

ANANTA SATSANG • SACRED TEXTS

भगवान् और उनकी भक्ति

Bhagavān aur Unkī Bhakti

God and Devotion to Him



Swami Ramsukhdas

*Nine Discourses on God, Divine Love,
Grace, and Surrender*

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Nine Discourses on God, Divine Love, Grace, and Surrender

Swami Ramsukhdas

This is a fresh, complete English reading edition translated paragraph by paragraph from the locked 114-scan Hindi source. The authentic inner title, imprint, publisher's note, and printed contents are preserved; the modern live-contents wrapper, cover-only leaf, and blue lower-margin navigation labels are not treated as translation paragraphs. Two unrelated pages injected at official scans 18-19 are also excluded. The printed text missing there - pages 12-13 - has been restored from a dated Santvani transcription and a photographed Gita Press witness, with exact sentence joins to official pages 11 and 14. The authored body is therefore complete and continuous from printed page 1 through page 108.

Across nine discourses, Swami Ramsukhdas develops the relation among Bhagavān, bhakti, the devotee, divine love, the saguṇa form, grace, true attainment, prayer, and surrender. The book holds knowledge and devotion together while consistently treating Bhagavān as the devotee's own Beloved and refuge.

Reader's Orientation

Readers seeking an overview may begin with *Bhakti, the Devotee, and Bhagavān*. The third discourse gives the book's fullest treatment of the saṁgha form and the relation between the paths of knowledge and devotion. The final three discourses form a natural movement through extraordinary grace, true attainment, prayer, and surrender. The author's oral satsang voice, questions, concrete analogies, and deliberate repetitions are preserved.

Terminology Guide

Bhagavān is retained where the personal divine name matters, and rendered as God or the Lord where English requires it. *Bhakti* is devotion; *prema-bhakti*, love-devotion or divine love; *premī*, the lover of God; and *premāspada*, the Beloved. *Saguṇa* means with attributes or the manifest personal form, while *nirguṇa* means beyond the guṇas or attributeless according to context. *Kṛpā* is grace, *siddhi* is attainment or fulfillment, and *śaraṇāgati* is surrender or taking refuge.

Title, Imprint, Publisher's Note, and Contents

त्वमेव माता च पति त्वमेव।

त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।

त्वमेव वदिया द्रवणिं त्वमेव।

त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव॥

tvam eva mātā ca pitā tvam eva |

tvam eva bandhuś ca sakhā tvam eva |

tvam eva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvam eva |

tvam eva sarvaṁ mama deva-deva ||

No. 589

Śrī Hari.

Bhagavān and His Bhakti

You alone are my mother, and You alone my father;

You alone are my kinsman, and You alone my friend.

You alone are knowledge, and You alone are wealth;

You alone are everything to me, O God of gods.

Swami Ramsukhdas

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A Humble Submission

The Bhagavad Gītā is such an extraordinary book that no one has yet reached its limit, no one reaches it now, no one will reach it, and indeed no one ever can. When one enters deeply into its study and reflection, ever-new and extraordinary insights continually reveal themselves. Our most revered Swamiji Maharaj too has found many priceless jewels by diving into this unfathomable ocean of the Gītā, and continues to find them. During last year's Cāturmāsya at Mathania (Jodhpur), he likewise received from the Gītā many remarkable insights concerning Bhagavān's manifest, qualified form and bhakti. The present book has been composed from those insights. We hope that it will give thoughtful, God-loving seekers a new vision and show them an easy path to God-realization.

We humbly request readers to read the book attentively, understand it, and benefit from it.

Dīpāvalī, Vikrama Samvat 2050 -Publisher

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Bhakti, the Devotee, and Bhagavān

Śrī Hari.

The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā specially glorifies bhakti. When Bhagavān, hearing Arjuna's prayer, showed him the universal form, He said that no one before Arjuna had seen such a form and that it could not otherwise be seen (Gītā 11.47-48). Then, at Arjuna's renewed prayer, Bhagavān showed His four-armed form of Viṣṇu and said:

Not through the Vedas, austerity, charity, or sacrifice can I be seen in the form in which you have seen Me.

If He cannot be seen through any of these disciplines, through what can He be seen? Bhagavān answers:

But by single-hearted bhakti alone, O Arjuna, can I in this form be truly known, seen, and entered into, O scorcher of foes.

The point to note is that bhakti makes all three possible: knowing, seeing, and entering. But where Bhagavān describes the supreme culmination of knowledge, He speaks of only two-knowing and entering: "Then, knowing Me in truth, he enters Me immediately thereafter" (Gītā 18.55). Bhakti can also grant the vision of Bhagavān-this is its distinctive excellence-whereas even the supreme culmination of knowledge does not bring His vision.

The Rāmāyaṇa too specially glorifies bhakti. It compares knowledge to a lamp but bhakti to a jewel (Mānasa, Uttara 117-120). A lamp needs ghee and a wick and can be extinguished by wind; the jewel needs neither and no wind can put it out:

It is supreme light by day and night; it needs no lamp, ghee, or wick. The poverty of delusion does not approach it, nor can the wind of greed extinguish it. The darkness of mighty ignorance is dispelled, and the whole swarm of moths is defeated.

Moreover, the liberation obtained with great difficulty through knowledge comes of itself, unsought, through worship of Bhagavān:

The supreme state of absolute liberation is exceedingly difficult to obtain, so declare saints, Purāṇas, Vedas, and Āgamas. Yet that very liberation comes unsought to one who worships Rāma.

The path of knowledge is therefore described as difficult-“the path of knowledge is the edge of a sword”-while the path of bhakti is called easy: “I shall explain the practice of bhakti, the easy path by which beings attain Me.” Bhagavān likewise says that He is readily accessible to devotees:

O Pārtha, I am easy to attain for the ever-united yogī who, with undivided mind, remembers Me constantly, day after day.

One who follows the path of knowledge relies upon the strength of his practice, but the devotee’s distinctive quality is that he does not rely upon his practice at all. Bhakti is not attained while the inner pride remains, “I perform so much japa, austerity, meditation, and satsanga.” It comes to those who are straightforward and simple, depend upon Bhagavān’s grace, and remain joyful in every circumstance:

Tell me: what exertion does the path of bhakti require? Neither yoga, sacrifice, japa, austerity, nor fasting-only a simple nature, no crookedness of mind, and constant contentment with whatever comes.

As long as pride in one's discipline remains, genuine bhakti is not attained. Once bhakti is attained, the devotee does not even think, "I worship." Hanumān, the great master of bhakti, asks only for the imperishable bhakti bestowed by grace and takes no pride in his worship. Śabarī did not even know that bhakti has nine forms and that all were fully present in her. She calls herself the lowest of the low, dull-witted and sinful; Bhagavān, however, declares that He will tell her the ninefold bhakti, that anyone possessing even one of its forms is exceedingly dear to Him, and that every form is firmly established in her.

Hanumān and Śabarī neither lie nor make a show of cleverness; they speak from an unaffected simplicity because not even the slightest pride exists in them. Seeing no excellence in himself, the devotee recognizes Bhagavān's grace alone. If nothing is one's own, what could pride rest upon? Pride arises when we see a virtue in ourselves and claim it as ours. The devotee sees no virtue as his own, and so pride has no opening. His means and end, practice and goal, are both Bhagavān. He regards the practice as Bhagavān's grace and the attainment of the goal as Bhagavān's grace.

Bhagavān's grace is equal toward all: "My compassion is equal toward everyone." Sunlight falls equally everywhere, yet a magnifying glass concentrates it and reveals fire. Producing the fire is the sun's work; gathering and focusing its rays is the glass's work. Likewise, bestowing grace is Bhagavān's work and accepting it is the devotee's. There is no partiality in His grace. Where there is no self-pride, the stream of grace flows directly. But when we see some distinction in ourselves—"I know so much; I am so discerning; I possess such ability"-pride obstructs its arrival.

If one sees even a little virtue, distinction, effort, or ability as one's own, bhakti is not attained. Pride is an obstacle to bhakti. Therefore, when a good deed is accomplished, the devotee does not claim it but naturally looks toward Bhagavān as its doer. The poem says: what is good is done by Rāma, the true Guru, or the saints; take any error to be your own. The devotee attributes virtues to Bhagavān and faults to himself. Virtues belong to Bhagavān and are self-existent; faults are personal and arise from pride. He therefore sees that whatever is good happens through Bhagavān's grace and whatever is bad through his own mistake.

When Hanumān returned from Laṅkā, Rāma told him that no god, human, or sage embodied on earth had rendered service equal to his. Hearing this praise, Hanumān fell at His feet crying, "Save me!" The danger was pride. Fearing pride might arise when Bhagavān praised him, he declared: "All this was accomplished through Your majesty, O Raghurāya; nothing was done by any power of mine."

Where self-pride is absent, no obstacle catches the seeker. Obstacles arise where one takes pride in one's ability, strength, understanding, learning, dispassion, renunciation, japa, or the like. The devotee sees no ability in himself and considers himself utterly unqualified; therefore Bhagavān's ability works through him. Surrender to Bhagavān alone and Bhagavān performs every task—He "carries what is lacking and preserves what is possessed" (Gītā 9.22). This is exclusive bhakti.

It is Bhagavān's very nature to love the devotee who has no other recourse. Thus Tulsidas sings: *One reliance, one strength, one hope and faith: the one Rāma, dark as the rain cloud, is the beloved of the cātaka-bird Tulsidas.*

One should depend solely upon Bhagavān with this exclusive feeling and worship Him, without taking pride even in the worship—"I do so much japa and meditation." The devotee practices because what else could he do? Nothing could be better. Yet he does not think, "Through my worship I shall attain Bhagavān." He sees the worship itself as Bhagavān's grace and attainment as His grace. Having no refuge other than that grace is exclusive bhakti, through which Bhagavān becomes easy to attain.

Nothing is sweeter than worship of Bhagavān, and so the devotee remains continually absorbed in it. Bhagavān says: *With minds fixed on Me and lives given over to Me, enlightening one another and speaking of Me always, they are contented and delight in Me.* Nothing remains for them to do apart from His worship.

The Bhāgavata says: *Whether without desire, full of every desire, or desiring liberation, a person of expansive understanding should worship the Supreme Person through intense bhakti-yoga.* Thus one who wants nothing, one who wants everything, and one who wants only liberation all receive the same answer: worship Bhagavān alone. He alone can give everything. Like a child dependent solely upon its mother, the devotee cries "Mother!" because the very name is sweet and dear.

Even Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, though so lofty a philosophical saint, addresses Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Mother: *O Mother named Kṛṣṇa, having handed me-born under the root-star of delusion-to Māyā for my maintenance, You have long remained indifferent to me. O sole abode of compassion, will You not look upon my face even once? Alas, can You not pacify that root of delusion?*

The follower of knowledge begins by regarding himself as great-as Brahman-whereas the devotee always regards himself as little, a child, and never as great. Bhagavān therefore says: “The jñānī is like My grown son; the humble servant is like My little child.”

Even in old age Goswami Tulsidas regarded himself as a child and asked Mother Sītā: *Mother, sometime when You find the opportunity, bring me to mind after beginning some moving tale of compassion. I am poor, bereft of every virtue, worn, sullied, and steeped in sin; I fill my belly by invoking the Lord’s name and call myself the servant of Your servant. When He asks, “Who is that?”, tell Him my name and condition. On hearing it, compassionate Rāma may set right what is ruined in me. O Jānakī, Mother of the world, support this servant’s plea; then Tulsidas will cross becoming, singing the virtues of Your Lord.*

A child tells its mother whatever arises in its heart. Tulsidas asks Sītā not to mention him abruptly before Rāma: first tell some piteous story of a devotee; when Rāma is softened and moved by love, then mention him indirectly. He even entices the Mother by promising to sing Her husband’s virtues if his work is accomplished. This is the innocent speech of devotees, not cleverness: their nature is simple and their mind without crookedness. With no knot of deceit in the heart and a simple disposition toward all, says Nārāyaṇa, the devotee’s boat has reached the shore.



Bhakti and Its Glory

Of all disciplines leading to blessedness, bhakti is supreme—"In all three ways, bhakti alone is weightier, bhakti alone is weightier" (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 81). Bhakti is the worship of Bhagavān. *Bhajana* means partaking or serving. As food, water, and air are taken for the body, so for the self one partakes of Bhagavān—that is, loves Him.

Listen: there is no worship equal to love. Knowing this, sages repeatedly sing Rāma's virtues.

There is no worship equal to love; the sages therefore sing Bhagavān's virtues again and again, because singing them awakens love for Him. Love means that Bhagavān feels good, sweet, and dear to us. When our attraction to inert and perishing things—money, enjoyments, relatives, and the body—falls away and becomes attraction to Bhagavān alone, that is love.

In truth our attraction is directed toward Bhagavān, but by giving importance to perishing things we have diverted it toward the world. The Gaṅgā is so pure that merely seeing her destroys the sins of hundreds of births. Yet after the river swells in the rainy season and then recedes, some water remains in pits. That abandoned water is called *gaṅgojjha* and is considered impure like liquor because it has become separated from the Gaṅgā's current, turned away from her, and been left behind by her. Water we bring home in a vessel directly from the Gaṅgā is not impure, because we took it from her; she did not abandon it.

In the same way Bhagavān is supremely pure—"You are supreme purity" (Gītā 10.12)—and because we are His portion, we too are

inherently “conscious, stainless, and a natural mass of bliss.” But when our attraction leaves Bhagavān for perishable enjoyments, our life becomes like that abandoned water, deeply impure. When the Gaṅgā rises, the abandoned pool rejoins her and becomes supremely pure; likewise, if our attraction turns to Bhagavān, our whole life becomes supremely pure.

As the current of the Gaṅgā moves continually toward the ocean, so the current of all our mental movements should flow toward Bhagavān throughout all eight watches of the day. Whether Bhagavān grants us His vision or not, whether He accepts us or not, our mind should move only toward Him. Bharata asks for neither wealth, righteousness, pleasure, liberation, nor any other boon-only love for Rāma’s feet birth after birth. Even if the world calls him crooked and a traitor to Guru and master, he asks that his love for Sītā and Rāma’s feet increase daily through Their grace. Pārvatī likewise resolves that even through millions of births she will wed Śiva or remain unmarried, never abandoning Nārada’s instruction even if Śiva Himself should contradict it a hundred times.

Thus, in love, the devotee’s mind moves only toward Bhagavān. Love is held higher even than liberation. Wealth, righteousness, desire, and liberation are called the four human aims; love is the fifth, beyond all four. In liberation a person seeks his own happiness, but in love he seeks Bhagavān’s happiness. Loving devotees feel that there is no harm even if they must go to the hells, provided Bhagavān receives happiness and comfort. The gopīs remained in Vṛndāvana while Śrī Kṛṣṇa lived in Mathurā, because He did not wish them to come there; nevertheless their minds remained ceaselessly fixed on Him. Even so great a jñānī as Uddhava, Bṛhaspati’s foremost disciple, could not disturb their minds; seeing their love, his own confidence in knowledge was

disturbed. Like the gopīs, may our mind contemplate Bhagavān alone, our speech sing His virtues, our ears hear only His discussion, and all our faculties rest naturally in Him:

May our speech recount Your virtues, our ears attend to Your stories, our hands perform Your service, and our mind rest at Your feet. May our head bow in remembrance to the world that is Your dwelling, and may our eyes behold the saints who are Your embodied forms.

We have granted reality to the world and thereby importance, so our mental currents flow toward it. Bhakti is the turning of that flow from the world toward Bhagavān. As a child finds its mother, her name, and her presence dear and sweet, bhakti begins when Bhagavān, His name, and His presence become dear and sweet. Even if someone touches fire unintentionally, the hand

...is burned; likewise, if the mind becomes fixed on Bhagavān in any manner, that connection brings blessedness. Even a relation formed with Him through hostility, fear, or hatred ultimately brings welfare, but it is not bhakti. Bhakti is a relation joined to Bhagavān in love. Bathing in the Gaṅgā during Māgha and during Vaiśākha are equally praised, yet the Māgha bath is painfully cold while the Vaiśākha bath is delightful in summer. Relation through hostility, fear, or hatred is like the Māgha bath; relation through love is like the Vaiśākha bath. In love Bhagavān feels exceedingly good, dear, and sweet, and the mind is enraptured by hearing His virtues, glory, and names.

As the jñānī delights in the Self, the devotee delights in Bhagavān—"they are contented and rejoice in Me" (Gītā 10.9). Loving Bhagavān, he sings His virtues day and night, speaks only of

Him, and listens only to His glory. He does not have to force himself to meditate; remembrance happens of itself, as food comes spontaneously to the mind of a hungry person. In battle with Indra, Vṛtrāsura prays:

As unfledged birds long for their mother, as hungry calves long for milk, and as a sorrowing wife longs for her absent beloved, so, lotus-eyed Lord, my mind longs to behold You.

Cursed by Mother Pārvatī, Vṛtrāsura outwardly became an asura, but inwardly remained Bhagavān's loving devotee. He therefore says:

O perfectly gracious Lord, apart from You I desire neither heaven nor Brahmā's station, neither sovereignty over earth nor lordship over the netherworld, neither yogic powers nor even freedom from rebirth.

Loving devotees do not seek liberation, for the desire to be liberated arises only where bondage exists. Attachment to the world is bondage, and no such worldly attachment remains in loving devotees. They have only one bond: Bhagavān's ever-new face; liberation itself falls from His feet. Day after day they bow to the ever-new son of Nanda, exclaiming that the beauty of the divine Couple is unprecedented today.

The relish of bhakti therefore increases naturally at every moment. The bliss of knowledge remains unbroken and uniform, while the bliss of bhakti is endless. The waxing moon eventually reaches fullness, but the moon of divine love never reaches a final full moon; love forever continues to increase.

Among Bhagavān's infinite powers, two are especially prominent: majesty and sweetness. Majesty manifests His greatness; sweetness manifests love. In sweetness Bhagavān forgets His own majesty, power, and divinity. Devotees' love makes Him innocent and guileless. When Mother Yaśodā catches Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He cries in fear that Mother will strike Him. He before whom fear itself trembles becomes afraid of His mother-this is His sweetness.

Where love is present, Bhagavān becomes subject to it. Seeing devotees' love, He wonders what He can give them. To the gopīs He says:

Even with the lifespan of the gods, I could not repay the spotless devotion by which you have served Me, severing the nearly unbreakable chains of home. Let your own goodness be your recompense.

By calling Himself indebted, Bhagavān means: "Your love for Me has no equal in My love for you. Apart from Me you love no one at all, while I love many devotees. I could equal you only if I acknowledged no one but you; but I have many devotees. Therefore I remain in your debt."

"In this court the lowly are honored; such has always been its custom." Those who are humble, little, surrendered, and wholly devoted to Bhagavān receive honor in His house. When they never tire of loving Him, He comes under their sway and does whatever they wish. Conquered by love, He becomes a charioteer and drives horses; He clears away used leaf-plates and delights in doing so. A mother delights even in cleaning her child's waste; likewise Bhagavān delights in performing the smallest service for His devotees. A mother's love contains self-interest and possessiveness,

but Bhagavān has neither-only love. Small people wish to become great, while Bhagavān, already greatest of all, delights in becoming small.

“I am the servant of My devotees; devotees are the crest-jewel upon My crown.” He therefore never tires of singing their glory. Such is the glory of bhakti.

Bhakti is of two kinds: bhakti as the practice and bhakti as the goal. Practice-bhakti gives rise to goal-bhakti-“through bhakti born of bhakti” (Bhāgavata 11.3.31). Practice-bhakti has nine forms:

Hearing of Viṣṇu, singing His praise, remembering Him, serving His feet, worship, salutation, servitude, friendship, and complete self-offering.

These fall into three groups. In hearing, singing, and remembrance, the devotee regards Bhagavān as distant. In serving His feet, worship, and salutation, he regards Him as near. In servitude, friendship, and self-offering, he regards Him as exceedingly near. Thus from hearing through self-offering the devotee progressively draws nearer, until in self-offering he becomes wholly absorbed in Bhagavān.

The devotee first has the attitude of servitude, regarding Bhagavān as master and himself as servant. This carries reserve and modest fear lest the servant make a mistake. It gradually matures into friendship. The devotee then regards Bhagavān as his companion and becomes intimate with Him, without the reserve or fear of servitude. Bhagavān plays with His cowherd friends. When He loses yet claims victory, they put Him out of the game and tease Him: “Does having more cows make You a great man?” Sūrdās’s song

pictures Śrīdāmā defeating Hari and the boys refusing to play with Him until He gives the stake, swearing by Nanda.

Even knowing Bhagavān's greatness, the gopīs address Him as friend:

You are not merely the son who delights the gopīs; You behold the inner Self of every embodied being. At Brahmā's prayer You have arisen in the Sātvata clan to protect the world, O friend.

In complete self-offering the devotee offers himself to Bhagavān. Nothing remains that he can call his own; everything becomes Bhagavān's. Body, senses, mind, intellect, life-breath, and ego all belong to Bhagavān and no longer to himself. After self-offering, bhakti as the goal-bhakti whose defining mark is love-is attained. In this love one can no longer tell who is the devotee and who Bhagavān, who lover and who beloved; devotee and Bhagavān become inseparably intimate: "because there is no distinction between Him and His devotee" and "those who worship Me with bhakti abide in Me, and I in them."



Bhagavān's Saguṇa Form and Bhakti

1. The Primacy of the Whole (Saṁguṇa) in the Gītā

Bhagavān says in the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā:

The yogī is higher than ascetics, higher even than those of knowledge, and higher than ritualists. Therefore become a yogī, Arjuna.

After extolling yoga He adds:

Of all yogīs, the faithful one who worships Me with his inner being absorbed in Me is, in My judgment, the most fully united.

Thus among karma-yogīs, jñāna-yogīs, haṭha-yogīs, laya-yogīs, rāja-yogīs, mantra-yogīs, and every other kind, Bhagavān's devotee is supreme. When talk turns to Bhagavān, the devotee

The printed note cites further statements about His devotee: Gītā 7.1, 7.29, 12.2, and 12.20. ...becomes absorbed in that alone and nothing else appeals to him. Likewise, once Bhagavān began speaking of His devotee, He too became absorbed, forgot every other matter, and a flood of teaching on bhakti welled up within Him. Thus He began the seventh chapter on His own, without any question from Arjuna.

At its opening Bhagavān promises knowledge together with realization, by which Arjuna will know His "whole" form, after which nothing remains to be known. He concludes its description:

Those who strive for freedom from age and death, taking refuge in Me, know Brahman, the entire principle of the self, and all action. Those who know Me together with the principle of beings, the

divine principle, and sacrifice know Me even at the time of departure, their minds united.

Bhagavān often speaks of birth and death, but only here of age and death. His devotee is free from both: neither suffering from old age while living nor anxiety over the destination after death. Taking refuge in Him, devotees know the whole: Brahman, the infinite selves, and the action of creation comprise the unmanifest division; infinite universes, Hiraṇyagarbha Brahmā, and indwelling Viṣṇu comprise the manifest division. The surrendered know both, because the whole is known not by reasoning but through grace upon surrender.

The printed note explains that Bhagavān's creative action is truly "inaction," citing Gītā 4.13 and 8.3.

A point requiring special attention is that the unqualified, formless Brahman appears as the "That" within Bhagavān's whole form. It is commonly said that saguṇa Īśvara is included within nirguṇa Brahman: Brahman is without Māyā, Īśvara with Māyā, and therefore Īśvara occupies one part of Brahman. But the Gītā says instead that Brahman is one aspect of Bhagavān's whole. Bhagavān declares, "I am the foundation of Brahman" (14.27) and "This entire world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest form" (9.4). His meaning is not that He is a part of Brahman, but that Brahman is a part of Him. An impartial reading therefore shows that the Gītā gives primacy not to Brahman alone but to Bhagavān as the whole. The complete Reality is the whole, encompassing qualified and unqualified, formed and formless.

Strictly considered, only the saguṇa can be the whole, because the unqualified may be included within the qualified, whereas the

qualified cannot be included within the unqualified. Wholeness therefore belongs to saguṇa, not nirguṇa.

Those devoted to the formless Absolute regard the individual self and Brahman as identical in essence: “Brahman is real, the world unreal, and the individual is Brahman alone.” The Gītā applies the same characteristics to self and Brahman. The embodied is called *jīva*; without bodily limitation it is Brahman. Because bodily identification obstructs this unity, attainment of the unmanifest is difficult and delayed for the body-identified (Gītā 12.5).

In saguṇa worship, however, relation to the body is not the obstacle; turning away from Bhagavān is. From the beginning the devotee faces Him with the conviction, “I am Bhagavān’s, and Bhagavān is mine.” Grace therefore rescues him swiftly and easily. He depends not upon the discipline but upon Bhagavān. Nor does he insist that the world be rejected as unreal, because for him inert and conscious, moving and unmoving, being and nonbeing are all Bhagavān. Worship of saguṇa is thus worship of the whole; worship of nirguṇa is of one aspect of that whole.

The printed notes cite the Gītā’s parallel predicates for self and Supreme Self, its promises of swift rescue (12.7) and accessibility (8.14), and warn the nirguṇa worshiper never to disparage saguṇa.

Both formless Brahman and the perishing world are aspects of Bhagavān as the whole. The devotee loves not majesty but the One who possesses it. Bhagavān calls the worshiper of the whole supreme (6.47; 12.2), and calls the great soul who realizes “Vāsudeva is everything” exceedingly rare (7.19).

On deep reflection the primacy of saguṇa alone resolves every question. It is wrong to despise saguṇa as entangled in Māyā: He is not subject to Māyā but its Lord. Realized sages such as Sanaka, Śukadeva, and Janaka naturally loved His manifest form.

The Bhāgavata says: *Even self-delighting sages, free from every knot, render causeless bhakti to the Lord of mighty strides, for Hari's qualities are such that they draw beings to Him.*

2. The Supreme Self Is the Source of Every Power

We must acknowledge in the Supreme Self a power by which the universe is governed, created, sustained, and dissolved; otherwise creation cannot be accounted for. Jayadayal Goyandka, founder, director, and guardian of Gita Press, though giving primacy to nirguṇa, once told me privately that one must admit a power in the Supreme Self-the matter cannot work otherwise.

Some maintain that after everything is negated only emptiness remains. But who knows that? The knower of emptiness cannot itself be empty. And how could a universe arise from sheer absence? The Chāndogya asks, “How could being arise from nonbeing?” The Brahma Sūtras therefore begin: “Now, therefore, the inquiry into Brahman. That from which the origin and the rest of this universe proceed.” They add: *Brahman is endowed with all powers, because scripture reveals it so.*

The Supreme Self is the extraordinary treasury of all powers, sciences, and arts. Conscious, intelligent power cannot reside in inert nature. A computer performs remarkable tasks, but a conscious person constructs, programs, and operates it. The computer is fabricated; the Supreme Self is self-existent. Every special excellence seen in the world therefore comes from Him: *Whatever being possesses majesty, beauty, or strength, know it to have arisen from a portion of My splendor.* Power found in the tree must already be in the seed. That Supreme Self’s power of speech ...appears in the speaker; His power of writing in the writer, generosity in the giver, and poetry in the poet. Liberation, knowledge, and love are all gifts of the Supreme Self, not products

of nature. If “I am inherently free,” where did bondage arise? If “I am knowledge,” where, how, why, and when did ignorance arise? How could a moonless night occur in the sun? Knowledge is truly the Supreme Self’s, but ignorance begins when we claim it as ours. The “I” and “mine” in “I am knowledge; knowledge is mine” are themselves ignorance. Because we fail to look toward the giver, His gifts of freedom, knowledge, and love seem our own. We see the product but not the power behind it. The gift is not ours; the Giver is ours.

Prahlāda says: Viṣṇu dwelling in the heart is the teacher of the entire universe. Apart from that Supreme Self, who can instruct whom? Dhruva prays: Entering within me, the bearer of all powers revives by His radiance my sleeping speech, hands, feet, hearing, skin, other senses, and vital powers. To You, the indwelling Supreme Person, I bow.

The Kena Upaniṣad tells how Brahman won victory for the gods, who then proudly imagined, “This victory and glory are ours.” To destroy their pride, Brahman appeared as a Yakṣa. Agni boasted that he could burn everything on earth but could not burn the straw the Yakṣa placed before him. Vāyu boasted he could carry everything away but could not move it. When Indra approached, the Yakṣa vanished and Umā, daughter of Himālaya, revealed that it had been Brahman. Thus the Supreme Self is the source of all powers.

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad says: *His supreme power is indeed heard of as manifold-His inherent powers of knowledge, strength, and action.*

“This is the Lord of all, the knower of all, the indwelling guide, the source of all—the origin and dissolution of beings” (Māṇḍūkya 6).

“Seek to know that from which beings arise, by which they live, and into which they enter at departure; that is Brahman” (Taittirīya 3.1).

“From that Self arose space; from space air; from air fire; from fire water; from water earth; from earth plants; from plants food; and from food the human person” (Taittirīya 2.1).

The Śvetāśvatara calls Him maker and knower of the universe, His own source, the death of time, possessed of qualities and all-knowing. The Muṇḍaka says that name, form, food, cosmic form, life, mind, senses, elements, and sustaining earth arise from the all-knowing Lord.

These Upaniṣadic statements concern the saṁguṇa Supreme Self, not the nirguṇa Self. The Gītā likewise attributes creation to the manifest Lord:

At the end of a cosmic cycle all beings enter My nature; at its beginning I send them forth again. Controlling My own nature, I repeatedly project this entire multitude, helpless under nature’s sway.

Under My supervision nature brings forth the moving and unmoving world.

I am the origin and dissolution of the entire universe.

3. The Supreme Self, Ruler of All

The ruler and master of the world in which we live is *saguṇa Īśvara*. As a kingdom has a king and every community a governor, creation must have a governor. The unqualified formless has no arising initiative, so the ruler can only be the qualified, formed Lord. The Upaniṣads describe Him as ruling perishable nature and the imperishable self; as distinct from both knowledge and ignorance; as holding sun, moon, heaven, and earth under His command; and as the One through fear of whom fire, sun, Indra, wind, and death perform their functions.

The Gītā says: *There are two persons in the world, perishable and imperishable. All beings are perishable, while the unchanging self is imperishable. But the Supreme Person is another: the imperishable Lord called the Supreme Self, who enters and sustains the three worlds.*

4. The Primacy of the Supreme Self's Saguṇa Form

The Gītā calls both nature and the person beginningless (13.19). If nirguṇa alone were supreme, how could its power, nature, also be beginningless? Saguṇa is therefore truly supreme. The Gītā calls embodied Śrī Kṛṣṇa “Brahman” (5.10; 10.12), and gives Brahman the names “Om, Tat, Sat” (17.23); name and named imply manifestation. The Bhāgavata unites Brahman, the Supreme Self, and Bhagavān: *Knowers of Reality call the one nondual consciousness Brahman, Paramātmān, and Bhagavān.*

Even Madhusūdāna, an exclusive worshiper of the formless Absolute, confessed that Kṛṣṇa-the mischievous lover who follows the cowherd women-had forcibly made him His servant. He declares: *Beyond Kṛṣṇa, whose flute adorns His hand, whose hue is a fresh rain cloud, whose garment is yellow, lips red as bimba fruit, face lovely as the full moon, and eyes like lotuses, I know no Reality whatever.*

Uddhava's pride in the formless Absolute melted before the gopīs' love for embodied Kṛṣṇa. The Padma Purāṇa says that Brahman is but the radiance of one of Kṛṣṇa's nails. The Hanumannāṭaka identifies Hari, Lord of the three worlds, as the One worshiped as Śiva, Brahman, Buddha, creator, Arhat, and karma. Thus Brahman is itself one form of saguṇa Hari.

“Saguṇa” does not mean composed of sattva, rajas, and tamas; it means eternally possessing divine qualities such as majesty, sweetness, beauty, and generosity. Rāmānuja calls Him the boundless ocean of innumerable auspicious qualities-knowledge,

strength, sovereignty, vigor, power, radiance, compassion, gracious accessibility, affection, and generosity. Such qualities belong to consciousness, not inert Māyā.

The Bhāgavata calls worship of the manifest Lord “nirguṇa,” beyond the three qualities; the Gītā says: *One who serves Me through unwavering bhakti-yoga crosses these qualities and becomes fit for Brahman.* Brahma Sūtra 1.1.2 and 2.1.30 likewise establish the saguṇa Brahman as creator endowed with every power. Śaṅkara identifies Puruṣottama with Brahman and says: *The indwelling, knowledge-filled, being-consciousness-bliss Supreme Self beyond nature is this very jewel of Yadu’s line, present within all beings as their inner ruler.*

The Upaniṣads likewise establish the primacy of saguṇa. The Śvetāśvatara says: *Know the Brahman eternally established within the self; nothing beyond it remains to be known. Knowing the enjoyer, the enjoyed, and the impeller, all is declared-this Brahman is threefold.* It identifies Māyā as nature and the wielder of Māyā as Maheśvara. The Muṇḍaka says: *When the seer beholds the golden-hued maker, Lord, Person, and source of Brahman, he shakes off merit and demerit, becomes stainless, and attains supreme likeness.*

The printed footnote tabulates the Gītā’s simultaneous names for the individual self, nature, and Supreme Self:

Chapter/verse	Individual self	Nature	Supreme Self
7.4-6	Higher nature	Lower nature	“I”
8.3-4	Principle of self; divine principle	Action; principle of beings	Brahman; principle of sacrifice
13.1-2	Knower of the field	Field	“Me”

Chapter/verse	Individual self	Nature	Supreme Self
14.3-4	Embryo; seed	Great Brahman; womb	“I”; father
15.16-18	Imperishable	Perishable	Supreme Person

The printed gloss reads: “When this seer, the jīvātmā, directly realizes the Supreme Puruṣa-the ruler of all, the primal cause even of Brahmā, the creator of the entire universe, and the embodiment of divine light-then, having thoroughly cast off both merit and sin and become stainless, that wise great soul attains the highest equality.”

मनोमयः प्राणशरीरो भारूपः सत्यसंकल्प आकाशात्मा सर्वकर्मा

सर्वकामः सर्वगन्धः सर्वरसः सर्वमदिमभ्यात्तोऽवाक्यनादरः।

(छान्दोग्य० ३।१४।२)

*manomayaḥ prāṇa-śarīro bhārūpaḥ satya-saṅkalpa ākāśātmā
sarva-karmā*

*sarva-kāmaḥ sarva-gandhaḥ sarva-rasaḥ sarvam idam abhyāto
'vāky anādaraḥ |*

“Made of mind, having prāṇa as His body, formed of light, whose resolve is truth, whose nature is space, the doer of all, possessing every desire, every fragrance, and every taste, embracing all this, beyond speech and without agitation.” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.2)

The printed gloss reads: “That Brahman is made of mind, has prāṇa as His body, is the form of light, whose resolve is truth, whose nature is space, the doer of all, possessing every desire, fragrance, and taste, pervading this entire universe on every side, beyond speech, and free from agitation.”

ते ध्यानयोगानुगता अपश्यन् देवात्मशक्तिस्वगुणैर्नगूढाम्।

यः कारणानिखिलानितानकालात्मयुक्तान्यधितिष्ठत्येकः॥

(श्वेताश्वतर० १।३)

*te dhyāna-yogānugatā apaśyan devātma-śaktim sva-guṇair
nigūḍhām |*

yaḥ kāraṇāni nikhilāni tāni kālātma-yuktāny adhitiṣṭhaty ekaḥ ||

“Following the yoga of meditation, they beheld the divine Self's Power, hidden by Her own guṇas. He alone presides over all those causes joined with time and the self.” (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 1.3)

The printed gloss reads: “Established in the yoga of meditation, those great seers directly realized the Power that is the very nature of the divine Paramātmā and is concealed by Her own guṇas. That Paramātmā alone rules over all the causes, from time through the individual self.”

Whether directed toward the qualified or the attributeless, every form of worship begins with the qualified and formless. Even the conviction that Paramātmā exists pertains to the qualified and formless, because the intellect, being a product of Prakṛti, cannot grasp the attributeless Reality beyond Prakṛti. Thus the worshipper of the attributeless aims at the attributeless and formless, yet with the intellect contemplates only the qualified and formless.

5. The Path of Knowledge and the Path of Devotion

There is not the slightest opposition between devotion and knowledge, or between duality and nonduality. Knowledge does not obstruct devotion; insistence upon one's view of devotion is the obstruction. Devotion does not obstruct knowledge; insistence upon one's view of knowledge is the obstruction. Only when knowledge is

bookish or merely verbal and talkative does devotion's sense of duality appear to obstruct it. Gosvāmījī Mahārāja writes concerning bookish or verbal knowledge:

“Men and women speak of nothing but knowledge of Brahman; yet, overcome by greed, for a mere cowrie they will even slay a brāhmaṇa or guru.” (Mānas, Uttara 99a)

Once knowledge is directly realized, devotion does not obstruct it. Although Bhagavān Śaṅkara, Sanaka and the other sages, Nāradaḥ, Vedavyāsajī, Śukadevajī, and others are perfect knowers, they still sing and hear accounts of Bhagavān's divine play. What truly obstructs is attachment to the world. Thus a dualistic understanding does not obstruct knowledge; worldly attachment does. Devotion contains love, not attachment, and love erases attachment. Devotion therefore does not obstruct knowledge.

When a seeker decides beforehand that Paramātmā is only attributeless or only qualified, that duality alone is correct or nonduality alone is correct, the seeker then begins to see accordingly. In reality, forming such a fixed conviction or insistence obstructs realization of Reality. Within the various traditions, many people merely agree with what their group says, while very few realize it directly. Only one who, while accepting the teaching of one's tradition, still possesses the sincere inquiry, “What is Reality actually?” and does not insist upon one's own doctrine can readily realize Reality. In fact there is no difference between knowledge and devotion. Love without knowledge is attachment, and knowledge without love is empty. But if a follower of the path of knowledge disparages-neglects, censures, or refutes-a follower of devotion, perfection of knowledge will be obstructed; and if a follower of devotion disparages a follower of knowledge, perfection of devotion

will be obstructed. In fact, nondualists censure dualists in a way that dualists do not censure nondualists. Dualists merely say that nondualists are Māyāvādins because they regard the world as māyā. In reality, however, nondualists are not Māyāvādins but Brahmvādins.

Some nondualists who study Vedānta describe devotion as dependent and inferior. In reality devotion is supremely independent: *“Devotion is independent, the mine of every joy”* (Mānas, Uttara 45.3). If Paramātmā is regarded as “other,” even the doctrine of nonduality cannot be established, for how could the jīva and Brahman be one if Paramātmā were “other”? Paramātmā is therefore not “other,” but one’s own. *Sva* has two meanings: oneself, one’s true nature, and one’s very own. Paramātmā is one’s very own. Dependence upon one’s own is supreme freedom, the crown of freedom. Devotion therefore possesses great freedom, sovereignty, majesty, and extraordinariness.

Nondualists say that devotion contains two-Bhagavān and devotee-and that fear arises from another: *“Fear indeed arises from a second”* (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.2). Fear does arise from one who is other, but not from one’s intimate own. Bhagavān is not other; He is one’s very own. For a child the mother is not a second, but one’s own, and therefore the child does not fear her. Just as a child becomes fearless upon entering its mother’s lap, a person becomes fearless forever upon taking refuge in Bhagavān.

मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तिं युक्त आसीत् मत्परः॥ (गीता ६।१४)

manaḥ saṁyamya mac-citto yukta āsīt mat-parah ||

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः। (गीता २।६१)

tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīt mat-parah |

Attraction toward the unreal, the world, is itself the absence of practice and brings about one's fall; attraction toward the Real, Paramātmā, is practice itself and brings elevation. Knowledge makes matters intelligible, but it does not erase the world's pull. The pull of the world is erased only by love.* Even after realizing Reality, the world's pull is not wholly erased without attraction-love-toward Paramātmā. Love is therefore superior even to knowledge. That love becomes manifest by accepting Bhagavān as one's own and not accepting the world as one's own. Devotion to the qualified Lord is therefore primary.

The Karma-yogī has the strength of renunciation, and the Jñāna-yogī the strength of discernment, but the Bhakti-yogī has the strength of trust in Bhagavān. Through this strength the devotee very quickly becomes free of inner disorders. Seekers on the path of knowledge also experience that when such disorders agitate the mind, taking refuge in Bhagavān and calling upon Him brings a benefit that reflection alone does not. Bhagavān therefore tells even the seeker on the path of knowledge to be wholly devoted to Him:

“Restraining the mind, with consciousness fixed on Me, one should sit disciplined and wholly devoted to Me.” (Gītā 6.14, second half)

“Restraining all of them, one should remain disciplined and wholly devoted to Me.” (Gītā 2.61, first half)

This is devotion's special excellence.

Printed footnote
No one wants one's own existence to cease-this is love of the attributeless. But this love of Existence alone does not erase the world's pull, because discernment remains predominant within it; that is, both the Real and unreal remain. Therefore the predominance of discernment does not erase the existence of the unreal, even though that existence may be imagined. But

when a special attraction, love, for Paramātmā arises, attraction to the unreal disappears. The Rāmacaritamānasa therefore says: “*O Raghurāi, without the water of loving devotion, the inner impurity can never depart.*” (Uttara 49.3)

6. The Primacy of Devotion

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।

श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः॥

(गीता १२।२)

mayy āveśya mano ye mām nitya-yuktā upāsate |

śraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ ||

Among all means of attaining Paramātmā, devotion is primary. Followers of the path of knowledge say that whichever path one follows, one must ultimately enter knowledge; but this does not seem right. In reality devotion alone is at the end. Knowledge contains an unbroken, stable relish, while devotion contains an infinite relish that increases at every moment. Devotion is so comprehensive that it is present both at the beginning and at the end of every discipline. At the beginning it appears as spiritual attraction, because without attraction toward Paramātmā no one can engage in practice at all. At the end it remains as love that increases at every moment—“*he attains supreme devotion to Me*” (Gītā 18.54)—because practice reaches perfection only through its attainment. The Brahma-sūtra therefore describes the discipline concerning devotion to Bhagavān as superior to all other disciplines: “*Therefore the other is superior, as indicated by the sign*” (3.4.39).

Arjuna also asked Bhagavān in the Gītā which of the two worshippers—those of the qualified and those of the attributeless—are superior. Bhagavān replied that worshippers of the qualified Lord are superior:

“Those who fix their minds on Me, ever steadfast, and worship Me endowed with supreme faith-I regard them as the most perfectly united.” (Gītā 12.2)

The printed gloss reads: “Those devotees who fix their minds on Me, remain continually established in Me, and worship Me endowed with supreme faith are, in My view, the finest yogīs.”

Every seeker must ultimately enter the path of devotion, because true nonduality is found only in devotion. The Gītā says:

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परग्रहम्।
वमुच्य नरिममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते॥
ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मदभक्तलिभते पराम्॥
भक्त्या मामभजिनात यिवान्यथास्मि तत्त्वतः।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा वशिते तदनन्तरम्॥
(गीता १८।५३-५५)

ahaṅkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ parigrahaṁ |
vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ||
brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati |
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām ||
bhaktiā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ |
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad-anantaram ||
यिवानहं यथाभावो यद्रूपगुणकर्मकः।
तथैव तत्त्ववज्ज्ञानमस्तु ते मदनुग्रहात्॥
(श्रीमद्भा० २।१।३१)
yāvān ahaṁ yathā-bhāvo yad-rūpa-guṇa-karmakaḥ |

tathaiva tattva-vijñānam astu te mad-anugrahāt ||

“Having relinquished egoism, strength, arrogance, desire, anger, and possessiveness, becoming free of mine-making and peaceful, the seeker becomes fit for the state of Brahman. Established in Brahman, serene in self, one neither grieves nor desires. Equal toward all beings, one attains supreme devotion to Me. Through devotion one knows Me in truth-how great I am and what I am. Then, knowing Me in truth, one immediately enters into Me.” (Gītā 18.53-55)

The three printed glosses read: “Having renounced egoism, strength, arrogance, desire, anger, and possessiveness, and becoming free of mine-making and peaceful, the seeker becomes fit to attain Brahman.” “The serene seeker established in the Brahman-state neither grieves for anyone nor desires anything. Equal toward all beings, such a seeker attains My supreme devotion.” “Through that supreme devotion one knows Me in truth-how great I am and what I am-and, knowing Me in truth, immediately enters into Me.”

“How great I am and what I am” (*yāvān yaś cāsmi*) pertains only to the qualified Lord, because “as great as” cannot apply to the attributeless; it can apply only to the qualified. *This establishes the distinctiveness and primacy of the qualified Lord. On the path of knowledge there are only two things-knowing in truth (jñātvā) and entering (viśate*)-but on the path of devotion...*

Printed footnote

In the four-verse Bhāgavata, Bhagavān similarly uses *yāvān* when He tells Brahmājī: “May you, through My grace, possess exact knowledge of Reality concerning how great I am, My nature, and the forms, qualities, and activities I possess.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 2.9.31) The printed gloss reads: “May

you, through My grace, attain exact knowledge of the truth of how great I am, the nature I possess, and all the forms, qualities, and divine plays with which I am endowed.”

| भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंवर्धोऽर्जुन।*

ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप॥ (गीता ११।५४)

bhaktiā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁ-vidho 'rjuna |

jñātuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṁ ca parantapa ||

† तेषामेवानुक्तमपार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता॥ (गीता १०।११)

teṣām evānukampārtham aham ajñāna-jam tamaḥ |

nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā ||

‡ तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात्।

भवामनिचरित्पार्थ मयावेशतिचेतसाम्॥ (गीता १२।७)

teṣām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt |

bhavāmi nacirāt pārtha mayi āveśita-cetasām ||

§ सर्वभूतस्थितिं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थतिः।

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि योगी मयि विरतते॥ (गीता ६।३१)

sarva-bhūta-sthitam yo mām bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ |

sarvathā vartamāno 'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||

Besides knowing in truth (*jñātuṁ*) and entering (*praveṣṭuṁ*), Bhagavān also speaks of seeing Him (*draṣṭuṁ*).^{*} Although Bhagavān is not an object of the senses, He becomes an object of the senses-this is His extraordinary grace. This extraordinary feature belongs to devotion alone, not knowledge.

When knowledge predominates, the seeker knows only Bhagavān's attributeless form; when devotion predominates, the seeker knows

Bhagavān in His integral form. When a calf drinks from one teat, milk begins to flow from all four of the cow's teats. In the same way, when a devotee is attracted toward Bhagavān in love, Bhagavān graciously reveals His integral form. He removes the darkness of the devotee's ignorance,[†] and He also delivers the devotee.[‡] An exclusive devotee therefore need do nothing for personal deliverance: the responsibility for granting knowledge and delivering the devotee rests with Bhagavān. Though performing every activity, the devotee always moves and abides in Bhagavān.§ Moreover, the devotee never falls from yoga, because the devotee relies not upon personal practice but solely upon Bhagavān. Bhagavān therefore says:

Printed footnote

"But through exclusive devotion I may in this form, O Arjuna, be known, directly seen in truth, and entered, O scorcher of foes." (Gītā 11.54)

[†] *"Out of compassion for them alone, dwelling in their very being, I destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the radiant lamp of knowledge." (Gītā 10.11)*

[‡] *"For those whose consciousness is absorbed in Me, O Pārtha, I soon become the deliverer from the ocean of death and saṁsāra." (Gītā 12.7)*

[§] *"The yogī who worships Me as abiding in all beings and established in unity dwells in Me, whatever the manner of that person's life." (Gītā 6.31)*

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सिद्धा कृत्वा णो मद्व्यपाश्रयः।

मत्प्रसादाद्वाप्नोति शैश्वर्यं पदमव्ययम्॥

(गीता १८।५६)

sarva-karmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo mad-vyapāśrayaḥ |

mat-prasādād avāpnoti śāsvatam padam avyayam ||

मद्यत्तिः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरषियसि

(गीता १८।५८)

mac-cittaḥ sarva-durgāṇi mat-prasādāt tariṣyasi |

“Though always performing every action, one who takes refuge in Me attains by My grace the eternal, imperishable state.” (Gītā 18.56)

The printed gloss reads: “Although always performing every action, the devotee who takes refuge in Me attains by My grace the eternal, imperishable state.”

“With consciousness fixed on Me, by My grace you will cross every obstacle.” (Gītā 18.58, first half)

The printed gloss reads: “With your consciousness in Me, by My grace you will cross every obstacle.”

The point is that Bhagavān bestows special grace upon the devotee, removes every obstacle and impediment in the devotee’s practice, and also brings about attainment of Himself. The Brahma-sūtra therefore says, “*And there is special grace*” (3.4.38). The printed gloss reads: “Practising devotion to Bhagavān brings Bhagavān’s special grace.”

अहं भक्तरिति ख्याता इमौ मे तनयौ मतौ।

ज्ञानवैराग्यनामानौ कालयोगेन जर्जरौ॥

(१।४५)

aḥam bhaktir iti khyātā imau me tanayau matau |

jñāna-vairāgya-nāmānau kāla-yogena jarjarau ||

यद्यन्यत् साधनं नास्ति भक्तिरस्ति महेश्वरे।

तदा क्रमेण सधियन्त विरक्तिजिज्ञानमुक्तयः॥

(बोधसार, भक्ति ५)

yady anyat sādhanam nāsti bhaktir asti maheśvare |

tadā krameṇa sidhyanti virakti-jñāna-muktayaḥ ||

Where devotion is present, knowledge and dispassion arise of themselves. A devotee therefore need not labour to attain them. In the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Māhātmya, Knowledge and Dispassion are described as Devotion's sons:

"I am renowned as Devotion, and these two are regarded as my sons. Named Knowledge and Dispassion, they have grown decrepit through the course of time." (1.45)

Wherever the mother goes, her sons will certainly go too. Therefore the Bodhasāra says:

"Even if no other discipline is present, when devotion to Maheśvara is present, dispassion, knowledge, and liberation are successively perfected." (Bodhasāra, Bhakti 5)

The printed gloss repeats: "If devotion to Parameśvara is present within oneself, then even without any other discipline, dispassion, knowledge, and liberation-all three-are successively perfected."

| गुणरहितं कामनारहितं प्रतर्क्षणवर्धमानमवच्छिन्निं सूक्ष्मतरमनुभवरूपम्॥*

(नारदभक्तिसूत्र ५४)

guṇa-rahitaṁ kāmanā-rahitaṁ pratikṣaṇa-vardhamānam

avicchinnam sūkṣmataram anubhava-rūpam ||

When pure devotion is described, it is *nirguṇa*, beyond the guṇas-as in "*But service to Me is beyond the guṇas*" (Śrīmad

Bhāgavata 11.25.27). But when followers of the path of knowledge, bearing the impressions of that path, describe devotion, sattva predominates in their description. What knowers describe as devotion or love is therefore not genuine pure devotion, but devotion mixed with knowledge. Since it removes the defect of mental distraction, it is a means to knowledge, not loving devotion. Loving devotion lies beyond even realization of Reality. Followers of knowledge regard love as a modification of the inner instrument, a sāttvika condition, whereas love is not a modification of the inner instrument at all. Love belongs to the Self. No guṇa-no insentience-is present in love.* Mīrābāī possessed pure love, and therefore even her body became conscious and dissolved into Bhagavān's sacred image, for in devotion no insentient thing remains; everything becomes conscious. The gopīs likewise saw Kṛṣṇa alone everywhere. Their bodies too became conscious and dissolved into a pond renowned as Gopītalāī in Dvārakā. The clay of that pond is called Gopīcandana.

On the path of knowledge the world has no independent existence, but on the path of devotion there is no independent reality whatsoever: everything is Bhagavān-“*Vāsudeva is all.*” Followers of knowledge regard liberation as the highest thing; how then could they understand love-loving devotion or supreme devotion-which lies beyond liberation? Liberation contains an unbroken relish, but love an infinite relish. Love lies beyond liberation, realization of Reality, recognition of one's true nature, direct realization of the Self, and kaivalya.

Printed footnote

“It is beyond the guṇas, free from desire, increasing every moment, uninterrupted, subtler than the subtle, and of the nature of direct experience.” (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 54) The printed gloss reads: “This love is

beyond the guṇas, free from desire, continually increasing, uninterrupted, subtler than the subtle, and of the nature of direct experience.”

द्वैतं मोहाय बोधात्प्राग्जाते बोधे मनीषया।

भक्त्यर्थं कल्पितं द्वैतमद्वैतादपि सुन्दरम्॥

(बोधसार, भक्ति ४२)

dvaitam mohāya bodhāt prāg jāte bodhe manīṣayā |

bhakty-arthaṁ kalpitam dvaitam advaitād api sundaram ||

The Bodhasāra says:

“Before realization, duality leads to delusion; once realization has arisen, the duality deliberately imagined for devotion is more beautiful even than nonduality.” (Bodhasāra, Bhakti 42)

The printed gloss reads: “Duality before realization can cast one into delusion, but once realization has occurred, the duality imagined for the sake of devotion is more beautiful even than nonduality.”

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।

ददामि बुद्धयिगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति॥

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता॥

(गीता १०।१०-११)

teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam |

dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te ||

teṣāṁ evānukampārtham ahaṁ ajñāna-jam tamaḥ |

nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā ||

Loving devotion may arise after realization of Reality, or it may arise directly. Because of the devotee’s deep sense of intimate

belonging with Bhagavān, loving devotion may be attained directly even without prior realization. After loving devotion is attained, realization of Reality arises of itself through Bhagavān's grace:

"The supreme, incomparable fruit of seeing Me is that the jīva attains its own natural true nature." (Mānas, Araṇya 36.5)

Bhagavān says:

"To those who are ever steadfast, worshipping Me with love, I give that yoga of understanding by which they come to Me. Solely out of compassion for them, dwelling in their very being, I destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the radiant lamp of knowledge." (Gītā 10.10-11)

The printed gloss reads: "To those devotees who are continually established in Me and worship Me with love, I give the yoga of understanding by which they attain Me. Solely to show grace to those devotees, dwelling in their true being, I wholly destroy their darkness born of ignorance with the brilliantly shining lamp of knowledge."

Knowledge received from Bhagavān, the Jagadguru, is extraordinarily distinctive compared with knowledge received from human gurus.

वाग्गद्गदा द्रवते यस्य चित्तं
रुदत्यभीक्ष्णं हसतक्वचिच्च।
वलिज्ज उद्गायत नृत्यते च
मद्भक्तयुक्तो भुवनं पुनात॥
(श्रीमद्भा० ११।१४।२४)

vāg gadgadā dravate yasya cittam

*rudaty abhīkṣṇaṁ hasati kvacī ca |
vilajja udgāyati nṛtyate ca
mad-bhakti-yukto bhuvanaṁ punāti ||*

The knower possesses unbroken bliss, but the loving devotee possesses bliss that increases at every moment. The devotee therefore does not remain calm and uniform like the knower; instead, waves of various extraordinary devotional states continually arise:

“One whose voice falters, whose heart melts, who repeatedly weeps, sometimes laughs, and, abandoning shame, sings aloud and dances-such a person, joined to devotion for Me, purifies the world.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.14.24)

The printed gloss reads: “One whose voice becomes choked while describing My name, qualities, and divine plays; whose heart melts while contemplating My form, qualities, greatness, and divine plays; who repeatedly weeps, sometimes begins to laugh, sometimes abandons shame and sings aloud, and sometimes begins to dance-such a devotee of Mine purifies the whole world.”



Love, the Lover, and the Beloved

4. Love, Lover, and Beloved

1. We Are in Bhagavān, and Bhagavān Is in Us

There is a profound point: what we truly desire is always within us, and we are always within it. Our true desires are three: (1) the desire for Being-that I may always live and never die; (2) the desire for Consciousness-that I may know everything and never remain ignorant of anything; and (3) the desire for Bliss-that I may always be happy and never unhappy. All three desires are for Paramātmā, whose nature is Being-Consciousness-Bliss. That compact mass of Being-Consciousness-Bliss is always within us, and we are always within Him. Our error is that we try to fulfil these desires through what is not within us and within which we are not. We want to live through the body, become knowledgeable through the intellect, and become happy through the senses. Thus we try to fulfil all three desires through the world, whose nature is unreality, insentience, and sorrow. That is why they remain unfulfilled and we have suffered from beginningless time. We desire Being-Consciousness-Bliss, yet try to fulfil that desire through the unreal, insentient, sorrowful world-what foolishness!

योऽन्यथा सन्तमात्मानमन्यथा प्रतपिद्यते।

कर्त्तिन न कृतं पापं चौरैणात्मापहारिणा॥

(महा० उदयोग० ४२।३७)

yo 'nyathā santam ātmānam anyathā pratipadyate |

kiñ tena na kṛtaṁ pāpaṁ caureṇātmāpahārīṇā ||

Everyone experiences the body and world changing continuously, but no one ever experiences oneself changing. The body passes from

childhood to youth and from youth to old age, yet “I am the same”-there is no change in the Self. We are therefore not in the world, and the world is not in us. The world is separate from us, while Paramātmā is eternally attained by us. To regard what is separate as attained, and what is eternally attained as separate and unattained-there is no sin comparable to this.

“One who misconceives the Self, which truly is one way, as being otherwise-what sin has that thief who steals away the Self not committed?” (Mahābhārata, Udyoga 42.37)

The printed gloss adds: “That self-destroying thief has committed every sin.”

What is separate from us is to be served; what is within us is to be accepted as our own. Doing so breaks the assumed relationship with the world and awakens the real relationship with Paramātmā. When that relationship awakens, love is attained-the supreme goal of human life.

2. Bhagavān Is Our Own

As long as a person believes in a relationship with the world, whatever comes to that person is regarded as one’s own. But when satsang brings the knowledge that the world is not mine and Bhagavān alone is mine, one experiences that every received thing belongs to Bhagavān and has come from Him. The object is not one’s own; the giver is one’s own.

A person makes the grave mistake of seeing the received object while never turning toward its giver. One takes the object as one’s own but never takes the giver as one’s own. Bhagavān, the giver, should truly seem dearer than the received object. To love the object

but not the one who gave it is not a grateful understanding, but an enjoyment-seeking understanding.

Bliss or love that increases at every moment cannot be relished while remaining one and alone: *“The solitary one does not delight”* (Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.3). To relish the divine play of love, Bhagavān therefore resolved, “Though one, may I become many”: *“He desired: May I become many; may I be born forth”* (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.6). Countless jīvas were created through this resolve. Bhagavān manifested Śrījī, Rādhājī, from Himself; manifested the jīvas from Himself; and manifested from Himself the materials of divine play, the world. The play of love occurs only when lover and beloved are equal, with neither smaller nor greater. Bhagavān therefore made the jīvas like Himself—that is, completely free. Within this play Śrījī was attracted solely toward Bhagavān and made no error; but the other jīvas misused their freedom, regarded the objects of divine play—the world—as their own, and became drawn toward them. Instead of loving Bhagavān, they began delighting in the objects He had given. They became owners of those objects and forgot their own Master. They took the objects as their own and turned away from their giver. Thus, misusing the freedom received, the jīva became dependent and fell into the bondage of birth and death.

Bhagavān graciously gives discernment to the jīva. When a person values that discernment, Bhagavān grants realization. Receiving it, the person experiences completeness and joyfully exclaims, “I am blessed! I am blessed!” Yet this too is an error. Completeness is not one’s own; the giver of completeness is one’s own. We should therefore desire not completeness but its giver. Bhagavān grants realization so that the jīva, liberated and free, may exchange love with Him. But when a person becomes satisfied with realization and

forgets Bhagavān, Bhagavān graciously introduces dryness even into that realization so that the person may relish love. Thus one who has realization sometimes perceives great bliss within, and sometimes dryness; sometimes completeness, and sometimes deficiency. A seeker may forget Bhagavān, but Bhagavān never forgets the seeker and continually awakens the seeker to draw that person toward Himself.

Bhagavān has the extraordinary nature that whenever He gives anything, He hides Himself so completely in the giving that the recipient thinks the thing belongs to oneself. In the world the giver is considered greater and the receiver smaller. Bhagavān therefore gives while concealing Himself so that no greatness enters the giver and no smallness enters the receiver. One should not become proud over what has been received, but grateful toward Bhagavān. When the recipient regards not the received object but its giver, Bhagavān, as one's own, Bhagavān becomes indebted and says: "I am the servant of the devotees; the devotees are the crown jewel upon My head!"

When a devotee offers oneself to Bhagavān, Bhagavān offers Himself to the devotee. The devotee gives Bhagavān the relish of love, and Bhagavān gives the devotee that relish: "*As people surrender to Me, so do I reciprocate with them*" (Gītā 4.11). In this play of love that increases at every moment, one cannot tell who is the devotee and who Bhagavān. Liberation-realization of Reality-contains unbroken relish, but this love contains infinite relish. Human life is fulfilled only through attaining that infinite relish.

3. Bhagavān Is Subject to Love

No one can describe how much bliss is present in love for Bhagavān. Even liberation and freedom from birth and death do not contain its bliss. With liberation and freedom from birth and death, suffering is destroyed and a person becomes satisfied-having accomplished what was to be accomplished, known what was to be known, and attained what was to be attained. But upon attaining love, one does not become satisfied; its bliss continues increasing without end. That love is imperishable and infinite. It is not attained through any action, practice, or reflection. Reflection may renounce insentience and bring recognition of one's true nature, but it cannot produce love. Love is attained through the deepening of the trust: "I belong to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān belongs to me." In other words, when the pull we feel toward the world turns toward Bhagavān, love is attained. Bhagavān Himself is also the giver of that love.

A person becomes a Karma-yogī only through the capacity Bhagavān gives, a knower only through the knowledge He gives, and a lover only through the love He gives. Every excellence and extraordinary quality seen in a person has been given entirely by Him. Even after giving everything, He does not reveal Himself-this is His nature.

| सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।*

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥ (गीता १८।६६)

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |

ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

If one asks Bhagavān for anything, ask only for love; if one attains anything, attain only love. A person needs nothing but love. Solely to let human beings relish this nectar of love, Bhagavān descends into the world in human form, reveals Himself, performs many

kinds of divine play, and teaches surrender-the final and most secret truth of His heart.*

Printed footnote

“Abandoning reliance upon all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I shall free you from every sin; do not grieve.” (Gītā 18.66) The printed gloss reads: “Abandon the support of all dharmas and enter My refuge alone. I shall free you from every sin; do not worry.”

मुक्तदिदातुकिरुहयितुस्म न भक्तियोगम्।

(श्रीमद्भा० ५।६।१८)

muktiṁ dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam |

Bhagavān did not create human beings for His own enjoyment, to engage them in pleasures, or to rule over them, but so that they might love Him and He might love them, they might call Him their own and He might call them His own, they might look upon Him and He upon them. Bhagavān does not make a human being His servant or dependent; He makes the person like Himself and grants equal honour. Bhagavān therefore hesitates to give devotion, because in devotion the human being becomes Bhagavān’s servant. The Śrīmad Bhāgavata says:

“He may grant liberation, but not devotion.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 5.6.18, concluding quarter)

The printed gloss reads: “Bhagavān may sometimes grant liberation, but He does not readily grant Bhakti-yoga.”

When Bhagavān Śrī Rāma told Kākabhuṣuṇḍijī to ask whatever boon he desired-mystic powers such as becoming minute, knowledge, dispassion, liberation, and so forth-Kākabhuṣuṇḍijī reflected that Bhagavān had offered everything except His own devotion:

“Hearing Prabhu’s words, my love greatly increased, and my mind began to reflect: Prabhu has indeed offered every happiness, but He has not offered His own devotion. Without devotion, every virtue and joy is like many dishes without salt.” (Mānas, Uttara 84.2-3)

Kākabhuṣuṇḍijī therefore asked for no other boon, but only devotion. Bhagavān became exceedingly pleased and, saying “So be it,” replied:

“Listen, crow: you are naturally wise. Why would you not ask such a boon? You have asked for devotion, the mine of every happiness; no one in the world is as greatly blessed as you. What sages do not obtain through millions of efforts while burning their bodies in the fire of japa and yoga-you have asked for devotion. Seeing your wisdom, I am delighted; it pleases Me greatly.” (Mānas, Uttara 85.1-3)

Bhagavān does not grant devotion on His own initiative, but if someone desires devotion alone, He is greatly pleased to bestow it. Devotion brings joy to both Bhagavān and devotee. Bhagavān therefore grants devotion to one who desires it and Himself becomes that devotee’s servant:

“I am the servant of the devotees; the devotees are the crown jewel upon My head.”

Bhagavān tells Durvāsājī:

अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्वजि।

साधुभरिग्रस्तहृदयो भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः॥

(श्रीमद्भा० ९।४।६३)

aham bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija |

sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ ||

मयि निरिबद्धहृदयाः साधवः समदर्शनाः।

वशीकुर्वन्तमिमां भक्त्या सत्सत्तरयिः सत्पतयिथा॥

(श्रीमद्भा० ९।४।६६)

mayi nirbaddha-hṛdayāḥ sādhaḥ sama-darśanāḥ |

vaśīkurvanti mām bhaktyā sat-striyaḥ sat-patim yathā ||

“O twice-born one, I am dependent upon My devotees, as though not independent. My heart is captured by the sādhus and devotees, for devotees are dear to Me.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 9.4.63)

The printed gloss reads: “O twice-born one, I am entirely subject to the devotees and not independent. Devotees are exceedingly dear to Me; they possess complete authority over My heart.”

“The even-seeing sādhus whose hearts are bound to Me bring Me under their control through devotion, just as virtuous wives do their virtuous husbands.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 9.4.66)

The printed gloss reads: “Just as a devoted wife brings her virtuous husband under her control through love, the even-seeing sādhus who have bound their hearts to Me with the bond of love bring Me under their control through devotion.”

न साधयतिमिमां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म उद्धव।

न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोर्जति॥

(श्रीमद्भा० ११।१४।२०)

na sādhayati mām yogo na sāṅkhyam dharma uddhava |

na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo yathā bhaktir mamorjitā ||

Bhagavān cannot be brought under control by any discipline, but devotion brings Him under control. He therefore says:

“O Uddhava, neither yoga, nor Sāṅkhya, nor dharma, nor study, austerity, or renunciation subdues Me as does powerful devotion to Me.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.14.20)

The printed gloss reads: “O Uddhava, yoga, Sāṅkhya or knowledge, dharma, study, austerity, and renunciation are not as capable of bringing Me under control as is intense devotion to Me.”

Because the jīva is dependent, it delights in becoming free; because Bhagavān is supremely free, He delights in becoming dependent. Freedom is rare for the jīva, and dependence is rare for Bhagavān.

4. Eternal Separation and Eternal Union

मुक्तोपसृप्यव्यपदेशात्। (१।३।२)

muktopasṛpya-vyapadeśāt |

There is no discipline or worship equal to intimate belonging with Bhagavān in the form, “I belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān belongs to me.” Through this intimacy, even Bhagavān, the compact mass of Bliss, receives bliss. He gives His intimate own His everything-His infinite relish, love. But to those who, distressed by dependence and the bondage of birth and death, desire liberation, Bhagavān grants liberation while keeping Himself hidden from them. When a liberated person is not content even with liberation’s unbroken relish, hunger for infinite relish awakens. Liberation erases desire for perishable relish, but does not erase hunger for infinite relish. The Brahma-sūtra therefore says:

“Because He is declared to be approached by the liberated.” (1.3.2)

The printed gloss reads: “Bhagavān, whose nature is love, is described as attainable even by liberated persons.” One of Bhagavān’s names is therefore “He who attracts the hosts of those who delight in the Self.”

| यस्त्वात्मरतिरिव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः।*

आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न वदियते॥ (गीता ३।१७)

yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād ātma-tr̥ptaś ca mānavaḥ |

ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryam na vidyate ||

Infinite relish is not found in realization, but in love. Hunger for this infinite relish is the jīva’s real and final hunger, and attaining love is the jīva’s real and final gain. Liberation has a limit,* but love has none. To attain love one need not know what Bhagavān is like; one must accept, “Bhagavān is mine.” This intimate belonging gives infinite relish and bliss to both devotee and Bhagavān. Knowledge of an object merely removes ignorance; it gives nothing. But accepting “this object is mine,” and thus possessing mine-making toward it, yields a relish. The relish in attraction toward an object is not present in knowledge of it.

Printed footnote

“But for the person who delights solely in the Self, is satisfied in the Self, and is content in the Self alone, there is no duty to perform.” (Gītā 3.17) The printed gloss repeats this meaning.

Attraction toward a worldly object is for one’s own happiness, while attraction toward Bhagavān is for His happiness—*“to be happy in His happiness.”* Worldly attraction therefore ends, but attraction toward Bhagavān has no end; it is infinite. Desire for enjoyment ends, and the desire for liberation or spiritual inquiry is fulfilled, but thirst for love neither ends nor is fulfilled; it continually

increases at every moment-“*increasing at every moment*” (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 54).

The lover always sees only an absence of love within oneself, just as a wealthy person continually sees a lack of wealth. As wealth increases, the person feels its deficiency more strongly.* The lover similarly perceives only a lack of love within. Love is therefore said to increase at every moment. If the lover did not perceive a deficiency of love, how would love increase? Never regarding oneself as complete and always perceiving a lack of love is eternal separation. Eternal separation and eternal union-eternal yoga-are both eternal. The longing for union with the Beloved is therefore never fulfilled, yet separation from the Beloved never occurs. Eternal separation increases love, and eternal union gives love life, consciousness, and a special extraordinariness.

Printed footnote

In truth the tendency expressed by “*as gain increases, greed increases*” was intended within the jīva for love of Bhagavān that increases at every moment. But the jīva applied it to the world, enjoyment, and accumulation. The attraction was truly for imperishable Bhagavān, but the jīva directed it toward the perishable world. The attraction remained the same, but through bad company and taking pleasure in enjoyments its aim changed. Attraction to the world-attachment or desire-leads toward downfall; attraction to Bhagavān-love-leads upward. Worldly attraction weakens and turns into sorrow and dryness, whereas attraction to Bhagavān becomes bliss increasing at every moment.

Eternal separation and eternal union are two forms of the same love.

“Restless night and day to meet Him, even while always united the heart feels it has never met. ‘Bhagavata-rasika’ speaks a

connoisseur's truths; without such relish, no one can understand them."

Illustrating eternal separation and eternal union, Gosvāmī Tulsīdāsajī Mahārāja describes Mother Kausalyā's condition:

"Mother, no one can make me understand. Was Rāma's departure real or a dream? My mind cannot believe it. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā remain continually before my eyes, yet the burning in this heart does not cease-so contrary has fate become. My sorrow cannot remain when I behold Raghupati, yet without seeing Him my body cannot remain. Still my life does not depart. Listen, friend-my fate has become tangled in this puzzle. Hearing Kausalyā's words of separation, all the queens burst into tears. Tulsīdāsa says: the pain of separation from Raghuvīra cannot be described." (Gītāvalī, Ayodhyā 53)

Bhagavān Himself graciously grants both this eternal separation and this eternal union.



The Supreme Spiritual Means

अयं हि सर्वकल्पानां सध्रीचीनो मतो मम।

मद्भावः सर्वभूतेषु मनोवाक्कायवृत्तभिः॥

(११।२९।१९)

ayaṁ hi sarva-kalpānāṁ sadhrīcīno mato mama |

mad-bhāvaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu mano-vāk-kāya-vṛttibhiḥ ||

There are three means of attaining Bhagavān:

1. Seeing Bhagavān in the world-“*one who sees Me everywhere*” (Gītā 6.30).
2. Seeing the world in Bhagavān-“*and sees everything in Me*” (Gītā 6.30).
3. Seeing the world as Bhagavān’s very form-“*Vāsudeva is all*” (Gītā 7.19).

Of these three, the supreme means that brings swift attainment of Bhagavān is to see the world as His form-to accept that everything is Bhagavān alone. It is supreme because the state, “*Vāsudeva is all*,” which appears only at the end of the first two means, is present from the very beginning of the third. The Śrīmad Bhāgavata says:

“Of all means, I regard this as the most direct: through every movement of mind, speech, and body, maintain the awareness of Me in all beings.” (11.29.19)

The printed gloss reads: “Of all the means of attaining Me, I regard this as the finest: in all dealings of mind, speech, and body toward every being and object, one should maintain the awareness of Me alone.”

The Upaniṣads give three illustrations for understanding this point: gold, iron, and clay. Gold takes the form of many ornaments. Their shapes, names, forms, weights, uses, and values differ, yet the gold in all of them is one; nothing but gold is present. There are many weapons and implements of iron, yet they contain nothing but iron. Likewise there are many earthen vessels, but nothing other than clay is in them. Just as ornaments made of gold are to be seen as gold, weapons made of iron as iron, and vessels made of clay as clay, creation born from Paramātmā is to be seen as Paramātmā. To understand correctly that this whole world is Paramātmā's form, the matter is now examined.

| मम योनिरिमहद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन्निगर्भं दधाम्यहम्।*

सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत॥ (गीता १४।३)

mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmy aham |

sambhavaḥ sarva-bhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata ||

सर्वयोन्येषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्त्येताः।

तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरिहं बीजप्रदः पतिः॥ (गीता १४।४)

sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ |

tāsām brahma mahad yonir ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā ||

At the root of every worldly object lies something unproduced that human beings cannot manufacture. We can make many things from wheat, but cannot make a grain of wheat; many things from chickpeas, but not a chickpea; many things from potatoes, but not a potato. Many human beings can be born from a human body, but we cannot make the ovum and seed from which bodies arise. Even the greatest scientist cannot manufacture the fundamental substance, the seed, of any object. We can alter things and combine two things; by grafting plants we can produce a different fruit or

introduce a modification, but cannot manufacture the root principle. That principle is self-established. It was not made by a human being but by Bhagavān.* Bhagavān is the primal seed of the entire world.

Printed footnote

“The great Brahman is My womb; in it I place the embryo. From that arises every being, O Bhārata.” (Gītā 14.3) The printed gloss explains the great Brahman as Bhagavān’s primordial Prakṛti and the embryo as the seed of the jīvas, from which the cosmic totality arises.

“Whatever forms arise in all wombs, O Kaunteya, the great Brahman is their womb and I am the seed-giving Father.” (Gītā 14.4) The printed gloss explains primordial Prakṛti as the mother of all individual bodies and Bhagavān as their seed-giving Father.

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन।

न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम्॥

(गीता १०।३९)

yaś cāpi sarva-bhūtānām bījaṁ tad aham arjuna |

na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram ||

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां वद्धिपार्थ सनातनम्॥

(गीता ७।१०)

bījaṁ mām sarva-bhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam ||

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं नष्टानं बीजमव्ययम्॥

(गीता ९।१८)

prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ nidhānaṁ bījam avyayam ||

Bhagavān says:

“Whatever is the seed of all beings-that am I, O Arjuna. No moving or unmoving being can exist without Me.” (Gītā 10.39)

The printed gloss reads: “O Arjuna, I alone am the seed of every being. No moving or unmoving creature exists without Me; that is, everything moving and unmoving is Me alone.”

A worldly seed is born from a tree, but Bhagavān is unborn. He therefore calls Himself the eternal seed:

“Know Me, O Pārtha, as the eternal seed of every being.” (Gītā 7.10, second half)

A worldly seed produces a tree and is itself destroyed, but even after producing infinite creations Bhagavān remains exactly as He is. He therefore calls Himself the imperishable seed:

“The origin, dissolution, ground, repository, and imperishable seed.” (Gītā 9.18, second half)

Bhagavān is present both at the beginning and at the end of the entire universe. It is a principle that whatever is present at the beginning and end is also present in the middle, the present. Many kinds of objects arise from clay, remain in clay, and finally dissolve into clay. Likewise every seed in the world arises from Bhagavān, remains in Bhagavān, and finally dissolves into Bhagavān. Worldly seeds arise and perish, but the imperishable seed that is Bhagavān remains unchanged at the beginning, middle, and end. Therefore in the present Bhagavān alone appears as the world. Nothing exists apart from Him.

Question: At present we directly see only an insentient world composed of the five elements, subject to arising and destruction. How can it be understood as the imperishable form of Bhagavān?

Answer: Everything arising from a seed possesses the nature of that seed. A crop arising from wheat is itself called wheat. Farmers say, “The wheat crop has grown very well. Look, wheat is standing in the field; the field is full of wheat.” A city merchant might refuse to call it wheat: “I have bought and sold sacks upon sacks of wheat. Do I not know what wheat looks like? This is grass, stalk, and leaf-not wheat.” But a knowledgeable farmer will say, “This is not the grass that animals eat; it is wheat.” If a cow eats the crop, people say the cow ate their wheat, even though it did not eat a single grain. Although the field may not yet contain one grain of wheat, it unquestionably is wheat, because it was wheat before and will be wheat at the end. In the middle too, in the form of a crop, it is wheat alone.

At present it appears as green grass, but after ripening it will yield only wheat. Likewise before the world there was Paramātmā alone—*“In the beginning, dear one, this was Being alone, one without a second”* (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2.1)—and at the end Paramātmā alone will remain—*“He remains, known as Śeṣa”* (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.3.25). Therefore in the middle too everything is Paramātmā alone: *“Vāsudeva is all”* (Gītā 7.19); *“I am both the real and unreal”* (Gītā 9.19).

Bhagavān created the entire universe from Himself; nothing therefore exists apart from Him. Whatever enters the mind’s imagination and whatever does not is Bhagavān’s form. Whatever we see in waking and dream is Bhagavān alone. The real is Bhagavān, the unreal is Bhagavān, and what lies beyond both is Bhagavān—*“whatever is beyond the real and unreal”* (Gītā 11.37). The revered brāhmaṇa, whose footprints even Bhagavān bears upon His heart, and the lowest dog-cooker or caṇḍāla are both Bhagavān’s forms. People worship an image of Gaṇeśa made of gold

but not a mouse made of gold, yet to a goldsmith both have the same value. In the same way, brāhmaṇa and caṇḍāla, sādhu and butcher, cow and dog, elephant and ant, lump of clay and gold—all differ by birth, qualities, and actions, yet to a devotee they are equal, Bhagavān’s very form: “*Vāsudeva is all.*” Just as one deals appropriately with every bodily limb while maintaining the same self-identification with them all and striving equally to remove their pain and give them comfort, a devotee deals appropriately with brāhmaṇa, caṇḍāla, and all others according to scriptural propriety—“as the deity, so the worship”—without any difference in seeing Bhagavān in them or striving to remove their sorrow and give them happiness.

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद् यत् सदसत् परम्।

पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम्॥

(श्रीमद्भा० २।९।३२)

aham evāsam evāgre nānyad yat sad-asat param |

paścād ahaṁ yad etac ca yo ’vaśiṣyeta so ’smy aham ||

अहमादक्षिच मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च॥

(१०।२०)

aham ādiś ca madhyaṁ ca bhūtānām anta eva ca ||

सर्गाणामादरिन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन।

(१०।३२)

sargāṇām ādir antaś ca madhyaṁ caivāham arjuna |

The change visible in the world is a glimpse, radiance, animation, and divine play of Bhagavān alone. A worldly person sees that glimpse and becomes trapped in it. Because of an enjoyment-seeking outlook, one’s vision gets caught in the changing

world and does not reach Bhagavān. When the influence of satsang turns the person away from the world and toward Bhagavān, Bhagavān bestows special grace and grants nondual devotion-the awareness of Bhagavān.

No discipline or worship exceeds the awareness that everything is Bhagavān. It makes attainment of Bhagavān exceedingly easy. Teaching this awareness to Brahmājī, Bhagavān says:

“I alone existed before creation; nothing other than Me existed-neither the real, the unreal, nor what lies beyond them. After creation too I am whatever appears here, and after its destruction whatever remains-that too am I.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 2.9.32)

The printed gloss expands this same meaning.

Bhagavān likewise says in the Gītā: *“I am the beginning, middle, and very end of beings”* (10.20), and, *“O Arjuna, I alone am the beginning, end, and middle of creations”* (10.32). The printed glosses restate both.

To know creation born from Paramātmā as Paramātmā’s form is knowledge. So long as one perceives oneself and the world as separately existing, there is ignorance. Seeing a wheat field as wheat is knowledge; seeing it as grass is ignorance.

Question: Wheat produces only wheat and millet only millet. How, then, do many kinds of moving and unmoving beings arise from Paramātmā?

Answer: Wheat and millet are worldly seeds, but Bhagavān is a transcendent and extraordinary seed-eternal and imperishable. Many kinds of creation therefore arise from the one Bhagavān. The

three worlds, fourteen realms, insentient and sentient, unmoving and moving, land-dwelling, aquatic, and aerial, those born from womb, egg, moisture, and sprout, sāttvika, rājasika, and tāmasika, human beings, gods, animals, birds, ghosts, spirits, piśācas, Brahma-rākṣasas-all are the crop of that extraordinary seed. Bhagavān says in the Gītā: *“There is no other cause of this world apart from Me”* (7.7, printed gloss); *“Know that every sāttvika, rājasika, and tāmasika state arises from Me alone”* (7.12, printed gloss); *“The many distinct states of beings-intelligence, knowledge, freedom from delusion, and so forth-arise from Me alone”* (10.5, printed gloss); and *“Memory, knowledge, and the removal of doubt and other defects arise from Me alone”* (15.15, printed gloss).

मनसा वचसा दृष्ट्या गृह्यतेऽन्यैरपीन्द्रियैः।

अहमेव न मत्तोऽन्यदतिबुध्यध्वमञ्जसा॥

(११।१३।२४)

manasā vacasā dṛṣṭyā grhyate 'nyair apīndriyaiḥ |

aham eva na matto 'nyad iti budhyadhvam añjasā ||

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Bhagavān says:

“Whatever is apprehended by the mind, speech, sight, and the other senses is I alone; nothing is apart from Me. Understand this directly.” (11.13.24)

The printed gloss says: “Whatever is apprehended by the mind, speech, sight, and the other senses-sound, touch, form, taste, smell, and so forth-is all I alone. Therefore thoughtfully and quickly understand, that is, accept, this principle: apart from Me there is nothing whatever.”

The point is that every sāttvika, rājasika, and tāmasika state, action, object, and so forth apprehended by the body, senses, mind, and intellect is Bhagavān alone. Every mere stirring of the mind, whether good or bad, is Bhagavān. Whatever enters into seeing, hearing, speaking, thinking, or understanding in this world-good and bad, pure and impure, enemy and friend, wicked and virtuous, sinful and meritorious, one's own and another's-is Bhagavān alone. Body and indweller, field and knower of the field, lower and higher nature, perishable and imperishable-all are Bhagavān. Nothing whatever exists anywhere apart from Him: *"All this is pervaded by Me"* (Gītā 9.4). If everything is Bhagavān, whence did "I," the individual personality, arise within it? There is no "I" at all; there is only You, You alone:

Repeating "You, You," I became You; no "I" remained in me.

I have offered and sacrificed myself; wherever I look, there are You.

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्जः स्वधाहममौषधम्।

मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्नरिहं हुतम्॥

(गीता ९।१६)

aham kratur aham yajñah svadhāham aham auśadham |

mantra 'ham aham evājyam aham agnir aham hutam ||

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हवर्िब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिन॥

(गीता ४।२४)

brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam |

brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā ||

From the standpoint of knowledge, the guṇas alone act upon the guṇas—*“the guṇas operate among the guṇas”* (Gītā 3.28). In the same way, from the standpoint of devotion, Bhagavān’s own object is being offered to Bhagavān. Just as one may worship the Gaṅgā with Gaṅgā-water, worship the sun with a lamp, or worship the earth with flowers born from the earth, Bhagavān is being worshipped with Bhagavān’s own objects. In truth, the worshipped is Bhagavān, the materials of worship are Bhagavān, the worship is Bhagavān, and the worshipper too is Bhagavān. Bhagavān says:

“I am the Vedic rite; I am the sacrifice; I am the ancestral offering; I am the herb. I am the mantra; I alone am the clarified butter; I am the fire; I am the act of offering.” (Gītā 9.16)

The printed gloss identifies each element of the rite-kratu, sacrifice, ancestral offering, herb, mantra, clarified butter, fire, and the act of oblation-as Bhagavān Himself.

“The offering is Brahman, the oblation is Brahman, and it is offered by Brahman into the fire that is Brahman. Brahman alone is to be reached by one absorbed in action as Brahman.” (Gītā 4.24)

The printed gloss explains that the ladle and other instruments, the material offered, the Brahman-form agent, the Brahman-form fire, the act of offering, and the fruit attained by the person absorbed in that Brahman-action are all Brahman alone.

Seeing Bhagavān everywhere in this way leaves no attraction or aversion in the seeker. When everything is Bhagavān, who could feel attraction or aversion, and toward whom?

“O Umā, those devoted to Rāma’s feet, free from desire, pride, and anger, see the world pervaded by their own Lord-with whom could they be at odds?” (Mānas, Uttara 112b)

There is a subtle point here. To experience that everything is Bhagavān, one needs neither an action nor an object, but discernment or devotional feeling. Discernment searches; feeling accepts or holds a conviction. Both discernment and feeling ultimately culminate in knowledge of Reality. The path of knowledge gives primacy to discernment, and the path of devotion to feeling. On the path of knowledge one accepts after knowing; on the path of devotion one knows after accepting. Both have the same outcome. The result of knowing something in its reality is also produced by accepting it firmly.* On the path of devotion, the devotee first firmly accepts that everything is Bhagavān and later knows it in reality-that is, directly experiences that everything is Bhagavān.

* A human being has three powers: the power to act, the power to know, and the power to accept. Just as the yoga of knowledge employs the power to know and the yoga of devotion employs the power to accept, karma-yoga employs the power to act. A karma-yogī selflessly serves every living being through mind, speech, and body: regarding the capacity and materials received from the world as belonging to the world itself, the karma-yogī puts them into its service. Such service severs one’s relationship with the world, and one experiences the all-pervading Reality of Paramātmā everywhere. Thus the same Reality attained through jñāna-yoga and bhakti-yoga is attained through karma-yoga as well.

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इतगुणाः प्रकृतसिम्भवाः।

(गीता १४।५)

sattvaṁ rajas tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛti-sambhavāḥ |

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये।

मत्त एवेतान्वदिधि।

(गीता ७।१२)

ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye |

matta eveti tāt viddhi |

From the standpoint of jñāna-yoga, all three guṇas-sattva, rajas, and tamas-arise from prakṛti: “*Sattva, rajas, and tamas are the guṇas born of prakṛti*” (Gītā 14.5). From the standpoint of bhakti-yoga, all guṇas arise from Bhagavān: “*Whatever states are sāttvika, rājasika, or tāmasika, know them to arise from Me alone*” (Gītā 7.12). Therefore, everything visible to the jñāna-yogī is prakṛti,* and every change is simply the guṇas operating among the guṇas. Everything visible to the bhakti-yogī is Bhagavān’s own form,† and every change is Bhagavān’s divine play.

न तदस्तपिथवियां वा दर्विदैवेषु वा पुनः।*

सत्त्वं प्रकृतजिर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः॥

(गीता १८।४०)

na tad asti prthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ |

sattvaṁ prakṛti-jair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ ||

“There is no entity on earth, or again in heaven among the gods, that can be free from these three guṇas born of prakṛti.”* (Gītā 18.40)

The printed gloss says: “On earth, in heaven, among the gods, or anywhere else, there is no object free from these three guṇas born of prakṛti.”

† न तदस्तविनि यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम्॥

(गीता १०।३९)

na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram ||

† “No moving or unmoving being can exist without Me.” (Gītā 10.39)

The printed gloss says: “There is no moving or unmoving being without Me.”

वासना यस्य यत्र स्यात् स तं स्वप्नेषु पश्यति

स्वप्नवन्मरणं ज्ञेयं वासना तु वपुर्नृणाम्॥

vāsanā yasya yatra syāt sa taṁ svapneṣu paśyati |

svapnavan maraṇaṁ jñeyaṁ vāsanā tu vapur nṛṇām ||

The world exists neither in the vision of a liberated-in-life, truth-knowing, Bhagavān-loving great soul nor in Bhagavān’s vision. It exists only in the vision of the jīva who harbours desire for the world—who has ascribed independent reality and importance to it: “O mighty-armed one, by this nature become the living principle, the world is sustained” (Gītā 7.5). This desire for the world is the seed of bondage in the form of birth and death:

“Whatever a person’s latent desire may be, that is what one sees in dreams. Death should be understood as like a dream; latent desire is the body of human beings.”

The printed gloss says that a person dreams in accordance with the desire one harbours. Death resembles dream: at the final moment one thinks according to one’s latent desire, and one’s destination accords with that thought.

The Gītā calls this very desire association with the guṇas: *“Association with the guṇas is the cause of one’s births in higher and lower wombs”* (13.21, with the printed gloss). In the absence of desire, one experiences the disappearance of the notions of jīva and world and the presence of Bhagavān: *“Vāsudeva is all.”*

On the path of knowledge, the seeker uses discernment to become unattached to the world. On the path of devotion, the seeker sees the world as Bhagavān’s form through devotional feeling-faith. That everything is Bhagavān is not a subject of discernment or analysis, but of feeling or faith. This is why the statement “everything is Bhagavān” occurs more often in the speech of devotees.

Discernment remains so long as both pairs—the real and unreal, Brahman and world—remain. When belief in the unreal, the world, disappears, discernment no longer remains; direct realization of Reality does. Thus, if one uses discernment to set the world apart and then sees Bhagavān, the world retains reality, for only that whose reality has been assumed is negated. But when one sees the world as Bhagavān’s form through devotional feeling, the world retains no independent reality. So long as Bhagavān and world remain separate in the seeker’s vision, uninterrupted bliss does not remain in life: sometimes joy comes and sometimes dryness; sometimes the seeker sees great progress in the discipline, and sometimes none at all. Therefore the highest discipline is to see the world as Bhagavān’s form—to see that Bhagavān Himself is appearing as the world.

To experience that everything is Bhagavān, the seeker should firmly accept: whether or not I understand it, whether or not I experience it, this alone is true. Whatever object appears, from the greatest to the smallest, one should accept that Bhagavān is wholly present

within it. The same principle of water is fully present in a drop and in the ocean; likewise, whether it is a lump of clay or the whole earth, Bhagavān is entirely present there—*aṇor aṇīyān mahato mahīyān*, “smaller than the small and greater than the great” (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.20; Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.20). Holding this conviction, one should continually bow mentally to everyone.* Then Bhagavān will become visible everywhere.

From one perspective, there is duality on the path of knowledge and nonduality on the path of devotion. The path of knowledge distinguishes prakṛti and puruṣa, real and unreal, Brahman and world, eternal and noneternal, insentient and sentient, body and indweller, field and knower of the field. On the path of devotion, however, nothing exists apart from the one Bhagavān. On the path of knowledge, Brahman is real and the world unreal—*brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā*, “Brahman is real; the world is false.” On the path of devotion, real and unreal alike are Bhagavān: *sad-asac cāham arjuna*, “O Arjuna, I am the real and the unreal” (Gītā 9.19). One who accepts that everything is Bhagavān and takes refuge in Him—erasing one’s independent existence, the sense of “I,” and becoming absorbed in Him—is called a knower by Bhagavān: *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti jñānavān mām prapadyate*, “The knower who sees that Vāsudeva is all takes refuge in Me” (Gītā 7.19). Bhagavān calls such a knowing devotee exceedingly dear to Himself—*priyo hi jñānino ’tyartham aham sa ca mama priyaḥ*, “I am exceedingly dear to the knower, and that one is dear to Me” (Gītā 7.17)—and identifies that devotee with His own Self—*jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam*, “The knower is My very Self—such is My view” (7.18). Thus devotional feeling is even swifter than discernment. Seeing the world as Bhagavān’s form through devotional feeling is therefore the highest discipline.

वायुर्यमोऽग्निरिवरुणः शशाङ्कः प्रजापतसित्तुं प्रपतिमहश्च।*

नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्वः पुनश्च भूयोऽपनिमो नमस्ते॥

नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व।

अनन्तवीर्यामतिविक्रमस्त्वं सर्वं समाप्नोषिततोऽसि सर्वः॥

(गीता ११।३९-४०)

*vāyur yamo 'gnir varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ prajāpatīs tvam
prapitāmahaś ca |*

*namo namas te 'stu sahasra-kṛtvaḥ punaś ca bhūyo 'pi namo
namas te ||*

*namaḥ purastād atha prṣṭhataś te namo 'stu te sarvata eva sarva
|*

*ananta-vīryāmita-vikramas tvam sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato 'si
sarvaḥ ||*

खं वायुमग्निसिलिलं महीं च ज्योतीषसित्तुवानदिशो द्रुमादीन्।

सरत्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं यत्कञ्चि भूतं प्रणमेदनन्यः॥

(श्रीमद्भा० ११।२।४१)

*khaṁ vāyum agniṁ salilam mahīm ca jyotīmṣi sattvāni diśo
drumādīn |*

*sarīṭ-samudrāṁś ca hareḥ śarīraṁ yat kiñca bhūtaṁ praṇamed
ananyaḥ ||*

वसृज्य समयमानान् स्वान् दृशं व्रीडां च दैहिकीम्।

प्रणमेद् दण्डवद् भूमावाश्वचाण्डालगोखरम्॥

(श्रीमद्भा० ११।२९।१६)

visṛjya smayamānān svān dṛśaṁ vrīḍāṁ ca daihikīm |

praṇamed daṇḍavad bhūmāv ā-śva-cāṇḍāla-go-kharam ||

“You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa, the moon, Prajāpati, and the great-grandsire. Homage, homage to You a thousand times; and

yet again, repeatedly, homage and homage to You. Homage to You from the front and from behind; homage to You from every side, O All. Infinite in power and immeasurable in prowess, You pervade everything; therefore You are all.”* (Gītā 11.39-40)

The printed gloss expands the names and says that because the infinitely powerful Bhagavān pervades the entire world, He is all forms and is to be saluted from every direction.

“Space, air, fire, water, earth, the luminaries, living beings, directions, trees and other plants, rivers and oceans-whatever has come into being is Hari’s body; the single-hearted devotee should bow to it.”* (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.2.41)

The printed gloss says that all these are Bhagavān’s body and that the exclusive devotee should bow to them all with this conviction.

“Abandoning concern for the laughter of one’s own people, bodily vision, and shame, one should prostrate oneself like a staff upon the ground even before a dog, a caṇḍāla, a cow, and a donkey.”* (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.29.16)

The printed gloss directs one to set aside embarrassment that one’s own people may mock and to offer full prostration even to a dog, caṇḍāla, cow, and donkey.

Om Tat Sat.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsaḥ Mahārāja says:

“Knowing every insentient and sentient being in the world to be pervaded by Rāma, I ever bow to the lotus feet of all with both hands joined.” (Mānas, Bāla 7c)

“The 8.4 million forms and species of beings dwelling in water, on land, and in the sky-knowing the whole world to be pervaded by Sītā and Rāma, I bow with both hands joined.” (Mānas, Bāla 8.1)

“Pervaded by Sītā and Rāma” means that every female- and male-designated being and object is the very form of Sītā-Rāma. Whether one says Sītā-Rāma, Rādhā-Śyāma, Gaurī-Śaṅkara, or Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, the meaning is the same.

Everything Is Bhagavān Alone

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते।

वासुदेवः सर्वमत्तिसि महात्मा सुदुर्लभः॥ (गीता ७।१९)

bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate |

vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ||

सब कुछ भगवान् ही हैं-‘सर्वं खल्वदि ब्रह्म’ (छान्दोग्योपनिषद् ३।१४।१), ‘ब्रह्मैवेदं
वश्वमदिं वरषिठम्’ (मुण्डकोपनिषद् २।२।११)।

sarvaṁ khalv idam brahma.

brahmaivedaṁ viśvam idam variṣṭham.

स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम। (गीता १०।१५)

svayam evātmanātmānaṁ vettha tvaṁ puruṣottama.

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्कञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय।

मयि सर्वमदिं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव॥ (गीता ७।७)

mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya |

mayi sarvam idam protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva ||

त्वं वायुरग्निरिव निरियदम्बुमात्राः

प्राणेन्द्रियाणि हृदयं च दिनुग्रहश्च।

सर्वं त्वमेव सगुणो वगुणश्च भूमन्

नान्यत्तत्त्वदस्त्यपि मनोवचसा निरुक्तम्॥ (श्रीमद्भागवत ७।९।४८)

tvaṁ vāyur agnir avanir viyad ambu-mātrāḥ

prāṇendriyāṇi hṛdayaṁ cid-anugrahaś ca |

sarvaṁ tvam eva saguṇo viguṇaś ca bhūman

nānyat tvad asty api mano-vacasā niruktam ||

Bhagavān says in the Gītā:

“At the end of many births, the person of knowledge takes refuge in Me, knowing, ‘Vāsudeva is all.’ Such a great soul is exceedingly rare.” (Gītā 7.19)

bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate |

vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ||

“Everything is Bhagavān alone”—this is true knowledge. The devotee endowed with such knowledge, that *mahātmā*, takes refuge in Bhagavān: his separate existence, his “I”-sense, dissolves into Bhagavān. Then neither the “I” nor a separate knower remains; Bhagavān alone remains as knowledge itself, without “I,” “you,” “this,” or “that.”

The root of the world is *aham*, the “I”-sense. Every discipline therefore aims at effacing it; once it is effaced, all disciplines become one. The conviction that everything is Bhagavān removes the “I” with ease. The world appears to possess an independent existence only because one accepts egoic individuality and retains its latent impressions. When ego is effaced, that supposed independence disappears and one realizes that everything is Bhagavān. So long as oneself or the world appears independently real, liberation and true knowledge have not arisen.

Printed footnote

Mahātmā means a great self: a self free from ego, individuality, and limitation to one place. One possessing these is an *alpātmā*, a “small self.” In the Gītā Bhagavān uses *mahātmā* only for devotees: for aspirants walking the devotional path (9.13), for those who have become non-different from Him (7.19), and for those who have attained supreme perfection, supreme love (8.15).

“All this indeed is Brahman” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.1); “this whole universe is Brahman alone, the highest” (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.11).

sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma.

brahmaivedaṁ viśvam idaṁ variṣṭham.

Apart from the one supreme Reality, Bhagavān, nothing else has ever come to be, exists, will exist, or can exist. Even the knower of this truth is Bhagavān, for in Him there is no “I,” “you,” “this,” or “that.” As long as a separate knower of Bhagavān seems to exist, “Vāsudeva is all” has not been realized. With realization, no separate existence remains: Bhagavān alone remains.

I searched the whole world but found no trace of You;

when I found Your trace, no trace of me remained.

Arjuna says, “O Puruṣottama, You alone know Yourself by Yourself” (Gītā 10.15).

Printed footnote

“Whatever is seen or heard—past, present, or future; stationary or moving; great or small—nothing can truly be spoken of as separate from Acyuta. He alone is all and is ultimate Reality.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.46.43)

dṛṣṭaṁ śrutaṁ bhūta-bhavad-bhaviṣyat sthāśnuś cariṣṇu mahad alpakaṁ ca |

vinācyutād vastu tarāṁ na vācyaṁ sa eva sarvaṁ paramārtha-bhūtaḥ ||

The knower is Bhagavān, the known is Bhagavān, and knowing too is Bhagavān—everything is Bhagavān. Nothing exists apart from Him. He says, “There is nothing whatsoever higher than Me, O Dhanañjaya. All this is strung on Me like clusters of jewels on a thread” (Gītā 7.7).

mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya |
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva ||

The thread is Bhagavān; the beads, the rosary, and the person turning it are Bhagavān. Prahlāda says to Him:

“You are air, fire, earth, space, water and the subtle elements; the vital airs, senses, mind, consciousness and ego; the entire universe; the qualified and the unqualified. O Infinite One, whatever mind and speech can describe is nothing apart from You.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.9.48)

tvaṁ vāyur agnir avanir viyaḍ ambu-mātrāḥ
prāṇendriyāṇi hṛdayaṁ cid-anugrahaś ca |
sarvaṁ tvam eva saḡuṇo viḡuṇaś ca bhūman
nānyat tvad asty api mano-vacasā niruktam ||

This conviction is even more direct than discrimination. Discrimination is primary on the path of knowledge; devotional feeling is primary on the path of devotion.

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणचि कर्म यः। (गीता ४।१८)
karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ.

Because discrimination between inert and conscious, real and unreal, is primary on the path of knowledge, it is a path of duality. Because the feeling of Bhagavān alone is primary on the path of devotion, it is nondual. Jñāna-yoga begins with discrimination, but bhakti-yoga begins with relationship to Bhagavān. Devotion is therefore superior to knowledge.

Jñāna-yoga is for those of extreme dispassion-“knowledge-yoga is for those who are disenchanted” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.20.7). For

one neither completely disenchanted nor excessively attached, bhakti-yoga brings perfection (11.20.8). Discrimination is a means to realization, not realization itself. Without extreme dispassion, some sense of the unreal world's existence remains, preventing unbroken joy. Even a trace of its impression brings sorrow because the world is an abode of sorrow. Thus the aspirant complains: "I understand correctly, yet my state does not conform. Years of practice have passed, but realization has not come." Sometimes practice seems good; when attraction and aversion rise, remorse and agitation return. This ambivalence exists because both the real and unreal remain in one's feeling. If only Bhagavān remained there—"Vāsudeva is all"—no ambivalence could remain.

On the path of knowledge, the renouncer of the unreal—the ego—may survive renunciation. On the devotional path, emphasis on Bhagavān, the One to be attained, increases love, and increasing love spontaneously releases the ego. Knowledge emphasizes the experiencer; devotion emphasizes the One experienced. Hence the "I" persists far along the path of knowledge but quickly dissolves in devotion. "I see" emphasizes the seer; "He is seen" emphasizes Him. In "everything is Bhagavān," experience, experienced, and experiencer all disappear.

The discriminative aspirant negates the unreal, yet the act of negation preserves its presumed existence; the harder he negates it, the firmer it seems. Ignoring it is better, and the feeling "everything is Paramātmā" is better still. The devotee neither removes nor ignores the unreal, but accepts that both real and unreal are Paramātmā: "I am the real and the unreal, O Arjuna" (Gītā 9.19).

“The guṇas operate among the guṇas” still contains senses, objects, and action. “Vāsudeva is all” contains none of the three-Bhagavān alone remains.

Just as the path of knowledge requires extreme dispassion, devotion requires firm conviction-unwavering trust. Extreme dispassion turns discrimination into awakening; unwavering trust turns the conviction “Vāsudeva is all” into realization. Strictly speaking, that conviction is needed only to remove the world’s presumed independent existence. Otherwise it is not a belief but reality. Belief retains a believer; “Vāsudeva is all” leaves neither believer nor experiencer, only Vāsudeva. So long as the egoic believer or experiencer remains, the world appears to exist.

Question: Is the conviction “Vāsudeva is all” an affirmative or a negative discipline?

Answer: Prescription and prohibition pertain to karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga. Bhakti-yoga transcends both, because the first two are worldly disciplines whereas bhakti-yoga is not. Prescription and prohibition belong to the world; Bhagavān transcends it. In “everything is Bhagavān,” the prohibited unreal has no existence. Karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga therefore emphasize abandoning the prohibited, while bhakti-yoga emphasizes taking refuge in Bhagavān with trust.

Printed footnote

The Gītā says: “In this world I formerly declared two disciplines, O sinless one: jñāna-yoga for the Sāṅkhyas and karma-yoga for the yogins” (3.3). Karma-yoga proceeds with the perishable world; jñāna-yoga with the imperishable individual self. Both are within the world: “There are two persons in this world, the perishable and the imperishable” (15.16). Bhakti-yoga proceeds with Paramātmā, distinct from both: “But the Supreme Person is another, declared to be Paramātmā” (15.17). Bhakti-yoga is therefore

not a worldly discipline. Taking refuge in Bhagavān is more direct even than abandoning what is prohibited. Refuge means firmly accepting “everything is Bhagavān” and dissolving both “I” and “mine” in Him.

Question: What is the difference between learning that everything is Paramātmā and realizing it?

Answer: One who merely learns it can remember, explain, write a book, and lecture on it, yet the world retains existence within him. In realization, his state remains evenly established in the one Paramātmā. Learning retains the world; realization leaves it no independent existence-only Paramātmā remains at all times and everywhere.

After learning this teaching, one may sometimes feel, “I have attained Paramātmā,” with great peace and joy. Later the belief weakens, the world confronts one, and it seems that such a state was never attained. One may even think, “Before learning this, I had more peace; now there is only turmoil!” The firmer the world’s supposed reality, the greater the unrest, grief, and anguish. Reasoned reflection may remove it temporarily, making all appear as Paramātmā; but once “everything is Bhagavān” is realized, no variation occurs, because no world exists in Bhagavān.

Question: Does this realization depend upon an instrument, or is it independent of instruments?

Answer: It is independent. When one reaches a roof, the stairs fall behind by themselves. In devotion the instrument likewise falls away without deliberate abandonment. The discriminative aspirant knowingly leaves the stairs and ascends; because renouncer and renounced retain existence, ego persists a long way. The devotee, however, is devoted to and dependent upon Bhagavān from the

beginning. In devotion the instrument is related to Bhagavān; in discipline-centered practice-“I practice”-one relates oneself to the instrument. For the devotee the goal is Bhagavān and the means is trust in Him. He does not feel “I practice,” but “practice occurs by Bhagavān’s grace; He makes it happen, not I-everything happens by Gopāla’s doing.” Agency does not remain; if any survives, Bhagavān destroys it.

Question: By what means is “everything is Bhagavān” realized?

Answer: By three means: karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga. In karma-yoga, one sees inaction in action and action in inaction: “One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction...” (Gītā 4.18).

Printed footnote
<i>“To those who are ever steadfast and worship Me with love, I give the yoga of understanding by which they come to Me. Solely out of compassion, dwelling in their hearts, I destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the shining lamp of knowledge.” (Gītā 10.10-11)</i>
<i>teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam </i>
<i>dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te </i>
<i>teṣāṁ evānukampārtham aham ajñāna-jaṁ tamaḥ </i>
<i>nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā </i>

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानां चात्मानं (गीता ६।२९)

sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānaṁ sarva-bhūtāni cātmani.

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति (गीता ६।३०)

yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati.

उत्तर- जैसे जमीनमें जल सब जगह रहता है, पर उसका प्राप्त-स्थान कुआँ है, ऐसे ही भगवान् सब जगह है, पर उनका प्राप्त-स्थान हृदय है-‘हृदय सर्वस्य वसिष्ठतिम्’ (गीता

१३।१७), ‘सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टः’ (गीता १५।१५)। परन्तु सात्त्विकि-राजस-तामस भाव भगवान् के प्राप्ति-स्थान नहीं हैं। अतः ये साधकके लिये कामके नहीं हैं। इसीलिये भगवान् ने कहा है कि- ये वैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये।

मत् एवेतान् विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मया॥ (गीता ७।१२)

ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye |

matta eveti tām viddhi na tv aham teṣu te mayi ||

In jñāna-yoga the aspirant sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self: “the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self” (Gītā 6.29).

sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam sarva-bhūtāni cātmani.

In bhakti-yoga the aspirant sees Bhagavān in the world and the world in Bhagavān: “One who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me” (Gītā 6.30).

yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati.

Seeing inaction in action and action in inaction leaves no action, only actionlessness. Seeing the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self leaves no beings, only the Self. Seeing Bhagavān in the world and the world in Bhagavān leaves no world, only Bhagavān. Actionlessness, Self, and Bhagavān are one. Karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga thus culminate in realization that everything is Bhagavān.

The karma-yogin relinquishes selfishness and acts solely for others’ welfare, so attachment to pleasure disappears. With it the “I” disappears; with the “I,” the world’s independent existence disappears, and Bhagavān alone remains.

The jñāna-yogin emphasizes discrimination between real and unreal, negates the unreal, and abides in the real. Yet if dispassion was not intense during practice, the world persists subtly even after such abiding: a trace of attraction or ego remains. This subtle ego causes differences among philosophies and makes one's own doctrine and discipline seem superior. When dispassion becomes intense and Reality is directly realized, this subtle ego disappears and everything is realized as Bhagavān.

The bhakti-yogin sees Bhagavān in all and all in Bhagavān. Thus neither "I and mine," "you and yours," "this and its," nor "that and its" remains; only Bhagavān. Ordinarily one feels, "I exist, the world exists, and Bhagavān exists." In the devotee Bhagavān alone remains, so ego dissolves easily and "everything is Bhagavān" is realized.

Printed footnote 1

If the discriminative aspirant understands from the beginning that the unreal truly has no existence—"the unreal never comes to be" (Gītā 2.16)—its presumed existence lodged in the intellect disappears very easily.

Printed footnote 2

Even if an "I" remains in devotion, it is no obstacle when one feels "I am Bhagavān's": "May this pride never leave me: I am the servant and Raghupati my Lord" (Mānas 3.11.11). The devotee's "I" depends on Bhagavān rather than standing independently; only an independent ego obstructs.

Question: If everything is Bhagavān, why must sāttvika, rājasa, and tāmasa states be abandoned?

Answer: Water exists everywhere underground, yet a well is its place of access. Bhagavān is everywhere, yet the heart is the place of access—"established in every heart" (Gītā 13.17), "I am seated in everyone's heart" (Gītā 15.15). Sāttvika, rājasa, and tāmasa states

are not places of access to Him and are therefore of no use to the aspirant. Hence Bhagavān says: “*Know that all states-sāttvika, rājasa, and tāmasa-arise from Me. Yet I am not in them, nor are they in Me.*” (Gītā 7.12)

ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye |

matta eveti tāt viddhi na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi ||

In a millet field, the grain is primary, not leaves and stalks. The farmer’s aim is the millet alone. To obtain it he nourishes the field with water and fertilizer. Likewise the aspirant’s sole goal should be Bhagavān, not the world. To attain Him, one should serve the world but have no concern with it apart from service. The grain matters, not leaves and stalks, because millet exists at the beginning and remains at the end. What remains after harvesting the grain is of no use to the farmer himself; it is food for animals. Sāttvika, rājasa, and tāmasa states likewise serve worldly dealings, not the Self.

Though leaves and stalks arise from millet seed, the grain is not in them and they are not in the grain. Though the three modes arise from Bhagavān, Bhagavān is not in them and they are not in Him-“I am not in them, nor are they in Me.”

Leaves and stalks arise and perish, and the grain is not visible in them, yet they are not separate from it: grain stood at their beginning and will remain at their end. The world likewise arises and perishes; Bhagavān is not visible in it, yet it is not separate from Him, for He was at its beginning and remains at its end. An uninformed person lacking vision of Reality sees a millet field and says, “This is only grass-how can it be millet?” The ignorant similarly says, “What appears is the world-how can it be Bhagavān?” Yet for the great knowers who see Reality, no world

exists; everything is Bhagavān-“Vāsudeva is all.” Those who see the grain are truly human. Those who see only grass are like animals: humans discard grass and take the grain, whereas animals chew grass alone, seeing nothing beyond sense enjoyment-“holding enjoyment of desires as supreme, convinced that this is all” (Gītā 16.11).

Printed footnote

“Deluded by these three states composed of the guṇas, this whole world does not know Me as imperishable and beyond them.” (Gītā 7.13)

tribhīr guṇa-mayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat |

mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam ||



Extraordinary Divine Grace

अयमुत्तमोऽयमधमो जात्या रूपेण सम्पदा वयसा।

श्लाघ्योऽश्लाघ्यो वेत्यं न वेत्त भगवाननुग्रहावसरे॥

अन्तःस्वभावभोक्ता ततोऽन्तरात्मा महामेघः।

खदरिश्वम्पक इव वा प्रवर्षणं कविचारयति॥ (प्रबोधसुधाकर २५२-२५३)

ayam uttamo 'yam adhamo jātyā rūpeṇa sampadā vayasā |

ślāghyo 'ślāghyo vety aṁ na vetti bhagavān anugrahāvasare ||

antaḥ-svabhāva-bhoktā tato 'ntarātmā mahāmeghaḥ |

khadiraś campaka iva vā pravarṣaṇaṁ kiṁ vicārayati ||

7. Bhagavān's Extraordinary Grace

Trust Bhagavān, but never the world. The world encountered through seeing, hearing, and understanding changes every moment-everyone experiences this. How can it be trusted? The world is not an object of trust but of service. Bhagavān alone merits trust: He has never changed, never will change, and cannot change; He remains ever the same.

Trust also that when Bhagavān graciously gave a human body for attaining Him, He also supplied the means of attainment. He did not give too little but so abundantly that one could attain Him many times over-though true attainment occurs only once and forever.

An aspirant often imagines that he lacks the means, wishing someone would provide instruction or explanation. Arjuna likewise supposes that his divine endowment is deficient. Bhagavān assures him that it is naturally present: “Do not grieve; you are born with the divine endowment, O Pāṇḍava” (Gītā 16.5). Bhagavān cannot make the mistake of giving a human birth for liberation while

withholding its means. He has given discrimination, ability, authority, time, and strength. To think, “He did not give me enough intelligence, means, or assistance-how can I uplift myself?” is ingratitude and error. Can He who bestows causeless grace on all be deficient in giving? Never.

If we desire spiritual progress, we should trust that Bhagavān has helped, is helping, and certainly will help us wherever needed. He is supremely compassionate by nature. He nourishes not only devotees but all beings alike. He gives food, water, and air even to those turned away from Him; sustenance even to wicked people who oppose scripture and revile Him; sustenance even to snakes and lions. Will such a compassionate Bhagavān not care for us?

“When granting grace, Bhagavān does not ask whether one is high or low in birth, form, wealth, or age, praiseworthy or blameworthy. The inner Self, a mighty rain cloud, receives only the inward feeling. Does a cloud, when raining, consider whether a tree is khadira or campaka?” (Prabodhasudhākara 252-253)

*ayam uttamo ’yam adhamo jātyā rūpeṇa sampadā vayasā |
ślāghyo ’ślāghyo vety aṁ na vetti bhagavān anugrahāvasare ||
antaḥ-svabhāva-bhoktā tato ’ntarātmā mahāmeghaḥ |
khadiraś campaka iva vā pravarṣaṇaṁ kiṁ vicārayati ||*

We should therefore trust Bhagavān to provide whatever is needed. The teachings now reaching us through the Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, other true scriptures, and satsang come solely by His grace.

At root there is only Bhagavān’s grace, though it seems to arrive through different channels. Water seems to come from a tap, but reaches it through a pipe, the pipe from a tank, the tank from river

or well, those from rain, rain from ocean, oceanic water from fire, fire from air, air from space, and space from Paramātmā's power. Paramātmā, from whom creation arises, is the root of all.

Everything we receive comes from Bhagavān. He gives not after measuring our ability but out of His own causeless grace. A mother nurtures her child not because of the child's strength, intelligence, education, or virtues, but because she is the mother. Bhagavān is everyone's Mother and Father. His care has no external cause; it flows from His natural affection, grace, and goodwill. Everyone should rely on it. The greater the trust, the more fully His grace bears fruit and is experienced, bringing peace, freedom from anxiety, and fearlessness.

लालने ताडने मातुरनाकारुण्यं यथार्भके।

तद्वदेव महेशस्य नयिन्तुर्गुणदोषयोः॥

lālāne tāḍane mātūr nākāruṇyaṁ yathārbbhake |

tadvad eva maheśasya niyantur guṇa-doṣayoḥ ||

तत्तेऽनुकम्पां सुसमीक्षमाणो भुञ्जान एवात्मकृतं वपिकम्।

हृद्वाग्वपुर्भरिविदधन्मस्ते जीवेत यो मुक्तपिदे स दायभाक्॥ (श्रीमद्भागवत
१०।१४।८)

*tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ
vipākam |*

*hṛd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te jīveta yo mukti-pade sa
dāya-bhāk ||*

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः।

इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमतिं ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हतिम्॥ (गीता १८।६४)

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ |

iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam ||

Bhagavān's grace continually flows upon us, yet we do not look toward it. We disregard, dishonor, and insult it, but He never abandons His gracious nature. A child shows his mother every kind of disrespect-defecating, urinating, or spitting anywhere-yet she bears it. The child reaches for snakes, scorpions, or a lantern; she keeps protecting him. We are quick like children to go astray, but Bhagavān is quicker than a mother in bestowing grace. We should rely upon it.

His grace remains unchanged in the most adverse circumstances-fever, financial loss, death in the home, illness, disgrace, or insult. Trust that grace.

“Just as a mother is not unkind either when nurturing or correcting her child, the Lord who governs the virtues and faults of beings is never ungracious to anyone.”

lālāne tāḍane mātur nākāruṇyaṁ yathārbhake |

tadvad eva maheśasya niyantur guṇa-doṣayoḥ ||

The Lord of causeless grace sometimes grants a human body through special grace: “Sometimes the Lord, affectionate without cause, compassionately grants a human body” (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 44.3).

Accumulated sins never naturally reach an end, for they have continued through every human birth. Yet even while they remain, Bhagavān grants a human body and an opportunity for liberation in their midst-this is special grace.

His very nature is grace-He loves without cause-and granting a human body through grace doubles that grace. Practice founded upon trust in this boundless grace brings extraordinary,

spontaneous spiritual progress. When we do not face it, it bears less fruit; when we face it, it becomes abundantly fruitful. Brahmā therefore praises Bhagavān:

“One who lives while carefully seeing Your grace, undergoing the results of his own deeds, and bowing to You with heart, speech, and body becomes rightful heir to the state of liberation, just as a son inherits his father’s estate.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.14.8)

*tat te ’nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ
vipākam |*

*hṛd-vāg-vapurbhir vidadhan namas te jīveta yo mukti-pade sa
dāya-bhāk ||*

Merely keeping one’s sight on Bhagavān’s grace frees one forever from worldly sorrow. By not looking toward it one fails to receive it and suffers; yet His grace never diminishes. Even if a person does not face, accept, or even denies Bhagavān, Bhagavān’s grace remains the same. A son may become bad, but a mother does not cease to be a mother. Bhagavān is eternally the Mother of endless mothers and Father of endless fathers. His infinite grace flows upon us naturally. Whatever happens and whatever comes to us comes by that grace. When good company, a good teaching, a good feeling, or sudden remembrance of Bhagavān comes- -recognize it as Bhagavān’s special grace: Bhagavān has specially remembered me. Look toward His grace and rely on Him alone; then His grace manifests with extraordinary power.

A child slept at home while his mother went to fetch water from a well. He awoke and, seeing her return with a pitcher, walked toward her across sun-scorched ground. His tender feet burned, but he did not think, “I should wait; Mother is coming.” He reached her, but with the pitcher on her head she could not bend to lift him. She

asked him merely to raise one hand. Instead, he lay on the hot ground crying, “Why did you leave me?” She repeated, “Raise your hand a little,” but he would not listen. She went home with the pitcher and he got up and ran behind. What loss, humiliation, effort, or qualification would raising one hand have required? Bhagavān likewise stands ready to take us in His arms. We need only raise a hand-turn toward Him: “The instant a being turns toward Me, the sins of millions of births are destroyed” (Mānas, Sundarakāṇḍa 44.1).

We need only look toward His grace and call, “O my Lord! O my Lord!” Merely calling makes Him bring about our welfare. He does not first count past sins, injustice, or opposition: “The Lord holds no devotee’s faults against him; Friend of the lowly, His nature is exceedingly tender” (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 1.3); “The Lord does not retain a fault in mind, but remembers a good deed a hundred times” (Mānas, Bālakāṇḍa 29.3).

A mother scarcely remembers her child’s fault. However contrary he has behaved, once he comes before her she forgets and lovingly takes him into her lap. Bhagavān likewise does not remember our faults.

An ordinary camera captures whatever stands before it. Bhagavān’s camera is different: when we worship, He captures that feeling; when we err and go astray, He does not capture it at all. “He took My name; he came to My refuge; he heard stories of Me and My devotees; he attended satsang”-these are imprinted in Bhagavān’s camera. Contrary acts are not imprinted or remembered.

Great ones first correct those they wish to reform and then show affection: “After disciplining, they bestow favor again; such, O Lord,

is the natural disposition of masters” (Mānas, Bālakāṇḍa 89.2). Their grace is equal in discipline and affection. In the Gītā Bhagavān first warns Arjuna, “If you do not listen, you will perish” (18.58), then says lovingly: “Hear again My supreme, most secret word. You are exceedingly dear to Me; therefore I shall speak for your welfare” (18.64).

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ |
iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam ||

Bhagavān, gurus, and parents nurture us with this disposition. What would become of us otherwise? If people knew our defects, how they would despise us! Bhagavān knows every atom, yet gives spontaneous grace.

Who in this world is so generous? Who, without service rendered, melts for the lowly? None is like Rāma. (Vinaya Patrikā 162)

Our lives continue only because our faults are not exposed among people. If others knew every bad thought in our minds, how many beatings would one day bring! Bhagavān knows all, yet does not abandon us; He closes His eyes, saying, “It is a child-never mind.” Otherwise even survival, much less liberation, would be difficult. Trust this ocean of grace and rely upon Him alone:

One reliance, one strength, one hope, one trust: the one dark-cloud Rāma is the Beloved of the cātaka bird Tulasīdāsa. (Dohāvalī 277)



The Path of True Attainment

त्वमेव माता च पति त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।

त्वमेव वदिया द्रवणिं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव॥ (गर्गसंहिता, द्वारकाखण्ड
१२।१९)

*tvam eva mātā ca pitā tvam eva tvam eva bandhuś ca sakhā tvam
eva |*

*tvam eva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvam eva tvam eva sarvaṁ mama
deva-deva ||*

न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिकिः कुतोऽन्यो लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतमिप्रभावः॥ (गीता ११।४३)

*na tvat-samo 'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto 'nyo loka-traye 'py
apratima-prabhāva.*

सर्वधर्मान्परतिज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि शुचः॥ (गीता १८।६६)

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |

ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

8. The Path to True Attainment

Where victory is certain, one should not become cowardly. Worldly undertakings may succeed or fail, so Bhagavān commands equanimity and freedom from disturbance in both—“remaining equal in success and failure” (Gītā 2.48), “equal in success and failure” (4.22), and “unaffected by success or failure” (18.26). But attainment of supreme Reality can only succeed. Even worldly equanimity serves true attainment, for worldly success or failure has no ultimate value. Worldly success is uncertain because it depends on others; spiritual attainment is certain because it is independent, and the human body was received for that very purpose. The aspirant should therefore neither become timid nor despair, but maintain ever-renewed enthusiasm for attaining Paramātmā.

A child claims his mother wholly as “my mother.” Even if she has ten children, each claims the whole mother; no one thinks he owns a tenth. Bhagavān likewise belongs wholly to every being. A human mother may show partiality, but Bhagavān, whose real children we all are, does not. He is our true Mother and Father.

“You alone are mother and father; You alone are kinsman and friend; You alone are knowledge and wealth; O God of gods, You alone are everything to me.” (Garga Saṁhitā, Dvārakā-khaṇḍa 12.19)

*tvam eva mātā ca pitā tvam eva tvam eva bandhuś ca sakhā tvam
eva |*

*tvam eva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvam eva tvam eva sarvaṁ mama
deva-deva ||*

“Know as exclusive the one whose understanding never wavers: ‘I am the servant, and Bhagavān, in the form of all that moves and does not move, is my Lord’” (Mānas, Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa 3).

Gods, humans, animals, birds, insects, plants, trees, mountains-whatever exists-is our Lord in every form. Those who recognized this, such as Prahlāda and Mīrābāī, were not shaken by the greatest sorrow because they saw their Beloved everywhere. Paramātmā is our true Parent. The body, a portion of worldly parents, dies; the individual self, a portion of Paramātmā, has never died, will never die, and cannot die. No one should therefore think, “Bhagavān’s grace upon me is slight; my conduct and feeling are poor; I lack devotion, knowledge, eligibility, or strength, so I cannot attain Him.” Human ability works only against inability, strength against weakness, and learning against ignorance. All the strength, intelligence, status, lineage, religion, caste, stage of life, and similar qualifications we claim are useless for attaining Paramātmā. The feeling “Bhagavān is mine” is stronger than them all. Even a knower’s discrimination does not protect as Bhagavān protects.

A child in his mother’s lap may threaten even a king, thinking none equals the mother who holds him. A human mother is limited, but none in the three worlds equals our true Mother, Bhagavān. Arjuna says: “O Lord of incomparable power, none in the three worlds equals You; how then could anyone be greater?” (Gītā 11.43).

na tvat-samo ’sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto ’nyo loka-traye ’py apratima-prabhāva.

To regard body, family, sect, caste, stage of life, ability, or intelligence as high, and oneself as great through relationship to

them, is a grave mistake. What value have they before Bhagavān?
His strength is for the weak:

*While the elephant exercised his own strength, not the smallest
work was done;*

*becoming powerless, he called Rāma-who came before half the
Name was uttered.*

Listen, sister: Rāma is the strength of the powerless.

Pride in one's strength, intelligence, or qualifications-and even pride in one's spiritual practice-is a great obstacle to attaining Bhagavān. This does not mean abandoning practice; what else would one do? Practice day and night, but do not rely proudly upon its power. By the power of practice alone we- -cannot attain Paramātmā. He is attained only by taking refuge in Him.

A small child may frighten the household by crying loudly. By what strength? Crying is no strength but a sign of helplessness. Yet even a strong thief may flee when a child cries. We should likewise cry before Bhagavān. Our error is that we cry for wealth, family, spouse and children, honor, life, and body. We should cry only for Bhagavān. He is ours and we are His.

A child recognizes "my mother." Other women may be more beautiful and richly adorned, yet they are not his mother. His own mother may be dark and poorly clothed, but he clings to her breast saying, "This is my mother." He approaches her not for clothes, jewels, or qualifications, but because she is his. Bhagavān is everyone's true Mother. Many may be strong, rich, learned, perfected, or divine, but none equals our Mother, Bhagavān. We must take refuge in Him alone.

Arjuna takes refuge and says, “My mind is confused about dharma; I ask You” (Gītā 2.7). Bhagavān replies in effect: Why must you decide it? Abandon reliance upon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone: “Abandoning all dharmas, come to Me alone for refuge. I shall free you from every sin; do not grieve” (18.66).

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |

ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

Perform dharma, but rely on Me, not on dharma; trust neither strength, intellect, learning, nor anything else-trust Me alone.

One reliance, one strength, one hope, one trust: the one dark-cloud Rāma is the Beloved of the cātaka bird Tulasīdāsa. (Dohāvalī 277)

Those who proceed by the power of their practice are like wage laborers. A mother does not measure her child’s work and proportion food or affection to it. A servant’s labor is measured and his wage apportioned. People need wealth and possessions; Bhagavān needs nothing. Those who worship, practice, and reflect while relying on their own strength are performing wage labor. Rely not on the wage but on belonging to Bhagavān. Wage-consciousness brings cowardice: “I lack strength and qualification; I have not practiced enough; I have so many defects.”

When Bharata goes to meet Rāma, three movements are described. Looking at his own strength, he stands still; looking at his mother’s deed, he turns back; looking at Bhagavān, he runs: “When he reflects on Raghunātha’s nature, his feet hurry along the path” (Mānas, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 234.3).

We likewise should look not toward deeds, strength, mind, or intellect, but toward Bhagavān. Does a mother measure the child’s

work before deciding how much milk to give? Far from helping, he obstructs the household, yet she lets him drink his fill, dress and sleep as he wishes—even in her lap. And this is only a worldly mother; our true Mother is extraordinary and divine.

Before such a Mother, brooding over one's qualifications is foolish, as is reducing remembrance and worship. Do not lessen worship, but do not pridefully think its strength will purchase Bhagavān. We are to offer ourselves to Him, not buy Him. Pride in strength makes us weak; pride in wealth makes us poor; pride in qualification makes us unqualified; pride in cleverness makes us foolish; pride in learning makes us ignorant; pride in action drags us down. Nothing is truly "ours," for every object has been received and must part from us. Everything we have is Bhagavān's gift. To claim the gift while refusing to claim the Giver as our own is dishonesty; remove that dishonesty.

Bhagavān has an extraordinary nature: He gives everything but does not make Himself known as the Giver. He gives body, senses, mind, intellect, and life, yet the recipient says, "All this is mine." If the body is yours, why let it die? If the eyes are yours, why let them weaken? If you earn the money, why let it suffer loss?

Rāvaṇa was a great devotee of Śaṅkara but relied upon his own strength rather than Śaṅkara's. When arrows strike and kill him, Śaṅkara stands in the sky watching: "Gods, Brahmā, siddhas, and many sages watch the battle from aerial cars. Umā, I too remain among them, watching Rāma's deeds in the sport of battle" (Mānas, Laṅkākāṇḍa 81.1).

Had Rāvaṇa trusted only Śaṅkara's strength without pride in his own, Śaṅkara would have entered the war to help him. All strength

truly belongs to Bhagavān-what strength is ours? A child fears crows and dogs; he has only his mother's strength, and even that is limited. If he dies, she cannot save him. Bhagavān's strength is limitless. Hiraṇyakaśipu considered himself immensely powerful, yet what use was that power? Immune to the hardest weapons, he died by Bhagavān's nails. Do nails ordinarily kill? Even the gods feared him, while Prahlāda spoke fearlessly before him. When Bhagavān is ours, what is there to fear? Just as Prahlāda belonged to Bhagavān, so do we.

Prahlāda was not generationally nearer to Bhagavān while we are farther away. Everyone has the same relationship with Him. He says, "All are dear to Me; all are born from Me" (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 86.2), "I am equal toward all beings" (Gītā 9.29), and "the individual in the world is truly My portion" (Gītā 15.7). The only difference is that Prahlāda accepted Bhagavān as his own and we do not.

Whatever a person's kind, caste, country, dress, stage of life, or tradition-Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or Parsi-Bhagavān is equal to all. He is not near one and distant from another. As one approaches, so He responds: "As people take refuge in Me, so do I relate to them" (Gītā 4.11). Do not lose courage by imagining distance from your Lord. If Bhagavān's strength makes us strong, why despair?

*Do not abandon courage, O person who utters Rāma's Name;
through courage Hari made Dhruva's abode immovable.*

We shall attain Bhagavān not by our strength but by His strength and grace. His grace has accomplished, accomplishes, and will accomplish everything. Look at our lives: how did we receive this

human body? Did we knowingly choose birth here? How were we nurtured from infancy? How did the Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, satsang, good books, and good company reach us? What effort, expenditure, or strength did we apply? Everything came by Bhagavān's grace.

Having received so much, why worry now? Suppose someone invites a brāhmaṇa to eat, seats him, sets leaf-plate and water before him. Why worry whether food will come? Had the host no intention to feed him, why invite and seat him? Bhagavān graciously gave us a human body and introduced us to scripture and satsang without our asking. He who has given so much will continue to give. If not, whose honor would be lost? Draupadī says, "It is Your honor that will be lost, O Lord; what can happen to me?" If trust is absent, pray: "Lord, give me trust and love; if You do not, who else will?" A mother's milk is for the child, not herself; Bhagavān's power is likewise for us. Our only task is to take refuge in Him.

Worldly undertakings may profit or lose; someone may be born or die; we want one thing and another occurs. Worldly success is not inevitable, but spiritual attainment-attainment of Bhagavān-is. Our victory on this path is certain.



Prayer and Surrender

बुद्धिर्विकुण्ठति नाथ समाप्ता मम युक्तयः।

buddhir vikuṇṭhitā nātha samāptā mama yuktayah.

Prayer to Bhagavān and surrender to Him bring immediate attainment. When calamity, grief, anguish, or confusion comes, call in distress, “O Lord! O Master!” and pray; help comes at once. Gajendra, Draupadī, Uttarā, and others remembered and called Bhagavān in danger and were immediately protected. When one’s strength fails and intellect is confounded, taking refuge allows Bhagavān’s grace to act.

Unable to free himself from the crocodile, disappointed in his strength and companions, Gajendra surrendered and Bhagavān liberated him. When Draupadī was abandoned on every side during her disrobing and no one heard her plea, she called Bhagavān and He protected her. When Aśvatthāmā’s weapon came to destroy the child in Uttarā’s womb, she surrendered wholly and called Him, and He protected her womb. Unable to decide duty from non-duty and despairing of his intellect, Arjuna surrendered; through the world-uplifting teaching of the Gītā, Bhagavān destroyed his delusion.

What Bhagavān’s grace accomplishes can never be accomplished by personal strength or intellect. Yet genuine prayer does not rise from within until one has exerted one’s full strength. Full exertion brings the experience of helplessness; reliance on personal strength falls away, and genuine prayer arises.

“My intellect is confounded, O Lord; all my devices are exhausted.”

buddhir vikuṇṭhitā nātha samāptā mama yuktayah.

Genuine prayer arises when intellect, devices, and effort all fail. If a trace of pride in personal strength remains, prayer is counterfeit and bears no result. Those who say, “I prayed, but nothing happened,” did not truly pray. Prayer is not manufactured; it comes forth from within, spontaneously. Genuine inward prayer works immediately.

As long as one leans upon strength, qualification, position, learning, intellect, caste, stage of life, or tradition, neither true prayer nor surrender occurs, because such supports preserve ego. While ego remains, neither is genuine; without genuine prayer and surrender, the work is not done.

Complete awareness of one’s powerlessness brings genuine prayer and surrender—“Listen, sister: Rāma is the strength of the powerless.” Powerlessness does not mean physical weakness, sickness, or loss of bodily energy. It means despairing of one’s own power and retaining not the slightest support, trust, or pride in it. When confidence in intellectual, mental, financial, bodily, muscular, and learned power is exhausted while intense hope for attaining Bhagavān arises, prayer works at once. If hope remains in one’s own power while one despairs of attaining Bhagavān, prayer does not work.

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामाश्रित्य यतन्तयि।

ते ब्रह्म तद्वद्विः कृत्स्नमध्यातुं कर्म चाखलिम्॥ (गीता ७।२९)

jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye |

te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam ||

नमित्तिमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन्। (गीता ११।३३)

nimitta-mātraṁ bhava savyasācin.

तात्पर्य है कभिगवान् असम्भवको सम्भव और सम्भवको असम्भव बनानेमें सर्वथा समर्थ हैं-‘कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथाकर्तुं समर्थः।’

kartum akartum anyathā kartum samarthaḥ.

यो मामेवमसम्बूढो जानात्पुरुषोत्तमम्।

स सर्ववद्भिजतमिं सर्वभावेन भारत॥ (गीता १५।१९)

yo mām evam asammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam |

sa sarva-vid bhajati mām sarva-bhāvena bhārata ||

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥ (गीता १८।६६)

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja |

aham tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

No task is so impossible that prayer to Bhagavān cannot make it possible, for His strength is boundless, limitless, infinite, and beyond words. Even “boundless,” “limitless,” and “infinite” are relative terms-beyond a shore, boundary, or end-whereas Bhagavān is absolute. Prayer and surrender arise through becoming powerless:

While the elephant exercised his own strength, not the smallest work was done;

becoming powerless, he called Rāma-who came before half the Name was uttered.

Let no refuge remain except Bhagavān:

One reliance, one strength, one hope, one trust:

*the one dark-cloud Rāma is the Beloved of the cātaka bird
Tulasīdāsa.*

While even the slightest reliance on strength, intellect, qualification, caste, or stage of life remains, an exclusive cry does not arise. When no reliance on these remains and one realizes, “By these I cannot attain Bhagavān or even remove my sorrow,” Bhagavān’s strength begins to work.

The aspirant should experience powerlessness and depend wholly upon Bhagavān: “Lord, apart from You I have no refuge and no power.” Becoming carefree in this way accomplishes immediately what years of practice powered by oneself cannot. The subtle point is to apply one’s full strength while taking refuge only in Bhagavān. The Gītā says: “Those who strive for freedom from old age and death, taking refuge in Me, know Brahman, the whole of adhyātma, and all karma” (7.29).

jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye |

te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam ||

Strive, but trust Bhagavān rather than striving. Bhagavān lifted Mount Govardhana on the nail of His left little finger and told the cowherd boys to prop it with their sticks. They did so and began to think their sticks held up the mountain. To remove pride in their strength, He lowered His finger slightly; they cried, “Brother, we are dying!” His meaning was: apply your strength, but do not rely upon it. Let eagerness be complete without pride. Hence He tells Arjuna, “Become merely an instrument, O Savyasācin” (Gītā 11.33).

nimitta-mātraṁ bhava savyasācin.

Being an instrument means exerting full power while placing not the slightest trust in it; it does not mean doing very little. Arjuna could shoot equally accurately with either hand, hence the name Savyasācin. By addressing him as Savyasācin, Bhagavān—says:

Apply your full power, but do not think, “My strength and skill will accomplish it.” Whatever happens will happen by the power of My grace. Prayer grounded in Bhagavān’s grace immediately brings His boundless, extraordinary power into action. The Rāmacaritamānasa says:

“The Lord can make a mosquito into Brahmā and reduce Brahmā below a mosquito.” (Uttarakāṇḍa 122b)

“He can make the conscious inert and the inert conscious.” (Uttarakāṇḍa 119b)

“He can turn straw into a thunderbolt and a thunderbolt into straw.” (Laṅkākaṇḍa 35.4)

Bhagavān is wholly capable of making the impossible possible and the possible impossible-“able to do, not do, or do otherwise.”

kartum akartum anyathā kartum samarthah.

No incapacity exists in Him. He is complete in every respect, with not the slightest deficiency in strength, intelligence, knowledge, or ability. Once relationship with the all-powerful and wholly perfect Bhagavān is realized, all His power enters us. Connected to electricity, a fan moves, a stove heats, ice freezes, and a lamp shines-one power performs many contrary functions. One divine power likewise creates, sustains, and dissolves the world. When prayer turns the devotee toward the omnipotent Bhagavān, how could any deficiency remain? It is impossible. Bhagavān says: “One who, free from delusion, knows Me thus as Puruṣottama knows all and worships Me with his whole being, O Bhārata” (Gītā 15.19).

yo mām evam asammūḍho jñāti puruṣottamam |

sa sarva-vid bhajati mām sarva-bhāvena bhārata ||

The one who knows Bhagavān as Puruṣottama is all-knowing; knowing many worldly facts does not make one so. Whoever firmly trusts His boundless, limitless, infinite, unfathomable power worships Him with the whole being. The gaze turns nowhere else. No other support has value; no hope rests on anyone else. All worldly reliance is exhausted, and “I shall accomplish it by my strength” leaves the heart forever. Then genuine surrender and prayer arise. Bhagavān says: “Abandoning all dharmas, come to Me alone for refuge. I shall free you from every sin; do not grieve” (Gītā 18.66).

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||*

Our task is to take exclusive refuge in Bhagavān without the slightest reliance or pride in strength, intellect, or learning. His task is to free us forever from all sin. We turned away from Him; He never turned away from us. If we surrender exclusively, His power will bring welfare quickly and easily. He assures us: “Come to My refuge and I shall free you from every sin, sorrow, and bondage. Why then do you worry?”

