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MEDITATION ON THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

Sripad Shankaracharya's Gīta-dhyāna
Introduction, translation and commentary
by His Divine Grace A.C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Versification by *Hayagriva Das Adhikari*

Sri Shankaracharya — or Shankar — is considered to be an incarnation of Lord Shiva, as the *Padma Purāṇa* testifies. Appearing in India in the 6th century A.D., he single-handedly drove the Buddhist philosophy out of India and reestablished Vedic culture, all in his short lifetime of 32 years. Although he took up the impersonalist guise to better battle the Buddhists — impersonalism is much akin to Buddhism — the commentary rendered below as well as other writings reveal him to be a devotee of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Shankar's most famous treatise is *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, and his other works include *Śārīraka-bhāṣya* and Prayers for Krishna.



*om pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam
vyāseṇa grathitām purāṇa muninā madhye mahā-bhārata
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatām aṣṭādaśādhyāyīṇīm
amba! tām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhavad-veṣiṇīm*

O *Bhagavad-gītā*,
Through Thy eighteen chapters

Thou showerest upon man
The immortal nectar
Of the wisdom of the Absolute.
O blessed *Gītā*,
By Thee, Lord Krishna Himself
Enlightened Arjun.
Afterward, the ancient sage Vyas
Included Thee in the *Mahābhārata*.
O loving mother,
Destroyer of man's rebirth
Into the darkness of this mortal world,
Upon Thee I meditate. (Text 1)

*namo 'stu te vyāsa viśāla-buddhe
phullāravindāyata-patra-netra
yena tvayā bhārata-taila-pūrṇaḥ
prajvālito jñānamayaḥ pradīpaḥ*

Salutations to thee, O Vyas,
Thou art of mighty intellect,
And shine eyes
Are large as the petals
Of the full-blown lotus.
It was thou
Who brightened this lamp of wisdom,
Filling it with the oil
Of the *Mahābhārata*. (Text 2)

PURPORT: Srimad Shankaracharya was an impersonalist from the materialist point of view. But he never denied the spiritual form known as *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* or the eternal all-blissful form of knowledge which existed before the material creation.

When he spoke of Supreme Brahman as impersonal, he did not mean that the Lord's *sac-cid-ānanda* form was to be confused with a material conception of personality. In the very beginning of his commentary on the *Gītā*, he maintains that Narayan, the Supreme Lord, is transcendental to the material creation. The Lord existed before the creation as the transcendental personality, and he has nothing to do with material personality. Lord Krishna is the same Supreme Personality, and he has no connection with a material body. He descends in his spiritual eternal form, but foolish people mistake his body to be like unto ours. Shankar's preaching of impersonalism is especially meant for teaching foolish persons who consider Krishna to be an ordinary man composed of matter.

No one would care to read the *Gītā* if it had been spoken by a material man, and certainly Vyasadev wouldn't have bothered to incorporate it into the history of the *Mahābhārata*. According to the above verses, *Mahābhārata* is the history of the ancient world, and Vyasadev is the writer of this great epic. *Bhagavad-gītā* is identical with Krishna; and because Krishna is the Absolute Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no difference between Krishna and his words. Therefore the *Bhagavad-gītā* is as worshipable as Lord Krishna himself, both being absolute. One who hears *Bhagavad-gītā* "as is" actually hears the words directly from the lotus lips of the Lord. But unfortunate persons say that the *Gītā* is too antiquated for the modern man, who wants to find out God by speculation or meditation.

*prapanna-pārijātāya-totra-vetraika-pāṇāye
jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛta-duhe namaḥ*

I salute Thee, O Krishna,
O Thou who art the refuge
Of ocean-born Lakshmi
And all who take refuge
At Thy lotus feet.
Thou art indeed
The wish-fulfilling tree
For Thy devotee.
Thy one hand holds a staff
For driving cows,
And Thy other hand is raised —

The thumb touching the tip
Of Thy forefinger,
Indicating divine knowledge.
Salutations to Thee, O Supreme Lord,
For Thou art the milker
Of the ambrosia of the *Gītā*. (Text 3)

PURPORT: Srimad Shankaracharya explicitly says, "You fools, just worship Govinda and that *Bhagavad-gītā* spoken by Narayan himself," yet foolish people still conduct their research work to find out Narayan; consequently they are wretched and they waste their time for nothing. Narayan is never wretched nor *daridra* [poor]; rather, he is worshiped by the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, as well as all living entities. Shankar declared himself to be "Brahman," but he admits Narayan or Krishna to be the Supreme Personality who is beyond the material creation. He offers his respects to Krishna as the Supreme Brahman

Nāma-tattva

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NAME AND THE FORM *Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode's From Jaiva Dharma chapter 23*

Vijaya: "Are there any distinctions between *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and *kṛṣṇa-svarūpa*, Krishna's name and Krishna's form?"

Raghunath Das Babaji: "No, there are no differences whatsoever. However, there is one unique, even mystical feature in this subject: *Harināma* is more merciful than *kṛṣṇa-svarūpa*. Offences committed against *kṛṣṇa-svarūpa* are never forgiven by Krishna; however, offences against either *kṛṣṇa-svarūpa* or *kṛṣṇa-nāma* are both kindly absolved by the mercy of *harināma*. Therefore, one should understand and commit to memory the ten offenses to *harināma*. Then, one must meticulously avoid perpetrating these offenses, because one must rise above *nāmāparādha* in order to chant *suddha-harināma*. ❀

— Adapted from the edition translated by Sri Sarvabhavana Das. Published by Brhat Mrdanga Press. Vrindavan. 2003.

or *para-brahman* because he (Krishna) is worshipable by everyone. Only the fools and enemies of Krishna who cannot understand what *Bhagavad-gītā* is (though they make commentaries on it) say, "It is not the personal Krishna to whom we have to surrender ourselves utterly, but to the unborn, beginningless eternal who speaks through Krishna." Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Whereas Shankar, the greatest of the impersonalists, offers his due respects to Krishna and his book *Bhagavad-gītā*, the foolish say that "it is not to the personal Krishna." Such unenlightened people do not know that Krishna is absolute and that there is no difference between his inside and outside. The difference of inside and outside is experienced in the dual material world. In the absolute world there is no such difference, because in the absolute everything is spiritual (*sac-cid-ānanda*), and Narayan or Krishna belongs to the absolute world. In the absolute world there is only the factual personality, and there is no distinction between body and soul.

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopāla nandanah
pārtho vatsah sudhir bhoktā dugdhan gītāmṛtam mahat*

The Upanishads
Are as a herd of cows,
Lord Krishna, son of a cowherd,
Is their milker,
Arjun is the calf,
The supreme nectar of the *Gītā*
Is the milk,
And the wise man
Of purified intellect
Is the drinker. (Text 4)

PURPORT: Unless one understands spiritual variegatedness, one cannot understand the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is said that Krishna's name, form, quality, pastimes, entourage and paraphernalia are all *ānanda-cinmaya-rasa* — in short, everything of his transcendental association is of the same composition of spiritual bliss, knowledge and eternity. There is no end to his name, form, etc., unlike the material world where all things have their end. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, only fools deride him, whereas it is Shankar, the greatest impersonalist, who worships him, his cows,

and his pastimes as the son of Vasudev and pleasure of Devaki.

*vasudeva-sutaṁ devaṁ kamsa-cāṅūra-mardanam
devakī-paramānandaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ vande jagad-gurum*

Thou son of Vasudev,
Destroyer of the demons Kamsa and Canura,
Thou supreme bliss of Mother Devaki,
O Thou guru of the universe,
Teacher of the worlds,
Thee, O Krishna, I salute. (Text 5)

PURPORT: Shankar describes him as the son of Vasudev and Devaki. Does he mean thereby that he is worshipping an ordinary material man? He worships Krishna because he knows that Krishna's birth and activities are all supernatural. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4th chapter), Krishna's birth and activities are mysterious and transcendental and therefore only the devotees of Krishna can know them perfectly. Shankar was not such a fool that he would accept Krishna as an ordinary man and at the same time offer him all devotional obeisances, knowing him as the son of Devaki and Vasudev. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, only by knowing the transcendental birth and activities of Krishna can one attain liberation by acquiring a spiritual form like Krishna. There are five different kinds of liberations. One who merges into the spiritual auras of Krishna, known as impersonal Brahman effulgence, does not fully develop his spiritual body. But one who fully develops his spiritual existence becomes an associate of Narayan or Krishna in different spiritual abodes. One who enters into the abode of Narayan develops a spiritual form exactly like Narayan (four-handed), and one who enters into the highest spiritual abode of Krishna, known as Goloka Vrindavan, develops a spiritual form of two hands like Krishna. Shankar, as an incarnation of Lord Shiva, knows all these spiritual existences, but he did not disclose them to his then Buddhist followers because it was impossible for them to know about the spiritual world. Lord Buddha preached that void is the ultimate goal, so how could his followers understand spiritual variegatedness? Therefore Shankar said *brahma satya jagat mithyā*, or material variegatedness is false but spiritual variegatedness

is fact. In the *Padma Purāna*, Lord Shiva has admitted that he had to preach the philosophy of *māyā* or illusion in the *Kali-yuga* as another edition of the “void” philosophy of Buddha. He had to do this by the order of the Lord for specific reasons. He, however, disclosed his real mind by recommending that people worship Krishna, for no one can be saved simply by mental speculations composed of word jugglery and grammatical maneuvers. Shankar instructs further: *bhaja govindam bhaja govindam bhaja govindam mūḍha-mate, prāpte sannihite kāle na hi na hi rakṣati dukṛñ karaṇe.* “You intellectual fools, just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda. Your grammatical knowledge and word jugglery will not save you at the time of death.”

(To be concluded in the next issue.)

WHEN WILL NITAI BE MERCIFUL?

Prema Das

For more information about the poet Prema Das, see Bindus 122 and 169.

(*Barāḍī-rāga*)

*hari hari nitāi kabe karuṇā karibe
samsāra-vāsana mora kabe dūra habe*



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Hari! Hari! When will Lord Nitai be merciful? When will material desires flee far away from me?

*kabe vā kāṅgāla-veśe vṛndāvane yāba
śyāma-kuṇḍa rādhā-kuṇḍa nayane heriba*

When, wearing the garments of a beggar, will I live in Vrindavan? When will I see Shyama Kund and Radha Kund with my own eyes?

*vamśī-vaṭera chāyāya giyā jīvana juḍāba
kabe govardhana-mūle gaḍāgaḍi diba*

When, attaining the shade of the Vamsi Vata tree, will I feel my life filled with cooling bliss? When at the foot of Govardhan Hill will I roll on the ground?

*māyā-moha puruṣa-deha kabe vā chāḍiba
sakhira anugā haiyā caraṇa seviba*

When will I give up this human body made of *māyā*'s illusions? When, attaining the form of a follower of the *gopīs*, will I serve the feet of the divine couple?

*śrī-rūpa-mañjarī-sakhira āśraya la-iba
vāma-pāśe rahi aṅge cāmara ḍhulāba*

When will I take shelter of Sri Rupa Manjari? When, standing at her side, will I fan the divine couple with a *camara* whisk?

*ekāsane yugala-kiśora vasāiba
eka mālā duhuñ gale kabe vā parāba*

When will I give the divine couple a sitting place on a single throne? When will I place a single flower garland around their necks?

*kāṅgāla haiyā vraje giyā kabe vā bhramiba
ghare ghare mādrukuri bhikṣā māḡi khāba*

When, becoming a beggar, will I wander in Vrindavan? When will I eat by begging from house to house?

*prema dāsa kahe kabe hena bhāgya habe
gaurāṅga balite mora pāpa prāṇa yābe*

Prema Das asks when he will become fortunate in these ways, and when, calling out “Gauranga!”, will he leave his body made of sins? ❀

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