiritual consciousness (*brahma vadis*) experience this Brahman (realization) as always fresh and enthusiastic (*navya-vat*) and perceive knowledge within the heart (*hridaye yat jnah*). After attaining this level, one is never confused or worried, or overwhelmed by emotions" (*navyavat hridaye yat jnah brahma etad brahma-vadibhih, na muhyanti na socanti na hrisyanti yato gatah*).

*Bhagavad gita* speaks at length of this Brahman realization:

"Brahman is the transcendental/ supreme unchanging (existence). The intrinsic nature (of the being) is called Adhyatma. And *karma* is described as the creative action that causes the states of existence/the bodies/the nature and the birth of the living beings" (*sri-bhagavan uvaca, aksaram brahma paramam svabhavo 'dhyatmam ucyate, bhuta-bhavodbhava-karo visargah karma-samjnitah*, 8.3).

"The (wise) seers (of Reality) attain the *brahma nirvana* (because) they have been purified from (all) sins/ faults and have cut off (all) doubts (dualistic illusions), engaging themselves in (work for) the benefit of all living beings" (*labhante brahma-nirvanam rishayah kshina-kalmashah, chinna-dvaidha yatatmanah sarva-bhuta-hite ratah, 5.25*).

Brahman realization, however, does not necessarily mean Brahman meditation (on the formless). Starting from chapter 7 and up to chapter 11, Krishna is giving us the perfect method of meditation that will enable us to realize how God is the transcendental and eternal Existence and Consciousness, from whom everything comes. Meditation specifically focused on the idea of Transcendence as merely non-limited by material designations (*nirguna brahman*) is not recommended in *Bhagavad gita*, because as Krishna says in 12.5, those who are embodied will find that progress is more troublesome to achieve if one remains attached to the non-manifested (*kleso 'dhikataras tesam avyakta asakta cetasam, avyakta hi gatih duhkham dehavadbhir avapyate*).

Even better is the transcendental form of Bhagavan mentioned in 8.20: "But there is another nature, different from this non-manifested (state), a non-manifested (nature) that is eternal and is not dissolved when all the beings are dissolved" (*paras tasmad tu bhavo 'nyo 'vyakto 'vyaktat sananatah, yah sa sarvesu bhutesu nasyatsu na vinasyati*).

The Names of God are non-different from his transcendental form: "The transcendental sound is the manifested form of the non-manifested *brahman*; it remains spiritual although it appears clearly perceivable, and is charged with many different energies that are distributed (all over the universe)" (*sabda brahma atmanas tasya vyakta avyakta atmanah parah, brahma avabhati vitatah nana shakti upabrimhitah, 3.12.48*).

## VERSE 13

आहुस्त्वामृषयः सर्वे देवर्षिनारदस्तथा ।

āhustvāmṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣirnāradastathā ।

असितो देवलो व्यासः स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥ १०-१३ ॥

asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṁ caiva bravīṣi me ।। 10-13।।

*ahuh:* they say; *tvam:* you; *rishayah:* the Rishis; *sarve:* all; *devarshih:* the *rishis* among the *devas*; *naradah:* Narada; *tatha:* as well; *asitah:* Asita; *devalah:* Devala; *vyasah:* Vyasa; *svayam:* yourself; *ca:* and; *eva:* certainly; *bravisi:* you are telling; *me:* to me.

**"All the Rishis say this - Devarshi Narada, and also Asita, Devala, Vyasa - and now you are also telling me, very clearly."**

The realization of Brahman, as any other realization, must be verified and confirmed with the genuine *shastra* and the truly Self realized souls, because the mind can play many tricks, and we may be led to project our idealizations, expectations and hopes beyond the actual facts.

The Rishis mentioned in this verse - Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa - are all authentic without any doubt, and Arjuna had personally met them on several occasions and heard their explanations about the transcendental science.

We know that Vyasa is the son of Parasara and Satyavati, related to the family of Arjuna, and that he is the compiler of most of the presently known Vedic literature.

Narada is also very famous as having composed authoritative texts especially on *bhakti*, such as the *Narada bhakti sutras*, and is usually portrayed as playing his special *vina* (stringed musical instrument). He is a direct son of Brahma, and he is known as a

tireless space traveler, therefore we find him in almost all the spiritual and religious assemblies all over the universe.

The Asita mentioned in this verse is also found in several religious meeting, including the coronation of Yudhisthira and the *sarpa yajna* performed by Janamejaya (the son of Parikshit). However, there seems to be more than one Rishi going by that name, or it is the same Rishi that also goes under the composite name of Asita Devala - as we find in the *Mahabharata*, where he is described as the Rishi who narrated the story of Krishna's advent to the Pitris (while Narada narrated it to the Devas, Sukadeva to the Rakshasas and Yakshas, and Vyasa to the human beings). This Asita Devala is said to be a descendant of Kasyapa. Asita (a name that literally means "blue" or "black") is credited with having announced the extraordinary character of the newborn Krishna, as well as the future destiny and mission of Siddhartha Gautama (the historical Buddha).

The word *bravisi*, "you are telling", carries a meaning that goes beyond mere theory. Krishna is not repeating some textbook definitions on the academical level - he is explaining and demonstrating his position through the description of his level of consciousness. This is precisely the method required to obtain transcendental knowledge: we must approach a realized soul and hear the explanations and examples from the level of consciousness that he has actually experienced (4.34).

The transmission of spiritual realization is done through the transcendental sound vibration (*sabda brahman*), that is much more powerful of ordinary material sound - already a considerably strong factor in this world.

The faculty of hearing is the most powerful sense, that continues to work even when we are asleep and all other senses are suspended and inert. Sound is also the subtlest of all energies, from which all

the elements are manifested in the beginning of creation - something that modern scientists have called "the Big Bang".

The vibrations of sound cover a wide range of frequencies, of which presently the human ear can only perceive a limited variety; even within such frequencies, some are so powerful that they can break glass, and can become even more effective through the application of magnetic fields.

In ancient Vedic times, the science of sound was so advanced that it was normally applied to many functions that contemporary scientists are still unable to understand - and therefore are labeled as "mythology" or "unexplained phenomena".

#### VERSE 14

सर्वमेतदृतं मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव ।

sarvametadr̥taṁ manye yanmāṁ vadasi keśava ।

न हि ते भगवन्व्यक्तिं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ॥ १०-१४ ॥

na hi te bhagavanvyaktiṁ vidurdevā na dānavāḥ ।। 10-14 ।।

*sarvam*: all; *etat*: this; *ritam*: the rule of truth; *manye*: I consider; *yat*: that; *mam*: me; *vadasi*: you are saying; *kesava*: o Kesava; *na*: not; *hi*: certainly; *te*: your; *bhagavan*: God; *vyaktim*: manifestation; *viduh*: they know; *devah*: the *devas*; *na*: not; *danavah*: the *danavas*.

**"O Kesava, I consider all this that you have been saying as the (supreme) truth. Certainly neither the Devas nor the Danavas are able to understand your divine manifestation."**

The *bhagavan vyakti*, "manifestation of God", mentioned in this verse is the transcendental form of Bhagavan that is the foundation of Brahman, and that is only perceived partially (*ekamsena sthito jagat*, 10.42) through the *vibhuti yoga*. The complete form of God is much more difficult to see and to contemplate (11.52-53).

This realization is not opposed to the realization of *avyakta brahman*, but rather it completes it, carrying us to the higher level of Krishna Consciousness (*mat cittah*, 10.9).

The other crucial word in this verse is *ritam*, that contains many levels of meanings. It is not just "truth", but also "*dharma*", "law", "order", "cycle", and "*vyakti*" as revelation or manifestation, as opposite of *avyakti*. To better understand how all these concepts are connected, we need to relate *ritam* with *sat*, a very similar word. *Sat* also means "truth", and also "existence", "eternity", "reality", "spiritual", "good", "virtuous", as compared to *asat*, that has all the exact opposite meanings.

Narada, Asita, Devala, Vyasa, and the other true Rishis recognize Krishna's divinity, because of his teachings that conform and integrate the consistent realizations of all the Rishis ("those who see Reality").

A person's divinity cannot be demonstrated simply by claiming he performed some miracles and his presence on the planet can be proven historically. The divine status is not awarded to someone because of the entertaining stories circulating on him, more or less verifiably or truthfully.

From a superficial, materialistic point of view, the adventures of Krishna's *lila* are not more impressive than many other stories told about various personalities and characters. Krishna's divinity is not proven by the fact that some people say that he lifted a hill when he was a child or that he appeared in a four-armed form to his

parents. God cannot be limited by such considerations, or even by the mere fact that he says he is God. No material criteria can be used to measure the transcendental spiritual reality - only transcendental consciousness can perceive it. The validity of a teaching is in its intrinsic value and merit, and not in the historical circumstances in which it was spoken, or by the evaluation of the physical appearance of the person who spoke it.

This is why a fool or ignorant can be detected only when he speaks. A famous example is the story of Jada Bharata, narrated in *Bhagavata Purana*, canto 5, chapters 8 to 13. Because king Rahugana was intelligent, he was able to appreciate Jada Bharata's sublime level of realization after hearing him speak about the transcendental science - although Jada Bharata externally appeared as a very ordinary person, uninterested in social conventions.

## VERSE 15

स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।

svayamevātmanātmānam vettha tvam puruṣottama ।

भूतभावन भूतेश देवदेव जगत्पते ॥ १०-१५ ॥

bhūtabhāvana bhūteśa devadeva jagatpate ।। 10-15 ।।

*svayam*: personally/ yourself; *eva*: certainly; *atmana*: the self; *atmanam*: the self; *vettha*: you know; *tvam*: you; *puruṣa uttama*: o supreme Purusha; *bhuta-bhavana*: origin of everything; *bhuta isa*: Lord of (all) beings; *deva-deva*: God of the Gods; *jagat-pate*: protector of the universe.

**"You certainly know yourself, (as you are) the Param Atman (the *atman* of the *atman*). O Supreme Purusha, origin of everything, Lord of all beings, God of the Gods and protector of the universe!"**

God is the supreme Consciousness and Existence, therefore the very foundation of the concept of divinity is self-awareness.

The *Bhagavata Purana* declares that Bhagavan is non-different from Param Atman and Brahman: "Those who know the truth say that Existence is the non-dual knowledge/ awareness called Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan" (*vadanti tat tattva-vidah tattvam yaj jnanam advayam, brahma iti, paramatma iti, bhagavan iti sabdyate*, 1.2.11).

We have already explored the meaning of Brahman. Paramatma is the *atman* of the *atman*, the soul of the soul - the consciousness of all consciousness, the existence of all existence. It is always present in each and every being - *jiva* and state of being - and also within each and every atom of the entire creation. These are the concepts expressed by Arjuna in his prayer.

The definition of *purusha uttama*, "supreme Purusha", adds another dimension to our understanding of God. Brahman/ Paramatma/ Bhagavan is Consciousness (*chaitanya*), and therefore it constitutes the enjoying principle, that perceives the feelings and the sentiments; on the intimate level personified by Krishna, it is called the *rasa svarupa*, or the "personification of sentiments", or *rasa vigraha*, "the form of sentiments". Thus, the *purusha* is the passive and stable principle, while *prakriti* is the active and changing principle.

In the ordinary materialistic sense, the word *purusha* is often used to refer to "man/ male" as opposed to "woman/ female" (*stri*), as within the ordinary sexual relationship, bodily identified persons

naturally take up the masculine or feminine roles according to the type of body they are wearing. In the metaphysical sense, the term *purusha* is complemented by the word *prakriti* ("nature"), so there is a sort of ideological superimposition area where *prakriti* is considered as female in nature, and the principle of consciousness (*purusha*) is depicted in a male form, accompanied by his *prakriti* or *shakti* in female form.

We need to be very careful here, to avoid projecting a materialistic limited mentality on the symbolic representation of metaphysical realities that are not limited by the dualities of material attributes. God contains both the masculine and the feminine principles, and when there is a differentiation in iconography, the divine Couple should be depicted together: there can be no real separation between the two.

More about the principles of *purusha* and *prakriti* will be found in chapter 13, entitled *prakriti-purusha-viveka yoga* (" the *yoga* of understanding nature as distinct from the personal principle") and in chapter 15, entitled *purushottama yoga* ("the *yoga* of the Supreme Person").

The definition *bhuta*, as in *bhuta bhavana* and *bhuta isa*, literally means "what has come to being", or simply "being". Thus it can be applied both to the living beings (the *jivatmas*, including those who only have a subtle body) and to the states of existence in this created world. Because God is the origin of all beings, he can also control them completely; such complete control is highlighted by the next definition of *deva deva*, "God of the Gods".

However, such control is always benevolent and never tyrannical: Bhagavan protects the universe and cares for all beings, through the agency of *prakriti*.

## VERSE 16

वक्तुमर्हस्यशेषेण दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।

vaktumarhasyaśeṣeṇa divyā hyātmavibhūtayāḥ ।

याभिर्विभूतिभिर्लोकानिमांस्त्वं व्याप्य तिष्ठसि ॥ १०-१६ ॥

yābhirvibhūtibhirlokanimāṁstvaṁ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi ॥ 10-16 ॥

*vaktum*: to say; *arhasi*: you should; *asesena*: by endless; *divya*: divine; *hi*: indeed; *atma-vibhutayah*: by (your) own powers/ opulences; *yabhih*: by them; *vibhutibhih*: powers/ wonders; *lokan*: all the planets/ all the people; *iman*: these; *tvam*: you; *vyapa*: pervading; *tisthasi*: you remain/ are situated.

**"Please tell more about (your) endless divine powers, by which you pervade all these planets and remain situated in them. "**

Arjuna is requesting Krishna to continue the description of the *vibhuti yoga*, by which we can unite (*yoga*) with the supreme *atman* through the contemplation of his glories (*vibhuti*).

The expression *vaktum arhasi asesena* literally means "you should speak endlessly", where the word *arhasi* is very respectful and conveys the meanings of "be pleased to, "you are able to", indicating that a superior person is more qualified to perform an action, and therefore by engaging in that action, he will better benefit the universe. It is a word used often in prayers, where the devotee is requesting the Lord to grant some blessing or deliver some important teaching.

The word *a-sesa* literally means "without end", and indicates that the glories of God are endless - not just very numerous or too

many for us to count, but always expanding and therefore unlimited. Even the empirical study of ordinary material things can be mind boggling: how a single seed can contain the genetic information for the production of thousands of seeds, each one of them also possessing the same reproductive power. Everything is contained within information - knowledge, or consciousness. Each atom is a microcosm, containing innumerable sub-atomic particles, and an enormous amount of energy - as we can see, for example, in the process of nuclear fusion or fission. Physicists have been shocked to discover that such sub-atomic particles are actually unlimited - therefore they have been called *quanta*, "non-measurable quantities".

The definition *lokan* (plural of *lokah*) is very interesting as it refers to individuals, peoples and worlds as well. We find it in the names of the various regions of space, such as Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka (as the three main dimensions of the universe) as well as Satyaloka, Tapoloka, Janaloka etc, down to the lower systems such as Patalaloka, etc. The interesting point is that the definition is connected to the people inhabiting the place, and not to the physical characteristics of the place: this means that it does not need to be a planet proper, like Earth or Mars. It could even be a subtle dimension that is not to be perceived on the gross level through our material senses; there the inhabitants may have subtle bodies, or bodies that are composed in a different way.

Our bodies are mainly composed by water and earth, with a small part of fire and air, as well as ether, mind, intelligence and ego. Other bodies may have a prevalence of fire and air, and very little water and earth, and other bodies are only composed by subtle elements and have the power to arrange and rearrange molecules of the other elements to manifest temporary forms.

The expression *divya atma-vibhutayah*, "divine powers of the self", states that we can find the divine presence also in the material

universe: *vibhuti* is the spirit - the consciousness, the knowledge - that manifests all the wonders within the universe.

Abrahamic faiths have created a very damaging rift between religion and science, but Vedic knowledge beautifully integrates them, just how it used to be in pre-abrahamic times in all world cultures. The most advanced contemporary scientific research is confirming the ancient teachings of Vedic scriptures. God is omnipresent in the universe, as he pervades (*vyapya*) everything in a permanent way (*tisthasi*), because without the consciousness/ knowledge/ information, that constitutes the subtle blue print of all things, nothing can exist. Therefore he is called *visvato mukham*, "whose face is everywhere".

## VERSE 17

कथं विद्यामहं योगिंस्त्वां सदा परिचिन्तयन् ।

*katham vidyāmaham yogiṁstvāṁ sadā paricintayan |*

केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन्मया ॥ १०-१७ ॥

*keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo'si bhagavanmayā || 10-17 ||*

*katham*: how; *vidyam aham*: I should know; *yogin*: o yogi; *tvam*: you; *sada*: always; *paricintayan*: meditating on; *keshu keshu*: in which (different ways); *ca*: and; *bhaveshu*: in the sentiments; *cintyah asi*: you should be contemplated; *bhagavan*: God; *maya*: by me.

**"O Yogi, how should I know you through constant meditation? O Lord, in which different ways and sentiments should I contemplate you?"**

This is the 5th verse of Arjuna's prayers, starting from 10.12. Arjuna recognized the truth of Krishna's statements, that are in accordance to the explanations that he had heard several times from the Rishis.

Only the direct transcendental perception of Consciousness enables us to understand Krishna's glories, and that does not depend on material qualifications or powers: intellect is not sufficient, because it will merely take us to the theoretical level, while consciousness is something that we must experience in our very soul, at the spiritual level. It is the thrill and the emotion and the union (*yoga*) and the deep feeling of direct perception, that we also call enlightenment or ecstasy.

This is the nature of *bhakti*. Verse 18.55 (*bhaktya mam abhijanati yavan yas casmi tattvatah*, "only through *bhakti* one can know me as I truly am") will conclude that only the genuine emotion of love and devotion can tune our consciousness to the spiritual level of the supreme Consciousness and experience that eternal existence, awareness and happiness that transcends material limitations.

Arjuna calls Krishna "*yogi*", to indicate that he is connected to everything. He does not mean to belittle Krishna's position by comparing him to an ordinary *yoga* practitioner, but rather he is showing his great appreciation and deep understanding of the true meaning of Yoga. This *Yogi* is also Bhagavan, the personal manifestation of the supreme Brahman.

Meditation in *yoga* means tuning one's consciousness into the supreme Consciousness, through the contemplation of forms, names, activities, qualities, or powers manifested by the supreme Consciousness. Ordinary meditation - that is not in *yoga*, "in union with the Supreme" - can focus on any object, as it simply consists in concentrating our attention on something specific, like we do when we study a lesson or we try to solve a problem, or even when

we are engrossed in watching some film or remembering some past event or some person. A relaxing meditation can be done by visualizing nice images, such as a sunlight clear sky with some fluffy white little clouds, a beautiful meadow with lush green grass and cute flowers, a majestic forest with light mysteriously filtering down through the branches and leaves, or fresh mountains covered in snow, and so on. But that is not *yoga* - it's just a pleasing exercise of imagination or fantasy, a nice illusion or day-dream.

Yoga meditation is not about "the void" either. It is true that a little "void meditation" can help us in learning how to quiet our mind, become detached from the compulsive desire to run after whatever thoughts and impressions that flow in, and appreciate silence and peace. Most people are so used to the unending chattering of their minds that they become scared and anxious whenever there is silence - when the TV breaks down, when they do not have noisy people around, when they do not have some work to do, when they can't get on internet, social media, phone, game sites, and so on.

So dropping all these distractions is merely a preliminary stage, called *pratyahara*, that will gradually enable us to actually concentrate our attention on a single thought (*dharana*) - the first stage of real *yoga* meditation; *dhyana* is the stage of *yoga* meditation in which we focus on a set of interconnected spiritual concepts or aspects of the Divine (*keshu keshu bhaveshu*). *Yoga* means "union", by which we deliberately and consciously join in with the supreme awareness and intelligence.

The word *bhavesu* ("in which sentiments") is the plural locative of the noun *bhava*, that conveys the meanings of "emotion", "feeling", "sentiment", "physical thing", "aspect", "existence", "nature". Arjuna is requesting the Lord himself (*bhagavan*) to explain in which sentiment one should meditate on him; since Arjuna is presenting the request in a personal manner (*maya*: "by me"), and we know that Arjuna is not an ordinary unevolved person, but a

close companion of the Lord, we understand that the meditation recommended to him by Krishna is not meant just for "beginners" or "neophytes".

## VERSE 18

विस्तरेणात्मनो योगं विभूतिं च जनार्दन ।

vistareṇātmano yogam vibhūtiṃ ca janārdana ।

भूयः कथय तृप्तिर्हि शृण्वतो नास्ति मेऽमृतम् ॥ १०-१८ ॥

bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptirhi śṛṇvato nāsti me'amṛtam ॥ 10-18 ॥

*vistarena*: in various ways; *atmanah*: the *atman*; *yogam*: the *yoga*; *vibhutim*: the power/ opulence; *ca*: and; *janardana*: o Janardana; *bhuyah*: again; *kathaya*: describe; *triptih*: satisfaction; *hi*: indeed; *srinvatah*: hearing; *na*: not; *asti*: there is; *me*: for me; *amritam*: nectar.

**"O Janardana, (please) describe the various manifestations of your *vibhuti yoga* again, because I can never be tired of hearing such nectar."**

This is the difference between material subjects and spiritual subjects: spiritual knowledge is always fresh and interesting, and one never tires of hearing about it. *Krishna katha* means "discussions about Krishna", while *gramya katha* means "village discussions" - the ordinary talking that ordinary people engage in.

Two other very important words in this verse are *tripti* and *amrita*. *Tripti* means "satisfaction", the exhaustion that has removed the hunger or interest for something after having enjoyed sufficient pleasure, like after a very good meal. When we have eaten enough,

we lose interest even in the most delicious treats, because we are unable to take anything more.

This is because such sense gratification is on the material level. It is material food, and it is a material stomach - and only a certain quantity can be processed pleurably. After that, eating actually becomes a suffering and our body revolts against it.

On the spiritual level, however, our hunger for happiness is unlimited, and therefore we see that people who seek happiness from the material objects are never really satisfied. This is the difference between *tripti* ("satiation") and *tusti* ("contentment"), mentioned in verse 10.5.

In material pleasures, a *yogi* (a person who focuses on the cultivation of consciousness) is content with a reasonable and healthy amount of sattvic pleasure, while a *bhogi* (a person who focuses on sense pleasure) is never satisfied but always hits the wall of *tripti*, "satiation".

For this reason, the word *tripti* in this verse is counter-balanced by the word *amrita*, that is usually translated as "nectar". Its literal meaning is actually "immortal", and refers to transcendental nature: only the spiritual immortal and inexhaustible nectar can satisfy the soul's hunger for happiness, that is also spiritual. This is confirmed by *Bhagavata Purana* in several verses:

"We shall never be tired of hearing about the activities of the Lord, who is glorified with transcendental prayers, because we relish these sweet sentiments at every step, even by listening continuously" (*vayam tu na vitripyana uttama sloka vikrame, yat srnvatam rasa jnanam svadu svadu pade pade*, 1.1.19)

"Bless you! Please tell us more about these generous activities (of the Lord). Any person who knows about *rasas* will never become tired of drinking the nectar of Hari's stories" (*ta nah kirtaya*

*bhadram te kirtanya udara karmanah, rasajnah ko nu tripyeta hari lilaṃritam piban, 3.20.6).*

"O *brahmana*, Bhagavan manifests unlimited activities according to his own desires. Who can become tired of listening to such nectar, as his generous activities as a cowherd boy?" (*brahman bhagavatas tasya bhumnah svacchanda vartinah, gopala udara caritam kar triptyeta amrita jusan, 10.16.3).*

The activities of the Lord are called *udara* ("generous", "magnanimous") because they are manifested in this world with the purpose of attracting and inspiring the conditioned souls towards the spiritual level.

## VERSE 19

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

śrībhagavānuvāca ।

हन्त ते कथयिष्यामि दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।

hanta te kathayisyāmi divyā hyātmavibhūṭayaḥ ।

प्राधान्यतः कुरुश्रेष्ठ नास्त्यन्तो विस्तरस्य मे ॥ १०-१९ ॥

prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me ॥ 10-19 ॥

*sri*: the wonderful; *bhagavan*: Lord; *uvaca*: said; *hanta*: yes; *te*: to you; *kathayisyami*: I will speak; *divya*: divine; *hi*: indeed; *atma-vibhūṭayah*: the potencies of the self; *pradhānyataḥ*: the most notable; *kuru-sreṣṭha*: o best of the Kurus; *na*: not; *asti*: there is; *antah*: the end; *vistarasya*: of the variety; *me*: mine.

**The wonderful Lord said,**

**"Yes, o best of the Kurus, I will tell you about the divine potencies of the Self, but only about the most prominent, because there is no end to the variety (of my glories)."**

The word *hanta*, that could be translated as "yes, now", is still used in Indian languages (in its *prakriti* form *han*) to indicate affirmation, agreement, approval, etc. It is interesting to note that a similar sound - albeit spontaneous and not considered as a word proper - is also popular in many other languages to express this same sentiment, and is intuitively understood by anyone provided it is modulated with the proper intonation.

The word *pradhanyatah*, meaning "the main", "those excellent among", and "supreme position", is from the same root as *pradhana*, that refers to the primeval non-differentiated aggregate of material nature.

In the process of spiritual realization and study of transcendental science, the most important factor is the proper communication between the teacher and the student.

Krishna in *Bhagavad gita* gives the perfect example of the teacher who is always ready to answer all the questions, offer more examples for elucidation, dispel doubts, reconcile apparent contradictions, and destroy misconceptions even with strong words.

From his part, Arjuna is also playing his student role perfectly, from the very start of the conversation, when he asks Krishna to drive his chariot in the middle of the battlefield, to see who has come to fight to support the "bad guys", and what work is expecting him in the execution of his duties.

Arjuna is not afraid of uncovering his weakness and problems before Krishna, and this constitutes the first and most important step in the relationship with the genuine *guru*.

Many people labor under the delusional idea that the *guru* is not supposed to be interested in their problems, or that he already "knows everything" so there is no need to ask questions and present doubts and perplexities. Especially in the case of "superstar *gurus*", disciples can hardly approach the *guru* at a personal level for a few minutes of superficial conversation, what to speak of establishing a deep, meaningful and useful relationship to be correctly guided in personal evolution.

Yet, such "*gurus*" demand total, unquestioning, and exclusive allegiance to their particular person, as well as worship and profit of some kind, and expect the disciples to keep pledging their immense and inexpressible gratitude for their debt towards their "lord, master and savior" lifetime after lifetime.

This is unfair, as it puts the entire load of responsibility and duties on the students, who by definition are less qualified to sustain the weight of the relationship.

A genuine *guru* is very well aware of the responsibility of accepting a disciple, and of the fact that the *guru* will have to come back, lifetime after lifetime, until all the disciples have either attained the desired goal, or have explicitly rejected the *guru*. For this reason, the genuine *guru* is always very interested in understanding any problem the disciples may be going through, and answer all their questions.

The service that the disciples offer to the *guru* is a reciprocation and an expression of gratitude for the *guru's* actual help; a *guru* who simply acts as a representative for someone else, and does not answer to any responsibility, or is not able to give proper explanations and knowledge, is not a real *guru*.

*Bhagavad gita* is very clear about this issue: "You should learn this (knowledge) by approaching those who directly contemplate the

Truth, asking them many questions and offering them service. Those who have the knowledge will initiate you (into this science)" *tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasenena sevaya, upadekshyanti te jñanam jñaninas tattva-darsinah* (4.34).

## VERSE 20

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitah ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ १०-२० ॥

ahamādiśca madhyam ca bhūtānāmanta eva ca ।। 10-20 ।।

*aham*: I (am); *atman*: the *atman*/ Self; *gudakesa*: o Gudakesa; *sarva-bhuta*: of all beings; *asaya sthitah*: situated/ established in the heart; *aham*: I (am); *adih*: the beginning; *ca*: and; *madhyam*: the middle; *ca*: and; *bhutanam*: of the beings; *antah*: the end; *eva*: certainly; *ca*: as well as.

**"O Gudakesha, I am the *atman* situated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings as well."**

The words *param atman* mean "the *atman* of the *atman*", where *atman* is translated as "self". The meanings of "self" can be applied to different levels according to the sense of identity or identification of the person who speaks.

Materialistic people who identify with the body will interpret "self" as the body, while those who mostly live on the mental platform will - like Descartes - say "*cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I exist"). A spiritualist will understand the "self" as the individual *atman*. When Krishna, the supreme Consciousness, talks

about the *atman*, he means the *adhyatma*, the *param atman*, that is pure consciousness and awareness at universal level.

Of course, for Krishna there is no difference between his spirit, his mind and his body, because his body and mind are manifested by his internal spiritual energy, therefore as a manifestation of pure consciousness, they are not material or limited by material conditions. This is why he is called "non-born" (*ajam*, 10.12).

In the same way as he manifests in his *tad rupa/ svayam rupa, svayam prakasa, tad ekatma, prabhava, vaibhava, vilasa* and *avatara*, Krishna also manifests in the *shakti avesha* and in the ordinary *jivas* - as Consciousness.

As we have already quoted, *Bhagavata Purana* (1.2.11) confirms that Bhagavan is non-different from Param Atman and Brahman: "Those who know the truth say that Existence is the non-dual knowledge/ awareness called Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan" (*vadanti tat tattva-vidah tattvam yaj jnanam advayam, brahma iti, paramatma iti, bhagavan iti sabdyate*, 1.2.11).

When Krishna says that he is the beginning, middle and end (*adi, madhyam, antah*) of all beings, he speaks about the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of everything. It is easy to remember here the *guna avataras* Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva who are connected with the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe respectively. However, we should look even further, and try to understand more deeply the transcendental and scientific meaning of this.

Later, Krishna will reveal himself as Time (11.32), so we can understand that Consciousness is the past, present, and future of all manifestations and all beings. In verse 2.12, at the very beginning of his instructions to Arjuna, Krishna has already declared that each being always existed, and will continue to be: but how?

Certainly not in terms of the temporary material bodies, because at each moment the bodies keep disappearing and appearing, in a constant dance of transformation. So what always remains in the past, present of future of all beings, is Consciousness - Krishna as Brahman, Paramatma, Bhagavan.

## VERSE 21

आदित्यानामहं विष्णुज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।

ādityānāmahaṁ viṣṇurjyotiṣāṁ raviraṁśumān ।

मरीचिर्मरुतामस्मि नक्षत्राणामहं शशी ॥ १०-२१ ॥

marīcirmarutāmasmi nakṣatrāṇāmahaṁ śaśī ।। 10-21 ।।

*adityanam*: of the Adityas; *aham*: I (am); *vishnuh*: Vishnu; *jyotisham*: of the lights; *ravih*: the sun; *amsuman*: radiant; *maricih*: Marici; *marutam*: of the Marutas; *asmi*: I am; *nakshatranam*: of the lunar mansions; *aham*: I (am); *sasi*: the moon.

**"Among the Adityas, I am Vishnu. Among the lights, I am the radiant Sun. To the Marutas, I am Marici. To the constellations, I am the Moon."**

The descriptions of the these verses connect the principle of Consciousness to the various manifestations of this world, not only to express the greatest, most powerful and most important of every category, but also to refer to their meaning. This is why the verse connects the Moon with the *nakshatras* ("lunar mansions"), as Krishna knows very well the difference between the Moon and the stars.

The word *nakshatra* refers specifically to stars, and the Vedic science of astrology/ astronomy (*vyotisha*) clearly teaches that the Moon is the companion or Lord of the stars - not one of them, not even the brightest or most important.

The names of the 27 *nakshatras*, covering the entire circle of 360 degrees of the sky vault, are as follows: Visakha corresponds to the star *Alpha Librae*, Jyestha is *Antares*, Purva asadha is *Delta Sagittari* and Uttara asadha is *Sigma sagittari*, Sravana is *Alpha Aquilae*, Purva bhadra pada is *Alpha Pegasi* and Uttara bhadra pada is *Gamma Pegasi*, Asvina is *Beta Arietis*, Kritika is *Eta Tauri* (associated with the constellation of the Pleiades), Mrigasira is *Lambda Orionis*, Pushya is *Delta Cancri*, Magha is *Regulus*, Purva phalguni is *Delta Leonis* and Uttara phalguni is *Beta Leonis*, Chitra is *Vegas* or *Spica Virginis*. Other important stars are Rohini (*Aldebaran*), Revati (*Zeta Piscium*), Anuradha (*Delta Scorpio*), Dhanishta (*Beta Delphinum*), Ardra (*Alpha Orionis/ Betelgeuse*), Satabisha (*Lambda Aquarius*), Aslesha (*Alpha Hydrae*), Punarvasu (*Beta Geminorum*), Hasta (*Delta Corvi*), Svati (*Arcturus*), Mula (*Lambda Scorpionis*), Bharani (*35 Arietis*), Asvayuja and Punarvasu (*Castor and Pollux*), Abhijit (*Vega*) etc.

On the other hand, it is not clear which contemporary astronomical names correspond to the stars called Radha, Sunrita, Sravistha and Prostha pada.

According to the position of these stars, the Vedic calendar lists the 12 months bearing the names of the constellations: the first month (April-May) of the Vedic calendar is called Vaisakha, the second (May-June) is Jyestha, then come Asadha (June-July), Sravana (July-August), Bhadra (August-September), Asvina (September-October), Kartika (October-November), Margasira (November-December), Pausha (December-January), Magha (January-February), Phalguna (February-March) and Chaitra (March-April).

In the Vedic system, *nakshatras* are considered particularly important in the calculation of the personal horoscope of an individual or of the auspicious moment to begin a specific activity - something that is very interesting because this concept does not exist any more in western astrology (that considers practically only the members of our solar system - the 9 planets, the Sun and the Moon) although people still use expressions such as "being born under a good/ bad star", "what the stars say", and so on.

The 12 Adityas are listed as Dhata, Mitra, Aryama, Rudra, Varuna, Surya, Bhaga, Vivasvan, Pusha, Savita, Tvasta, and Vishnu. This Vishnu among the Adityas is the youngest son of Aditi, named Upendra or Vamana. The mention of the Sun just after the Adityas is significant, as Surya is the Sun. In fact, all the Adityas are considered manifestations of the Sun - the greatest power in the universe, next to the *brahmajyoti* or transcendental light of the spirit (Brahman).

Equally if not more intriguing are the Marutas or Maruta ganas, usually associated with wind, storm, or air (including the breathing in human beings), close companions of Indra. Actually the Marutas were sons of Diti - the mother of the Daityas, enemies of the Adityas - but as explained in chapter 18 of canto 6 of the *Bhagavata Purana*, Indra came to know that Diti was planning to generate a son who would be his enemy, and he managed to enter Diti's womb to kill the embryo by cutting it to pieces. However, by the power of Diti's austerities, each of the pieces continued to live independently as an individual child, so after the original embryo had cloned itself into 49, Indra decided to befriend him/ them, and considered him/ them as his brothers, *sa-udara* ("who have been in the same uterus").

The 7 main Marutas are listed in Vedic literature as Avaha, Pravaha, Vivaha, Paravaha, Udvaha, Samvaha, Parivaha; it is then obvious that Marici (literally, "ray of light") is not the most

prominent among these sons of Diti – and it does not even seem to be the original embryo. The only famous Marici is the Marici Rishi, that is the *manasa putra* of Brahma and one of the Sapta Rishis, who became the father of Kasyapa Rishi, the father of all the other creatures of the universe.

Kasyapa married several of Daksha's daughters: Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtra, Arista, Surasa, Ila, Muni, Krodhavasa, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. Aditi became the mother of the Adityas (the main Devas), while Diti became the mother of the Daityas (the traditional enemies of the Adityas) and Danu the mother of the Danavas. Arista became the mother of the Gandharvas, Muni of the Apsaras, Surasa of the Rakshasas. Vinata became the mother of Garuda (Vishnu's bird carrier) and Aruna (Surya's charioteer), while Kadru became the mother of all the serpents, except the *dandasukas*, who were produced by Krodhavasa. Surabhi was the mother of all the cows, the buffaloes and similar animals. Kashtra produced the horses, Tamra the great birds of prey and Patangi all the other birds, Timi the aquatics, Sarama the fierce carnivores such as lions and tigers, and Yamini the locusts. Ila produced all the various trees and plants. This should make us understand that this type of "motherhood" does not refer to the ordinary reproduction of human beings, but it refers to symbolic principles of the creation of the universe.

The connection of Marici Rishi with the Marutas is not immediately clear if we remain on the superficial "mythological" level of genealogical descriptions, so we need to dive deeper into their scientific symbolic significance. At this level, we find that Maruta is the Vedic definition of space/ wind, as 49 varieties of forces or vibrational frequencies, not connected to light, sound, magnetism, or gravity, that are listed separately.

VERSE 22

वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि देवानामस्मि वासवः ।

vedānām sāmavedo'smi devānāmasmi vāsavaḥ ।

इन्द्रियाणां मनश्चास्मि भूतानामस्मि चेतना ॥ १०-२२ ॥

indriyāṇām manaścāsmi bhūtānāmasmi cetanā ॥ 10-22 ॥

*vedanam*: of the *Vedas*; *sama-vedah*: the *Sama Veda*; *asmi*: I am; *devanam*: of the *devas*; *asmi*: I am; *vasavah*: the ruler; *indriyanam*: of the senses; *manah*: the mind; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *bhutanam*: of the beings; *asmi*: I am; *cetana*: the consciousness.

**"Of the *Vedas*, I am the *Sama*. Of the *devas*, I am *Vasava*. Of the senses, I am the mind. In living beings, I am consciousness."**

The *Sama Veda* is the most elaborate and artistic of the four *samhitas*, and it is meant to be sung (rather than chanted) in the rituals to call the *devas*. The musical tunes of the *Sama Veda* are mathematical combinations of the basic notes, so they add extra power to the hymns of the *Rig* and *Yajur*.

We know that in ancient times mathematics was highly respected as the perceivable expression and manifestation of the supreme spiritual realities, and strictly connected to music; some fragments of that knowledge have survived from the teachings of Pythagoras and other great thinkers.

Colonial indologists have done their worst to trivialize the tremendously deep symbolic and scientific knowledge contained in the *Vedas*, but the hidden power of these immensely ancient texts is still very much present and can be unlocked by those who have developed the required level of realization.

The name Vasava (generally referred to Indra) literally means "of the *vasus*", that are the subtle material elements of the cosmos, and as personifications they are one of the main group of *devas*, together with the Adityas and Rudras. As we mentioned in commentary to verse 7.9, the Vasus are the eight principles of the cosmic manifestation, sometimes referred as the "material elements", but that definition creates confusion because they can be mistaken for the 8 elements previously mentioned by Krishna (7.4) as *bhumih apah analah vayuh kham manah buddhiih ahankara*.

The personifications of these Vasus are: fire as Agni ("burning") or Anala ("lively"), earth as Prithivi ("wide") or Dhara ("that which supports"), wind as Vayu ("wind of life") or Anila ("breath of life"), space as Antariksha ("what is seen in the middle") or Aha ("pervading"), the sun as Aditya ("eternal") or Pratyusha ("he who follows dawn"), the sky as Dyaus ("luminous") or Prabhasa ("radiant") also connected to sunset, the moon as Chandra ("illustrious") and Chandramasa (the lunar month) or Soma (the rejuvenating plant).

Nakshatra (the aggregate of constellations) is also strictly connected to Dhruva (the pole star) and with the Sapta Rishis (the Seven Sages) that compose the most famous constellation in the sky: the Great Dipper or *Ursa Maior*. Dhruva is also known as Svetadvipa, the *prapancika vaikuntha* planet in each universe. The primary principles of the universe are also categorized in a slightly different way as the Adityas, that are 12 aspects of the sun: Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha, Amsa, Tvastri, Pushan, Vivasvat, Savitri, Sakra and Vishnu.

The third meditation in this verse is very direct: Krishna is the consciousness or awareness (*cetana*) among all states of beings and in all living entities; as we have already elaborated quite often, Brahman is pure transcendental consciousness.

## VERSE 23

रुद्राणां शङ्करश्चास्मि वित्तेशो यक्षरक्षसाम् ।

rudrāṇām śaṅkaraścāsmi vittaśo yakṣarakṣasām ।

वसूनां पावकश्चास्मि मेरुः शिखरिणामहम् ॥ १०-२३ ॥

vasūnām pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇāmaham ॥ 10-23 ॥

*rudranam*: of the Rudras; *sankarah*: Sankara; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *vitta isah*: the Lord of wealth; *yaksha-rakshasam*: of the Yakshas and Rakshasas; *vasunam*: of the Vasus; *pavakah*: the fire; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *meruh*: the Meru; *sikharinam*: of the mountains; *aham*: I (am).

**"Of the Rudras, I am Shankara. Of the Yakshas and Rakshasas, I am the Lord of wealth. Of the Vasus, I am fire, and among the peaks, I am Meru."**

The theme of the Vasus returns in this verse. Krishna has already mentioned the Adityas. Here Krishna brings the principle of Fire as the most important and primeval constituent of the universe - fire as the heat created by the fast and powerful movement of the smallest particles of matter, that expand into creation, like the warm breath of Narayana exhaling the universes.

Agni - fire - is the messenger who carries our offerings to all the *devas*. He is the purifier, destroyer and giver of life, and the primeval teacher for all human beings, that gives knowledge and realizations in a spontaneous and elemental way, and on the highest level as well.

As we mentioned in the commentary to 7.9, the other group of categories of the universal principles, called the 11 Rudras, are the aspects of Shiva or the Purusha principle: Atma ("Self", "the

individual soul"), Ananda ("happiness"), Vijnana ("knowledge"), Manas ("the mind"), Prana ("the vital energy"), Vac ("the faculty of speech"), Isana ("the dominating principle"), Tatpuruṣa ("that activating principle"), Aghora ("nothing is horrible"), Vamaḍeva ("pleasant Lord") and Sadyojata ("appearing quickly"). All these are personifications of the conscious principle in each of the manifestations that gives them their names. According to the *Bṛihad aranyaka Upaniṣad* (3.9.4), the Rudras are personifications of the senses, including the mind.

The collective name Rudra literally means "violent", "fierce", "wild", and derives from the root *rud*, meaning "to howl". This is certainly not a negative meaning, but simply indicates a very powerful and overwhelming force that is intrinsic in the manifestation of consciousness in the material world. Within the universal plan, such manifestations are meant to fuel the momentum of creation that brings the inevitable destruction, which in turn establishes the necessary conditions for a new creation.

Shankara is a famous name for Shiva Mahadeva, who is the origin of all the Rudras; although he is not one of these 11 (who are his expansions), he is also called Rudra, especially as the manifestation of the Sun that is among the 12 Adityas.

The Yakshas and Rakshasas are two humanoid races that have greater powers than human beings and are known to interact with them quite often, even establishing permanent settlements or bases on Earth.

Especially the Yakshas like to live in mountain caves and tunnels, where they sometimes accumulate treasures of gold and other valuable things. The capital of the Yakshas on Earth is Alakapuri, in the Himalayan mountains. The Lord of wealth mentioned in the verse is Kuvera, the king of the Yakshas and "brother" of Shiva Mahadeva.

Mount Meru (also called Sumeru) is mentioned here as the greatest and most important of all mountain peaks, because it is the center of the universe, the axis around which the cosmos revolves. Its roots reach down into the lower planetary systems and its summit touches Brahmaloaka. It represents the spinal column of the universal body, therefore it is also called Meru Danda, where *danda* means "column", "pillar", "rod".

Several people have attempted to identify mount Meru with visible mountains, but this is not the Vedic perspective, as the Meru is the divine subtle axis on which the planet revolves, and that gives it the proper orientation in connection with the rest of the universe.

## VERSE 24

पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम् ।

*purodhasām ca mukhyam mām viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim ।*

सेनानीनामहं स्कन्दः सरसामस्मि सागरः ॥ १०-२४ ॥

*senānīnāmahaṁ skandah sarasāmasmi sāgarah ।। 10-24 ।।*

*purodhasam*: of the priests; *ca*: and; *mukhyam*: the chief; *mam*: me; *viddhi*: you should know; *partha*: o son of Pritha; *brihaspatim*: Brihaspati; *senaninam*: of the generals; *aham*: I (am); *skandah*: Skanda; *sarasam*: of the lakes; *asmi*: I am; *sagarah*: the ocean.

**"O son of Pritha, know that among the priests, I am the chief, Brihaspati. Among the generals, I am Skanda. Among the lakes, I am the ocean."**

A *purodhasa* is a professional priest who performs the ritualistic ceremonies for the benefit of the family or the kingdom he works for.

It is important here to understand that a *brahmana* never depends financially on anyone, and does not receive a salary, because that would be dangerous for his integrity. No *brahmana* should ever compromise on *dharma* or *vidya* to please the wealthy or materially powerful people, and thus obtain some personal profit. Therefore the relationship between the *purodhasa* (or *purohita*) and his *karta* (the "doer" of the sacrifice, for whose benefit the ritual is performed) is like the relationship between the *guru* and the disciples. In fact, the *purodhasa* gives a particular *diksha* to the *karta* every time a major ritual is performed, and the *dakshina* ("compensation") he receives is a gift that must be offered with gratitude and humility.

There is a famous story about Indra once disrespecting Brihaspati, because he got the idea that his priest was a member of his court working for him like the others; as a result, Brihaspati abandoned him and the Devas, and the Devas ended up being defeated by the Asuras and losing their kingdom.

Brihaspati, son of Angira Rishi, was granted the position of preceptor of the Devas by the blessing of Shiva as a reward for his religious practices at Prabhasa tirtha (Somanatha). He is also identified with the beneficial planet Jupiter (called Guru or Brihaspati in Vedic astronomy/ astrology) and has 3 wives - Subha, Tara and Mamata.

Skanda or Kartikeya (also called Subramanyam or Sanmukha) is Shiva's son, born out of fire. He is associated with the planet Angaraka or Mars - ruling over war and martial arts. Traditionally, his worship is very popular in south Indian culture, where he is honored by the famous festival of Thaipusam. Probably the greatest version of this festival is the one held by the Hindu Tamil community at the Batu caves, in Malaysia, attended by several thousands of people.

The word *sara* or *sarovara* means "lake", "pond", and also applies to man-made lakes or large tanks where people take bath for purification. The ocean (*sagara*) is the greatest among all bathing places, the purest and the most powerful.

## VERSE 25

महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।

maharṣīṇāṃ bhṛgurahaṃ girāmasmyekamakṣaram ।

यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥ १०-२५ ॥

yajñānām japayajño'smi sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ ।। 10-25 ।।

*maha rishinam*: of the great Rishis; *bhṛguruh*: Bhrigu; *aham*: I (am); *giram*: of the words; *asmi*: I am; *ekam aksharam*: the one syllable; *yajnanam*: of the *yajnas*; *japa-yajnah*: the *japa yajna*; *asmi*: I am; *sthavaranam*: of the established; *himalayah*: the Himalayas.

**"Of the great Rishis, I am Bhrigu. Among the words, I am the one syllable. Of the sacrifices, I am the *japa*. Among the established things, I am the Himalaya."**

Bhrigu is one of the Sapta Rishis, and was born from the mind of Brahma (*manasa putra*). Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) recognized him as a genuine authority, together with Visvamitra, Atri, Valmiki, Vamadeva, Yamadagni, Angira, Bharadvaja, Vasistha and Kasyapa (1.245 *Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga*). Contrarily to what many people believe, Buddha did not reject the authority of the genuine *Vedas*, but only their manipulated and distorted versions created by unscrupulous degraded brahmins.

The most famous episode about Brighu is about the origin of the special mark called *brighupada* ("foot of Brighu") that is found on Vishnu's chest: one day the assembled Rishis asked Brighu to establish who was the most elevated Personality of God - Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva. So the Rishi went to test the patience and generosity of these three great Personalities, stimulating their anger respectively by neglecting to salute Brahma (his father), by throwing insulting words at Shiva, and by actually kicking Vishnu on his chest.

Brighu is the father of one incarnation of Lakshmi, named Bhargavi, as well as of Sukracharya (also called Usana), Cyavana Rishi, and the two brothers Dhata and Vidhata. As the greatest authority on astrology/ astronomy, Brighu compiled a database of about 45 million templates with all the possible positions of the planets and stars, covering all past, present and future lifetimes of all human beings. Unfortunately most of these texts were lost during the islamic invasions, especially with the destruction of the university and library of Nalanda, where most of his writings were collected.

The "one syllable" (*ekam aksharam*) mentioned in this verse is the sacred syllable *om*, that is undoubtedly the most fundamental of utterances or discourses (the literal meaning of *gira*).

In chapters 3 and 4, we have elaborated on the meaning of *yajna* as sacred action or sacrifice, by which a human being participates to the support of the universe. Here Krishna states that among all acts of sacrifice, he is the *japa yajna* - the sacred religious action of softly chanting the Names of God. The *japa yajna* is the only act of worship that can be performed in all places and circumstances, and does not need any external paraphernalia; it is very simple and yet it is the most effective of all religious practices, capable of bringing enormous benefits both at spiritual and material levels.

In fact, the chanting of the Names of God constitutes the fundamental basis of all religious practices, because there is no ritual that can dispense with the preliminary action of calling the Deity to accept our worship, offerings and praise.

According to the instructions and the example of the greatest teachers of the Bhakti tradition, the chanting of the Names of God - any of the innumerable genuine Names we find in the scriptures - is the best and most intimate way to connect with the transcendental Personality of God, because it establishes a personal relationship.

We can see it also in our ordinary experience: even more than exchanging food, gifts or compliments, calling the name of a loved person attracts the direct attention and elicits an affectionate response between lovers.

So all forms of ritual worship to the Personality of God start from calling the Name of the Deity to be present personally either temporarily (*avahana*) or permanently (*prana pratistha*).

Then various pleasing items are offered (fresh water, scents, auspicious substances, nice clothes, ornaments, flower, incense, lamps etc), then food is offered (*bhoga* or *naivedya*), and finally prayers and praise (*vandana*).

The Himalayas are not exactly immovable, as they keep growing in height from the corrugating pressure of the tectonic plate of the Indian subcontinent pushing into the Asian land mass. However, the word *sthavaranam*, "stable", refers to the fact that the Himalayas "will not go away" but remain permanently, as they are the most considerably established feature of the planet, that can be easily seen even from outer space.

## VERSE 26

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।

aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṇāṃ devarṣīṇāṃ ca nāradaḥ ।

गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥ १०-२६ ॥

gandharvāṇāṃ citrarathaḥ siddhānāṃ kapilo munih ।। 10-26 ।।

*asvatthah*: the Asvattha banyan tree; *sarva-vrikshanam*: of all the plants; *devarshinam*: of the Rishis among the *devas*; *ca*: and; *naradah*: Narada; *gandharvanam*: of the Gandharvas; *citraratah*: Citraratha; *siddhanam*: of the Siddhas; *kapilah*: Kapila; *munih*: the silent sage.

**"Among all the plants, I am the *asvattha*. Among the Rishis of the Devas, I am Narada. Among the Gandharvas, I am Citraratha. Among the Siddhas, I am Kapila Muni."**

The *asvattha* (also called *pipal* or *bodhi*) is a particular type of banyan tree that does not always have aerial roots from the branches. Its fruits and leaves and even the bark are edible and have medicinal properties (including relieving toothache, asthma, thirst, diseases of blood and heart, gout, ulcers, and menstrual problems). Due to its beautiful shape, this tree is often planted for decorative purposes, and the leaves are used as canvas for small artistic paintings. Sometimes its seeds germinate over other trees, so it appears that the *asvattha* was born directly from the host tree. Its botanical name, *Ficus religiosa*, derives from the fact that the Buddha - Siddhartha Gautama - sat and meditated under this tree, as it has always been the tradition in ancient times, as the *asvattha* is considered a sacred plant, worthy of worship.

And in fact the *asvattha* has been sacred to Vedic peoples since time immemorial.

In some Harappan seals, we find the characteristic leaves of this tree crowning the buffalo horns of the "Pasupati", the bearded male sitting in meditation and surrounded by several wild animals. On other Harappan seals, we see the *asvattha* tree itself at the center of the image, together with 7 *matrikas* or forms of the Goddess; in some of such images the *matrikas* have bird faces, in others they have human faces but bird characteristics, such as feathers wings.

Devarshi Narada is a very special personality, a Rishi among the Devas, direct son of Brahma at the beginning of creation. He is the famous author of the *Narada bhakti sutras*, and he is always listed among the great Rishis present at the various important occasions all over the universe, but especially on Earth. His role in the Krishna lila described in *Bhagavata Purana* (10th canto) is crucial, and he appears several times in the narration.

In *Bhagavata Purana* (1.5.23-39, 1.6.1-36) Narada himself tells about his previous life while speaking with Vyasa, highlighting the importance of devotional service and especially of the company of self-realized souls who discuss about Krishna (*krsna katha*, 1.5.26) and the leftovers of the food that was offered to God (1.5.25). Interestingly, Narada compares devotional service to homeopathy (1.5.33), meaning that attachment, desire and identification with one's actions (when engaged in devotional service) are the medicine that will cure the conditioned soul from attachments, desires and identifications with material things.

Although in that previous lifetime Narada had been a mere 5 year old boy, son of an unmarried maidservant (that we could call a *sudrani* or low caste woman), he was immediately able to attain the level of Brahman realization (1.5.25, 26, 27, 31) because of his good behavior, sincerity and attentiveness (1.5.24). After the sudden death of his mother, the child started traveling like a *sannyasi*, until he finally reached a sacred and solitary place, near a river lake, and sat under a *pipal* tree (the sacred *ficus religiosa*

mentioned just before) to meditate until he obtained the full *darshana* of the transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Narayana spoke to him, saying that he would not get another opportunity for such *darshana* in that lifetime, but that he should consider this as a greater blessing, because the feeling of separation (*vipralambha*) and hankering (*lalasamayi*) for God is the greatest form of meditation, that keeps the heart completely free from all material contamination.

After several years spent in traveling and remembering God, the child left his body and remained in a transcendental body (*suddha tanum*, 1.6.28), and at the beginning of the subsequent creation, he was born from Brahma, to travel freely in the spiritual and material worlds to carry out his preaching work on behalf of the Lord.

Citraratha (literally, "beautiful chariot", referred to his *vimana* or airplane), is considered the king and the best singer among the Gandharvas, the *upadevas* or subordinate *devas* on the higher planetary systems that are famous for their performing arts. He is mentioned several times in puranic episodes, including one (*Bhagavata Purana* 9.16.3) in which his handsomeness fascinates the mind of Parasurama's mother Renuka, who saw him playing in the river with the Apsaras and totally forgot that she was supposed to be fetching water for an important religious ritual performed by her husband Jamadagni.

Citraratha also became the dance teacher of Arjuna, and out of affection, he gifted him with beautiful white horses that could move swiftly both on earth and in the sky and were invulnerable in battle. In *Mahabharata* we find a chapter entitled *Citraratha parva*, describing the early encounter between Arjuna and Citraratha (in which Citraratha is defeated in a duel), and another episode in the *Ghoshayatra parva*, where Citraratha (there called Citrasena) punishes Duryodhana for his impudence, and delivers him as a prisoner to Yudhisthira and Arjuna.

Kapila is the famous teacher of the Sankhya darshana (philosophy), based on the analysis of the components of the universe, including the fundamental principles of *purusha* and *prakriti*. The *Bhagavata Purana* recognizes him as an *avatara* of Vishnu (2.7.3) together with Dattatreya (2.7.4). Verse 3.24.17 mentions his characteristic golden hair.

Several chapters of the *Bhagavata Purana* (3.24.8-47, 3.25,1-44, 3.26.1-72, 3.27.1-30, 3.28.1-44, 3.29.1-45, 3.30.1-34, 3.31.1-48, 3.32.1-43, 3.33.1-37) are totally dedicated to the story of Kapila and his teachings to his mother Devahuti.

The Siddhas ("perfect beings") are a category that is often mentioned in the lists of divine beings, and it is said they reside in a particular dimension of this universe. They have become perfect in *yoga*, and therefore their bodies can spontaneously manifest the *siddhis* ("perfections") that we have already mentioned as *anima*, *mahima*, *laghima*, *vasitva*, *prapti*, *isitva*, *kamavasayita*, *prakamyā* and so on.

The word *muni* literally means "silent", and is used often to refer to Rishis and Self-realized souls who are very grave and serious in the concentration of their awareness, and therefore do not engage in idle gossip and ordinary social conversations. Beginners on the path of *yoga* are advised to practice *mauna*, "silence", by maintaining strict control over what they talk about and avoiding unnecessary conversations.

Unfortunately, some people had been mistakenly led to believe that a Self-realized soul never speaks (or should never speak) at all, and that those who teach/ preach must therefore be unqualified cheaters. So they claim "those who know, do not speak, and those who speak, do not know" - instantly demonstrating how, according to their own *diktat*, they should not be given any consideration as they do not know anything, because they are definitely speaking.

This foolish idea of a "never speaking sage" encourages the ignorant and sentimentalists to worship actual cheaters who pose as great sages simply by remaining silent (which is not so difficult) and to discredit the very process of teaching and preaching and discussing about transcendental topics - that as we have abundantly seen in *Bhagavad gita* and many other texts, is essential in Self-realization.

### VERSE 27

उच्चैःश्रवसमश्वानां विद्धि माममृतोद्भवम् ।

uccaiḥśravasamaśvānām viddhi māmamṛtodbhavam ।

ऐरावतं गजेन्द्राणां नराणां च नराधिपम् ॥ १०-२७ ॥

airāvatam gajendrāṇām narāṇām ca narādhipam ।। 10-27।।

*uccaihsravasam*: Ucchaihsrava: *asvanam*: of the horses; *viddhi*: you should know; *mam*: me; *amrita udbhavam*: risen from the nectar; *airavatam*: Airavata; *gajendranam*: of the kings of elephants; *naranam*: of the human beings; *ca*: and; *nara adhipam*: the chief.

**"Among the horses, I am Ucchaihsrava, born from the nectar. Among the kings of elephants, I am Airavata. Among the human beings, I am the chief/ king."**

In the history of the long wars between Suras and Asuras, we find a very interesting and famous episode called *samudra manthana* ("the churning of the ocean"), that also gave origin to the popular festival called Kumbha mela.

As related in several texts (*Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, and especially *Matsya Purana*), Vishnu suggested that Devas and Asuras should ally and cooperate to

produce the nectar of immortality, by churning the ocean of milk on which Kshirodakasayi Vishnu reclines. Vasuki was employed as the rope and mount Mandara as the churning rod; after the poisonous black froth (*halahala* or *kalakuta*) was removed by Shiva, the nectar (*amrita*) started to form, like butter when yogurt is churned, and several wonders (called *ratnas*, "jewels") also appeared. One of such wonders was Uchchaisrava, a beautiful and divine white horse, who was given to Bali Maharaja on the advice of Vishnu (*Bhagavata Purana*, 8.8.3).

Right next, the great elephant Airavata appeared (*Bhagavata Purana*, 8.8.4) - a large white pachiderm with 4 tusks, who became the foremost of the Guardians of the Directions in the universe. Together with him, the other 7 great *dik gajas* appeared (Pundarika, Vamana, Kumuda, Anjana, Puspadanta, Sarvabhauma, Supratika) as well as 8 female elephants headed by Abhramu.

After that the ocean produced the Kaustubha mani, the Padmaraga mani and the *parijata* flower, and finally the nectar of immortality, carried by Dhanvantari, the *avatara* who taught the science of *Ayur Veda*. At that time, Devas and Asuras started to quarrel about which party would get to drink the nectar first, and so Vishnu intervened again, taking the form of the female *avatara* Mohini, to distract and confuse the Asuras, and give the nectar to the Devas first.

In the process, a few drops of the nectar fell on Earth, in the places known as Har Ki Pauri at Haridvara ("the door to Hari") in Uttaranchala on the Ganga (and all subsequent *tirthas* on the Ganga down to the Bay of Bengal), and Prayaga ("the site of *yajnas*") at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati. The other two sites are Nasik (Maharashtra) on the Godavari (where the Triambakesvara  *jyotir linga* resides) and Ujjain on the Shipra river (Madhya Pradesh, where the Mahakalesvara  *jyotir linga* resides).

The precise times for the bathing in these places are: at Haridvara when Brihaspati (Jupiter) is in Kumbha rasi (Aquarius) and Surya (the Sun) is in Mesha rasi (Aries), at Prayaga when Brihaspati is in Vrisha rasi (Taurus) and Surya is in Makara rasi (Capricorn), at Nasik when both Brihaspati and Surya are in Simha rasi (Leo), and in Ujjain when Brihaspati is in Tula rasi (Libra) and Surya is in Mesha rasi (Aries).

According to the positions of other planets and stars, the assemblies are held once every 4 years or 12 years. The festival held every year in each of these sacred location is called Magha mela.

It is believed that all the Devas and 88,000 Rishis, as well as about 350 million residents of the higher planets, come to bathe in these sacred rivers at the auspicious times in various forms, visible and invisible.

The tradition of Kumbha mela was officialized by Adi Shankara to revive the Vedic *dharma* in his times after the Buddhist revolution had weakened the tradition.

The word *adhipam* literally means "the chief", and can be applied to all varieties of kings as leaders of human beings. Natural leaders have a special charisma, a radiating energy (*tejas*) that distinguishes them from ordinary men, and that is found in all cultures and societies.

Monarchy is the best government system because the king is directly responsible for the protection and well being of the *prajas* (subjects), and is expected to sacrifice himself for the kingdom in all possible ways.

## VERSE 28

आयुधानामहं वज्रं धेनूनामस्मि कामधुक् ।

āyudhānāmahaṁ vajraṁ dhenūnāmasmi kāmadhuk ।

प्रजनश्चास्मि कन्दर्पः सर्पाणामस्मि वासुकिः ॥ १०-२८ ॥

prajanaścāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇāmasmi vāsukih ॥ 10-28 ॥

*ayudhanam*: of the weapons; *aham*: I (am); *vajram*: the *vajra*; *dhenunam*: of the cows; *asmi*: I am; *kama dhuk*: the wish-fulfilling cow; *prajanaḥ*: of those who generate offspring; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *kandarpaḥ*: Kandarpa; *sarpanam*: of the snakes; *asmi*: I am; *vasukih*: Vasuki.

**"Among the weapons, I am the Vajra. Among the cows, I am the Kamadhenu. Of those who generate offspring, I am Kandarpa. Of the serpents, I am Vasuki."**

The word *ayudha* means "weapon" but also "insignia", therefore it mainly applies to the weapons held as symbols by the various forms of the Personalities of God, signifying the nature of their specific powers. The word *vajra* means "lightning" and also "diamond" (see for example *Bhagavata Purana* 3.15.29) and is considered the hardest and strongest material, unleashing immense power. The association of meanings between the lightning and the diamond calls for the piezoelectric properties of crystals, that can produce electricity. Piezoelectricity, already studied by Carl Linnaeus and Franz Aepinus, was demonstrated in 1880 by Jacques and Pierre Curie. It is the electric charge that accumulates in crystals, such as amber and quartz, topaz and other gems, some kinds of ceramics, as well as in cane sugar, bone, various proteins and DNA itself.

The piezoelectric effect is defined as the linear electromechanical interaction between the mechanical and the electrical state in crystalline materials with no inversion symmetry. It is presently used in the production of ultrasonic sound waves and other electronic frequencies (as in the Sonar), as well as for the ignition of gas lighters for example in cooking ranges.

Vedic civilization, like several other ancient cultures, had a deep knowledge about the properties of crystals and used them extensively. It is said that Atlantis - the lost continent mentioned by Plato and others - was destroyed because of an ill-fated incident from tampering with its power-center working with crystals. Lightning is another very important universal symbol of power, revered as divine not only by Hindus and Buddhists, but also by the Roman, Greek and Hellenistic cultures and the pre-abrahamic Canaanite culture, where the King of Gods - called respectively Jupiter, Zeus, and Baal (literally, "the Lord") - were iconically represented holding the lightning bolt.

Specifically about Baal, we can mention here that his worship in the Mediterranean was centered around the ancient city of Baalbek in Lebanon, later renamed Heliopolis. It was originally built before 9000 BCE with huge stones estimated to weight 800 to 1500 tons each, perfectly shaped and arranged to form a very big platform - something that even the most advanced contemporary technology (or "western" type) is unable to do.

Vasuki, the Nagaraja, is Shiva's snake, and his sister (i.e. female manifestation) is Manasa, a form of the Mother Goddess. He is one of the 8 great Naga kings, together with Nanda, Upananda, Sagara, Takshaka, Balavan, Anavatapta and Utpala. He is also revered in Chinese and Japanese traditions, which have a deep connection with the Nagas or celestial Dragons, of whom the Chinese emperor was considered to be a direct descendant.

As we have already mentioned, Vasuki is also one of the protagonists of the *samudra manthana* (the churning of the ocean) that produced the nectar of immortality.

Kandarpa, also called Kamadeva, Ananga and Madana, is the God of erotic love. He holds a bow and arrows made with flowers, rides a parrot and is accompanied by his wife Rati ("attachment"). The parrot - a very romantic and affectionate creature - also appears as a symbol in the iconography of Matangi (a form of the Mother Goddess worshiped in Sri Vidya rituals) and Radha/ Vrinda Devi.

Krishna, too, is identified with Kamadeva in the famous Kama gayatri. The *Tantraraja tantra* says that Matangi, the Mother Goddess, manifested as the six forms of Krishna known as Kamaraja Gopala, Manmatha Gopala, Kandarpa Gopala, Makaraketana Gopala and Manobhava Gopala.

The fundamental principle of erotic love represented by Kandarpa is essential in the sexual act of procreation (considered perfectly moral and even sacred in Vedic culture) and therefore it represents Krishna as the essence of existence.

## VERSE 29

अनन्तश्चास्मि नागानां वरुणो यादसामहम् ।

anantaścāsmi nāgānām varuṇo yādasāmaham ।

पितृणामर्यमा चास्मि यमः संयमतामहम् ॥ १०-२९ ॥

pitṛṇāmaryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṁyamatāmaham ।। 10-29 ।।

*anantah*: Ananta; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *naganam*: of the Nagas; *varunah*: Varuna; *yadasam*: of those who are connected with

water; *aham*: I (am); *pitrinam*: of the Pitris; *aryama*: Aryama; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *yamah*: Yama; *samyamatam*: of the enforcers/controllers; *aham*: I (am).

**"Of the Nagas, I am Ananta. Of the aquatic principles, I am Varuna. Among the Pitris, I am Aryama, and among the law enforcers, I am Yama."**

There seems to be a superimposition between the *sarpas* of the previous verse (10.28) and the *nagas* of this verse, with Vasuki and Ananta Sesha mentioned respectively. This could be explained by considering that the category of *sarpas* also includes ordinary snakes, so it is fitting to be topped by a divine Naga like Vasuki. On the other hand, the Nagas are all divine serpents, with powers far exceeding those of human beings, and Ananta Sesha Naga cannot be called a mere *sarpa* (serpent). It is a different and higher level.

Chapter 25 of the 5th canto of the *Bhagavata Purana* is all dedicated to elaborations about Ananta Sesha. An important point we should make in this regard is that Ananta Sankarshana is said to support all the planets with his many heads. The word *sankarshana* literally means "that which attracts together", and effectively expresses the natural law known as gravity.

Ananta, also called Sankarshana, is a direct emanation of Mahavishnu in the first *chatur vyuha* (Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha) and is not different from Shiva.

On this point, different groups feel differently: some fundamentalist *vaishnavas* believe that Shiva is simply a devotee of Sankarshana, while fundamentalist *shaivites* see Sankarshana as an emanation of the Shiva principle - identifying Mahavishnu as Sadashiva, the origin of all material universes. We can happily solve this conundrum by applying the brilliant perspective

(*darshana*) offered by Chaitanya, and called *acintya bheda abheda tattva* ("inconceivably simultaneous difference and non-difference"). This vision has a long and very popular tradition that spans centuries if not millennia before the appearance of Chaitanya, who simply offered it as the conclusion of the debate on vedic perspectives that had started with Adi Shankara and then continued with Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Madhva.

In fact, especially in Orissa but also in many other regions we find the worship of Hari-Hara (the composite form of Hari and Hara - Vishnu and Shiva as one person) and Madhava ("the husband of the Mother Goddess"). The identification or strict connection of Ananta with Shiva is confirmed as the end of Brahma's day, it is the fire from Ananta's thousand mouths that consumes the universe (*Bhagavata Purana* 3.11.30, 4.24.36).

Some extremist *vaishnavas*, who have not realized the meaning of the *tattva* (especially its *darshana* called *acintya bhedabheda*), claim that worshipping Shiva or chanting his name constitutes an offense against Vishnu, and they quote the list of 10 offenses to be avoided in the chanting of the holy Names. The original text of *Padma Purana* (*Brahma Kanda*, 25.15-18) says: *sivasya sri-visnor ya iha guna-namadi-sakalam, dhiya bhinnam pasyet na khalu hari-namahita-karah*.

The translation offered by the *vaishnava* extremists is as follows: "The holy Name of Krishna is source of all auspiciousness. The name, form, qualities of Vishnu are all transcendental. Therefore it is offensive to separate God, the Supreme Person (Vishnu) from his holy name, form, or transcendental qualities and pastimes, considering them material."

Although this is one of the valid translations of the verse, it becomes ambiguous with the addition that is sometimes presented as the second part of the translation: "Similarly, it is blasphemous

to think that the names of the demigods such as Shiva, Brahma etc are on the same level of the name of Vishnu, or that the demigods are equal to Vishnu."

This invented meaning (in which *bhinna*, "separate" or "different" is taken to mean its exact opposite, i.e. "equal") is compounded by the use of the improper term "demigod", that literally means "half god" - a word created by abrahamic academia to discredit the ancient Deities of pre-abrahamic religions by implying that they were not really God, but merely some powerful beings like angels - specifically the "fallen angels" such as Satan and his companions.

We need to remember here that the "flavor" of English taught in British colonial schools in India (including the Scottish College in Calcutta) was certainly not supportive towards the indigenous culture and religion, and although students were not required to formally convert to Christianity, their use of language was intentionally poisoned from the very start of their schooling, when their innocent minds were taught false and belittling linguistic equivalences. Another famous example is the word "idol", that unfortunately is still used by a majority of Indian Hindus to indicate their own *ista devata*.

To clarify any possible misunderstanding about that verse from *Padma Purana*, we therefore offer a complementary (not opposite) translation as follows: *sivasya sri-visnor ya iha guna-namadi-sakalam, dhiya bhinnam pasyet na khalu hari-namahita-karah*, "To contemplate, in one's meditation, any difference/ separation between the holy names, qualities etc, of Shiva and Vishnu: this certainly destroys the benefits of chanting the name of Hari."

Here is the dictionary meaning of the words: *sivasya*: of Shiva; *sri visnor*: of Sri Vishnu; *yah*: s/he; *iha*: here/ certainly; *guna-namadi*: the qualities, names etc; *sakalam*: everything; *dhiya*: in meditation; *bhinnam*: separated; *pasyet*: sees/ considers; *na khalu*: most

certainly not; *hari-nama*: the name of Hari; *hita*: benefit; *karah*: that does.

*Brihad Bhagavatamrita* (1.2.86) very clearly confirms this meaning by stating: *krsnac chivasya bhedeksa maha-dosa-kari mata, ago bhagavata svasmin ksamyate na sive krtam*, "One who sees some difference between Krishna and Shiva is committing a great offense. Krishna may excuse someone who commits *aparadha* to his own lotus feet, but will never excuse one who commits *aparadha* at the lotus feet of Shiva".

Krsna himself in *Bhagavata Purana* (10.88.38-39) addresses Shiva as *jagat guru*, and says, "If someone commits *aparadha* to such a *mahajana* and *jagat guru* as you are, they will never get any auspiciousness". In this context, we may remember that in *Bhagavata Purana* Krishna recommends: *acharyam mam vijaniyan navamanyeta karhicit*, "One should know that the spiritual teacher is non-different from me." (11.17.27)

It just does not make sense to say that equating *jagat guru* Shiva Mahadeva with Krishna constitutes one of the most serious offenses in devotional service. Chaitanya himself always offered respectful and loving worship to Shiva, as we can see from the complete story of his life (that we have summarized in another publication).

Also, we can refer to the *Shivastakam* prayers (text 7), quoted by Murari Gupta in his *Chaitanya Charita Mahakavya*, where Chaitanya says: *sivaya sarva-gurave namo namah*; "I repeatedly offer my obeisances to Shiva, who is the *guru* of everyone."

This verse also mentions Varuna and Aryama, in connection to the *yadasas* and the *pitris* respectively. The *yadasas* are divine/elemental personalities controlling the waters, comparable to the nymphs of the sacred stories of ancient Europe; among them

Varuna is certainly the supreme, as he is the personification of all waters including the ocean, and is listed as one of the 12 Adityas.

Aryama is also one of the 12 Adityas, and therefore he is considered a manifestation of Surya. He resides on Pitriloka, the planet or dimension accessible to those great personalities who have perfectly fulfilled their duties in their lifetime on Earth, and as such, he is called as witness during marriages.

Following the thread of associations, next Krishna mentions Yama, the Deva who could be described as the highest magistrate of the supreme court of the universe. Yamaraja also resides on Pitriloka, but he is primarily concerned with judging the conditioned souls who have committed serious crimes during their life as human beings; his servants, the Yamadutas, can be equated with a special police force, who pick up the culprits at the time of death and take them to court for the sentence.

### VERSE 30

प्रह्लादश्चास्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलयतामहम् ।

prahlādaścāsmi daityānām kālah kalayatāmaham ।

मृगाणां च मृगेन्द्रोऽहं वैनतेयश्च पक्षिणाम् ॥ १०-३० ॥

mṛgāṇām ca mṛgendro'haṁ vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām ।। 10-30 ।।

*prahladah*: Prahlada; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *daityanam*: of the Daityas; *kalah*: time; *kalayatam*: of the conquerors/ measuring parts; *aham*: I (am); *mrganam*: of the animals; *ca*: and; *mriga indrah*: the king of animals; *aham*: I (am); *vainateyah*: the son of Vinata; *ca*: and; *pakshinam*: of the birds.

**"Among the Daityas I am Prahlada. Among the conquerors I am Time. I am also the king of the animals among the beasts, and the son of Vinata among the birds."**

In the *Bhagavata Purana*, Prahlada's story and teachings occupy all the 15 chapters of the 7th canto, and his name comes up very frequently as an example of a great divine personality.

Some translate *daityas* as "demons", but this can cause considerable confusion. According to the English dictionary, a *demon* is an evil spirit; in abrahamic cultures this definition is equated with the devil, and refers to the various manifestations of Satan the "bad God", similar to the *jinn*s or diabolic ghosts that can enter the bodies of living beings and possess them. In ancient Greece, the *daimon* was a powerful spirit that could either protect or harm human beings, and it was often depicted in a serpent form (that we would call Naga).

However, anyone who has heard Prahlada's story will agree that there is/ was absolutely nothing evil or demoniac in him - on the contrary, he is/ was a very saintly person and deeply devoted to Vishnu. He is actually one of the 12 *mahajanas*, the highest authorities on spiritual science and devotional service to Vishnu. So, a better translation of the word *daitya* is in order, for us to understand the example offered by Krishna in this verse. The Daityas are simply the sons of Diti, descendants of Kasyapa Rishi just like the Devas (also called Adityas or sons of Aditi). True, the cultural tradition of the Daityas keeps them in opposition against the Devas and therefore they can generally be called Asuras, but applying such definition to Prahlada would be a seriously wrong prejudice based on birth.

The word *kalayatam* is a tricky one. From the point of view of grammar and etymology, it means "of those who are connected with *kala*" (with a short "a"). Now, *kala* (with a short "a") means

"part", "measure", "flow", and obviously the word that refers to time, *kala* (with a long "a") is related to it as "what is measured" or "which flows". Therefore we could translate the passage as "among those who calculate and control time, I am Time (itself)".

Previous commentators have chosen to translate *kalayatam* as "among the subduers", "among those who conquer", or "among those who destroy". This is also correct, because destruction is nothing but the end of the calculated time allotted to a particular material manifestation, and those who can destroy a thing are also in control of it. The name Kala (with a long "a") indicating Time is also translated as "black", and is applied to the names of fierce manifestations of Godhead such as Kala Bhairava (an aspect of Shiva) and Kali Bhairavi (an aspect of Shakti) - both associated with the destruction of the universe, as Time obviously is.

The word *mriga*, "animal", is generally applied to mammals - and not to birds or reptiles or fish, for example. The expression *mriga indra* literally means "the king of animals", and it could be applied to the lion, or to any other powerful animal. In any case, the sense of the statement is clear.

Vainateya, "the son of Vinata", is Garuda, the carrier of Vishnu. He is depicted as a powerful being, half human and half eagle, but his body is in constant and direct personal touch with Vishnu, therefore it cannot be ordinarily material; this is confirmed by the descriptions according to which the movement of Garuda's wing vibrates the Vedic hymns.

Garuda is popular also as in several other cultures, and especially in Mongolian shamanism we find him clearly mentioned as Han Garid, the Thunderbird - the gigantic eagle that is able to fly in outer space. Through early migrations, the Mongolian tribes carried their faith to north America and this is how we find Garuda on many totem poles in Native American tribal traditions.

## VERSE 31

पवनः पवतामस्मि रामः शस्त्रभृतामहम् ।

pavanaḥ pavatāmasmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtāmaham ।

झषाणां मकरश्चास्मि स्रोतसामस्मि जाह्नवी ॥ १०-३१ ॥

jhaṣāṇāṃ makaraścāsmi srotasāmasmi jāhnavī ।। 10-31 ।।

*pavanaḥ*: Pavana; *pavatam*: of the purifiers; *asmi*: I am; *ramah*: Rama; *sastra-bhritam*: of those who carry weapons; *aham*: I (am); *jhashanam*: of the fish; *makarah*: the shark/ alligator; *ca*: and; *asmi*: I am; *srotasam*: of the flowing rivers; *asmi*: I am; *jahnavi*: the daughter of Jahnu.

**"Among the purifiers, I am Pavana. Among those who carry weapons, I am Rama. Among the water creatures, I am the makara. Among the flowing rivers, I am Jahnavi."**

Pavana ("the purifier") is another name of Vayu, the wind. In this regard we may remember one of the famous names of Hanuman, son of Vayu, as Pavana suta. The wind can never really become contaminated for a long time, although it effectively carries away bad smells, dust, germs, smoke and so on. As soon as its speed slows down in some open space, the wind drops the contaminants back to earth and lets them be washed away by rain, to be recycled within nature.

At a deeper level, we could contemplate the purifying effect of breathing (such as in *pranayama*) over the mind and especially over emotions. Even simply getting a bit of fresh air or taking a few deep breaths will clarify the mind from the fumes of intoxication or from the influence of bad company.

The Rama mentioned in the verse could be Ramachandra, the great archer, the valiant warrior prince that is universally recognized as

an *avatara* of Vishnu. However, there is another famous weapon carrier by the name of Rama - Parasurama, "the Rama of the axe", also recognized as a Vishnu *avatara*. The entire *Ramayana* is dedicated to the wonderful story of Ramachandra, but both *avataras* are described in 9th canto of the *Bhagavata Purana* (respectively chapters 10 to 11 for Ramachandra and 15 to 16 for Parasurama).

The word *jhasa* does not refer exclusively to fish (called *mina*), but includes all aquatic animals. For example, it is used to describe the crocodile that attacked Gajendra (3.19.35). The definition of *makara* is sometimes translated as "shark" and sometimes as "crocodile", but looking at the traditional depictions we see that it is quite different from both - a sort of monster with the head similar to a crocodile's and the tail of a fish.

Sometimes the head's picture resembles an elephant's, with a trunk that could also be a long snout like a boar's, or even a goat's or a deer's horn. The *makara* is especially famous because it represents one of the zodiac signs (*makara rasi*), corresponding to the western Capricorn - an extraordinary animal that is generally represented having a fish tail and a goat's head. It is very much possible that such an animal really exists, or existed, hidden in some mysterious abysses below the surface of the ocean, like so many other creatures that have been considered mythological or extinct because they show themselves only rarely.

Jahnvi is another name of Ganga, the Ganges river. It originates from a puranic episode regarding the descent of the holy river to Earth. The Ganges is believed to be created by the waters of the Karana Ocean, that leaked through the covering of the universe when Vamana's foot pierced it.

Ganga remained in the heavenly planets for a very long time, then (as described in *Bhagavata Purana*, chapter 17 of canto 5, and

chapter 9 of canto 9) she agreed to descend to Earth to bless Bhagiratha for his long austerities. For this reason, Ganga is also known as Bhagirathi.

When the rushing Ganges swept the land, she arrived at the *ashrama* of Jahnu Rishi, who was concerned about the disasters caused by the flood. The Rishi simply opened his mouth and swallowed the entire flow of the river. When Bhagiratha requested him to release the river, so that his own ancestors could be purified from their bad actions, Jahnu let her flow out of his ear - that is considered a clean part of the body as it is purified by the hearing of sacred *mantras*. This is the reason why *dvijas* - the twiceborn who wear the sacred thread - hang it on their ear when they go to the bathroom. Since the Ganges came out from Jahnu's body, she is considered his daughter.

### VERSE 32

सर्गाणामादिरन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन ।

sargāṇāmādirantaśca madhyam caivāhamarjuna ।

अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां वादः प्रवदतामहम् ॥ १०-३२ ॥

adhyātmavidyā vidyānām vādaḥ pravadatāmaham ।। 10-32 ।।

*sarganam*: of creations; *adih*: the beginning; *antah*: the end; *ca*: and; *madhyam*: the middle; *ca*: and; *eva*: certainly; *aham*: I (am); *arjuna*: Arjuna; *adhyatma-vidya*: the knowledge of the original Self; *vidyanam*: of sciences; *vadah*: the conclusion; *pravadatam*: of the discussions; *aham*: I (am).

**"Of all creations, I am the beginning, middle and end. O Arjuna, among the sciences I am the science of the *atman*, and in all discussions I am the conclusion."**

The word *sarga* ("creation", "manifestation") is used here in the plural form, therefore it indicates a variety of creations all along the manifestation of the universe. Everything we know in this world has a beginning, an intermediate period and an end, because this is the rule for all material things - situations, experiences, bodies, enterprises, buildings, and even empires.

*Adhyatma* is the original transcendental Self, the *atman* of the *atman*, so the *adhyatma vidya* is the spiritual science that makes us understand both ourselves and God - as we are of the same nature.

The science of the Self is the most important form of knowledge, because it gives meaning to all the rest. We have already mentioned this point in reference to verse 9.2, that described Krishna's teachings as *raja vidya*, "the king of all knowledge". Knowing the Self means understanding the subject of all knowledge, by which the very concept of knowledge becomes actually relevant. Without the knower, there is no meaning to the idea of knowledge.

In this connection, it might be interesting here to remember Werner Heisenberg, the father of quantum physics, who formulated the principle of uncertainty, according to which the observer influences the observed system by the simple fact of observing it. So when we try to measure a system, the system behaves differently. According to the Vedic knowledge of the *adhyatman*, the entire Reality is solely based on Consciousness, and everything else is created by it.

This *adhyatma vidya* is the central part of Vedic knowledge, and is extensively explained in *Bhagavad gita*, as well as in the *Upanishads* and in the *Vedanta sutras*. We are humbly trying our best to bring such an invaluable treasure to the attention of all classes of people, by presenting it in such a way that it can be understood in practice as well as in theory.

Such work requires a tireless, patient, enthusiastic, selfless and determined engagement in debate or discussion, as there is no other way to establish knowledge. In present times, however, people are often confused about the idea of debate or discussion, especially because of the popular misconception that wants to give "equal opportunities" to all. Therefore we often find people who believe that all opinions should be equally considered valid, no matter how unfounded they are. Some particularly confused people become angry and envious when a better proposition is presented, and accuse a good teacher of being arrogant for trying to defeat sheer ignorance.

Of course there are also many people who engage in discussions with ill motives, without any actual desire to discover and understand the truth and the facts (and the conclusion) - which as we find in this verse, constitutes the very purpose and essence of the discussion. To better understand the meaning of the term *vada*, it is useful to compare it with the other modalities of discussions listed in the *Nyaya shastra* (the science of logic, attributed to Akshapada Gautama Rishi).

*Vada* is the genuinely correct debate, the open minded discussion, while the other (faulty and invalid) methods are called *vitanda* (wrangling), *hetvabhasa* (illogical argument), *chala* (changing the topic or "beating around the bush", so to speak), *avayava* (syllogism), *jati* (false generalization), *nigraha sthana* (stalling position) and *jalpa* (pointless arguments). Other possible positions are *tarka* (hypothetical reasoning), *nirnaya* (compromise) and *samsaya* (doubt). The other categories (*padarthas*) contemplated by Nyaya are the all-important *pramana* (proof or evidence), *prameya* (objects of knowledge), *prayojana* (purpose) and *dristanta* (example).

A correct application of *vada* (also called *vagvada*, or "spoken discussion") is aimed at sincerely establishing the *tattva*

(substance) and *siddhanta* (perfect conclusion), by presenting different perspectives of the same Reality in order to deepen the vision and expand the minds of the participants.

### VERSE 33

अक्षराणामकारोऽस्मि द्वन्द्वः सामासिकस्य च ।

akṣarāṇāmakāro'smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca ।

अहमेवाक्षयः कालो धाताहं विश्वतोमुखः ॥ १०-३३ ॥

ahamevākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṁ viśvatomukhaḥ ।। 10-33 ।।

*aksharanam*: of the letters; *a-karo*: the letter A; *asmi*: I am; *dvandvah*: the double word; *samasikasya*: of compound words; *ca*: and; *aham*: I (am); *eva*: certainly; *akshayah*: imperishable; *kalah*: time; *dhata*: the creator/ destiny; *aham*: I (am); *visvato-mukhah*: (the one) whose faces are everywhere.

**"Of the letters, I am the A. Of the compound words, I am the *dvandva*. I am Time eternal, the creator, and the omnipresent (consciousness of the universe)."**

An identical statement is found in *Bhagavata Purana* (11.16.12) in Krishna's instructions to Uddhava: *aksharanam akaro smi*, "Among the letters I am the A".

The Sanskrit devanagari script is a special alphabet system, where all consonants are built "modularly" on the support of the simple straight line/ basic sound that constitutes the letter A.

The concept of *akshara* unites both meanings of "letter" and "syllable": unlike the Latin alphabet, where each consonant is standing alone (B, C, D, M, G etc), Sanskrit has each consonant

accompanied or supported by a vocalic sound that enables its pronunciation (normally, A). Therefore when we refer to the consonants in Sanskrit, we call them Ba, Ca, Da, Ma and so on. Actually the same thing happens, albeit not officially, also in the European languages, because the consonants by themselves are spelled as Bi, Ci, Di, eM, Gi, and so on.

Sanskrit/ Devanagari scientifically applies this instinctive concept and codifies it precisely: this already shows us the type of mental structure that is the basis of Vedic knowledge - the precise understanding and the scientific formulation of the natural universal laws instinctively known and applied by everyone. The Sanskrit alphabet includes 15 vowels and 34 simple consonants, 4 of which (Ra, Ya, La, Va) are considered "semi-vowels" and according to the laws of *sandhi* ("euphonic ties") they can transform into their vocalic counterparts or in special consonantic groups with a particular graphic configuration. The number of composite letters/ syllables is very large - a tribute to the appreciation of unity in diversity demonstrated by Vedic culture.

A *samasa* or *samasika* is the nominal compound (union of more words in the same grammatical case) where only the final element receives the case inflection. The various forms of *samasikas* are: *avyayibhava* ("unchangeable", or indeclinable, where the first word has primacy), *tatpurusha* ("determinative", where the second word has primacy either as *vyadhikarana* or "instrumental" or *karmadharaya* or "descriptive of the action"), *upapada samasa* (union with noun and verb), *bahuvrihi* ("possessive" or "qualifying by attributes"), *amredita* (iterative), *aluka samasa* (compound where both words express the case declination), and *dvandva* ("coordinative"). The *dvandva* type connects words logically united by the copulative or coordinative conjunction ("and").

The second part of the verse marks a pause in the comparative series, offering three distinct and independent statements, that can

also be connected together to evoke a multi-dimensional vision of the essence of Reality. Time eternal is the origin of the material creation, and is the continuum on which everything is based.

The name *dhata* ("the giver") means both "creator" and "destiny", as well as "provider" and "providence". The expression *visvato mukhah* literally means "whose faces are everywhere".

### VERSE 34

मृत्युः सर्वहरश्चाहमुद्भवश्च भविष्यताम् ।

*mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaścāhamudbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām ।*

कीर्तिः श्रीर्वाक् नारीणां स्मृतिर्मेधा धृतिः क्षमा ॥ १०-३४ ॥

*kīrtiḥ śrīrvākca nārīṇāṃ smṛtirmedhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā ।। 10-34 ।।*

*mṛtyuh*: death; *sarva-harah*: of all those who take away; *ca*: and; *aham*: I (am); *udbhavah*: the act of creation; *ca*: and; *bhaviṣyatam*: of the future things; *kirtih*: good fame; *srih*: beauty and opulence; *vak*: speech; *ca*: and; *narinam*: of women; *smritih*: memory; *medha*: intelligence; *dhritih*: determination; *kshama*: patience.

**"Among those who take away things, I am death. Of future things, I am the fulfillment. In women, I am fame, splendor, eloquence, memory, intelligence, determination and patience."**

*Hara* means "who takes away", and applied to God, it refers both to the removal of the devotee's sufferings and difficulties, and to the need of developing complete dedication in devotion - relinquishing all other attachments.

In *Bhagavata Purana* (10.88.8), Krishna is quoted to have stated: *yasyaham anugruhnamī harisyē tad dhanam sanaiḥ, tato adhanam*

*tyajyanti asya svajana duhkha duhkhitam*, "When I want to show special favor to someone, I gradually take away all his material assets, so that he is abandoned by everyone, and suffers a setback after another".

The logic of this statement is that only after becoming disillusioned with material attachments, the conditioned soul starts questioning himself about the purpose of life, and turns towards a higher dimension of awareness. As we can remember, this is also the starting point of the discussion between Krishna and Arjuna in *Bhagavad gita*.

Among all the losses we can face in this world, death is certainly the most radical, as by leaving the body we also lose everything that was related to the body - wealth, relationships, home, social position, attainments, identifications, and so on. However, death is simply a passage that will take us to a future life, just like any loss is simply a pre-requisite for the attainment of something better and more valuable - if we are able to see it, appreciate it and seize it at the proper time.

The word *udbhava* means "creation", "completion", "production", "fulfillment", and "success", indicating the process of something becoming a reality. Therefore, it is also used to mean "prosperity", and even "change"; however, such change is not necessarily about increasing possessions or identifications. The 6 changes (*udbhavas*) are listed as: birth, growth, maturity, reproduction, decline, and death.

The word *bhavisyatam* literally means "of the things that will be/become".

The second part of the verse lists a series of special qualities that according to Krishna are to be considered the epitome or perfection of femininity. The mysoginist propounders of the "patriarchal

model" in Hinduism superimpose - more or less unconsciously - the idea of modesty with the typically abrahamic mentality of absolute submission of the women, that should be generally considered a mere extension of their husbands. But Krishna does not speak here of submission, shyness, abnegation, silence, or capability to breed.

This is because Vedic culture has always appreciated the eloquence of women, starting from Sarasvati, the form of the Mother Goddess that is worshiped by all as she personifies knowledge, learning, and the power of speech. Another name of Sarasvati is Vak ("speech"). Another name still is Sarada ("giving the essence") while Sarasvati means "knowing the essence").

And this does not simply concern the Goddesses, but includes all the women as well. In the marriage hymn of the *Rig Veda* (10.85.26) it is said that the bride "addresses the assembly like a general addresses the army". Then *Rig Veda* continues (10. 159.2) describing the position of a married woman in the words of Sachi Paulomi: "I am the banner. I am the guide. I possess excellent eloquence; my husband cooperates with me and follows my will."

The name Sri ("beauty and opulence") is also honored as a major form of the Mother Goddess - Lakshmi, also called Kamala or Padmavati, because she holds lotus flowers (the symbol of the Sun) besides being seated on a lotus.

The word *sri* is regularly added - to signify the beneficent presence of Lakshmi - to the names of all respectable and glorious personalities, not only the divine Personalities such as Sri Vishnu, Sri Krishna, etc, but also ordinary human beings in everyday dealings. In Orissa, this custom is even more explicit, as married men are addressed as *sri-yukta* ("united with Sri"), signifying the mystical union of the male principle to the female principle during the marriage ritual.

Similarly, the new bride is worshiped ritually and addressed as Lakshmi herself when she enters the house of her husband. If all Hindus really practiced what their tradition teaches, the world would be a much better place, especially if girl children were encouraged and supported to stand up to such a high role in family and society.

Besides eloquence and opulence, the other qualities listed by Krishna as essential characteristics of femininity are intelligence (*medha*) and memory (*smriti*), determination (*dhriti*) as well as patience/ tolerance (*dhriti*), qualities that ensure that women will not misuse their position in family and society. More specifically, *medha* indicates the ability to apply knowledge to practical situations, while *dhriti* conveys the meanings of courage, fortitude and endurance, as well as support for all, exemplified by Bhumi, Mother Earth.

The word *kirti* ("good fame") comes from the same root of *kirtana*, and refers to people speaking highly of the qualities and activities of women - who definitely should not be hidden or segregated within the ladies' apartments or behind veils.

Kirti is also considered as another name of Gayatri, the Mother of the *Vedas*.

It may be interesting to note here that in the symbolic genealogical tables described in the *Puranas*, Kirti, Medha, Dhriti, Smriti and Kshama are the names of *prajapati* Daksha's daughters, who married great personalities such as Dharma (Kirti, Medha, Dhriti), Angira (Smriti) and Pulaha (Kshama).

In the same line, Sri was the daughter of Bhrigu and Khyati (daughter of Daksha) and married Vishnu. Thus another interpretation of the verse could refer to these great ladies rather than simply to the qualities they represent.

## VERSE 35

बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम् ।

bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnaṁ gāyatrī chandasāmaham ।

मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहमृतूनां कुसुमाकरः ॥ १०-३५ ॥

māsānāṁ mārḡasīrṣo'hamṛtūnāṁ kusumākaraḥ ॥ 10-35 ॥

*brihat-sama*: the *Brihat Sama*; *tatha*: as well; *samnam*: of the (hymns) of the *Sama*; *gayatri*: the *Gayatri*; *chandasam*: of poetic metrics; *aham*: I (am); *masanam*: of the months; *marga-sirshah*: the month of Margasirsha; *aham*: I (am); *ritunam*: of the seasons; *kusuma karah*: the maker of flowers.

**"Among the hymns of the *Sama Veda*, I am the *Brihat Sama*. Among the forms of poetry I am the *Gayatri*. Among the months I am Margasirsha. Among the seasons, I am the one that brings flowers."**

The name *brihat* literally means "great", so we can easily understand the high fame of this particular hymn in the *Sama Veda samhita*, sung by the *udgatar rtivik* during the *soma yajna* to summarize the entire purpose of the hymns of the *Veda samhitas* accompanying the performance of rituals. It is the 7th hymn in the second book (*Uhaganas*) of the traditional collection; it is dedicated to Indra and its translation goes as follows: "Since very ancient times we have sung the hymns of prayers to Indra. (Our ancestors) have sung this *Brihat* in many rituals, expressing the sentiments of worshipers. Indra has given us great wealth, and both the worlds, and the Sun. Therefore we mix milk with the pure and radiant juice of the *soma* for Indra's pleasure."

The *Gayatri* - the "Mother of the *Vedas*" - is the most famous *mantra* in Vedic tradition, and it represents the entire corpus of

Vedic knowledge that is transmitted by the *guru* to the disciple together with the sacred thread at the time of *diksha* (initiation), also called *upanayana samskara*. The *Gayatri mantra* is the sacred thread (*sutra*) that binds together the evolved human beings with the other *suras* ("divine beings") who are engaged in supporting the progress and well being of the universe, both materially and spiritually.

The original *Gayatri*, quoted in *Rig Veda* 3.62.10, *Yajur Veda* 3.35, 36.3, 22.9 and *Sama Veda* 1.462, is: *om bhuh bhuvah svah, tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yah nah prachodayat*, "Om! Bhu! Bhvah! Svah! That Divine Supreme (Existence) is radiant and purifying like the Sun. May our intellect receive inspiration from it."

From this original *Gayatri*, the Rishis have created more versions dedicated to the meditation on Ganesha, Surya, Vishnu, Narayana, Nrisimha, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Durga, Lakshmi, Radha, Sita, Sarasvati, Hanuman, Brahma, Indra, Chandra, Yama, Bhumi, Varuna, Tulasi, Hamsa and Hayagriva.

So important and famous is the *Gayatri mantra*, that it gave its name to the first and foremost metric form in Sanskrit poetry, composed by 3 *padas* (verses, literally "positions" or "feet") of 8 syllables each of precise length (*matra*). The other metric forms (*chandasa*) of Sanskrit poetry are the Ushnika, with 4 *padas* of 7 syllables, the Anustubha with 4 *padas* of 8 syllables, the Brihati with 4 *padas* of 9 syllables, the Pankti with 4 *padas* of 10 syllables, the Tristubha with 4 *padas* of 11 syllables and the Jagati, with 4 *padas* of 12 syllables.

In the Vedic calendar, time are calculated according both systems - the solar and the lunar - adjusting the differences with the addition of one special month (Purushottama adhika) every few years. The solar months, however, do not correspond each to the western

months because they are calculated to start from the *sankranti*, the day in which the Sun enters each of the Zodiac signs. Western astrology calculates these around the 21 of each month (as they were in ancient times), but since Vedic astrology contemplates the notion of the variable represented by the precession of the equinoxes, it calculates the *sankranti* days in their actual present positions, that fall around the middle of the western months.

Marga sirsha or Marga sira ("the head of the road") is also called Aग्रहयाना ("ahead of the journey") and corresponds to November-December. In India it is harvest time, and still today the celebration of the offering of the first grains (called Pongal in south India) marks the beginning of an important cycle in the year. On the higher planets, this time marks the start of the "working day" for the Devas, who have awakened on Hari utthapana ekadasi (the 11th day of the waxing moon in the previous month of Kartika) and have now completed their morning rituals. We may remember here that one complete year on Earth equals to one single day on the higher planetary systems.

Seasons (*ritus*) are calculated according to the inclination of the Earth in respect to the Sun; it is interesting to note that in the Vedic calendar there are six seasons instead of the four seasons usually considered in the European calendar (winter, spring, summer, autumn).

The six Vedic seasons are: 1. Vasanta Ritu (spring) comprising the two months of Chaitra and Vaisakha (also called Madhu and Madhava), 2. Grishma Ritu (summer) comprising the two months of Jyestha and Ashada (also called Sukra and Suci), Varsha Ritu (rainy season) comprising the two months of Sravana and Bhadra (also called Nabhas and Nabhasya), Sarada Ritu (autumn) comprising the two months of Ashvina and Kartika (also called Isha and Urja), Hemanta Ritu (winter) comprising the two months of Margasirsa and Pausha (also called Sahas and Sahasya), and

Sisira Ritu (dewy season) comprising the two months of Magha and Phalguna (also called Tapas and Tapasya). The most pleasant season is certainly spring, that brings flowers and sweetness - in fact *madhu* means "honey".

### VERSE 36

द्यूतं छलयतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ।

dyūtāṁ chalayatāmasmi tejastejasvināmaham ।

जयोऽस्मि व्यवसायोऽस्मि सत्त्वं सत्त्ववतामहम् ॥ १०-३६ ॥

jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvaṁ sattvavatāmaham ।। 10-36।।

*dyutam*: gambling; *chalayatam*: of the cheaters; *asmi*: I am; *tejah*: radiance; *tejasvinam*: of all that is radiant; *aham*: I (am); *jayah*: victory; *asmi*: I am; *vyavasayah*: of ventures; *asmi*: I am; *sattvam*: virtue; *sattva vatam*: of the virtuous; *aham*: I (am).

**"Among cheaters, I am gambling. Of all that is radiant, I am the power that radiates. Of all ventures, I am victory. Of everything good, I am goodness."**

The word *dyuta* includes all forms of gambling, that constituted a popular pastime in Vedic times, so much that casinos or gambling houses (*dyuta sadanas*) are mentioned in *Bhagavata Purana* (11.25.25) as examples of residence under the influence of ignorance (*tamas*) and one of the four places granted by king Parikshit to the personification of Kali yuga (1.17.38) together with gold hoarding, drinking and smoking and chewing (extravagant foods) and those womanly pastimes that may lead to *adharma*.

Vedic culture does not condemn these activities as sinful, but warns us that they easily stimulate material desires, attachments and identifications, and the power of these material urges can carry the mind away from dharmic considerations. A man who falls victim to the fascination of gold, to the uncontrolled pleasures of the tongue, to sex addiction or to gambling will easily lose his good judgment and become a hopeless slave of illusion and need, suffering immensely and destroying all the good things he had in life - including wealth, health, family relationships, friends, career, respect from society, and even their own life in this world and in the next. This inevitably happens in all cultures.

Gambling is particularly dangerous because it is based on the cheating delusional hope of easy gains obtained without any real work - on the roll of a dice. Nobody really ever wins at gambling, even those who "hit the jackpot" from time to time: otherwise the gambling houses would not be able to thrive on their clients. Sooner or later, gamblers lose everything they had obtained, and usually more than that. What gamblers actually buy is "fun and excitement".

The excitement produced by the conflict of hope and fear for gain and loss respectively stimulates the adrenal glands and the resulting rush of adrenaline - a powerful endorphine - has a physical effect that is not much different from the results of dangerous drugs such as cocaine etc. Adrenaline junkies do not purchase narcotics on the market, but they are often even more damaging to society than other addicts, because they normally endanger themselves and others while seeking their "kicks" in extremely dangerous situations.

The word *tejas* is explained as deriving from the root *tij*, meaning "point of flame", as in the rays of the flaming aura we can see in many iconographic images of Devas. The word *tij* also contains the meanings of "to excite", "to stir up", and refers to the impact that

*tejas* has on people. This concept has already been elaborated in the commentary to verse 7.9; it includes all forms of power, from the light and heat of the sun and the fire, to the charisma of great leaders, warriors and saints. Similarly, *sattva* includes the concepts of virtue (in the general sense, as "good quality") and goodness and can be applied to all the manifestations of the universe and especially to the activities and choices of human beings, as we will see extensively in chapter 14 of *Bhagavad gita*, dedicated to the *guna traya vibhaga yoga*, the *yoga* of differentiating between the *gunas*.

*Tejas* and *sattva* are closely linked as symbols of spirit and divinity, as expressed in *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* (1.3.28): *asato ma sad gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrityor ma amritam gamaya*, "from what is temporary lead me to what is eternal, from darkness lead me to the light, from death lead me to eternal life".

The word *jaya* conveys the meaning of excellence achieved through effort, while *vyavasayah* ("venture", "enterprise") conveys the meanings of perseverance and deliberate effort applied with the proper discrimination. These are also characteristics of *sattva*, or goodness. A similar verse is found in *Bhagavata Purana* (11.16.31): *vyavasayinam aham lakshmih, kitavanam chala graha, titikshami titikshunam, sattvam sattvavatam aham*, "Of those who work well and hard, I am prosperity. Among the thieves, I am gambling. I am tolerance in tolerant persons, and the goodness in good people".

Of course, this means that gambling includes all the cheating tricks meant to get easy money without really producing anything useful for society - frauds of all types, stock market gambling, interest banking on loans, usury, robberies and so on, that create heavy karmic debts that will have to be paid in the future.

As we may remember, the word *vyavasayah* was already used in verse 2.40 referring to the quality of intelligence (*vyavasayatmika buddhi*) that is resolute and well focused on the purpose, and sustains hard good work that is productive and beneficial for society.

### VERSE 37

वृष्णीनां वासुदेवोऽस्मि पाण्डवानां धनञ्जयः ।

vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo'smi pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ ।

मुनीनामप्यहं व्यासः कवीनामुशना कविः ॥ १०-३७ ॥

munīnāmapyahaṁ vyāsaḥ kavīnāmuśanā kavīḥ ।। 10-37।।

*vṛishinam*: of the Vrishnis; *vasudevah*: Vasudeva (with long "a"); *asmi*: I am; *pandavanam*: of the Pandavas; *dhanaanjayah*: the conqueror of wealth; *muninam*: of the Munis; *api*: although; *aham*: I (am); *vyasah*: Vyasa; *kavinam*: of the scholars/ poets; *usana*: Usana; *kavīh*: Kavi.

**"Among the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva. Among the Pandavas, I am Dhananjaya. Among the *munis*, I am Vyasa, and among the scholars I am Kavi Usana."**

The name Vasudeva (with a long "a") in this verse literally means "son of Vasudeva", and therefore it can be applied to both Krishna and Balarama. At the ontological level, the word means "all-pervading", and therefore it indicates the appearance of Krishna from the all-pervading supreme Consciousness.

Krishna and Arjuna (*Bhagavata Purana*, 4.1.59, 10.69.16, 10.89.59) are Nara and Narayana Rishis, the two great spiritual teachers to whom homage is paid before starting to study the scriptures (1.2.4, 5.19.11, 8.16.34, 10.86.35, 11.5.29-30, and the

entire chapter 8 of canto 12). They appeared as the twin sons of Dharma and Murti, daughter of Daksha (1.3.9, 11.4.6) and according to *Bhagavata Purana* (12.4.41) they taught all the *Puranas* to Narada, who in turn transmitted them to Vyasa.

The Vrishnis are a branch of the Yadu dynasty where Krishna appeared; his grandfather king Ugrasena reigned over the Vrishnis, Bhojas, Satvatas and Dasarhas. Vrishni was a great king, the elder of the 100 sons of king Madhu, who descended from Yadu through Jayadhvaja, one of 5 sons of Kartavirya Arjuna who survived the slaughter by Parasurama. Yadu was one of the two sons of Devayani (daughter of Sukracharya) by king Yayati, second son of Nahusha, who had ascended the throne when his elder brother Yati chose to retire in the forest to fully dedicate to spiritual life.

Nahusha was a descendant of Pururava and the Apsara Urvasi - like Visvamitra Rishi, the river Kaushiki (previously Visvamitra's sister named Satyavati) and Parasurama. The first origin of this Soma vamsa (lunar dynasty) starts from Atri, *manasa putra* of Brahma; Atri was the father of Soma/ Chandra (the Moon), who eloped with Brihaspati's wife Tara, generating Budha (planet Mercury). Budha became the father of Pururava at the end of Satya yuga.

The name Dhananjaya ("conqueror of wealth") is used to address Arjuna in several verses of *Bhagavad gita*. As we mentioned in the commentary to verse 1.15 it refers to the campaign by which Arjuna traveled in various regions to collect funds from allies in order to build their new capital Khandavaprastha and perform the Rajasuya yajna.

Again Krishna addresses Arjuna with this name especially in 2.49 and 9.9 to make a contrast between the ideal position of the *yogi* and the sad position of those misers who act only for their materialistic interest.

Arjuna is not the eldest of the Pandava brothers, but he is certainly the most valiant protagonist in the adventures of the sons of Kunti. He is the one who wins the hand of Draupadi in marriage, the one who goes on a quest for special divine weapons up to the capital of Indra, the one who goes alone to fight against the Kurus to defend Virata's kingdom, and leads the Rajasuya campaign to establish Yudhisthira's prominence over the greatest possible area.

Veda Vyasa is the greatest among all those who silently contemplate the vast expanse of Vedic knowledge, and the teacher of all the Rishis that compiled and expanded the Vedic scriptures. Interestingly, he is also a relative of Arjuna, as Vyasa was the first son of Satyavati, who later on married king Santanu, the grandfather of Pandu, the father of the Pandavas, and more importantly, Vyasa was the biological father of Pandu, as he was called by Satyavati to give sons to the widows of his impotent half-brother Vicitravirya.

In this regard, the word *muni* used to indicate Vyasa in this verse can be particularly significant, as Vyasa loyally and humbly obeyed the order of his mother Satyavati, strictly avoiding to reproach or blame her for the unnecessary difficulties that she had created to the royal succession in the Kuru dynasty. When Satyavati was asked in marriage by king Santanu, she should have contented herself of becoming the queen and the foster mother of Bhishma, the perfectly qualified heir apparent to the throne, who was the direct son of Ganga Devi. Instead, she demanded that Bhishma irrevocably renounced all his succession rights in favor of her own future descendants - a disastrous choice that caused immense sufferings to innumerable people.

The word *kavi* literally means "intellectual", "thinker", and is often translated as "poet" because of the remarkable amount of attention and learning required to compose poetry in the Vedic tradition. Unlike modern western arts, that are often whimsical and do not

follow any rule (in poetry, as well as in figurative arts such as painting etc) to the point of utter absurdity, all the Vedic arts are extremely precise and carefully codified.

Usana is another name of Sukracharya, a great strategic thinker and poet, the traditional preceptor of the Daityas, who skillfully performs all the required rituals to support their astounding military power and luxurious lifestyle. He is famous for having obtained from Shiva the *sanjivani mantra*, that can bring the dead back to life, provided that the bodies have not been critically mutilated (*Bhagavata Purana* 8.11.47).

Just like Brihaspati (the preceptor of the Devas) is identified as the planet Jupiter, Sukracharya is identified as the planet Venus. Puranic genealogical lore, that is charged with deep symbolic meanings, states that Sukracharya is a descendant of Brighu - one of the Sapta Rishis and *manasa putras* of Brahma, mentioned in verse 10.25 as the greatest among the Rishis. Brighu's wife Khyati had two sons (Dhata and Vidhata) and one daughter, Sri, a direct manifestation of Lakshmi. Dhata and Vidhata generated respectively Mrikanda and Prana; Mrikanda became the father of the famous Markandeya Rishi, while Prana's son became the father of Usana/ Sukracharya. Sukra's son Chanda and Amarka were the school teachers for Prahlada, the son of Hiranyakasipu; Sukra also had a daughter called Devayani, who married king Yayati, the father of Yadu - so we can safely say that Krishna is still talking about "family".

Sukracharya is also famous for his *Nitis*, or compilations about good conduct. Here are some examples:

"A King should never lust after the wives of others or the properties of others, or punish his subjects in an angry mood. The lusty attraction towards the wives of others has been the downfall of many great men such as Indra, Dandakya, Nahusha and Ravana.

Similarly, one who acts hastily without thinking about the consequences of his actions will only get sorrows. Good actions give good results and bad actions give bad results: so it is very simple, one should engage in good actions and avoid bad actions."

"A *kshatriya* is a brave man who cleverly protects his subjects, controls his own senses and has a natural tendency to oppose wrong doers. One should recognize good qualities even in one's enemies and respect them for that reason; however, bad qualities should be condemned even in one's own son or teacher. In this world nobody is a *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya* or *sudra* by birth, but only through *karma* and *samskaras*."

"One must never show indifference towards his wife, child, diseases, servants/ subordinates, domestic animals, wealth, knowledge and studies, and serving the good people. One should maintain secrecy about 9 things: his own age, wealth, house problems, practice of *mantras*, sexual intercourse, consumption of medicine, acts of charity (given or received), and acts of respect and disrespect (given or received)."

### VERSE 38

दण्डो दमयतामस्मि नीतिरस्मि जिगीषताम् ।

daṇḍo damayatāmasmi nītirasmi jigīṣatām ।

मौनं चैवास्मि गुह्यानां ज्ञानं ज्ञानवतामहम् ॥ १०-३८ ॥

maunaṁ caivāsmi guhyānāṁ jñānaṁ jñānavatāmaham ।। 10-38।।

*dandah*: the use of force; *damatayam*: of the curbing; *asmi*: I am; *nitih*: ethics; *asmi*: I am; *jigishatam*: of those who seek victory;

*maunam*: silence; *ca*: and; *eva*: certainly; *asmi*: I am; *guhyanam*: of the secrets; *jnanam*: the knowledge; *jnanavatam*: of the learned; *aham*: I (am).

**"Among the subduers, I am the use of force. Of those who seek victory, I am ethical behavior. Of secrets, I am silence. Of those who have knowledge, I am knowledge itself."**

*Danda* (literally, "the stick", i.e. the use or simply the threat of force) is one of the categories of action contemplated by the codes of government against enemies, as the last resort after the failing of the other categories of action - *sama* (not fueling low level dangers by giving them real importance), *dana* (offering of gifts or benefits to turn enemies into allies), and *bheda* (creating divisions among enemies).

The use of force should be avoided as much as possible, but it is not negative in itself - rather it is perfectly legitimate and even sacred, as Krishna expresses in this verse. The concept of *ahimsa* does not mean that the use of force is adharmic in itself: it means that it should be applied without hatred.

Also, it is very important here to understand who is the enemy that we must subdue.

Only an aggressor is an enemy. Vedic civilization does not mistake dissenters for enemies, and does not interfere with the individual's private life, professional occupation, beliefs, or freedom of expression. The government (the *kshatriyas*) intervene only when an innocent individual is subject to an aggression that s/he is unable to prevent or stop - this is the true demonstration of the famous motto "to serve and protect".

There is no need for the government to issue or enforce many laws and rules to restrict the liberties of the people: the only thing that the government/ *kshatriya*/ police should do is to protect the people

(innocent human beings and innocent animals) from any form of violence.

In the Vedic system there are no jails or lawyers. Any individual has the right to fight back all categories of aggressors (*atatayinah*): those who attack with any type of deadly weapon, or who set fire to a house, give poison, attack (rape or abduct) a girl or woman, break into a house to steal or destroy/ damage property, or encroach land or property. Thus any individual has the right to own suitable defensive weapons and is responsible for their proper use. The *kshatriya* (police) should only intervene to protect a victim of aggression that is unable to protect himself/ herself sufficiently.

If the aggressor surrenders and atones/ pays for his crime by compensating the victim appropriately, he is allowed to go free; repeat offenders are immediately exiled. If the aggressor does not surrender but escapes, the *kshatriya* has the duty to pursue him and bring him to justice to the full satisfaction of the damaged party - which by the way is the victim of the aggression, and not the government itself.

However, all such dealings should be moderated by ethical considerations, especially in the behavior of the most powerful and responsible persons concerned - those who pursue victory, as clearly stated in this verse. It is important to understand the meaning of the word *niti*, that implies wisdom, ethical values, integrity, responsible conduct, and so on. In Vedic literature, *niti shastras* are the texts that teach all this.

Revenge is not condemned or forbidden in itself, but those who behave within the restraint of wisdom and compassion are blessed with a virtuous victory that represents Krishna.

Keeping silence about secrets or hidden things is not only a legitimate choice, but even a commendable or sacred course of

action. It is true that truthfulness is a great virtue, but that does not mean that we are supposed to disclose everything to the wrong people, or at the wrong time and place, or circumstances. In any case, when a secret is spoken about, it's not a secret anymore - it has lost the essence of its existence.

*Jnanam* is knowledge, or in other words, the perception and memory of an objective fact. Without knowledge, learning has absolutely no meaning or existence: this confirms the pragmatic and honest approach of Vedic civilization in regard to reality.

It does not matter how many academic titles, advertisement, certificates and stamps one can obtain from so-called registered authorities: the only evidence of knowledge is the knowledge itself.

### VERSE 39

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन ।

yaccāpi sarvabhūtānām bijam tadahamarjuna ।

न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम् ॥ १०-३९ ॥

na tadasti vinā yatsyānmayā bhūtaṁ carācaram ॥ 10-39 ॥

*yat*: whatever; *ca*: and; *api*: certainly; *sarva-bhutanam*: of all existences/ beings; *bijam*: the seed; *tat*: that; *aham*: I (am); *arjuna*: Arjuna; *na*: not; *tat*: that; *asti*: there is; *vina*: without; *yat*: that; *syat*: there can be; *maya*: by me; *bhutam*: of (all) beings; *chara acharam*: moving and non-moving.

**"O Arjuna, I am the seed of all existences, of all beings - moving and non-moving. Without me, nothing could ever exist."**

The comparison with the seed (*bija*) has already been mentioned in verse 7.10 (*bijam mam sarva-bhutanam viddhi partha sanatanam, buddhir buddhimatam asmi tejas tejasvinam aham*, "O Partha, know that I am the eternal seed of all existences/ all beings. I am intelligence in the intelligent, and I am the powerful radiance in the powerful"). In the commentary to that verse, we elaborated on the basic concept of seed as the principle or essence of everything, the blueprint of existence, the information from which things manifest and develop.

On the spiritual level, this is represented by the *bija mantras*, the "seed sounds" that contain the personal presence of the Deity.

In verse 14.4, Krishna will give another statement that completes these two: *sarva-yonishu kaunteya murtayah sambhavanti yah, tasam brahma mahad yonir aham bija-pradah pita*, "O son of Kunti, whatever form they will develop, in whatever matrix, all (beings) are born from the supreme matrix of Brahman, and I am the father, that gives the seed."

The broad categorization between moving beings and non-moving beings, offered by the Vedic tradition, is more practical than the conventional classification of animals and plants, because it is functional and not ontological. Therefore it does not have "gray areas" such as the sea anemone and the carnivorous plants, and it can be verified empirically and directly by anyone. As we have already mentioned in several commentaries, the word *bhuta* literally means "being", so it can apply both to living beings and to the conditions of being or circumstances in life. This interpretation is perfectly in line with the series of examples presented by Krishna in this thread of conversation.

This last statement summarizes the meaning and purpose of all the previous examples, and closes the thread.

VERSE 40

नान्तोऽस्ति मम दिव्यानां विभूतीनां परन्तप ।

nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām parantapa ।

एष तूद्देशतः प्रोक्तो विभूतेर्विस्तरो मया ॥ १०-४० ॥

eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūtervistaro mayā ॥ 10-40 ॥

*na*: not; *antah*: end; *asti*: there is; *mama*: my; *divyanam*: divine; *vibhutinam*: powers; *parantapa*: o scorcher of the enemies; *eshah*: (all) this; *tu*: but; *uddesatah*: examples; *proktah*: told (by me); *vibhuteh*: of glories; *vistarah*: the scope; *maya*: by me.

**"O Parantapa, there is no end to my divine powers. This (series of statements in the previous verses) that I have spoken about, was just to exemplify the scope of my glories."**

The word *divya* is applied here to the *vibhuti* - glories, powers, opulences - of the Supreme Personality of God, Krishna. We have already mentioned that the root of the word *divya* ("divine") is *div*, from which we have other words such as *deva* ("God"), *diva* ("day"), and so on. The word *div* contains the meanings of "resplendent", "powerful", "radiant".

Another word for "divine" is *daiva*, as we will see later in the chapter entitled *daivasura sampad vibhaga yoga*, the *yoga* of the difference between *deva* and *asura*. Its meaning is slightly different, as it derives not directly from *div*, but from *deva*, therefore it refers to a quality that is manifested personally by a *deva* like the noble personalities in charge of the administration of the universe. On the other hand, the concept of *divya* develops at a primeval level, at a point that is the origin of the *devas* and of all other manifestations as well - the Supreme Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan.

Here Krishna addresses Arjuna calling him Parantapa ("scorcher of the enemy"), which implies the fact that Arjuna, too, manifests a part of Krishna's *divya vibhuti*s, most notably through his extraordinary valor in fighting.

We could continue forever talking in the thread of the divine powers manifested in this creation, as the universe is full of wonderful and powerful things in many dimensions. Krishna has spoken of things that human beings can easily understand, but there are many more things on the higher and subtler levels of reality, in what we could call "other dimensions".

This is the reason why the extent of the compilations of the Vedic scriptures varies considerably from age to age, and from place to place, as it is presented in a manner that is suitable for the understanding of the people it is meant for. On other planets (or in other dimensions, if we prefer) the *devas* can avail of much larger compilations, and even on our own planet/ plane of existence, the collection of Vedic teachings was much larger in previous ages, such as Dvapara, Treta and Satya.

Mainstream conventional historians believe that civilization started only about 5000 years ago with the "invention" of the art of writing, but according to the Vedic tradition, exactly the opposite was true. People knew very well how to write even in previous ages, but they simply did not give it much importance because memory, intelligence and the other faculties of human beings were much sharper and stronger than we can find in Kali yuga. They remembered what they needed to do without having to note down a "to do list".

To make a crude example, we can apply the same principle to the situation of an old man who is afflicted by senile dementia, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, or a similar decrease in mental faculties, who starts wearing a bracelet where his own home

address is written. This does not mean that he has "evolved" and now he has become able to write his name and address on his personal ornaments. It means that his memory has become so weak that he needs to read his bracelet to find his way back home, otherwise he will be lost.

## VERSE 41

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।

yadyadvibhūtimatsattvaṁ śrīmadūrjitameva vā ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽसम्भवम् ॥ १०-४१ ॥

tattadevāvagaccha tvam mama tejoḥśasambhavam ॥ 10-41 ॥

*yat*: whatever; *yat*: whatever; *vibhuti mat*: that has powers; *sattvam*: existence/ virtue; *srimat*: beautiful/ wonderful; *urjitam*: glorious; *eva*: certainly; *va*: or; *tat*: that; *tat*: that; *eva*: certainly; *avagaccha*: (you) should come to; *tvam*: you; *mama*: my; *tejah amsa*: a part of the radiance; *sambhavam*: come to existence.

**"Anything that is good, powerful, wonderful, or glorious, you should encounter, has come to existence as a part of my radiance."**

The word *tejas* is used here to indicate the origin of the *vibhutis*: we can better understand the meaning by comparing the two terms with the radiance of the sun and the sun rays respectively. The rays are emanations from the original radiance, that is the power of the Sun. Similarly, the *vibhutis* manifested in this universe of which Krishna has spoken to Arjuna are the emanations from the original *tejas* or radiance (*brahmajyoti*) of the Supreme Brahman.

The examples listed up to here refer to things that Arjuna (or a human being living on this planet) might have come to encounter (*avagaccha*) and is therefore able to understand. There is no end to such wonderful manifestations, because they are not limited to the natural phenomena but also include the creations of the human intellect, which is also a creation of God. So all the great artistic products of all living beings can be counted among the *divya vibhutis* of the Supreme Personality of God - the pyramids, great temples and other magnificent buildings, jewels and ornaments, paintings, sculptures, and so on.

Anything that takes our breath away in awe and wonder - and inspires a sense of worship even in the most primitive human minds - is giving us a glimpse of God's divine powers. Krishna has spoken about the "most prominent" (*pradhanyatah*, 10.19) of such things, that are the most easily macroscopic, visible and famous in Vedic civilization.

However, there are endless other wonders even on this Earth, that are not considered very extraordinary by many people - a mighty waterfall, a powerful cyclone, a sunlit meadow, a forest of majestic trees, delicate flowers, or even the beauty of animals. What to speak of the wonders of the atoms and sub-atomic particles, even a mere grain of sand seen through a strong magnifying device or the multicolored designs on the wings of a butterfly can inspire great admiration in those who are sensitive to the beauty of the universe.

This means that we can constantly remain conscious of Krishna wherever we turn our eyes, even on the "material" things, provided we look at the world with the respect, admiration, love and sense of worship that is the sentiment of religious/ spiritual meditation, as stated by Arjuna (10.17).

Actually, for a person who is truly Krishna conscious there is nothing "material" - everything is spiritual, because it is a

manifestation of Krishna's glories. It is all a matter of consciousness (*chaitanya*).

The *Upanishads* and especially the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, confirm the import of these verses. The chapters 4, 5 and 6 declare that God can be perceived in fire, in the sun, the moon, the stars, in any woman, man, boy, girl, or a thundercloud. God can be perceived in the beauty of the seasons, of blue butterfly and the green parrot. Everything is manifested from God's *svabhava* (*Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 5.5).

#### VERSE 42

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।

athavā bahunaitena kiṁ jñātena tavārjuna ।

विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ १०-४२ ॥

viṣṭabhyāhamidaṁ kṛtsnamekāśhena sthito jagat ।। 10-42।।

*atha va:* or also; *bahuna:* many; *etena:* by these; *kim:* what; *jñātena:* by knowing; *tava:* your; *arjuna:* Arjuna; *viṣṭabhya:* pervading; *aham:* I (am); *idam:* this; *kṛtsnam:* entire; *eka:* one; *amsena:* by a part; *sthitah:* established; *jagat:* the universe.

**"O Arjuna, what more should we say about these things that can be known? I pervade and establish this entire universe simply by one partial manifestation (of myself)."**

The expression *ekamsena sthita*, "established from one *amsa*", refers to the fact that the Personality of God that establishes and pervades all the material universes is known as Kshirodakasayi Vishnu, the form of the Paramatma that resides in Svetadvipa in

the ocean of milk within this universe. As explained in the *Bhagavata Purana* (1.3.1, 3.7.22, 11.15.18) this is the third expansion of the *purusha avatara* that penetrates the material energy to manifest the universes.

The first form of this *purusha avatara* is Karanodakasayi, also called Maha Vishnu or Narayana, who rests on the Causal Ocean (*karana* means "cause", *udaka* means "ocean" and *sayi* means "reclining") also called Viraja. All the universes emanate from the pores of Karanodakasayi at each exhalation, and are withdrawn again into his body at each inhalation. After exhaling the universes, the *purusha avatara* enters each one of them as Garbhodakasayi (*garbha* means "embryo", "fetus" or "uterus"), who rests at the bottom of the universal egg (*brahma anda*) on the Garbha ocean. From the water contained within his navel, a lotus flower (that is, a form that we can compare to a lotus flower) grows, and in the middle of this blooming lotus, Brahma is born. The third form of the *purusha avatara* resides in *prapancika vaikuntha*, also called Svetadvipa, that is located on the pole star (also called Dhruvaloka), and from there he establishes a direct connection within the heart of each being and each atom of the universe.

The expression *atha va bahuna etena kim jnatena* ("what more things can be known") should be understood correctly. Krishna is not saying that there is no need to speak about such glories, otherwise he would not have recommended to Arjuna to meditate on them. He is rather saying that Arjuna must have understood the point, and can find other examples by himself.

Ideologies that teach a fundamental opposition between spirit and matter tend to create a dangerous confusion in the minds of people, to the point of demonizing the material manifestations in the universe and preaching that we need to fight against nature and subdue it as an inferior and negative power. This is not the Vedic perspective.

True, there is a distinction between the *para* and *apara prakriti*, the "supreme" and "not supreme" functions of nature, but there is no condemnation in such definition - just the expression of a different type of manifestation.

So although we are advised to move our consciousness from the temporary material manifestations to the eternal existence of consciousness (spirit), nevertheless we need to offer our sincere respect and worship to the Divine in material manifestations as well.

The word *vistabhya* includes the meanings of "pervading", "supporting", "being situated in", "accepting the form", "controlling" - all of which can help us to better understand the nature and activities of God.

The word *kritsnam*, meaning "entire", applies here to the universal form of which Krishna has been speaking in these last chapters. The same meaning is conveyed by the words *jagat*, *akhila*, and *visvam*, also used extensively in *Bhagavad gita* and other Vedic texts.

However, this amazing universal form, so full of great, glorious and majestic manifestations, is simply one fraction of God's creation. It is called *ekapada*, "one *pada*", where *pada* means "foot", "position" or "measure", as in the metric measurement of poetic verses.

There is another and greater expanse of *vibhuti*, called the *tripada-vibhuti*, that consists of the glories and wonders of the spiritual world, that is eternal and unlimited by time or space.

This *tripada vibhuti* is mentioned as *tripadasyamritam divi* ("the 3 divine imperishable *padas*") in several traditional scriptures, such as the *Purusha sukta* in *Rig Veda* (10.90.3) and the *Taittiriya Aranya Upanishad* (3.12.3).

Why three? When we speak of innumerable universes, and the unlimited expanse of the spiritual world, saying that the spiritual world is three times greater than all the material universes together, we are dealing with quantities that are not in the scope of ordinary human calculation. Who can count even only the stars in this one universe? Yet, Vedic rishis speak of a proportion - not a quantity - of something much greater, with the same confidence and clarity they show when they speak of the astronomical duration of the entire life of Brahma, itself containing a great number of cycles of creation and dissolution of the universe, and then compare it to a mere breathing cycle of Narayana.

Only ignorant people can dismiss such information as mere mythology. Many great physicists working at the cutting edge of the exploration of the mysteries of the cosmos have shown great admiration for the extraordinary vision of the Vedic Rishis.

Werner Heisenberg, Robert Oppenheimer, Brian David Josephson, and other famous scientists and writers such as Fritjof Capra and Alan Watts are only a few of such people, that we have quoted in our book *Introduction to Vedic Knowledge*.